

# urban

Vol.1, N.1, 2024

International journal of urban planning and policies

## Universities and Cities in Transition. Policies for a Better Integration

Edited by Nicola Martinelli, Mariella Annese, Giovanna Mangialardi

Baratta, Barberis, Basti, Bazzoli, Cataldo, Cognetti, D'Alfonso, Danisi, Deblasi, De Leo, Didonna, Di Giuseppe, Finucci, Hernandez Garcia, Laino, Lamacchia, Laudisa, Lello, Lombardi, Mangialardi, Marini, Maroccia, Masanotti, Massari, Messina, Misceo, Orioli, Panebianco, Perini, Pica, Pierini, Piferi, Polito, Presta, Renna, Renzullo, Savino, Tedesco, Viesti, Viganò, Volpe, Zaccaria

# urbana

International journal of urban planning and policies

**Vol.1, N.1, 2024**

<https://urbana.unibo.it/>

ISSN 3034-8544

<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.3034-8544/v1-n1-2024>

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# Editorial

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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"<sup>1</sup>, 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"<sup>2</sup>. 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

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

<sup>2</sup> <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 Tendenze", 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 Proceedings<sup>3</sup>, and now this Volume.

The first Volume collects 14 innovative and original papers presented at the National Conference, selected and introduced by the chairs<sup>4</sup> 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.

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<sup>3</sup>The 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).

<sup>4</sup>Adolfo 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.



# 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.

# Universities as Urban Anchors: Examining the Socio-Economic Impact and Support Dynamics in Italy

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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What does it mean for a city to be a university city? In other words, what impact do universities have on the areas in which they reside? Universities undoubtedly have important direct and indirect effects on local economies. The direct economic effects are driven in large part by the student population. In Piedmont, for instance, a combined total of over 130,000 students are enrolled in the region's four universities, with 42,000 of them coming from outside the region. That's roughly the population of a mid-sized Italian town. And according to a 2020 estimate by IRES Piemonte, these 42,000 students spend an average of 800 million euros per year on food, lodging, school supplies, recreational-sports activities, and transportation, determining a substantial economic return to the region. Even more striking is the universities' indirect economic contribution. According to data from the Rosselli Foundation, universities in the Turin metropolitan area make up the region's fourth most productive sector in Piedmont in terms of indirect economic impact, ranking just behind the construction, transportation, and agricultural sectors, with a total estimated value of nearly 2 billion euros. The economic advantages of having a university located in the community have not escaped the notice of local administrations, who are eager to encourage the establishment of university programmes not just in large cities, but also in smaller towns.

Additionally, the impact of universities extends beyond the economic to the social fabric of a territory. Institutions of higher education play a crucial role in the formation of human capital and in shaping the urban environment. The sort of changes in Milan we heard about in Professor Balducci's presentation this morning can also be seen in Turin, where university expansion has quite literally reconfigured entire areas of the city. One example of this is the Luigi Einaudi Campus, which was completed in 2013 and has led to the complete revitalisation and redevelopment of the neighbourhood known as Aurora. Students at the University of Padua have gone so far as to coin the slogan: "Without us, Padua dies!" This phrase reflects just how tightly intertwined the city-

university relationship can become, even to the point of completely transforming the urban and social landscape. Nevertheless, “town/gown” relations are not always easy and are frequently marked by mixed feelings towards the student population.

In a recent EU survey [QS, 2021], international students were asked – and for the present purposes one can replace “international” with “non-local” – what they consider to be the five most important factors when choosing a city to study in. The safety of the city and its being welcoming to students were ranked in first place, and cost of living in second, with quality of teaching, recreational opportunities, and affordable housing following close behind [Figure 1]. In short, the cost of living and of accommodation are among the top considerations for students when choosing a town or city in which to study.

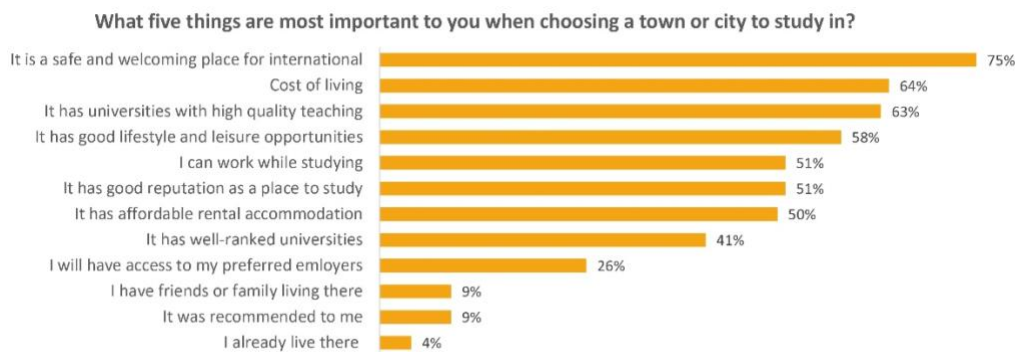


Figure 1| Data Source Provider: EU International Student Survey 2021, QS

So, in Italy, who bears the cost of maintaining university students? It is a fairly well-known fact that the Italian government provides study grants and scholarships to defray the costs of higher education. Less commonly known, however, is that only around 14% of university students in Italy actually benefit from this form of financial assistance. In the 2021/2022 academic year, that came to approximately 235,000 students out of a total of 1,700,000. In a uniquely Italian twist, not everyone who satisfies the economic and merit criteria for government-funded financial aid can expect to receive any—and here it bears emphasising the word merit, which is so often overlooked—and the reason for this is the lack of sufficient funding. Consequently, as can be seen in Figure 2, the number of students receiving government aid has never caught up with the number of students eligible for it.



Figure 2| Number of grant-holders and number of beneficiaries in Italy, 2002/03-2021/22. Source: Office II – MIUR until 2013/14; usta t.miur.it from 2014/1

Government-funded university scholarships are not only few and far between, but the transfer of funds to students is slow to arrive, meaning that they often serve mainly as reimbursement (or partial reimbursement) for expenses already incurred. Grants generally come in two instalments, with the first half typically paid out between November and the end of December, which is three to four months after courses have begun. In some cases, first-year students must satisfy the merit requirement (earning 20 credits by August 10) before receiving the entire amount in a single instalment, which could be at the end of the June at the earliest, or as late as in the autumn. One has to wonder how students manage to support themselves while waiting for their grant money to arrive if their families are unable to provide support.

Across the border, in France, government study grants are paid in monthly instalments, on the 5th of each month, beginning in September (provided the proper documents have been submitted by the end of August) or in October. Another advantage of the system of student financial support in France is that it is managed uniformly nationwide. In Italy, instead, each of the different educational authorities operates according to its own set of rules and regulations concerning application deadlines and disbursements. Consequently, there are over thirty different financial aid systems, without even counting the region of Lombardy, where each higher-education institution is responsible for handling its own students' financial aid.

The fragmented nature of the financial aid system in Italy makes it difficult for students to be properly informed about the opportunities available, and there is no dedicated office responsible for disseminating this information to high school students. A number of recent studies confirm how little students know about their right to higher education. For example, the Region of Piedmont's Regional Observatory for the University and for the Right to Higher Education analysed data from students at two universities in Piedmont during the 2016/17 academic

year. It was found that 58% of those interviewed who met the eligibility requirements for need-based financial aid had never even applied for it. In another study conducted at the University of Udine over three academic years from 2015/16 to 2017/18, approximately 45% of students reported being unaware of initiatives supporting the right to higher education, even though they were already attending university. A student at a conference in Bologna described his personal experience with ER.GO, the Regional Authority for the Right to Higher Education of Emilia-Romagna like this: "My life changed completely after a chance meeting with a friend, who told me about ER.GO," he explained. "At the time, I wasn't even sure I wanted to go to university. I had no idea what I wanted to do. But when I heard about the opportunity to apply for a scholarship and a place to live, that's what I did. It was a pivotal moment in my life." Stories like this show how information about student aid is most often obtained through informal channels.

And what about housing costs? How are they covered? All non-local students who meet the financial and merit requirements for a scholarship are entitled to a place in affordable student housing. Currently, 29,000 of Italy's approximately 97,000 non-local scholarship holders live in university residence halls, meaning that, on average, one in three of them benefits from the opportunity of being assigned student accommodation. However, it needs to be borne in mind that this national average conceals significant regional variations in the ability to meet housing demand [Figure 3].

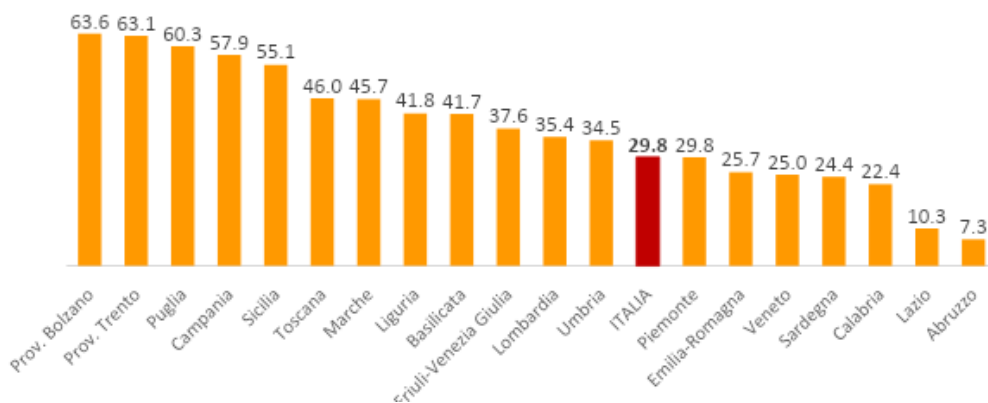


Fig. 3| Percentage of off-site fellows receiving accommodation, a.y. 2020/21. Note: The percentage is calculated by comparing the number of beds occupied by eligible non-local students to the number of eligible non-local students. In Molise and Valle d'Aosta, student accommodation is not managed by the regional authorities for the DSU.

Source: Elaboration on MUR data, [ustat.miur.it](http://ustat.miur.it)

We have seen that only 29,000 scholarship holders in Italy reside in university housing. Nonetheless, the potential supply of student housing is greater than that. If we include accommodation managed by legally recognised non-state colleges and university residence halls, there are

roughly 51,000 beds. Still, this pales in comparison to the 175,000 residential places available in France, and 195,000 in Germany. Our French and German cousins outperform us not only in terms of the number of available places - which is three to four times that in Italy - but also in terms of the percentage of students who live in university accommodation, which is 3% in Italy, 6.5% in France, and nearly 8% in Germany. Moreover, because student housing in France and Germany is maintained by local institutions for the right to study (CROUS and Studentenwerk), average rents are €250-260 per month. In Italy, there is no rent relief for housing located in university residences or operated by private organisations.

As another measure to ease the expense of accommodation for non-local students, the Italian government allows students to claim 19% of their rental expense as an income tax deduction. Since the maximum deductible is capped at €2,633 annually, the tax refund amounts to €500 at most, and is, of course, only received the following tax year, after the rent has already been paid. Yet again, one wonders how much of a difference such a modest figure can make to a student facing financial hardship who wishes to attend a non-local university. Given the present circumstances, it is hardly surprising that a wave of student protests over the high cost of housing has arisen in many Italian university cities. For one thing, soaring rents are unaffordable for those with less privileged backgrounds; for another, the availability of private living options for non-local students is rapidly diminishing, particularly in popular tourist destinations like Bologna, Florence, and Padua. This is mainly due to the large number of flats being converted into bed and breakfasts in recent years, which has significantly reduced the supply of housing available.

What potential impacts can be expected in the future as a result of the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)?

First and foremost, it is encouraging that the PNRR has acknowledged the dire shortage of university housing in Italy. To address the issue, the proposal calls for a significant investment of 960 million euros and aims to develop housing capacity by adding more than 100,000 beds by 2026, which means 60,000 additional beds over the next four years. Given that only 14,000 new beds were created during the fifteen-year period between 2005 and 2020, the PNRR target almost seems a “mission (im)possible”. The plan, which consists of two milestones, is indeed quite ambitious. The first milestone, budgeted at EUR 300 million, envisages the creation of 7,500 additional beds by December 2022, and the second, with a budget of EUR 660 million, will add 52,500 more beds by the end of 2026. In practical terms, what does reaching these milestones entail?

Regarding the first milestone, two public calls were issued - in August and December 2022 (due to the failure of the first call to meet the target) - to co-finance public or private entities, including partnerships, for the purchase or long-term lease (at least nine years) of real estate to be used

as university lodging. Currently, over 9,000 beds have been co-financed with the stated intention of prioritising non-local students. However, it is unclear how this can be guaranteed in residences managed by private operators, since they do not have access to the rankings issued by the authorities for the right to education. Who will be responsible for verifying that grant recipients receive priority access?

In terms of the second milestone, in September 2023, the University Housing Fund was established to cover all or at least part of private operators' management costs for three years and providing them with tax breaks. According to the PNRR: *"It is based on an innovative and original design that aims to encourage private subjects to build new university buildings, by having the MUR cover the costs of managing the facilities for the first three years."* It is not exactly clear why the plan has been defined as "innovative and original design" since private investors have been investing in university housing for years and continue to do so in response to rising demand and the potential for profit. In fact, the rents charged by private operators are market-driven, and only some of the wealthiest university students can afford them.

The key issue that not yet been addressed by any ministerial act as part of either the first or the second milestone is that of student accommodation fees. Will students be guaranteed discounted rents for university housing? And presuming that rents will be controlled for at least the first three years thanks to the PNRR, what will happen thereafter? Posterity will be a harsh judge. For genuine innovation would be to implement solutions that allow our current public support system to function effectively. Until that happens, students will "vote with their feet" by enrolling in universities abroad as international students to gain access to resources that Italy is, unfortunately, still unable to provide. The loss of human capital is a setback not just to the development of our cities, but to the nation as a whole.



# Tertiary Education Levels in our Country are Insufficient for the Needs of the Contemporary Economy and Society

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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The difficulties of the Italian economy have articulated causes, but they are primarily attributable to the very modest productivity dynamics. Between 1995 and 2019, labor productivity in Italy grew by 0.3% per year, compared with the value of 1.6% in the EU-28, and much lower than in France (1.3%), the UK (1.5%), Germany (1.3%), and Spain (0.6%).<sup>1</sup> Insufficient productivity growth is linked to our production system's mediocre ability to adapt to the major changes of the twenty-first century: growing trade and locational competition from emerging and Eastern European countries for productions with greater price competition and the emergence of new innovative goods and services based on new digitally driven technologies. Underlying this lack of adaptability are several factors, but certainly, the most relevant ones are the low levels of education of our entrepreneurs and workforce.

In this respect, Italy's historical lag is not being bridged. Eurostat data show that out of every 100 young people aged 30 to 34 in Italy, as many as 27 do not have a high school diploma, and only 28 have a university degree (2019). These figures are far worse than in other EU partners. Within the country, data are significantly worse for southern Italy regions. There is so vast evidence of the importance of these data for the economy, both regarding productivity and entrepreneurship. Suffice it to mention, thanks to data from Istat's "Knowledge Report",<sup>2</sup> that the educational level of entrepreneurs in Italian small businesses is 11.4 years of schooling (less than a high school diploma); the most common educational qualification is the lower middle school diploma (38% of the total). The average education level of workers is 10.8 years of schooling. However, better-educated entrepreneurs hire better-educated staff: each additional year of schooling for entrepreneurs is associated with 1.3 more years in employees' education. Moreover, better-educated entrepreneurs tend to pay their staff better. This produces important effects: each

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<sup>1</sup> Istat, *Misure di produttività anni 1995-2019*, Statistiche Report (November 4, 2020). [https://www.istat.it/it/files/2020/11/Report\\_MISURE\\_PRODUTTIVITA\\_1995\\_2019.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files/2020/11/Report_MISURE_PRODUTTIVITA_1995_2019.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Istat, *Rapporto sulla conoscenza*, Economia e società (Rome, 2020).

additional year of education in employees' average results in a productivity increase of just under 4%. Each additional year corresponds to a 30% increase in the probability of ERP (management) application adoption, a 20% increase in CRM (customer relationship) adoption, and a 6% difference in the percentage of employees using computers. Again, a 2019 AlmaLaurea Report<sup>3</sup> documents that among 2004-2018 graduates, 7% founded a business (the percentage rises to 18% for master's graduates). 6.7% in the North, 7.3% in the center, and 7.5% in the South. As a result, 236,000 enterprises (3.9% of all enterprises) were born, including 2,127 innovative start-ups (20.2% of all innovative start-ups).

Why does Italy have so few university graduates? Based on an estimate in the Anvur report, it can be argued that this is mainly due to meager entry rates into the university system: this factor explains two-thirds of the difference; one-third of the difference is due to lower rates of study completion: the problem remains, but study regularity has significantly increased in recent years. Nearly 60 percent of Italian boys and girls have never entered a university. Trends in enrollment data are unfavorable: they had been growing until 2005, partly due to the positive effect of more mature students "returning" to university. However, they then steadily declined for ten years; they returned slightly to grow from 2015 onward, but the number of students enrolled in 2018-19 is at the level of 2000. Italy is especially lacking in the enrollment of students from the weaker strata of society, from lower-status families, with a lower level of education, and from secondary technical and professional institutes. The drop in enrollment, partly because of what was just mentioned, was most noticeable for students from the weaker regions of the country. The correlation between parents' and children's educational qualifications remains strong, a dangerous sign of low social mobility.

The trend in enrollment has been negatively affected by the sharp increase in university taxation and the poor level of interventions for the right to study. University taxation in Italy has become the highest in Continental Europe (after Holland and Latvia). The approximately \$2,000 (at purchasing power parity) annual cost of university studies in Italy<sup>4</sup> should also be compared with the free university studies in the Scandinavians and several Eastern countries, with Germany's \$133 and France's \$237. The average contribution has risen from just over 1,000 Euros in 2013-14 to over 1,300 in 2017-18, a very noticeable increase.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, total exemption from the fee for students from less affluent families (based on ISEE) was subsequently introduced; so, in 2017-18, 25% of enrolled students were exempt from the fee (a percentage that grew later): this circumstance contributed to the upswing in

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<sup>3</sup> AlmaLaurea, *Laurea e imprenditorialità* (executive summary, December 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Oecd, *Education at a Glance*, OECD Indicators (Paris: OECD Publishing, September 10, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

<sup>5</sup> MIUR, "La contribuzione studentesca negli Atenei e negli istituti AFAM, anno accademico 2017-18" (Rome, July 2019).

matriculations. As for scholarships and student services, they have always been (as analytically documented in the 2016 report “Università in declino”) far below other European countries. However, in this case too, there have been changes in recent years, with a significant increase in scholarships starting in 2015. It is a very positive figure, though it only narrows a little and certainly does not close the gaps with other countries. Overall, there is resounding public underfunding of the Italian university system. As of 2018, public university funding amounted to 7.3 billion Euros in Italy: these should be compared to 31 for Germany, 25 for France, nearly 8 for Spain, and about 6 for Sweden.<sup>6</sup> Expressed on a per capita basis, they result in a per capita funding of 121 Euros in Italy, while figures are much higher elsewhere; even Poland has now come close to Italy's figure. In the decade 2008-18, public funding in Italy decreased by 14%, while it increased greatly in the other contexts, in emerging countries such as Poland and Turkey, by 27% and 61%, respectively. In Spain, it has also decreased a lot (-23%). However, it started from much higher levels.

The sharp contraction of public investment in Italian universities has resulted in a freeze on professors' turnover, with different scales over the years. This led to a threefold consequence. First, the total number of professors, according to a survey by the National University Council,<sup>7</sup> has decreased from 44,799 at the end of 2006 to 37,837 at the end of 2017. The ratio of faculty to enrolled students in Italy is worse than in other European countries. With the reduction in staffing levels, it has worsened further: according to Anvur surveys, it went from 27 students per faculty member in 2008 to 31.5 in 2017. Second, the freeze has resulted in significantly aging the current staff. Finally, this congestion left an entire generation of young scholars out of the academic path, forcing them either into underpaid, precarious positions (possible, however, only for those with sufficient family resources) or into emigration. This phenomenon has increased significantly in the last decade.<sup>8</sup> As an essential and negative side effect, recruitment decisions, and regulations have sharply declined professors' mobility between universities.<sup>9</sup> Fortunately, there have been some signs of a counter-trend in the most recent period, mainly related to new calls for fixed-term type B researchers. By the end of 2018, an increase in teaching staff to 39,200 was visible.<sup>10</sup> More recent data report further improvement.

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<sup>6</sup> EUA, *Public Funding Observatory Report 2019/2020* (February 20, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> CUN National University Council, *The University System in the Analysis of the National University Council 2017-2019* (Rome, January 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Leopoldo Nascia, Mario Pianta and A. Stilo, “The migration of researchers in Europe. A pilot study of Italy”, *Final Report for the EU Joint Research Centre* (March 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Domenico Cersosimo, Rosanna Nisticò, Emmanuele Pavolini, Francesco Prota and Gianfranco Viesti, “Circolazione del capitale umano e politiche universitarie: un’analisi del caso italiano,” *Politiche Sociali*, n. 3 (2018): 387-406.

<sup>10</sup> CUN, *The University System in the Analysis of the National University Council 2017-2019*.

The contraction of financial and human resources for the Italian university system has been highly geographically selective due to questionable provisions, analytically documented in the volume “Università in Declino.” Universities in the more “peripheral” North, and especially in the South-Central area, have been particularly disadvantaged. Updating those data<sup>11</sup> shows how, between 2008 and 2018, the Ordinary Financing Fund (FFO, Fondo di Finanziamento Ordinario) for universities decreased by 4% in nominal terms. The reduction reached 13% in Genoa, 7% in Florence, 17% for Rome La Sapienza, and 15% for Bari, to a maximum, among the top fifteen Italian universities of almost 24% in Messina. The turnover in the teaching staff between 2012 and 2019, expressed as the percentage of “staff positions” made available by retirements and those actually available, was 58% for the entire Italian university system. But it was 47% in Genoa, 50% in Florence, 47% for Rome La Sapienza, 42% for Bari, down to a low of 35% for Catania, among the top 15 Italian universities.

On the one hand, the differences in turnover are directly related to the decline in FFO, which is, as shown above, much more intense in some locations. On the other hand, they are tied to the laws linking it to revenues from student taxation. As mentioned earlier, it has increased sharply, to a greater extent, in universities in the South Central. But, given the widely varying income levels of households, the rate increase did not produce the same revenue for universities in less wealthy areas of the country. Note that, according to an Istat survey referring to 2014-15<sup>12</sup> in that year, the average household income of a student at the University of Catania (16,400 Euros) was slightly more than half that of a student at the Politecnico or Statale di Milano. This difference is consistent with the average household disposable income variability across Italian regions. Some analyses by the Bank of Italy show that, as a result of the lack of turnover, the supply of usable university courses within an hour's travel time from the municipality of residence has shrunk in the South (where it was already lower) to a much greater extent than in the rest of the country.<sup>13</sup>

The decline in enrollment has been accompanied by a significant increase in student flows from the South to universities in the North, both for bachelor's degrees and, even more for master's degrees. These flows are mainly explained by the different opportunities in the labor market, with disparities becoming more pronounced in the last decade. This is also shown by the reduced flow of southern students to the universities of Lazio and Tuscany. Despite their undisputed prestige, they offer fewer

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<sup>11</sup> Gianfranco Viesti, “Le politiche universitarie”, *SINAPPSI Connessioni tra ricerca e politiche pubbliche*, IX, no.3 (2019): 94-105.

<sup>12</sup> Istat, *Studenti e bacini universitari* (Rome, 2016). <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2016/11/Studenti-e-bacini-universitari.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Sources and data can be found in: Gianfranco Viesti, *La laurea negata. Le politiche contro l'istruzione universitaria* (Rome-Bari: Editori Laterza, 2018).

opportunities for placement in the labor market. Analyses on the areas of origin of Southern university students who enroll in the North-Central region show that the percentages of students who move correlate with the availability of a wide range of educational offerings that can also be reached through commuter attendance. The percentage of students who enrolled in the North-Central region in 2014-15 ranged from values even higher than 50 percent for the provinces of Trapani and Ragusa to completely physiological values of just over 10% for the provinces of Naples, Cagliari, Catania, Palermo, and Bari.

Thus, the enrollment trends mentioned above, also related to tuition fee increases, together with their geographic dynamics, have produced a highly diversified picture. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18, enrollments declined by 7% in the national average; however, they dropped (again, among the fifteen major Italian universities) by 14% in Genoa, 8% in Florence, 19% in Rome La Sapienza, 25% in Bari, to a high of 29% in Messina.

The above can be summed up by concluding that a selective and cumulative compression of the Italian university system has been underway since 2008. It is a compression as the size of the system, while largely smaller than in European countries comparable to Italy, has shrunk significantly. It is selective because, due to a patchwork of mainly regulatory provisions, this reduction has been considerably more significant for universities in the South-Central part of the country and particularly for those in the Islands. In recent years, there has been strong political-cultural pressure for investment in the Italian university system to be concentrated only in some “elected” locations. All of them are in the strongest areas of the country. Instead, the rest of the system was abandoned to an ancillary role (e.g., limited to bachelor's degree courses only or without research activities). It is cumulative because these were not one-off cuts; instead, they were due to mechanisms (particularly the new criteria for allocating FFO in both its primary and so-called “premium” components and the criteria for allocating “staff points”). Thus, sharply shrinking universities can hardly counteract their “decline,” as reductions in public funding, faculty, courses, and students feed off each other. The idea that universities should downsize the number of current students seems unsupportable. The number of students reached, particularly in some locations, can only be considered pathological and not physiological; indeed, this is undesirable. Moreover, it is incompatible with a revival of the Italian economy itself. A recent study<sup>14</sup> documents how the ratio of college teachers to “potential” enrollees, namely high school graduates, is much lower and worsened to a greater extent in the South.

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<sup>14</sup> Lucia Rizzica, “The Italian Public Sector Workforce. Recent Evolution in the Light of the Rules on Turnover,” *Questioni di Economia e Finanza* (occasional paper), no.560 (Banca d'Italia, June 2020).

Fortunately, it should be acknowledged that some positive provisions have been introduced in recent years, some of which have been recalled. Enrollment figures in 2020-21, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, are encouraging and also related to the extension of the university tax exemption. However, they do not yet seem able to reverse the course that has been summarily described here, but only to slow it down, nor even to heal the effects of a long decade of “anti-university policies.”<sup>15</sup>

A truly great plan for the revitalization of the Italian university can only consist, also and above all, of interventions in a profoundly different direction from the last twelve years. They must aim at its structural strengthening through rules and current funding, enabling it to function in conditions of normal ordinary operation. It should involve initiatives to increase high school-to-college transition rates significantly, steadily, and strongly increasing enrollment and overall enrollment size. Eliminating taxation for some students is only a first step, albeit in the right direction; it should be accompanied by intense policies to promote the right to study and educational mechanisms to remedy the lack of knowledge of matriculates and reduce first-year dropouts. The sensitive recruitment of new researchers is undoubtedly going in the right direction; however, it needs to be made permanent, giving reasonable recruitment opportunities to younger people. Moreover, it certainly must be rebalanced from a territorial point of view.

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# University and Right-to-Study Facilities as a Tool for Urban Regeneration

CHAIR SESSION 1

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Law No. 338 of November 14, 2000, is the norm that has changed the paradigm of student housing more than any other regulatory reference for any other type of building in the last two decades.

The objectives that the Law, commissioned by former Minister Ortensio Zecchino, are quantitative and qualitative.

The first objective of a quantitative nature is to increase the number of housing places, to reduce the difference between demand and supply,<sup>1</sup> as well as the gap with the main European countries; the second objective of a qualitative nature, is to recover disused or underutilized architectural heritage so as to constitute a tool for building and urban regeneration.<sup>2</sup>

To these objectives is added the possibility of intervening for building energy efficiency, which, combined with the possibility of conferring the value of the property to cover the costs borne by the proposing party, favors interventions on the existing and zeroes the financing borne by the beneficiaries.<sup>3</sup>

Through multiscale actions and with a strongly operational character, the Law has also pursued other objectives, such as the integration of services, the adaptation of existing residences to the latest demanding and regulatory frameworks, the openness to public-private partnerships, and the attitude toward environmentally sustainable solutions. In relation to this last issue, with the fifth call, the principle of architectural heritage recovery has been further reinforced: Article 15 of Legislative Decree 152/2021 adds paragraph 4-bis to Article 1 of the Law, specifying that according to the European Green Deal and the NRP, "high environmental standards must be pursued in the implementation and management of interventions," while Legislative Decree 1257/2021, in Article 4 (1), specifies that new green-field construction is not

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<sup>1</sup> A phenomenon related to the low availability of university residences is that 68 percent of Italian students live with their parents, in spite of a European average of 34 percent.

<sup>2</sup> The objective was found to be so shared that it accounted for as much as 60% of the total interventions, committing the prevailing share of available resources.

<sup>3</sup> Adolfo F. L. Baratta and Claudio Piferi, "Le residenze universitarie come strumento di rigenerazione urbana. L'esperienza del Programma 338/00," *Abitare il futuro. Giornate internazionali di studio*. Napoli: Clean Edizioni (2015): 485-493.

permissible, unless it is included in existing campuses or in areas adjoining university settlements.

In the five calls for applications of the Law, equal to the substantial economic resources allocated by the state and supplemented by private stakeholders and public administrations, an important social and cultural impact has emerged.

The latter is evident from the contributions received in the first session of the conference "Universities for Cities and Territories. Proposals for the integration of university and urban policies." The Session initiated a discussion aimed at expanding knowledge on two interconnected topics, namely, university facilities and services and urban regeneration.

The session, which was attended by researchers and professors from all over Italy, highlighted how university residence has now gone beyond the domestic and private dimension to approach a new urban model based on co-neighborhood i.e. weaving a complex of relationships able to activate the creation of a sharing system that generates transformations. Virtually all the papers emphasized how the rehabilitation and renovation of the existing heritage, introducing a use in which the idea of urban regeneration is inherent, attributes to the city and the territory on the one hand the new vital and economic lifeblood that off-site students bring with them and on the other hand the spaces and services made available by residence to citizens. In the more than 20 years that the Act has been in operation, facilities have been built with libraries, fitness centers with fields and swimming pools, recording rooms, cinemas, restaurants on scenic terraces, and shopping centers-all of which expand the offerings for students and help integrate the student residence into the city.

The papers confirmed how the student's quality of life depends mainly on the type and nature of the shared places i.e., the complementary activities and support services that are considered not only within the residential facility but also the relationship with the city.

Finally, all contributions show how important Law 338/2000 still is in "contributing to the formulation of a thought about cities and territories based on sustainability, oriented to people's lives and declined on new lifestyles".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Nicola Martinelli e Mariavaleria Mininni, "Introduzione. L'Urbanistica italiana di fronte all'Agenda 2030. Portare territori e comunità sulla strada della sostenibilità e della resilienza." *Proceedings of the XXII SIU Conference, Matera-Bari June 6-8 2019*. Roma Milano: Planum Publisher (2020): 7.

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# Living in the University City. Giancarlo De Carlo and the University Colleges of Urbino

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## 1. Living as a Student. The Historic City and the City of Students.

The relationship between the city and the university, between residents and new students, has different nuances dictated by the time of residence, the services present, the connections, the reciprocal position, the organization of the city.

«The city of students and the city of residents are two realities that are sometimes parallel, sometimes intertwined, producing wealth and social capital, but also discomfort and tension».<sup>2</sup>

There are also different types of university students: the residents, the "commuters", who go there for lessons or exams and then return to their family context and the off-site students. For off-site students, the university represents a significant transition, with the consequent transfer and change of habits in a new context. Each type of student corresponds to a different way and time of experiencing the university space. The students experience the city through a provisional and temporary bond: cit(y)zens, passing citizens, live together with citizens, historical citizens, born and raised in that place.

The contribution focuses on the relationship between the city of residents and the city of university students, between the architecture of university residences and the host context through a paradigmatic example.

Urbino is a city which in terms of history, culture and size constitutes a paradigmatic example.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

<sup>2</sup> L. Ceccarini and I. Diamanti, "Urbino e l'Università: le due città," in *Studiare a Urbino. Gli studenti, la città, l'Università*, ed. G. Maggioni and I. Diamanti (Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2013), 51.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Urbino city-campus lived the coexistence of equal numbers of resident citizens and students.<sup>3</sup> Two parallel ways of living that seem to touch each other without ever really touching, where time, space and the feeling of belonging are the true holders of the differences, delimiting the places of life, the rhythms of daily life, the lifestyle, the activities, expression of social reality and values. In these dualities, Giancarlo De Carlo's project for the Colleges of Urbino serves as a paradigmatic example.

The contribution starts from a rereading of De Carlo's thought regarding the relationship between the city and the territory, the basis of his architectural production. The relationship with the context becomes the key to understanding his projects, first with the Urbino town plan, then the construction of the university colleges. The latter are therefore analysed according to their relationship with the geographical, urban but also social context, which can be observed in the articulation of the architectural plans, sections, routes and individual rooms. Finally, a reading from the large to the small scale covers the design of the colleges in Urbino.

## 2. De Carlo, the City and the Territory.

Throughout his career, De Carlo has carried out constant research on the relationship between city and territory in design, through his teaching, publishing and professional activity. City and territory, historic city and new city, according to De Carlo, are two separable spaces but parts of a single system, where the territory is an expression of human experience. He presented a lesson in urban planning like a film at the 1954 Triennale, on the occasion of the Urban Planning Exhibition; he presented his research about the forms of collective participation to urban transformations: «there is no intelligent and sensitive urban planner who (...) does not recognize the imprecision, inefficiency or arbitrariness of his action and not feel the discomfort of continuing to operate according to abstract principles (...) on a reality that he is unable to approach and know».<sup>4</sup> With this reflection, De Carlo manages to identify those recurring questions in his profession: the architect must design with the senses and control with the technique<sup>5</sup> since the physical design of the space arises from local conditions and from the relationship with history. In fact, it is in the historic city that De Carlo traces his compositional principles; aware that «clearing the city of the idea of its own historicity, uprooting it from its relations with the geography of the landscape (...) means making it pure past and a tourist enterprise».<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> F. Vetrano, "Urbino: una città "in forma di università" ", in *Città universitaria. Dalle buone pratiche all'identità*, ed. P. Nappi (Ferrara: Faust Edizioni, 2015), 158.

<sup>4</sup> Giancarlo De Carlo, "Intenzioni e risultati della mostra di urbanistica," *Casabella* 203 (1954): 24.

<sup>5</sup> Federico Bilò, *A partire da Giancarlo De Carlo* (Palermo: Gangemi Editore, 2007), 70.

<sup>6</sup> Vittorio Gregotti, *Architettura e postmetropoli* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), 35.

According to De Carlo, the city is without models and evolves through open, widespread, different systems; a city that mixes languages, uses and practices, which requires respect for this multiplicity; the zoning plan, in fact, corresponds to two closely related preconceptions: the existence of an incurable antithesis between city and countryside and the application of the urban plan to a determination in time and space. De Carlo proposes a multifaceted approach to the development of the city and in contrast with the theory of the compact city, he does not rely on a formulary, but on the search for a methodological rigor capable of restoring credibility to the design approach.<sup>7</sup>

The city that has seen the experimentation and application of De Carlo's research is Urbino, to the point of declaring himself "jealous" of the city. Its link with the city has had various vicissitudes, from the call by the rector Carlo Bo with his idea of the city-campus to the master plan, the university colleges, the faculties in the centre, etc.

### 3. Urbino, an Idea of a Plan an Idea of the City.

De Carlo was called by the rector Carlo Bo in 1948 and an intermittent planning followed for over fifty years. «I believe that my story with Urbino should be viewed from a broad point of view and recorded in a nuanced listening. I mean that in my works in Urbino I have grafted the experiences I had in the rest of the world and on the other hand there is always, in the fabric of my architecture, a warp or weft thread that leads back to Urbino».<sup>8</sup> With the Urbino Regulatory Plan of 1964, De Carlo reorganised the territorial road system, connecting the city also to more distant urban realities; he proceeded to rationalise the accesses to the city, but the lack of homogeneity of the different urban nuclei prevented the formation of efficient widespread facilities, so that the qualitative increase of the city passed through the regenerative action of the decentralised or degraded fabrics. «De Carlo in Urbino had an entire historic city at his disposal as material. How does this reuse of the city happen? Its pieces are disassembled, others are added, others are changed; the relationships between the various parts change, the relationship with the territory changes. This project of a new city uses present and latent energy (...), the university becomes an open system linked through services to the life of the city» (De Carlo, 1983, 98). He proposed an overall rethinking of the city, based on the centrality of cultural functions and institutions. In the 1950s, the Renaissance city was transformed into a university city, providing for the recovery of the consolidated center and the transfer of university activities inside pre-existing buildings.

<sup>7</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Franco Bunčuga and Giancarlo De Carlo, *Conversazioni con Giancarlo De Carlo: architettura e libertà* (Milano: Elèuthera, 2000), 113.

An essential aspect of De Carlo's cultural activity in the years preceding the design of the “Collegio del Colle” concerns his international experiences, which led him to theorize a new model of expansion such that «Urbino today is three cities: the historic centre, the suburbs and university colleges. This is because (...) the weight of the universities, (...) has become strong, therefore, has generated phenomena of expulsion from the historic center (...), for which the objective is to control peripheral development, using "the surplus of built volume" in the historic center and set a limit to outsourcing with possible external settlements (...).»<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. The University Colleges of Urbino.

«My effort was to build an unquestionably contemporary university settlement but permeated by the echoes of historic Urbino: to the point that the citizens could consider it another part of the city they already knew (...). In other words, the intention was to establish a permanent exchange between the historical city and the city of the Colleges».<sup>10</sup>

De Carlo rejected both the model of the campus, self-sufficient and decentralized, and that of the university dispersed in fragments, but nevertheless thought of the university as an articulated and multipolar system, in which the settlement principle seeks a balance between private, public and semi-public areas. Reflection on the civil and social role of education was at the fore in the project of the Colleges of Urbino, favored by an unprecedented cooperation between the Superintendency, the Municipality and the University.

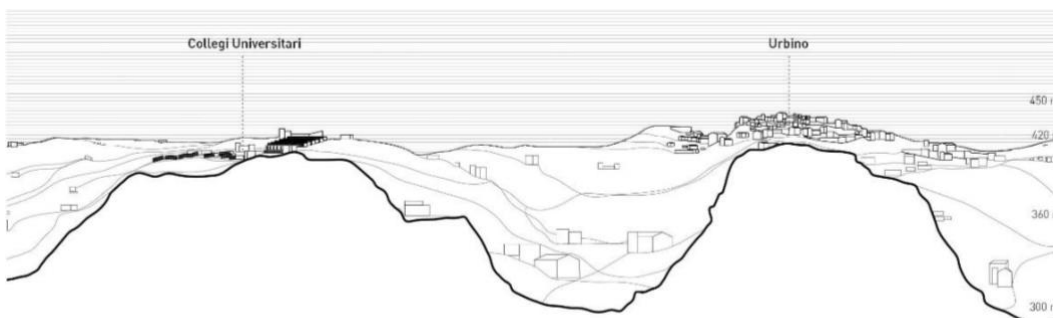


Figure 1| The relationship between the city of Urbino and the Colleges, territorial section.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

In the colleges of Urbino, De Carlo sought that «urban measure appropriate to what the city of Urbino was and is now, and to what it could be in the future»,<sup>11</sup> with the aim of designing a complex «opposite and at the same time analogous to the stronghold of the medieval city and which

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 141-143.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

allows us to rethink the city as an entity on a territorial scale». <sup>12</sup> The architect recounts how, using the principle of time simulation, he considered the college the first nucleus of a city which, as it progressed, took on similar but different configurations, because the characteristics of the place and the human experience changed; and in order not to make the simulation including all the variables artificial: of nature, of the landscapes, of the inhabitants; dislocated the student accommodation outside the city walls, in the expansion area near an ancient convent, the University College is no longer expressed in a finished and immutable design, but «it is rather an open, dynamic, changeable system», <sup>13</sup> proving to be part of the city, it reproduces the urban elements of the historic city [Figure 1]: the variable texture of the paths, which offer a plurality of uses, the scale ratios, the uniformity of the materials and technologies. The first nucleus, made up of the “Collegio del Colle” (1962-66), established a peculiar dialogue with the morphology of Urbino [Figure 2], generating «an organism in the form of a city», <sup>14</sup> while the second nucleus, made up of the New Colleges (1965-75), configured the entire complex as a «piece of city». <sup>15</sup>



Figure 2| The colleges and the city of Urbino.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

<sup>12</sup> F. Zuddas, “Pretese di equivalenza, De Carlo, Woods e il mat-building,” *FAMagazine* 34 (2015): 45-65.

<sup>13</sup> Giancarlo De Carlo, “È tempo di girare il cannocchiale,” *Spazio e società* 54 (1991): 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> P. Nicolini, “De Carlo/Nicolini, Conversazione su Urbino,” *Lotus* 18 (1978): 4-41.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 18.



### 5. The Differences between Colleges: Accommodation and Collective Spaces.

Considering the peculiarity of De Carlo's architecture, the methodological choice of this essay fell on re-reading the work of the colleges for the relationship with the historic city and the collective spaces. Brief descriptions of the complexes, their peculiarities and differences in the places intended for interactions, collective and residential spaces and the multiple connections are presented below.

The buildings are presented in chronological order according to the year of construction. In this way, it is possible to assess how thinking evolves over time and is reflected in the built architecture. The following image compares the different college plans, showing the routes, private and communal spaces.

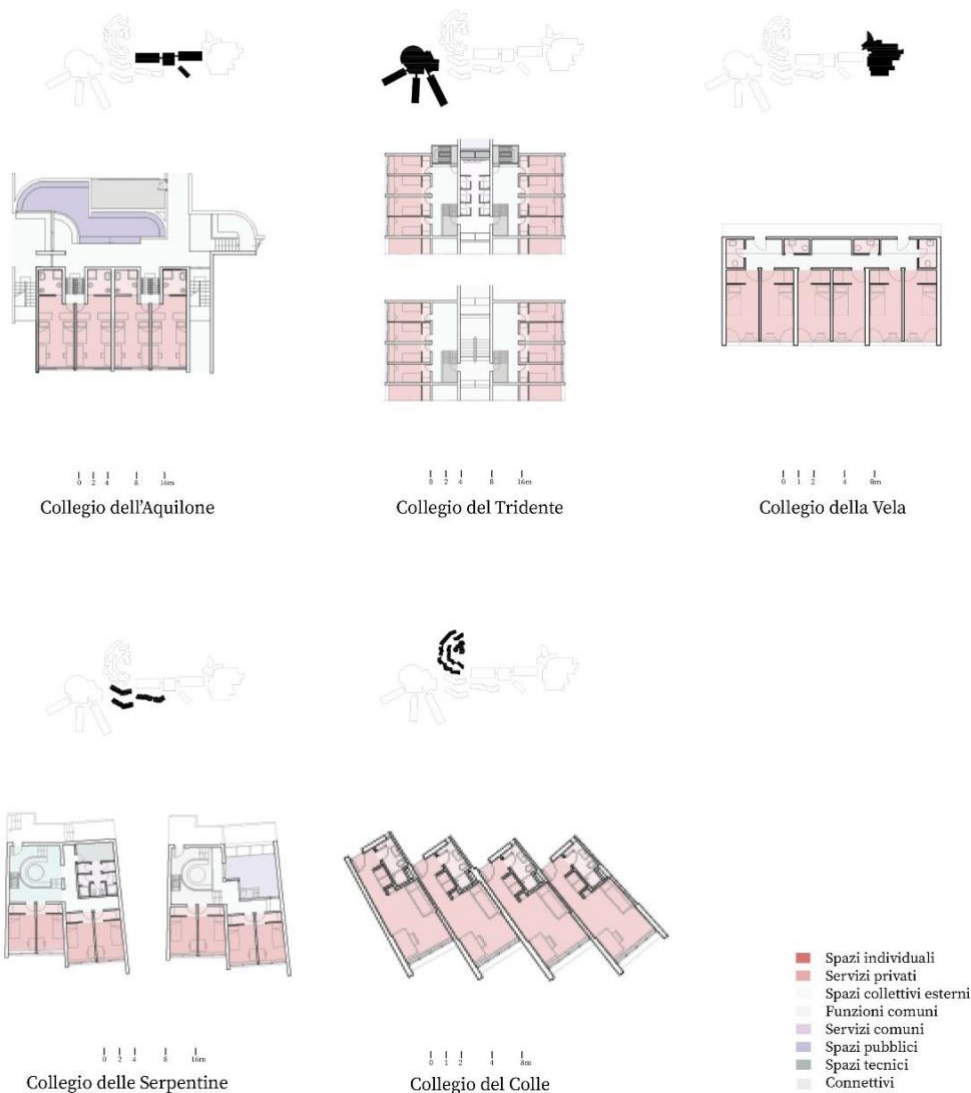


Figure 3| Typological plans of the colleges.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

“Collegio del Tridente” presents the building dedicated to common services on four levels, with classrooms, canteen, kitchens, parking and some rooms that can be used freely. The first two levels, partially underground, form a continuous plate on which the public square is set up which, built with exposed reinforced concrete pillars, follows a radial grid. The residences branch off from this building in three branches: 352 single rooms organized into blocks include 16 rooms arranged on two levels and share services and two common areas; in this way the students are «responsible for their common spaces all together; and for this they must make agreements, communicate, respect each other».<sup>16</sup> The juxtaposition of the blocks allows for the differences in height to be absorbed, while access to the terraces on the roof is via metal stairs.

A strong emphasis on the collective space both outside and inside, dedicated to the different functions, respecting the territory, helping to experience it, reading it in the ups and downs, crossing it and observing it from the different paths made of ups and downs.

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<sup>16</sup> Franco Bunčuga and Giancarlo De Carlo, *Conversazioni con Giancarlo De Carlo: architettura e libertà* (Milano: Elèuthera, 2000), 135-136.

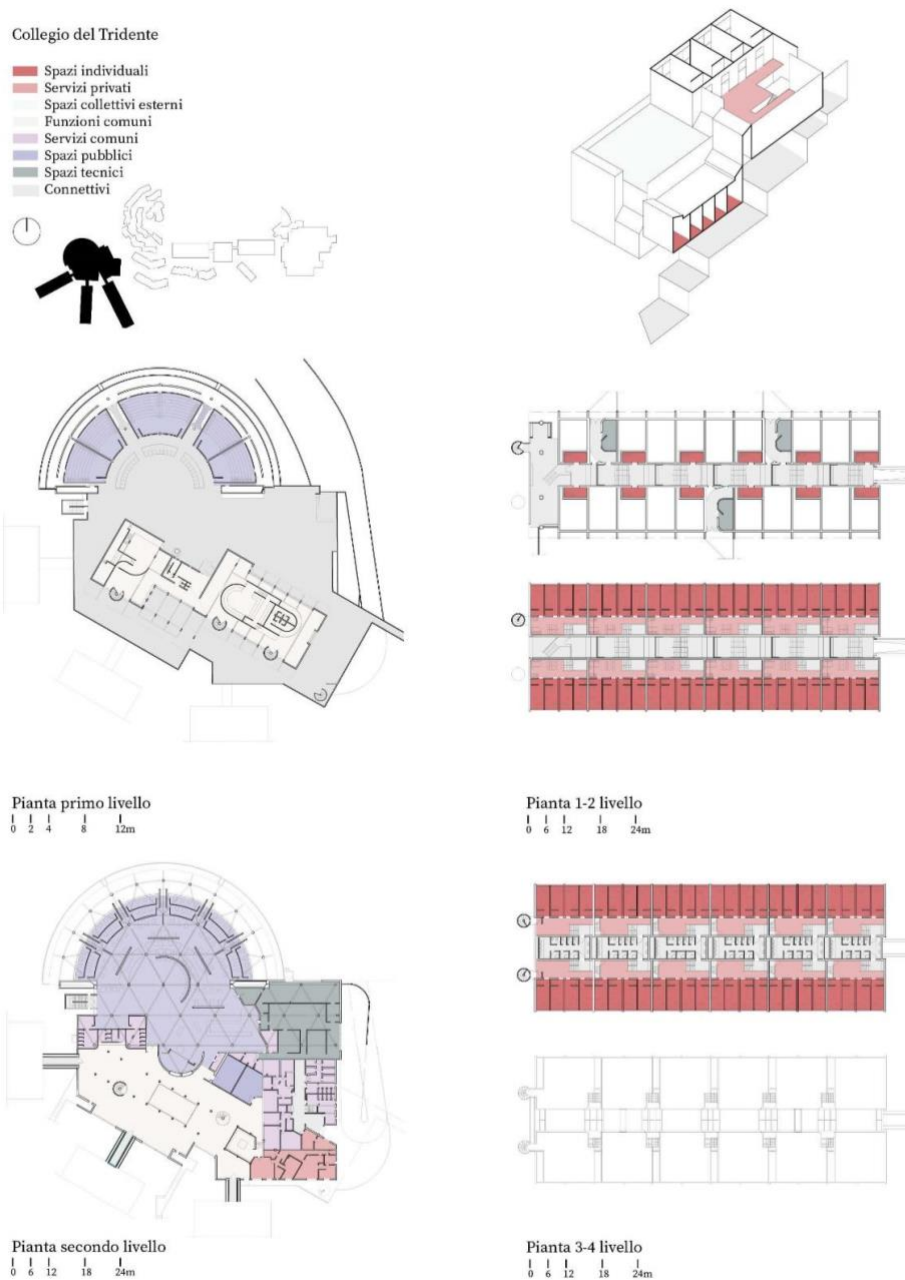


Figure 4| Plants of the college “Collegio Tridente”.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

“Collegio del Colle” was built between 1962 and 1965, it is the first college built by De Carlo in Urbino and includes 150 single rooms, arranged around the building that houses the common functions: spread over four levels above ground, one partially underground, it has living rooms, reception, manager's apartment, conference room, canteen - restaurant with kitchen, offices and service areas. The square leads to the upper levels, where the concierge and conference room are located; from here one descends to the living rooms and spaces located on the lower levels, from which the external pedestrian paths branch off which give access to the residences. The residences are organized in 10 blocks, each of which

contains from 12 to 20 single rooms with private bathrooms and are arranged on two levels, connected by a system of covered paths [Figure 3]. The communal functions are barycentred with respect to the residences, open to the public and residents, testifying to a concern for privacy, but also an openness to the city.

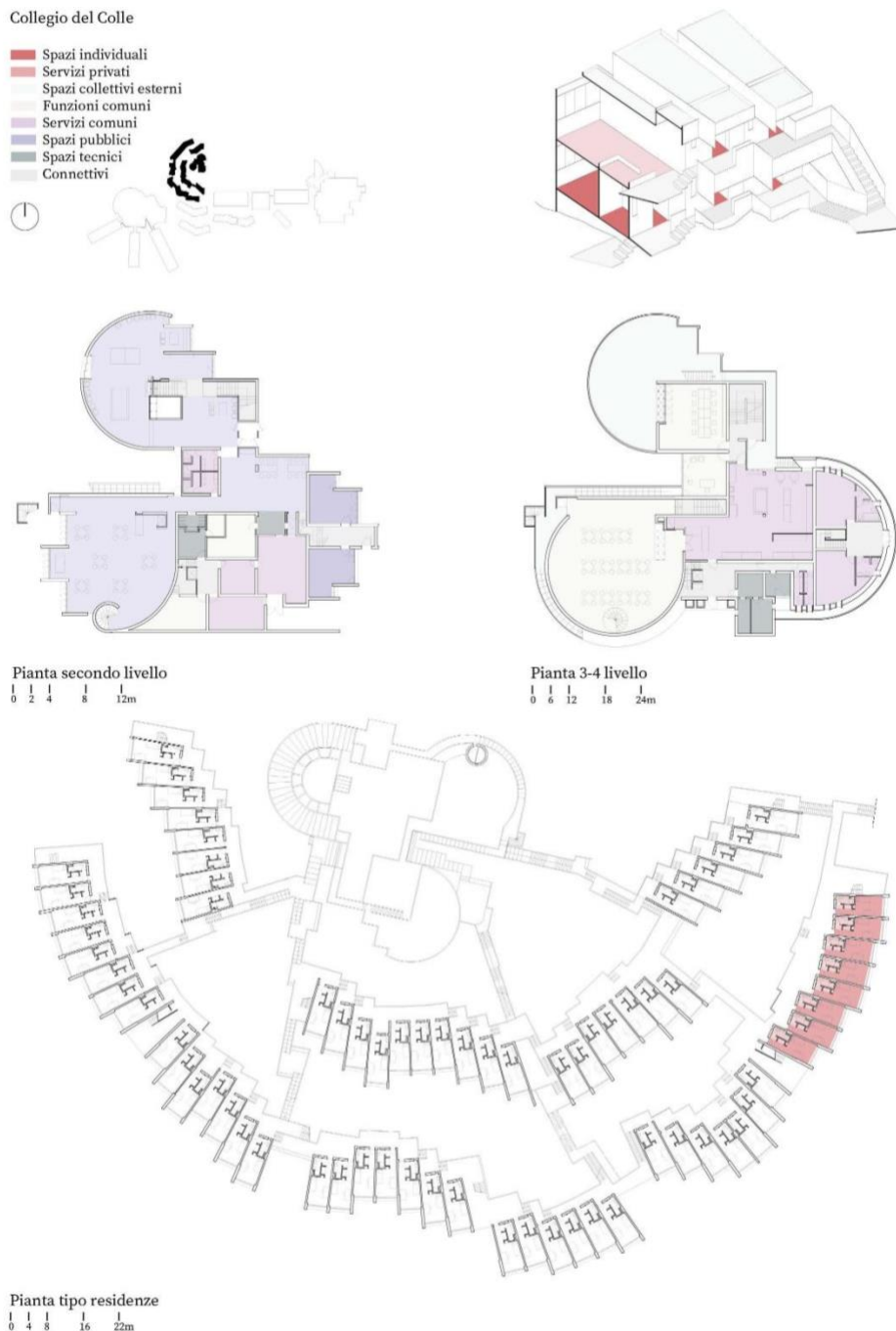


Figure 5 | Plants of “Collegio del Colle”.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

“Collegio delle Serpentine” comprises 152 single rooms organized in 3 blocks, each of which includes up to 7 cells/apartments containing 8

rooms on two levels. On the lower level of each apartment there is a double-height living space, the kitchen and shared services, while the bedrooms are located on the upper floors. While containing the same elements, the blocks and apartments are all different from each other. In each of the apartments, the rooms are in fact organized in a different way: these small adaptations make it possible to move the composition and, at the same time, to accompany the natural slope of the site. Personal care is placed at the centre, in the choice of customisation and in the division of interior spaces (living room/bedroom). an approach that therefore occurs at all project scales.

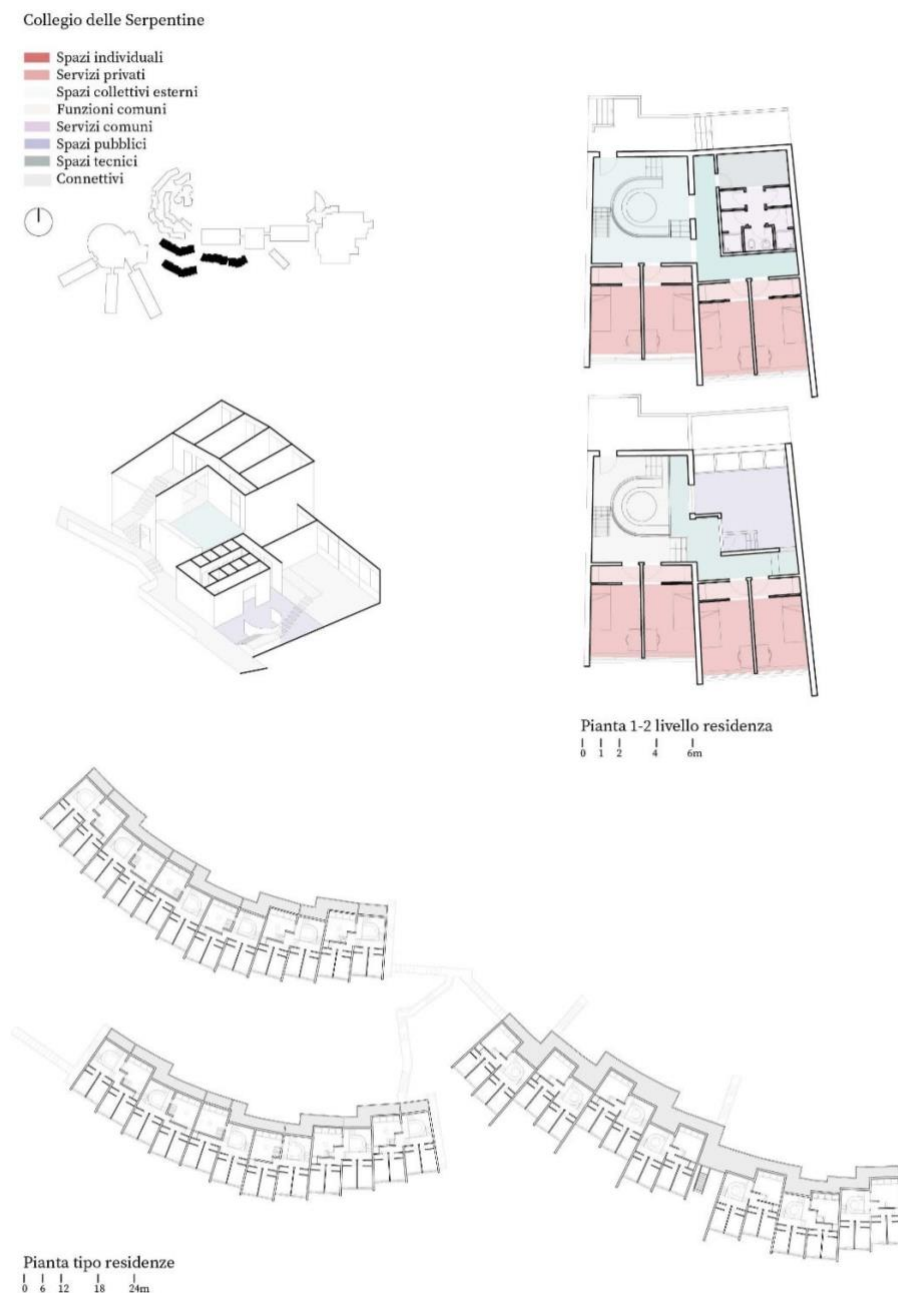


Figure 6 | Plants of “Collegio Serpentine”.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

“Collegio della Vela” is set on the fundamental axis that connects it to “Collegio dell'Aquilone” and the common areas are not located in a separate building, but are arranged, together with the residential blocks, in 8 sloping rows which include a variable number of rooms. 156 single rooms and 33 double rooms share a common area which includes toilets, showers and a small cooking area and are organized in blocks connected to each other by an internal path onto which small living spaces open; while on the fourth floor there is a larger space conceived as a real internal garden crossed by light metal walkways which constitute the element of continuity of the path on the roof. Here again, the relationship with common spaces is fundamental, with a relationship with personal and public green spaces; interstitial spaces become important in neighbourhood life.

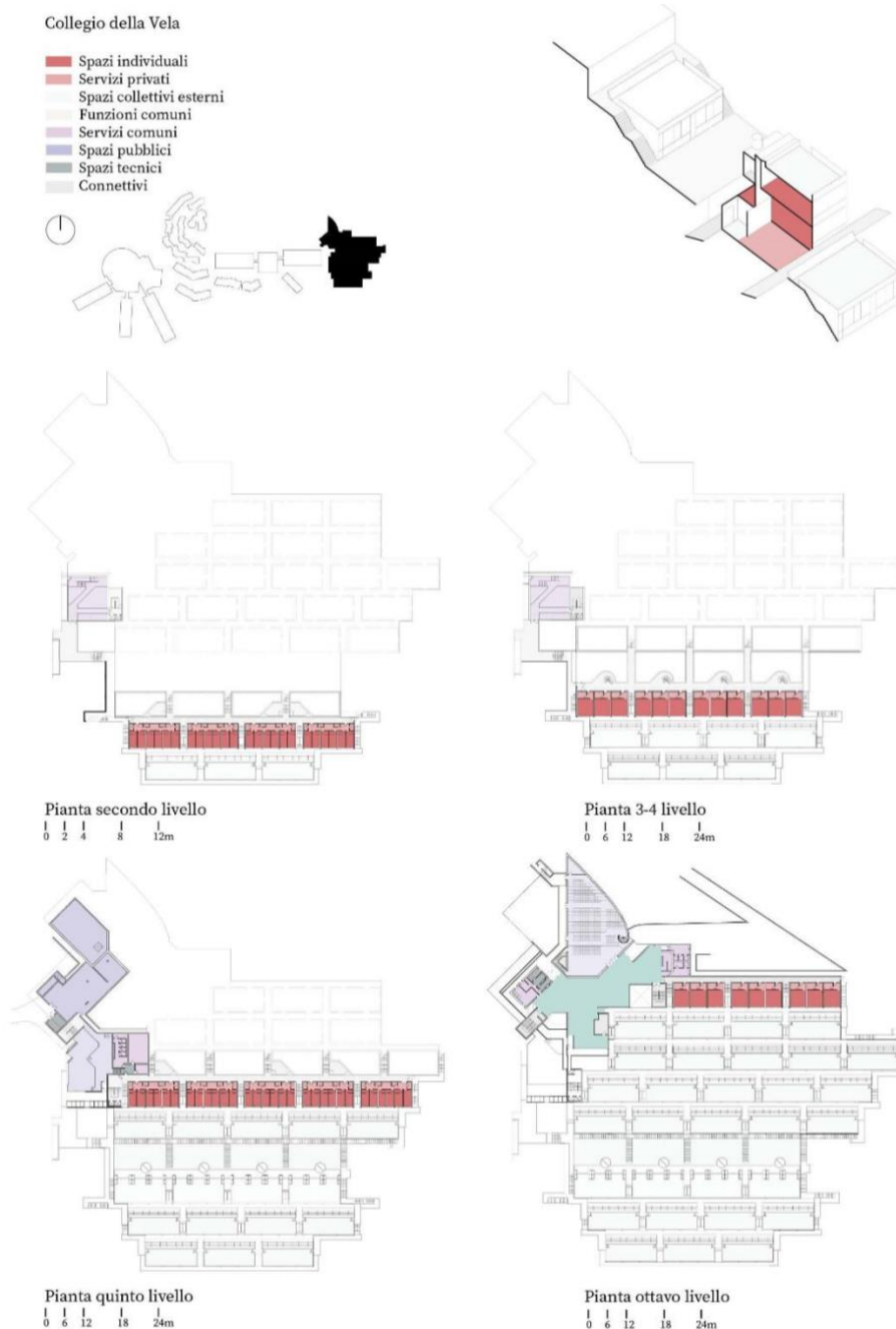


Figure 7| Plants of “Collegio della Vela”.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

“Collegio dell'Aquilone” is the first of the New Colleges to be built, it has 128 double rooms and accommodates 256 students. The rooms are organized in blocks of 4 units, aligned to form 4 arms. Each arm contains 8 blocks and is crossed by an internal and external irregular path. The stairwells between the blocks allow access to the roofs of the rooms, which form practicable terraces. At the center of the complex is the building that contains the common services, with a square planimetric layout on five levels above ground and a full-height central space, around which the spaces open to citizens are organized on the upper floors, while

on the levels lower than those dedicated to students. It encompasses all the elements tried and tested in the previously constructed buildings. the relationship with the public, with the land and with private spaces is evident: a city within a city, with a landscape context that is always the protagonist and an interior shaped to it.

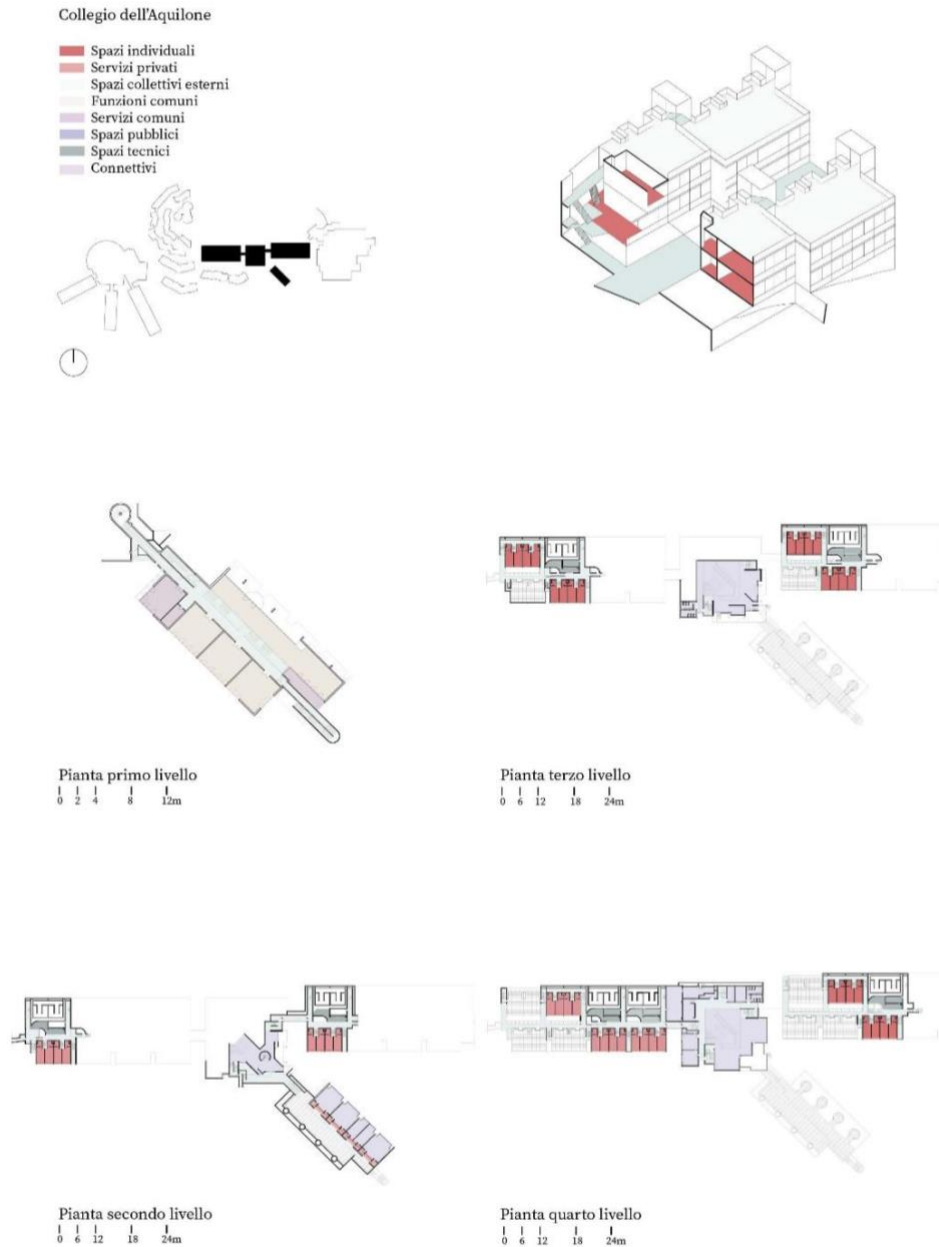


Figure 8| Plants of “Collegio dell’Aquilone”.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.



## 6. The Social Meaning.

«There were few people, but those who were there greeted me, stopped to talk, and if they knew me - janitors, cooks, guardians - celebrated my return. I felt in a city that I knew well, I felt...at home?». <sup>17</sup>

The Colleges of Urbino retain within them a profound social dimension, rooted in the constant dialectical relationship between project and users. In developing the entire project, the architect takes into consideration three variables: the characteristics of the area, the presence of the city and the formal connections with it, the demands of social groups. In fact, De Carlo's work does not simply represent a space set aside for a residential function but qualifies as a place for social interaction. The social purposes of the architect's project are also demonstrated by the significant cultural value that "nomadic" users and "sedentary" inhabitants recognize both for the architectural quality of the spaces and for the community principles that they reflect. In fact, the social value of the complex is also recognized with regard to the aggregation and socializing function for the student community: the availability of meeting spaces and common areas have always stimulated the development of cultural initiatives and favored exchanges and interactions. These elements of both a social and spatial nature influence in providing the inhabitants of the colleges with a certain sense of belonging and an identity value. The experience in the boarding school therefore assumes the value of a transition between dependence and housing independence towards a participatory dimension, by virtue of which the boarding school rises to a more intimate dimension, becomes the home, understood as a family place.

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 140.

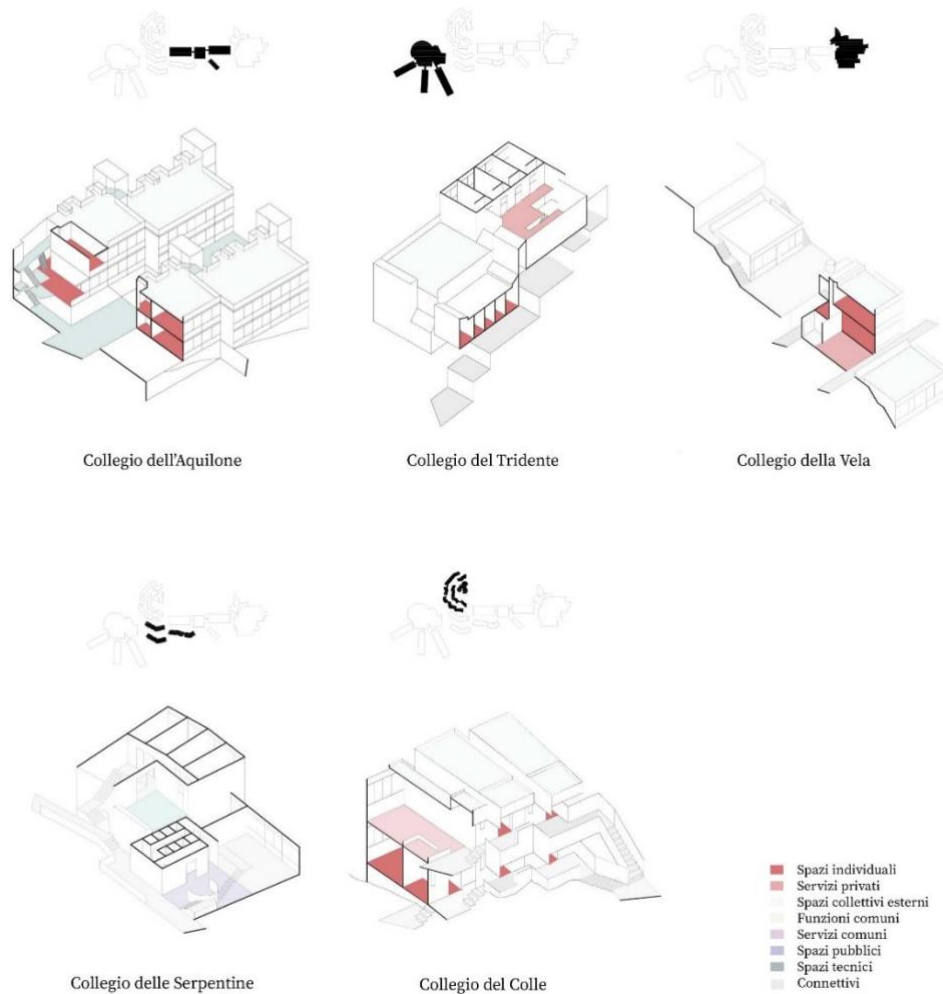


Figure 9| The colleges of Urbino.  
Credits: Cinzia Didonna, Lorenzo Renzullo.

## 7. Articulation of Meanings: Paths, Individual and Collective Spaces.

«They tell me that you can get lost in the colleges and I think that getting lost is the best way to understand the place».<sup>18</sup> In the College buildings, De Carlo worked on the proximity, continuity and maximum possible variety of spaces, moving from one space to another, from public to private, from individual to relational, moving in an articulated system of places public connections through walkways and paths, corridors in the form of roads. Addressing the theme of the university as an engine of urban development, De Carlo has shaped a university settlement; therefore, the housing cell becomes a space-generating element for the student. In fact, the new university residences and their typological proposals assume the topography of the ground, both in the relationship of each of them with the place and in the intimate relationships between the residential ensembles themselves, divided into clearly recognizable

<sup>18</sup> M.P. Borganaro, A. Troisi, N. Bazzoli, D. Del Curto and A. Sansonetti, *I collegi di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino, piano di conservazione e gestione* (Milano: Mimesis Edizione, 2019), 124.

groups. The college is therefore a building that «gives more to the landscape than it receives from it, internalizing and differentiating it.<sup>19</sup> It is a huge threshold that has the character of a city, woven into a whole, a geological formation.<sup>20</sup> The colleges of Urbino represent an exemplary case in which the design matrix is a dynamic structure, or rather an evolutionary, organizational and generative fabric at the same time. Recognizable geometries are used in an unconventional way, capable of impressing lasting change and strong images, but the basic criterion for the articulation of space has always been to use a measure perceptible by man.<sup>21</sup>

Each college can in fact be considered autonomous and complete despite being made up of a distribution system that leads towards public centralities: «(...) one nucleus contains large halls for conferences and meetings, another a general library, another a cinema, the second a place of open-air projections and some spaces for shops, the third also a restaurant (...). All contain rooms for meetings, seminars, reading, music, games; but in each of the “nuclei” the places have a different character (...)».<sup>22</sup>

## 8. Conclusions.

The experience of the colleges of Urbino, which will accompany him throughout his career, highlights De Carlo's research and his evolution by specifying it. The colleges, all autonomous and different, have a common methodological-design matrix: the careful investigation of the historical and environmental context, with which the project is measured, reads the signs of time and reinterprets the way of living, restoring an architecture always "contemporary", specifically for the city of Urbino for residents and students.

In constant relationship with the city of Urbino, the landscape context and history, the collegium project captures within it the fundamental elements of the city, re-proposing them at all scales of the project, from the urban scale to that of the building, right down to the attention to detail. Thinking architecture built for relationships, with the public, with one's neighbours, with oneself, aware of being built for students, young off-site residents who want to build a future as men, professionals, citizens.

The project of the colleges of Urbino by De Carlo can still be paradigmatic today since it questions the social and relational aspect of the university residence, invites us to "learn from" the host city and from the life of the students, so that the project is the result of a constant action of dialogue

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<sup>19</sup> A. Van Eyck, "University College in Urbino," *Zodiac* 16 (1966): 16.

<sup>20</sup> P. Smithson, "PS. su G.D.C. ovvero... pensieri provocati dalle immagini di un libro," *Casabella* 550 (1988), 34.

<sup>21</sup> S. Woods, *Candilis Josic Woods, Una década de arquitectura y urbanismo* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1968), 157.

<sup>22</sup> P. Nicolini, "De Carlo/Nicolini, Conversazione su Urbino," *Lotus* 18 (1978): 4-41.

and interaction, with the territory, with tradition, with people: an original approach that far anticipated the thought of living as a contemporary student, increasingly dynamic, made up of proximity and sharing.

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# From Evaluation to Monitoring: Multi-criteria Indicators and Assessments in Urban Regeneration Triggered by University Residences

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## 1. Urban Regeneration and University Housing.

Academic training paths, and the related learning and educational processes, have been profoundly influenced in recent years by the increasingly key role that university housing takes on in student life.

Because these facilities, virtuous processes are triggered involving new forms of socialization, a greater propensity for sharing, increased youth empowerment,<sup>2</sup> an improved sense of responsibility, good attitude to dialogue<sup>3</sup> and, eventually, students develop a greater disposition to diversity.<sup>4</sup> The pattern of life triggered, characterized by sharing and interactions allows students' social capital to be promoted and enhanced.<sup>5</sup> The impact of the only presence of universities in urban areas consists precisely in the ability to trigger stable relationships and synergies between territorial actors,<sup>6</sup> the improvement of local economies,<sup>7</sup> and, in addition, the ability to promote knowledge networks and economic

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<sup>2</sup> Maria Stella Agnoli, *Spazi, identità, relazioni. Indagine sulla convivenza multiculturale nelle residenze universitarie* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Nazirah Zainul Abidin and Nurul Najib, "Student Residential Satisfaction in Research Universities," *Journal of Facilities Management* 9, no. 3 (2011): 200-212.

<sup>4</sup> Gary R Pike, "The Differential Effects of on-and Off-campus Living Arrangements on Students' Openness to Diversity," *Naspa Journal* 39, no. 4 (2002): 283-299.

<sup>5</sup> Jules Pretty and Hugh Ward, "Social Capital and the Environment," *World development* 2, (2001): 209-227.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret O'Mara, "Beyond the Town and Gown: University Economic Engagement and the Legacy of the Urban Crisis," *The Journal of Technology Transfer* 37 (2012): 234-250.

<sup>7</sup> Joan W. Woffard, *Urban Universities: Rhetoric, Reality, and Conflict* (Washington, DC, USA: US Department of Health, Education & Welfare, 1970).

competitiveness.<sup>8</sup> Urban development can strongly be characterized by the strength that the university has in a context to settle specific facilities such as hospitals, sports facilities, libraries, or others.<sup>9</sup> In addition to these facilities, university residences also represent an opportunity to trigger, for the entire urban community as well as for students, a virtuous process that implements the regeneration of existing urban fabrics through densification strategies, with the possibility of developing a "new model of diffuse university campus".<sup>10</sup> According to Bellini et al.,<sup>11</sup> students is a micro-community with some problems in common with the local community—difficulties of integration and cultural understanding, language barriers, distance from home—and other more original characteristics that distinguish them as high cultural profile and young, homogeneous age group.

The paper considers urban regeneration in terms of multidisciplinary research that includes urban planning, urban design, housing, transportation, economics, community development, and sustainability studies<sup>12</sup>. General principles for urban regeneration are widely recognized, but urban regeneration programs must always be adapted to their specific geographic contexts and the urban development patterns adopted by local governments.<sup>13</sup> Law 338/2000 "Provisions on housing and residences for university students" provides for co-financing by the state for interventions aimed at the construction of housing and residences for university students and is configured, as a strategic tool capable of promoting regeneration policies, conceiving the university and the city as an integrated system, with the aim of providing housing for students and, simultaneously, services and activities intended for users of the piece of city in which it is grafted,<sup>14</sup> actuating lines of intervention also aimed at the redevelopment of the existing building stock. The paper presents the first results of a doctoral research that considers multi-criteria assessment methods both as a tool to support decision-making problem in urban planning and regeneration in terms of interfering dimensions and as a monitoring tool. The second section sets out the principles of Law

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<sup>8</sup> Gar Alperovitz, Steve Dubb and Tedd Howard, "The Next Wave: Building University Engagement for the 21st Century," *The Good Society* 17, no. 2 (2008):69-75.

<sup>9</sup> Janet Bercovitz and Maryann Feldman, "Entrepreneurial Universities and Technology Transfer: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Knowledge-based Economic Development," *The Journal of Technology Transfer* 31, (2006): 175-188.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Argenti, Fabio Cutroni, Maura Pecroco, and Giulia Santarelli, "Un Campus Universitario 'Diffuso'," in *Residenze e Servizi per Studenti Universitari*, eds. Romano Del Nord, Adolfo F.L. Baratta and Claudio Piferi (Florence: Tesi, 2016), 151-62.

<sup>11</sup> Oscar. E. Bellini, Matteo Gambaro and Martino Mocchi, "Living and Learning: A New Identity for Student Housing in City Suburbs," in *Regeneration of the Built Environment from a Circular Economy Perspective*, eds. Stefano Della Torre, Sara Cattaeno, Camilla Lenzi and Alessandra Zanelli (Gewerbstrasse: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2020), 99-109.

<sup>12</sup> Michael E. Leary and John McCarthy, "Introduction Urban Regeneration a Global phenomenon," in *The Routledge Companion Tourban Regeneration*, eds. Michael E. Leary and John McCarthy (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Reinout Kleinhans, "Housing Policies and Regeneration," *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*, (2012): 590-95.

<sup>14</sup> Francesco Musco, *Rigenerazione Urbana e Sostenibilità* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2009).

338/200 and the strategies adopted for social inclusion and urban regeneration; the third section introduces the issue of decision-making processes and support through multi-criteria evaluations; the fourth section proposes a reading of indicators for post-operam monitoring processes; and the fourth and final section regards the concluding reflections.

## 2. Law 338/2000: an Urban Regeneration and Social Inclusion Tool.

In response to the imbalance between demand and supply, in the early 2000s, Italian government provided funding for the construction of student accommodation with Law 338/2000; later, with the issuing of decrees establishing the procedures and formalities for requesting funding, the law identified the qualitative and quantitative standards of the projects.<sup>15</sup> Now, in its 5th Call for implementation<sup>16</sup> (2021), the law has partially solved the imbalance between demand and supply;<sup>17</sup> almost twenty years after the 1st call was issued, despite more than 200 design proposal put into operation and about 30,000 new and upgraded accommodation places,<sup>18</sup> it fails to match the European situation: about 2.5% of available accommodation places in relation to the student population against 11% in Germany, 15% in France and 34% in England. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the student population by forcing them to deal with changes related to everyday life with significant repercussions in social, economic and welfare-related terms.<sup>19</sup> Meaningful ties, relationships between students, colleagues and teachers are issues that influence the educational pathway.<sup>20</sup> Relationships and situations that, due to the pandemic situation, have not occurred and that strongly affect out-of-town students who, in addition to being engaged in educational activities, build a network of relationships that strongly affect health and the perception of well-being.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Adolfo F. L. Baratta, "Students Housing: Functional Model Quality," in *Research Tools for Design*, eds. Nicoletta Setola (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2011), 35–38.

<sup>16</sup> From the Italian: V Bando di attuazione.

<sup>17</sup> The 2018 ISTAT Census shows that 591,507 students were carrying out their academic activities in places other than their Province or Metropolitan City of residence; 35 percent of students (considering the 1,720,760 students enrolled in the 2018/2019 academic year) represent the potential demand for university housing.

<sup>18</sup> Claudio Piferi, *La qualità dell'abitare a servizio del diritto allo studio. quaderni di opera 30 anni al servizio degli studenti* (Trento: Edizioni Opera Universitaria, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Aleksander Aristovnik, Damijana Keržič, Dejan Ravšelj, Nina Tomažević and Lan Umek, "Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Life of Higher Education Students: A Global Perspective," *Sustainability* 12, no. 20 (2020): 1-34.

<sup>20</sup> Giancarlo Gasperoni, "Studio universitario, orientamenti valoriali, consumi culturali," *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* 1, (2000): 109–30.

<sup>21</sup> Andrea Amerio, Andrea Brambilla, Alessandro Morganti, Andrea Aguglia, Davide Bianchi, Francesca Santi and Luigi Costantini, "Covid-19 Lockdown: Housing Built Environment's Effects on Mental Health," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 16 (2020): 1-10.



## 2.1 The 5th Call of Implementation of the Law 338/2000.

The 5th Call for implementation of the law represents an opportunity not only for the increased provision of residential facilities for students, but also for the urban regeneration of the contexts in which the projects are included and the further social inclusion by re-weaving the community networks dispersed by the pandemic. The current call, which re-proposes the goal of enhancing the public heritage that can be used for the conversion of buildings and for the redevelopment of urban areas that are sometimes degraded and a source of social criticality<sup>22</sup>, provides for co-financing by the state for the recovery and construction of housing and residences for university students. The residences, in addition to the necessary conditions for the student's stay in the university city, must promote the social and cultural integration of students in the urban context in which they are proposed. In order to facilitate attendance and the attainment of the degree, as well as to improve the student's quality of life, the 5th Call for implementation provides indications both for functional areas dedicated to residences and for functional areas dedicated to teaching, research, support and cultural and recreational activities. The criteria for project requirements—in addition to those concerning the general functional and building dimensions and the requirements of the environmental units—concern environmental compatibility, integration with the city and services, the coexistence of individuality and sociality levels in fruition, the integration of information and multimedia technologies, environmental orientation, maintenance, and management (Ministerial Decree, 1256/2021).

The criteria for project requirements -in addition to those for general functional and building sizing and environmental unit requirements-concern (Ministerial Decree, 1256/2021):

- Environmental compatibility, whereby new buildings-and as far as possible also for extraordinary maintenance, rehabilitation, or renovation of existing buildings-must consider the principles for environmental protection from the perspective of Minimum Environmental Criteria and conforming all types of design proposal from the principle of Do No Significant Harm.<sup>23</sup> In addition, projects will be eligible for funding only if they document the achievement of four of six environmental criteria in the standard.
- Integration with the city and services, whereby newly constructed, rehabilitated, or renovated buildings must integrate with their surroundings.
- Coexistence of levels of individuality and sociality in fruition, whereby the residence must consider the individual need of the student

<sup>22</sup> Romano Del Nord, "Processi e Metodi Innovativi per La Promozione Della Qualità Architettonica Delle Residenze Universitarie," in *Residenze e Servizi per Studenti Universitari*, eds. Romano Del Nord, Adolfo F. L. Baratta, and C. Piferi (Florence: Tesis, 2016), 13-16.

<sup>23</sup> Environmental objectives of the DNSH Assessment under EU Regulation No. 2020/852.

and that of sociality through the distribution of semi-private and semi-collective spaces.

- Integration of information and multimedia technologies, whereby buildings of new construction - and as far as possible also for extraordinary maintenance, rehabilitation, or renovation of existing buildings - the integration of information and multimedia technologies should be considered to enable management of services in IoT optics.
- Environmental orientation, whereby environmental units must be able to be easily recognized to improve their orientation not only for students but also for external users.
- Maintenance and management, whereby the residence hall must meet the requirements of maintainability and durability.

Design proposal for co-financing can also be entrusted to private entities under construction and management or service concessions, and are distinguished into (Ministerial Decree, 1256/2021):

- a1) Design proposals of extraordinary maintenance, recovery, building and urban restructuring and restoration, including the removal of architectural barriers and adaptation based on current provisions on seismic, hygiene and safety of real estate used or to be used as university residences.
- a2) energy efficiency design proposals for pre-existing university residences.
- b) demolition and reconstruction work, transformation, expansion, and completion of existing real estate, including new construction work only for existing university campuses.
- c) acquisition of buildings to be used as university residences, within existing real estate considering probable future transformation.

Table 1 | Summary of the aspects exposed on the 5th Call of the Law 338/2000.

Aims	General criteria	Sizing criteria	Type of proposal
(i) protection and facilitation of study attendance and degree attainment (ii) social and cultural integration at the location	(i) environmental compatibility (ii) integration with the city and services (iii) co-presence of the levels of individuality and sociality of fruition (iv) integration of information and multimedia technologies (v) environmental orientation (vi) maintenance and management	(i) residential functions (ii) service functions	(a1) extraordinary maintenance, rehabilitation, building and urban renewal and restoration work (a2) energy efficiency design proposals (b) design proposals of demolition and reconstruction, transformation, expansion and completion (c) purchase

The 5th Call introduces impact indicators, initially higher in number than what is present today, to which it was chosen to reduce it due to the reduced timeline for submitting applications for co-funding (Tables 2, 3 and 4) to be included through a computerized template when filling out the application for funding (Decree, 168/2022):

- Social impact indicators, including measurements on demand, merit, community, and inclusivity.
- Environmental impact indicators, including measurements on energy sustainability, energy efficiency, material resource consumption reduction and sustainability.
- Financial impact indicators, including measurements on the type of financing, speed of execution and management.

Table 2 | Social impact indicators.

Social impact indicators	Indicator	Measure	
	Demand	Demand for on-site accommodation places (a.y. 2019-2020) / supply of on-site accommodation places (November 1st, 2020)	a. p. / a. p.
	Merit	Number accommodation places for deserving students / total accommodation places	a. p. / a. p.
	Inclusivity	Number of accommodation places reserved for students with disabilities / total accommodation places	a. p. / a. p.
	Collectivity	Facilities surface (FA2+FA3+FA4) / total surface (FA1+FA2+FA3+FA4)	m2 / m2

Table 3 | Environmental impact indicators.

Environmental impact indicators	Indicator	Measure	
	Energy Sustainability	Use of renewable energy (solar, wind, water, geothermal, biomass)	0; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5;
	Energy efficiency	Energy class for new buildings and class increase for design proposals on the existing one	+1; +5; +4; +3; +2; +1;
	Reduction of material resource consumption	Material from reuse or recycling of materials and products/total material used	m3 / m3
	Sustainability	Use of sustainable technical solutions	Yes / No

Table 4 | Financial impact indicators.

Financial impact indicators	Indicator	Measure	
	Funding A	Third party funding / overall funding	€/€
	Financing B	Regional or autonomous province funding / overall funding	€/€

	Speed of execution	Presence of executive design level and administrative approvals	Si / No
	Management	Previous experience of the subject in managing university facilities	0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21-30, >30

**2.2 The 5th Call of Implementation of the Law 338/2000 Evaluation Criteria.**

The criteria for evaluating proposals (Decree, 168/2022) must consider the objectives of the call, including: a) project effectiveness; b) project efficiency; c) project utility; d) project sustainability and durability; and e) impact indicators. The evaluation process implemented in the Law employs impact indicators and evaluation criteria (Table 5 and 6) for the construction of the ranking aimed at allocating funding. This method, on a multi-criteria basis, provides transparency, rationality and traceability to the project selection process. In this way, the 5th Call results such as regulatory tool capable of incentivizing not only the housing form of university residences, but a stimulus for interventions in the rehabilitation of the existing building stock and urban regeneration.

The vocation to urban regeneration is also corroborated by the types of design proposals upon completion of the 4th Call (2016), which shows that 60 percent of the projects accepted for funding since the 1st Call –about 200 out of 320–, contemplate design proposals on the existing heritage, including 128 interventions—completed or under implementation—in the field of building heritage rehabilitation and 72 interventions of ordinary, extraordinary maintenance and energy efficiency<sup>24</sup>.

Table 5 | Rating title expressed by the Call for design proposals A2.

Typology proposal	Rating title	Score (max)
A2	(a) Requirement accommodation places and indicators of social impact	20
	(b) Co-financing and cost-sharing	10
	(c) Supply of accommodation places	10
	(d) Quality technical solutions, energy efficiency	60

Table 6 | Rating title expressed by the Call for design proposals A1, B, and C.

Typology proposal	Rating title	Score (max)
A1 B C	(a) Consistency with ministerial guidance	10
	(b) Housing place requirement, correspondence to indicators of social impact	20
	(c) Quality and indicators of environmental impact	20

<sup>24</sup> Roberto Bologna, “Student Housing in Architectural Renovation and Urban Regeneration Project,” *Techne* 24 (2022): 198–206.

	(d) Financial sharing and indicator of financial impact	10
	(e) Co-financing from the regions	15
	(f) Work on buildings of historical interest	15
	(g) Applicant's experience	10
A2	(a) Requirement accommodation places and indicators of social impact	20
	(b) Co-financing and cost-sharing	10
	(c) Supply of accommodation places	10
	(d) Quality technical solutions, energy efficiency	60

### 3. Multi-criteria Evaluation as Decision Support Tool.

Urban regeneration sets as an aspiration an interfering reading of the different aspects, establishing the need to make choices based on the alternatives available. Indeed, territories are in constant transformation, subject to unpredictable changes, generated by an aggregate of intentions, projects and actions dependent on individual or collective wills, whose decisions overlap, contradict or deform. In these models, the decision is identified as a process delineated by interconnected actions; the activity that the individual performs with regard to an evaluation is based on an abstract process (Table 7) that is not necessarily stated, therefore, in the context of urban transformations and due to the numerous actors involved in the decision-making process, the complexity to be faced may be that of the non-comparability of objectives. Multi-criteria evaluation methods include a family of techniques that simultaneously consider different areas of the decision-making problem on the basis of a set of criteria. The methodology is configured within pre-determined alternative hypotheses or the introductory step requires the identification of the objective, which may be a preferred choice at the end of the evaluation process—as in the case of project selection—or an understanding of a problem, such as in the case of monitoring. The first step specifies the possible alternatives to solving the problem, the stage at which "scenario building" takes place<sup>25</sup>. The second step identifies the criteria on which the final decision depends; the quantification and measurement of the criteria are closely related to the application domain in which the problem is grafted. The third step includes the estimation of the weights to be assigned to each criterion, either based on relevance to the decision maker or on the basis of logical mathematical function, resulting in the fourth step, i.e., the measurement of alternatives in relation to the criteria. The very nature of the decision-making problem confronts units of measurement relevant to the criteria being considered. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a fifth step and normalize on the

<sup>25</sup> David Aaker, *Strategic Market Management* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001).

basis of comparable scales by applying mathematical formulas, thus making it possible to relate the scores to the previously assigned weights. The ranking of alternatives that is obtained depends on the way in which the evaluator assigns weights to the evaluation criteria, representing, therefore, the point of view of the evaluation. Closing the evaluation process is a final step, a sensitivity analysis that tests the robustness of the results.

Table 7 | Steps of a multi-criteria analysis.

Phase	Description
(0) Objective identification	It is the introduction to the decision problem in that it requires the identification of the objective, problem and evaluation.
(1) Alternatives identification	Specification of the possible alternatives that provide different solutions to the problem.
(2) Evaluation criteria identification	Specification of the criteria on which the final decision depends, which includes information about the indicator, measurement scale and objective function.
(3) Estimation of the weights to be assigned to the criteria	Estimation of the weights to be assigned to each criterion, which can be on the basis of relevance to the decision maker (by ordering) or on the basis of logical mathematical function (cardinal).
(4) Measuring the performance of the alternative for each criterion	Each alternative will describe a performance based on each criterion.
(5) Normalization	Mathematical operation that allows measurement on the basis of different comparable scales.
(6) Ranking	Consists of the ranking of priorities among the pre-posed alternatives.
(7) Sensitivity analysis	Final operation designed to check the robustness of the result, which may involve variation in the assignment of weight values or variation in the normalization function.

The techniques—simple or complex—are manifold<sup>26</sup> but, but there are several classifications of them in the literature<sup>27</sup> (Table 8). The first considers the generation of alternatives: a) multi-criteria analysis, in which the problem is carried out with a set of finite alternatives, to which the objective is to identify a scale of preferability in a set of finite alternatives; b) multi-objective techniques, in which the decision maker responds to a set of infinite alternatives, the decision maker can be defined as the planner who chooses the best possible alternative based on the objectives set. The second classification considers the nature of the outcome: a) deterministic in nature; b) probabilistic in nature.

Table 8 | Techniques classification

Classification	Description
1. Generation of alternatives	(a) multi-criteria analysis
	(b) multi-objective techniques

<sup>26</sup> Mika Marttunen, Judit Lienert and Valerie Belton, "Structuring Problems for Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis in Practice: A Literature Review of Method Combinations," *European Journal of Operational Research* 263, no.1 (2017): 1-17.

<sup>27</sup> Pietro Rostirolla, *La Fattibilità Economico-Finanziaria. Metodi e Applicazioni* (Napoles: Liguori Editore, 1998).

2. Nature of the result	(a) deterministic
	(b) probabilistic

In general, the evaluation methods described above use of mathematical models and operations that identify a preferable alternative, surpassing the concept of a perfect alternative, confirming the idea that there may be a plurality of needs to be met depending on the design proposal.

In relation to the application of these methods to recent residences, they attempt to construct a ranking of criteria, sub-criteria and indicators for a sustainable evaluation of them. The methodology consists of a reiterative process involving the collection of data from the literature, interviews with students, selection and ranking of criteria, validation of the data through interviews, refinement of the criteria and definition of the evaluation model. The hierarchical structure is composed of three categories<sup>28</sup>: 1) spatial configuration: covers the characteristics of bedrooms, common areas, furniture, accessibility and location, proximity to the university, public transport and services; 2) environmental quality and well-being: criteria related to air quality and thermal, visual and acoustic comfort, etc.; 3) housing management: is composed of the sub-criteria related to housing services, energy, water, waste and costs.

Similarly, Malaysian research<sup>29</sup> selects a set of criteria for the sustainable assessment of green university buildings. More specifically, they use the Analytic Hierarchy Process technique in order to structure the hierarchical evaluation model, which consists of the following criteria: indoor environmental quality, energy efficiency, site planning and sustainable management, reusable or recycled materials, and water collection and recovery; each is followed by its own sub-criteria.

In the above-mentioned application cases, the criteria of environmental quality and well-being—in the former—, and of housing management and energy efficiency—in the latter—appear to be the most relevant within the hierarchical evaluation model.

A further application case developed in Nigeria<sup>30</sup>, aims to select the preferred housing solution-taking into account the student's point of view-from four alternatives: 1) traditional on-campus housing, whereby students can easily reach university services; 2) off-campus, university-managed housing; 3) off-campus, university-rented housing; and 4) off-campus, privately rented housing. The evaluation takes into account the views of two decision makers for each alternative described above and is

<sup>28</sup> Shady Attia, Pierre Alphonsine, Mohamed Amer and Guirec Ruellan, "Towards a European Rating System for Sustainable Student Housing: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a Multi-Criteria Assessment Approach," *Environmental and Sustainability Indicators* 7, (2020): 1-12.

<sup>29</sup> Elaheh Yadegaridehkordi and Mehrbakhsh Nilashi, "Moving towards Green University: A Method of Analysis Based on Multi-Criteria Decision-Making Approach to Assess Sustainability Indicators," *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* 19, no. 9 (2022): 8207-30.

<sup>30</sup> Hammad Baba, Joel Musa Dabo, Ali Garba Rishi, Dabo Hammad and Isaac Ishaku Ayuba, "Criteria for the Selection of Students Accommodation Model in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions Using Analytic Hierarchy Process," *Academic Research International* 4, no. 5 (2013): 550-556.

done through a hierarchical AHP model of pairwise comparison of alternatives based on the criteria: a) proximity of academic services; studied discipline; maintenance cost; and safety.

Table 9 | Summary of the overexposed experiences.

Reference	Technique	Evaluation goal	Point of view	Macro-criteria
Attia et al. (2020)		Select a priority among criteria for choosing university housing	Students	Spatial configuration
				Environmental quality and well-being
				Housing management
Yadegaridehkor di and Nilashi (2022)	AHP	Select a priority among criteria for evaluating green university buildings	Experts in the application field	Indoor environmental quality
				Energy efficiency
				Site planning and sustainable management
				Reuse or recycled materials
				Water collection and recovery
Baba Hammad et al. (2013)	AHP	Choice of university housing preferred from: (1) Traditional on campus accommodation (2) Off-campus school managed (3) Off campus leased (4) Off-campus private	Students	Academic Proximity
				Student discipline
				Maintenance cost
				Students security

The three approaches described above, suggest possible evaluative applications for university residences and for the construction of indicator sets that are also useful in terms of urban regeneration, again suggesting a supporting tool on a multi-criteria basis.

#### 4. Conclusions: from Project Selection to a Monitoring Process.

Law 338/2000 model refers to an evaluation based on criteria mostly concerning project characteristics. The measurement of the regenerative effect triggered on an urban fabric by a university student residence is not an objective of the Law 338/2000 process and the latter, in fact, does not incorporate criteria and indicators for this purpose. This is consistent with the fact that it is not in the planning stages of design proposals that the criteria for monitoring effects can be established, since planning instruments fail to crystallize in a pre-vision processes and interrelationships that are evolutionary, unpredictable, and creative in



nature<sup>31</sup>. The monitoring of regenerative effects—environmental, social and economic—should be undertaken in successive stages, in view of the fact that the effects of actions may take time to emerge and may present themselves with such discontinuities that certain thresholds must be reached before significant and measurable impacts occur<sup>32</sup>. However, it would be useful to subject the outcomes of policies to verification of their economic, social and environmental sustainability in order to produce feedback effects capable of modifying the plan or program that produced them<sup>33</sup>. Among the many studies to measure the sustainability of urban regeneration, the indicator system approach is most widely used<sup>34</sup> and the literature presents many applications on different systems. There are applications that consider the measurement of quality-of-life improvement<sup>35</sup>; others that employ sets based on five aspects<sup>36</sup> such as economy and labor, resource use, land use and buildings, transport and mobility, and community benefits; and finally, others cover environmental, financial, socio-economic and liveability aspects<sup>37</sup>. However, the various systems or sets of indicators are not without criticism, such as the subjectivity in the choice of indicators or the strict adherence of the set used to the local context or the project being evaluated<sup>38</sup>, which does not make the evaluation process replicable and comparable. A monitoring process should be based on a broad, non-redundant system of indicators capable of describing and making comparable the different interventions and the plurality of effects and impacts that can be triggered. At present, this research is reviewing the reference literature in order to select—and possibly modify—indicators classified by environmental-urban, social and economic dimensions. The ultimate aim is the implementation of a set of criteria that, subjected to due experimental verification, will become a useful tool for measuring the regenerative effects of a university residence and for comparing projects. An initial list drawn up in the course of the research—provisional, non-exhaustive and still being evaluated—is shown in Table 10 below.

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<sup>31</sup> Grazia Napoli, “La Valutazione Multicriteriale Nella Pianificazione Territoriale: Riflessioni Teoriche Su Un Caso Applicativo,” *AESTIMUM* 32, (2009): 861–86.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Tyler, Colin Warnock, Allan Provins and Bruno Lanz, “Valuing the Benefits of Urban Regeneration,” *Urban Studies* 50, no. 1 (2013): 169–90.

<sup>33</sup> Napoli, “La Valutazione Multicriteriale”, 861–86.

<sup>34</sup> Yi Peng, Yani Lai, Xuewen Li and Xiaoling Zhang, “An Alternative Model for Measuring the Sustainability of Urban Regeneration: The Way Forward,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 109, (2015): 76–83.

<sup>35</sup> Mee Kam NG, “Quality of Life Perceptions and Directions for Urban Regeneration in Hong Kong,” *Social Indicators Research* 71, no.3 (2005); 441–465.

<sup>36</sup> Lesley Hemphill, Jim Berry and Stanley McGreal, “An Indicator-Based Approach to Measuring Sustainable Urban Regeneration Performance: Part 1, Conceptual Foundations and Methodological Framework,” *Urban Studies* 41, no. 4 (2004): 725–55.

<sup>37</sup> G. Christopher Wedding and Crawford-Brown Douglas, “Measuring Site-Level Success in Brownfield Redevelopments: A Focus on Sustainability and Green Building,” *Journal of Environmental Management* 85, no. 2 (2007): 483–95.

<sup>38</sup> Helen Wei Zheng, Geoffrey Qiping Shen and Hao Wang, “A Review of Recent Studies on Sustainable Urban Renewal,” *Habitat International* 41 (2014): 272–79.

Table 10 | Set of criteria for measuring the regenerative effects of a university residence

Aspect	Criteria	Quantitative	Qualitative
Economic	Increase in the number of businesses	V	
	Increase in the number of jobs	V	
	Increase in the market values of real estate	V	
	Increase in average incomes	V	
	Increase in the number of new businesses operating in the area	V	
	Increased perception of overall community well-being		V
	Increase in public investment		
Sociale	Increase in the number of cultural activities present (cinemas, theaters and libraries)	V	
	Increase in the number of associations or third-sector entities	V	
	Improved overall satisfaction and sense of place		V
	Improved shared and collective enjoyment of public space		V
	Improved efficiency of community networks		V
	Increased access to education services	V	
	Increased perception of the level of quality of services		V
	Reduction in petty crime and theft	V	
Urbano-ambientale	Increased areas of green areas (parks and urban green, public green and sports green)	V	
	Increase in the number of public transportation reaching the target area	V	
	Increase in the number of number of health care activities present (pharmacies, health garrisons, elderly care day care centers and disabled care day care centers)	V	
	Increased areas of pedestrian areas	V	
	Increase in the areas devoted to neighborhood services	V	
	Improving the surface area ratio between public and private spaces	V	

Increase in the number of redeveloped buildings	V	
Improvement in the overall quality of public space		V
Increase in the surfaces of public parking lots	V	

The paper considered the issues of urban regeneration in a multidisciplinary context, the strategic tool of Law 338/2000 that can conceive of the city and university services as an organic system of functions and integrated: in approaching the above-described issues, decision-making processes and support through multi-criteria evaluations were considered. The contribution exposed the first results of a doctoral research regarding a reading of some sets of indicators, not only for the ex-ante choice of projects ex-ante but for a hypothetical process of monitoring them ex-post. The effectiveness over time of a university residence hall project that aspires to trigger regeneration processes can be measured through such an approach, which is still being studied. The matrix thus composed—projects by indicators—is not aimed at ranking research, but at building a framework. A useful "dashboard" for monitoring, in which even the simple comparison of the effectiveness of an intervention, criterion by criterion, becomes a tool for critical analysis of the project/context relationship, capable of returning feedback that is in turn useful for reorienting subsequent intervention strategies.

The next steps in the research will involve the development of a comprehensive evaluation framework that includes—in addition to several sets of criteria each suitable for each phase—, a system of capable of evaluating projects ex ante, in the planning and selection phase, correcting their course with *in itinere* evaluations in the implementation phase, and in conclusion monitoring their regenerative effects in the *ex-post* phase.

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# Multiannual Public Intervention Programs for Student Housing and Urban Regeneration

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## 1. Multi-annual Funding Plans for University Residences.

Since June 1999, when 29 European ministers of education signed the 'Bologna Declaration', which aimed to achieve a European higher education area, student mobility within the EU member states has increased significantly.

This mobility, coupled with the growing number of university enrolments, has led to a considerable increase in the demand for accommodation since the end of the 20th century. With the aim of meeting this demand with an adequate supply of housing, many countries have undertaken policies aimed at building university residences, through programs involving public and private actors. Of particular interest, also for a comparison with the Italian reality, are the French, German and Irish experiences. The first one through the Centre National des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires (CNOUS) and the Centres Régionaux des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires (CROUS), which implement funding programs for the creation of new university student accommodation places also through the renovation of the existing building stock, the second through the Deutsches StudentenWerk (DSW), a non-profit state agency, financed by the Lander and private individuals, which deals with the construction and management of student housing<sup>1</sup>. Of great interest in recent years is also the program implemented in Ireland, where the increase in university enrolment has forced the state Housing Finance Agency (HFA) to finance Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to build Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), residences mainly for students without financial means. (CEB)<sup>2</sup>.

The recent Next Generation Europe program, for example, with Mission

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<sup>1</sup> Germany Visa 2021. Student Accommodation and Housing in Germany.

<https://www.germany-visa.org/student-accommodation-housing/>

<sup>2</sup> CEB, 2021. CEB to support construction of student housing in Ireland with a € 75 million loan. Available at: <https://coebank.org/en/news-and-publications/news/ceb-to-support-construction-of-student-housing-in-ireland-with-a-75-million-loan/>



4, Component 1, Reform 1.7 of the NRP - Student Housing and Reform of Student Housing Legislation, envisages an investment for Italy of no less than 960 million euro with the aim of tripling the current supply of university student housing (amounting to about 38,000 units) and making more than 100,000 accommodation places available by 2026. In Italy, it is since the beginning of the century, with the enactment of law 338/2000, that structured policies for the construction of accommodation and residences for university students have been put in place: the legislative provision constitutes a first example of an organic multi-year programme aimed at a specific type of user that provides state funding for measures to increase the number of accommodation places also for doctoral students, researchers, visiting professors, etc. The law has practical implications because it has allowed for an increase in the number of housing places available [Figure 1], cultural implications because it has sanctioned the transition from dormitory to incubator residence<sup>3</sup>, and socioeconomic implications because it has triggered a virtuous process by contributing to the redevelopment of disused buildings and the urban and social regeneration of degraded areas<sup>4</sup>.

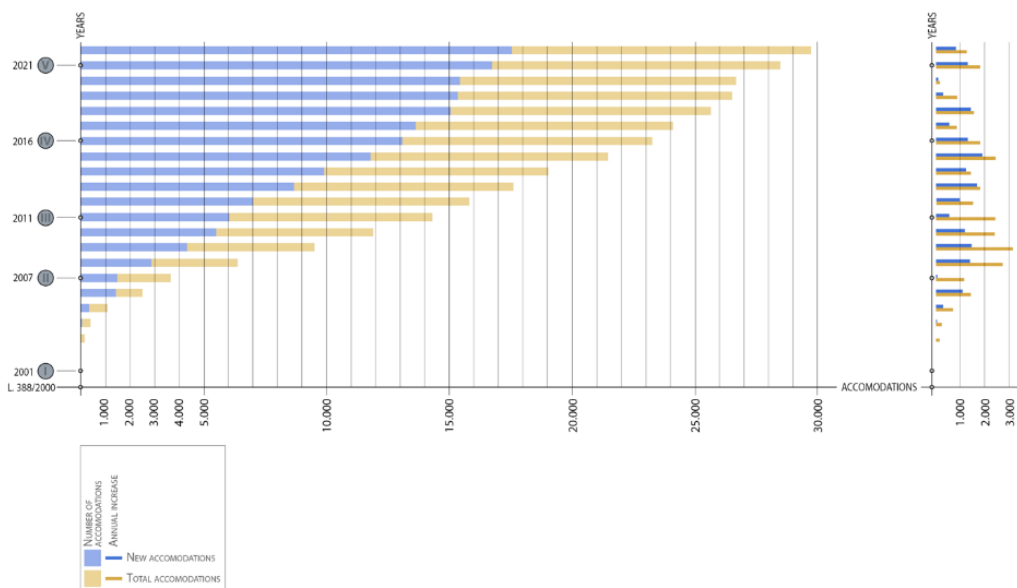


Figure 1 | Accommodation places financed with L. 338. Situation in December 2022.

Credits: Andrea Sichi.

In addition to the definition of specific quali-quantitative standards, the law makes explicit reference to extremely topical issues, such as environmental compatibility, integration with the city and services, the

<sup>3</sup> Claudio Piferi, *La qualità dell'abitare a servizio del diritto allo studio* (Trento: Edizioni Opera Universitaria, 2021), 7-25.

<sup>4</sup> Adolfo F.L. Baratta, "La legge n. 338/2000 come strumento di recupero del patrimonio e rigenerazione delle periferie", *Vivere e abitare l'Università* (Milano: Politecnica, 2020), 47-54.

coexistence of individuality and sociality, and the integration of information and multimedia technologies<sup>5</sup>.

Specific Executive Decrees have the task of describing the technical and economic parameters to be met to obtain the state contribution and of defining the procedures and methods for the submission of projects and the payment of funding.

To date, five calls for proposals have been published, the latest of which<sup>6</sup> is currently in progress [Figure 2].

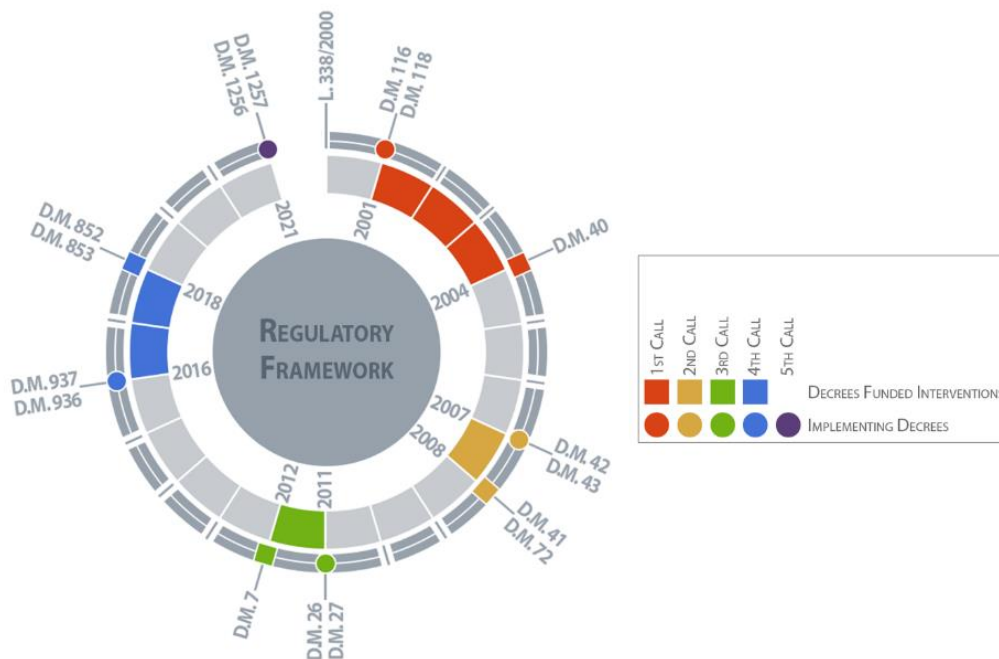


Figure 2| The regulatory framework.  
Credits: Andrea Sichi.

The procedures of the previous four calls<sup>7</sup> were very similar: from the publication of the Executives Decrees, subjects interested in funding had a defined time frame in which to submit a final or executive level project. At the end of the deadline, a specially Commission<sup>8</sup>, composed of 7 members appointed by the Ministry of University and Research and 7 by the State-Regions Conference, assessed the proposals submitted and submitted the ranking list to the Minister: this ranking list was included in the Three-Year Plans<sup>9</sup> that allocate the available economic resources

<sup>5</sup> Romano Del Nord, "L'innovazione di processo come strumento per promuovere la qualità delle opera", *Il processo attuativo del piano nazionale di interventi per la realizzazione di residenze universitarie*, (Firenze: Edifir, 2014), 19-27.

<sup>6</sup> DD.MM. nos. 1256-1257/2021.

<sup>7</sup> DD.MM. No. 116-118/2001 (I), No. 42-43/2007 (II), No. 26-27/2011 (III), No. 936-937/2016 (IV).

<sup>8</sup> DD.MM. No. 117/2001, No. 27/2005, No. 2/2009, No. 245/2012, No. 504/2015, No. 321/2019, No. 916/2022.

<sup>9</sup> DD.MM. n. 40/2004 (I), nn. 41-72/2008 (II), n. 246/2012 (III), nn. 852-853/2019 (IV).

between interventions admitted with the availability of funds, admitted but awaiting the necessary resources, and excluded.

From the publication of the Plans, the beneficiaries were given a defined time to submit any supplementary documentation (e.g. building permits and the executive project).

After examining the supplementary documentation, the Commission decided either to approve the signing of the agreement with the MUR, or to revoke the co-financing: from the notification of the registration of the agreement, which defines the duties of both parties, the deadlines for starting the work begin.

As for the financial aspects, each call provided for a total amount divided by year<sup>10</sup> and a maximum funding equal to 50% of the total cost of the intervention, which may include the value of the building, the cost of the works and part of the furnishings.

## **2. The Numbers of Law No. 338/2000.**

The research activity, carried out by the TESIS Inter-university Centre of the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence for more than 15 years through the preparation of special agreements with the MUR and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti S.p.A. (CDP), and focused on the collection, analysis, systematization and processing of data and information that are remarkable for their quantity, quality and originality, has made it possible, through the development of specific operational tools, to assess the efficiency of the standard.

The combination of operational research activities and the study of the process and its evolution makes it possible to compare the quality expected from the Program with that achieved.

Specifically, about 650 projects (over 150 of them concerning the fifth call of the law) were investigated, more than 200 economic frameworks were monitored and verified, 2,800 work progress reports, 380 variants and around 200 inspections were carried out.

The four calls for tenders saw the submission of 487 applications for a funding request of more than 1,890 million, and the standardization and construction of 60,000 housing places (35,000 from scratch). The applications were distributed throughout the country: 247 in the north, 144 in the center and 96 in the south.

A total of 395 projects were admitted into the three-year plans for a co-financing request of more than 1,300 million and 48,000 accommodation places concerned.

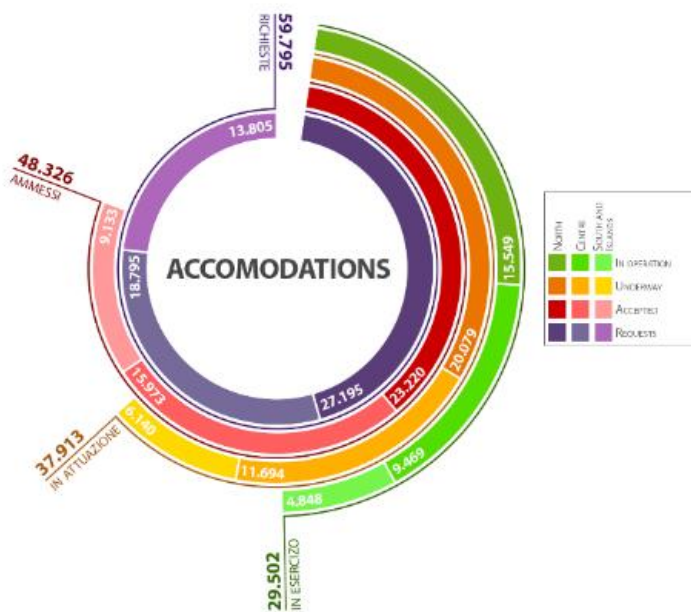
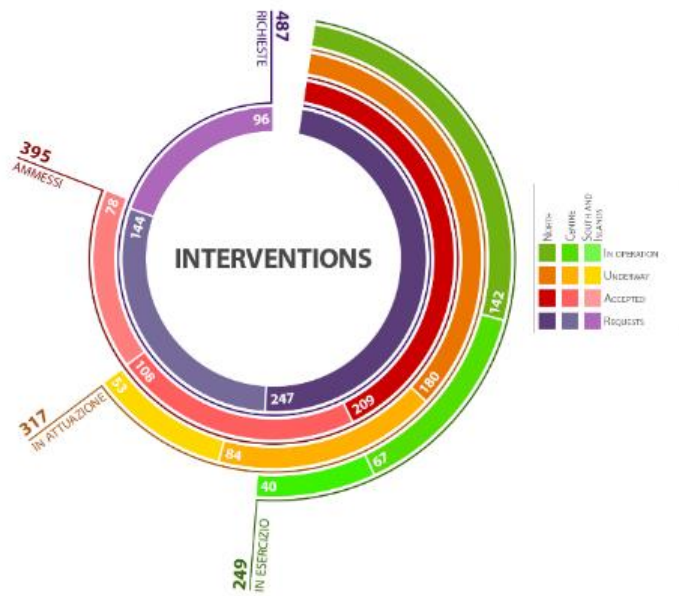
After exclusions and renuncements, there are 317 implemented interventions with co-financing of just under EUR 1,000 million and more than 38,000 accommodation places (about 24,000 ex-novo).

There are currently 249 university residences in operation (142 in the north, 67 in the center, 40 in the south), with a total of almost 30,000

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<sup>10</sup> 2002-2004 (I), 2006-2009 (II), 2011-2013 (III), 2016-2018 (IV), 2022-2024 (V).

accommodation places (more than 17,000 ex-novo) and a co-financing provided by the state of almost 700 million [Figure 3]. All the interventions financed by the first call (114) are in operation, while for the second there are 82 residences in operation and 2 missing interventions are expected to be completed in 2023.





### 3. Analysis and Structuring of Data Acquired during Research Activities.

In addition to the social and cultural implications already mentioned, it is worth emphasizing other consequences related to the structuring of the norm.

One of the positive aspects of the law is that the implementation of the program does not stop with the granting of the funding, but continues through the monitoring of the construction phases, from the publication of the call for tenders to the commissioning and is completed with the disbursement of the state funding following, the control of the actual expenditure incurred and any variants.

The state financing is therefore configured as a reimbursement, constituting a further guarantee of the use of public resources for the intended purposes, avoiding complications for the repayment of unused amounts, with considerable savings in economic and time terms: moreover, the disbursement of the financing in conjunction with the transmission of the work progress reports allows the subjects to quickly dispose of the money advanced.

The structuring of the program meant that the interventions did not suffer any slowdowns or drastic interruptions, guaranteeing that construction companies could work even during periods of severe crisis in the construction sector.

Finally, by means of the principle of sliding from one Plan to another of the unspent funds deriving from the tender rebates (about 160 million in total), and the allocation of a reserved annual fund, as provided for in paragraph 18, Art. 144 of Law 388/00, it was possible to guarantee the continuity of the procedure and the procurement of the necessary resources also for the interventions admitted with reserve.

### 4. Urban Regeneration.

Aware that new constructions imply a considerable use of energy, that Italian cities are characterized by the presence of abandoned buildings (it is estimated that there are over 10 million empty residential properties)<sup>11</sup>, and that the system of Universities spread throughout the territory, typical of the Italian reality, is mainly structured in the historical city centers<sup>12</sup>, the legislator, in art. 1, of 338, specifies that the law was created to allow the State to contribute to the realization of interventions necessary for [...] the extraordinary maintenance, recovery and renovation of already existing buildings, used or to be used as

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<sup>11</sup> Vincenzo Gioffrè, "Riciclare l'urbano. Strategie rigenerative per la città orizzontale", *Technè*, 17 (2019): 167.

<sup>12</sup> Roberto Bologna, "Il progetto della residenza per studenti universitari", *Il processo attuativo del piano nazionale di interventi per la realizzazione di residenze universitarie*, (Firenze: Edifir, 2014), 122-123.

accommodation or residences for university students, as well as interventions of new construction and purchase of areas and buildings to be used for the same purpose: the priority, therefore, appears to be that of recovering, for this purpose, the existing building heritage, as opposed to interventions of new construction.

This has allowed not only the recovery of disused buildings but, in many cases, also the urban and social regeneration of depressed and degraded areas<sup>13</sup>.

The recovery of the existing building stock is, in fact, further incentivized by the possibility, offered by the law, to contribute the value of the building as part of the co-financing amount and consequently obtain state funding equal to the total amount of the works [Figure 5].

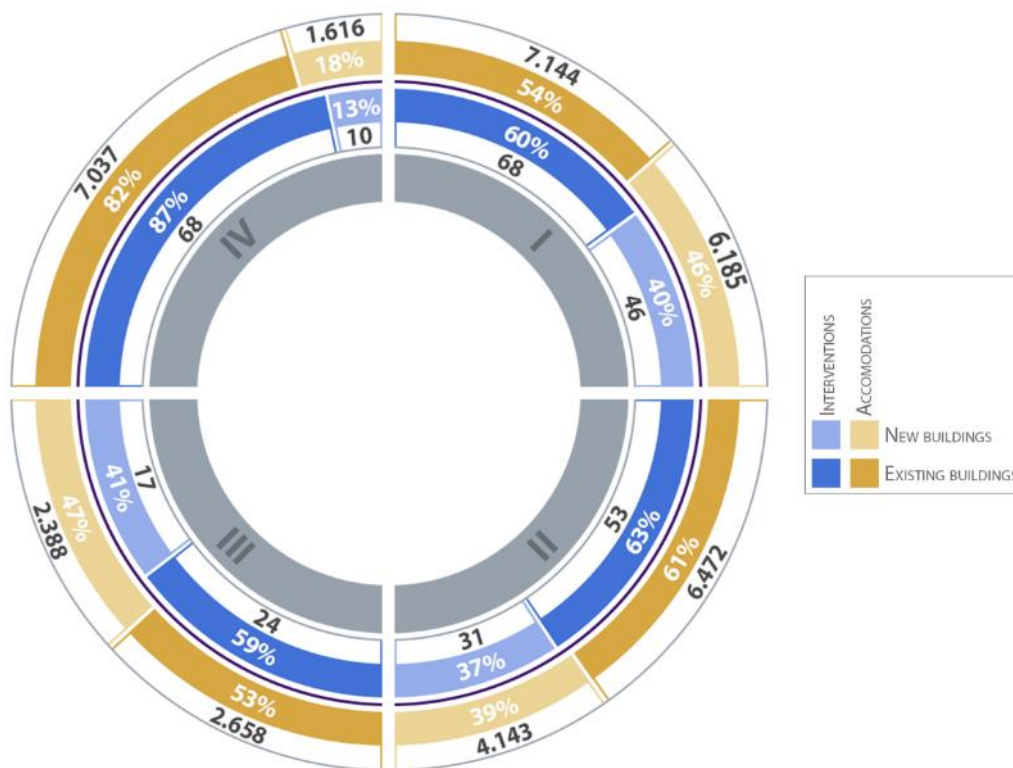


Figure 5| Existing building and new construction: interventions and accommodation.  
Situation in December 2022.  
Credits: Andrea Sichi.

In addition, interventions on the existing building stock of special value and listed buildings have considerable advantages regarding compliance

<sup>13</sup> Adolfo F. L. Baratta, and Claudio Piferi. "Le residenze universitarie come strumento di rigenerazione urbana. L'esperienza del programma 338/00", 3° edizione di *abitare il futuro. Giornate internazionali di studio*, edited by Antonella Falotico, Nicola Flora, Domenico Moccia, Maria Federica Palestino, Sergio Pone, Francesco Rispoli, Michelangelo Russo, Sergio Russo Ermolli, Paola Scala. (Napoli: Clean edizioni, 2015), 485-493.

with dimensional standards, as they provide for decreasing percentages on legal obligations.

Of the 317 projects in place, more than 70 per cent concern existing buildings: of the approximately 38,000 accommodation places concerned, more than 23,000 are in existing buildings and about 15,000 in new buildings.

There are many university residences realized with law no. 338/00 that can be taken as examples to understand the role that these structures have played and are playing in terms of urban, environmental and social regeneration: the recovery of the former convents of Crociferi in Venice [Figure 6] and Benedettini in Palermo are perhaps the best-known examples, but there are many others equally significant.



Figure 6| Crociferi University Residence, Venice.  
Credits: TESIS archive.

Briefly, 3 case studies are described that highlight some of the urban implications arising from the introduction of university residency through the redevelopment of the existing building stock. The San Giobbe university residence project constitutes the last stage in the completion of the new Ca' Foscari university campus in Venice. The project, which began in 1995, involved the restoration, rehabilitation, and urban redevelopment of disused industrial areas, including the former monumental slaughterhouse and other adjacent areas in a serious state of deterioration. The area for the student residence is located on the outskirts of the city, on the same site where the hospital designed by Le Corbusier in the 1960s



was to be built. The project envisaged, on an experimental basis and for the first time in Venice, through consultation with the Superintendency, the use of sustainable technologies to achieve energy class 'A'. The residence accommodates 229 students distributed in single and double rooms according to the hotel typology. Common areas are located both on the ground floor and on the different floors. Of particular interest is how the intervention fits into the established historical context of the city of Venice. The architecture and the use of materials, in fact, recall the classic stylistic features of lagoon architecture, recreating, within the complex, “calli” and “fondamenta”, and consequently allowing Venetians to regain possession of a contemporary and functional space that does not disrupt the pre-existing urban texture. This ensures that the new neighborhood that has been created is also experienced by non-residents. The realization of a new pedestrian bridge, which from platform 1 of the Santa Lucia railway station allows students and others to reach the complex, guarantees an uncommon level of accessibility for a complex city like Venice [Figures 7, 8].



Figure 7| San Giobbe University Residence, Venice.  
Credits: TESIS archive.



Figure 8 | San Giobbe University Residence, Venice.  
Credits: TESIS archive.

The complex where the Ca' Longa university residence is located dates to the end of the 19th century and housed a cotton mill: the entire complex is in an area heavily densified by former industrial buildings that have undergone restoration work in recent years. The Santa Marta Residence project serves as a complement to these interventions, offering the opportunity for the portion of the neighborhood to be lived in during all hours of the day. Externally, the structure retains the appearance of an industrial brick building with large windows in relation to the pertinent garden and a series of skylights in the roof that allow natural light to enter the first floor. The residence, which accommodates a total of 650 students, 136 of them thanks to this intervention, is spread over two floors according to a mini-apartment, single and double accommodation type, and guarantees a standard of approximately 25 square meters per accommodation space. The building also uses a photovoltaic system and solar panels to supply energy from renewable sources. In terms of urban regeneration, the entire complex is in an area heavily densified by former industrial buildings that in recent years have been recovered and transformed into educational centers for Ca' Foscari University. The Santa Marta Residence project serves as a complement to these interventions, offering the opportunity for the portion of the neighborhood to be lived in at all hours of the day [Figure 9].



Figure 9| Ca' Foscari University Residence, Venice.  
Credits: TESIS archive.

The Camplus university residence in Florence is the result of the redevelopment of a mid-twentieth century building owned by the State Railways Group. The residence is in a lot adjacent to the railway line, near the tramway and the central station and not far from the city center. The building has maintained its C-shaped conformation, preserving the strong stone perimeter wall on the main elevation: the original project planned the demolition and reconstruction of the entire building: subsequently, due to changes in the city of Florence's regulatory framework, it was changed to a building renovation and structural consolidation of the existing building. The building, which is on six above-ground levels, has a hotel-type living space and accommodates 213 students in single and double rooms, for a total of approximately 12.5 square meters per student of residential area. Almost all functional common areas including a conference room, a refreshment area and a gymnasium are located on the ground floor. Internally, the structure is clad with dark-colored wooden paneling, designed both to house the lighting system and to reduce maintenance work. The furnishings are characterized using flexible systems capable of dividing the rooms into

smaller environmental, residential and service units<sup>14</sup>. All systems are controlled by an automated system: electricity is produced by photovoltaic panels on the roof, hot water by heat pumps, and ventilation systems are of the primary air type [Figures 10-11].



Figure 10| Camplus University Residence in Florence.  
Credits: TESIS archive.

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<sup>14</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic period, this allowed the residence managers to manage emergencies in both the residential and service areas, preventing guest students from coming into contact.



Figure 11| Camplus University Residence in Florence.  
Credits: TESIS archive.

The focus on the recovery of the existing heritage was further strengthened in 2021 when the law was specially amended. Article 15, Legislative Decree No. 152/21, amends Article 1 of Law 338, adding paragraph 4-bis, which states: 'In order to pursue the objectives identified in the European Commission's communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal, transposed in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the renovation, transformation, also through demolition and reconstruction, and purchase of existing structures and buildings with the aim of pursuing high environmental standards in the construction and management of the interventions are promoted as a priority'.

Ministerial Decree No. 1256/21, the fifth announcement of the law, sharpens this concept, specifying in paragraph 1, Art. 4, that in implementation of the provisions of the Annex relating to the approval of the 8 July 2021 NRP assessment, no new green-field building interventions are admissible, except for interventions included in existing campuses, or in areas bordering university settlements.

## 5. Developments in the Legal Apparatus.

The updates that have affected the law are due to different reasons: on the one hand, the evolution of the regulatory framework (e.g., in the field of public works contracts, accessibility and safety requirements, energy containment and environmental sustainability), on the other hand, the need to overcome some of the critical issues that have emerged during the process. Legislators have therefore sought to make procedures clearer and more streamlined with the aim of increasing the number of requests, sometimes even to the partial detriment of the final quality.

In addition to the changes already described, it is worth mentioning that with the Fifth Call for Proposals the percentage that can be financed by the State was increased from 50 per cent to 75 per cent, and further specific references to the themes of digital and ecological transition<sup>15</sup> were introduced.

The digitization of the process, the elimination of the paper apparatus, the compulsory use of Building Information Modeling (BIM), and compliance with Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM)<sup>16</sup> and the principle of Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) represent some of the most interesting introductions.

The fifth call, in addition to setting 90 days as the deadline for submitting applications for co-financing, abolishes the obligations of submitting supplementary documentation and signing the agreement, delegating to the Three-Year Plans the role of regulating relations between the MUR and the beneficiaries: the date of its publication will set the deadline from which the 150 days for starting work will begin.

With the aim of further reducing the timing, applicants were also allowed to attach a Technical-Economic Feasibility Project to the application, while, to reduce the gap between the north and south of the country, 40 per cent of the total resources are allocated to interventions located in the southern regions.

In fact, if we analyze the data from the monitoring of applications and interventions in place in previous calls, we notice that most of the dropouts were concentrated in the southern regions where more than 45 percent of the applications were unsuccessful and out of 13,000 planned housing places, only 6,000 are in implementation.

With the goal of reaching target M4C1-28, due in Q4 2022 "At least 7,500 additional beds created and assigned thanks to Law 338/2000, as revised by 31 December 2022", the MUR, on 26 August 2022, published Ministerial Decree no. 1046, later updated on 19 September 2022 with Ministerial Decree no. 1089, which provides for the specific allocation of 300 million

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<sup>15</sup> Amendments introduced by Article 64(8) of Law No. 108/2021 and Article 15 of Legislative Decree No. 152/2021.

<sup>16</sup> Article 18, Law No. 221/2015 and Article 34, Legislative Decree 50/2016 (as amended by Legislative Decree 56/2017).

euro (to be found within the 960 provided for by Reform 1.7 of the PNRR)<sup>17</sup>.

This amount, previously included in Ministerial Decree 1257/2021, which had increased the availability of the Fifth Call for Law 338 to € 467 million, was removed from Ministerial Decree 1257/2021, bringing the availability of the decree back to € 167 million.

The call retraces the structure of Law No. 338 and the implementing decrees but, for the first time, introduces the possibility of financing leases as long as they are more than nine years old and opens up the possibility for private individuals to apply for financing following an agreement with the public or private entities envisaged by Law No. 338.

In fact, with the aim of making accommodation immediately available, the call is essentially aimed at purchases of existing facilities and leases. The financing of the works, which can be carried out until March 2024 (without compromising the functionality of the residences) to achieve the DNSH, as well as the necessary expenditure for the purchase of furniture and equipment, are only possible at the same time as the purchase of the property.

The call for funding also introduces significant reductions to the minimum quali-quantitative standards required, reducing the minimum surface areas of single and double rooms and toilet facilities by 20 per cent, and eliminating the mandatory minimum surface areas of the environmental units to be allocated to functional service areas.

Following the issuing of Ministerial Decree No. 1046/2022, 61 applications for funding were submitted. At the end of the work, the commission considered 44 interventions for a total financing amount of about 141 million euros and an involvement of more than 4,200 accommodation places as eligible for financing. Of these interventions, 27 relate to over-nine-year leases for more than 3,000 accommodation places involved. The results of the preliminary activity and the list of those admitted were published in Ministerial Decree no. 1246 of 28 November 2022.

Since the amount assigned with the first call for applications was less than 50% of the available resources, and thanks to the mediation with the European Community, which allowed for the postponement of the time for the commissioning of the accommodation places from 31 December 2022 to 28 February 2023, the MUR published a new call for applications, Ministerial Decree 1252/2022. For this second issuance, 44 applications were submitted and 37 were admitted for a state funding amount of more than 135 million euro and about 4,700 accommodation places concerned. 24 successful applications concerned long-term leases for about 3,500 accommodation places and 93 million in funding granted. The results of this second call were published in Ministerial Decree No. 77 of 14 February 2023.

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<sup>17</sup> To identify the interventions eligible for this tranche of funding, the MUR, with Ministerial Decree no. 1169 of 12 October 2022, appointed a special commission subsequently also confirmed for the processing of applications received under Ministerial Decree 1252/2022.

In total, therefore, around 278 million euro was co-financed for more than 8,900 accommodation places.

For the management of the remaining 670 million euros, the Ministry of Universities and Research, with the aim, among other things, of increasing the openness of participation in the financing to private investors and public-private partnerships, appointed, with Ministerial Decree no. 59/2022 of 13 January 2022, a specific working group to draw up proposals aimed at a more structural revision of the current law itself and, on 27 December, issued Ministerial Decree 1437/2022, which partially clarifies the way in which this amount is to be used.

Starting in 2023, the same Ministry has undertaken a series of meetings with public and private operators aimed at identifying appropriate strategies to be able to achieve, with the support of these funds, the target set for 2026, hypothesizing different ways of disbursing state funding that also include support for management costs.

On the other hand, about the fifth call of law no. 338/00, Parliament, with law no. 197 of 29 December 2022, The State Budget for the financial year 2023, approved the allocation of a further 300 million euros, offsetting the share of the PNRR funds that had been cancelled and bringing the overall availability, for the specific financing, to almost 500 million euros.

## **6. Conclusions.**

The reported data and elaborations attest to the effectiveness of a flexible apparatus, capable of progressing in accordance with regulatory developments and in line with a constantly evolving framework of demands, of students and stakeholders.

Parliament's increase of annual resources and the inclusion of a specific funding chapter within the NRP further contribute to certify the validity of Law 338.

Rapidly increasing the availability of accommodation, through the reduction of standards such as quantity, is, however, something to reflect on.

The identification of minimum standards such as quantitative standards, defined through research carried out by the inter-university Centre TESIS at the end of the last century, represented an extraordinary innovation for the sector: law 338/00 and the implementing decrees, in fact, although born with the objective of increasing the number of university accommodation and residences, were characterized by the importance given to student welfare.

However, the continuous and steady reduction in the areas and functional areas provided for, greatly accentuated by the decrees issued to reach the target of 7,500 beds by December 2022, is beginning to undermine the virtuosity of the law to the advantage of more properly economic and managerial logics.

One of the goals achieved in recent years by the regulatory apparatus, namely, to transform student housing from dormitories to full-fledged



social incubators, is clashing with a more pressing need, namely, to achieve the highest possible number of beds by 2026. The priority, therefore, shifted to quantitative, economic and managerial aspects, leaving out architectural and social ones. The reduction of space has been used, in fact, as a tool to justify the economic sustainability of financial operations and increase the number of beds, generating an inevitable lowering of the quality offered not only in terms of surfaces and environmental units but also in terms of integration with the context, space sharing, redevelopment of the existing building stock and urban regeneration.

The reduction and in some cases elimination of specific functional areas risks abruptly stopping an ongoing cultural process that puts the student, and his or her well-being, at the center of the educational process, also interrupting the urban and social regeneration processes undertaken so far.

### Thanks

Arch. Sandra Carlini, arch. PhD Mario Di Benedetto, arch. Andrea Sichi and arch. PhD student Valentina Spagnoli for their support in data collection.

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# The Role of Urban Cultural and Youth Policies.

CHAIR SESSION2

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How does the University contribute to the growth of cultural life and of quality of life in the cities in which it is located? How does it promote the cultural inclusion of those strata of the population increasingly excluded from cultural life? How does it promote the development of cultural and creative enterprise?

Culture represents one of the main keys to reading the relationship between universities and cities: it is the engine of participation, confrontation, and growth in urban communities, especially in the southern regions, where, according to the April 2022 Fair and Sustainable Welfare data, there is a particularly sharp decline in cultural consumption, well below the European average. This is a worrying picture that threatens to undermine the understanding of society's complex problems and the democratic frameworks.

A great master of archaeology and ancient art history, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, who always combined his university teaching with civic engagement, argued in the 1970s that *«l'essere tagliati fuori, esclusi dalla possibilità di comprendere certi valori culturali è, per la classe operaia, una ingiustizia e una sofferenza non minore di quella dovuta alla diseguaglianza economica e sociale»*. The insistence on education and culture as a tool for emancipation and freedom had, on the other hand, been a *leitmotiv* in the battles of the great trade unionist Giuseppe Di Vittorio, but the issue remains highly topical today.

The university cannot but be in the forefront: it is the main social lift (long since stopped), through education and research, but also through widespread cultural promotion that goes beyond the boundaries of the academic community.

Culture is an essential right, as emphasized by the Council of Europe Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro), ratified by the Italian Parliament in 2020, according to which communities and cultural resources are linked by dynamic, plural and complex relationships: cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is the main "resource for sustainable development and quality of life, in a constantly evolving society."

In this sense, the University can assume the role of an essential urban actor: open to listening, sensitive to the needs of the citizenry, it must

foster integration, social turnover, and open, inclusive and democratic dialogue.

The first need felt was related to the acquisition of information in all Apulian universities: a survey on the places and events of cultural production and fruition, on the collaborations established with local administrations, associations, and the world of cultural enterprises. The results are of considerable interest and provide a basis for developing and evaluating proposals to be put in place.

During the discussion, numerous and varied initiatives were presented to enhance university cultural resources in favor of city communities, from university film clubs to projects focused on the relationships between culture and food, many of these directly promoted by and with student associations. The emerging picture is vibrant and multifaceted, but it is also marked by a certain fragmented nature, a still poor coordination at the level of the individual university, the city and local area (including the areas of travel of the many commuters) and the region, that prevents it from becoming a system. What is needed, therefore, would be steering committees, composed of faculty, students and technical-administrative staff, open externally to stakeholders that would encourage the construction of integrated networks with the different components between universities, businesses and associations in the area. To trigger encounter and dialogue in this regard, joint initiatives, such as the *Beautiful Minds Festival*, a proposal developed from student suggestions, would be desirable. Ultimately, cultural professions should be more recognized and guaranteed, affirming the centrality of work and quality employment in this field as well: culture can and should also be enterprise, as so many encouraging experiences already show, such as, for example, the Cineclub run by the students of the University of Salento. Opportunities for real collaboration between the Universities and the many energies present in local society should be multiplied: an example of this is the cycle "I giovedì della Camerata Musicale di Bari," conversations and concerts that the University of Bari will host in the summer months in the courtyards of the Ateneo building, so as to offer citizens who remain in town and tourists the chance to spend a few pleasant evening hours with speakers who will cover multiple topics and various musical genres. Above all, universities should give voice to the desire for experimentation and free creativity, supporting original and "less academically stuffed" projects (as someone pointed out during the debate).

# Cinema and the Third Mission. The Case of the Cineclub Universitario in Salento.

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## 1. Introduction.

In 2015, the “Cineclub Universitario” initiative was launched by the board for the Degree Course in Communication Sciences, with the aim to build a path for students in the disciplines of communication and entertainment. Funded by the Apulia Region Department of Tourism and Cultural Industry, the project was implemented by the Apulia Film Commission—AFC—and the University of Salento, which had just entered into an agreement. Over time, the initiative has become instrumental in fostering cooperation between a variety of institutions dealing with film culture in the Salento area.

Under the scientific supervision of Luca Bandirali, the project initially focused on the screening and analysis of television series, video clips, medium-length and feature films, shown in different slots and chosen based on the topics covered within the Cinema, Photography, and Television course. The introduction of both a bachelor’s degree in Performing Arts and Music—DAMS—at the University of Salento in 2017 and a master’s degree in Performing Arts and Audio-Visual Production at the University of Bologna in 2020 broadened such a field of education, with courses in Audience studies, Film studies, Media studies, Film Production and Distribution.

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The Cineclub currently complements university teaching, providing students with a first approach to the planning of cultural events and offering opportunities for discussion with insiders and academics. Over the years, initiatives have been carried out that include festivals with screenings of classic and contemporary films, workshops with production artists and academic researchers, and collaborations with the main film events in the area, which is in line with the Third Mission objectives pursued by the University of Salento. The Third Mission instrument may be said to be crucial for the academic world to engage with social issues, adopting a strategy that aims to disseminate knowledge among members of the community and the industry<sup>2</sup>, while demonstrating its ability to manage public funding reserved for the cultural development of the areas involved<sup>3</sup>. As set out in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup>, the University aims to establish a network with public and private bodies, promoting the economic development and cultural growth of the area.

As Boyer would say<sup>5</sup>, the Cineclub aims to achieve a “scholarship of engagement” that may bring about a renewal of the relationship between the academic world and the local community, in an attempt to culturally enrich the area and foster a more inclusive idea of the University. With a view to rethinking the public engagement of the university as a “bridge” that should bring the university to the area and the area to the university, the debate on the institutional recognition of the Third Mission also revolves around reforms based on what has been called a “third way”. Such reforms stem from the assumption that the university should have an “amphibious” status in order to move more nimbly in the non-academic world<sup>6</sup>: medium- and long-term collaborations in the area may help to deal with innovative projects characterized by a logic of sharing and public engagement that sometimes remains outside the evaluation grids<sup>7</sup>, or does not find full appreciation in the academic world. For this

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Stefan de Jong, Katharine Barker, Deborah Cox, Thordis Sveinsdottir and Peter Van den Besselaar, “Understanding Societal Impact through Productive Interactions: ICT Research as a Case”, *Research Evaluation* 23, no. 2 (2014): 89–102; Giustina Secundo, Christle De Beer, Cornelius S.L. Schutte and Giuseppina Passiante, “Mobilising Intellectual Capital to Improve European Universities’ Competitiveness. The Technology Transfer Offices’ Role”, *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 18, no. 3 (2017): 607–624; Tommaso Agasisti, Cristian Barra and Roberto Zotti, “Research, Knowledge Transfer, and Innovation: the Effect of Italian Universities’ Efficiency on Local Economic Development 2006–2012”, *Journal of Regional Science* (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Benneworth, Rómulo Pinheiro and Mabel Sánchez-Barrioluengo, “One Size does not Fit All! New Perspectives on the University in the Social Knowledge Economy”, *Science and Public Policy* 43, no. 6 (2016): 731–735.

<sup>4</sup> University of Salento, *Piano Strategico 2020-2022* No. 0023989 of 04/02/2021 – Rep. n. 68/2021 Decreti Rettorali (2016-) - UOR: Rettorato - Classif. III/17. 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest L. Boyer, “The Scholarship of Engagement”, *Journal of Public Service and Outreach* 1, no.1 (1996): 11-20.

<sup>6</sup> Mara Benadusi and Roberta Altin, “Engaged Scholarship o razionalità neoliberale? Il ruolo anfibio dell’antropologia nella Terza Missione”, *Antropologia Pubblica* 8, no. 1 (Bologna: Clueb, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> The evaluation of case studies within the framework of Third Mission activities is a significant new feature of VQR3. These activities demonstrate the openness of institutions, as they identify with, and understand, the needs of local residents, becoming involved in the area and offering

reason, the university should foster a development model fuelled by institutions, businesses, the local community, and the university itself. The history of the Cineclub shows how such an initiative can contribute to actively enhancing the tangible and intangible cultural heritage crucial for the development of the area.

## **2. Networking: the Collaboration with the Apulia Film Commission.**

The collaboration with the Apulia Film Commission has been fundamental to both strengthen the relationship with the Apulia Regional Council and have a decisive impact on the development of film culture. In the regional context, cinema is a significant economic reality: the Apulia Region has had a Film Commission since 2007, with the primary goal of establishing a production chain, attracting investment, and fostering the professionalization of local workers. The Film Fund provides production support to companies that plan to make films in Apulia and have a budget in place, by allocating selected projects between 20% and 40% of their production budget. Furthermore, the Film Commission plays a key role in audience development and the dissemination of audio-visual culture, with the “Cineporto” buildings and festival networks being essential in the achievement of such an objective. The “Cineporto” buildings in Bari, Lecce, and Taranto are multi-purpose structures that were set up to provide logistic support to productions and, over time, have become part of a distribution network, hosting a film programming that is often integrated with educational initiatives planned by universities and schools.

In fifteen years, the Apulia Film Commission has carried out activities that have had a beneficial economic impact on the area. The over 10 million euros allocated in its first ten years translated into a 46-million-euro direct impact on the area, with a contribution-expenditure ratio of five<sup>8</sup>. The impact on the Salento area has been particularly significant in terms of some AFC guidelines, such as tourism promotion and the dissemination of Apulian cultural identities.

The Apulian Film Commission has always prioritized education among its goals. In this sense, the activities carried out within the framework of the

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their knowledge to entire communities. The Third Mission thus encourages institutions external to the university to participate in the complex process of research and innovation. Third Mission activities contribute to building a relationship between institutions and the outside world by transferring knowledge from the researcher to society. This results in a constructive bi-directional evolution in which institutions outline new directions in research and education through interaction with society. See Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems, *Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca 2015-2019 (VQR 2015-2019)*. Final Report – *Statistiche e risultati di compendio* – 21 July 2022 [https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/VQR-2015-2019\\_Rapporto\\_Finale\\_EC\\_21luglio2022.pdf](https://www.anvur.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/VQR-2015-2019_Rapporto_Finale_EC_21luglio2022.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Luca Bandirali, “Il Salento si alza. Come una regione di confine nel bacino del Mediterraneo è diventata un’area di interesse nell’ambito del cinema europeo contemporaneo”, in Stefania Parigi, Christian Uva and Vito Zaggarro (eds), *Cinema e identità italiana. Cultura visuale e immaginario nazionale fra tradizione e contemporaneità* (Roma: RomaTre-Press, 2019).



Cineclub have contributed to the achievement of its statutory objectives. Some of the educational initiatives that have been carried out since 2015 will be analysed in the following paragraphs.

Cineclub students have acted as jurors and staff members at film festivals held within the Apulia Cinefestival Network, which coordinates film events funded by the Apulia Regional Council, including the Lecce European Film Festival directed by Alberto La Monica, Vive le Cinéma, a French Film Festival directed by Alessandro Valenti, Brizia Minerva, and Angelo Laudisa, the Corigliano d'Otranto Film Festival of the Real under the direction of Paolo Pisanelli, the Otranto Film Fund Festival directed by Stefania Rocca, and others that have been recently established. Such an experience has allowed students to approach film productions from a critical perspective, which has enabled them to put into practice their theoretical knowledge of audio-visual language. Proof of the effectiveness of such initiatives is the fact that students from the DAMS of the University of Salento are constantly selected to become members of the UNIMED International Jury at the Venice Film Festival, and some of them have recently also acted as jurors at the Collegium of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival. On the other hand, those who have taken part in the organization of a festival as volunteer staff members have been provided with the opportunity to observe the different phases of event planning from the inside, establishing valuable contacts with cultural operators that may even turn into future job opportunities. As for the production sector, internships have been set up on film and television sets, so as to enable students to learn the basic technical skills related to pre-production, production, and post-production.

Cineclub students have also had the opportunity to participate in multidisciplinary debates, within the framework of higher education schools cooperating with the University of Salento and the Apulia Film Commission. Among these, the "Fata Morgana Web" magazine, under the scientific direction of Roberto De Gaetano from the University of Calabria, has been holding La Critica Cinematografica Summer School since 2019. In this context, lectures are held by internationally renowned teachers, with the theoretical analysis of the role, history and forms of film criticism being complemented by practical experience, through writing workshops aimed at explaining the practical aspects of a critical reflection, especially when written for the web. In 2019, the University of Salento also hosted the Scuola di Placetelling Winter School. Under the scientific direction of Fabio Pollice, Rector of the same University, a series of theoretical and technical seminars were held that focused on audio-visual approaches to the narration of places. The expression "placetelling" is to be interpreted as a specific approach that sees storytelling as a social action centred on the narration of places and capable of contributing to the production of the very sense of places. Therefore, placetelling may be said to be the point of convergence of different fields of research—media geography, film studies, territorial

marketing, semiotics, narratology, ethnography—which finds one of its most widespread and effective manifestations in audio-visual storytelling. Working on these concepts, students specialized in the analysis of the audio-visual representation of space. Finally, the Otranto Film Fund Festival Summer School in Filmmaking, held in 2019, dealt with audio-visual techniques, with a specific focus on digital storytelling. Conceived and directed by Luca Bandirali from the University of Salento, the Summer School adopted an interdisciplinary, multifaceted approach, bringing together an international group of students and teachers from DAMS courses, the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, and film schools located in Italy, Spain, Greece, and Bulgaria.

### **3. The DAMS Mondays.**

As clarified in its mission statement, one of the objectives pursued by the AFC is audience development, which has been achieved through the film discussion and educational events planned by Cineclub students. Such events have taken place at the “Giuseppe Bertolucci” CineLab in the Cineporto building in Lecce, one of the venues that the AFC has made available to host initiatives organized by third parties or the AFC itself.

“The DAMS Mondays” initiative, which took place between 2019 and 2020, may be described as an organic process in which students could choose the films to review, the themes to discuss, and the guests to invite, while acquiring new knowledge of the planning of a cine-audio-visual cultural event. The design of the events was deeply educational, which was instrumental in both refining the learning process of the students involved and consolidating their specific professional profile. The work of the Cineclub benefited from the mentoring of some of the professionals from the AFC. Thanks to the adoption of non-formal education strategies based on a learning by doing approach, the students were encouraged to gain field experience and achieve concrete objectives, while developing their personal and professional skills.

The initiative took place on a weekly basis, in the 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. time slot. The content of the programming was in line with the objectives of the DAMS degree course, with the events being intended not only for the about 400 first, second, and third year DAMS students, but also for the entire university and local population. The necessary funding was provided by the Apulia Region Department of Tourism and Cultural Industry, as part of the “Viva Cinema – Promuovere il Cinema e Valorizzare i Cineporti di Puglia 2019-2020” action, funded through the “Patto per la Puglia” 2014-2020 Cohesion Fund, and “Promuovere il cinema e i suoi luoghi”, an action undertaken by the Apulia Film Commission and the Apulia Region Department of Tourism, Cultural Economy and Territorial Enhancement, funded through “Patto per la Puglia” 2014-2020 Cohesion Fund.

Organized by the Cineclub and focused on film review, “The DAMS Mondays” was the first event that directly involved students in event

design, research, press releases, communication, and organization. The participants were divided into specialized working groups, which allowed them to develop professional planning knowledge and skills. Each group also had a mentor for the implementation of the actions described in the following paragraphs.

- Design

The working group had to deal with the design of the event, choosing the film to screen, the themes to discuss, and the guests to invite. It communicated the dates of the events to the institutions and drew up the budget plan.

- Research

Students were responsible for finding the right film media. They selected the version of each work to be screened—e.g., restored, dubbed, subtitled, soundtracked editions—, providing a Blu-ray Disc and backup copies. The group verified the effective functioning of the supports and took care of any replacements.

- Hospitality

The working group contacted the guests—e.g., university lecturers, directors, operators—, arranged meetings, and organized travel and accommodation.

- Multimedia Content

The working group, consisting of photographers and video makers in training, documented each of the events. Students also created multimedia content to be used for social communication.

- Social Communication

The working group was responsible for creating and programming content for the Cineclub Instagram and Facebook pages. It disseminated news about the events and built audience loyalty through content designed for different targets.

- Press Office

The working group drafted and disseminated press releases, organized press conferences, invited institutional partners, and collected their statements.

- Graphics

Students designed graphics for posters, brochures, and online communication.

- Newsletter

The working group collected the participants' e-mail addresses and created a newsletter reporting on upcoming events.

Some of the themes covered within the context of “The DAMS Mondays” were: “Le maschere della commedia all’italiana” (Masks of the Italian comedy), with the screening of Dino Risi’s *Il Sorpasso* (1962), in the edition restored by the Cineteca di Bologna and Istituto Luce, and *Il Federale*, directed by Luciano Salce (1961); “Non sono una bambola” (I am not a doll), with an analysis of Nicholas Ray’s *Johnny Guitar* (1954), Jean-Luc Godard’s *Vivre sa vie* (1962), and Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Deserto*

rosso (1964), and interviews with guests including Francesco Zucconi from the IUAV University of Venice. Some of the film-review events also focused on television seriality and game studies. One of such events, introduced by Damiano Garofalo from “La Sapienza” University of Rome, involved the analysis of the interactive film *Bandersnatch*, part of the *Black Mirror* franchise, which required a special screening in order for the audience to express their preferences and plot choices. A special event was organized to celebrate Oscar night, with a screening of Joseph L. Mankiewicz’s *All about Eve* (1950) and guests including journalist and film critic Enrico Magrelli, one of the authors and presenters of the “Hollywood Party” *Radio Tre* programme.

The above-mentioned events, together with the partnerships established and the presence of experts in the field, have sparked interest in the cinema, thus contributing to the cultural growth of the area. The interactive nature of the events has proved to be essential in building a community of connoisseurs and enthusiasts who, in turn, have supported local cinemas.

Audience development activities have also made it possible to include new audiences. These have been guided in the improvement of crucial skills and tools to both enjoy cultural content and decode messages, fundamental in order for the artistic experience not to become meaningless and alienating<sup>9</sup>. As it has already been mentioned, each the event planned by the Cineclub has provided an interpretive tool for the audience: the screenings have been preceded by an introduction delivered by experts in the field—film professors, directors, actors, cinema operators, and experts in other fields related to the topic to be covered—, who have also been responsible for constructing a narrative that could encourage the participation in cultural initiatives.

Consequently, the audience has started to play an increasingly active role, as it has expressed its opinion and has been involved in the programming, with its collective intelligence being recognized<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, the local community has actively participated in programming and implementation, through open planning, public bodies, associations, and committees that have interacted and cooperated with the Cineclub to create content that may meet the needs of the community. The Cineclub internal working and research groups have focused on specific topics that are in line with the mission of some of the actors involved, who are in constant dialogue with the community in order to listen to and analyse the audience.

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<sup>9</sup> Heather Maitland, *A Guide to Audience Development*, 2nd ed. (London: Arts Council of England, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Alessandro Bollo, “50 sfumature di pubblico e la sfida dell’audience development,” in Francesco De Biase (ed.), *I pubblici della cultura. Audience development, audience engagement* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2014).

#### 4. #LaCulturaRestaAccesa Festival.

The result of a collaboration with the Lecce Library and Museum Centre, the Apulia Regional Council, the Teatro Pubblico Pugliese Association, and the Apulia Film Commission, #LaCulturaRestaAccesa (#CultureStaysOn) Festival aimed to promote and support the work of cultural organizations in the local context, an objective that proved to be particularly significant during Covid-19 lockdown in Italy. The digital schedule designed by the student members of the Cineclub offered daily audio-visual content from the archives of the associations involved. Through the Festival YouTube channel, a variety of cultural and identity-related topics were explored in the fields of music, dance, theatre, archaeology, contemporary art, literature, and publishing.

Such programming was made possible thanks to intensive work on archive materials and content curation. The content offered by the associations involved was further developed through re-editing and the creation of soundtracks and graphics. The fruitful interaction between the Cineclub and the Library and Museum Centre demonstrated a shared interest in making cultural heritage digitally available, enhancing local culture even in a period of uncertainty.

Between March and May 2020, daily events were organized to promote the new content published on the LaCulturaRestaAccesa YouTube channel. Some examples of that include the performances put on by the Koreja innovative theatre company<sup>11</sup>; the concerts by musicians Paolo Fresu, Uri Caine and Raffaele Casarano; Davide Barletti's Italian Sud Est; Carmelo Bene's *Lectura Dantis*; videos on the staging of the *Venus of the Rags*, a conceptual artwork by Michelangelo Pistoletto; and interviews with well-known personalities in the fields of art and architecture, such as Eugenio Barba, Goffredo Fofi, Elio De Capitani, and Renzo Piano.

The CRAfest 2020 experience developed as part of this project. An online international contest organized by the Cineclub and the Musicclub Unisalento, it aimed to promote the work of young artists in the fields of music and short film production. On this occasion, the Cineclub set up a jury chaired by Stefania Rocca to evaluate the competing short films, giving the students the opportunity to put into practice the critical skills they had acquired during their university studies.

The experimental model of #LaCulturaRestaAccesa Festival proved to be an effective tool in the cultural development of the area, as it brought together the skills and resources of important national and international artists and cultural operators. Furthermore, the CRAfest 2020 allowed emerging young artists to reach new audiences even during a healthcare emergency.

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<sup>11</sup> *Brecht's Dance. La danza del ribelle* (2001), *BRAT (Fratello): Cantieri per un'Opera Rom* (2010), *Katër i Radës. Il naufragio* (2014, co-produced with Biennale Musica Venezia – International Festival of Contemporary Music).

## 5. Other Collaborations.

The Cineclub has collaborated with a variety of cultural institutions in the area, with the aim to implement a wide range of initiatives including screenings and seminars, some of which are summarized below.

- History of Cinema – Starter Pack (13/10/2022 – 15/12/2022)

In the context of the History of Cinema course part of the bachelor's degree in DAMS, a screening of classic films was hosted, with a historical analysis of the latter being carried out.

- FeelM – From Primitives to the Future (2021 – ongoing)

In collaboration with Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, CoolClub, and Cineteca di Milano, the event has been exploring the link between the sounds of contemporary music and early cinema through the soundtrack of silent films.

- From my Armchair: Music and Cinema, Origins and Similarities of Different Disciplines (2021)

The initiative was carried out in collaboration with Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, CoolClub, and Apulia Film Commission. A series of masterclasses focused on the sound processes of silent films, historiographically delving into the different approaches of early and contemporary film composers.

- Repeat! The Film that Lived Several Times (2020)

In collaboration with Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, such a retrospective explored the early 20th-century film adaptations of theatrical and literary works, with the films being broadcast on #Laculturarestaaccessa YouTube channel.

- Your Mind at the Cinema (2019-2020)

The event was held in collaboration with the Italian Association of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. Films dealing with the various stages of life and the relationship between the human and inhuman were analysed, in an attempt to facilitate the understanding of the emotional and unconscious aspects characterizing topical issues.

- Arts/Media (2018)

Carried out in collaboration with Interdepartmental Research Centre in Digital Humanities, the project focused on philosophy and art history, film analysis and media convergence.

- Full Screen (2017)

Held in collaboration with “Rete degli Spettatori” Association, the initiative aimed to initiate a discourse on contemporary filmmaking in Italy. It involved the screening of a series of contemporary films produced in Italy, followed by seminars held by directors and film critics.

- Conversations about the Future (2017)

The Conversations about the Future Festival has been held in Lecce since 2013. Every year, about 80 events take place over four days, with over 150 guests exploring – from a multidisciplinary perspective – the issues that characterize contemporary society and those that will develop in the near future. In the 2017 edition of the Festival, the Cineclub, in collaboration

with “Diffondiamo idee di valore” Association, hosted the “Cinema about the Future” section of the initiative, with films focusing on art, migration, journalism, activism, and other topical issues.

## 6. A New Phase: a Cultural Association.

In January 2023, the Cineclub Universitario founded the cultural association of the same name, thanks to the passionate commitment of 17 students and graduates from the bachelor’s degree in Performing Arts and Music, and the master’s degree in Performing Arts and Audio-Visual Production Sciences. The Statute of the Association formalizes some of the objectives that have characterized the activities of the Cineclub since its early days. In particular, Articles 3 and 4 of the Statute clarify that<sup>12</sup>, Art. 3. The association operates for the pursuit of civil, solidarity and socially useful purposes on a non-profit basis, carrying out ‘activities of general interest’ that may benefit its members or third parties, as set out by Art. 5 of the Third Sector Code.

Art. 4. The aim of the Association is to promote the wider dissemination of the outcomes of cultural, technical, and professional initiatives in the field of the cinema, with a view to enhancing the local, national and foreign cinematographic and audio-visual heritage.

Accordingly, the Association aims to:

- cooperate with educational institutions in order to set up a cultural centre through activities for the dissemination and promotion of film culture;
- foster interaction within the university community;
- promote exchanges with similar organizations based in Italian and foreign universities.

The Association also aims to foster the education of its members and contribute to local cultural growth. It encourages participation in social life by means of concrete initiatives. The Association may carry out any activity deemed useful for the pursuit of social goals, even cooperating with natural or legal persons, public or private bodies.

Furthermore, the Association is willing to improve accessibility: fostering the interaction within the community also means facilitating the involvement of people with disabilities. By collaborating with associations that support the organizers of cultural events in the development of appropriate strategies, the Cineclub promotes social inclusion through measures that enable people with disabilities to actively and safely participate in the most diverse activities. Some of the films screened during the Cineclub events have audio descriptions, created for individuals with visual impairments by specialists in the field. Such an approach has allowed the Association to involve that part of the audience that is often difficult to reach, the “audience by surprise”

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<sup>12</sup> Associazione Culturale “Cineclub Universitario”, *Statuto dell’Associazione Culturale “Cineclub Universitario”*, 2023.

described in a study on audience development carried out for the European Commission:

People hard to reach/indifferent/hostile who do not participate in any cultural activity for a complex range of reasons, related to social exclusion factors, education and accessibility. Their participation could hardly be possible without an intentional, long-term and targeted approach<sup>13</sup>.

In addition, the Association is committed to the criteria of eco-sustainability, adopting renewable solutions in the creation of installations and transferring promotional activities to digital media<sup>14</sup>.

The Association planning currently shows a particular focus on the study of space and landscape issues. The Cineclub offers a privileged perspective on the matter due to its collaboration with organizations such as the Apulia Film Commission, the Castromediano Museum, and the University of Salento.

The actors that trigger, and participate in, the creation of values and practices are examined in a series of studies on the transformative processes of the contemporary southern landscape. The dissemination of Apulian cultural identities and the enhancement of the area have been part of the Apulia Film Commission programmes since its inception, which has resulted in works having their roots in Apulia and produced by local artists. Consequently, the cinema is close to the various local contexts and captures the events taking place in the region in a participatory manner. The landscape never acts as a backdrop, but it is always a subject that leaves its mark on the stories being told, strengthening or changing the identity of specific places.

Some of the activities carried out by the Association have enabled the formation of research groups involving students interested in broadening their knowledge in these areas. The initiatives that have been implemented since the foundation of the cultural Association are listed below.

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<sup>13</sup> Other audience categories were also identified by the study: “*Audience by habit*. People who usually attend and/or participate in cultural activities, whose barriers to access are relatively easy to overcome, and towards whom different strategies are possible, like audience education to attract similar audiences not currently participating; taste cultivation to increase and diversify content and attendance. ‘Habit’ in this framework means that those audiences are familiar with the same idea of being an audience, therefore cultural experiences are not just something they are used to do, but much more a part of their identity and self-perception. *Audience by choice*. People who are not used to participate for reasons of life style, lack of opportunities or financial resources; those for whom participating is not a habit, or who rarely choose to attend a show or a concert, but don’t have any particular social or cultural disadvantage; to engage them different strategies are possible, as extended marketing but also education and participatory approaches”. See Alessandro Bollo, Cristina Da Milano, Alessandra Gariboldi, and Chris Torch (eds), *Study on Audience Development – How to Place Audiences at the Centre of Cultural Organizations*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> As far as sustainability is concerned, the “Cineclub Universitario” Association guarantees, where possible, the implementation of sustainable events in compliance with the indications provided by the ‘Festival Green Guide’ promoted by the Association of Italian Film Festivals, in line with the Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM) defined by the Ministry of the Environment also for the culture and entertainment sector.



- Abysses of Silence. Images from *Banditi a Orgosolo*, directed by Vittorio De Seta and released in 1961 (31/03/2023)

The initiative was carried out in collaboration with Cineteca Sarda, University of Cagliari, University of Salento, and Castromediano Museum. Through stills and frames from the film, the analysis focused on Vittorio De Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo*, which won the "Best First Feature Award" at the Venice Film Festival in 1961.

- Image-Landscape (2023 – in progress)

The project is being carried out in collaboration with the Eurisko association for social development, within the context of the Theories and Techniques of Audio-Visual Language course part of the bachelor's degree in DAMS. The initiative focuses on an analysis of the representation and role of the landscape in classic and contemporary film productions. Some screenings include the use of audio description for visually impaired individuals.

- Nature Rebels (27/03/2023)

In collaboration with Bifest Bari International Film Festival, the Cineclub participated in the panel on cinema and ecology for high schools, with the realization and screening of a montage of several film scenes featuring monstrous creatures.

Although the screenings may be linked to specific university or school projects, access has always been free and open to the entire community, in line with Goal 4 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims not only to ensure quality, equitable, and inclusive education with reference to compulsory schooling, but also to promote non-compulsory learning opportunities throughout an individual's lifetime<sup>15</sup>. The cultural policies analysed identify the role of the citizen not only as a user of culture, but also as an active participant in its protection and promotion: the study and implementation of innovative art forms leads to the development of responsible and involved audiences<sup>16</sup>.

## 7. Concluding Remarks.

Thanks to the support of local institutions, DAMS students have been entrusted with the management of the Cineclub activities, taking care of film retrieval and content curation, creating schedules, welcoming guest speakers and interacting with them. The planning of events has always been geared towards community involvement, with the aim of building community loyalty and creating a link between the local population and the academia, while sparking the people's interest in film and television by offering quality film programming and interviews with well-known experts. The 20th-century meaning of the word "Cineclub" has thus been restored, with it being interpreted as one of the first instruments for the

<sup>15</sup> Stefano Molina and Francesca Billotta, "Il goal 4 dell'Agenda 2030 e le politiche per un'istruzione di qualità in Italia", *Working papers. Rivista online di Urban@it* – 2/2020.

<sup>16</sup> Flavia Barca, "L'Anno Europeo del Patrimonio Culturale e la visione europea della cultura," *DigitCult | Scientific Journal on Digital Cultures* 2, no. 3 (2017): 75–93.

cultural legitimation of the cinema and the diffusion and protection of film culture and art.

As soon as the Cineclub is recognized as a student association of the University of Salento in May 2023, it will have access to new forms of funding for the improvement of teaching and education services. Thanks to that, the dedication and attention that have always characterized the work carried out by the Cineclub will be strengthened and complemented by substantial new ambitions.

Over the years, the Cineclub of the University of Salento has succeeded in both involving the local community and interacting with cultural bodies in the public and private sphere. The agreement between the Apulia Film Commission and the University of Salento has encouraged Cineclub students to engage in experiences that have allowed them to develop their skills and knowledge in film programming. In accordance with the principles established by the Faro Convention, the Cineclub Universitario has committed to ensuring democratic participation in cultural promotion events, with the aim of raising awareness of “the process of identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural heritage”<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Council of Europe. *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, 27.X.2005. Faro, 2005.

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# Matera University City? Possible Dialogues

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## 1. University and City.

The historic relationship between universities and cities<sup>2</sup> is now returning to the centre of attention in socio-cultural and political reflections as a result of the crises and resources available in the new European programming and in the national funds of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Rethinking possible integration policies between the two systems from a contemporary perspective is very important, especially in contexts where this relationship has remained potential or insufficiently valued as resources for places and citizens.

The city is to be understood as a place for knowledge, culture and creativity production and dissemination, while the university represents the place that fosters the transit of knowledge, and individuals, which forms new personalities.<sup>3</sup> This complex relationship, which has been at the centre of architectural and urban planning debate since the 1970s, is reflected in the three categories of a university city, a city with universities, and a university campus,<sup>4</sup> described below, and from which the reflections of the present contribution start. In the university city, it is the university that assumes a central role in the urban, social and economic development of the city, determining the main qualitative and quantitative transformations; in the case of the city with universities, also called "university poles", to the university is given a space defined in physical and immaterial terms, which is more residual than in the first

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<sup>2</sup> Paolo Prodi, «Università e città nella storia europea», *il Mulino* 37, fasc. 3 (1988): 375–84; Patrizia Messina e Michelangelo Savino, «Università e Città. Introduzione al tema monografico», *Regional Studies and Local Development* 3, fasc. 3 (2022): 15–42.

<sup>3</sup> Arnaldo Bagnasco, «Città in cerca di università. Le università regionali e il paradigma dello sviluppo locale», *Stato e mercato* 24, fasc. 3 (2004): 455–74.

<sup>4</sup> Nicola Martinelli, *Spazi della conoscenza: università, città e territori* (Bari: Adda Editore, 2012).

case, and for that reason, it determines urban transformations and lines of development less strongly; finally, the third case of the university campus represents the physical and geographical separation between the city and the university, which inevitably affects the distance from the city's services and the possibilities the latter can offer the university and its community and vice versa.

These definitions take relevance when contextualized against the backdrop of the ongoing poly-crisis,<sup>5</sup> so profound as to call into question the social and economic assets, and ways of living and working in the contemporary city, and because of the renewed role of the knowledge economy as a facilitator in processes of advancement and development.<sup>6</sup> The contribution, therefore, aims to investigate as case study the city of Matera that hosts the university (among the many functions) and its community, trying to define the relationship between city and university system, still today fluctuating and not primary in territorial government policies. However, Matera has gone through three different conditions: the nomination as European Capital of Culture (2014), the Capital Year (2019) and the Covid-19 crisis (2020 to present). In each of these moments, the University has been a central element in urban dynamics, in some cases driving, in other cases it has more than anything else suffered some transformations. Different forms of temporary inhabitants populate Matera: students, tourists, and city users,<sup>7</sup> each exhibiting different housing needs. The category of students is very close to the knowledge worker vision;<sup>8</sup> travelling for training purposes, they move from the individual dimensions of their housing to the collective dimensions of places of study. Training facilities have always produced a strong impact on cities, which concerns not only the modification of the urban setting<sup>9</sup> but also the economic and social system of the host city.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, the presence of big events in the city brings measurable impacts on the attractiveness and competitiveness of universities.<sup>11</sup> For example, the inauguration of the new location of the University Campus in Via Lanera coincided with the proclamation of Matera as the European Capital of Culture 2019 and represented an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the academic institution and the city, integrating educational

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<sup>5</sup> Mauro Ceruti e Francesco Bellusci, *Abitare la complessità: La sfida di un destino comune* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis Piccola Biblioteca, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Jean Trullén e Rafael Boix, «Economia della conoscenza e reti di città: Città creative nell'era della conoscenza», *Sviluppo locale* 8, fasc. 18 (2001): 41–60.

<sup>7</sup> Guido Martinotti, *Metropoli: la nuova morfologia sociale della città* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Drucker, *Landmarks of Tomorrow: a Report on the New Post Modern World* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1959).

<sup>9</sup> Vittoria Santarsiero e Mariavaleria Mininni, «Politiche di innovazione e modelli sostenibili food oriented. Il ruolo delle università come spazi di sperimentazione e educazione», in *Atti della XXII Conferenza Nazionale SIU. L'Urbanistica italiana di fronte all'Agenda 2030. Portare territori e comunità sulla strada della sostenibilità e della resilienza* (Roma-Milano: Planum Publisher, s.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Wim Wiewel e David C Perry, *Global Universities and Urban Development: Case Studies and Analysis: Case Studies and Analysis* (Routledge, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Russ Thorne, «Economic Impact of sporting events», *The Independent, Independent Digital News and Media* 20 (2015).

activities with political and cultural ones<sup>12</sup> in the awareness of the importance of integration between urban and cultural policies. It is possible, moreover, to identify a "process of consolidation of the academic school in Matera in light of a better strategy of urban regionalization of the Lucanian university"<sup>13</sup> with a view to a development model based on the knowledge economy. Weaker, however, has been the city's response to student housing policies and the construction of services for students and temporary residents, as discussed below.

In this premises light, the contribution investigates the existing relationship between the university system and Matera, the nature of this relation, and how the latter has changed as a result of the aforementioned events, attempting to assess the fallout at the urban level useful to define possible scenarios built on the mutual exchange between city and university. Particular attention is paid to the role in these processes assumed by the temporary inhabitants of Matera, defined in the candidacy dossier as cultural inhabitants, and to the "new" ways of living that have challenged traditional models.

The contribution is organized as follows. After this introduction and a brief overview of temporary forms of city users, the materials and method of the research are described. Next, the case study of Matera in its relationship with the university is illustrated, highlighting the influence and impacts that the events had on the city, the university and the temporary inhabitants. Finally, after a discussion that returns an overview of the issues that emerged concerning the research themes, the study's limitations, conclusions and avenues for future research are drawn.

## 2. Temporary Forms of City Users.

The contemporary condition, is strongly influenced by the digitization of society, decreasing distances, hybrid forms of work and education, the result is the rise of a new population in constant movement. *"We are in an era where the transformations of productive arrangements and lifestyles, of global economic organization and communication systems, of languages and international relations are such as to postulate the advent of a 'new' professional and human figure, of a 'lineage' different from previous ones, capable of permeating the entire society with itself and at the same time of being its symbol, its logo"*.<sup>14</sup> Transitional, temporary inhabitants are those who enrich cities with cultural and social contaminations, who are adapted to living in places unusual in relation to traditional one. The motivations that push individuals to move are several, but we have a specific focus on

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<sup>12</sup> Mariavaleria Mininni, *MateraLucania2017: laboratorio città paesaggio* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Mariavaleria Mininni e Cristina Dicillo, «Politiche urbane e politiche culturali per Matera verso il 2019», *Territorio*, fasc. 73 (2015): 86.

<sup>14</sup> Sergio Bologna, «I "lavoratori della conoscenza" e la fabbrica che dovrebbe produrli», *L'ospite ingrato* 1 (2005): 18.

a population that moves for cultural and intellectual reasons. For this aim, we define, in a more specific way, what is meant by a temporary inhabitant, by understanding analytically what types this term refers to and what their needs are. The temporary inhabitant is a new player, a result of the phenomena of social and economic innovation, which has radically changed the concept of using time and space, with inevitable impacts on the urban context and its dynamics of transformation. Martinotti<sup>15</sup> defines them as city users, which are individuals who take advantage of a city's services but do not actually reside there. Reference is made, for example, to knowledge workers<sup>16</sup> and so, to artists, intellectuals, freelancers, researchers, businessman, the man with the personal computer, brain worker, anyone who produces knowledge by knowledge. This category also includes tourists, or better yet, travelers, the curious, cultural inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> Di Campli,<sup>18</sup> for instance, describes the resident tourist as a complex form of tourist, which is one who is not simply hunting for signs,<sup>19</sup> but learning about local culture, traditions and territories. The category of students is very similar to the view of temporary residents, as they are individuals who move for educational purposes. Out-of-home students personify a particular form of temporary inhabitant: they leave their hometowns to pursue higher education, university, master's, and further education. The time period is variable and can coincide with the entire course of study, or with short periods, such as semesters in European exchange programs like Erasmus+, for graduate courses, or for university conventions.

Among the previously mentioned categories, students certainly have a strong impact on the urban and economic and social system; think for example of the settlement of large facilities dedicated to education, housing for those out-of-home students, and services. Deciding to study in one city over another certainly depends on how attractive an urban setting is able to make itself by providing new inhabitants with adequate facilities, breaking down social barriers, ensuring social and cultural heterogeneity, and offering facilities dedicated to educational. Moreover, the academic community is far broader, including faculty, researchers, and doctoral students, each of which can also carry out their study, teaching and research activities at other locations. This condition includes the whole scientific community in the type of temporary inhabitants [Figure 1].

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<sup>15</sup> Martinotti, *Metropoli: la nuova morfologia sociale della città*.

<sup>16</sup> Drucker, *Landmarks of Tomorrow: a Report on the New Post Modern World*.

<sup>17</sup> Dossier Matera Capital of Culture 2019

<sup>18</sup> Antonio Di Campli, *Abitare la differenza: il turista e il migrante* (Roma: Donzelli editore, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Marco d'Eramo, *Il selfie del mondo: indagine sull'età del turismo* (Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 2019).





Figure 1| PhD Student working in the van.  
Credits: Francesca Alemanno.

### 3. Materials and Method.

The research applies the case study method to explore the relationship between Matera and its University and try to return a definition of this relation. The objective was to connote the City-University relationship in its socio-territorial and cultural elements, events occurred, and to detect the impacts on the urban and university system.

Qualitative research is based on two parallel phases: the analysis phase, better defined as desk research, which consists of researching, evaluating and reprocessing data already collected by others, and the second one, the fieldwork phase, which focuses on the researchers' participation in the activities analyzed.

The analysis phase was dedicated to an in-depth study of the relationship between the University of Basilicata (Matera campus) and the city of Matera, trying to reconstruct the resources present in the area, the events impacts and the possibilities for dialogue between the two institutions. The analysis of data and documents facilitated the description of the state of the art and the study of change processes. Specifically, Mininni<sup>20</sup> research,<sup>21</sup> were fundamental materials for understanding material and immaterial Matera resources, dynamics occurred, events and the legacy left by the Capital of Culture event.

In parallel, a fieldwork phase involved the observation of the city and university phenomena occurred 2019 to the present, with particular attention to the Capital of Culture event and to the analysis of the post-legacy phase, subsequently conditioned by the pandemic. These

<sup>20</sup> Leader of the Team Evaluator of the scope: Matera 2019: the transformative bearing on urban spaces, with subsequent publication of the volume *Osservare Matera*, Quodlibet, Macerata, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Mininni, *MateraLucania2017: laboratorio città paesaggio*; Mariavaleria Mininni, *Osservare Matera: cultura, cittadinanza e spazio* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2022).

assessments started from the phenomena observation, particularly at the initial moment of the Matera 2019 process, during the preparation of the events. This observation was carried out in the researchers' role, interested in the urban dynamics of the city of Matera, and by users and temporary inhabitants of the city, who experienced the Capital of Culture event, the subsequent pandemic lockdown and their effects on the city and its university (community included).

#### 4. University and Cultural System Versus Matera.

The site of the University of Basilicata in Matera represents a branch of the main one, which is located in the city of Potenza. The Matera campus includes the Department of Cultures and the Mediterranean (DiCEM), and the Department of Human Sciences (DiSU), as well as the offices of the Student Secretariat and those associated with the internship management facilities and the University Library. The courses of study pertaining to the DiCEM department are: Architecture, five years course, master's degree; Cultural Heritage Worker, and Landscape, Environment and Urban Greening (PAVU), bachelor's degree programs; Archaeology and History of Art (ASA), international course in collaboration with the *école pratique des hautes études in Paris*, master's degree; Anthropological and Geographical Sciences for Cultural Heritage and the Enhancement of Territories (SAGE), managed in a consortium manner with the Universities of Naples Federico II, University of Salento and University of Foggia, master's degree. In the same department there are, in addition, two postgraduate tracks, the PhD in Cities and Landscapes: Architecture, Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, History and Resources, and the School of Specialization in Archaeological Heritage. For the DiSU department, the course of Primary Education Science, a five year course, master's degree program, is provided at the campus on Via Lanera. The University has a strongly humanistic character focusing on cultural heritage, tourism and education, with technical aspects concerning the course of study in Architecture. The curriculum is a perfect match for the urban setting, one of the oldest in human history and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1993.<sup>22</sup> A city with an artistic heritage, which has made its history the primary instrument of social and economic claim in the national and international arena. Although the focus remains on the university presidium, it is important to emphasize the presence of other cultural resources that the city of Matera also possesses, which, if systematized from the perspective of services/resources for the construction of a university city, would be a significant strength. In particular, we mention the *Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti (Cte)*, in Via San Rocco, which has the municipality of Matera as the lead partner along with scientific collaboration from both the University of Basilicata, the Polytechnic

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<sup>22</sup> Pietro Laureano, *Giardini di pietra: i Sassi di Matera e la civiltà mediterranea* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri editore, 1992).

University of Bari and the CNR. Cte aims to carry out experimentation, applied research and technology transfer projects based on the use of emerging technologies, such as Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), linked to the development of next-generation networks.<sup>23</sup> HUBOUT, a coworking space and laboratory for social innovation of the Municipality of Matera, in collaboration with the Basilicata Creative Cluster, has been open in the Spine Bianche neighborhood since 2022. A separate site of the School of Higher Education of the Central Institute for Restoration (ICR) , an organ of the Ministry of Culture, has been located in Vittorio Veneto Square since 2015. The School of Advanced Training (SAF - ICR) is a course aimed at those who want to work in the profession of restorer, acquiring a preparation based on technical-educational activities conducted directly on artifacts identified as cultural property and subject to the provisions of protection. At the end of the five-year course, the student received a Diploma equivalent to the Master's Degree in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage qualifying for the profession of cultural heritage restorer. Lastly, in Piazza del Sedile is the headquarters of the "Duni" Conservatory, one of the most important in southern Italy. The city thus appears to have an important cultural network of higher education, which, at several levels communicate with the administration.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ctematera.it/>

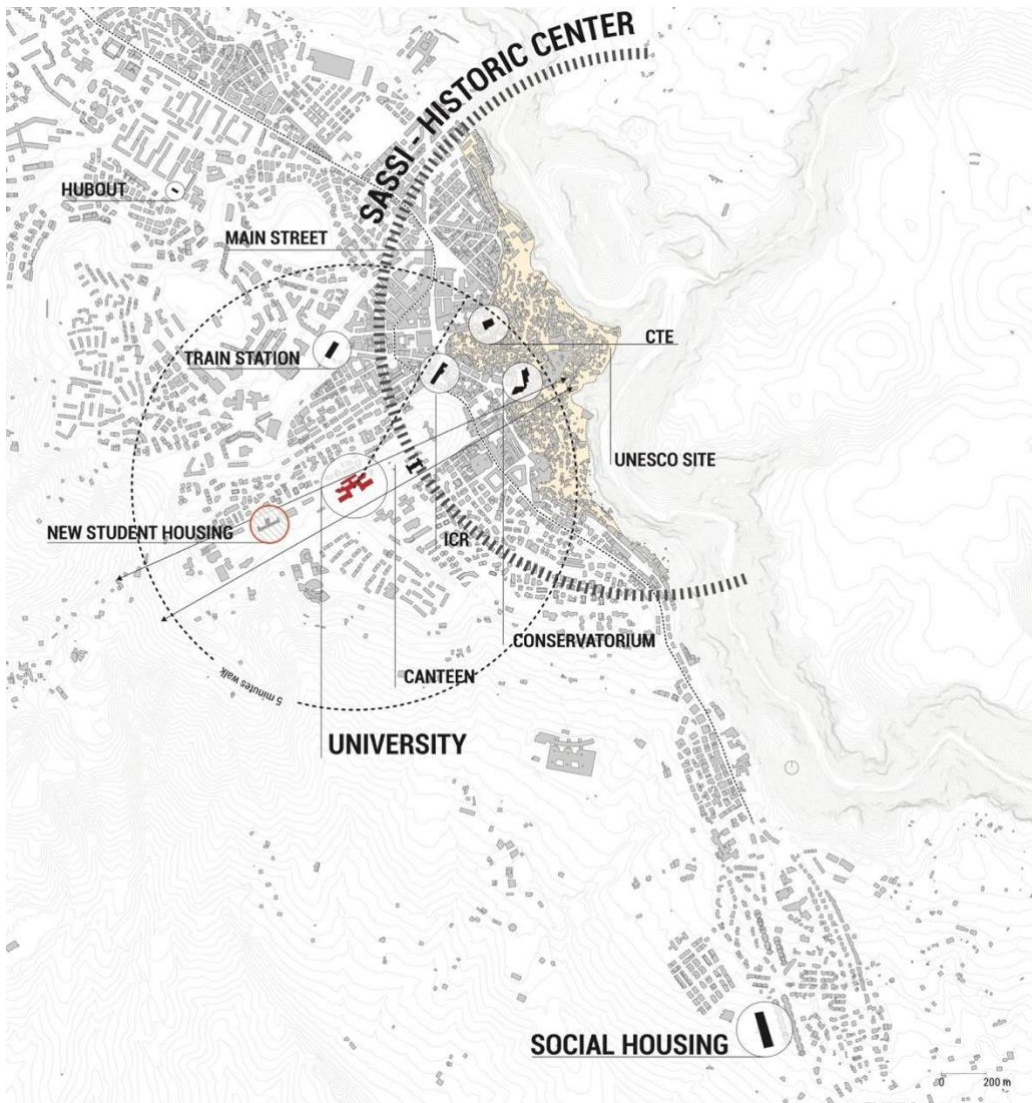


Figure 2| Resources and supply in the city of Matera.  
Credits: Giovanna Mangialardi, Ida G. Presta.

The map [Figure 2] shows the university campus, and the relationship established with the urban context. In particular, it can be seen how within a 5 min walk are concentrated the main services and other cultural and training institutions in the city. It is interesting indeed, the cultural corridor that starts down from Sassi and arrives up to Castle Hill also location of the campus and future student residence. In terms of university housing offerings, it is important to note that there is no student housing in the city but rather two ongoing experiences. First one is the student residence that will be completed, as reported in the statement by Councillor for Infrastructure Donatella Merra,<sup>24</sup> owing to a recent allocation of 7,5 million euros in funds, which will be in addition to those already allocated. The Councillor also emphasized the importance and urgency of this project, specifically for off-site students who have been suffering from market changes and increases for too long; it will also represent a valuable and promotional service for the University. In March 2023,

<sup>24</sup><https://www.regione.basilicata.it/giunta/site/giunta/detail.jsp?otype=1012&id=3077831&value=regione>

the tender for the completion of the student residence hall was published.<sup>25</sup> The amount allocated is 13,7 million euros, this represents an initial response to the appeal of the entire Lucanian student community.

The second project concerns the recent completion of the Social Housing-City of Sassi complex, which saw the Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, as the main investor.<sup>26</sup> The project includes 115 apartments on an area of about 13,000 square meters, social gathering spaces and open spaces. The initiative is among the most relevant social housing real estate interventions for the South, aiming to provide housing solutions with subsidized rents in the city.<sup>27</sup> The Social Housing Complex-City of Sassi, targets segments of the population that have difficulty accessing the free housing market, and thus large families, single-income, single-parent households, the elderly, young couples, as well as young off-site students. Despite representing a real estate operation promoted by mostly private actors (Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, Fondo Esperia and Social Housing Foundation, etc.), it is an attempt to respond to the rising cost of living in the city by providing an alternative solution to the growing housing needs of the city of Matera.

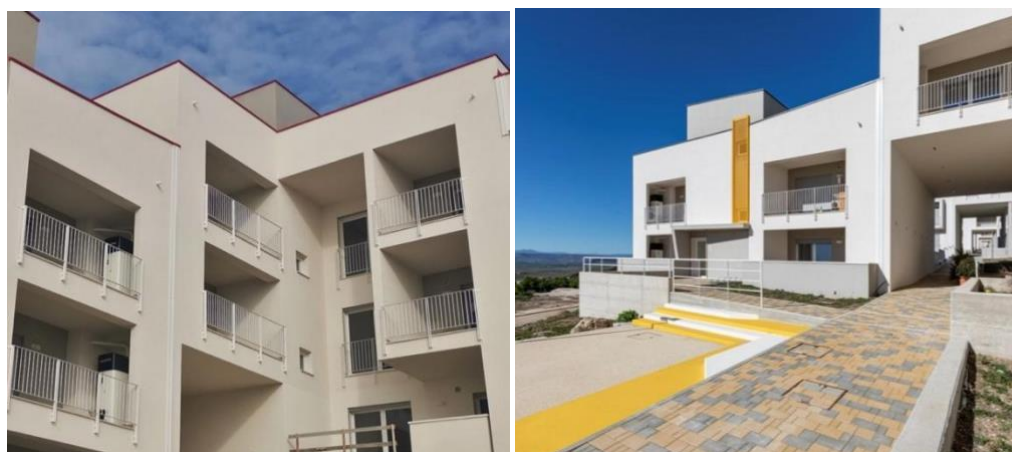


Figure 3| Social Housing Matera “Città dei Sassi”.<sup>28</sup>

## 5. Events and Impacts.

The nomination as European Capital of Culture 2019 has confirmed art and culture as major attractors. Matera, as the first city in the South to receive the title, has built the candidature by interweaving scientific and technological expertise, manual skills and traditions to design an idea of the future (the reference slogan is Open Future)<sup>29</sup> for the Lucania community and for local, national and international tourists and city users based on the immense architectural and cultural heritage that

<sup>25</sup> "Recupero e ristrutturazione edilizia del 2° padiglione dell'ex Ospedale Civile di Matera da adibire a residenza per studenti universitari", Comunicato della Regione Basilicata.

<sup>26</sup> <https://materasocialhousing.it/tipologie-appartamenti/>

<sup>27</sup> Press release - no.104 of 05/10/2022/ Social Housing Matera | Cassa Depositi e Prestiti

<sup>28</sup> Left photo Credits: <https://materasocialhousing.it/tipologie-appartamenti/>

Right photo Credist: <https://sg-gallerylive.it/index.php/cantieri/social-housing-citta-dei-sassi/#bwg429/6060>

<sup>29</sup> dossier [https://www.matera-basilicata2019.it/images/2019/allegati/dossier\\_mt2019-openfuture\\_ita.pdf](https://www.matera-basilicata2019.it/images/2019/allegati/dossier_mt2019-openfuture_ita.pdf)

animates the city of Matera and its history. A long and inclusive process in which cultural and social associations, the region's municipalities, private operators, residents and many other institutions, including the University of Basilicata, participated. The Department of European and Mediterranean Cultures (DICEM) and the School of Specialization in Archaeology worked alongside the Committee to support the candidacy but above all to introject its spirit and train all enrolled students in the culture of openness. In fact, in July 2014 in the decommissioned building of the *Ferrovie Appulo Lucane* railways, in agreement with APT Basilicata, Matera 2019 and the University, the Matera 2019 Urban Center was opened, a place that could be supportive in the narrative about the change of the city, as well as a space for study and work. Since 2019, with the opening of the Campus the Center has moved inside the campus itself, it remains a coworking space open to students and interested companies, who with a membership fee can gain access.

Evaluation and reports that are useful in order to understand the transformations of the process from the moment of nomination have reported what has happened of Matera European Capital of Culture in a transparent and open way.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, the reports and evaluations submitted and collected were:

- Project leader and Matera 2019 – Experience, business model impact and social innovation. Analysis of some case studies by Prof. Carlucci (University of Basilicata);<sup>31</sup>
- Open Design School: Living Lab as a catalyst for business development. The experience of some providers by Prof. Carlucci (University of Basilicata);<sup>32</sup>
- Audience survey: a study of the experience and perceived benefits during Matera 2019 by Prof. Petraglia (Università degli Studi della Basilicata);<sup>33</sup>
- The space of events and events in space by Prof. Mininni (University of Basilicata).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dossier Matera Capital of Culture 2019

<sup>31</sup> Evaluator: University of Basilicata (team led by Prof. Daniela Carlucci) - Evaluative scope: In Matera we produce culture. Effects and impacts on strengthening cultural and creative supply chains-

<https://www.matera-basilicata2019.it/it/report-2019/studi-valutativi-su-matera-2019/l-esperienza-dei-project-leader.html>

<sup>32</sup> Evaluator: University of Basilicata (team led by Prof. Daniela Carlucci)

Evaluative Scope: Culture is produced in Matera. Effects and impacts on strengthening cultural and creative supply chains. - <https://www.matera-basilicata2019.it/it/report-2019/studi-valutativi-su-matera-2019/il-living-lab-open-design-school.html>

<sup>33</sup> Evaluator: University of Basilicata (team led by Prof. Carmelo Petraglia and composed of Dr. Lucio Giuseppe Gaeta, Dr. Benedetta Parenti, Dr. Salvatore Ercolano) - Evaluative scope: Matera 2019 and access to culture - <https://www.matera-basilicata2019.it/it/report-2019/studi-valutativi-su-matera-2019/l-indagine-sul-pubblico.html>

<sup>34</sup> Evaluator: University of Basilicata (Team led by Prof. Maria Valeria Mininni and composed of Arch. Marialucia Camardelli, arch. Giovanna Costanza and arch. Miriam Pepe) - Evaluative scope: Matera 2019: the transformative impact on urban spaces - <https://www.matera-basilicata2019.it/it/report-2019/studi-valutativi-su-matera-2019/gli-spazi-degli-eventi.html>

Under the I-DEA project<sup>35</sup> 249 public archives and private collections were surveyed by the University of Basilicata, which are now accessible on the Foundation's open data portal.<sup>36</sup>

There were about 7,200 students involved in the Matera 2019 process, from all grade levels, more than 95 percent of whom participated in the realization and construction of the events. The University, with the figure of Rector Ignazio Mancini, is still present in the board of directors of the Matera 2019 Foundation, together with the Mayor of Matera and the President of the Region, underlining the importance of the institution and the work it does in the area. The pandemic condition confronted by the city and consequently by the university and its community represented a moment of profound crisis: from the creative euphoria of 2019 came the lockdown of 2020, bringing an abrupt interruption to tourist flows, to the dialogues struck between the University and the City, and to access to public spaces, and consequently to the university (access to study rooms, lecture halls, the library, etc., was banned, for example).

In particular, the synergy relationship set up during the course of the event was frozen, and now slowly resumed,<sup>37</sup> although the city's attractiveness is still a strong driver of economic development and tourist flows to the city are increasing. From APT statistical data,<sup>38</sup> in 2014, the year of the nomination, the registered presences in the city reach 244,847; in 2019, the year of the European Capital of Culture, there is an increase of about 200% recording 730,434 presences in the city, to drop by about 65% in 2020, the year of the pandemic with 253,250 presences; in 2021 the trend rises again by 36%, with 345,187 presences. The data indicates that interest in the city is still strong, the administration and the foundation, in fact, continue to work on a busy cultural and tourism program, sometimes in collaboration with the university, continuing the exchange triggered with the Matera 2019 event.

Although the academic community afferent to the DiCEM/DiSU department counts on a number of about 1580 individuals (including enrolled students,<sup>39</sup> structured and contracted faculty, and administrative staff)<sup>40</sup> which corresponds to about 2.6 percent of the city's total

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<sup>35</sup> I-DEA is a pillar project of Matera 2019's exploration of Basilicata's archives and collections from an artistic point of view; it is an experiment in how archives and collections can be interpreted as living entities according to which to understand the articulated complexity of a territory's history and culture. The project is by the Matera 2019 Foundation, with support from the Ministry of Culture, the Cohesion Fund and the Basilicata region.

<sup>36</sup> Open archival access portal: [https://umap.geonue.com/en/map/archivi-e-collezioni-unibas-per-i-dea\\_978#9/40.6338/16.4603](https://umap.geonue.com/en/map/archivi-e-collezioni-unibas-per-i-dea_978#9/40.6338/16.4603)

<sup>37</sup> Mininni, *Osservare Matera: cultura, cittadinanza e spazio*.

<sup>38</sup> Statistical data extracted from the Basilicata Territorial Promotion Agency - Archives 2014-2021 - <https://www.aptbasilicata.it/dati-statistici/>

<sup>39</sup> Data extrapolated from the MUR database - <http://dati.ustat.miur.it/organization/ace58834-5a0b-40f6-9b0e-ed6c34ea8de0?tags=Universit%C3%A0&tags=Studenti>

<sup>40</sup> Data collected from the university website -

<https://www.google.com/search?q=unibas&oq=unibas&aqs=chrome.0.0i271j46i131i433i512j69i59j69i60j69i65j69i60l3.1386j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

population (60,351)<sup>41</sup> the city is not perceived as a university town. Citizens, for example, are not familiar with the new university campus in Matera, but only recognize the one in Potenza.<sup>42</sup> The number of matriculations has also been declining in recent years due to the pandemic [Figure 4]; however, from the interviews posed to the University on enrollment data, about 15 percent of matriculations are expected to recover by the academic year 2022/2023.

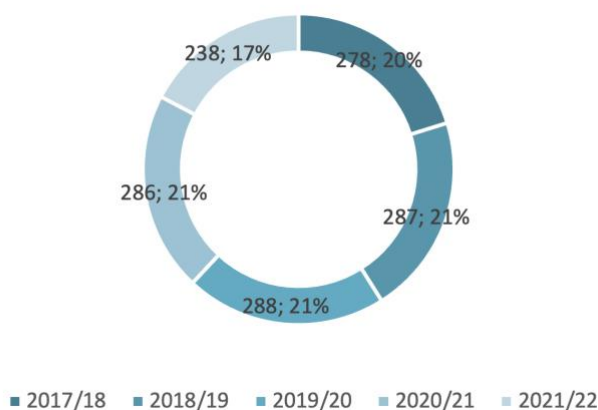


Figure 4| Matriculated Trends in Matera site.  
Credits: Authors' revision of Mur data.

The city's strong tourist orientation can be read from the housing supply. Matera has seen significant increases in private rentals and needs even more subsidized housing for the most vulnerable social groups.

## 6. Possible Dialogue? Concluding Remarks.

The contribution investigates the existing relationship between the university system and Matera, the nature of this relationship, and how the latter has changed as a result of the aforementioned events, attempting to assess the fallout at the urban level.

Matera has undergone profound changes as a result of the various events that have affected the city, yet the relationship with the university has remained latent and undervalued. In 2020, a discussion seemed to have begun between the administration and the university institutions,<sup>43</sup> with the main objective of making Matera a university city by investing in the university's attractiveness and networking with other actors and with the numerous cultural principals. Particular attention was paid to the need to address the declining population, especially in the 20-29 age group.<sup>44</sup> An

<sup>41</sup> Istat DATA 2017

<sup>42</sup> Mininni, *Osservare Matera: cultura, cittadinanza e spazio*.

<sup>43</sup> The working panel included the Rector Mancini and Mayor Bennardi. <https://www.sassilive.it/cultura-e-spettacoli/terza-pagina/matera-pronta-per-la-citta-universitaria-sindaco-bennardi-incontra-rettore-unibas-mancini-report-e-foto/>

<sup>44</sup> Istat 2020 data.

[https://www.istat.it/it/files//2022/03/Censimento-della-popolazione-in-Basilicata\\_focus.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2022/03/Censimento-della-popolazione-in-Basilicata_focus.pdf)



opportunity that has not yet been fully seized both in urban strategies and in educational and housing offerings appropriate to the target students. The University, during the Matera 2019 event, has assumed the role of intermediary in the relationship between cultural policies and urban policies, between culture and the city. It became an anchor institution, fulfilling the task of monitoring and evaluating some of the experiences that took place during and/or after the event, thanks to the activity provided by the Matera 2019 Foundation. However, the presence of the University of Basilicata, despite representing an important cultural venue<sup>45</sup> and a value for the territory, cannot yet be considered as a hinge between the events and the urban space.

The impact of the event was strongly perceived in the city, giving it the designation of a tourist/art city. However, Matera has not managed to win the definition of “university city”;<sup>46</sup> Matera seems to be more of a “city with a university”, where the university has a residual role compared to the clearer tourist vocation and will. Moreover, the role of the student community has been marginal in public discussions, and the exodus of young Matera residents is still ongoing. The pandemic, on the other hand, as shown in the data above, has greatly affected enrolment, which has gone from 289 matriculated for the a.y. 2019/2020, to 238 for the a.y. 2021/2022. However, as specified above, trends suggest a 15% recovery in future years.

Despite the many issues solicited, however, the importance of the public service that the University of Basilicata offers to the community emerges, through its role as a mediator between the training of scientific excellence and social and contemporary problems.

Ultimately, the analysis shows how the University of Basilicata beyond the more traditional tasks of research and education, represents, albeit within the limits of action, for the city of Matera, an attractor of talent and businesses, triggering relationships that over time nurture and enrich the relationship between University and City, and the big event of Matera European Capital of Culture has demonstrated this. However, this does not imply a direct increase in the attractiveness of the university campus for students, as there has been a weak increase and difficulty in managing facilities related to the right to study. There is still much to be done in terms of upgrading infrastructure and services to support students. It is necessary, therefore, to support a still embryonic process by providing joint City/University policies to preserve the international breath gained in 2019 and to attract and enhance young temporary residents.<sup>47</sup> The university should aim to become a leader of cultural and social processes that are an engine of emancipation and vindication for both the region and the city of Matera, at the national and international levels.<sup>48</sup> The

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<sup>45</sup> Mininni e Dicillo, «Politiche urbane e politiche culturali per Matera verso il 2019».

<sup>46</sup> Martinelli, *Spazi della conoscenza: università, città e territori*.

<sup>47</sup> Mininni, *Osservare Matera: cultura, cittadinanza e spazio*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

potential conditions of Matera and its University make evident the multiple possibilities and relationships of/with the Lucanian territory, which if enhanced can initiate a long-lasting and fruitful dialogue over time, benefiting both institutions and especially the students, citizens and resources for the territory.

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# The Apulian University System and Urban and Youth Cultural Policies: Mapping of Resources and First Proposals for an Agenda

PEER REVIEWED

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## 1. Introduction.

The current Italian scenario, amid economic, social and political transformations, calls for a rethinking of the relationship between universities, cities and communities, not only in terms of reassessing the role that universities can assume in the development of territorial and human resources, but also in reorienting the use and production of cultural resources. In fact, culture is a key player not only in orienting strategies to steer the complex, rapid and controversial changes in progress but also in defining the structural points around which to hinge the actions to change the role of the university system as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>A process of analysis and rethinking on the role of the university in the development of the territory and society has been underway in recent years in the country. By way of example see: Nicola Martinelli, Michelangelo Savino, "Università/Città. Condizioni in evoluzione", *Territorio 73* (2015): 58-59; Michelangelo Savino, "Il ruolo dell'università nel processo di trasformazione sociale dopo la crisi", *Territorio 73* (2015): 60-66; Stefano Boffo, Francesco Gagliardi, "Un nuovo contenitore per i rapporti tra università e territorio", *Territorio 73* (2015): 67-72; Valeria Fedeli, "Università-città-territorio in Italia: una relazione in trasformazione", *Territorio 73* (2015): 79-85; Mariavaleria Mininni, Cristina Dicillo, "Politiche urbane e politiche culturali per Matera verso il 2019", *Territorio 73* (2015): 86-93; Nicola Martinelli, "Diritto allo studio e diritto di cittadinanza nel rapporto università-città", *Territorio 73* (2015): 94-99. Michelangelo Savino, "Università, città, studenti: aspetti complessi di interdipendenze non sempre note", *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali* 60-61 (1997): 13-84.

## **2. The Project and the Theme.**

Starting from this premise, which animated the entire structure of the “Puglia Regione Universitaria” project, the survey carried out under the theme “The Role of the University System in Urban and Youth Cultural Policies” aimed at developing an initial framework of knowledge of cultural resources at Apulian universities.

To date, there are no comprehensive studies that provide a mapping of the cultural resources available in Apulia for the university and urban communities. Therefore, assessing the accessibility to these resources, their quality and effectiveness becomes essential to understanding the extent to which university and urban educational and cultural offerings are in dialogue with each other.

## **3. The Survey.**

The investigation focused on the direct and active role that the academic institutions play in generating and promoting resources in various cultural compartments in order to estimate their ability to involve students in the processes of organization, management and creation, and their impact on the urban cultural scene and their permeability to citizenship.

The survey covered the facilities for both use and production of culture in each of the five Apulian universities (University of Bari, Bari Polytechnic, University of Foggia, University of Salento with its related sites in Brindisi and Taranto, Free Mediterranean University "Giuseppe Degennaro"-LUM). The survey has led to build a list of the academic resources and facilities for use and production of culture (museums, libraries, archives) and for cultural events (cinema, theater, music and audiovisuals, art and creativity, journalism and scientific popularization), and a questionnaire was delivered to the managers and other contact people involved in academic systems.

The survey aimed to outline the profile of the facilities, their rootedness in the university life and their organization and functioning in terms of funds, attendance, opening hours, activities and staff; it attempted to better identify the public that use and attend them, the degree of involvement of students in the activities, and the very nature of their efforts, whether educational, professionalizing or aimed at fostering youth entrepreneurship. Along these lines communication strategies and tools, their intensity and effectiveness were explored as well as the readiness to hold events aimed at building a community around the facility, whether made up of university students whether external.

Finally, the survey was directed to acquire elements describing the openness towards urban reality in terms of collaborations established by the facilities with other urban structures—museums, libraries, archives, publishing houses, bookstores, associations, etc.—and with events engaged in the dissemination and promotion of culture like exhibitions

and festivals—“Notte bianca dei Musei”, “Notte dei ricercatori”, “Il libro possibile”, “*Lector in fabula*”, “Bifest”, “Festival del cinema Europeo” etc. Other data were collected in terms of patronage offered to external events and of relations with schools and other educational institutions in the city and in terms of students discounts for museums, bookstores or major cultural events held by the city. The final section of the questionnaire was devoted to acquiring data on past activities carried out by the facilities, to assess their performance compared to the past and to acquire data on successful events whose memory has been lost. The preliminary survey revealed that cultural facilities are mainly departmental libraries, university museums, archives and some other multi-institutional/extra-institutional entities rooted in the academic world (study centers, academies, excellence centers, etc.). The following pages summarize the common trends that have emerged in Apulia for an overall assessment of the university-city system<sup>3</sup>. G.V.

### 3.1 Libraries.

University libraries are facilities for preservation, cataloguing and use for research, teaching and cultural and scientific education.

Existent at all Apulian universities, they are the mostly stable and entrenched institutions (many are over 20 years old: Figure 1); in the larger and more structured universities, they are organized as library hubs, divided into departmental macro-areas, and managed by an Athenaeum Library System (SiBA or SBA, present at the Bari Polytechnic and the Universities of Bari, Foggia and Salento) for the coordination and management of the activities of institutional cultural facilities with similar functions and purposes.

Most of these facilities work essentially for the academic community; absent or occasional is the component related to schools and very sporadic is that related to the urban community [Figure 2]. Libraries are mostly open for 15 to 30 hours a week, a rather reduced range as pointed out extensively by students in the survey [Figure 3]. It is no coincidence that the libraries with the liveliest attendance<sup>4</sup> and a growth in terms of attendance of more than 50 percent are those that have renewed themselves in terms of available space and organization and that offer extended opening hours.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the digitization of repositories in the late 1990s -the most significant event for these facilities in the past 25 years- has enabled a more immediate access to bibliographic resources as well as the activation of new nationwide network library services.

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<sup>3</sup> A more analytical view of the results obtained that returns the specific relationship established by each university with its city is deferred to another discussion.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the Library of Economics, Management and Business Law - Corporate Area of the Economic Pole, in University of Bari, where over 10,000 visitors are registered in a year, compared to other structures in the same area which register a maximum of 300.

In terms of functioning, the most observed phenomenon over the past 10 years is the steady reduction in structured staffing which, along with the lack of space, is listed as one of the primary causes of malfunction<sup>5</sup> that blocks the possibility of extending and better characterizing the functions of libraries towards wider communities. It is in relation to this fragility that the data on the almost total absence of communication strategies should probably be read (Figure 4: only few facilities use digital means, often scarcely effective such as mailing lists and old-fashioned web pages) and so the lack of broader content or events aimed at schools or at the city<sup>6</sup>. When staffed, university students are largely framed as civil service volunteers and as trainees, rarely are they found framed with grants or part-time contracts<sup>7</sup>. What seems to emerge from the survey is how they are mostly used as additional staff supporting existing staff, without performing specific assignments or tasks. The deployment of spin-off companies does not occur.

### 3.2 Museums.

University museums are facilities and services destined for the collection, protection, enrichment, classification, enhancement, study and public display of the historical, artistic, archaeological, scientific and naturalistic heritage. Together with libraries, therefore, they are designated for the research and dissemination of culture in the university environment, but also open to the general public.

The university museums are organized in a coordinated system: the Athenaeum Museum System (SIMA or SMA), is an institution that exists at the universities of Bari and Salento that brings together eleven and respectively eight museums by regulating collections, botanical gardens and aquariums through special rules.

University museums look very different in terms of openness to the community. They range from institutions well-established for more than 20 years to very young facilities founded in the last 5 years [Figure 5]. The museums of the University of Bari are mainly historical-scientific and naturalistic, linked to the Interdepartmental Service Center for Scientific Museology (CISMUS), connected with the science laboratories and dedicated to gathering and protecting collections. The origin and nature of a part of the museums of the university of Bari is not such as to welcome the external community but to preserve specialized materials or

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<sup>5</sup> At Bari Polytechnic there is a sharp reduction in libraries. The libraries of six departments have been merged due to lack of personnel and of space.

<sup>6</sup> The survey shows that as opposed to the common trend described above, the only exceptions are some libraries (in Bari, Foggia and Salento), which are organized as places that are open to the community, interacting with schools, museums, festivals, city associations and other cultural venues in the area, and participating in or organizing cultural initiatives. Of particular interest is the activity of the University of Salento's 3D SIBA Theater.

<sup>7</sup> The Bari Polytechnic Library System, on the other hand, tends to place students on part-time contracts and uses internships much less. The audience is also more mixed and the general public is more present.

instrumentation and to help the historical-scientific education of university students in specific subjects.<sup>8</sup>

Some museums, however, have developed a didactic-disseminative competence to relate to the urban community and other audiences, particularly schools. The targeted and functional use of social networks, the presence of an entrance fee, a more intense organization of events, exhibitions, festivals and affiliations with schools, departments or external entities, and the collaboration established with other structures of the city's cultural scene seem to demonstrate, in some cases, more advanced management [Figure 5].<sup>9</sup>

The Salento University museums, which are more balanced between the humanities and the sciences than those in Bari, are generally more open to the urban community, and endowed with a greater educational vocation, particularly toward the world of education<sup>10</sup>. The public, on average more numerous, is mostly made up of students, schoolteachers and outsiders, as a result of greater attention to communication strategies and a more intense collaboration network with other SMA and city museums and with events and festivals of the cultural scene in Lecce. For all the museums, the survey clearly highlighted the problems associated with the temporary closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of weakening and rarefaction of collaborative relationships with the city's various cultural institutions, which slowed down and affected their normal functioning.

As for libraries, the survey reveals a poor integration of university students in staff, who are employed in the structures as interns, but are rarely hired with scholarships or collaboration contracts [Figure 6].

### 3.3 Archives.

University archives in the universities of Bari and Foggia<sup>11</sup> are facilities dedicated to the preservation and consultation for study purposes of the documentary heritage of historical, administrative, iconographic, cartographic, epigraphic and ethnographic nature, but they do not see themselves as places frequented and open to the community, if not on rare occasions, such as extraordinary events.

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<sup>8</sup> These aspects exist, for example, in the Museum of Psychology and Psychotechnology, the Museum of Commodities, the Museum of Entomology and the Computer Science Department Collection.

<sup>9</sup> These aspects exist, for example, in the Museum of Earth Sciences and the Botanical Garden Museum.

<sup>10</sup> These aspects exist, for example, in the "Pietro Parenzan" Marine Biology Museum, the Historical-Archaeological Museum (MUSA), the Widespread Museum of Cavallino which is the only case in which recourse is made to a university spin-off company (ARVA, "Archeologia Ricerca e Valorizzazione").

<sup>11</sup> In addition there are the Multimedia Archive "Itinerari Bizantini Puglia-Albania" and the Electronic Archive Photo Library of Rock Iconography - Apulia Region of the University of Salento, which as electronic archives are accessible telematically for consultation of multimedia resources but have no physical locations.



### 3.4 Other Facilities.

In order to complete the picture of universities' cultural facilities there are other cultural entities, such as study centers, centers of excellence and academies, which originated within the University of Bari but are marked by a sharper transversality between university and city. They offer a much more distinct and systematic openness to the citizenry and experiment with innovative approaches to cultural resources that involve significant input from creative entrepreneurship.

Although they present very different characteristics, they have some significant aspects in common: they rely on multiple funds (public and private); they develop a structured communication strategy based on a specific investment of resources and on regular content publishing; they interact in a systematic way with urban cultural institutions that are not related to the cities; they participate, organize or host events, exhibitions, festivals and initiatives aimed at schools or citizens that cross-culturally include multiple cultural sectors. The field of science popularization dominates and is complemented by literary, cinematographic, theatrical and artistic initiatives.

This aspect can be related to some recurring observations made by the contact persons of the universities' various cultural facilities, even those less open to the public, such as some departmental libraries and university archives: the organization of or sponsorship to festivals and "notti bianche", the extraordinary collective openings and the planning of systematic relationships with school communities are to be considered among the most valuable activities because they constitute the only opportunities to give visibility to the facilities and to open them to the general public.

In summary, the questionnaires administered to the facilities' contact persons clearly reveal the weaknesses of the universities' cultural facilities: occasionally underrepresented are the external public and students who are not university students; the majority does not have a social profile, nor a specific contact person for the publication of social content, does not offer specific content for different audiences and groups and are not in close contact with the city's institutions and resources for a common strategy of promoting culture. Cultural facilities of universities are frequented by university students, but rarely involve them with active and continuative roles.

### 3.5 Events.

The survey has also led to the identification of the few but active facilities in each university that promote cultural events—cinema, theater, music and audiovisuals, art and creativity, journalism and scientific popularization—. In general, these are not linked to specific university institutions, but rather to spontaneous cultural activities of specific courses and departments. In some cases, the activities are promoted by

centers—the CUTAMC at the university of Bari, the CUT at the university of Foggia and Salento—, film clubs affiliated with private city foundations or by cultural associations or university spin-off.

Data from the questionnaire administered to the respective contact persons further articulate the picture of cultural resources of Apulian universities. The survey aimed to focus, in qualitative and quantitative terms, on the nature of cultural activities—popularization of science, theater, film or audiovisual sector, art, music, radio—, the type of events—meetings or reviews, festivals, productions—, the existence of associations or companies established within the university context, the audience, the role of students in the events, be it simple participation/adhesion or active organization, production, communication or artistic direction, the employment relationship—simple students, trainees, scholarship holders, contract workers—and the possible activation of start-ups or university spin-offs.

The survey also aimed to acquire elements describing the relationships established between universities and cities in terms of the activation of affiliations and collaborations for cultural activities with facilities, associations, festivals and so on.

The acquired data show a similar scenario in the universities of Salento, Foggia and, partially, Bari, characterized by a few but very active institutions, capable of triggering a virtuous circle of cultural initiatives across different cultural fields—with a predominance of initiatives in popularization and in the film sector—, and of involving universities, schools and citizenries in the framework of festivals, meetings and special events. The percentage of students in the audience is constant, and in several cases within the organization, less often in the management, but almost never in the production. The organization of events has very good feedback on the urban population because very often they arise from a network of collaborative relationships with local authorities and other urban cultural entities, such as city associations, which strongly connote the cultural life of Apulian university towns, foundations, theaters, festivals and creative companies.

Few but effective institutions have encouraged the birth of university spin-offs and cultural associations such as film clubs that offer the citizenry a cultural resource run by university students entirely free of charge<sup>12</sup>, in particular established between universities and small cities as in the cases of the universities of Foggia and Salento.

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<sup>12</sup> Of note at the University of Salento, in addition to the many cultural activities that revolve around the Laboratory and the SIBA 3D Theater, is the activity of ESE Salento University Publishing, an Open Access service of the University of Salento that publishes journals, series and proceedings which allows wide dissemination of the results of the University of Salento's scientific research both in the national and international academic community and free access even by ordinary scholars and enthusiasts. ESE also publishes an Open Access Teaching Series that makes the teaching texts adopted by faculty members available to students.

### 3.6 Students.

In line with the principles of the Faro Convention that emphasizes the perception of communities towards cultural resources, the core of the study was based on the involvement of students in the issues of participation and cultural animation in university life. By administering a questionnaire to a selected sample of students, conducting several interviews and organizing functional meetings for comparison, a qualitative survey was carried out involving all the student associations, centers and representatives in Apulia that are sensitive to the issue of culture and the impact that universities have in youth cultural policies and in offering and facilitating university and city cultural life in general. The view offered by students is quite critical. Museums and university archives are very little known and frequented, libraries are more so but exclusively used for study purposes [Figure 7].

This occurs in the context of a sample of students who frequent the cultural venues offered by their urban context in very high percentages: first and foremost, cinemas, bookstores, music clubs, theaters, museums, libraries, art galleries, cultural associations and archives, and who also frequent these places in other Italian cities and abroad, with a very clear prevalence, in this case, of museums and exhibitions. To cultural venues of Apulian universities, students first and foremost impute limited access hours and ineffective communication strategies [Figure 8], to which they add inadequate facilities, failure to update content, and insufficient and not fully qualified staff. Even simple attendance in events such as meetings or festivals organized at universities in any cultural sector—with a partial exception regarding the organization of cultural debates and popularization meetings—is very low. The involvement of students in cultural events and facilities rarely occurs through internships, traineeships or part-time contracts, an aspect that is also reflected in the university's lack of ability to entrust students with an active role in organizing and animating cultural life with the exception of a small but encouraged percentage of students are directly involved in organizing cultural events, particularly at the University of Salento. A small percentage of active students also continue to get involved in cultural associations of cities (that deal with particularly heartfelt issues such as social, political and current affairs: gender issues, environmental sustainability, promotion of the territory, but also music and cinema. A grassroot movement experienced in total autonomy: in fact, universities rarely collaborate with cultural associations. The free content fields provided in the questionnaire were extensively used by students to give their views and make suggestions. Together with some face-to-face discussions, the answers served as an essential basis for the construction of the proposals presented below.

### 3.7 Notes and Proposals for an Agenda.

The critical points that have emerged from the survey of university facilities and events, as seen from the perspective of contact persons and students who are active and sensitive to university cultural life, tend to converge on some recurring elements.

Beginning with the goal of enhancing cultural resources of universities for the community and to facilitate a process of integration, the essential aspects identified (see Figure 9 as a summary), on which action needs to be taken are:

- the strengthening and broadening of the audience reached by cultural initiatives of universities, both in terms of the 'internal' community - that is, the ability of the university population itself to recognize itself as a community-, and in terms of the 'external' community -the ability to attract citizenship to itself through three lines (technology transfer, lifelong learning, social education) that connote the third mission of the universities. Here the improvement of communication strategies plays an essential role.
- The strengthening of university coordination. Closely related to the previous point, with reference to building a community 'within' the university, the need to coordinate initiatives and to optimize the management of cultural venues and events around which the community could gather emerges. This strategy aims to implement participation, pushes for the initiation of working methods that overcome the fragmented, competitive and individualistic dimension prevalent in the academy and encourages networking, projects and sharing ideas and the integration of cultural experiences with out-of-town or Erasmus students.
- Improving the effectiveness of the collaborative network between different urban actors—universities, local authorities, cultural venues and/or city associations—to extend and coordinate cultural initiatives by integrating university and city resources, creating exchange and coherence between urban and university offerings. The creation of 'hybrid' facilities and experiences can trigger important opportunities for encounters.
- A direct consequence of the previous points is the commitment to foster youth employment and entrepreneurship in the urban cultural and creative industry. The agreement between institutions and urban cultural actors must encourage the increase of the participation of students in the processes of organization and management of cultural initiatives of universities and cities and foster the creation of employment opportunities of cultural workers trained at Apulian universities.

Several concrete proposals for actions to improve existing resources were then developed around these macro-areas of intervention:

- the extension of the opening hours of university facilities, to improve and broaden their use as places for studying but also for meeting and sharing.

- the activation of audience monitoring systems in cultural venues of universities—ticketing/online booking systems/etc.—for audience profiling and enhancing participation strategies;
- the organization of training seminars to upskill staff in terms of communication;
- the intensification of agreements between university and cultural venues of cities.

Similarly, some concrete proposals for innovation actions could be envisioned:

- the recruitment of competent and dedicated individuals specifically to improve communication strategies that enhance the university's many cultural resources;
- the creation of student-run multi-purpose spaces to foster gathering, discussion and sharing of creative energies;
- agreements with one or more of the city's venues like cinema-theaters to encourage the gathering of the university community in the broadest sense of the term, to stimulate the systematic planning and organization of events with the direct involvement of students, but also to gather the vibrant but parcelled out cultural activities of universities in one physical place for the benefit of the urban community;
- the establishment of a Cultural Steering Committee with mixed faculty and student members within the university entities to foster the planning of cultural events from a shared perspective;
- the organization of an annual regional festival aggregating cultural components of universities and cities.

#### **4. Beautiful minds. A Regional Festival as a First Action for Change?**

In particular, the proposal for a regional festival, which has attracted the specific interest of the scientific leaders of the Puglia Regione Universitaria project, could be an excellent factory to initiate some of the points described in the agenda that would act as a trigger for the desired changes.

Why a Festival? A festival is a central element in Italian cultural life, an image of cheerful but demanding participation of communities. It fills the public spaces of the city, it is a collective ritual of sharing an in-depth experience, built around a theme. It is a practice of active citizenship, capable, because of its immediacy, of quickly building a community. A festival facilitates the contamination between culture and creativity, in an experimental and multidisciplinary dimension that is more difficult in more connoted cultural contexts. In addition, festivals are an important tool for economic-entrepreneurial growth: among curators, artistic directors, and restaurateurs, Confcommercio declares that in 2018 the festival and cultural events sector employed 99,000 people. Ultimately, a

festival is an event capable of determining a very significant socio-cultural impact<sup>13</sup>.

The essential idea behind *Beautiful minds- University Festival of Communities and Participation* is that universities and territorial entities act as a hinge between academic research and the world of cultural entrepreneurship (museums and exhibitions, communication for cultural heritage, publishing, journalism, theater, cinema, music, performing arts), starting with the resources of the territory (associations, foundations, companies, other festivals) but with external 'guests' who would be invited from year to year (universities of excellence in the university-city-business relationship; entrepreneurs who nationally invest in the cultural sector). Each year the festival could revolve around a theme, an inspiration of general and cross-cultural interest that spans multiple cultural fields, linking humanities and sciences.

Students would be placed at the center of the planning and management of all events. Student activities would be included in the calculation of credits, and the initiation of forms of remuneration for coordination, greater commitment and responsibility, based on funding and agreement between the university, institutions and businesses would be essential.

In the occasion of the festival, opportunities for internships, part-time and fixed-term contracts at cultural venues in the city and the territory should be initiated.

The events would be consistent with the chosen in-depth theme, open to the whole citizenry, at an affordable entrance fee, season tickets, the possibility of payment by faculty card, etc.

Basically, the idea is to combine the single experience of entertainment and cultural dissemination with in-depth study through open lectures and discussions among different urban players.

Festival venues would be diverse, with some crossroads: selected university spaces, new or old city premises. City theater-cinemas would serve as crossroads for selected events. The basic idea is the hybridization of places, that is, bringing unusual recreational moments to traditional university facilities or bringing lectures, meetings and discussions to theaters. Finally, it should be emphasized that the success of the event will depend above all on the ability to shape, integrate and coordinate cultural events and initiatives that already exist for the most part, but are 'atomized' and unable to coagulate. The unity of purpose among different urban players will contribute to enhancing the existing network, giving it new meaning to offer to the Apulian community as a whole.

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<sup>13</sup> Giulia Alonzo, Oliviero Ponte di Pino, *In giro per festival. Guida nomade agli eventi culturali. Festival di pensiero, letteratura, musica, teatro, cinema e arte in Italia* (Milan: ed. Altreconomia, 2022), 9-15.

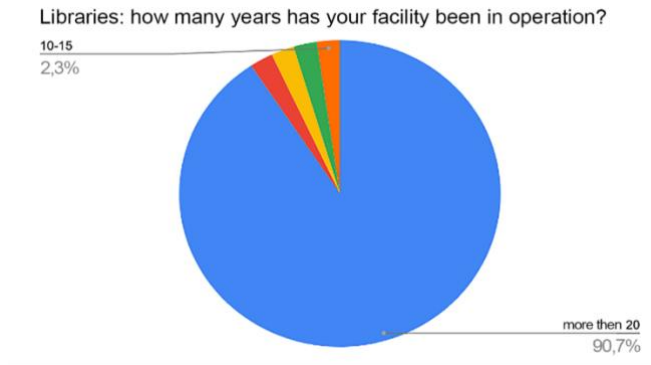


Figure 1| Survey of years of libraries in Apulian universities (graph from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

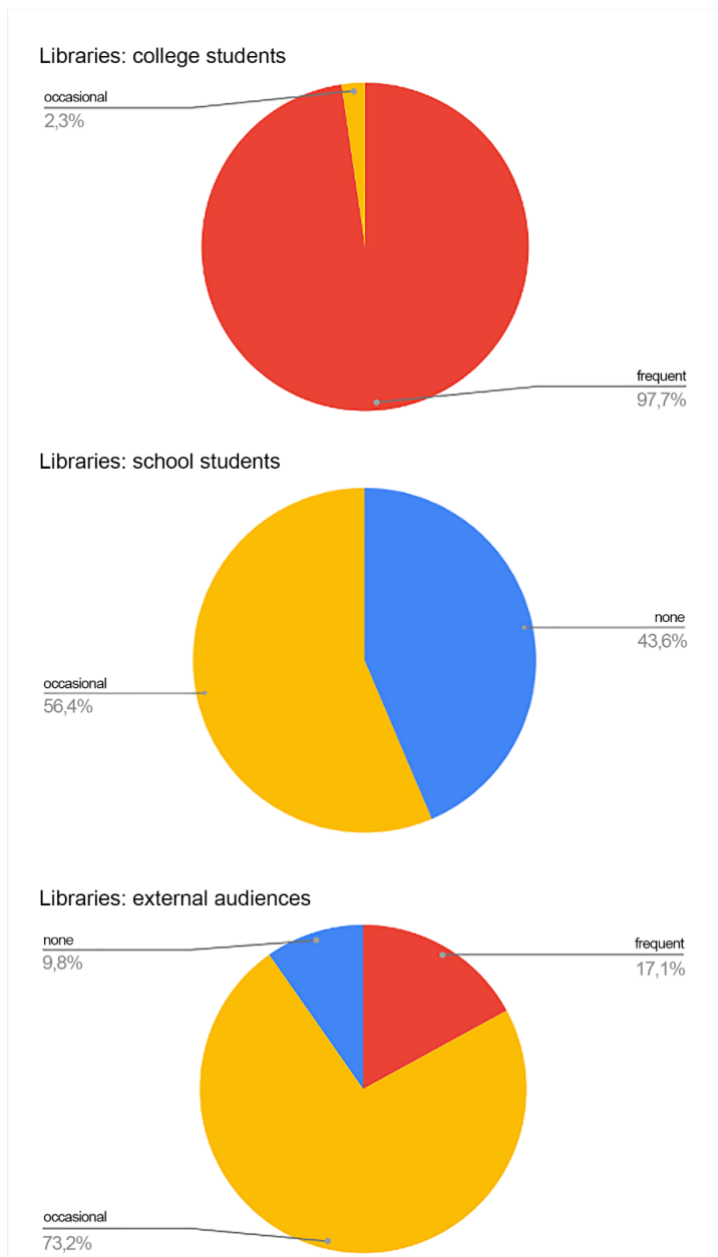


Figure 2| Summary on the characterization of library patrons in Apulian universities (graph from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

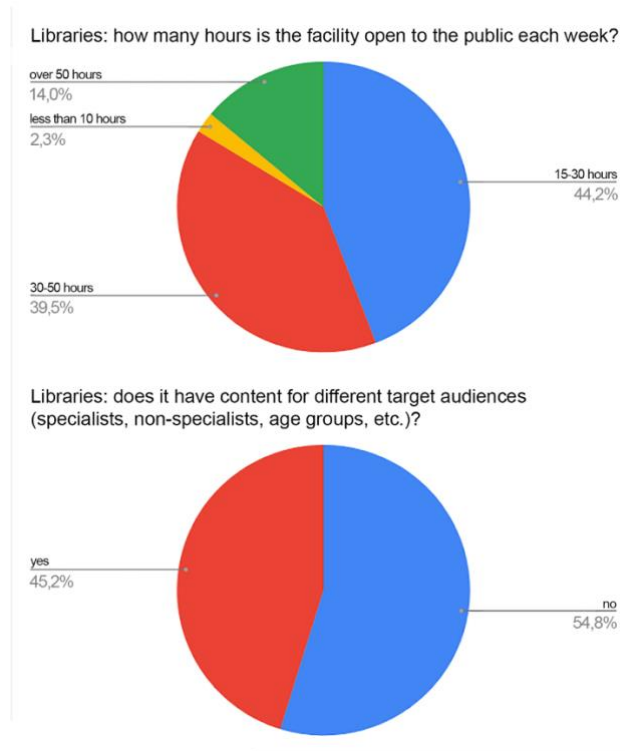


Figure 3| Graphic summary regarding the opening hours of Apulian universities (from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

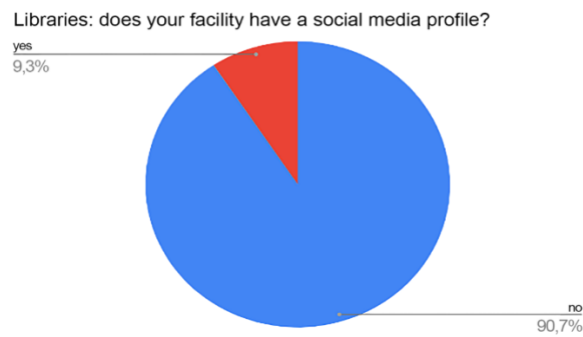


Figure 4| Survey of social use in libraries of Apulian universities (from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.



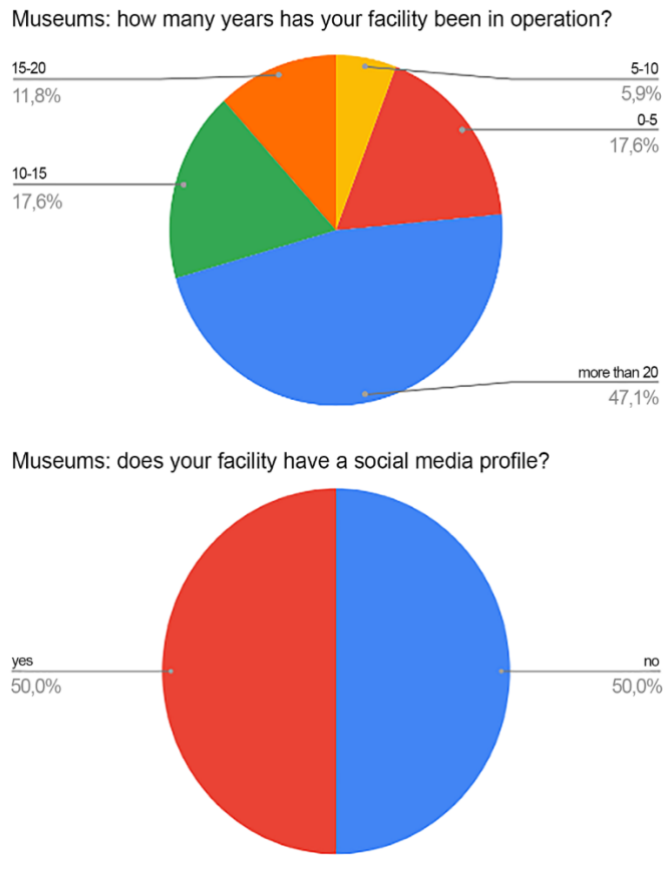
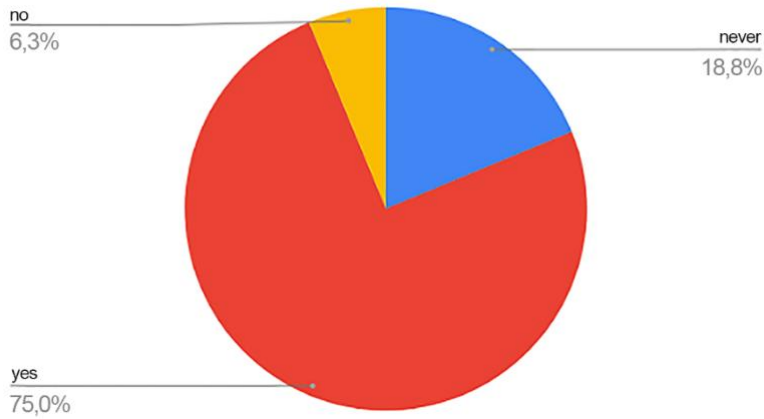


Figure 5| Survey of years of life and social use in Apulian university museums (from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

Museums: does the facility accommodate student interns?



Museums: does the facility offer fellowships or part-time contracts for undergraduate students?

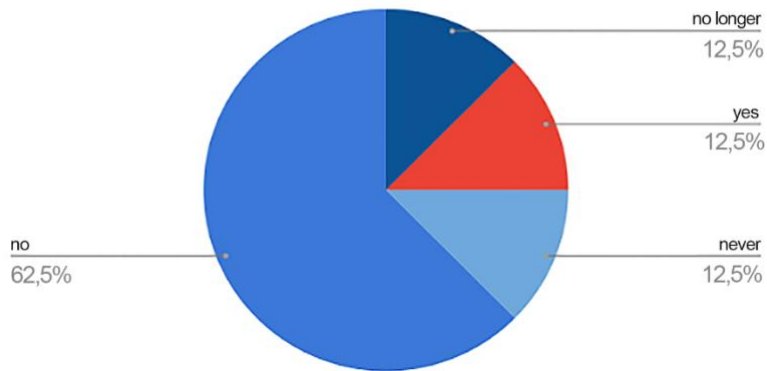
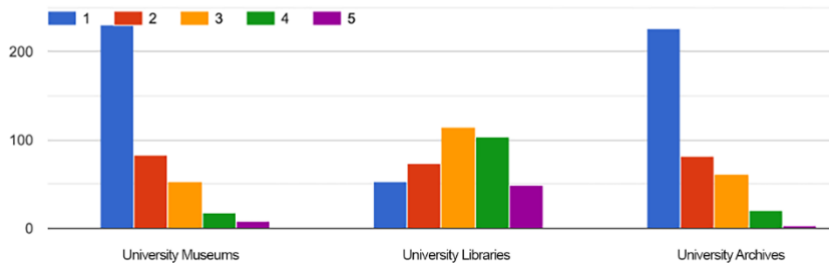


Figure 6| Survey of student framing in Apulian university museums (from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

On a scale of 1 to 5, could you indicate how familiar you are with the cultural venues at your university?



On a scale of 1 to 5 could you indicate how much you attend them?

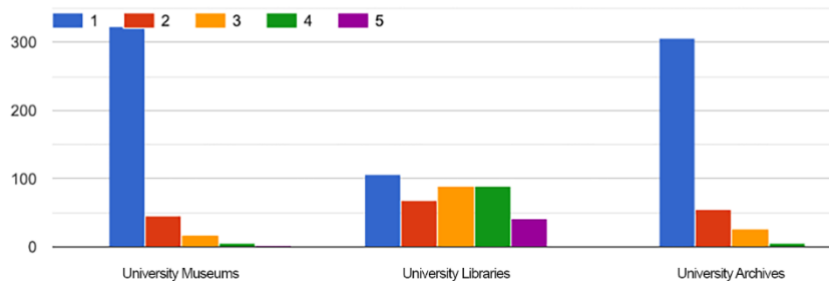


Figure 7| Survey on students' knowledge and attendance of university cultural venues (from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

On a scale of 1 to 5, university cultural venues would need ... (more than one answer allowed)

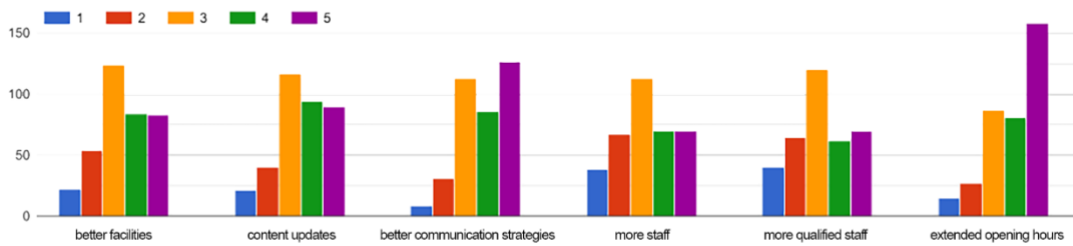


Figure 8| Survey on students' knowledge and attendance of university cultural venues (from Google Forms).  
Credits: Velia Polito.

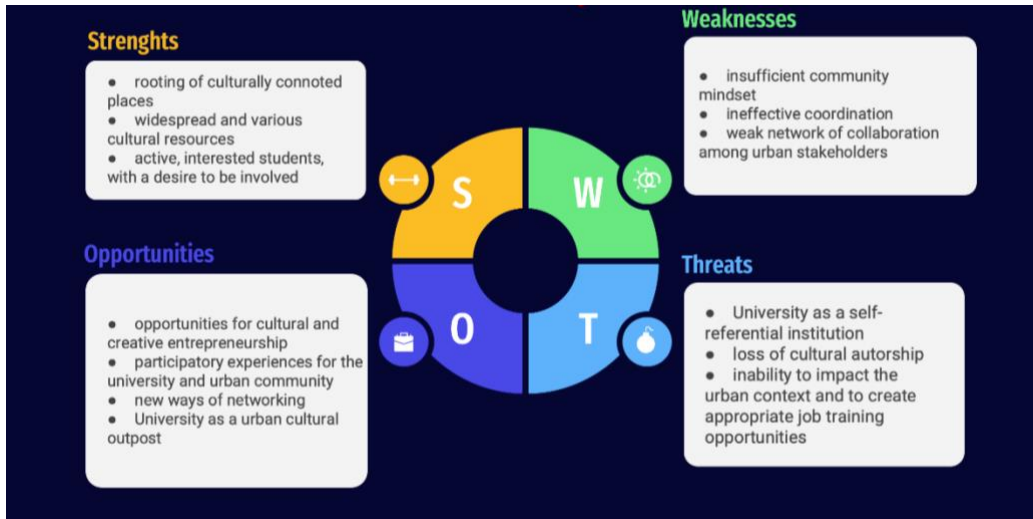


Figure 9| Graphic summary comparing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (elaboration by Velia Polito).

Credits: Velia Polito.

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# Urban Sustainability Agendas for Universities

CHAIR SESSION 3

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Energy transition, climate adaptation (including green infrastructure), sustainable land use and nature-based solutions, urban mobility, culture and heritage and safety in public spaces, air quality, urban poverty, housing, circular economy, digital transition, inclusion of migrants and refugees, jobs and skills in the local economy, innovative and responsible public procurement are priority themes of the European Urban Agenda. The Urban Agenda can be seen as a virtuous example of multi-level governance, allowing cities to tackle today's challenges directly on the ground and to propose joint actions for better regulation, financing and knowledge exchange. Success in achieving the Urban Agenda is highly dependent on the action and collaboration of all actors in the territorial, institutional and socio-economic system.

Universities are in a privileged position and have a fundamental responsibility in the green and social transition, not only as institutions dedicated to providing an education that spans all disciplines, reaching hundreds of millions of students/staff, but also as “platform” actors able to act as drivers for the development of new systemic and transformative solutions, through the collaboration of various stakeholders. It is recognized that universities represent for the communities and the territorial context in which they are located a resource and a driver for change, in the direction of a sustainable development.

Even before the strong push for the ecological transition that the European Green Deal and the following National Resilience and Recovery Plan (PNRR) envisage for cities and territories, Italian universities came together in the Network of Universities for Sustainability (RUS) and since 2019 have contributed to the drafting of Urban Sustainability Agendas in numerous Italian cities, in the belief that good practices and lifestyles can radiate into urban contexts starting from campuses and university campuses (for mobility, waste, energy saving, urban green areas, and so forth).

The three studies presented in the followings, considering a multidisciplinary perspective, highlight the evidence that universities are key players in the ecological and social transition of local communities, contributing to the innovation of urban policies and sustainable development of their territorial context.

In particular, the experience coming from the City Environment Networks Territory (CARTA) laboratory of the University of Bologna provides an observatory for the sub-region of Forlì-Cesena, a territorial context that presents varied dynamics, from those affecting the more peripheral portions of the territory, the inland areas of the Romagna Apennines, to the expansion and contraction forms of the Adriatic conurbation of Romagna and the city-region of the Via Emilia, which open up numerous research directions. This study demonstrates that university researchers, in interaction with public administrators and the local community, including student organizations, represent an indispensable element in the implementation of the ecological transition. The second paper also emphasizes the promoting and driving role that can be played by universities in building sustainability in territorial systems, by proposing sustainable local development projects. More specifically, the study is related to the construction and implementation of a walk, called *Cammino del Duca*, proposed by the University of Urbino in collaboration with the CAI-Montefeltro and CAI-Gubbio Sections. The process of realizing this walk highlights innovative aspects and unresolved critical issues, with the aim of stimulating a reflection on the opportunities and constraints affecting universities' sustainability policies in their interaction with the local communities, for the creation and sharing of a culture that is attentive to respect for local specificities, the promotion of health and wellbeing, and care for the environment. Finally, the third study focuses on Renewable Energy Community (REC) and specifically on the identification of all the legal, regulatory and socio-economic requirements for the development of a meta-design approach, aimed at experimenting a virtuous process of accompanying local communities to the establishment of RECs, as a tool for urban and environmental regeneration.

The above mentioned studies are just few and limited examples of the large number of case studies available to demonstrate the important role of universities in this crucial and difficult transition period.

# Building Sustainability in the Relationship with the Territory. The Cammino del Duca (the Duke's Way) of the University of Urbino

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## 1. Introduction.

Over the past decades, universities have experienced an increasing integration with their local contexts, playing a key role in urban and regional development processes<sup>2</sup>. Usually, this process has taken place

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<sup>2</sup> Giuliano Amato, Riccardo Varaldo, and Michela Lazzeroni, *La città nell'era della conoscenza e dell'innovazione* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2006); Arnaldo Bagnasco, "Città in cerca di università. Le università regionali e il paradigma dello sviluppo locale", *Stato e mercato*, 24 n.3 (2004): 455-474;



via technology transfer and building partnerships with local stakeholders, aimed at producing direct and indirect economic spillovers<sup>3</sup>. However, the compelling growth in relevance of sustainability issues implied a recalibration of such activities. Universities have been starting to operate to find effective solutions to address the significant social transformations and climate and environmental challenges currently underway<sup>4</sup>.

Within this framework, Italy has also witnessed forms of convergence among the different missions of universities to develop local networks, collaborations, and exchange mechanisms with public and private actors in their catching areas<sup>5</sup>. This process is particularly relevant in more peripheral areas, where the relationships between universities and local communities appear particularly significant, given their generative potential in creating and diffusing innovation and mitigating inequalities<sup>6</sup>.

This contribution aims to highlight the promoting and driving role that can be played by universities in the definition of sustainable local development projects, taking as an example the path of construction and implementation of the Cammino del Duca (the Duke's Way), proposed by the University of Urbino Carlo Bo in collaboration with two sections of the Italian Alpine Club (CAI), namely Montefeltro and Gubbio. The Cammino, which crosses an area rich in landscape, history, and nature, but affected by phenomena of economic and social marginalization, is meant as a project of sustainable tourism and community engagement, consistently with University's plural missions<sup>7</sup>.

In particular, we will focus here on the process of implementation of the Cammino, highlighting its innovative aspects and critical issues, in order to promote a debate on opportunities and constraints affecting universities' sustainability policies when interacting with local reference contexts, to boost a culture respectful for local specificities, the environment, and the promotion of health and well-being.

This contribution is structured as follows.

After investigating the role of universities in promoting a process of sustainable development, the main features of the Cammino del Duca will

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Michela Lazzeroni, *Geografie dell'università: Esplorazioni teoriche e pratiche generative* (Milano: Mimesis, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Elvira Uyarra, "Conceptualizing the Regional Roles of Universities, Implications and Contradictions", in *European Planning Studies* 18.8 (2010): 1227-1246.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory Trencher, et al. "Beyond the Third Mission: Exploring the Emerging University Function of Co-creation for Sustainability" *Science and Public Policy*, 41, 2 (2014): 151-179.

<sup>5</sup> Cesare Emanuel, "Gli atenei come «luoghi terzi» della valorizzazione della conoscenza generativa e dei processi di sviluppo locale", edited by Michela Lazzeroni, Monica Morazzoni and Maria Paradiso, *Nuove geografie dell'innovazione e dell'informazione*, 11-24.

<sup>6</sup> Michela Lazzeroni, "Università e innovazione nelle aree periferiche: dinamiche di sviluppo, inclusione sociale e progetti di rigenerazione urbana", *Geotema*, 59 (2019): 25-34.

<sup>7</sup> Nico Bazzoli, Mauro De Donatis, Elisa Lello, Filippo Martelli, Elena Viganò, and Paolo Piacentini. "Il Cammino del Duca: un itinerario in costruzione tra università e territorio". In *Itinerari per la rigenerazione territoriale tra sviluppi reticolari e sostenibili*, edited by Luisa Spagnoli. (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2022).

be described. Namely, we will focus on its potential contribution to the revitalization of the area the Way crosses. Actually, the local context is more and more declining, with contrasting visions on how to keep together economic needs and environmental protection. Next, we will introduce the actions carried out to trace the path of the Cammino and share it with local populations. A special focus is devoted to the project logo, as a key element in the visual identity of the project. Some considerations on key driving factors and main critical issues of the project will be reported in the conclusions.

## 2. Universities and Sustainability: the Case of the *Cammino del Duca*.

With the increasing awareness about the socio-environmental crises related to the limits of existing development processes, several authors have emphasized the need to place university institutions at the center of the debate for the creation of a sustainable future<sup>8</sup>. These arguments move from the recognition of their specific position within society as unique sites for the production, dissemination, and use of knowledge, that is, those elements that can support broad economic and social transformations such as those related to sustainable development<sup>9</sup>. As is well known, this implies complex challenges, requiring not only new directions in teaching and research but also a rethinking of the very role of universities, and their relationship with the surrounding context, at different levels of spatial proximity.

A relevant push in this direction came with the United Nations 2030 Agenda, the first international development agenda to include higher education both in the goal of quality education (SDG 4) and as a key player in partnerships to achieve the other goals (SDG 17)<sup>10</sup>. This has resulted in a clear interest by universities to pursue 2030 Agenda's SDGs, albeit with varying modalities and intensity<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, it should be pointed out that university institutions are characterized by multiple values and visions regarding sustainable development, as well as different constraints and

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<sup>8</sup> Issa Ibrahim Berchin, Ana Regina de Aguiar Dutra and José Baltazar Salgueirinho Osório de Andrade Guerra, "How do Higher Education Institutions Promote Sustainable Development? A Literature Review", *Sustainable Development* 29.6 (2021): 1204-1222; Anthony D. Cortese, "The Critical Role of Higher Education in Creating a Sustainable Future", *Planning for higher education* 31.3 (2003): 15-22; Paul Sylvestre, Rebecca McNeil and Tarah Wright, "From Talloires to Turin: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Declarations for Sustainability in Higher Education", *Sustainability* 5.4 (2013): 1356-1371.

<sup>9</sup> Jennie C. Stephens et al. "Higher Education as a Change Agent for Sustainability in Different Cultures and Contexts", *International journal of sustainability in higher education* 9.3 (2008): 317-338.

<sup>10</sup> Taya Louise Owens, "Higher Education in the Sustainable Development Goals Framework", *European Journal of Education* 52.4 (2017): 414-420.

<sup>11</sup> Maia Chankseliani and Tristan McCowan, "Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals", *Higher Education* 81.1 (2021): 1-8; Isabel Ruiz-Mallén and María Heras, "What Sustainability? Higher Education Institutions' Pathways to Reach the Agenda 2030 Goals", *Sustainability* 12.4 (2020): 1290.

peculiarities that influence their role, as well as their goals, strategies, and operational scope<sup>12</sup>.

In any case, in the literature above there is quite an agreement that the interconnectedness and complexity of current socio-ecological emergencies require strong integration between disciplines and relevant interactions between universities and society, building partnerships to design and implement initiatives geared toward the pursuit of 2020 Agenda SDGs. This is especially true at the local level, where the ability of universities to interact with the social fabric, dependent on contextual knowledge and familiarity with communities, still has wide margins of improvement. In this respect, both greater openness to actors outside the academic community and the building of interconnections between different actors with a transdisciplinary approach are needed<sup>13</sup>.

Such an orientation implies a third mission activity or a real fourth mission dedicated to sustainability<sup>14</sup>, directed to the implementation of cross-sectoral and wide-ranging processes and initiatives that pay special attention to the local communities in which the universities are embedded. On the other hand, innovative proposals aimed at promoting sustainable development turn out to be sensitive to local contexts<sup>15</sup> and should be elaborated considering the peculiarities of places to grasp their latent potential and develop effective strategies for enhancement.

This attention to the context represents one of the main elements that, together with contamination and sharing, animate the worksite of “Uniurb Sostenibile” (Sustainable University of Urbino) and the actions of the pro-rectorate of Sustainability and Enhancement of Differences at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo. The focus is not only on building knowledge, but also on building relationships and initiatives on sustainability in different respects, via the collaboration and engagement of external stakeholders, as well as the university staff, and students.

Among the various projects promoted in this perspective over the past few years, the *Cammino del Duca* stands out. This route of about 100 kilometers winds between Marche and Umbria, connecting the cities of Urbino and Gubbio —both deeply linked to the history of Duke Federico da Montefeltro (1422-1482). This initiative is related to different missions of the University (third mission, teaching as well as research), with the priority aim of contributing to the reconciliation of sustainability and local economy.

A key issue of the project is represented by the role of the University as a promoter, and actively involved in its implementation, in collaboration

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<sup>12</sup> Andrea Cuesta-Claros, et al., “Understanding the Roles of Universities for Sustainable Development Transformations: A Framing Analysis of University Models”, *Sustainable Development* 30.4 (2022): 525-538.

<sup>13</sup> Julie Klein Thompson, et al., *Transdisciplinarity: Joint Problem Solving among Science, Technology, and Society: An Effective Way for Managing Complexity* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Chiara Rinaldi, Alessio Cavicchi and Richard N.S. Robinson, “University Contributions to Co-creating Sustainable Tourism Destinations”, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 30.9 (2022): 2144-2166.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory Trencher et al., “University Partnerships for Co-designing and Co-producing Urban Sustainability”, *Global Environmental Change* 28 (2014): 153-165.

with CAI (Montefeltro and Gubbio sections), local authorities, and a number of public and private bodies in the area. Therefore, the *Cammino* becomes a debate arena with the local context, to activate many resources to formulate a participatory proposal of slow tourism and knowledge of the local context.

Moreover, the *Cammino* is defined as an open-air classroom-laboratory for the sharing and co-creation of knowledge with the students and with stakeholders outside the academic arena, not only in reference to the historical, landscape, and naturalistic aspects, but also to local environmental, socio-demographic and economic problems. In this sense, the project also serves as a stimulus for the consolidation of research interests in the local context, channelling part of the energies of the teaching and research staff towards multi-interdisciplinary scientific insights that also intend to address the theme of local economies of marginal areas. In particular, the focus is on models combining income and employment creation with respect for the environment and the protection of well-being and health.

### **3. A Trade-off between Environmental Sustainability and the Enhancement of Local Economies?**

The route of the *Cammino* del Duca is divided into five stages that touch the territory of six inland municipalities in the Province of Pesaro and Urbino and two municipalities in the Province of Perugia. In addition to high orographic and landscape variability, the spatial context of the *Cammino* is quite heterogeneous in terms of spatial marginality and socio-economic characteristics. Two of the eight municipalities crossed by the route are classified, according to the National Strategy for Inner Areas, as poles, two as belt areas, and four as intermediate [Table 1]. Although only the latter falls within the delimitation of the Inner Areas, the entire area under consideration is affected by processes of population shrinkage (more advanced, as in the case of smaller and peripheral municipalities, or less). These municipalities show also socio-demographic and labor market indicators that, in several cases, are among the worst in the regional context.

Depopulation is just one piece of a larger mosaic of attrition - economic, social, demographic, and related to the supply of services - that undermines the well-being of resident populations and the ability to sustain local economies. Thus, in this area straddling the Umbria-Marches Apennines, albeit with different intensities, the typical issues of inland areas arise along with difficulties attributable to the various forms of decline that have recently involved intermediate territories<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Francesco Curci, Arturo Lanzani and Agim Kërçuku, "Le geografie emergenti della contrazione insediativa in Italia: analisi interpretative e segnali per le politiche", *CRIOS*, 19-20 (2020): 8-19.

Table 1| Main socio-economic characteristics of the area traversed by the Cammino del Duca.

Source: elaboration on data from the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

*\* Labour force aged 15-89 years**\*\* At provincial level, the activity and unemployment rate – year 2022 are 55,1% and 4,6% (Pesaro-Urbino), and 53,1% and 7,3% (Perugia).*

Municipalities	Group in the National Strategy for Inner areas	Inhabitants 2022	Change in population (%) 2011-2022	Old age index 2022 %	Activity rate 2019 %	Unemployment rate 2019 %
Acqualagna (PU)	Intermediate	4.182	-7,4	186,2	56,3	9,7
Cagli (PU)	Intermediate	8.068	-11,1	274,3	51,0	8,5
Fermignano (PU)	Belt	8.239	-4,6	155,6	58,5	9,2
Frontone (PU)	Intermediate	1.204	-11,7	276,6	52,1	11,0
Gubbio (PG)	Areal centre	30.650	-6,0	235,4	52,0	8,8
Provincia PG	-	640.482	-2,8	211,8	53,8	10,7
Provincia PU	-	349.818	-3,9	201,1	55,5	10,5
Scheggia e Pascelupo (PG)	Belt	1.280	-13,4	300,7	45,4	11,6
Serra Sant'Abbondio (PU)	Intermediate	919	-17,1	471,6	46,3	10,4
Urbino (PU)	Areal Centre	13.772	-11,5	262,5	53,1	7,8

In these rural and mountainous areas, socio-economic trends in the last decades show an urgent need to sustain the local economy and employment. At the same time, these needs often tend to conflict with environmental protection goals, making the reconciliation of these two dimensions problematic. Indeed, in some cases, an (outdated) view persists, maintaining that environmental initiatives can be constraints for the development of local business and economies.

As a result, openly hostile positions gain momentum, harming initiatives aimed to reconcile income and employment creation with environmental protection making the implementation of sustainable economy projects even more complex. On the other hand, the increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather phenomena related to climate change—which have severely affected in recent months many of the municipalities involved in the Cammino—is showing more and more that a strong commitment is needed, not only in the mitigation of the greenhouse effect, but also in the conscious and responsible land management.

#### 4. Building the Cammino del Duca.

In the context of the pandemic and the rediscovery of inland destinations, awareness of the potential of slow tourism linked to walking routes has further asserted itself. This awareness, combined with a careful assessment of the paths crossing the Marche and Umbria regions, moved a group of professors and researchers from the University of Urbino toward the definition of an initial hypothesis of a route for the Cammino del Duca. This was intended as a basis for a shared definition involving a working group extended to the CAI sections of the territories concerned. Following numerous meetings and discussions, a draft route was agreed upon in the spring of 2021 to be promoted and tested through experience. With the aim of directly assessing the feasibility of the route by different categories of users, an initiative open to the public was then organised to walk the five identified stages. The experimentation, which took place from 26 to 30 July 2021, was preceded by appropriate promotion and communication initiatives and initial mapping of the accommodation facilities, commercial activities and elements of significant landscape, geological and cultural interest in the vicinity of the route, to propose them as points of refreshment, refuelling, overnight stays and thematic deepening.

An intense listening and discussion activity with the territories concerned accompanied the event. At the end of each stage, near the places of arrival and overnight stay, public meetings were organised in which the group of walkers interfaced with various representatives of local institutions and communities, and with individual citizens. These initiatives served to make the Cammino del Duca project known to institutional stakeholders and the inhabitants of the municipalities crossed and, at the same time, to understand the needs of the territories and the main issues to be addressed for the implementation of the Cammino itself.

The importance the working group attached to listening was also reflected in the group of walkers who were testing the route for the first time. In fact, a prominent role was reserved for gathering feedback and information from the participants to obtain an initial assessment of the route, critical points, and aspects to be improved.

The main issues that emerged from this activity made it possible to initiate a process of redefining certain parts of the route, providing for some alternative paths, also based on different users' profiles and interests [Figure 1]. This revision of the Cammino was carried out by the CAI sections involved in the project, bearing in mind specific criteria such as the use of existing paths and roads, the state of maintenance of the pathways, the need to avoid asphalt roads as much as possible, the safety requirements for usability, the length of the stages, the difference in altitude, the physical effort required and the possibility of guaranteeing at least a minimum logistical support at the stage points.

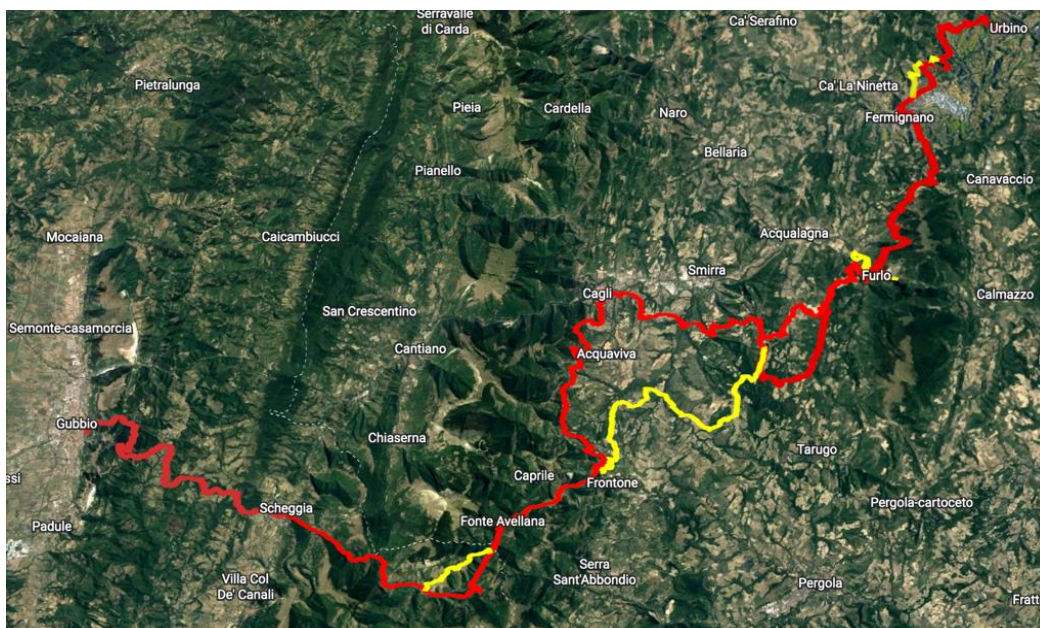


Figure 1| The Path of the Cammino del Duca (in red) with the alternative path (in yellow).

The success with the public and the good feedback received led to the organisation of a second structured walking activity from 29 June to 3 July 2022, with the aim of continuing the itinerant construction process of the project and further strengthening the relations between the University of Urbino and the local stakeholders, in a generative perspective.

At the same time, the process of institutional recognition of the Cammino del Duca by both the regions and the municipalities involved was initiated, with a view to its inclusion in the *Atlante dei Cammini* (Atlas of the Ways) of Italy, through the preparation of technical reports, the survey of routes and the design of the logo. The latter, in particular, represented an important phase in defining the identity of the Cammino and in helping to increase its knowledge on the part of both the local populations and those potentially interested in walking it and getting to know, from multiple perspectives, the territory along which it winds.

## 5. Communicating the Cammino del Duca.

Developing the Cammino del Duca included a design activity in the field of graphic design and visual communication aimed at creating a graphic sign and an identity system capable of responding to different communication needs. Consistently with the objectives of the project and its implementation strategy, which identify the centrality of the university's action and the definition of a network of local stakeholders as a distinctive feature, it was decided to entrust the graphic design and communication project to the Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche (ISIA) di Urbino, involving a dedicated team of students, researchers, and lecturers. The choice seemed particularly appropriate given the Institute's teaching and research activities centred on the redefinition of the communication project based on principles of

sustainability, the attention to the complexity of contexts, the intended enhancement of the differences, and the understanding of designing as a tool to stimulate participation and a sense of belonging.

First of all, designing an identity system for the Cammino del Duca meant questioning the functions to which it must respond both in terms of identity and directional information. These dimensions of graphic design refer to specific disciplinary fields: that of corporate identity, understood as “the set of images or ideas or qualities of an entity that people have or are formed by relating to them through elements, called touch points, such as brands, buildings, products, packaging, printed matter, ...”<sup>17</sup> and that of wayfinding, a branch of information design and environmental graphic, or that field of design which, including different skills, deals with the implications of communication design in the built environment.

It was, therefore, necessary to question how the cultural, theoretical, and technical tools of identity and wayfinding design could account not only for the specificities of the object of application, the Cammino del Duca, but also for the process of its design from a collaborative, sustainable and inclusive perspective.

In recent years, designers and communication design scholars—among others—have become increasingly aware of the need to address territorial communication issues and enhance the specificities of places. This need has emerged from an understanding of the phenomena described above in terms of a progressive marginalisation of peripheral areas and, at the same time, from the awareness of the role that tourism, in its various forms, can play in coping with processes of marginalisation and depopulation.

While in many cases, the response of graphic and communication design has been that of territorial branding, which has applied the logic of the promotion of consumer goods and services to the communication of territories, a front of critical reflection has also opened up, which has concentrated its efforts on redefining communication design, increasingly moving away from a vision of design as a tool for regulating the forms of the visible referred to a subject, in favour of designing conceived as a tool for the enhancement of differences.

From this perspective, the identity system is no longer necessarily a closed synthetic sign but it can rather consist of a variable identity, a writing system that modifies itself on the logic of a grammar designed from time to time according to needs<sup>18</sup>.

This non-finiteness and adaptability of graphic design is a central feature in designing identities applied to contexts. If places are bearers of multiple meanings—some being more stable, linked to their formal characteristics, and others generated by uses and projections—the role of

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<sup>17</sup> Frederick Henri Kay Henrion and Alan Parkin, *Design Coordination and Corporate Image* (London: Studio Vista, 1967).

<sup>18</sup> Ulrike Felsing, *Dynamic Identities in Cultural and Public Contexts* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2010).



communication is to hold this complexity together, interpreting the spirit of the place and, at the same time, allowing everyone to interact with it<sup>19</sup>. On a communicative level, this means designing a graphic identity that incorporates characteristics of variability, combining distinctive graphic characters with a non-imposing logic, one that is sensitive to contexts, aware of sustainability over time and of the possible appropriation of the system by users. In this regard, Piscitelli, Ferrara and Guida<sup>20</sup> mention the case study of the Lost Cities paths near Aleppo in Syria, emphasising how its graphic-wayfinding system, making use of cement posts well integrated with the context, is characterised by a low production cost, does not require special maintenance and envisages the local procurement of raw materials.

The graphic design of the Cammino del Duca consists of an acronym (CDD) whose layout is variable with respect to a basic grid and in which the letters are connected by straight lines and curves that recall cartographic notational systems [Figure 2].



Figure 2| The Logo of the Cammino del Duca.

Realised in black and white, the logo-mark system has little impact on the natural environment in which it will be used. It is versatile, economical due to the use of a single colour; it can be easily reproduced: a characteristic that also allows it to be written by hand on irregular surfaces such as wood or stone found along the Way. The system's configurations also make it possible to use different variants for each point of the Way, or for a set of points along it, emphasising the specificity of each place without compromising the overall effectiveness of the identity project [Figure 3].

<sup>19</sup> Daniela Piscitelli, Cinzia Ferrara and Francesco E. Guida, "Design e comunicazione visiva", in *I paesaggi culturali. Costruzione, promozione, gestione*, Ed. Michela Barosio (Milano: Egea, 2013), 329-352.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

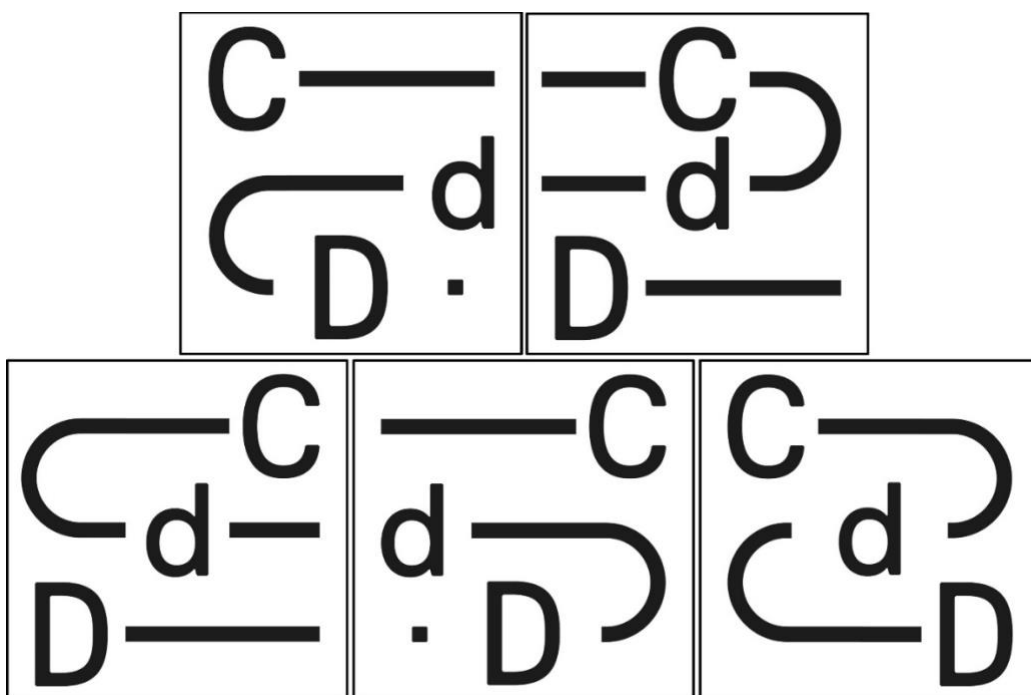


Figure 3| The “Cammino del Duca” Logo: possible variants.

These characteristics define a graphic system that is sufficiently open to be offered for use and appropriation by all the subjects of the network as well as the end users, in the awareness that each sign acquires meaning through use over time.

## 6. Some Concluding Remarks on the Nodes and Criticalities of the Process.

As in any project endowed with a certain complexity, the implementation process of the Cammino del Duca has brought out some interrelated nodes and specific critical issues. These are related both to the inclusion of the project in the framework of constraints, opportunities, guidelines and policies marking the local development path, and to the role assumed by the University.

Although there is some agreement within the framework of sector studies about the need to include local stakeholders in sustainable development projects, their actual involvement does not appear to be without problems. The issues underlying this difficulty can be multiple and related as much to the technical capacity of local stakeholders to cooperate as to their willingness and conviction to do so<sup>21</sup>. In fact, in the experience of implementing the Cammino del Duca, it should be pointed out that the participation of actors outside the promoting group is, in some cases, complex and constitutes a dimension to which specific

<sup>21</sup> Chiara Rinaldi et al., “Universities and Smart Specialisation Strategy: From Third Mission to Sustainable Development Co-creation”, *International journal of sustainability in higher education* 19.1 (2018): 67-84.

energies should be devoted, especially about the engagement of actors and their contribution over time. In view of the final launch, the various formal steps to arrive at the recognition of the Cammino by the Marche Region and the Umbria Region will hopefully represent an opportunity to strengthen relations with local authorities and the various socio-economic actors.

A second element of criticality, partly connected to the previous one, concerns the role assumed by the University as a co-proponent and co-leader in the implementation of the project. This specific role of the University of Urbino testifies to a direct commitment of the academic community to the territory, which is also rich in innovative aspects. At the same time, it risks representing a limitation to the systematization and consolidation of the Cammino. To allow the project to "walk with its own legs," it is necessary for the University to take on a different role from the current one, less tied to activities in the field and more oriented toward strengthening the participation of actors and the sharing of vision and goals, leading to the creation of a network of public and private entities that will be responsible for the promotion, maintenance, care, and usability of the itinerary. This issue about governance opens up the need to broaden and consolidate the relationships between the actors involved, accompanying them on a collaborative path fueled by the sharing of some basic elements about local sustainable economies.

Finally, the difficulty in reconciling different visions about local economies and "development", manifesting themselves in individual orientations and in the proposal of divergent projects in terms of land management choices and enhancement mechanisms, should be recalled. This is an area in which the university is called upon to make multiple contributions. First, regarding the promotion of sustainability, it can act through the proposal of innovative approaches to environmental management in its activities, that can be adopted by the different entities that come into contact with the university, fueling a process of progressive contamination<sup>22</sup>. Second, its action can be aimed at the definition and promotion of socio-economic patterns which are able to take into account the specific needs of different territorial contexts and their social groups together with respect of the environment and landscape. In this sense, the university can play a role as a mediator and glue between different local contexts, institutions and stakeholders, facilitating the elaboration of a strategic vision and the goals to be achieved to build a truly sustainable future.

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<sup>22</sup> Stephens et al., "Higher Education as a Change Agent", 317-338.

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# RECs as a Tool for Urban and Environmental Regeneration. The Case of Roseto Valfortore

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## 1. Introduction.

The “Renewable Energy Communities” (RECs) are now one of the most current and effective models for pursuing the sustainability and urban development goals set by the European Union in the UAEU “Urban Agenda for the EU”<sup>2</sup> which, details the operational framework, working method, concrete actions and themes. A model based on a process of green and digital transition of urban transformation policies, based on the involvement of “local communities,” rethinking of administrative arrangements, and “technological and energy transition.” This holistic approach promotes cooperation among all actors in a given territory, working to develop solutions designed to improve the quality of life for citizens and favor the use of renewable, ecological, intelligent, efficient and connected technologies.

Beginning with these premises, the text that follows examines the state-of-the-art in this field, with specific reference to the European and Italian contexts. The study gathers and analyses the most “relevant directives, regulations, studies and best practices” currently available, with a focus

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission, *The Urban Agenda for the EU*, (2016a). Available online: <https://urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/urban-agenda-eu> (accessed on May 30, 2023).

on the areas of action and characterizing factors of the different contexts in which they can be applied.

In the wake of these studies, the focus of the text shifts to an “applied experiment” at the scale of a meta-design project in the town of Roseto Valfortore (FG), the object of a collaboration agreement with the local office of ENEA (National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development), Energy efficiency Unit Department of Bari, that confronts the implications on the landscape and urban environment connected with the constitution of a REC.

## 2. State of the Art.

The concept of RECs (Renewable Energy Communities) appears at the EU level with the Renewable Energy Directive on the Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources (RED II)<sup>3</sup> introducing the application to Renewable Energy Communities and Collective Self-Consumption Groups.

This is followed by the Electricity Internal Market Directive (EIM), which introduces the Citizens Energy Community (CEC) institution.<sup>4</sup> In the same year, the European Union dismisses the Clean Energy for all Europeans package,<sup>5</sup> a suite of legislation comprised of eight Directives on energy-related themes (e.g., Energy performance in buildings, Renewable energy, Energy efficiency, Governance of the energy union, Electricity regulation, Electricity directive Risk preparedness Governance regulation, Electricity market design, Adoption process for the legal acts) for the purpose of democratic governance with clear and specific decision-making rules. The “Clean Energy for all Europeans package also addresses Energy communities,” understood as local communities made up of people and institutions living on the ground, and adhering to the sustainable development goals set out in the European Green Deal strategy (EGD) for the European Union,<sup>6</sup> the main policy framework for achieving a transition to a climate-neutral and sustainable Europe by 2050. EGD's is an ambitious program, aspiring to the goals of reducing CO2 emissions, climate neutrality, curbing energy consumption, increasing the use of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and reducing waste by promoting solutions related to individual and/or collective self-

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<sup>3</sup> European Parliament and Council, *Directive (EU) 2018/2001 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources*, Brussels, (2018). Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018L2001> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament and Council, *Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU*, (2019a). Available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L0944> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, *Clean energy for all Europeans package*, (2019b). Available online: [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/clean-energy-all-europeans-package\\_en](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/clean-energy-all-europeans-package_en) (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, *The European Green Deal (EGD) COM/2019/640 Final*, (2019c). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

consumption. Goals, moreover, already set at the EU level when the Energy Roadmap 2050<sup>7</sup> was adopted, for a low-carbon European economy by 2050 (-80/-95% greenhouse gases compared to 1990) based on the identification of new scenarios for decarbonization (energy efficiency, renewables, nuclear, carbon capture and storage). Funding programs such as the Next Generation EU are significant in fostering a strong momentum for the transition, to a cleaner and more sustainable energy system, and just in the context of energy policies, the EEF guiding principle “Energy Efficiency First”<sup>8</sup> emphasizes the importance of implementing the inclusion of energy efficiency measures as a priority in their planning and implementation.

The principles of EEF are evinced in the European REPowerEU Plan initiative<sup>9</sup> for the purpose of stimulating investment in promoting energy renovation innovation, employment and economic growth through energy upgrading of buildings. In support of the Urban Agenda for the EU,<sup>10</sup> maintaining the rigor of coherence and continuity within the programs of the Trio of Presidencies, an operational framework for the period 2016-2021 was developed by the EU ministers responsible for urban issues, subsequent to the “Amsterdam Pact”<sup>11</sup>, The New Leipzig Charter,<sup>12</sup> and the current adoption of the Ljubljana Agreement,<sup>13</sup> the related multi-annual work program for the period 2022-2026 which concretize the beginning of a new phase of the UAEU in an implementation document, which possesses a framework for planning, implementing and monitoring an ecological, social and economic transition, aimed at promoting and regulating a framework for sharing knowledge, experience and good practices related to Energy Communities through multilevel and multilateral cooperation by observing the long-term structural change in energy systems, which are

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<sup>7</sup> European Commission, COM (2011) 885, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, Energy Roadmap 2050*, (2011). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52011DC0885> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, *Energy Efficiency First (EEF)*, (2021). Available at: [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-first-principle\\_en](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-first-principle_en) (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, *REPowerEU Plan Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, (2022). Available online: [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/COM\\_2022\\_230\\_1\\_EN\\_ACT\\_part1\\_v5.pdf](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/COM_2022_230_1_EN_ACT_part1_v5.pdf) (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, *The Urban Agenda for the EU*.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission, *Establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU “Pact of Amsterdam” Agreed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, Amsterdam*, (2016b). Available online:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/pact-of-amsterdam.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/pact-of-amsterdam.pdf) (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/12/12-08-2020-new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/12/12-08-2020-new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good)

<sup>13</sup> Slovenian Presidency Consilium European, *Ljubljana agreement informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters. Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia*, (2021). Available online: [https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2022-10/ljubljana\\_agreement\\_2021\\_en.pdf](https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2022-10/ljubljana_agreement_2021_en.pdf) (accessed on July 26, 2023).



considered essential for the “sustainable development of the city”,<sup>14</sup> but which in their application to Energy Communities take on a systemic value oriented towards the development of “Smart Cities” or “Smart Territories.”

Better yet, we could speak of “Smart Communities,” intended not as a unique model to be applied indifferently, but as sustainable and digital communities, each characterized by a diverse organizational and managerial system inspired by local actors (public, private or third sector) committed to achieving precise objectives of sustainability, optimization, efficiency, and digitization.

In this arena, it is important to note how collaborative organizational models, combined with the opportunities offered by new digital technologies, constitute a cardinal point in “energy transition” and represent an opportunity for the creation of new arrangements based on the “green economy”, on the modification of systems of producing, distributing and consuming green energy, on the affirmation of “local energy economies” and a greater “attention toward the social dimension.” The principal actors in Smart Communities are public administrations, productive activities, universities, active citizens and integrator systems, all subjects deputized with the planning and management of network architecture. The first as components of decision-making bodies fundamental to the activation of new services, new infrastructures and investments oriented toward the promotion and conservation of human and environmental capital, relations and the common goods of a community. The second as promoters of an increase in productivity and employment through technological innovation. The third as subjects who implement training and research fundamental to the competitive development of local communities. The fourth component, citizens, as subjects with real needs directly involved in decision-making processes and the true protagonists of community life.<sup>15</sup> With Directive 2018/2001 RED II, the European Union made a strong push to renew the theme of energy production from renewable sources. At the national level in Italy, these objectives were adopted with Legislative Decree 162/2019 “Milleproroghe”<sup>16</sup> and the subsequent, final Legislative Decrees 2021/199 and 2021/210<sup>17</sup> respectively transpose the aforementioned Directives 2018/2001 and 2019/944. They are followed by Resolution 2020/318 of

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<sup>14</sup> European Commission, *The Urban Agenda for the EU*.

<sup>15</sup> Bharani Alagirisamy and Poornima Ramesh. “Smart sustainable cities: Principles and future trends,” in Indrajit Pal and Sreevalsa Kolathayar (eds.), *Sustainable Cities and Resilience. Select Proceedings of VCDRR 2021. Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering 183* (Singapore: Springer, 2022): 301-316.

<sup>16</sup> Presidency of the Republic, *Decree-Law 2019/162, converted into law 2021/228, art.42-bis* (2019). Available online:

<https://def.finanze.it/DocTribFrontend/getAttoNormativoDetail.do?ACTION=getSommario&id=%7B74782FF5-8835-4235-BFE0-F8D4DA1A7AB4%7D> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> President of Italian Republic, *Legislative Decree 2021/199*, (2021a). Available online: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2021/11/30/21G00214/sg> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

President of Italian Republic, *Legislative Decree 2021/210*, (2021b). Available online: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2021/12/11/21G00233/sg> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

ARERA (Regulatory Authority for Energy Networks and Environment), the Technical Rules established by GSE (Gestore Servizi Energetici), which set out the characteristics of participants, economic conditions, and the procedures for establishing RECs, and in light of ARERA Resolution 2020/727<sup>18</sup> and the issuance of the TIAD (Testo Integrato Autoconsumo Diffuso) on renewable energy configurations with the planned widespread self-consumption models pending implementation in conjunction with the approval by the EU, of the RECs Implementation Decree sent by the MASE (Minister of Environment and Energy Security) in February 2023.

Establishing an Energy Community in the Italian context, which is rich in valuable natural and cultural peculiarities and emergencies, however, poses the need to confront the requirements of conservation and protection of environmental and urban quality. It is therefore desirable, as emphasized by the European Landscape Convention<sup>19</sup>, to base actions on the principles of “safeguarding,” “management,” and “planning” of the territory capable of guiding choices and encouraging the identification of appropriate interventions useful for integrating new technologies with the peculiarities of Natural and Territorial Capital.

From a scientific literature perspective, it is interesting to mention the studies conducted by Susan Owens on “Energy Integrated Planning,” which are based on the application of new planning processes aimed at energy efficiency, particularly in the urban context.<sup>20</sup> These concepts have been taken up by Paolo De Pascali and expanded to a multidisciplinary dimension of energy planning at the urban and territorial level, in which sustainable development goals are integrated with the preservation and enhancement of local resources, local identities and historical and environmental values. The suggested intent is to define transformations through a process that brings the culture of becoming back into the culture of limit, a prerequisite of participatory systemic design.<sup>21</sup> Reasoning is extended to evaluate energy planning based on the integration of energy and planning, considering the real potential of neighborhood spaces in terms of capacity, mitigation and adaptation in the design of environments. This involves analyzing possible actions that can be implemented to create distributed renewable energy systems, taking into account energy consumption and different physical-environmental conditions. The goal is to assess the quality and

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<sup>18</sup> ARERA Autorità Di Regolazione per Energia Reti e Ambiente, *Deliberazione 727/2022/R/Eel Definition, pursuant to Legislative Decree 2021/199 and Legislative Decree 2021/210, of the Regulation of Diffuse Self-Consumption. Approval Of The Integrated Text of Diffuse Self-consumption*, (2022). Available online: <https://www.nextville.it/normativa/50294/delibera-arera-27-dicembre-2022-n-7272022reel/> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Council of Europe, *European Landscape Convention, Firenze*. ETS No. 176 - Firenze, 20.X.2000, (2004). Available online: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/-/council-of-europe-european-landscape-convention-ets-no-176-translations> (accessed on July 26, 2023).

<sup>20</sup> Susan Owens, *Energy, planning and urban form* (London: Pion Ltd, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Paolo De Pascali, *City and energy. The energy value of settlement organization*. Vol. 1786 (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2008).

effectiveness of the proposed solutions through the processing of energy data, which requires the creation of specific energy mapping and the use of appropriate tools to assess their technical-financial and socioeconomic feasibility.<sup>22</sup> The latter reflections reveal the need to better define the role played by the project, which can be interpreted as a possible tool for governing transformation processes and controlling architectural and landscape quality, especially with reference to new REC-related infrastructure settlements.

### 3. Best Practices.

In complement to the literature references, it has been deemed beneficial to conduct an examination of the experiences and experiments conducted to date on the subject of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) at both the community and national levels. The best practices under analysis concerning RECs can be distinguished based on the specific context in relation to the practical guidelines analyzed concerning the specificity of “participatory” design.

Starting from the “European experiences”, the study focused on the results of the Renewables-networking platform project,<sup>23</sup> carried out with the support of the European Commission's DG Energy, which reviewed 37 real cases, all referred to a holistic model aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and improving social cooperation between all the actors involved.

As far as the “Italian context,” it was useful to draw on the results of the LUMI Company,<sup>24</sup> studies, which show the existence of 26 Energy Communities, characterized by the development of smart grids, the jointly ownership of local services and/or infrastructures, the change in energy supply methods.

Among all the cases studied, we focused on the most relevant experiences similar and comparable with the case study investigated and described in the next paragraph, analyzing scope and characterization factors applicable to the different contexts. Particular attention was paid to projects focused on “urban regeneration models,” based on the smart city concept and the use of technology as a tool useful to the smart change of the urban environment. These projects are interesting because put the attention on issues such as sustainability and energy security, and implement an energy community following a bottom up approach and

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<sup>22</sup> Michiel Fremouw, Annamaria Bagaini and Paolo De Pascali, “Energy potential mapping: Open data in support of urban transition planning,” *Energies* 13(5) (March 2020): 1264, <https://doi.org/10.3390/en13051264>.

<sup>23</sup> The platform aims to connect major European, national, regional and local stakeholders to facilitate the development of sound policies that will ensure the achievement of the minimum 32 percent renewable energy target for 2030, while monitoring best practices and obstacles in policies at national and subnational levels. <https://www.renewables-networking.eu>

<sup>24</sup> Consulting firm for marketing strategies in energy transition and digital innovation. <https://luminetwork.it/>

developing opportunities and benefits for the territory, focusing on people, the urban context and the landscape.

### 3.1 Case Study 1: Smart City Project, Graz, Austria.

The city of Graz is part of the *Eurocities* program, the network of more than 200 European cities in 38 countries, representing 130 million people working together to address common challenges and share best practices in the field of sustainable urban development, promoting transactional cooperation between cities to improve the quality of urban life.

The Smart City Graz project, follows the Smart City Wien pilot initiative, with which it shares an approach to urban planning of neighborhoods and creating a smart and sustainable urban environment. This is done by promoting energy efficiency, improving sustainable mobility, and integrating smart technologies for managing urban infrastructure and neighborhood green areas. The project involves 12 national and international partners, led by the City of Graz. It will start in Waagner Biro, a compact neighborhood with mixed urban use. A high-quality public urban space will connect residential, office buildings to the new school campus by 2025. The project responds to very concrete problems and is related to citizens' demands on how to have more residential space, but also decrease traffic and increase social infrastructure [Figure 1].



NATION	AUSTRIA
INTERVENTION AREA	GRAZ, (AT) 353 M S.L.M.
NUMBER OF INHABITANTS	265 000 INHABITANTS
ENERGY SYSTEMS	SMART CITY - DISTRICT NET PHOTOVOLTAIC INVESTIMENT
COMPANY TYPE	LOCAL PARTNERSHIP
TECNOLOGY	PUBLIC URBAN SPACE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
PRODUCTION	-

## CASE STUDY

### SMART CITY GRAZ WAAGRER-BIRO

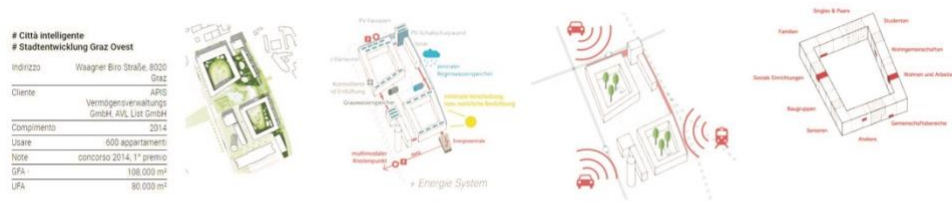


Figure 1| Smart City Graz project (AU). From top to bottom: general view of the intervention area, summary sheet of quantitative data, meta-design schemes of interventions, general view of the new neighborhood configuration.

Credits: <https://www.renewables-networking.eu>

### 3.2 Case Study 2: New Energy Model of Diffuse and Integrated Poly-generation, Madonie Park, Palermo, Italy.

In 2010, the first Diffuse Photovoltaic Park was built, located in highly degraded public areas (former landfills, lifting plants, asbestos roofing) allow to combine environmental, productive and social recovery, without consuming new land, lowering historical supply costs by about a quarter. The project, implemented and promoted by the Madonie Local Development Agency with the support of So.Vis.Ma S.p.A (Society for the Development of the Madonie) and Enel X as a technical partner, is based on a new energy model of diffuse and integrated poly-generation experimented in the city of Güssing, Austria, which is being applied with

the scientific support of which the ARCA Consortium<sup>25</sup> is the lead partner. The strategy made it possible to formulate a proposal that aims to introduce a pilot context for the analysis of energy demand and potential impact of the model tested with the STS-Med strategic project (funded by the European Commission under the ENPI CBCMED program). The analysis of data collected during specific energy audits with local stakeholders revealed the opportunity to combine the solar resource with the agroforestry resource, which is widely available in the area, through the implementation of a system of small-scale hybrid plants distributed throughout the territory. The complementary seasonality of the two resources, would, in fact, allow demand to be met in a balanced form, while the small scale would ensure respect for the landscape and enhancement of local biomass. To compare with international best practices and the belief that the Güssing model can be replicated, with appropriate adaptations, and to recover the “energy memory” of the territory with participatory modalities within the Madonie Ecomuseum, as media centers with highly qualified staff and employees of museum institutions, building on the memory of the territory's ability to produce energy through differentiated renewable sources. Outlining a role as a “living-lab of renewable energy” from national and international collaboration and structuring participatory forms between all actors (innovators, technicians, professionals, entrepreneurs and policy makers) who share the “vision” of the ambitious energy model and the integrated strategy of enhancement of local resources, with significant spin-offs on the productive fabric, employment and the very involvement of institutions with experimental laboratories of new technologies, to support the application of a generative model, through “Energy FabLab at School,” i.e., laboratories for the fabrication of demonstration devices (exhibits). Later expanded to the building level through a phase of co-design and implementation of energy improvement interventions in schools and other public buildings in the area. The contents of the strategy focus on vision and participation; the action has the vision and challenging goal of 100% energy from renewable sources within 10 years, defining an overall short-, medium-, and long-term energy master plan that integrates the actions of municipal SEAPs (Sustainable Energy Action Plans) and their enhancement.<sup>26</sup>

The Union of Municipalities of the Madonie Inner Area will support such models through targeted information campaigns to increase public awareness of the importance of energy sustainability. Some of the municipalities involved have also joined the network of CERS (Solidarity Renewable Energy Communities).<sup>27</sup> The Municipality of Blufi in

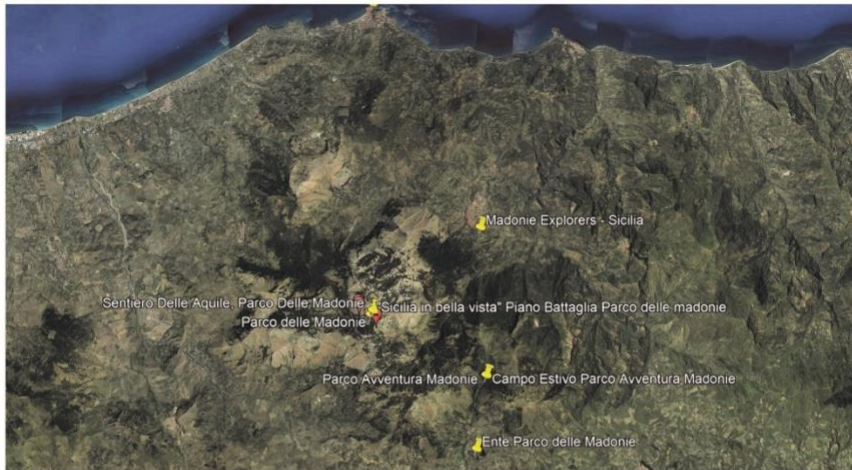
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<sup>25</sup> Public-private consortium composed of the University of Palermo and an entrepreneurial group specializing in industrial research and technology transfer for self-generation and energy autonomy.

<sup>26</sup> Source: <https://madonieareainterna.it/energia/>

<sup>27</sup>Source: <https://www.comunirinnovabili.it/la-rete-delle-comunita-energetiche-rinnovabili-e-sostenibili/>

particular, located in the hinterland of Palermo and belonging to the Madonie Park, started the first photovoltaic system of the area's Renewable Energy Community with the aim of becoming an aggregating entity within the Park. Subsequently, the municipalities of Bompietro, Castellana Sicula, Geraci Siculo, Petralia Soprana, and Petralia Sottana connected to the same primary transformer substation to draw the energy produced in anticipation of setting up their own co-production plants [Figure 2].



REGION	SICILY
INTERVENTION AREA	MADONIE NATURAL PARK (PA)
SURFACE GROUND	39,941 HECTARES
TECNOLOGY	PHOTOVOLTAIC PLANT (50 KW) WIND POWER PLANT (- KW)

Figure 2| New energy model of diffuse and integrated poly-generation, Madonie Development Agency (IT). From top to bottom: general view of the intervention area, summary sheet of quantitative data

Credits: <https://www.lumi4innovation.it/app/uploads/2021/11/GUIDA-Smart-Sustainable-City-lay-digital.pdf>

### 3.3 Case Study 3: Renewable and Supportive Energy Community, San Giovanni a Teduccio Neighborhood, Eastern Suburbs of Naples, Italy.

A project of about 179 kW, of photovoltaic systems, financed by the “Fondazione con il Sud,” promoted by Legambiente and the local community starting with the fundamental role of the “Fondazione Famiglia di Maria” and the 40 families with social hardship involved in the CERS “Renewable and Solidarity Energy Community” and who will enjoy the benefits of this new energy system. The first CERS example of Italy with a project that is an example of good practice with the aim of revitalizing a difficult neighborhood in the field of renewable energy, which will also see the families involved in a path of awareness and increased awareness of energy issues, in order to make the benefits efficient in function of the community [Figure. 3].



REGION	CAMPANIA
INTERVENTION AREA	SAN GIOVANNI A TEDUCCIO (NP)
NUMBER OF INHABITANTS	25 000 INHABITANTS (40 FAMILIES)
TECNOLOGY	PHOTOVOLTAIC PLANT (53 KW)

Figure 3| Photovoltaic plant, San Giovanni a Teduccio (NP). From top to bottom: general view of the intervention area, summary sheet of quantitative data.

Credits: <https://www.lumi4innovation.it/app/uploads/2021/11/GUIDA-Smart-Sustainable-City-lay-digital.pdf>

#### 4. The Case Study of Roseto Valfortre – Test Analysis.

The best practices analysis has allowed the knowledge of the key elements useful and necessary for starting up a Renewable Energy Communities. Energy community means to start from a collective dimension, to take new paths towards zero-km energy production and consumption. It means re-establishing a relationship with the environment, starting from the use of renewable sources for the realization of a sustainable economic and social system for present and future generations. Energy Community means mutual support, cooperation, exchange: all concepts at the base of living together.

A common key element is the role played by the local administrations in a territory. In fact, local administrations assume the role of promoters of the Renewable Energy Community, starting from the research and collection of needs and opportunities of the territory, through program, plans and implementation tools necessary for the realization and management of the Renewable Energy Communities also from an administrative and maintenance point of view.



The creation of an Energy Community in Italy, some country rich in peculiarities and valuable naturalistic and cultural emergencies, needs to involve the stakeholders in charge of the conservation and enhancement of the territorial heritage, to “develop a methodology for a meta design approach” able to combine these aspects with the establishment and development of the REC.

Based on these consideration, the study has focused on the case study of the Municipality of Roseto Valfortore (FG), a municipality included among “The most beautiful villages in Italy”<sup>28</sup> and characterized by a significant cultural, historical, architectural, landscape and tourist heritage. The basic idea was to verify the feasibility of establishing a Renewable Energy Communities in the municipality of Roseto Valfortore with the aim of making it a self-sufficient reality on the energy aspect and, at the same time, to promote its economic development by starting from the valorisation processes of all the local resources that concern economy, environment, culture, architecture, institutions, and people.

The approach to the Case Study found concreteness in the close relationship between the Department of Architecture, ENEA and the company Friendly Power S.r.l. in the person of V. Raffa, an economist who kindly made available his own technical-economic feasibility studies developed on the case study<sup>29</sup> document later used to support the calculations of renewable energy requirements and productivity, potentially realizable subsequently estimated.

From the methodological point of view, the study developed from a careful examination of the PPTE (Regional Territorial Landscape Plan) of Apulia to arrive at the identification and perimeter of the survey area, observing and interpreting its hydro-geo-morphological structure, ecosystem-environmental structure and anthropic and historical-cultural structure.<sup>30</sup> It also continued by analyzing geographic, demographic, environmental and economic ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) data. Site visits to the site of municipal interest to assess the problems of the area, interviews with citizens and the mayor formed an integral part of the study.

The analysis of anthropic transformations has highlighted, among others, some critical issues in the way renewable energy production plants have been established “[...] whose proliferation has occurred without any planning and attention to the landscape values of the area,” as highlighted in the accompanying document to the PPTR of the Apulia Region, which continues “[...] the absence of effective policies in favor of the mountains and minor centers has exposed, in addition, local governments to the flattery of royalties provided by companies engaged in the installation of

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<sup>28</sup>See the website: <https://borghipiubelliditalia.it/borgo/roseto-valfortore/>.

<sup>29</sup> Vincenzo Raffa, *Distributed energy generation and energy communities. The case of Roseto Valfortore* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane E.S.I. Spa, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Analyses developed through the use of GIS software and related Geoportals cadastral mapping of the Internal Revenue Service and the National Directory of Spatial Data (RNDD).

wind turbines”.<sup>31</sup>

It also highlighted some programmatic inconsistencies among the various urban plans, with particular reference to PRG (General Regulatory Plan) forecasts of new urban expansion areas in blatant contrast with nature conservation constraints placed by superordinate instruments. A non-negligible aspect that has led to the need to consider the development of a procedure for coordination and verification of planning choices, also with regard to decisions on the establishment of new RES (Renewable Energy Sources) plants so as to prevent significant alterations of the landscape and identity assets.<sup>32</sup>

At the building scale, the study continued through the reconstruction of a three-dimensional model of the entire urban fabric [Figure 4],<sup>33</sup> in order to arrive at an assessment of the possible locations of RES plants, articulating the analysis with respect to the two types of building artifacts, public and private, due to the different procedure required for the activation of the authorization and implementation processes [Figure 5].

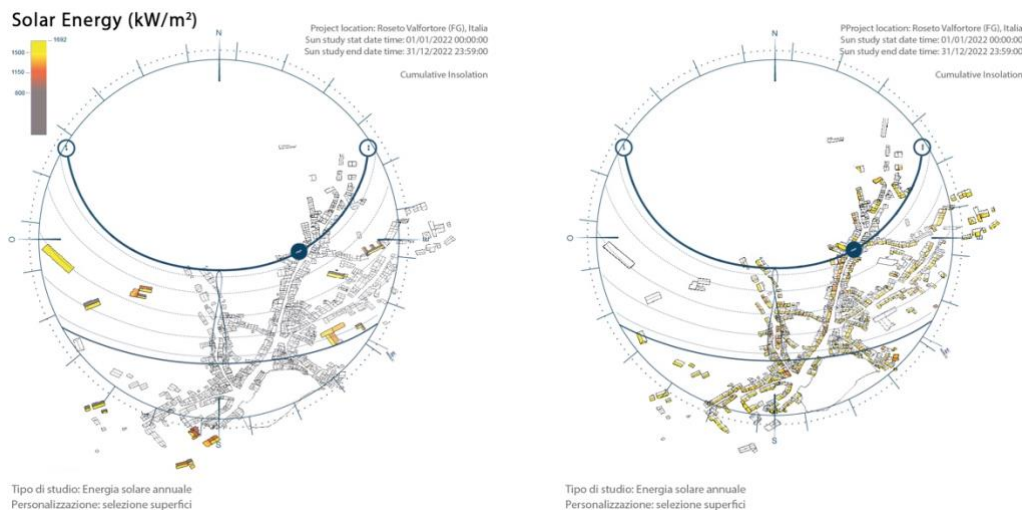


Figure 4| Sunshine analysis of the roofing surfaces of public (left) and private (right) assets.  
Credits: Elena Di Giuseppe.

<sup>31</sup> Puglia Region, Territorial Planning Department, *PPTR - Piano paesaggistico Territoriale Regionale* (2015).

<sup>32</sup> Dario Fossati and Anna Rossi (eds.), *L.O.T.O. Landscape Opportunities. La Gestione Paesistica delle Risorse Territoriali. Complessità Territoriale e Valorizzazione del Paesaggio. Esperienze a Confronto in Lombardia* (Milan: Regione Lombardia, 2006). Available online: [https://www.contrattidifiume.it/galleries/pubblicazioni/AZIONI\\_PILOTA\\_LOMBARDIA\\_LOTO.pdf](https://www.contrattidifiume.it/galleries/pubblicazioni/AZIONI_PILOTA_LOMBARDIA_LOTO.pdf) (accessed on December 5, 2023).

<sup>33</sup> A model was developed using Autodesk Revit software, incorporating an analysis of sunlight exposure on roofing surfaces and the corresponding annual solar irradiance expressed in annual kW/m<sup>2</sup>. This analysis was conducted using the Insight Building Performance Analysis plug-in.

Fabbisogno Comune:				Risultati	
Tipo di utenza	Alloggi	Fabb. unitario	Fabbisogno totale		
Fabbisogno residenziale	370	3194,00	1181780,00 [kWh/a]	Potenza dell'impianto necessaria	140 [kW]
Fabbisogno pubblico	3	16200,00	48600,00 [kWh/a]		
Fabbisogno produttivo	10	33266,85	332668,50 [kWh/a]		
Totale fabbisogno Comune			1230380,00 [kWh/a]	Potenza impianto previsto da progetto	<b>142 [kW]</b>

Utenza pubblica		Utenza privata	
Risultati : Produzione di energia fotovoltaica: 553.583 kWh/a Risparmi energetico: 83.038 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>		Risultati : Produzione di energia fotovoltaica: 1.823.698 kWh/a Risparmi energetico: 273555 kWh/m <sup>2</sup>	
Compensazione energetica dell'edificio: 2.732 m <sup>2</sup> area delle superfici analizzate Anni di ritorno: 17,1		Compensazione energetica dell'edificio: 7.791 m <sup>2</sup> area delle superfici analizzate Anni di ritorno: 12,8	

Figure 5| Analysis of municipal energy needs and photovoltaic productivity potentially installable on public (left) and private (right) assets.  
Credits Elena Di Giuseppe.

In light of the activities carried out, it is possible to identify three different areas of intervention with respect to which to focus the activities of meta-design and verification of settlement compatibility:

- *“The area of architectural integration at the territorial and landscape scale,”* with respect to which it is necessary to combine the needs for integration of plant infrastructure with the preservation of identity and natural features. Aspect also emerged from the analysis of case studies (New energy model of diffuse and integrated poly-generation, Madonie Development Agency, Italy).
- *“The area of architectural integration at the urban scale,”* with respect to which it is necessary to search for consistency between the needs for the inclusion of plant infrastructure and urban planning forecasts for new settlements for collective services. Aspect also emerged from the analysis of case studies (Smart City Graz Project, Austria, and New energy model of diffuse and integrated poly-generation, Madonie Development Agency Italy) based on the concept of functional integration.
- *“The area of architectural integration at the building scale,”* with respect to which it is necessary to combine the needs for integration of plant infrastructures with the preservation of the historical architectural heritage. From this point of view, the distinction between public and private interventions appears relevant, the latter to be evaluated also in relation to the deployment of appropriate incentive tools also aimed at building redevelopment and urban regeneration. Aspect also emerged from the analysis of the case studies (Smart City Graz Project, Austria, New energy model of diffuse and integrated poly-generation, Madonie Development Agency, Italy, and Photovoltaic Plant, San Giovanni a Teduccio, Naples).

Finally, the result of the work was the construction of a meta-design elaboration articulated by areas of intervention consistent with the objectives of urban-building development and territorial protection set by the local administration, appropriately accompanied by a careful analysis both from the point of view of identifying the implementing party (public or private) and from the point of view of the contribution that the

individual project actions, accompanied by an estimate of productivity, aimed at self-production and/or energy self-sufficiency of the local community [Figure 6, Figure 7].

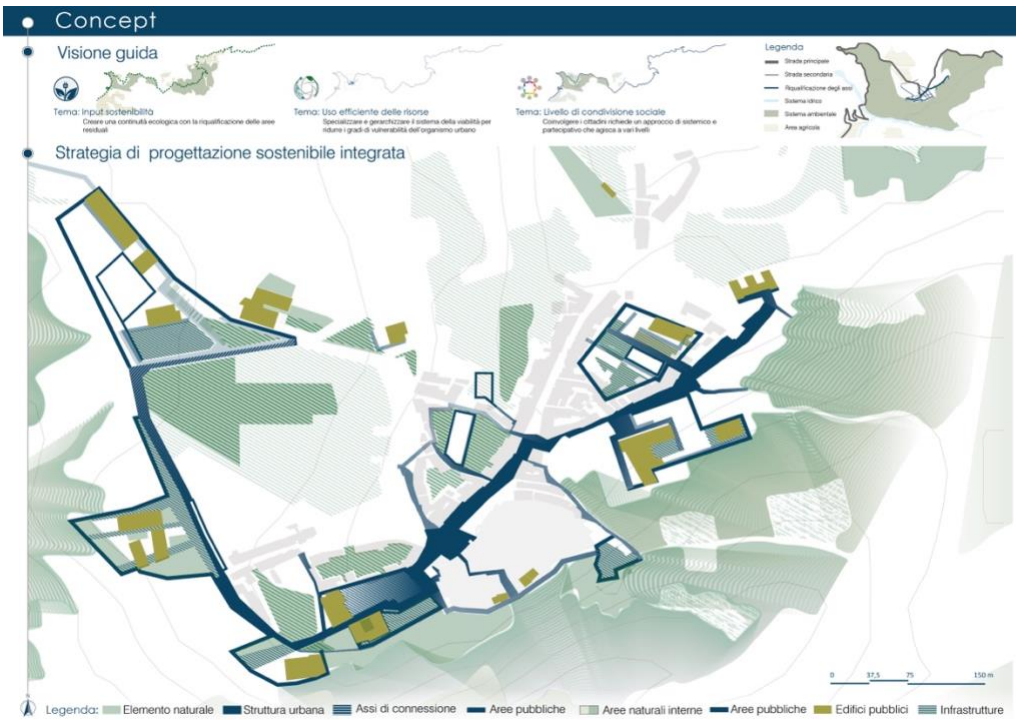


Figure 6| Integrated sustainable design strategy.  
Credits: Elena Di Giuseppe.



Figure 7| Integrated sustainable design actions.  
Credits: Elena Di Giuseppe

## 5. Conclusions.

The work done has highlighted all the complexity that characterizes the implementation of an energy community in both small and large communities. From the regulatory and literature review, a fairly exhaustive picture emerges from the technical-financial and legal point of view on how RECs are set up and activated, as well as from the analysis of application experiences, an approach predominantly oriented to diffuse generation emerges, in which solar photovoltaic technology plays a predominant role especially with regard to installation interventions on existing buildings. Little in-depth or even absent appear to be the aspects related to the realization of new medium-large installations and architectural integration. Just as totally unexplored appear the issues concerning the assessment of landscape compatibility with settlement contexts and the potential interaction with possible urban regeneration and enhancement programs, except for the Smart City Graz (AU) project. In this regard, the experience conducted has revealed the need to adopt a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, geared toward rethinking territories with a view to enhancement and revitalization, and based on a path of progressive approach supported by planning documentation suitable for verifying and validating individual project steps. First of all, an adequate census of locally available renewable energy endowments (FER),<sup>34</sup> on which to base integrated energy production strategies, as indicated by application experiences (see Figure 2) followed by an equally adequate process of verification of landscape and historical-architectural compatibility, preferably based on the methods proper to the competition of ideas and the sharing and participation of choices of transformation of the territory, in which local authorities and stakeholders are supported by research centers and central institutions in the definition of objectives and requirements for the protection of cultural heritage.

It also drew attention to the need to verify the consistency between land/urban planning choices and energy choices made at the local level, in order to encourage the development of interventions based on the functional integration of community services and new facilities, so as to improve urban endowments and reduce land consumption. Research areas related to:

- the identification of appropriate financial models and incentive mechanisms, especially to support private interventions;
- collaboration through national and international knowledge networks;
- the structuring of participatory forms among all stakeholders;
- the analysis of the costs of development, installation and maintenance of new energy infrastructure;

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<sup>34</sup> For example, the presence of areas historically devoted to the cultivation of forest biomass for heating, wind, solar, hydroelectric or geothermal areas.

- the ways of participation and active involvement of local communities in decision-making processes;
- the assessment of environmental impacts throughout the life cycle;
- the ways of creating educational and entrepreneurial opportunities related to REC management.

Recipients of this study can be identified in local governments (municipalities and regions) that would like to equip themselves with innovative and integrated tools/regulations that contemplate the census of locally available renewable resources, the protection and enhancement of the territory, and actions for the establishment of RECs. Not least the energy companies (ESCOs) involved in said processes.

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# The University as a Third Space for Collective Reading and Designing Intermediate Territories

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## 1. The University between Local and Transcalar Dynamics.

The manifold crises and general instability related to European and global socio-political turmoil have increased inequalities in our territories, revealing latent fragilities and unexpected territorial dynamics.<sup>2</sup> The unprecedented condition affecting cities and territories has resulted in the return of urban buzzwords<sup>3</sup>—such as proximity, resilience—and the need to pursue strategies capable of building sustainable territorial systems. However, when these concepts are applied to physical space and its transformation, they require keys and tools proper to the disciplines of city and territorial design, which are called to redefine their role and build synergies within and for the territory.<sup>4</sup>

The university and its research infrastructures are not immune to these mutations. Educational processes are radically changing and there has

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<sup>2</sup> Simone Tulumello, Laura Saija, and Andy Inch, “Planning amid Crisis and Austerity: In, Against and Beyond the Contemporary Conjuncture,” *International Planning Studies* 25, no. 1 (2020): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2019.1704404>; Alessandro Coppola et al., *Ricomporre i divari. politiche e progetti territoriali contro le disuguaglianze e per la transizione ecologica* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino spa, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Jason Palmer, Ian Cooper, and Rita Van der Vorst, “Mapping out Fuzzy Buzzwords—who Sits Where on Sustainability and Sustainable Development,” *Sustainable Development* 5, no. 2 (1997): 87–93.

<sup>4</sup> Valentina Orioli and Martina Massari, *Praticare l’urbanistica. Traiettorie tra innovazione sociale e pianificazione*, Urbanistica (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2023), 18

been a return to the discussion of the institution's active role within territories. Perhaps the most unexpected and radical outcome resulting from the recent urban crises is the resurgence of the territory's prominence. However, this is not merely in terms of a geographic entity, but rather as a situated manner of co-operating for the creation of a context capable of multiplying common resources.

In this moment of transition, the university—and the knowledge ecosystem it is able to coagulate around it—can be a strategic player in promoting and activating innovative cultural, social and technological actions and policies from close to and within the territory. In particular, minor institutions and more peripheral poles, are asked to redefine their roles and functions to prevent their gradual limitation. The idea is to turn the university into an “agent of territorialization”<sup>5</sup> that actively engages with the city and surrounding territories, effecting change and fostering processes and practices that address the challenges about sustainability, social inclusion and urban regeneration. Within these concepts, the university can grasp the aspects that are useful to the urban planning and design discipline and the possible leading action vis-à-vis a discipline subject to a necessary deviation from the scope of action, tools and research horizons.<sup>6</sup>

The university is confirmed as the place whose activities are increasingly characterized by dynamics of transcularity and interconnection with global inputs, but at the same time it is located in a territory with which it interacts, contributing to change it. The reciprocity between the university and the territory is the driving force behind the necessity of engaging with the regional and local context, particularly in medium-sized cities and with detached campuses. This engagement fosters meaningful partnerships between knowledge institutions and local actors.

These reflections have matured over time in successive re-positionings of the activities proposed by peripheral university poles, particularly by departments dealing with project disciplines (engineering, architecture, design), which increasingly take the form of research-intervention. Indeed, a way of doing research is taking shape that reversibly tests hypotheses (projects, transformations) and multiple solicitations directly in the realm of the city and the territory. An approach oriented to constructing knowledge through the recognition of the value of unexpected, unanticipated effects that become design solicitations. It involves the direct participation of the researcher in opening the field to the imagination of multiple possibilities that can produce tangible consequences.<sup>7</sup> Within the framework of these methodologies of

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<sup>5</sup> Michela Lazzeroni, *Geografie dell'università: esplorazioni teoriche e pratiche generative* (Milano: Mimesis, 2021):31.

<sup>6</sup> Pier Luigi Crosta and Cristina Bianchetti, *Conversazioni sulla ricerca* (Roma: Donzelli editore, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Orioli and Massari, *Praticare l'urbanistica. Traiettorie tra innovazione sociale e pianificazione*.

investigation, there are therefore paths of potential engagement with territorial actors through the operational experimentation of project hypotheses in the study contexts, initiatives for the active involvement of students in accompanying local authorities in the drafting of plans and projects focused on development actions at the local and regional scale. The outcomes of these initiatives often translate into anticipations of reality,<sup>8</sup> capable of acting as a system, also fulfilling the role of a hinge between the new generations in training and the territories in which they live, with a view to usable knowledge<sup>9</sup> to promote renewed synergies that also affect the labor market dynamics of the territorial reality.

The Romagna context,<sup>10</sup> made up of a diffuse network of small and medium-sized towns, practical skills, and professionalism acquired in manufacturing, advances in production processes, social relations, and ways of using natural ecosystems,<sup>11</sup> presents itself as a rich case study to record this synergy and test it with some research hypotheses.

## 2. A Territorial Campus.

The history of the de-territorialized headquarter of the University of Bologna, in Cesena (FC) represents a rather significant experience with respect to the topic the contribution seeks to interrogate. The birth of the University dates back to 1504 by Julius II who granted the formation of the Cesena Law College. The history of the Study of Cesena, however, came to an abrupt halt in 1800 when the privileges on which the right to *addottorare* was based were declared forfeited, in favor also of the surrounding major universities, such as the nearby University of Bologna, which became a mandatory reference in the regional context. With the traditional structure of the corporate professional colleges having lapsed, Cesena no longer had the ability to re-propose with convincing arguments the reactivation of its university, until the establishment of the Bachelor of Science in Information Science in 1989 as a branch of the University of Bologna. Over the years, the University of Bologna has invested, in collaboration with local authorities, in the development of the local Pole, until the establishment in 2001 of the Scientific-Didactic Pole of Cesena, which would later become a Campus, in order to allow the diffusion of

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<sup>8</sup> Laura Saija, *La ricerca-azione in pianificazione territoriale e urbanistica*, Metodi del territorio (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> David Adams, "Usable Knowledge in Public Policy," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 63, no. 1 (March 2004): 29–42, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8500.2004.00357.x>; Sebastian Jilke, Steven Van de Walle, and Soonhee Kim, "Generating Usable Knowledge through an Experimental Approach to Public Administration," *Public Administration Review* 76, no. 1 (January 2016): 69–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12488>.

<sup>10</sup> Romagna is a historical, geographical and linguistic region that for almost its entirety forms together with Emilia the administrative region of Emilia-Romagna.

<sup>11</sup> Enrico Brighi, Valentina Orioli, and Stefania Proli, "Il progetto urbano ai tempi della rigenerazione: esperienze sul campo nei centri minori della Romagna," *EcoWebTown-Journal of Sustainable Design*, 2019.

the educational offerings and the activation of a stable research reality in the area.<sup>12</sup>

This renewed need probably stems from the emergence of unprecedented processes of productive specialization that affect the territory of the province of Forlì-Cesena<sup>13</sup> and give rise to a new economy that is both globalized and locally specialized, requiring a local accumulation of knowledge and expertise. What Bagnasco calls a "territorial amalgam of economy and society"<sup>14</sup> that needs the presence of the university to fuel its production processes. A process that is reinforced by the Law n. 168 "Ruberti", which allows the budding of large Italian universities that trigger interesting processes of dialogue with early urban regeneration processes, as in the case of the Bologna university with the regeneration process of the former sugar factory in Cesena.

The evolution of the history of the Cesena's Pole provides an idea of how the university is a (s)object closely linked to its context of reference, in the opportunities and criticalities of its social and cultural contribution and to the forms of spatiality related to its presence and action in the territory. A relatively peripheral university reality that lends itself to be analyzed in its role within the ecosystem of local learning and innovation, both as a "geographic object, whereby the evolution [...], of its development models and its presence in the territory is read in response to the processes of change taking place at different scales"; and as a "geographic subject, that is, as a potential protagonist of the general socio-economic and cultural development."<sup>15</sup>

## 2.1 Cesena University Pole as a 'Third Place' for Research and Innovation.

The Cesena Campus already in its architecture and because of the position it occupies in relation to the historic city has gradually positioned itself as an activator of processes of territorialization and urban change, and is still engaged in the search for and definition of its own place<sup>16</sup> made up of relations with society and the surrounding area. Important activations in view of its peripheral location, which become an opportunity to define itself as part of a community and a network of local actors, able to contribute to the design of strategies in and for the

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<sup>12</sup> Information, further summarized, on the founding and development of the University of Bologna's Cesena Pole can be found on the institutional website of Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, which can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.unibo.it/it/campus-cesena/presentazione-e-organizzazione/la-storia-del-campus-di-cesena>.

<sup>13</sup> Brighi, Orioli, and Proli, "Il progetto urbano ai tempi della rigenerazione: esperienze sul campo nei centri minori della Romagna."

<sup>14</sup> Arnaldo Bagnasco, "Città in cerca di Università. Le Università regionali e il paradigma dello sviluppo locale," *Stato e Mercato* 24, no. 3 (2004): 455.

<sup>15</sup> Lazzeroni, *Geografie dell'università: esplorazioni teoriche e pratiche generative*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Bender, *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press on Demand, 1988).

territory, to offer opportunities for meeting and exchange with and for the local citizenship.

The hypothesis is that the campus could follow a trajectory of transformation of university space and networks toward a "third place" configuration—referring to the notion proposed by Oldenburg<sup>17</sup>—that is, an inclusive institutional context suitable for stimulating the contamination and circulation of knowledge, a local node in the knowledge network<sup>18</sup> and a meeting point between different territorial scales. The transformation in the third place could take place on two registers: a spatial one, which is concerned with opening and making porous to the outside the physical spaces of the university (e.g. laboratories, university libraries), making them places of information community;<sup>19</sup> a cognitive one that involves sharing moments of knowledge production (conferences, meetings with local bodies and actors, public and private), thus enhancing the generative and usable<sup>20</sup> component of knowledge.

It is in this perspective that the CARTA Laboratory—City Environment Networks Territory Actions—of the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna proposes to work, as part of the teaching activities of the Urban Planning Laboratory of the Department of Architecture in Cesena.

### 3. Laboratorio CARTA in the Provincial Territory.

The Laboratory was born from the collaboration of the teachers and researchers of the Urban Planning courses activated at the University of Bologna, Cesena campus, Master of Architecture degree course. Established in 2006 as a space for the preservation and distribution of cartographic materials, over time CARTA has been configured as a place for sharing knowledge and practices and for experimentation aimed at the territory and conducted in collaboration with students.

The look that the CARTA workshop proposes fits between the theoretical dimension of explaining phenomena and practices, that is, the processual components considered the basis of a renewed principle of project effectiveness. The activities of the research group are oriented on the one hand to update and implement the cognitive supports instrumental to planning, and on the other hand to experiment with and integrate

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<sup>17</sup> Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You through the Day* (Paragon House New York, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Bruno Monardo and Martina Massari, "A New Generation of 'Urban Centers': 'Intermediate Places' in Boston and Bologna," *Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies*, 2021, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48279-4\\_87](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48279-4_87).

<sup>19</sup> Donald Beagle, "The Emergent Information Commons: Philosophy, Models, and 21st Century Learning Paradigms," *Journal of Library Administration* 52, no. 6–7 (2012): 518–37.

<sup>20</sup> Colin Talbot and Carole Talbot, "Usable Knowledge: Discipline-Oriented versus Problem-Oriented Social Science in Public Policy," *The Palgrave Handbook of Public Administration and Management in Europe*, 2018, 1213–34.

techniques of representation in order to explicate and enhance the latent identities of contemporary places.

CARTA's mission is to make the university a protagonist and promoter of forms of synergy between institutional representations and local communities for the creation of networks capable of activating innovative and integrated policies on the territory. An "agent of territorialization and urban transformation"<sup>21</sup> whose reference context is the province of Forlì-Cesena. A territory that presents varied dynamics: from those affecting the more peripheral portions of urbanized territory, to the morphological and geographic vulnerabilities of the inland areas of the Romagna Apennines, to the forms of expansion and contraction of the Adriatic conurbation of Romagna and the city-region of the Via Emilia.

The University of Cesena can count on a rather dynamic territory to which it belongs, both from the point of view of public policies, private investment dynamics and a varied district production model, made up of small and medium-sized enterprises but also of large companies, which have shown in recent years a propensity for innovative industrial research and a willingness to invest in human capital training.

This is a context that opens up numerous research directions that transcend the local scale by becoming an element of interconnection between different territorial scales. Thus, the role to which the city of Cesena could aspire is that of a node of interconnection between different territorial scales.<sup>22</sup>

Hence the question arises, about the potential for research specialization, or at any rate research for specific objectives, which would have the advantage of strengthening joint projects between universities, local entities, public actors and businesses. A path ultimately oriented toward making the Campus a reference point capable of polarizing interest and networking with other national and international research centers.

On this the CARTA Laboratory, on the basis of the experiences gained in the area in the field of teaching and research activities, is building its identity and its role as a transversal subject of interface between local and national and international realities.

Significant in this regard was the experience developed during the academic year 2021-2022, as part of the teaching activities of the Urban Planning Laboratory. The study area proposed to the labs, identified in the Ronco-Bidente valley in the Province of Forlì-Cesena, was well suited to be an area for the experimentation of regeneration strategies and new territorial trajectories that would take into account the role of the smaller centers in the territory. The proposal to work in this area started from the suggestions of some local administrators, who were committed to building a vision to strengthen collaboration among municipalities.

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<sup>21</sup> Lazzeroni, *Geografie dell'università: esplorazioni teoriche e pratiche generative*.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Youtie and Philip Shapira, "Building an Innovation Hub: A Case Study of the Transformation of University Roles in Regional Technological and Economic Development," *Research Policy* 37, no. 8 (2008): 1188-1204.

Among the goals of the administrations was the creation of a Landscape Observatory of the Emilia Romagna Region, the network for slow mobility in the valley, the creation of a Biodistrict, and in general the enhancement of the river shaft and the surrounding naturalistic areas. The contribution requested of the university was to play the role of a mediator between the different interests in the field, capable of expanding the network of actors involved and operationally developing a cognitive framework of the valley until obtaining—building from the results of the laboratory—thematic layers capable of systematizing the broad territory and the characteristics of the individual municipalities to bring out their potential. An operational collaboration has emerged from the lab's work, embedding the CARTA lab in a process of accompanying provincial administrations and in a network that promotes knowledge and enhancement of the valley.

This, as well as previous experiences involving other transects of the Romagna territory—such as the stretch of the Via Emilia that runs through it and the coast—have allowed for the acquisition of a widespread and deep-rooted knowledge of the territory that has increased the recognition of the role played by the university as an agent and not just an observer. The Province of Forlì-Cesena has therefore requested the involvement of the Department of Architecture in the formation of the Area Territorial Plan (PTAV) for the development of the cognitive framework and thematic insights. In the context of the Framework Agreement, the research contribution of the University is being made explicit in the investigation of the contents of the cognitive framework of the PTAV, through exploratory tools<sup>23</sup> proper to the teaching activity. Already in the academic year 2022-2023, the laboratory is working on the provincial territory having as its focus urban ecology and the construction of resilient settlement systems, with the aim of providing the Province with cognitive tools to support strategies such as:

- curbing land consumption: protecting land as a producer of ecosystem services;
- urban regeneration: efficiency in the use of energy and physical resources, containment of CO2 emissions, promotion of infrastructure and services for sustainable mobility;
- the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and biodiversity, agricultural land, different areas of the landscape, and historical/cultural elements of the regional territory.

These inquiries constitute the background for the work that the CARTA Laboratory continues to pursue for the definition of a Knowledge Framework that has as its reference horizon the transition of the territory of the Province of Forlì-Cesena into a sustainable territorial ecosystem.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Crosta and Bianchetti, *Conversazioni sulla ricerca*; Alberta Giorgi, Micol Pizzolati, and Elena Vacchelli, *Metodi creativi per la ricerca sociale Contesto, pratiche, strumenti* (Società editrice il Mulino, Spa, 2021), <https://www.pandoracampus.it/lending/10.978.8815/367013>.

<sup>24</sup> Rocco Scolozzi, Elisa Morri, and Riccardo Santolini, "Pianificare Territori Sostenibili e Resilienti: La Prospettiva Dei Servizi Ecosistemici," *TERRITORIO* 60, no. 1 (2012): 167–75.

An ecosystem capable of holding together environmental system and human society in an attempt to ensure a socio-ecological transition, more equitable in distributing costs and benefits of transformations among the different 'geographies' that define the provincial territory. The PTAV, thanks to its nature as a strategic plan that orients choices at the local scale on recognized and shared quality objectives, allows for experimentation with new models of actors involvement to reach towards the satisfaction of new social interests. The university, through action-research, becomes the medium for recognizing these needs, organizing and building relationships between different actors within a unified direction, ensuring shared planning between local, sectoral and market actors, between public and private interest. The work carried out so far and still in progress, therefore, started from the recognition of five 'Territories' (Territory of Living, Territory of Production and Logistics, Rural Territory and Agribusiness, Territory of Tourism and Natural Territory) for which it is intended to build a mapping of planning and best practices and a table of critical synthesis that will then guide the construction of the guidelines and coordination of the plan and the identification of the actors to be involved in permanent tables for the development of shared project scenarios to support the drafting of planning at the local scale.

#### **4. CARTA as a Workshop for Reading and Designing the Territory.**

In its position as a territorial agent of transformation, CARTA position itself as a platform for reading and unraveling the latent aspects of territories, building relationships and reciprocity between subjects—even unintentional ones—and co-designing urban policies. The design action concurs at the same time to the ambition of providing a new identity oriented towards the characterization of the territorial pole of the University of Architecture, a process in the making that the campus shares with the territory in which it is inserted.

The work done over the years also constitutes an attempt to lay the groundwork for moving beyond the traditional role of the university researcher as an advisor to the public body to a mutually reinforcing partner role. In this way, the university becomes an active agent in urban transformation, while the administration of the city and territories becomes an investigative process and not a mere application of policy decisions. This is especially necessary if we read the role of the university in achieving the goals of the Urban Agenda, the success of which is highly dependent on the action and collaboration of all actors in the territorial, institutional and socio-economic system.



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# What Right to Study? A Set of Integrated and Inclusive Policies between the University and the City

CHAIR SESSION 4

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The right to education has been recognized as a human right in a number of international conventions, among which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, crucial to ensure the dignity of all individuals. It encompasses the obligation to eliminate discrimination at all levels of the educational system, including the university system. The right to study is also provided by Article 34 of the Italian Constitution, in the framework of the fundamental constitutional principles, constitutional judgments and State and Regional legislation.

Among the extensions of the right to education, Appadurai reflected on the “right to research”<sup>1</sup>, as the right to access tools to increase the knowledge capital essential to foster an active role in policy arenas and access to the city’s opportunities. In this regard, Appadurai highlights the need to look at rights not only as a formal status but by measuring the ability of different subjectivities to put them into practice effectively.

If we look at the right to study as both a status and a sense of belonging and enhancing subjectivities, the role of the university fits into a whole system of accessibility of opportunities, in which the city plays a key role. This perspective opens a vision where the right to study can’t be considered only as a standard—for example, about “square meters or number of services per student”—, but a complex set of integrated policies to enhance and include young people.

A set that is referenced to four main fields.

The first is the right to individual and social well-being, including psychological and group balance. Many signs reveal the precarious stability of the young generation, linked to an uncertain future not even guaranteed by the University. The Covid era has increased anxieties, loneliness, and inadequacy.

The second is the specific right to well-founded knowledge, which concerns the possibility for young people to access data in a well-versed way within a broader “right of scientific citizenship”<sup>2</sup>. Scientific

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<sup>1</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “The Right to Research,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 4, no. 2 (2006): 167- 177.

<sup>2</sup> Pietro Greco, “La cittadinanza scientifica,” *Micron*, 9 (2008): 6-7.

citizenship is about an idea of rights declined in its cultural dimension, in the fairness of information, access to information and knowledge, and the quality of knowledge. This awareness is more challenging to mature in the age of social networks and globalized information systems.

In addition to well-being related to the individual and his or her access to an articulated idea of culture and knowledge, I highlight a broader right to protagonism. This third field concerns the possibility of practicing full citizenship, which means the possibility of having an active role in society, including the opportunity of independently initiating enterprise and social innovation projects.

Finally, in the background, we can consider the complex right to quality of life, which relates to many aspects of young people's everyday life, outside and inside the university. It includes decent and affordable housing and the ability to easily attend places for sports, study, recreation, and leisure.

This perspective is complex and multilevel; the role of the city—public administration, but also third sector and private actors—is as crucial as that of the university. Therefore, it can only be fostered by an ecosystem of subjectivities, in which the university dialogues and collaborates with others. That is also demonstrated by the behaviours of students who move to study. Their choice is based not only on the quality of educational offers but also on evaluating the city in which it is located. Students and their families thus consider a system of urban limits and opportunities (e.g. the role of the housing market, educational and labour offerings, and openness to international contexts and networks).

Thus, right-to-study policies should be implemented as multi-level integrated policies, analyzing and programming together urban and university systems.

That is fueled by articulated and complex student needs (not just consumers and workforce), including how student rights meet other fragile rights (with a risk of competition on issues such as housing, mobility and transportation, public spaces and services) and how they can play an active role in-for the city.

It is also about building a political vision at different scales that can be declined into an operational dimension that can test this renewed idea of the right to study.

The challenge for universities today is where this vision is generated, through which coalitions, and with which policy tools.

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# Puglia Regione Universitaria Project as Action Research

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## 1. Universities and Urban Transformation.

The current historical phase, characterized by economic and social difficulties, is triggering a “knowledge challenge”<sup>2</sup>, testing the role of the Italian university.

Student housing, for example, is a particularly contentious issue of local policy in university towns, in relation to both the conversion of existing housing to student rentals and the development of private purpose-built student housing.<sup>3</sup>

The growth of private student housing across cities globally has been linked the lack of universities to keep up with the supply of student

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<sup>2</sup> Maurizio Novelli and Giuseppe Talamo, *La Terza Missione per l'Università Italiana. Una nuova occasione per crescere?* (Roma: Università di Roma Tor Vergata, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Nick Revington and Alexander James David Wray, "Land-Use Planning Approaches to Near-Campus Neighborhoods and Student Housing Development Patterns in Ontario, Canada," *Housing Policy Debate*, 2022: 1-27.

housing.<sup>4</sup> However, few researches consider the possibility that municipalities in an urban system can approach the problems of student housing through land-use planning and their consequent influence on development patterns. Municipalities' approaches in this regard reflect the local context, in particular their relationship to the city's own regional growth management plans.

During the pandemic period, the education system shifted to distance learning. Most of the student population started or continued their university studies using the various e-learning platforms provided by the universities. As a result, university towns have "emptied" out of the student community. Immediately after the pandemic phase, unlike in the business world, the university system resumed almost entirely with face-to-face teaching. The "off-campus" student flocked to university towns in search of accommodation. This phenomenon has generated an increase in demand for accommodation compared to pre-pandemic data, developing and intensifying the problem of "student residency" and causing a real "housing emergency". In Apulia, there was an increase of 4023 applications for accommodation places, compared to 2019, which recorded 3742 applications. In the various Apulian university cities, this "increase" in the university population was assessed as a "wake-up call" for municipal administrations, stimulating knowledge of the distribution of the student population in their cities, which had hitherto been little investigated.

Although the various stakeholders are represented in the decision-making bodies, the construction of the processes that implement the right-to-university study policies is often limited to single institutional actors.

Alongside the traditional university missions of education and research, promoting the "Third Mission" could be necessary for accompanying the transition toward a more inclusive city-university system. The Third Mission is defined as the «set of activities with which universities activate processes of direct interaction with civil society and the entrepreneurial fabric to promote the growth of a territory so that knowledge becomes instrumental in obtaining productive output».<sup>5</sup> Universities must open up to the external world and try to achieve new value for the projects within them. In fact, "Third Mission" also means interaction with the social tissue of their urban context and territory in a fruitful dialogue between the parties and the network<sup>6</sup> of actors that interact and take action in research projects.

These projects, today more than ever, cannot be limited to academic boundaries or a merely theoretical vision of reality; instead, they must be as adherent as possible to contemporary necessities and emergencies.

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<sup>4</sup> James J. Gregory and Jayne M Rogerson, "Studentification and Commodification of Student Lifestyle in Braamfontein, Johannesburg", *Urbani Izziv* 30 (2019): 178-193.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 182.

<sup>6</sup> Rupert F. Chisholm, "Action Research to Develop an Interorganizational Network," in *Handbook of Action Research*, (Londra: SAGE, 2001), 324–332.

Hence the importance and scientific value of the applied part of the research and the territorial effects.

The relationship between the academic reality and the external world, represented by the network of stakeholders, institutions, and actors of the territory, is an added value because it generates processes capable of bringing together common and complex interests and outputs. The “action” part of the research includes experimentation and involvement of researchers in the social field and the realization of the objectives of a project, going far beyond mere “knowledge problems”.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, the "*PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA. Studiare e vivere in città accoglienti e sostenibili*" project, the object of this contribution, represents an interesting example for analysis. The project results from an Agreement Protocol between the Apulia Region<sup>8</sup>, the Regional Agency for the Right to Study (A.Di.S.U. Puglia), the university cities<sup>9</sup>, and the Apulian universities<sup>10</sup> and is coordinated by urban@it, the National Centre for Urban Policy Studies<sup>11</sup>. *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* was conceived as a strongly applicative and multi-actor research project involving the entire regional territory in innovating the relationship between the urban and university systems. Indeed, the project's vision is based on the conviction that constant dialogue and direct collaboration between the university institution and the administration, together with interaction with local stakeholders and students, can give new life to the needs of the student community and the way it relates to the city and its policies, concerning the Right to Study.<sup>12</sup> The active involvement of students, who are the primary users of “knowledge spaces”,<sup>13</sup> and the establishment of a dense network of relations and interchanges of knowledge, points of view, and initiatives, represent challenges and, at the same time, medium-long term opportunities for the territory. Following a survey and data processing phase, the project provided a third “operational” phase, currently underway, dedicated to the flagship projects experimentation on the regional territory, transversal to the project themes<sup>14</sup>, which are tangible operations of the research.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Dubost and André Lévy, "Ricerca-azione e intervento," in *Dizionario di psicologia*, (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2005), 377-402.

<sup>8</sup> Department of training and labour, labour policies, right to study, school, university, professional training.

<sup>9</sup> Apulian university cities: Bari, Lecce, Foggia, Brindisi, Taranto.

<sup>10</sup> The five universities are: Polytechnic University of Bari, University of Bari, University of Salento, University of Foggia, LUM University.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.urbanit.it/>

<sup>12</sup> Nicola Martinelli, "Diritto allo studio e diritto di cittadinanza nel rapporto università-città," *Territorio* 73 (2015): 94-99.

<sup>13</sup> Nicola Martinelli, *Spazi della conoscenza. Università, città e territori* (Bari: ADDA, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> The five in-depth themes are:

Theme 1: University facilities of the Right to Study, as an opportunity for urban regeneration, Scientific referee Prof. M. Montemurro, Polytechnic University of Bari;

Theme 2: The role of the university system in urban cultural and youth policies, Scientific referee Prof. G. Volpe, University of Bari;

Theme 3: Urban University Sustainability Agendas on mobility and energy efficiency, Scientific referee Prof. M.A. Aiello, University of Salento;



Starting from these premises, the contribution aims to explore the operational and experimental phase of the Apulian regional project “PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA. Studiare e vivere in città accoglienti e sostenibili”<sup>15</sup> (*Apulia as a university region. Studying and living in welcoming and sustainable cities*), to verify its impacts on the territory (processes, actors, policies, etc.). In detail, the goal is to qualitatively check if and how all the flagship projects, and consequently the entire PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA project, can be defined as action-research.

Action research is «characterized by the immediate application of the produced knowledge to deal with a certain problem and includes the evaluation of the effects».<sup>16</sup> For this reason, it is based on the direct relationship between the researcher and external actors and between the researcher and analysis of the territory, addressing complex issues, which deal with, for example, the different scales of action and multiple knowledge necessary for the formulation of policies adherent to the needs of contemporary societies in transformation.

To achieve the goals mentioned above, the article intends to map and analyze all the flagship projects to extrapolate reflections and preliminary assessments. Furthermore, this systematic regional exploration may be helpful to evaluate the project’s ability to bring real transformations on the territory and orient new territorial policies and innovative choices regarding the right to study at university. The contribution is organized as follows. After this introduction and a brief overview of the impacts of some action research projects, the PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA project is illustrated, describing the research method, mapping flagship projects and reporting on the first evaluations of the project's operative phase. Finally, after a discussion that provides an overview of the issues that emerged concerning the action research themes, the study's limitations and conclusions are outlined.

## 2. Action Research. Some Examples.

In the scientific literature, the expression “action research”<sup>17</sup> is associated with Professor Kurt Lewin, who was the first to theorize the concept in the 1940s<sup>18</sup>, qualifying it as a «research activity conducted outside a

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Theme 4: Services Innovation for the Right to Study, Scientific referee Prof. F. Fanizza, University of Foggia;

Theme 5: Disability and accessibility of university facilities and urban spaces, Scientific referee Prof. A. Tarzia, LUM University.

<sup>15</sup> <https://regioneuniversitaria.puglia.it/>

<sup>16</sup> Laura Saija, *La ricerca-azione in pianificazione territoriale e urbanistica* (Milano: Franco-Angeli, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Kurt Lewin, "Action Research and Minority Problems," *Journal of social issues* 2.4 (1946): 34-46.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Foster, "An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Action Research in Work Organizations," *Human Relations* 25 (1972): 529-556.

university laboratory, in a life context, linked to problems of action and therefore value-driven».<sup>19</sup>

Action research, intended as an evolution of the classical concept of scientific work because it implies a collective intervention,<sup>20</sup> is a method capable of producing and verifying a project's real effects and tangible impacts in any field application. It describes a cognitive activity that aims to make changes in reality,<sup>21</sup> which take the form of new behaviors and practices, new attitudes, or new approaches to phenomena. Action research, therefore, proves to be an essential tool for the group of disciplines that deals with the production of projects, plans, and policies for management, conservation, and urban and territorial development, interacting, in this sense, with the concept of planning, intended as a field of technical knowledge that reflects on how society could/should relate to its living environment<sup>22</sup>.

The complexity of this multi-scalar topic has always led planners to combine their specific knowledge with that of other technical and non-technical disciplines. Today, more than ever, researchers claim a new research approach closely related to the territory. Despite this, compared to other fields, it is still uncommon in disciplines dealing with cities and territories in Italy.

The capacity of action research is to positively affect the territorial contexts in which it is applied, as a concrete transformation of it, going beyond the walls within which the study, traditionally intended, is developed.

As an example, at the European level, mention is made of the "Store4HUC" project<sup>23</sup> within the framework of the European program "INTERREG Central Europe", whose pilot case in 2019 was the city of Cuneo. The experimentation, helpful in assessing the impacts of the project on the territory involved and the potential effects in transforming behavior and triggering good practices (action research), envisages the new, totally renewable energy supply system of the city's panoramic lift. The energy storage will have an immediate impact on the territory. In addition to upgrading a significant infrastructure of the city, an overall improvement in energy efficiency from renewable sources is expected, with a consequent decrease in overall costs.<sup>24</sup> The long-term objective of the "Store4HUC" project is to propose virtuous examples, adaptable to

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<sup>19</sup> Jean Dubost, and André Lévy, "Ricerca-azione e intervento," in *Dizionario di psicologia*, (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2005), 377-402.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Peters and Vivienne Robinson, "The Origins and Status of Action Research," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 20 (1984): 113-124.

<sup>21</sup> Laura Saija, *La ricerca-azione in pianificazione territoriale e urbanistica* (Milano: Franco-Angeli, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 50.

<sup>23</sup> The Store4HUC project involves a partnership made up of 10 European cities representing Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Croatia and Italy with a total budget of around 1.8 million euros, of which more than 300,000 are earmarked for Environment Park and the Municipality of Cuneo.

<sup>24</sup> Marilisa Romagno, "Sostenibilità urbana: a Cuneo un progetto pilota per l'efficienza energetica dei centri storici," *www.alternativasostenibile.it*. (Marzo 22, 2019).

other contexts and able to contribute to improving and enriching urban planning strategies from a greener perspective, seeking the right compromise between constraints and environmental sustainability requirements. Therefore, preliminary investigation through pilot cases proves to be fundamental for the proper development of experimental research, representing support, in the course of the work, to the verification of the validity of objectives and results and, if necessary, to their redefinition.

### **3. Puglia Regione Universitaria Project.**

#### **3.1 The Research.**

The multi-actor process “*PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA. Studiare e vivere in città accoglienti e sostenibili*”, approved with the Regional Council Resolution n°2383/2019, aims to renew the relationship between the university and the urban system, capable of guaranteeing those who choose to study in Puglia a full Right of Citizenship, as an essential aspect of the Right to Study.<sup>25</sup> It is a two-year institutional and research project, started on 16 February 2021. The overall objective is to promote sustainable and integrated regional urban development policies in synergy with university action. The exchange of experience and knowledge between cities promoting an inedited connection between them, through the collective and constant involvement in the project and its activities (focus groups, itinerant meetings, multi-thematic workshops, project exhibitions, conferences on the topics covered involving technicians and professionals), helps to accelerate the process of policy innovation: to this end, the involvement of various stakeholders is essential. The goal is to ease the exchange of experience and learning between urban policy, decision-makers, and practitioners, helping them to define and implement Action Plans for sustainable urban development and acting on the major emergencies concerning the university. The research focuses on the well-being of university students as citizens, intersecting different actors in their specific areas, generating a complex network where individual skills and contributions join those of the rest of the group. In particular, with the signing of the Protocol of Agreement, due to the work of a research group of assignees and scholarship holders led by a scientific referee, each university has committed itself to delve into a topic (Housing, Culture, Sustainability, Right to Study and Accessibility) concerning the entire regional territory and to assist the other universities, through the identification of a topic referee for each of the other four project assets. The research activity was mainly conducted by five Apulian universities (Polytechnic University of Bari, University of Bari, University of Salento, University of Foggia, LUM University) and five

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<sup>25</sup> Giovanna Mangialardi, Nicola Martinelli and Angelica Triggiano, "Rigenerazione urbana nelle città universitarie tra Student e Social Housing. Il caso dell'Ex Ospedale Sanatoriale 'A. Galateo' a Lecce," *Regional Studies and Urban Development* 3(3) (2022): 43-64.

university cities (Bari, Foggia, Lecce, Brindisi, and Taranto), constantly involved territorial actors and students for a continuous survey of ideas and needs. At the same time, the municipalities, as the main territorial institutional actors, have committed themselves to define policies and supporting the research activities carried out in the university by including five scholarship holders in their staff. In addition, four further trainees are working within the Regional Agency for the Right to Study (A.di.S.U. Puglia), two experts in urban planning and construction and one in law, who can provide the required technical-scientific support. Further project details can be found in the article *Nuove forme di progettualità condivise. Il progetto Puglia Regione Universitaria*,<sup>26</sup> a contribution for the XXVI Scientific Conference SIU (Italian Society of the Urbanists), held in June 2022 in Brescia.

The application part of the research project took moves from the analysis phase conducted upstream by the five Apulian universities, and it is on this stage that this contribution focuses. Starting from the theoretical framework realized by the universities on the various topics, it focused on the concepts and issues that have emerged in the knowledge “transfer” process. This allows the administrations and the executive subjects to act on the most urgent matters highlighted by research activities. Therefore, the operation aims to develop the collective learning of the entire multi-actor ecosystem represented by *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA*.

### 3.2 The Method.

The two-year project is specifically divided into three phases: the analysis of the assigned topic, declined in each of the different contexts of the five university cities involved, followed by the elaboration of the results obtained useful for the drafting of a detailed thematic knowledge framework with the relative identification of strengths and weaknesses and the subsequent definition of targeted intervention tools and actions. The research, initially set up according to a linear process, evolved spontaneously into a continuous “spiral” process.<sup>27</sup> As this was an innovative and experimental project, the workgroup conducted constant reflections on the progress and partial outcomes of the project, rethinking the initially planned courses of action several times, led by the partial outcomes of each step, in line with the dynamics of action research that operates through a cyclical process of planning, action, and evaluation of the action leading to further planning, and so on.<sup>28 29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cristina Danisi, Giovanna Mangialardi, Alessandra Maroccia and Angelica Triggiano, "Nuove forme di progettualità condivise. Il progetto Puglia Regione Universitaria," *"Dare valore ai valori in urbanistica" XXVI Conferenza Scientifica SIU Brescia 2022* (2023).

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart and Rhonda Nixon, *The Action Research Planner. Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*, (Singapore: Springer, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> David Coghlan and Teresa Brannik, *Doing action research in your own organization*, (Londra: SAGE, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> David Coghlan and N S Rashford, *The Dynamics of Organizational Levels: A Change Framework for Managers and Consultants*, (Boston: Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994).

During the research project, the theoretical framework was transformed into action, using specific operational experiences conducted, for example, through international design competitions, participatory processes, and the recovery of disused buildings to increase student housing. The circularity of research has generated formalized “scientific” products but also clear influences on reality<sup>30</sup> and different forms of collective learning. The integration of knowledge attained and shared between institutions, universities, cities, territorial stakeholders, the student community, and the community of citizens was suitable to enable principles of socio-organizational change, valid for the definition of new public policies between cities and universities. This approach has led to an increase in the number of actors and territories involved and to the evolution of the expected results and impacts, both in quantity and complexity [Figure 1], as will be better explained in the following paragraphs.

To better qualify the process of the PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA project and associate it with an action research, the description of all the projects considered “flagship” is given below. The flagship projects of PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA allowed for immediate application and punctual feedback on the project's research themes, identified as the third applicative phase of the process. They could be defined the “action” part of the project.

The reconstruction was made on the basis of the knowledge of the authors, who represent some of the main institutions involved in the project (Regione Puglia, ADISU, urban@it), trying to reconstruct as faithfully as possible what happened in all areas during the two years of the project.

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<sup>30</sup> Hilary Bradbury and Peter Reason. *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry and Practice*. 2, (Londra: SAGE, 2008).

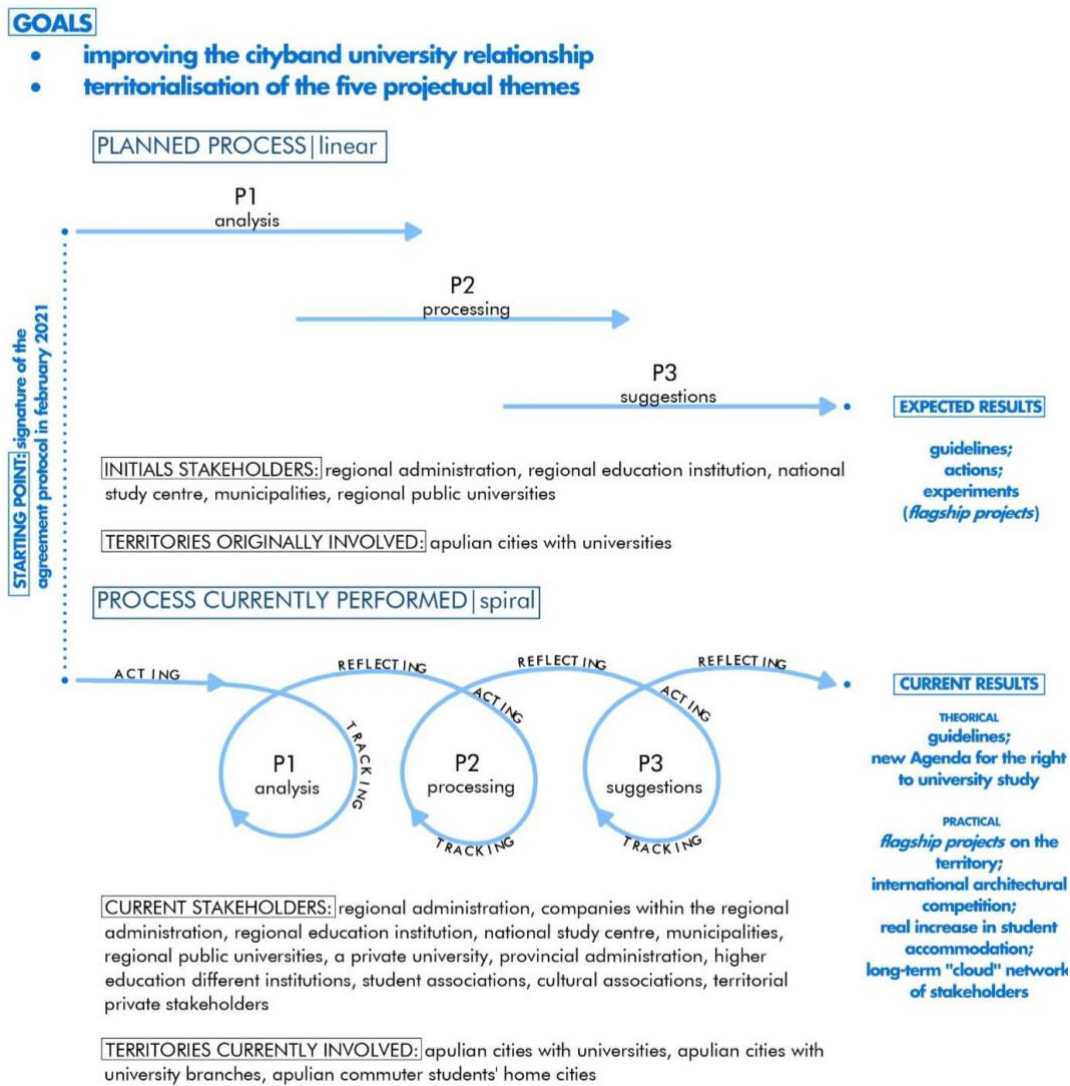


Figure 1| Diagram comparing the planned method and the one actually carried out for PUGLIA UNIVERSITY REGION.

Credits: Cristina Danisi, Giovanna Mangialardi.

### 3.3 The Action.

The housing emergency was one of the themes that certainly conditioned research developments in the flagship projects.

First and foremost, an incidental characteristic of the Apulian university system is the presence of commuters and out-of-town students from all over Apulia, in contrast to the very low percentage of out-of-region students and the high percentage of students who enroll in universities outside the region. This problem is particularly acute for municipal administrations. This data intersects with the dynamics of out-of-residence students in Apulia, who have to deal with the housing emergency in the various university cities, which cannot guarantee adequate accommodation for this category of users. Along these lines, the objective of the flagship project “FUORI SEDE - Design Workshop for the temporary housing of university citizens”

[Figure 2], which took place in September 2021, was to imagine new spaces and uses for the “E. De Giorgi” University Residence in Lecce, together with the community of students living there and the citizens and neighborhood associations, listening to their ideas and proposals. The protagonists of the initiative were the students and citizens who, through the tools of participatory planning, were involved in a workshop preparatory to planning the extension of the residence. The area outside the residence represents an “urban void” on which there have always been different views on the part of the various stakeholders: the Sud-Est cultural association based in the adjacent Knos Factories, appointed as a workshop leader, conceived of it as a space to be naturalized, giving it new life; the Province of Lecce, which before A.di.S.U. Puglia owned the concession for its use and envisaged a new outdoor sports field; finally, A.di.S.U. showed a willingness to exploit the space to create new student residences. The workshop was an opportunity to dialogue between the various actors and find a meeting point between ideas, needs, and desires. Starting with presenting case studies to explore issues ranging from the design of flexible architectures for temporary use to new sustainable construction methods, the design phase was followed by a discussion with university students, recent graduate designers, and residents of the Salesiani neighborhood in Lecce. The issue of student residences in university towns has produced more immediate results due to the publication of the 5th Ministerial Announcement of L.338/2000<sup>31</sup>, which finances new projects for university student accommodation and residences, to be implemented primarily through the conversion of existing buildings. Following a participatory process of territorial concertation, the municipalities, provinces, and universities formalized their interest in submitting disused public buildings to the 5th Call for Proposals of L. n°338/2000 for the construction of student halls of residence, colleges, and other forms of university housing, as well as facilities and equipment open to citizens, which foster the relationship between university facilities and urban functions. Three of the five design competitions were presented for the construction of student residences in university towns in Apulia on abandoned buildings: the former Carmelite Convent in Lecce [Figure 3], the “Palazzo Frisini” in Taranto and the former “Cassa Mutua Artigiani” in Brindisi. In this case, the action research of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* represented a way to accelerate the procedures regarding one of the most significant territorial emergencies, university housing: this resulted in the decision to carry out the first three of the five planned competitions, which will therefore follow different timetables. The flagship projects on the social housing theme were paved the way by

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<sup>31</sup> Law of 14.11.2000, n° 338: Provisions on accommodation and residences for university students.

the National Innovative Program for Housing Quality (PINQuA)<sup>32</sup> urban regeneration projects in Lecce, Taranto, and Brindisi. In Lecce, the project envisaged the renovation of the former “Galateo” building [Figure 4] to be used as a social housing complex offering accommodation for families, students, and the elderly through a housing re-functionalization and the creation of multifunctional spaces with aggregative functions for commercial, sports, recreational and cultural activities. In the north wing of the complex, a student dormitory for 20 students is planned, which A.di.S.U. Puglia is willing to manage, intending to experiment with mixed management forms as part of a renewed relationship between the university system and the city, which sees students fully integrated into the city community. The plan for the city of Taranto is to design and implement strategic urban regeneration actions for life quality improvement in large portions of the problematic districts of Paolo VI and “Città Vecchia”. In particular, the project on the “Città Vecchia” [Figure 5] envisages reopening to the public the use of the area surrounding the “Scaletta Calò”, which is now walled up, at the same time as the renovation of an old aristocratic palace to be used as accommodation for university students and the redevelopment of the external areas of the council houses in Via Garibaldi. A.di.S.U. Puglia, through an agreement, will manage the housing service.

A new “University of Brindisi building complex” [Figure 6] has been planned in Brindisi. This will form a social, cultural-historical, and service fabric continuum. In particular, the former building “Marconi” will be used in the project as a residence for off-site university students and visiting professors, and the interior will be rearranged to accommodate rooms for the disabled, single rooms with bathrooms, an administrative area, study rooms, hall-reception, a breakfast room, etc. In addition, the branch of the former “Marconi” Technical Commercial Institute, in Maglie Street, will be used as a university canteen with 150 seats.

The flagship project in the city of Foggia is the digital hub involving the “Miale Barracks” [Figure 7]. It takes the form of a radical regeneration and re-functionalization of the entire urban area. For years, it has been disconnected from most other urban areas and the educational and training activities in the surrounding and neighboring buildings. The “Miale Barracks” is set to become a hub of excellence for innovation, technology transfer, research, and higher education. In this place, a virtuous relationship will be formed between research, cultural growth, innovation, economic development, and social welfare. There, the university, together with its partners, will make available to the territory human resources and knowledge dedicated to a plurality of activities in support of companies operating in the territory, contributing to

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<sup>32</sup> National Innovative Programme for Housing Quality: financed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan with EUR 2.8 billion, it aims to reduce suburban decay, make public housing more energy efficient and carry out urban regeneration to improve people's quality of life.



technology transfer and digitalization of young people to support and stimulate them in the creation of start-ups and spin-offs, and of higher education for the benefit of trainers, companies and stakeholders in the territory.

The experimental and innovative services for students with disabilities covered the entire Apulian regional territory. The project started from the document “A two-level accompanying service for students with physical disabilities and SLD in the university pathway”, which analyzes the Disability and SLD Services in the five universities and was drafted by the Scientific Coordinator of the topic “Disability and material and immaterial accessibility of university structures and urban spaces” within *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA*, with the support of the Disability Delegates from the five Apulian universities. It is envisaged to finance innovative projects to foster the socialization and integration of the students mentioned above with the school and local community, facilitating their participation in cultural and sporting and providing artistic opportunities, forms of autonomy, and inclusion. One more action is the increase of social entrepreneurship to ensure personal services, addressing one or more public notices to non-profit private law entities who can offer them.



Figure 2| Working group of the 'Fuori Sede' workshop in Lecce, 2021.  
Credits: PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA w.g.



Figure 3| Render of the winning project of the design competition for a new student residence in the former “Convent of the Carmelitani Scalzi” in Lecce.  
Credits: <https://concorsiawn.it/residenzauniversitaria-lecce/home>.



Figure 4| Render of the winning project of the design competition for the renovation of the “ex Galateo” building, as part of PINQUA.  
Credits: <https://www.leccesocialhousing.it/#risultati>.



Figure 5| The strategies of the project “Re-inhabiting the Old City of Taranto”, within the framework of PINQUA.

Credits: [https://www.mit.gov.it/nfsmitgov/files/media/notizia/2022-04/Rapporto\\_Pinqua\\_web.pdf](https://www.mit.gov.it/nfsmitgov/files/media/notizia/2022-04/Rapporto_Pinqua_web.pdf)



Figure 6| The design of the new “Brindisi University Headquarters” building complex, as part of PINQUA.

Credits: [https://www.mit.gov.it/nfsmitgov/files/media/notizia/2022-04/Rapporto\\_Pinqua\\_web.pdf](https://www.mit.gov.it/nfsmitgov/files/media/notizia/2022-04/Rapporto_Pinqua_web.pdf)



Figure 7| The “Miale Barracks” that will host Foggia's new digital hub.

Credits: <https://www.bonculture.it/urban-politics/investigazioni-e-lezioni-lunifg-rivitalizza-la-caserma-miale-e-il-centro-di-foggia/>

### 3.4 Flagship Project Evaluations.

Sharing the research themes of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* and its flagship projects between the various institutional actors is considered a success factor for the research. To date, municipal administrations have “governed” their city policies, such as mobility, trade, housing, or urban development, without fully considering the presence on their territory of a university student community studying and living in the city. In addition to generating economic flows, this community also conditions urban services and mobility distribution. Using technical tables for each of the five themes of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* allowed all the involved subjects to follow a very clear direction “together”. In this sense, the project has also represented a “wake-up call”, which, until then, had not been “deemed interesting” on issues that would have probably not emerged otherwise; at least, it would have taken longer to explore them. *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA*, therefore, allowed administrations to understand which actions to prioritize, channeling funds and resources to them.

Further strengths were also highlighted: the flagship projects’ innovativeness and methodology are remarkable. Participatory planning, which is one of the key concepts of action research, produced a dialogue between urban and university on a regional scale, also involving student organizations, economic and social forces, managers of urban services,

and cultural associations in the reflection: this is a transversal research approach, which focuses on the welfare of students as citizens. Participatory planning implies a different communication strategy: from the defense of autonomy between universities and the city to an awareness of desirable interdependence. Combining the right to study and the right to the city has led a group of municipalities to reshape proposals currently being drawn up, testing the opportunities that a synergic relationship between residents and students can generate.

Undoubtedly, the housing emergency has played a decisive role in most projects.

One of the most important intentions, which involved the majority of the stakeholders, in addition to ensuring an increase in the number and quality of student housing in Apulia, was to guarantee equal treatment for all students in the region, independent of individual economic possibilities. Student housing, in fact, is a key-vector through which social inequalities can articulate and manifest themselves, reflecting a broader global trend.<sup>33</sup>

Through the flagship projects on housing developed in cooperation with A.di.S.U. Puglia, the aim is to generate an equal condition of well-being and to avoid classism based on economic conditions. This contrasts with the international growth of the commercialisation of the higher education sector and the privatisation of student accommodation, which has led to the emergence of a new type of “purpose-built student accommodation” (PBSA).<sup>34</sup> These are all-inclusive, high-quality student accommodations that have raised the standard and also the price of student housing, managed by private or commercial companies that create and maintain exclusive student communities. Housing for off-campus scholarship holders in Apulia still covers a small part of the demand. Against 1908 beds available in 2019/20, 4274 applications were received. This shortage becomes particularly acute in Bari and Lecce, with more than 50% of those eligible remaining without a bed. Combining the urgency of creating new accommodation places with the sharing policies and expansion of university towns is crucial. There was also often a lack of strategic alignment between the cities and universities before the project started.

Concerning the workshop “*FUORI SEDE*”—off-site—, it must be pointed out that until then, many residents of the Salesian neighborhood were unaware of the intended use of the space of the Student House. Thanks to the collective discussion, this space will now be able to open up to the city and build its evolution together. The participatory planning process applied in defining the new vision of the “E. De Giorgi” student house also

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<sup>33</sup> Alice Reynolds, "Geographies of Purpose Built Student Accommodation: Exclusivity, Precarity And (Im)Mobility," *Geography Compass* 14, no. 11 (2020): e12543.

<sup>34</sup> Therese Kenna and Ailish Murphy, "Constructing exclusive student communities: The rise of “superior” student accommodation and new geographies of exclusion," *The Geographical Journal* 187 (2021): 138 - 154.

highlighted some limitations that were not apparent until then. In fact, on the one hand, the institutional actors perceived participation in the process as an “institutional duty”. On the other hand, the world of associations and the city's non-institutional actors perceived participatory planning as a top-down process. Subjects who had not been involved in the university city's issues up to that point showed a critical attitude in the initial phase of the process. The expansion and rethinking of a university residence or the conversion of an existing building into a university residence is a process subject to long timescales dictated by bureaucracy and the identification of resources. Added to this is the time required for participatory planning. Time is critical, as financial resources are often tied to very tight deadlines. This is why some university towns in Apulia have been flagship projects, and others have not.

The Lecce context has been a particularly active landscape for *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* pilots: in addition to the workshop “*FUORI SEDE*”, the former “Convent of the Carmelitani Scalzi” being nominated for the 5th Ministerial Announcement of L. n°338/2000 through the design competition. Moreover, with the recovery of the former “Galateo building”, part of the residence will offer student accommodation.

Following the two decrees issued in a few months by the MUR<sup>35</sup> on NRRP<sup>36</sup> resources, a new student residence, “Ex Hotel Zenit” was activated directly by A.di.S.U. Puglia, and through the action of two private individuals, three residences were activated in the hinterland of the Ecotekne University campus, specifically in Arnesano (LE) and Monteroni (LE), and one in the city of Lecce.

#### 4. Discussion.

Action research is a form of self-reflexive investigation,<sup>37</sup> which aims at producing knowledge about a system while trying to change it, implying transformation interventions through a cyclic process of research, action, and evaluation in which those involved are at the same time participants in the research.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, the flagship projects of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* mark the triggering of fundamental transformations in the regional territory at different levels: individual, social, and organizational.<sup>39</sup>

Participatory design processes, national and international calls for

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<sup>35</sup> Ministry of University and Research.

<sup>36</sup> NRRP - National Recovery and Resilience Plan is the program with which the government manages the funds of the Next Generation Eu. It is the economic recovery and revitalization tool introduced by the European Union to restore pandemic-related losses.

<sup>37</sup> Robin McTaggart, "Participatory Action Research: issues in theory and Practice," *Educational Action Research 2* (1994): 313-337.

<sup>38</sup> Meg Bond and Elizabeth Hart, *Action Research for Health and Social Care* (Open University Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> Francesca Falcone, *Lavorare con la ricerca azione* (Rimini: Maggioli, 2016).

tenders for the reconversion of the building stock, and a qualitative/quantitative increase in the number of university accommodation places in Apulia are direct feedback triggered by the project, the development of which was built within the academic boundaries, and then turned to the entire local university and urban community – a university-territory relationship, now, authentically and mutually transformative.<sup>40</sup>

The objectives, clear from the outset, in the desire to create an actual network of relations between the university and urban communities in Apulia, solid over time, sedimentary even after the project itself, and in the declination in the territorial sphere of the five in-depth themes, have guided the entire dynamics of the process, ever since the signing of the memorandum of understanding in 2021. As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the spontaneous evolution of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* led the research team never to be satisfied with the obtained results or to slavishly follow the project's expected course but start from the initial planning. Each action was followed by an evaluative reflection, affecting the subsequent course of the various phases. In this way, the initially conceived theoretical and somehow rigid approach has adapted over the project itself. At the same time, the project itself has been “modeled” and updated according to the real impacts of each step. In the transition from the linear process to the spiral one, two years after the start of the project, the group of stakeholders initially involved has largely increased, involving additional agencies such as A.S.S.E.T.<sup>41</sup> and “Puglia Valore Immobiliare”<sup>42</sup>, and new territorial authorities such as some Provinces. This happened because the project spontaneously expanded from its initial prospects, also thanks to the wide dissemination promoted by the institutional partners. By moving from city to city and activating conferences and meetings open to the city, an increasing number of stakeholders became interested and curious about the topics treated, believing that they could make a contribution to the research themselves as well as gain important suggestions. At the same time, the network expanded thanks to the work of the researchers involved, who dealt with the topics in a concrete and direct manner, not just theoretically, interfacing in the first person with the stakeholders and partners they considered most suitable, involving them in the activities. The external stakeholders, both private and public, always showed interest and participation in the project, even launching several experiments in the area as part of the third operational phase (as an example, mention is made of the collaboration with the Cercoalloggio.it digital platform for the “diffuse housing” project in the city of Taranto, conceived in the winter of 2023).

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<sup>40</sup> Laura Saija, *La ricerca-azione in pianificazione territoriale e urbanistica* (Milano: Franco-Angeli, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> A.S.S.E.T. Regional Strategic Agency for Sustainable Land Development. <http://asset.regione.puglia.it/>.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.pugliavalore.it/>.

As far as the involvement of the territories is concerned, while the initial idea envisaged the participation of the individual cities where a university is located in Apulia, other realities were subsequently voluntarily included in the project, such as Brindisi, which is a branch of the University of Salento and the University of Bari, and some territories that do not directly host university campuses, but are cities of residence of commuting students who, at the regional level, strongly express the need for study venues not only in the cities where they attend the various courses but also in those to which they return at the end of the day or on weekends.

Similarly, the group of university institutions has been enriched and complexified through interaction with several regional A.F.A.M.<sup>43</sup> institutes.

Consequently, even the results initially envisaged, referred in a generic way to guidelines, actions, and experimentations, were later better specified and, at present, refer to a more “theoretical” part—formalized in a new “Agenda for the Right to University Studies”—which delves into the specific objectives of each topic, the macro-areas of intervention and, above all, some hypotheses of action to be taken by subjects such as institutions for the right to study, regional and municipal authorities and universities can carry out on the subject of the university-city relationship, proposed in the light of the results of the analyses carried out—setting up an observatory on university residences, mapping disused urban areas potentially suitable for redevelopment, transforming university buildings into environmentally and energy sustainable buildings, entering into agreements with subsidized rates to encourage the use of public transport, etc. —. The “practical” section, on the other hand, includes all the flagship projects described and the actions useful to sediment in the long term that important “cloud” of relations created between institutions and territories through the project—as an example, setting up permanent consultation tables on the main issues addressed through the project—.

## 5. Concluding Reflections.

The term “action”, in the context of research, marks a specific step of the experimental sequence, specifically referring to the phase of involvement of the workgroup in solving concrete problems and not only “knowledge problems”, making the notions acquired during the analysis applicable, and returning practices aimed at real changes on societies and territories.<sup>44</sup> The PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA project, therefore, could be considered a research action project because it determined changes in realities through an objective and rigorous knowledge of the

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<sup>43</sup> Higher education in art, music and dance.

<sup>44</sup> Kate Louise Mc Ardle and Peter Reason, "Action research and organization development," in *Handbook of organization development* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2008).



territorial context of the investigation and direct actions on relative territories.<sup>45</sup>

From the reconnaissance presented, aiming to assess the contribution of the flagship projects as an action research phase of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA*, the value that field experimentation has provided to the project can be seen. Indeed, the flagship projects aimed to stimulate dialog and interaction between complementary systems, which usually have difficulty coming into contact: academic institutions and administrations, the student and urban communities, economic and social forces, urban service managers, and cultural associations. The multi-actor approach experienced during the project and the relationships built will hopefully remain a legacy of the project. Sharing these intentions strengthened the common idea and the will to succeed in bridging the gaps present in the area and begin to overcome the major problems detected—for example, the shortage of student accommodation—by looking at the right to study as a right to the city, as a tangible result of the research.

However, not all the workgroups on the five research topics have imagined and implemented concrete projects: the examples described in the previous paragraph represent only a part of the flagship projects that the *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* workgroup has proposed. As an example, the initiatives planned by the workgroup on the topic of culture—like the Festival of Culture—have not been tested yet due to a lack of funds, while the workgroups on the topics of sustainability—mobility and/or energy efficiency— and the right to university study are currently lacking flagship projects, even though topics are greatly relevant and urgent at a world level. The misaligned timing of the research groups has been a limitation of the project, and in some cases, this has been reflected in the actions on the ground.

The resources allocated by the NRRP<sup>46</sup> for the co-financing of actions aimed at acquiring the availability of beds for university students allowed university cities to activate new accommodation places, but without having the necessary time for a participatory planning process, as in the case of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA*.

Administrations still have some limits in sharing strategic choices, such as conditioning university development from an urban and educational point of view. A case is represented by the degree courses that require frequent attendance in university laboratories and facilities—an example, Nursing Sciences—, which are not covered by essential student residence services.

The intention of the third phase of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA* is to strengthen the involvement of local administrations and territories in

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<sup>45</sup> Laura Saija, *La ricerca-azione in pianificazione territoriale e urbanistica* (Milano: Franco-Angeli, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> NRRP - National Recovery and Resilience Plan is the program with which the government manages the funds of the Next Generation Eu. It is the economic recovery and revitalization tool introduced by the European Union to restore pandemic-related losses.

research, which would otherwise be limited to academic boundaries. This is not only about five universities collaborating in scientific research and knowledge exchange but also interacting and confronting the five university cities to give concrete feedback to the developed reflections. Similarly, involving administrations and other territorial stakeholders, the aim is to provide guidelines on the right to study to channel resources and funds in the best possible way, pursuing the mission of increasing Apulia's attractiveness as a university region. The data obtained from the outcomes of the flagship projects of *PUGLIA REGIONE UNIVERSITARIA*<sup>47</sup> were collected and analyzed only qualitatively and are accessible from the website dedicated to the project. Future research will allow clustering of the contents, highlighting the actors involved, places, areas, and themes, and the state of progress of the research, also attempting to monitor the impacts in the medium to long term.

### Attributions

The contribution is the result of a joint reflection by the authors. In particular it is attributed to: G. Mangialardi the “UNIVERSITIES AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION” chapter; to C. Danisi the “ACTION RESEARCH. SOME EXAMPLES” chapter; to A. Maroccia the “a. The research” paragraph; to G. Mangialardi the “b. The method” paragraph; to M. Cataldo the “c. The action” paragraph; to M. Cataldo and C. Danisi the “d. Flagship Project evaluations” paragraph; to C. Danisi the “DISCUSSION” chapter; to G. Mangialardi the “CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS” chapter.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://regioneuniversitaria.puglia.it/progetti-bandiera/>.

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# Universities and Local Communities: Research, Training and Networking in the Field of Legality and Mafias, for the Right to Informed Knowledge

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## 1. State of the Art.

Despite a broad production from scholars on the topic of mafias,<sup>2</sup> the issue of where the Italian academic world is positioned in the antimafia system has not been consistently dealt with to date. In particular, an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional approach to the matter seems to be lacking. Therefore, this paper aims to formally outline the role of Universities as co-protagonists in the areas of contrast and prevention, on par with antimafia bodies and entities both at institutional level – i.e. the Antimafia Parliamentary Committee, the National Antimafia Directorate (DNA), the Antimafia Investigation Division (DIA), prefectures and courts of law – and at societal and activism level alongside local organizations and third-sector entities.

The main objective of the research whose results are hereby illustrated is to investigate the contribution that Italian Universities adhering to CRUI have given in the field of higher education and scientific research to the topics of legality and organised crime. The research has been conducted by 29 scholars from different academic disciplines, across 11 Italian Universities, in collaboration with CRUI and the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into mafia and other criminal organisations

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<sup>2</sup> F Dalla Chiesa, *Manifesto Dell'antimafia*, vol. 92 (Einaudi, 2014); Vittorio Mete, "La Lotta Alle Mafie. Tra Movimenti e Istituzioni," in *L'Italia e Le Sue Regioni: L'età Repubblicana-Vol. IV Società* (Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2015), 305–22; Rocco Sciarone, *Mafie Vecchie, Mafie Nuove: Radicamento ed Espansione* (Donzelli editore, 2021).

including foreign ones, implementing a Memorandum of Understanding between these two entities.<sup>3</sup>

This MoU was aimed at enhancing the role of Universities as places of training in terms of knowledge and skills, but also as ideal social environments where ethical and cultural principles in defence of institutions and society may take root.

The data that will be discussed in these pages are part of a *Review of university research and training activities* (henceforth *Review*), produced as a result of efforts coordinated by the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Research on Mafia and Corruption (LIRMAC) of the Federico II University of Naples. The role played by Universities in the fight against organised mafias is particularly emblematic in the interpretation of the relationship between Universities and territories, especially with respect to two interlinked aspects.

The first aspect relates to the University's forms of engagement, how diversified these can be and how closely they are linked to the educational and scientific research mission. In recent decades there has been an increase in the contribution of academics and Universities to the processes of change in the economic and social context where these institutions operate. At the same time, expectations have also grown on the part of the local communities, for a more institutionalised involvement of Universities in the processes of economic and social innovation.<sup>4</sup> The umbrella concept of the Third Mission encompasses many of the actions introduced by Universities in this sense, particularly those that take the form of a systematic commitment to support the development of territories. The connection between academia and the territories increasingly shapes permeable networks,<sup>5</sup> which are more consistent with the development of innovation understood as a social construction that develops in dialogues between complementary types of knowledge. The 'long' links (in spatial and social terms) that Universities are able to weave allow actors from external contexts to come into contact with knowledge hot-spots (research centres, laboratories, other Universities, etc.) and thus to produce significant innovations, as well as to harness instrumental resources, including economic ones.<sup>6</sup>

The second aspect sees the University community at the centre of ethical commitment, with special regard to younger students considered as the future leaders of the country. It is clear that every step taken in the direction of better knowledge of phenomena from different points of

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<sup>3</sup> The complete results of this research are illustrated in D'Alfonso & Manfredi (eds.), 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Trigilia and Marino Regini, "Università e Innovazione. Il Contributo Degli Atenei Italiani Allo Sviluppo Regionale," 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Harald Bathelt and Patrick Cohendet, "The Creation of Knowledge: Local Building, Global Accessing and Economic Development—toward an Agenda," *Journal of Economic Geography* 14, no. 5 (2014): 869–82.

<sup>6</sup> Pier Luigi Sacco, Guido Ferilli, and Giorgio Tavano Blessi, *Cultura e Sviluppo Locale: Verso Il Distretto Culturale Evoluto* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012).

view, affects the way such phenomena are perceived, understood and dealt with.

In this framework, mafias as a systemic phenomenon occupy a prominent place, and must be tackled as such in terms of prevention and contrast with equal systematicity. In this perspective, the role of the University stands as complementary (and necessary) to the repressive and contrasting one undertaken by the judiciary and law enforcement, while taking the form of a preventive action brought about by training in informed knowledge and by education to legality. Especially in the last thirty years there has been an increase in widespread awareness of the mafia presence in national territories and, in view of the development of illegal market networks, in international ones. This is thanks not only to the pressing counter-action (with significant results) of the judiciary, but also (perhaps above all) to the 'staging' of organised crime: from literary production (e.g., *Gomorra*, by Roberto Saviano) to graphic novels; including television series and film productions, as well as journalistic reports and media products centred on criminal profiles. While all this has undoubtedly brought to the fore a universe which had too often been denied and/or obscured, it has also produced various representations that do not always adhere to reality, and which have sometimes even run the risk of altering it or even mythologising certain aspects of it.

In this context, Universities can act as guarantors of the right to 'informed knowledge', offering cognitive approaches to the mafia phenomenon, with precise and rigorous theoretical and methodological points of view. In various areas of Italy, especially in the south, Universities represent for the younger generations one of the places of educational opportunities and professional and civil growth. These institutions take on the appearance of a 'garrison of legality on the territory' in opposition to criminal phenomena that have long been rooted there; they offer the tools and skills for knowledge and understanding of these phenomena. The work undertaken by University researchers in this sense offers the most appropriate tools. Furthermore, it can boost the effectiveness of policies, interventions and actions of prevention and contrast.

The *Review* therefore represents an opportunity that allows us to highlight the presence of specific training pathways and of experts or research teams operating in each University or across different Universities, and who represent the access points for scientific knowledge of the mafia phenomena.

More generally, the data we will see shortly offer stimulating food for thought as regards the relationship between teaching and research on the one hand, and between Universities and geographical-territorial contexts on the other. Regarding the latter, there are many studies that have shown the relevance of the spread of tertiary education institutions and their level of territorial embeddedness in fostering local development.<sup>7</sup> We will

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<sup>7</sup> John Harrison and Ivan Turok, "Universities, Knowledge and Regional Development," *Regional Studies* 51, no. 7 (2017): 977–81.

see how some variables, including location and size of Universities, disciplinary specialisations, the type of relationship with the territory, available resources, are crucial in defining the forms through which Universities can express their commitment to legality, in the local contexts where they are located and beyond.

## 2. The Review of Research and Training Activities Methodology.

The *Review* is the only database available today in Italy that enables us to draw a map of research, training and third mission activities carried out by Italian Universities. This database can be queried through the CRUI website.<sup>8</sup> The *Review* will be constantly updated, especially thanks to the contribution of LIRMAC.

The idea of investigating the role of Italian Universities in the fight against mafias, organised crime and corruption was conceived in 2017, in implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding adopted by the CRUI and the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Committee.<sup>9</sup>

To this end, the CRUI carried out a study, updated to the academic year 2015/2016, aimed at surveying the educational activities offered by Italian Universities, as well as dedicated facilities and events organised on these topics. The survey was conducted through the submission of an online questionnaire for 66 Universities, and the results were presented at a hearing before the Committee in November 2017.<sup>10</sup>

During the first phase of the project, three macro-areas of training offer were identified:

- Courses delivered and dedicated to the study of mafias and organised crime, as part of degree programmes or higher education programmes;
- Facilities or teams of researchers dedicated to scientific research on the topic;
- Events and/or initiatives organised by Universities for the promotion of the culture of legality.

Taking into account the evolution of studies and research on mafias in the years following the period covered by the survey presented in 2017, it was

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<sup>8</sup> Stefano D'Alfonso and Gaetano Manfredi, *L'università Nella Lotta Alle Mafie: La Ricerca e La Formazione* (Donzelli editore, 2021); Stefano D'Alfonso and Gaetano Manfredi, *University in the Fight against Mafias: Research, Teaching and Training* (FedOA-Federico II University Press, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> "Parliamentary committee of inquiry into mafia-related and other criminal organisations, including foreign ones", established in the 17th legislature by Law no. 87 of 19 July 2013; the project was then also adopted by the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Committee established in the 18th legislature by Law n. 99 of 7 August 2018 and by the Ministry of University and Research.

<sup>10</sup> The results were presented on 7 November 2017 by the then president of the CRUI, Professor Gaetano Manfredi, and Professor Anna Maria Zaccaria, member of Lirmac. The stenographic record of the hearing can be downloaded at the link on the website of the Chamber of Deputies, [https://www.camera.it/leg17/1058?idLegislatura=17&tipologia=audiz2&sottotipologia=audizione&anno=2017&mese=11&giorno=07&idCommissione=24&numero=0230&file=indice\\_stenografico](https://www.camera.it/leg17/1058?idLegislatura=17&tipologia=audiz2&sottotipologia=audizione&anno=2017&mese=11&giorno=07&idCommissione=24&numero=0230&file=indice_stenografico) The full hearing in video format can be viewed at [https://inchieste.camera.it/inchieste/mafie/video.html?leg=17&legLabel=XVII %20legislatura](https://inchieste.camera.it/inchieste/mafie/video.html?leg=17&legLabel=XVII%20legislatura).



deemed appropriate to proceed with a new survey that, while retaining the same objectives as the previous one, would allow for an update of the data and a broader and deeper analytical reflection. Firstly, a methodological adjustment was necessary. On the basis of the list of Italian Universities belonging to the CRUI, we proceeded with a thorough consultation of their websites in order to detect the presence and activities of bodies or courses of study dedicated exclusively to the mafia and corruption phenomenon and to check their activation over the five-year academic period 2016/2017-2020/2021. The reasons for this choice lie in the timeliness of the information: the direct collection of the data useful for the survey, in fact, made it possible both to shorten the time (inevitably longer in the case of using a questionnaire) and to mitigate the limitations that such a large unit of analysis could have generated (e.g. drop in the number of answers to the questionnaires, possible ambiguity of the questions/analytical dimensions, etc.). Thus, the websites and curricula of all the Universities belonging to the CRUI were consulted, maintaining a constant comparison with the previous survey. The data collection was carried out by comparing it with the previous survey and by querying the search engines of the individual Italian Universities using the following specific keywords in Italian: *antimafia, anticorruzione, camorra, camorrista, corruzione, Cosa nostra, criminali, criminalità, criminalità organizzata, crimine, devianza, mafia, mafie, mafioso, mafiosa, riciclaggio, 'ndrangheta, violenza*. (in English: anti-mafia, anti-corruption, camorra, corruption, Cosa Nostra, criminals, crime, organised crime, crime, deviance, mafia, mafias, mafia-related, money laundering, 'ndrangheta, violence).

In particular, the survey focused on the tracking and identification of:

- Teaching activities: courses and workshops
- Dedicated facilities: labs, observatories and research centres
- Higher education: PhDs, MAs and higher-education courses
- Third mission activities: summer and winter schools.

As a further part of the aforementioned Memorandum of Understanding, CRUI and LIRMAC created the *Review of research* through a survey of scientific publications about mafias. In this case the data collection method was different. The Universities provided their data by extracting it directly from the IRIS database, under the guidance of specifications produced by the CRUI and LIRMAC, thus avoiding manual data entry. The Universities that responded by indicating products of interest for the research are 64; two do not have products responding to the submitted request and two others were entered through autonomous access to the University IRIS system.

By means of a simple keyword search, this database makes it possible to identify Universities and faculty who have tackled and/or are tackling - in various ways - specific issues concerning the mafia phenomenon. This can be a useful support for scholars themselves, as well as for institutions, citizens and various stakeholders interested in identifying and

reconstructing the scientific commitment produced by Universities over the years. More importantly, however, it is also useful for students who - regardless of their educational background - wish to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In fact, this platform also allows an immediate identification of sector experts and teams (e.g., laboratories) to which they can refer in the presence of the most diverse needs for in-depth study (e.g., for legislative production). Finally, it makes it possible to focus on the various research groups present in each University or even across different Universities: a useful mapping for the promotion of further interdisciplinary collaborations and activities, which are increasingly necessary when facing a topic with a high social, economic and legal impact. This is therefore an important starting point for building strategies that place the University community at the centre of ethical commitment, with particular regard to young students, as citizens and future ruling class of the country.

In this contribution, we will present the main data on the training and research activities of the Italian Universities surveyed, putting forward some reflections that emerge from this data on the relationship between Universities and local communities.

### 3. Teaching Activities.

Among the Universities surveyed, there are 37 presenting teaching activities on the topic of mafias, with 17 located in southern regions, 12 in the north and 8 in the centre. As far as size is concerned, the 37 Universities are evenly distributed across the 4 size categories with a slightly greater share of 'large' ones.<sup>11</sup>

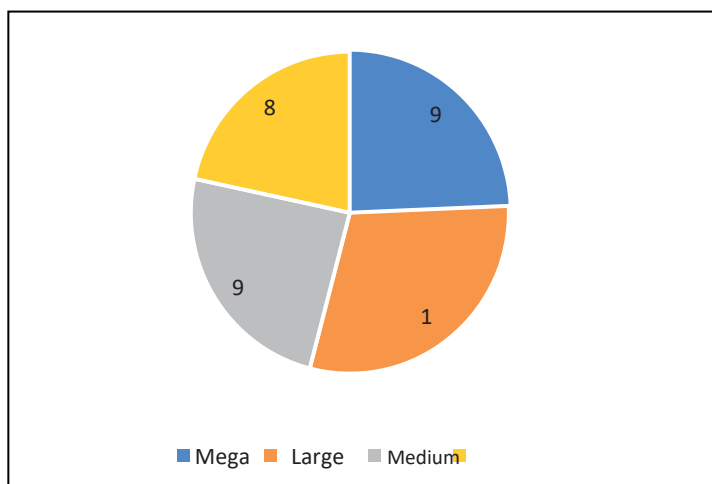


Figure 1| Distribution of Universities by size.

<sup>11</sup> These categories have been established on the basis of criteria set out by Censis in 2020, according to which the Universities with more than 40,000 students are called 'mega', while those with 20,000 to 40,000 students are 'large' and those with 10,000 to 20,000 students are 'medium-sized'. Finally, 'small' Universities are those with less than 10,000 students.

Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

With reference to the offer of specific activities and courses, in the Universities considered there has been a gradual increase in the number of workshops and courses focusing exclusively on the study of mafias and corruption since the 2016-2017 academic year: in 2020-2021, there was a positive change of around 47% compared to the 2016-2017 academic year. In practice, the offer has almost doubled over five academic years. There are still some territorial differences which had already emerged in the previous survey, with a higher concentration of availability in the northern regions.



Figure 2| Distribution of teaching programmes in Italy as of A. Y. 2020-2021<sup>12</sup>.  
Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

In fact, slightly less than half of the total 50 courses dedicated to the phenomenon are offered in Universities in the North (24 courses), concentrated in the Universities of Lombardy and Piedmont. As far as Southern Universities are concerned, the teaching offer increased from 14 teachings in 2016 to 18 in 2021; in the central regions there are 8, of which 6 in Lazio. The general picture of the time trend by geographic macro-area of the dedicated teaching offer [Figure 3] shows that in the northern regions there has been a constant and rather significant increase over the last three years, while the trend for the Universities of Central Italy is fluctuating; the Universities of the South record an increase in teaching concentrated in the last two years considered.

<sup>12</sup> Regions shown in black are those where Universities do not offer any of the three facilities/activities that form the core of this investigation (laboratories/workshops, higher education courses or subject-specific programmes). The blue regions (Sardinia and Marche) are those where at least one of the three aforementioned facilities/activities can be found although, in this case, they do not offer courses dedicated to the subject of mafias which explains why in this category they are allocated a value of zero.

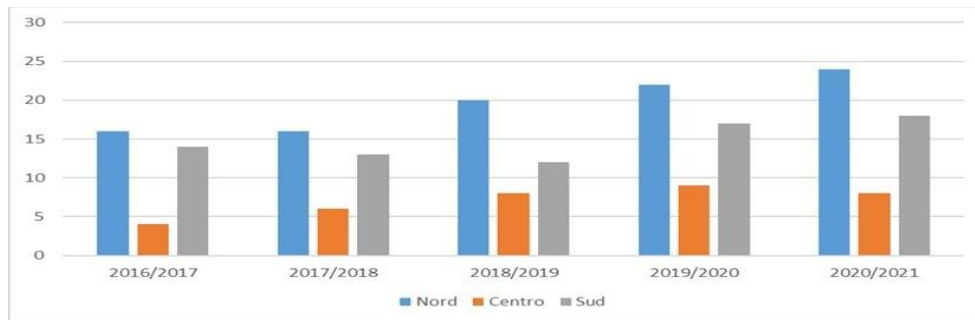


Figure 3| Distribution of courses by geographical macro-area.

Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

Blue = North; Orange = Centre; Grey = South

Several factors may contribute to explaining these differences, which, among other things, reveal an incongruous fact: the relatively limited contribution of Southern Universities, which are located precisely in the territories where the so-called traditional mafias originated. First of all, in recent years, the social alarm generated by the presence of mafia organisations in the northern regions has grown considerably, questioning various social actors at various levels.<sup>13</sup> Such external solicitation undoubtedly acts as a stimulus for the academic environment, inasmuch as this 'listens' to the territories and activates itself, with the tools of its specific competence, in the fight against illegality. This hypothesis can also be confirmed by the trend of the data referring to the teaching offer recorded for the Universities of the central regions, an area in which the risk of mafia presence has long been perceived as negligible; for instance, lower Lazio has been regarded as a safe haven, despite its proximity to the Caserta area, which has been a site of Camorra settlements and encroachments for at least thirty years.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to other regions of Italy, the *Mezzogiorno* has a long and well-established history of mafia syndicates, which is widely acknowledged by the public and civil society. However, simply recognizing the presence of the mafia and its impact on the region's economy, society, and culture is not enough to explain the disparity in educational outcomes among Universities. There are several factors that should be considered, such as structural, environmental, economic, scientific, and organizational aspects. For example, the mobility of lecturers and Universities' ability to propose extra-local training projects can have an impact. To better understand these issues, further investigation is needed to identify the constraints that prevent Italian Universities from taking more widespread and effective action against organized crime.

Looking at the review data again, the courses dedicated to mafia and corruption are mostly active in mega and large Universities, although

<sup>13</sup> Rocco Sciarrone, "Tra Sud e Nord. Le Mafie Nelle Aree Non Tradizionali," in *Mafie Del Nord. Strategie Criminali e Contesti Locali* (DONZELLI, 2019), 5-43; Gianni Belloni and Antonio Vesco, *Come Pesci Nell'acqua. Mafie, Impresa e Politica in Veneto*. (Milano: Donzelli, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Vittorio Martone, *Le Mafie Di Mezzo: Mercati e Reti Criminali a Roma e Nel Lazio* (Donzelli editore, 2017).

their number has been consistently growing over the last two years in small and medium-sized Universities. Among the mega Universities, the most significant contribution is given by the ‘Statale’ Universities of Milan and Turin, where in A. Y. 2020/21 the number of specific courses was 9 and 5, respectively. Courses appear to be rather evenly distributed across large Universities in Italy and their share seems to follow a stable trend.

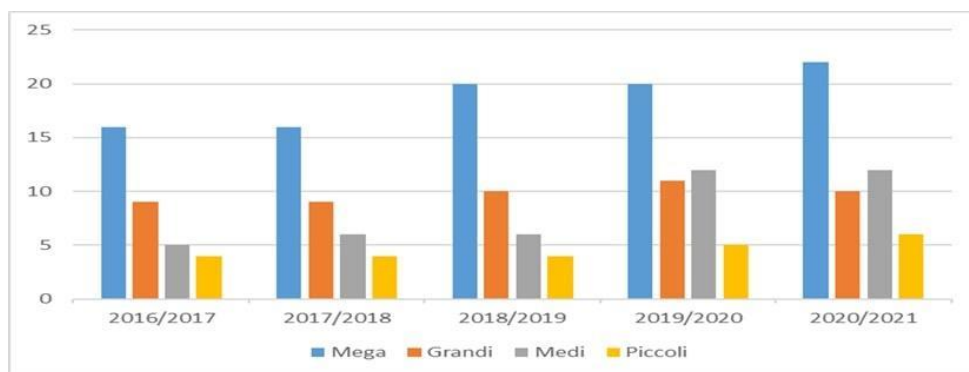


Figure 4| Distribution of courses by University size.  
Credits: Stefano D’Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.  
Blue = Mega; Orange = Large; Grey = Medium-sized; Yellow = Small

Courses are concentrated in four scientific macro-areas [Figure 5].<sup>15</sup>

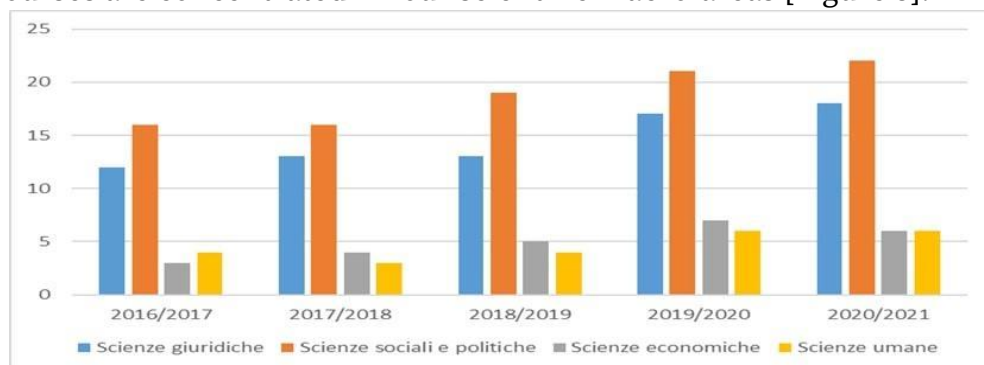


Figure 5| Distribution of courses by scientific sector.  
Credits: Stefano D’Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

Blue= Law and related courses; Orange= Political and Social Sciences; Grey= Economics; Yellow= Human sciences

Over the period analysed, their number progressively increased in the area of Law and above all in that of Political and Social Sciences; conversely, a more limited diffusion can be found in the sectors of Economics and Human Sciences. In addition, the courses are mainly

<sup>15</sup> The disciplinary macro-areas considered refer to the Miur classification. On the basis of the survey, it was possible to trace the subjects to the following macro-areas: a) legal area: law and related courses; b) area of political and social sciences: political science, international relations, science of administration and related courses, sociology and related courses, anthropology, communication sciences; c) area of economic sciences: degree programmes in economics and business and company organisation; d) area of human sciences: also includes historical sciences, learning and educational sciences and psychological sciences.

distributed across MAs and single-cycle degrees, with the former showing a significant increase over the last three years.

On the other hand, there is a more limited number of undergraduate degree courses, with the majority of them being concentrated in the area of historical disciplines. What is also interesting to notice is the figure relating to optional courses which are interdisciplinary and placed at the crossroads of various curricula and academic fields. In particular, these are often represented by interdisciplinary workshops dedicated to students of social and educational sciences. Despite a significant production of scientific research, the so-called hard sciences do not show an offer of courses dedicated to the subject of mafias and corruption.

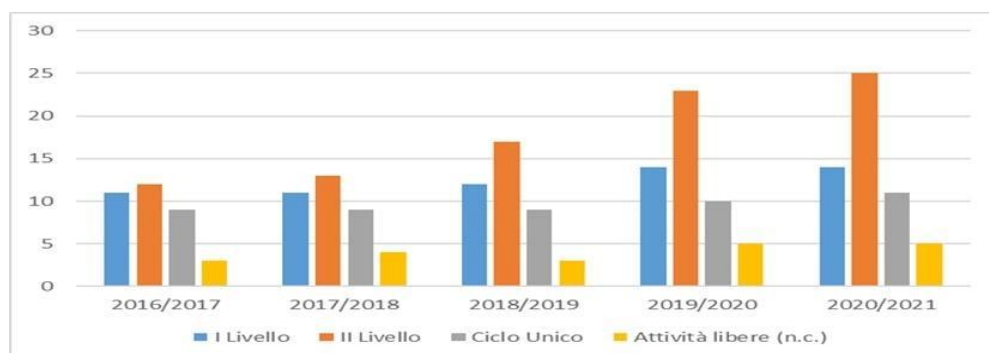


Figure 6| Distribution of courses by level of degree programme.

Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

Blue= undergraduate; Orange= MAs; Grey= Single cycle; Yellow= Electives

As highlighted earlier, the majority of these courses are concentrated in the north of Italy and in mega Universities. Analysing higher education we can see how this distribution is rebalanced.

The total number of higher education activities in the Universities surveyed is 21, i.e., 6 more than the previous 2017 survey. The higher-education offer is distributed across 14 Universities, with varying figures depending on the academic year considered. In particular, our data show that in 2016/17 the most significant concentration of higher education offer could be found in the South, while in the following academic year the offer increased in the north, while remaining stable in the centre and declining in the south. Finally, in the 2018-2020 period, growth could be observed in higher education offer in the Universities of Central and Southern Italy. On the other hand, in the two-year period 2020-2021 there was a similar level of offer across the three geographical areas [Figure 7].

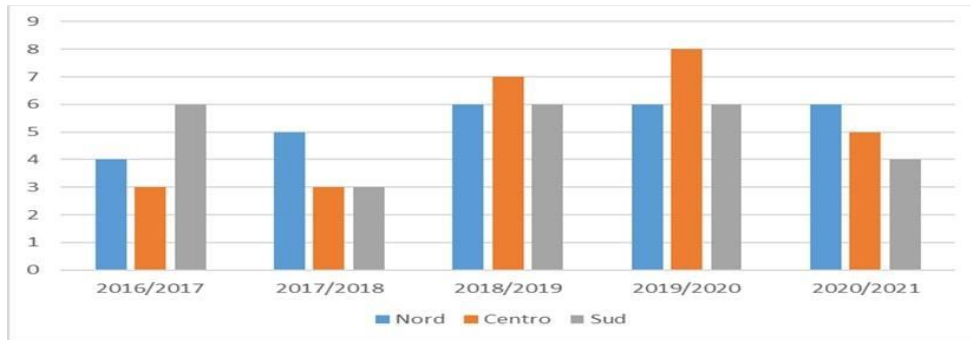


Figure 7| Distribution of higher education offer by geographical area.  
Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.  
Blue = North; Orange = Centre; Grey = South

Looking at the distribution of higher education courses in relation to University size, we see that the offer is ample in mega and large Universities, but rather limited in medium-sized ones. In small Universities, since 2018-2019, the trend in higher education activities dedicated to the subject of mafias and corruption has been stable.



Figure 8| Distribution of higher education activities by University size.  
Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.  
Blue = Mega; Orange = Large; Grey = Medium-sized; Yellow = Small

Another significant piece of information, which also sheds light on the relationships between Universities and other local stakeholders, is represented by the partnerships with external organisations or institutions which are quite frequent in the sector of higher education [Figure 9].<sup>16</sup> Out of the total number of MA courses surveyed, in fact, 10 avail themselves of the collaboration of Anac and/or Inps, Courthouse departments or law enforcement agencies, foundations and/or citizen associations, public and private organisations.

<sup>16</sup> We have hereby taken into consideration Master's degrees and higher education courses in which at least one external partnership was registered. It has to be pointed out that a master's degree can include more than one partnership from outside the academic world (e.g. the 2<sup>nd</sup> level master's degree on *Public tendering and prevention of corruption*, University of Ferrara, involves: Anac, Legacoop Estense, the province of Ferrara, Confartigianato di Ferrara, the Emilia-Romagna region, Confindustria, Consorzio nazionale servizi (Cns), Associazione italiana trasparenza e anticorruzione, municipality of Ferrara and Anci Emilia-Romagna).

The collaboration with "external" players is generally aimed at providing support both in terms of active training and in economic terms (most frequently in the form of scholarships for participants).

#### 4. Scientific Research Activities.

Before analysing the most significant data concerning scientific production, a methodological note is necessary. As mentioned, our data were extracted from the Iris research repository, and this choice is not devoid of criticalities. One such criticality refers to the problem of uploading products to Iris, an institutional archive that implies a 'selection' of products (e.g. retired and non-regularly employed scholars cannot upload products; moreover, products by authors from outside the academic world are not included). A second critical point concerns the selection by keywords, which undoubtedly has its limitations. This method only allows us to detect part of the products. Using this procedure does not give the certainty of surveying the entire corpus of research products, as some titles may not contain the selected keywords.

The decision to proceed in this way was based on the consideration that including a wider range of terms would have been far more critical than the usefulness of the extra information it could have produced. Finally, it should be borne in mind that the products surveyed are very heterogeneous and differ significantly in terms of type and scientific approach. Despite these critical issues, the repository has enabled interesting reflections on the scientific commitment of Universities in the field of mafias and corruption. A total of 2,273 original products published between 1999 and 2018 were identified and collected: the average annual production is more than 110 products distributed throughout the country. Across time, the scientific production concerning mafia studies has significantly increased across all sectors and territorial areas. There was a leap in the distribution of research products starting in particular from 2009: the incidence went from an average of 6.1 products/year to an average of 17.1 products/year. The 2013 peak of 196 products was followed by a slight decrease in production [Figure 9].

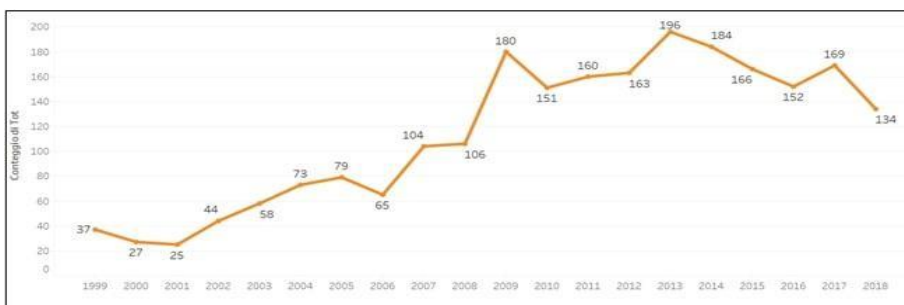


Figure 9| Annual trend of scientific products.  
Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.



As regards territorial distribution, significant differences emerge [Figure 10]. Slightly more than half of the papers, in fact, were published in the Universities of the South (53%), and about one third in those of the North (30%), while the remaining 16% were published in central Italy. Temporally, however, a progressive increase can be observed in the contributions of northern Universities. Their share grew from 26.7% in the first five-year period (1999-2003) to 35.3% in the most recent one considered (2014-2018). This can undoubtedly be attributed to a large extent to the judicial investigations that have been initiated recently in the northern regions.

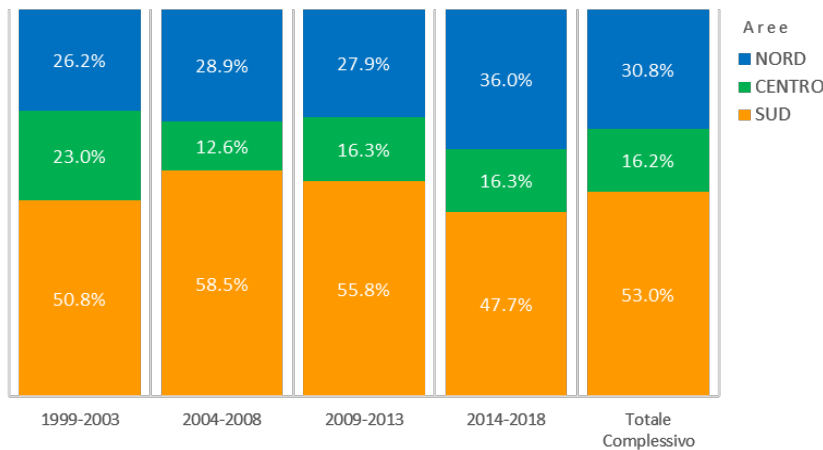


Figure 10| Percentage distribution of products by macro-area.

Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

Orange= South; Green= Centre; Blue= North; Totale complessivo= overall total

The most significant contribution in terms of number of products came from seven regions (two in the South, two in the Centre and three in the North), who account for over 85% of the total number of products: Sicily 31.3%, Campania 14.3%, Lombardy 12.9%, Lazio 7.4%, Tuscany 7.4%, Piedmont 7.1%, Emilia-Romagna 5%. The Sicily figure certainly stands out; in fact, this region accounts for almost a third of the overall number of products. When including Campania, these two regions cover almost the entire scientific production of Southern Universities in this field.

Social and Law disciplines together account for more than 50% of overall scientific production. Psychology, Economics, History also give a significant contribution, together representing more than a quarter of the total. Another significant share is accounted for by political and medical sciences. More than 75% of the production of psychologists, more than 50% of political subjects and about a third of the work of historians and economists was published in Sicily. Law Studies account for 27% of the total, while Sociology only reaches 22%. In Campania, the production of Economics and History scholars stands out, with 30 and 27% respectively of the total national figure. A significant share of the production of legal disciplines is also concentrated in Campania's Universities (14.7%). In Lombardy and Piedmont, sociologists stand out with percentages above

20% in the first case and 15% in the second. Political sciences (17%) and History (17%) are strongly represented in Tuscany.

Articles published in the selected time period were written by 930 authors. Analysis of the data shows that more than one third of the research products (37%) are the result of collaboration between two or more authors. Over the twenty years considered, the number of co-authorships increased by more than twenty percentage points: from 21% (1999-2003) to 43% (2014-2018). A figure that may reflect the consolidation of intra/inter-university collaboration networks. Mainly law scholars collaborate (31% with an average of 2.2 products per author), while sociologists, the most productive researchers with 6.7 products per author, are only 14.5% of the total [Figure 11]. This is followed by economists (11.6%), historians (6.3%) and psychologists (5.3%, with a production also in this case above the average of 5.6 products per author).

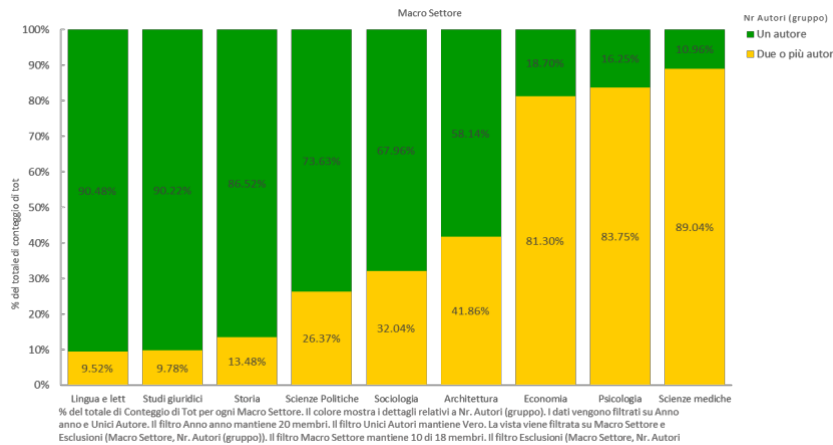


Figure 11| Percentage distribution of products with one or more authors by academic macro-sector.

Credits: Stefano D'Alfonso, Gaetano Manfredi.

*Lingua e letteratura*= Language and Literature; *studi giuridici*= Law Studies; *Storia*= History; *Scienze Politiche*= Political Sciences; *Sociologia*= Sociology; *Architettura*= Architecture; *Economia*= Economics; *Psicologia*= Psychology; *Scienze mediche*= Medicine; *totale complessivo*= Overall total

When it comes to gender distribution among authors, there is a clear gap: 64% are men and 36% are women. However, the gap decreased by over 9 percentage points over the years, with the share of female authors growing from 29.5% (1999-2003) to 38% (2014-2018). This rise was more marked in the north, with women making up 40% of the total in the north, compared to only around 30% in the south and centre. Looking at gender data by academic discipline, only two fields have more women than men: architecture (52% female) and psychology (61% female). However, it is important to note that these observations do not consider the overall gender distribution within each academic discipline.

## 5. Third Mission.

The density and variety of actions and products included under the Third Mission label today, made the results of the mapping undertaken for the

purposes of the *Review* less meaningful. For example, for summer and winter schools, a survey was carried out using the Google search engine and the engines present on the websites of the individual Universities, but the confusing data output made it hard to define an exhaustive mapping for the period under consideration. Therefore, it is probably necessary to recalibrate the methodologies in order to fill this gap in the review. More generally, these difficulties—connected to the difficulties faced by Universities when constructing databases on their third mission activities—highlight the need for a systematic and institutionalised collection and organisation of this type of information. The current uncertainty of the data prevents an accurate assessment of academic commitment on this front, which, in our opinion, runs the real risk of being underestimated. Such commitment emerges in all its relevance from the *Review*; above all, it is based on the increasingly leading role played by lecturers and researchers, who involve new recruits (PhDs, research fellows and PhD students), activate laboratories, observatories and research centres, and are involved in systematic public and civic engagement actions, as well as scientific communication and dissemination. Unequivocal strengths from this point of view are interdisciplinarity and the trend towards the development of inter-university collaborative networks. Above all, it is precisely the third mission activities that provide a more immediate visibility of the contribution that Universities can make to the study and understanding of mafia phenomena and corruption: a direct litmus test of their ability to respond to the students' (but not only) right to informed knowledge.

In this context we can place a recent initiative, developed in the University context and aimed at 'systemising' the University's scientific, educational and third-mission commitment on the subject of mafias, within the framework of the transmission of knowledge between soft-skills and lifelong learning. This initiative aimed to provide further room for the right to informed and continued knowledge, especially for those students who will become professionals, managers and decision-makers in the public sector. The initiative was developed within the Anti-mafia parliamentary committee and revolved around the relationship between professionals and mafia organisations.<sup>17</sup> An ad hoc analysis has shown not only the dynamics characterising the phenomena of compromise between some professional categories and mafia groups, but also various critical points in terms of the deontological references and values of professionals, in particular those in the self-employed sector. In the light of this, specific fields of action were identified in which Universities could make their contribution, starting from the awareness of its role in the training of young students as future professionals, and of the potential cognitive support for the professionals themselves, within the deontological training courses planned by professional orders and

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<sup>17</sup> Stefano D'Alfonso, Aldo De Chiara, and Gaetano Manfredi, *Mafie e Libere Professioni: Come Riconoscere e Contrastare l'area Grigia* (Donzelli editore, 2018).

colleges, particularly those most interested in the phenomenon. In terms of University mission, therefore, the action straddled the gap between the three types of mission. This led to two online freely accessible *Moocs* (Massive Open Online Courses), *Mafie e libere professioni e Le sfide della Legalità*.<sup>18</sup> Two teaching models were chosen that can be described in terms of soft-skills and lifelong learning. The transversal dimension of the topics dealt with in the online course justified the choice of not framing it in a specific discipline or teaching field. This choice was also supported by the aforementioned survey, which showed that compromise (or collusion), ascertained for example through convictions of mafia crimes in the courts or disciplinary proceedings by professional bodies, affects various professional categories: accountants, lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects and notaries. Therefore, the soft-skills approach may potentially lie in the area of interest of several degree courses, possibly chosen by Universities that are located in territories where mafias operate and where a higher 'job risk' has been detected. The lifelong learning perspective can respond to a demand for information and in-depth study for the entire span of (professional) life. This is an experiment, testing a foundation upon which one can imagine a dynamic contribution that the academic world could offer to students, the world of the professions and society as a whole, enhancing its role in transmitting the values of legality, with a competent and specialised focus on professional activities. An experiment which is replicable in other dimensions, albeit after applying the proper adjustments.

## 6. Conclusions.

The *Review of university teaching and research on mafias*, some essential aspects of which have been illustrated here, is aimed at:

- Promoting awareness of the contribution of Italian Universities, through education and prevention, to the fight against mafias and corruption;
- Highlighting forms and elements of the relationship that these institutions can build with local communities;
- Providing students and other subjects with the framework referents and expertise needed to study and understand mafia-type and corruption phenomena.

A few concluding remarks about these points can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, it seems clear that there is a mismatch between the intense research activity on the subject of mafias and corruption and the low presence of specific courses within degree programmes. This mismatch seems to suggest that Universities are focused on their role as containers of activities performed by their lecturers rather than on their function as

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<sup>18</sup> Available on the Federica Web Learning platform of the Federico II University, which can be accessed at this URL: [federica.eu](http://federica.eu)

organisations capable of deploying instruments and strategies for the fight against mafias and corruption. This can be explained by looking at “endogenous factors” which are dependent on structural components of the University system such as regulatory aspects, the organisation of teaching, the organisational choices of each University. However, only a more detailed analysis considering other aspects could shed more light on this sort of divergence.

Additionally, as has been pointed out, there is a low degree of territorial distribution of Universities that gear their teaching offer towards the subjects hereby considered. On the one hand, these activities are concentrated in mega and large Universities while on the other, this concentration is more substantial in the Universities of the North. Also in this case, several factors come into play, with endogenous factors intertwined with exogenous and agency-type ones. In particular, two factors seem to play a key role, namely the visibility of Universities and the specific features of local contexts. Assuming that the presence, in a certain University, of teams of scholars linking their research and studies to the subjects of mafia and corruption undoubtedly represents a strength, the data collected tell us that these teams are connected to mega and large Universities located in big cities. This is a position of relative advantage, at least in terms of infrastructures and services available and centrality of collaboration networks at the crossroads between different disciplines and research strands. All of the above generates a virtuous cycle which, on the one hand, increases visibility for these Universities and research groups and on the other facilitates the growth of the research networks. This represents a sort of cumulative advantage implying that the various opportunities for scientific research tend to accumulate in certain scholars or scientific organisations. This also concerns the identity of a University which may define itself as more or less local, national or international, with a subsequent fallout on its visibility and external perception by the outer world. Local contexts, as previously mentioned, have a certain weight not only in terms of socio-cultural features but also with regards to the demand for knowledge produced by Universities and potentially expressed by social or public organisations who may use it as a tool for the fight against illegality.

In conclusion, the data from the Review generally show a growing awareness on these issues among Italian Universities, but also increased awareness towards the needs expressed by local communities. More recent initiatives also show signs of this. For instance, the University of Milan, followed more recently by the University of Naples Federico II, have provided for specific delegations assigned by their Rectors, namely: Delegation on organised crime and education in anti-mafia culture; Delegation for activities aimed at disseminating anti-mafia culture. This testifies to the evident will to institutionalise the University as an autonomous research body knowingly positioned within the anti-mafia system, as a guarantee of constitutional rights. It also expresses the will

to establish liaison figures with the local communities, figures who are specifically committed to the dissemination of a properly informed anti-mafia culture.

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# Inclusiveness and Accessibility of University Facilities and Urban Spaces

CHAIR SESSION 5

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Europe has dealt with universities and their relationships with the cities of reference, sensing the value and promoting documents that enhance the potential of this relationship within a wide range of possibilities for economic and cultural development. From one side, Universities have been framed as a driver of development and moreover as important entrepreneurial subject of transformation not without illusions or controversy. From the other, scholars such Goddard—2015—introduced concept as civic university, with interesting insights can be found in both the work of Newcastle-upon-Tyne as well as there had been important initiatives such as that of Duke University or Belfast at the time committed to the construction of a new campus that would serve as a bridge between the two borders of the conflict. In this framework, very recently the university as an entrepreneurial subject has found interesting variations on the theme in Baldwin's critical research on the UniverCity.<sup>1</sup> According to this scholar, Universities, as a growth machines, are producing and disseminating gentrification, stewarding large police forces, cheating tax coffers while exploiting low wage Black and Brown labor throughout the campus, etc.

So far, the research available in Italy have discussed the growing role of universities in the urban and territorial context of reference that, in some cases, it has led to the definition of new and different economic-productive processes based on knowledge. Through case studies on specific practices, and Universities have been studied in their relationship with the system of transport, housing and, more generally, services.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the original research presented here lay the groundwork for the role of universities in creating equitable and just cities: the university does not act only as an intellectual and critical guide (which is not little) but offers the possibility to promote and implement transformative practices based on collaboration and especially on co-design assuming a proactive role useful to realize single projects but also models for an inclusive transformation. Then, the issue related to the campus, its

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<sup>1</sup> Davarian L. Baldwin, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower. How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> cf. Martinelli, Savino, Rovigatti, Ricci.



location and its function is a recurring theme with respect to the relationship between universities and design challenges. Indeed, many recent works define proposals for a better quality and functionality of the spaces for the University,<sup>3</sup> but also proposal for updating the quality of the spaces for work, research, teaching such in the project of the RomeTechnopole.<sup>4</sup> Here the regional ecosystem of innovation is open to comparison with the city of Rome and with the neighborhood of Pietralata that it will host it.

As a whole, the Italian universities, even if with delay compared to other European and especially North American universities, are dedicating themselves to a direction of public engagement through differentiated and for the moment rather fragmented practices that could produce more intentional and therefore strong impacts on cities and territories. Thus, it is important to bet on academic planning not only to design their own functioning spaces in the city but to give their contribution to the planning of contexts in favor of the territories and the most vulnerable people. Public engagement in fact, emphasizes the process of thoroughly integrating citizens and communities to join in the planning, policy design and implementation process, as well as citizen science methodologies, with an element of reciprocity in which the civic partners enrich both the institution and themselves, shifting towards a needs-based and rights-based approach. within an exchange that is more about reciprocity than gift and perspective.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gSnLD22kxs>

<https://www.vivipolimi.polimi.it/#VIVIPOLIMI>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.uniroma1.it/it/pagina/rome-technopole>.

# Regenerating Fragile Territories through the University. The Case of the New University Campus in Scampia, Naples

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## 1. Introduction.

In recent years, the third mission has mobilised university staff at all levels: rectors, deans, heads of departments and individual lecturers have all been trying to make universities more competitive against the evaluation criteria of the ANVUR—the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes—and to improve their reputation and relations with the local community. As is known, while teaching and research remain the main social function of universities, the latter have to commit to the third mission and public engagement: that is, the set of non-profit activities organised by a university—departments or individual researchers—with an educational, cultural and social development value, aimed at a non-academic public.

These are actions that require interaction and listening to build a different and stronger social relationship between the institution and the community. There are many types of actions: the organisation of cultural events, making spaces and facilities available, scientific dissemination, support of public benefit initiatives held in the local community, and so on.

However, to evaluate universities, we must adopt a very rigid scientific approach that looks at both social reporting and impact, drawing on well-documented and reliable data on third mission activities. After an initial assessment by the ANVUR through a learning workshop for universities to better understand how to regulate themselves and provide guidance to the many researchers, the universities are now working to help lecturers identify and select actions that can be easily documented with measurable impact indicators. Considering the broad spectrum of possible activities, some of which many universities have been promoting for years, especially on the cultural side, the universities' orientations are very diverse, also in terms of the components that are most easily identified: engineering schools and the faculties of medicine, science, agriculture, economics, etc., which tend to be closer to the business world than those in the humanities.

More generally, some fields of architecture, engineering, sociology and other social sciences have a long-standing inclination to study territorial contexts, often prompting students to explore social phenomena that are rooted in space and put territorial dynamics at the centre of their research.

Over the past few decades, several scholars have turned their attention to the developmental effects of the establishment of new university campuses in the very contexts of their location<sup>1</sup>.

It is only in more recent years that a specific strand of action and reflection has emerged concerning the values that the location of workshop activities in fragile territories can embody. For territorial scholars, the best-known cases are those that have been developed over a number of years within the framework of public policies (for example, neighbourhood contracts), or those that have identified specific public housing estates as a privileged place to involve students and tackle certain processes—such as urban regeneration—from the inside, applying an integrated approach and creating opportunities for decision-making or a more adequate implementation of necessary neighbourhood services<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Workshops in Fragile Neighbourhoods.

For a couple of years now, some universities—or individual departments—have opened offices or sent staff to laboratory-type facilities in “fragile” areas, usually social housing districts (for example, San Siro in Milan and Corviale in Rome). In addition, many universities have gathered in the APEnet network, which was created to support universities and research organisations in sharing public engagement projects, goals and joint initiatives.

These are very interesting practices for those who, like me, have been working for decades on an integrated approach to regeneration and the implementation of services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, located in historic centres or public housing areas. In recent years, many researchers have been involved in mediation workshops as part of the regeneration activities described in neighbourhood contracts, within the framework of agreements with municipalities<sup>3</sup>.

Subsequently, starting from initiatives developed among colleagues from DaStU Dipartimento Studi Urbani del Politecnico di Milano a space for

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola Martinelli and Michelangelo Savino. “L’Università italiana tra città e territorio nel XXI secolo - Parte Prima.” *Urbanistica*, 149 (2012): 4-67; Nicola Martinelli and Michelangelo Savino. “L’Università italiana tra città e territorio nel XXI secolo - Parte Seconda.” *Urbanistica*, 150/151 (2013): 10-43; Nicola Martinelli and Michelangelo Savino. “Università/Città. Condizioni in evoluzione?” *Territorio*, 73 (2015): 58-59; Nicola Martinelli and Piero Rovigatti. *Università, città e territorio nel Mezzogiorno* (Milano: FrancoAngeli editore, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Ida Castelnuovo, and Francesca Cognetti. “Mapping San Siro Lab: Experimenting Grounded, Interactive and Mutual Learning for Inclusive Cities.” *Transactions of the Associations of European Schools of Planning*, 3, 1 (2019): 37-54.

<sup>3</sup> AA.VV. “Dossier su Crocetta.” *Territorio*, 70 (2014); Claudio Calvaresi and Linda Cossa, *Un ponte a colori. Accompagnare la rigenerazione di un quartiere della periferia Milanese* (Rimini: Maggioli editore, 2011).

listening, mediation, observation and social enabling was activated in San Siro, led mainly by Francesca Cognetti and Liliana Padovani<sup>4</sup>.

### 3. The Case of Milan: from Neighbourhood Contracts to the Urban Living Labs.

The Politecnico di Milano launched the first Off Campus space in the San Siro district in April 2019, and a second space in the Nolo district in September 2020. Two more spaces were opened in 2022: one in the San Vittore prison and another one in a farmhouse on the outskirts of the city. In these structures, teachers, researchers and students alike engage in activities aimed at promoting innovative teaching, with a focus on the development of new skills, obtained through work in real contexts; responsible research, seeking to develop inclusive processes of knowledge production; and planning in collaboration with local groups and institutions to implement interventions rooted in the dynamics of the local context.<sup>5</sup>

The creation of these spaces is part of didactic and research pathways that, here as in other universities, have seen the commitment of staff—mainly from the departments of Urban Studies, Planning, Architecture and Social Sciences—in the local community. Within this institutional and university framework, the Milanese programme has strengthened initiatives that were initially run by individual lecturers or research groups. The activities of Off Campus San Siro, for example, are as follows:

- research: the role of the Living Labs in marginalised contexts; educational poverty and segregation in multicultural contexts; housing policies and projects;
- education and culture: territorial citizenship workshops; Caffè San Siro (cultural events); educational seminars and workshops; curricular internships;
- co-design: the reactivation of empty, public and communal spaces; skills training for migrant women; working group on future neighbourhood regeneration projects;
- neighbourhood archive: a collection of texts and materials, also from the inhabitants' private archives;
- coordination of the Sansheros Local Network, a network of local groups active in the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, Off Campus San Siro hosts a legal and legality education desk run by the Bocconi University. In fact, collaborations with other

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<sup>4</sup> Francesca Cognetti and Liliana Padovani. *Perché ancora i quartieri pubblici. Un laboratorio di politiche per la casa* (Milano: FrancoAngeli editore, 2018). In this paper, it is not possible to include a historical analysis that considers the evolution of the concept of neighbourhood laboratory, from Renzo Piano's experience in Otranto at the end of the 1970s to the more recent ones, which generally fall within the Living Lab approach.

<sup>5</sup> I wish to thank Professor Francesca Cognetti, delegate of the Rector of the Politecnico di Milano for social responsibility for the territory, and a researcher in the Off Campus San Siro project, for giving me this information.

Milanese universities have been strengthened over time, at San Siro mainly with the Bocconi University and the University of Milano-Bicocca.

#### 4. The Corviale District in Rome.

Another important initiative that has been underway for some years is that of the Corviale City Laboratory. Here, too, the personal commitment of individual researchers who are more sensitive to the problems of social exclusion—for example, that of the Roma community<sup>6</sup>—preceded the initiative. In particular, the case of Corviale, which is supported by the ATER Azienda Territoriale per l'Edilizia Residenziale is part of a longer and more articulated affair in which university researchers are employed as mediation professionals to facilitate the implementation of the works and the transfer of families, and to liaise between the assignees and ACER.

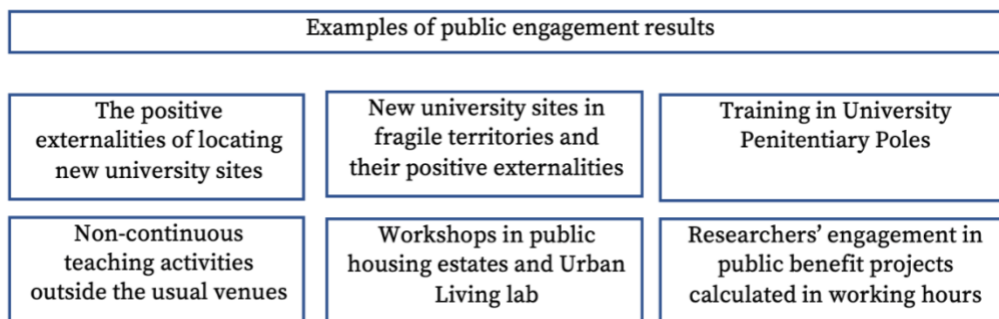


Figure 1| Examples of public engagement results.  
Credits: Giovanni Laino.

#### 5. The Shift from Individual Volunteering Outside University Walls to Professional Engagement in Projects funded by Universities.

Like some of my colleagues, I have long combined my professional commitment with volunteer work for a well-established and well-rooted third-sector organisation, planning, building partnerships and implementing and coordinating activities, especially for socio-educational services. In recent years, however, I have come to think differently about my personal commitment. Since 2020, with the permission of my university's Departmental Council and in compliance with the employment regulations for lecturers, I have requested that the hourly cost of the time I spend on some projects owned by non-profit organisations be considered as co-financing of the DiArc Dipartimento di Architettura, provided that the department acts as a formal partner of the relative projects. I think this is a unique and extremely useful way of having researchers and lecturers, paid by the university, providing services to local communities. One of the values of this approach is that it enables a real insertion into the nervous system of the projects, that is, the complex interaction between intentions, objectives, constraints,

<sup>6</sup> Francesco Careri, *Stalker-ON / Campus Rom* (Matera: Altrimedia edizioni, 2017).

resources, opportunities, learning, conflict and subsidiarity. Like a trauma centre for an orthopaedist, community service projects—which are increasingly hinged on urban regeneration programmes—are like a clinic for me. In my opinion, the study of planning theories and public policies would be very sterile and exposed to the risks of abstraction without a direct and emotional involvement in these experiences. Here, however, I want to focus on a different issue.

## 6. The Neapolitan Context.

Five major universities operate in the metropolitan area of Naples. Thanks also to the location of its campuses, the Federico II University is embedded both in the urban centre and on the outskirts of the city. In addition to being very central, fully inserted in the urban context and part of the Unesco area of the historic centre, some neighbourhoods<sup>7</sup> have an extraordinary symbolic value due to their particular living conditions: in these parts of the city, there is still a very lively environment, characterised by diversity and movement, two primary elements that are embedded in an ancient urban grid that is open to activities and residents from the better-off classes. More recently, some new structures have been built in Giovanni a Teduccio and Scampia, two districts that are known for a particular concentration of public housing and social classes living in relative or absolute poverty. While the now renowned experience of the San Giovanni campus is growing, in October 2022, that is, 15 years after the implementation of the relevant policy, the university campus of Scampia was finally launched. For years, various departments (Architecture, Social Sciences, Humanities) have done research on and organised events aimed at the integrated regeneration this district, which has been overexposed in the media<sup>8</sup>.

### 6.1 The San Giovanni a Teduccio Site.

In 1998, Rector Fulvio Tessitore signed an initial memorandum of understanding in support of the decision to move some of the classrooms used for courses with an ever-growing number of students to the site of the former Cirio factory. The latter is located between the working-class districts of Barra and Sangioanni, in the first suburbs of the eastern part of the city, 15 minutes by scooter from Via Toledo and about 30 minutes from the central stops of the old underground line. It was thus decided to create a new teaching facility in the eastern suburbs to complement the western one where, in addition to the engineering buildings, the new

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<sup>7</sup> In particular, mixed neighbourhoods such as Montecalvario, San Lorenzo and San Giuseppe are very popular suburbs.

<sup>8</sup> AA.VV. *Oltre le vele. Rapporto Scampia* (Napoli: Fridericiana Editrice Universitaria, 1999); Giovanni Laino, "Italy: the Scampia district in Naples." In *Neighbourhood housing debate*, edited by Daniela Ciaffi (Milano: FrancoAngeli editore, 2005); Enrico Martinelli and Massimo Santoro. *Periferie. Vele Scampia programma di riqualificazione urbana* (Napoli: Gruppo Associati Publitalf, 2004).

Economics and Business School had been located. This was a positive experience, mainly because of the correct and rapid use of European funds, which is a rarity in the Campania region – and even more so in Calabria and Sicily. From an architectural point of view, a project was chosen that had to be carried out in multiple stages, depending on the actual availability of funds, with the aim of creating a facility without any perimeter walls. It was also decided not to build refreshment facilities on the premises to encourage students and lecturers to use the bars and restaurants in the surrounding area. Local citizens have begun to accept and appropriate the spaces—with newlyweds even doing photo shoots at the site—, but for those who, like me, go there to teach, the anthropic and spatial landscape mostly presents itself as a large set of classrooms, generally designed in a traditional way—also in view of the anticipated number of students—, with pleasant but not very anthropised outdoor spaces.

Ever since its conception and initial implementation, the process has undergone a very significant evolution: thanks to a series of unforeseen opportunities, part of the space in one of the buildings was used as the headquarters first of the Apple Academy and then of various other important academies, attracting hundreds of young people—also from abroad—and creating a very innovative activity that was closely connected with major economic actors.

The city and the metropolitan area of Naples have many peculiarities: the spread of the spread of the informal sphere; the entrenchment of the working classes not only in the suburbs but also in large areas of the city centre, which is unique in Europe owing to the particular housing conditions—among other things—of at least 40,000 people living in the so-called *bassi* (very small homes with only a ground floor); a peak in the number of illegal constructions in parts of the second suburb, which are causing problems that seem impossible to solve; and a public housing stock (over 40,000 housing units) that is among the largest in Italy. Naples also has outer suburbs that are scattered across the municipalities of the metropolitan city, with tens of thousands of people living in deep poverty. Furthermore, the city has a large number of housing estates and buildings (120 of which have already been mapped in a GIS) that have lost the function they had until the end of the 20th century. This is why in Naples, more than anywhere else, there is an urgent need to regenerate—rather than simply reuse—some hundred buildings. This theme will undoubtedly be on the agenda for at least the next 50 years of urban history and is repeatedly associated with policies for the building of university campuses or, more recently, housing for university students and staff. Moreover, research into common goods has been ongoing for some years now, for which Naples presents itself as a Mediterranean centre of legal and social innovation. Although the city has a unique historic centre (extensively delimited by the general land use plan) in terms of its dimension and is experiencing a prolonged, intense wave of

touristisation, it does not seem to be affected by the same degree of gentrification as other large Italian cities, partly as a result of a private building heritage with a very peculiar consistency and use, and the now structural presence of migrant communities.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the data on deficits in childcare services, school failure and the various types of dropouts are notorious. In some areas of southern cities, these are at very critical levels compared to European cities, not to mention the situation of those who are no longer in the education system and neither working nor training for work (NEETs), which concerns the future of large parts of the new generations.

In this context, it is clear that many researchers and university lecturers have long felt the need to develop—or strengthen—a commitment to improving living conditions in the city, without compromising their allegiance to the university's main mission: to do research and train qualified young people.

## 6.2 The Nursing Sciences Campus in Scampia.

After several years of work and political vicissitudes, the new nursing centre of Scampia opened on 18 October 2022, in a beautiful building designed by Vittorio Gregotti, initially intended as the headquarters of the National Civil Protection.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the great contribution that medical professors and researchers will undoubtedly make, the campus offers a huge potential for public engagement initiatives that promise to be well-structured and not improvised, and which will prove even more innovative if focused on the regeneration of immaterial enabling services for local communities (residents, schools and third-sector organisations).

Scampia's social stratification is more articulated than the stereotypes in the media would have us believe.<sup>11</sup> This was already documented in a study on the neighbourhood commissioned by the rector and coordinated

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<sup>9</sup> In a survey conducted over the past two years, we collected data from the Chamber of Commerce on more than 6,500 people registered as traders, predominantly pedlars (Laino, 2022), and we also produced very interesting maps thanks to the geolocalisation of addresses via a simple GIS.

<sup>10</sup> Previously conceived as the headquarters of the regional civil protection service, this cylindrical building was designed and modified by Vittorio Gregotti. It is a seven-storey building (six above ground) with many ribbon windows and no balconies, reserved for the School of Medicine and Surgery's Health Professions courses and with outpatient clinics to be opened six months from now, intended for nutrition and endocrinological disorders, with an anti-diabetes centre and a blood collection centre. The classrooms will accommodate a total of 2143 students but currently contain 660 seats, with another 200 planned for the next semester. There is also a library, a large lecture hall with 519 seats, 32 laboratories, 50 offices, 5 student areas, a garage with 95 parking spaces and 30 motorcycle parking spaces. It has a medium- to long-term history, as it was formalised with a protocol signed back in April 2006. The initial plan was to locate a Faculty of Agriculture in Scampia, but the faculty members refused to be relocated from their historic site in Portici. In 2006, after the demolition of Sail H, the decision was made to build a Medicine and Surgery campus in Scampia. The construction site was opened in 2009, further funding arrived, some changes were made to the initial project and, finally, in July 2022, the building was finished and furnished, although some furnishings are yet to be completed.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Giovanni Laino and Daniela De Leo, *Le politiche pubbliche per il quartiere Scampia a Napoli* (Napoli: NEHOM, 2003).



by Enrico Pugliese in 1999, to assess the impact of the opening of a new university campus. Various populations coexist in Scampia.<sup>12</sup> Some of the “residents” live mainly in private parks; they are the relative majority and usually go out for work every morning, so they spend little time in the neighbourhood. These middle-class workers resemble those living in many suburbs of European cities, and a small part of them is involved in activities in schools, parishes and the headquarters of third-sector organisations in the neighbourhood. Next, there are the actual “inhabitants”: those who experience the neighbourhood to the full, having fewer opportunities for work and life in the external areas. They mostly live in brick high-rise buildings and a minority of them are families who used to live or still live in the Sails, in areas where the poorest or most precarious population is concentrated (Lot P, where the P stands for *Puffi*, the Smurfs) or in towers, almost always living in intergenerational poverty. Only a proportion of these residents are involved in clearly illegal activities. Other than this group, we must also consider the inhabitants of ROMA origin, who in many cases are de facto Neapolitans, with local identity cards and decades of residence, having lived in Scampia for three generations. An issue that has long been postponed is that of the Cupa Perillo camp: while acknowledging that some of its members commit crimes, the camp contains about one hundred families who have a legal right to public housing, but no administration has seriously considered offering it to them<sup>13</sup>. Then there is a further category of “inhabitants”: teachers and public service and third-sector workers who, despite living in other areas, run the neighbourhood’s daily socio-educational activities. In addition to hundreds of teachers, coordinated by highly committed educational directors, there are workers from other public services and about forty third-sector organisations, of which only a few were mentioned in a report published in the local issue of the newspaper *La Repubblica: Coop. L’uomo e il legno all’APS Chi Rome e Chi No, Kumpania, Dream Team, Le suore della Provvidenza* and many others.<sup>14</sup> In addition to recognising the commitment of these organisations, we should note that, for years now, they have been successful in attracting resources that amount to hundreds of thousands of euros by winning local and national tenders. These funds make it possible to provide at least some basic services and avoid the worst in terms of the lack of basic rights for large sections of the neighbourhood's population. In some cases, these institutions try—with good results—to make innovations in socio-educational, welfare and cultural services in a neighbourhood with a particular social need.

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<sup>12</sup> I here use some of the arguments presented in a newspaper article published in *La Repubblica Napoli* on 13.09.2022.

<sup>13</sup> Giovanni Laino, “Superare i campi Rom: cosa e come fare.” *Autonomie locali e servizi sociali*, no. 1 (2016): 45-64.

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Di Gennaro and Giuseppe Guida. “Scampia, l’università è pronta le lezioni partono fra un mese.”, in *La Repubblica Napoli*, 11 september 2022, 2-3.

The launch of the new Federico II campus in Scampia is therefore a great occasion that raises many expectations, but the effectiveness of the investment—in terms of making it an Engaged University—cannot be taken for granted. A lot depends on one decision: whether the medical stronghold will be a collection of nursing and body care activities or, starting from the idea of health as an all-encompassing social fact, it will be combined with other interventions to combat vulnerability and poverty among children, women and the elderly, some of which are already active in the neighbourhood.

To do this, the rector and senior referent of the Faculty of Medicine—in agreement with the mayor of Naples—aim to promote a local development coalition that will be hosted on the premises; this could be an opportunity to rationalise, relaunch and develop the mixed welfare system that effectively operates in the district. In this sense, the launch of the new training and health service centre could also act as an authoritative request to reinforce a local development coalition that the third sector and the municipality alone have, in fact, never managed to establish for over twenty years. This coalition represents the true qualitative leap that, together with the worthy commitment of local individuals and groups, can overcome a very spontaneous, often disjointed and ineffective phase of public investment, even if this quality improvement has not yet been clearly articulated.

To conclude, in Scampia, the Federico II University cannot repropose a model like that implemented in San Siro by the Politecnico di Milano (Urban Living Lab) or in the Corviale district in Rome (a mediation and support desk for the implementation of a relocation policy for families in upgraded housing). Rather, this new opportunity could launch a more advanced and challenging model. Without looking too far ahead, I believe it is essential to start a serious preliminary investigation that would allow the university to also allocate resources to a small group of motivated young researchers who, under the supervision of senior lecturers, could conduct action research that would be of great interest from this perspective. I have already proposed to set up a small working group and convene the most qualified actors for a sort of neighbourhood social committee that, together with referents from the municipal administration, would stimulate (or force) municipal departments to work in an integrated manner. This committee could also run new internal and external services, always ensuring transparency of resource allocation. A similar negotiating table could urge and support the most qualified actors of the third sector to create a local development coalition, tempering competition and trying to build a climate of social dialogue—one that does not seek to eliminate conflict—for the evaluation of social needs and their best possible treatment thanks to policies of different scales and innovative practices aimed at improving the effectiveness and protagonism of the involved actors.

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# The City/University Link beyond Proximity: a Learning Experience between Climate Adaptation Strategies and Civic Activism

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## 1. Introduction.

This contribution starts from interpreting the relationship between the university and the city as an interaction between several non-unitary actors, which becomes a learning practice.<sup>2</sup> It draws on a small education—and research—activity carried out in Verona, the “CLIM-ACT! In azione per il clima” Project—focused on bottom-up urban regeneration practices for climate adaptation—with the aim of developing some reflections about the geographies of ‘social engagement’ of universities as well as about the notion of social engagement itself, by beginning from the following question: What can we learn about the university/city relationship ‘following’ research practices even beyond the boundaries of territories which universities assume as ‘their territories’?

Research and education activities carried out by universities in interactive contexts can be considered to be relevant learning experiences for all the actors involved: «... knowledge is 'practical' not only because applied, but also because it is produced during the action,

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

<sup>2</sup> Pier Luigi Crosta, *Politiche. Quale conoscenza per l'azione territoriale* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1998), 355.

by all the actors who interact».<sup>3</sup> In the view of Dewey, experience is the basis of knowledge, and «The attainment of knowledge of some things is necessarily involved in common sense inquiries [...], and not [...] for its own sake».<sup>4</sup> So the knowledge occurs in «the environment in which human beings are directly involved, the common sense environment or "world," and inquires that take place, in making the required adjustments in a behavior common sense inquires,<sup>5</sup> so where the problems arise in situations of interaction in the world in which individuals live, and they can become the object of inquires. Furthermore, if we assume the pedagogical approach proposed by Freire and, more generally, a problem-posing education approach, knowledge is not a passive act. It is praxis, composed of reflection and action (Freire, 1968). It's a dialogic and cooperative process, transformation-oriented, led by a humble attitude, that requires a relationship with the context. This statement means identifying in the interaction with local contexts the possibility of activating innovative training strategies and understanding education not as mere teaching but as the outcome of learning processes (Crosta, 1997-1998). This opens up the possibility of investigating the forms of knowledge produced in the interaction between the actors involved from the point of view of both research and training.

Moreover, as far as sociospatial relations are concerned, if one «questions the privileging of a single dimension of sociospatial relations» in favor of the acknowledgment of «polymorphous organization of sociospatial relations in multiple forms and dimensions<sup>6</sup> new interpretations of the territories of universities emerge, which do not give for granted the boundaries of such territories. In general, «our experiences tell us that our social worlds, even of daily interaction, may stretch well beyond the area of a particular city, and that the webs which matter to us may be quite different to those of our neighbors».<sup>7</sup>

According to Jessop, Brenner and Jones,<sup>8</sup> not only were places increasingly understood as relationally constituted,<sup>9</sup> but the connections between four distinct socio-spatial concepts - that have been developed by social scientists over the last thirty years—territory, place, scale, and network—and their dimensions have to be all considered for the investigation and the understanding of the contemporary transformation of sociospatial relations.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 363, authors' translation.

<sup>4</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: the theory of inquiry* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1938), 60-61.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner and Martin Jones, "Theorizing sociospatial relations," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 389-401.

<sup>7</sup> Patsy Healey, "A Planner's Day: Knowledge and Action in Communicative Practice," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58 (1992) (1): 9-20.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner and Martin Jones, "Theorizing sociospatial relations," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 389-401.

<sup>9</sup> Dooren Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner and Martin Jones, "Theorizing sociospatial relations," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 389-401.

This contribution is divided into four sections in addition to this introduction. In the first section, a literature review concerning the university/city relationship in Italy is carried out. In the second one, the peculiarities of the CLIM-ACT! Project are framed within the climate adaptation and bottom-up regeneration debate, with an in-depth look at some relevant Urban Innovative Actions experiences. In the third section, the activities, the knowledge involved, and the local actors engaged in the project are described in detail. The last paragraph contains conclusive reflections, opening some points for developing a research agenda<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. University and the City.

The role played by Iuav University within the CLIM-ACT! Project can be understood within the broad scientific debate developed in Italy on the City/University relationships,<sup>12</sup> which has been progressively followed by the experimentations of several research and teaching activities developed in interactive contexts where Universities share knowledge with urban and territorial actors. Put differently, cities have increasingly become a fundamental resource for Universities.<sup>13</sup>

This phenomenon is undoubtedly linked to the changing dynamics of knowledge production within the evolving new set of activities within the so-called Third Mission of the University, which can be considered a critical dimension of university activities.<sup>14</sup>

In the Italian case, Cognetti,<sup>15</sup> referring to the Ministry of the University and Research documents, singles out within the Third Mission activities: activities related to knowledge transfer to enterprises; activities concerning the role of the University as an urban actor involved in urban regeneration/new developments strategies; and the social engagement activities, concerning knowledge sharing in social interaction contexts and the participation to cultural life.

Although the field of Third Mission activities is broad and multidisciplinary, if one observes it from the specific point of view of

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<sup>11</sup> This paper derives from the joined work and the lively discussion among its authors in the last phases of the CLIMACT Project implementation. Authors' main contribution may be singled out as follows: Carla Tedesco: introduction and first section; Stefania Marini: second section ("Main features of the CLIMACT project" sub-section) and section 3 jointly with Klarissa Pica; Klarissa Pica; second section ("In between UIA" sub-section) and section 3 jointly with Stefania Marini. The first part of the second section and the 4th section were jointly written by all authors, review & editing were jointly carried out by all authors.

<sup>12</sup> Michelangelo Savino (ed.), "Città e università - università vs città," *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali* (1998 1997): 60-61.

<sup>13</sup> Nicola Martinelli, "Università e territorio in una diversa competitività," *Urbanistica* 149 (2012): 6-11.

<sup>14</sup> Philippe Laredo, "Revisiting the Third Mission of Universities: Toward a Renewed Categorization of University Activities?," *Higher Education Policy* 20 (2007) (4): 441-56.

<sup>15</sup> Francesca Cognetti, "La third mission dell'università: lo spazio di soglia tra città e accademia," *Territorio* 66, (2013) (3): 18-22.



urban and regional planning schools, the most significant dimension of Third Mission can be identified with social engagement activities.<sup>16</sup> The assumption that through interaction with "their communities," universities can contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of the regions in which they operate is widely accepted.<sup>17</sup> However, the relationships between the performance of universities in research and training and the economic development of the regions in which they operate are somehow given for granted: the idea is that knowledge spillovers occur in areas that are in close geographical proximity to efficient universities.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, it is the same ministerial documents relating to the social segment of the third mission refer to the «context factors» in terms of «geographical proximity».<sup>19</sup> If one changes perspective, what are the territories of universities about social engagement activities becomes a research question. Although the universities are located within large networks of national and international relationships, in fact, the attention of scholars, with particular reference to the social engagement segment of the third mission, seems to have focused mainly on how the university/city relationship is configured in the local context where the University is located, which is taken for granted and not investigated starting from the multilocal trajectories of research practices. Only in some cases have the social activities of the universities been interpreted broadly, aggregating the initiatives aimed at themes of international cooperation and those related to social engagement in local contexts.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. CLIM-ACT and Bottom-up Climate Adaptation Initiatives.

The CLIM-ACT Project was promoted by a local partnership involving third-sector actors, the Iuav University of Venice, schools, the municipality of Verona, young people associations, consultants, and local businesses. It was led by a local environmental association called Rete Verso-Verona Sostenibile-. The project aimed to involve young people in civil activism initiatives for climate adaptation in urban areas.

The approach adopted for CLIM-ACT! put into tension the possibility of contributing to the construction of bottom-up actions in a policy field,

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<sup>16</sup> Robin Hambleton, "Purpose and Collegiality in Planning Education: An International Perspective," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26, 1 (2006): 107–17.

<sup>17</sup> Tommaso Agasisti, Cristian Barra and Roberto Zotti, "Research, Knowledge Transfer, and Innovation: The Effect of Italian Universities' Efficiency on Local Economic Development 2006–2012," *Journal of Regional Science* 59 (2019) (5): 819–49.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 820.

<sup>19</sup> Anvur, *La valutazione della terza missione nell'Università e negli enti di ricerca- Manuale per la valutazione. Nota integrative* (2015): 6.

<sup>20</sup> Alessandro Balducci, "Polisocial, un progetto di responsabilità sociale del Politecnico di Milano," *Territorio* 66 (2013) (3): 46–48.

Laura Montedoro, Alice Buoli, and Alessandro Frigerio, *Towards a Metropolitan Vision for the Maputo Province. An agenda for an integrated and sustainable territorial development in the South of Mozambique* (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2020).

such as the environmental one, where expertise is central, albeit eroded by conflicts.<sup>21</sup> The project as a whole involves the simultaneous experimentation of multiple actions, all based on the idea of building knowledge through experience.

The action developed by the Iuav University of Venice—called CLIM-ACT! Academy—focused on building competencies for young people on bottom-up practices for ecological transition, at the intertwining between actions to adapt cities and territories to climate change, and creative urban regeneration processes.

The organization of education activities came along with a literature review and a review of ‘good practices’ aiming at framing the CLIM-ACT! Project within the increasing number of similar national and international activities. This allowed to interpret the Academy experience as a research experience concerning the social engagement role of the University.

The rhetorical ambitions of co-production, networking, participation, and conflict resolution pervade the current context of planning. However, the profiles and roles of planners within these processes still need to be analyzed in detail: some forms of expert knowledge, in fact, still emerge as hierarchically superordinate compared to others.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the current context should be seen from the perspective of longer-term dynamics. In the last thirty years, on the one hand, a progressive acquisition in the scientific debate of awareness of the plurality of expert—and non-expert—knowledge which are at play in planning processes and which planners themselves possess emerged;<sup>23</sup> on the other hand, the change in the understanding of planning as processes of multiple interactions<sup>24</sup> in which the roles of planners and other actors are perceived differently occurred.

In the specific field of climate adaptation, the recent scientific debate and the numerous studies at the national and international levels that have focused on the impacts of climate change on the built environment and the risks for settled populations have declined the topic of knowledge in planning in a peculiar way. In particular, attention has not only been placed on the relationship between climate change and territorial planning and on the need to overcome consolidated approaches and ‘institutional traps’ that undermine the ability to shape decisions in the direction required by current challenges in favor of innovative responses

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<sup>21</sup> Luigi Pellizzon (ed.), *Conflitti ambientali. Esperti, politica, istituzioni nelle controversie ecologiche* (Milano: Il Mulino, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Mike Raco and Federico Savini (curated by), *Planning and knowledge: How new forms of technocracy are shaping contemporary cities* (1<sup>a</sup> ed. Bristol: Policy Press, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Patsy Healey, “A Planner’s Day: Knowledge and Action in Communicative Practice,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58, (1992) (1): 9–20.

Luigi Mazza, “Attivista e Gentiluomo?,” *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali* 48 (1993).

<sup>24</sup> Pier Luigi Crosta, *Politiche. Quale conoscenza per l’azione territoriale* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1998).

able to manage the conditions of uncertainty;<sup>25</sup> but reflections also emerged on the relevance of participatory approaches in the fight against climate change: the involvement of communities with the activation of capacity building paths, social learning and co-planning for adaptation is at the center of numerous reflections and projects.<sup>26</sup> In particular, nature-based solutions—understood as solutions offered by nature to environmental challenges, capable of generating environmental, social, and economic benefits to promote resilience—assume a prominent role in this sense,<sup>27</sup> identifying themselves as ready-made answers, helpful in making cities more resilient.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, it is widely recognized at the institutional level that citizens play a crucial role in climate action.<sup>29</sup> The importance of third-sector organizations as connectors capable of creating spaces to promote a more concrete involvement and move from awareness to action has been underlined.<sup>30</sup> This move occurs above all through co-production and co-design processes, involving citizens and potential and actual users of the spaces from the early stages of the adaptive design and transformation process.

Within this framework, the CLIM-ACT! Project presents itself as an opportunity for reflection on knowledge sharing in a specific field of planning, bottom-up regeneration initiatives linked to climate adaptation, as it cross-cuts these issues.

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<sup>25</sup> Leonora C Angeles, Victor D. Ngo and Zoë Greig, “Inert Resilience and Institutional Traps: Tackling Bureaucratic Inertias Towards Transformative Social Learning and Capacity Building for Local Climate Change Adaptation,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 22 (2021) (1): 51–71.

Heather Campbell, “Is the Issue of Climate Change too Big for Spatial Planning?,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 7 (2006) (2): 201–30.

Francesco Musco and Laura Fregolent, *Pianificazione urbanistica e clima urbano* (Padova: Il Poligrafo casa editrice, 2014).

Robert Wilby, “A Review of Climate Change Impacts on the Built Environment,” *Built Environment* 33 (2007) (1): 31–45.

<sup>26</sup> Leonora C Angeles, Victor D. Ngo and Zoë Greig, “Inert Resilience and Institutional Traps: Tackling Bureaucratic Inertias Towards Transformative Social Learning and Capacity Building for Local Climate Change Adaptation,” *Planning Theory & Practice* 22 (2021) (1): 51–71.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, H. Bulkeley, S. Naumann, Z. Vojinovic, C. Calfapietra, K. Whiteoak, T. Freitas, S. Vandewoestijne and T. Wild, *Nature-based solutions: state of the art in EU-funded projects* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Towards an EU Research and Innovation Policy Agenda for Nature-Based Solutions & Re-Naturing Cities: Final Report of the Horizon 2020 Expert Group on 'Nature Based Solutions and Re Naturing Cities'*, 2015. Valerie MacKinnon, Kathy Sobrevila and Claudia Hickey, *Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Adaptation: Nature-Based Solutions from the World Bank Portfolio* (Washington D. C.: World Bank, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 513. Climate Change Report*, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Patrizia Nanz and Miriam Fritsche, *La partecipazione dei cittadini: un manuale. Metodi partecipativi: protagonisti, opportunita' e limiti* (Bologna: Regione Emilia-Romagna, 2014).

#### 4. Main Features of the CLIM-ACT Project.

Recently, at the national and international levels, research projects, territorial cooperation projects, and exchange of experiences initiatives on climate adaptation in a participatory perspective multiplied. To highlight the peculiarities of CLIM-ACT, focusing, in particular, on the role played by the University, a literature review, and a review of 'good practices' circulating in the international context—in particular within programs fostered by the EU—and focusing on climate adaptation from a bottom-up regeneration perspective was carried out. In particular, initiatives within the Urban Innovative Actions program promoted and funded by the EU through ERDF funds with the aims of scalability and replicability, were focused on. In particular, the survey focused on multi-actor experiences involving the University, promoting participatory processes including the younger generations and students. Most are ongoing projects, which can be explored and articulated through several criteria and related to universities for the role, contribution, and knowledge mobilized.<sup>31</sup>

The first criterion concerns the promoters of the initiative. Based on this criterion, it is possible to identify experiences promoted by research institutions/universities and/or local bodies, the third sector and/or private subjects, in which the involvement of young people and school students is part of broader participatory processes, aimed at involving other populations as well. The second criterion concerns the contents of the projects. In most of the projects explored, the students are engaged in theoretical training courses aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness of the younger generations on these issues and sometimes go so far as to create dissemination tools to raise awareness of the risks of the changing climate or the benefits of answers such as nature-based solutions for the restoration of natural ecosystems. In other projects, however, students are actively involved in implementing transformative actions, through co-planning and playful co-creation of nature-based solutions, especially in the spaces pertaining to the school or in its proximity. Therefore, the school becomes a trigger, an outpost from which to start to counter the impacts of climate change on cities, recognizing the school building pertinent spaces as a «climatic refuge for socio-ecological regeneration». In these experiences, the University is supposed to be an expert actor responsible for knowledge transfer through training courses and for making available the know-how of scientific research concerning good practices and the exchange of experiences developed in other contexts.

A third criterion for describing the cases examined concerns the production of knowledge at the interweaving of different expertise and

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<sup>31</sup> Stefania Marini, Klarissa Pica, Carla Tedesco and Julie Pellizzari, "Adattamento 'dal basso'. Primi esiti di una sperimentazione a Verona," *Urbanistica Informazioni* 306 (2022): 298–300.

various disciplinary fields, as well as the relationship between expert and local knowledge. Indeed, in some projects, citizens' knowledge, perspectives, and perceptions are identified as valuable resources for local adaptation. From this perspective, the role of Universities becomes significant - sometimes leaders, other times partners in initiatives - whose activity is often limited to training or the evaluation of experiences and rarely goes so far as to experiment with concrete actions to re-design and transform places.<sup>32</sup>

## 5. In-between UIA.

Within this literature and projects investigation, some relevant experiences developed within the third call of the UIA-Urban Innovative Action and relating to the theme of climate adaptation have been singled out. In particular, the attention was placed on two parallel projects: OASIS - Schoolyards: Openness, Adaptation, Sensitisation, Innovation, and Social ties: Design and transformation of local urban areas adapted to climate change, working jointly with users in Paris and GBG\_AS2C - Blue, Green & Grey\_Adapting Schools to Climate Change in Barcelona.

In both projects, climate change adaptation measures were implemented in schools and, in particular, in the outdoor spaces of school courtyards, experimenting with nature-based projects and promoting participatory processes with the involvement of educational communities.<sup>33</sup> In these experiments, the external space of the schools finds a physical and social centrality within the neighborhoods, becoming an opportunity for community aggregation.<sup>34</sup> Within these experiences, several different actors established broad partnerships: municipalities, educational institutions—in particular, some primary schools—, and other institutional and public service actors linked to the promotion of public health and the water cycle in the case of Barcelona and the study of meteorological phenomena in the case of Paris. Both projects, through the involvement of schools, aim to address climate challenges by helping to raise awareness and cohesion of the communities involved.

In these cases, the partner universities of the project have mainly had the role of monitoring and evaluating the actions and the social and environmental impacts of the interventions, putting in place the expert skills to identify, describe, and disseminate to a broad audience of policymakers and practitioners the lessons learned. These projects aim at

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Francesc Baró, David A. Camacho, Carmen Perez del Pulgar, Isabel Ruiz-Mallén and Pablo García-Serrano, "Nature-Based Climate Solutions in European Schools: A Pioneering Co-Designed Strategy Towards Urban Resilience," *Urban Resilience to the Climate Emergency: Unravelling the Transformative Potential of Institutional and Grassroots Initiatives*, ed. Isabel Ruiz-Mallén, Hug March and Mar Satorras (The Urban Book Series. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 125-46.

<sup>34</sup> Valentina R Zucca, "Un sasso in uno stagno. Le scuole come spazio di centralità sociale e culturale in contesti in transizione nella Sardegna meridionale," *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali* 132 Suppl. (2021): 138-15.

possible scalability and replicability at the European level, promoting innovative practices in tackling the challenge of urban space re-design for climate adaptation.

## 6. A Workshop Open to Knowledge Interactions.

The Academy program was built through the intersection of different disciplinary perspectives—from ecology to planning to the arts—. It consisted of three webinars<sup>35</sup> and three workshops held in Verona. The latter focused on the shared analysis of vulnerability maps and the design of strategies and devices for mitigation/adaptation to climate change—nature-based solutions—to be implemented in a participatory manner. Starting from Verona's relationship with its river, considered, from a historical perspective, as a connecting element as well as an ecological corridor and biodiversity reserve, a number of areas vulnerable with respect to the risk of flooding and heat waves were selected, with particular attention to socio-economically marginal neighborhoods. Comparing the maps based on the perceptions of high school<sup>36</sup> students and the maps of vulnerability - with the assessment of areas exposed to heat waves and heavy rains in the entire Verona area<sup>37</sup> - realized by the university research staff<sup>38</sup>, allowing an initial identification of target areas.

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<sup>35</sup>With the aim of strengthening and building interdisciplinary knowledge on the understanding of the territorial impacts of climate change and participatory processes of urban regeneration. This is the articulation of the themes and the lecturers involved: "Cities in transition: the process of adaptation to climate change" (Denis Maragno); "Ecosystem services: concepts and good practices"(Daniele Brigolin); "Bottom-up urban regeneration projects and practices" (Carla Tedesco and Stefania Marini).

<sup>36</sup> These are the Engim Veneto Vocational School, located in the Chievo district, and the Messedaglia State Scientific High School, based in the historic center. They are involved in another project action through workshops run by the Energie Sociali social cooperative, one of the partners.

<sup>37</sup> In the first case, the evaluations were developed through the Land Surface Temperature map: land use data and the ratio of paved area to the permeable area were compared, producing a classification based on the heat wave vulnerability of the Verona area. In the second case, on the other hand, through the use of DTM (digital terrain model), simulation of water path, and comparison with data on soil permeability, the territory was classified for vulnerability to urban flooding by indicating the different factors of water accumulation and how soil characteristics may or may not feed surface runoff processes.

<sup>38</sup> Elaborated by Denis Maragno (Planning Climate Change Lab, Iuav University of Venice).

economically marginal neighborhoods. Comparing the maps based on the perceptions of high school students and the maps of vulnerability - with the assessment of areas exposed to heat waves and heavy rains in the entire Verona area - realized by the university research staff, allowing an initial identification of target areas.

During the workshop, many hotspots particularly vulnerable to both of the impacts mentioned above were identified in the first step. In a second moment, participants were able to get closer to these vulnerable contexts through a site survey that made it possible to gain direct experience of the places, observe urban practices, interact with local actors promoting significant experiences of activism, and reflect on how some informal practices turn out to be ready-made solutions for adaptation, according to the nature-based solutions approach. The survey focused on the "Adige River Park" areas north and south of the city. They reached through specially designed bicycle and pedestrian paths to immerse themselves in the river landscape and perceive the relationship with the neighborhoods bordering the river. These experiences were opportunities for discussion and confrontation based on the interweaving of expert knowledge and diverse backgrounds of professors and students—ecology, planning, design, economics, the arts, photography—.

During the site survey, students had the opportunity to meet with some local actors who carry out urban practices that often turn out to be ready-made adaptation solutions to climatic variations. Knowing bottom-up experiences along the Adige River and its surrounding areas allowed them to understand and valorize the inherent project-based dimension of some civic activism practices.<sup>39</sup>

The Canoe Club Association, founded for the dissemination and promotion of canoeing, now also promotes knowledge of the history and landscape features of the Adige River through educational and cultural activities and public awareness. In the South Adige Park area, the association Amici del Lazzaretto [Figure 1], founded as a result of a mobilization action of the FAI for the preservation of the historic Lazzaretto area, promotes cultural and social activities and intensive environmental education efforts; furthermore, it promotes actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to foster biodiversity. Finally, La Folaga farm promotes the l'Orto Al Porto association, which encourages the care of social relations through community vegetable gardening and cultural and social events.

All identified grassroots practices move at the intersection of cultural, social, and educational promotion, focusing on environmental sustainability and new lifestyles related to a fair trade economy.

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<sup>39</sup> Carlo Cellamare, *Progettualità dell'agire urbano: processi e pratiche urbane* (Roma: Carocci, 2011).



Figure 1| Survey and meeting with Arch. Anna Braioni (“Amici del Lazzaretto” Association).  
Credits: Stefania Marini.

The immersion in the area made it also possible to intercept some informal practices, such as in the case of the small beach along the river called "Catena Beach": a place where residents can enjoy a natural space, which becomes a natural space of climatic adaptation, as a shaded refreshment point compared to the areas subject to the heat island phenomenon present in the nearby neighborhoods [Figure 2]. Urban practices observed also designed informal everyday paths between the neighborhoods and the embankment of the river, marked by passing through uncultivated areas to connect with the pedestrian street that runs along the river from the Ponte Catena area to the Chievo district [Figure 3].



Figure 2| Informal practices along the Adige River.  
Credits: Klarissa Pica.





Figure 3| Informal paths connecting marginal neighborhoods and the Adige embankment.  
Credits: Chiara Lievore.

Following the site survey, in a cross-reference between the analysis of expert maps, narratives of the experiences of local actors, and the observation of places, participants were guided to reflect on the areas explored in the river's northern region, particularly around the Arsenal. Unlike the one in the south of the city - already involved in a participatory

workshop experience in 2013<sup>40</sup>—this area is characterized by more critical issues and less presence of civic activism. By crossing the perspectives of the students involved—from different backgrounds—design, urban planning, architecture, and economics—and the knowledge produced during the interaction with local actors, nature-based solutions strategies were constructed. In particular, the student groups were stimulated to look for solutions to connect the city's adaptation to climate change with promoting social cohesion. In this sense, the area along the Adige River may represent strong potential for the nearest neighborhoods.

The three student groups then selected three different areas on the right bank of the Adige River and differing in historical development and socioeconomic composition of the population: a connection area along the river between the Arsenal, the San Zeno district, and the Navigatori district, with solid mobility issues; a place in the so-called "Orti di Spagna" in the San Zeno district, which has suffered a significant demographic and economic change in recent years; and finally, an area in the Saval neighborhood, characterized by large portions of land designated for community services—which now appear as unused and/or lightly equipped through paving that is difficult to maintain—and numerous public housing estates that accommodate a population with socioeconomic solid fragilities.

Subsequently, the Academy's workshop course aimed to identify design strategies and a plan of activities to intercept/support/encourage the activation of citizenship and especially young people—including through synergy with other projects present in the city and enhanced with the CLIM-ACT! project—through the co-construction of climate change adaptation devices, including from existing informal practices to be recognized and enhanced.

The cross-disciplinary production of knowledge promoted during the Academy was also stimulated by reflecting on the role of artistic practices in raising awareness of environmental issues. Some students also developed a photographic research project; the outcomes of this project gave rise to an exhibition of the site-specific installation "Let's Degrade in the City." This photo installation is based on a game of associations and dissonances, in which images of the environmental "degradation" encountered along the Adige River during the surveys relate to the graffiti on the wall of the Arsenal, where the Academy and the final exhibition of the projects took place.

The workshop's conclusion was characterized by a public presentation that prompted much reflection among the experts, project partners, and local administration representatives [Figure 4].

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<sup>40</sup> Liliana Padovani and Nico Cattapan, "Partecipazione e coinvolgimento dei cittadini nella progettazione e gestione del verde urbano," in *Spazi verdi da vivere il verde fa bene alla salute*, ed. M.R. Vittadini, D. Bolla and A. Barp, (Saonara: Il Prato. 2015), 257–83.



Figure 4| Public presentation of the projects and the photographic exhibition "Let's degrade in the city".

Credits: Stefania Marini.

## 7. Concluding Remarks and Open Issues for a Research Agenda.

In this contribution, a research and training practice related to the social engagement role of the University was 'followed' in a twofold manner. On the one hand, the involvement of Iuav University in a specific training activity carried out within a broader social activation project was described in detail. On the other hand, this activity was framed within the scientific debate through a literature review and a review of good practices and innovative actions to focus on the peculiarities of this specific case. These research activities allowed to develop some reflections and to raise some questions for a research agenda.

First, concerning the micro research/teaching experience within a larger social activation project, some strengths and critical issues emerge. The learning experience allowed students to experience an interactive and dialogical approach to planning, being dropped into a concrete interdisciplinary planning context oriented to promote place transformations by implementing low-cost NBS. Students and tutors were, therefore, able to challenge their knowledge in a potential factual context of action that is difficult to find within the rigid university curricula. The short temporality of the project and the episodic nature of this educational approach in the university context, however, have, on the one hand, contributed to disregarding some of the expectations of the project partners who would have wished to turn young students into activists with the possibility of engagement for the implementation phase of the projects; on the other hand, they have made it challenging to consolidate the collaboration between the university and local

associations. Within standard educational programs, this type of experience tends to be occasional: the short research/teaching experience, and the lack of continuity of action, within a context of limited resources—and of continuous competition for resources—have partially undermined the creation of activities with a strong impact and solid learning chains, which can have spillovers at the local level, or manifest themselves in other places as well, given the multi-locality induced by contemporary living.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, such short-term experience is challenging to evaluate regarding student learning and its impact on the local context. These weaknesses point out how this planning educational practice should be more widely adopted in university programs to be more effective and add value in knowledge and multiple learnings for the students, the researchers, and the local actors involved.

Second, coming back to the territory where the public engagement role of the University is played, first of all, it is possible to highlight that the starting of this project is due to initial contacts with a network of local associations by a researcher from the Iuav University, who is an activist in the Verona context. As pointed out above, the University's social engagement context cannot be defined a priori. Still, it emerges through urban and territorial practices—not only academic—of its researchers. Even so, in this specific case, although the local University—University of Verona—does not deliver urban and regional studies courses and the city, where the CLIM-ACT! Project was held, is located in the same region where the IUAV University of Venice is located—the Veneto region—, it is not possible to easily frame this region as a whole in terms of “geographical proximity”. However the issues raised are certainly broader: the urban and territorial practices of researchers—as well as those of students and other university workers—are not limited to the local area. They are neither defined by administrative boundaries nor based on the geographies considered in ministerial documents for evaluating universities. The breadth of these «territories circulatoires»<sup>42</sup> concretely affects the possibility of activating social engagement initiatives. It gives us a particular perspective of the universities' territories.

If we assume a notion of city and territory as «the use that is made of it» and practice as «what people do»<sup>43</sup> by following the research practices—of researchers—beyond both the cities—and territories—in which the universities are located and the modes in which each specific university 'labels' its third mission activities, it is possible to develop some reflections on the university/city relationship from a different

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<sup>41</sup> Carla Tedesco, “Negli intestizi delle azioni innovative di rigenerazione urbana,” *Archivio di studi urbani e regionali*100, (2011): 82-98.

<sup>42</sup> Alain Tarrus, “Territoires circulatoires et espaces urbains : Différentiation des groupes migrants,” *Les Annales de la Recherche Urbaine* 59-60 (1993): 51-60, quoted in Pier Luigi Crosta, *Pratiche. Il territorio è «l'uso che se ne fa»* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2010), 119.

<sup>43</sup> (authors' translation) Pier Luigi Crosta, *Pratiche. Il territorio è «l'uso che se ne fa»* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2010), 7.

perspective. In other words, it is possible to shift the focus to the University's role concerning scientific dialogue with society, no longer taking it for granted that this is one confined to a predefined territorial context (where the university is located): if territories are not «a datum,» but are «constituted by the forms of social interaction, overlapping, but never coinciding, always interfering with each other»,<sup>44</sup> investigating what the territories of universities are becomes a research strategy.

From a different perspective, the peculiar interactive approach assumed by the CLIM-ACT! Project carried out through the involvement in a network of local actors can be considered within the 'micropolitics of planning' and how people interact even with objects to establish mutual understandings.<sup>45</sup>

Not only understanding the distinction between a site as «the place being planned,» a context as «the socio-political, cultural and economic conditions ... that shape the planning process» and the «place of practice» embodying actors as well as the materiality of the settings of the planning process<sup>46</sup> is essential for planning education, but this distinction also allows us to recognize that the places where researchers carry out social engagement activities and the connections thereof design geographies which deserve investigation as they constantly build up the territory of the University as a place of–planning education and research–practice.

Third. A further element for reflection concerns the strongly bottom-up nature of this initiative. The project promoter is neither a research institution nor a local authority but a non-profit association. Despite operating mainly through collaborations with other associations in proximity networks, it managed to involve both the municipal administration and the Iuav University of Venice, going beyond the narrow administrative boundaries of the municipal territory. By acting as a facilitator between schools, universities, and the third sector, the lead association encourages interaction and the exchange of knowledge: although the role of expert knowledge bearer on the subject cannot be recognized ex-ante, it succeeds, through the collaborative nature of the project, in creating a multi-actor network in which subjects capable of producing knowledge interact during the action. Consequently, the expertise the University brought to the project was as important as the capacity to interact with all partners, particularly with the lead partner, following procedures and tacit rules utterly different from those used within research networks. Researchers had to adapt their research routines to this new context.

Ultimately, the university and territory relationship is no longer between two given elements but becomes a relationship built in and through action. From this perspective, the experimentation that was activated

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<sup>44</sup> (authors' translation) *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Robert A. Beauregard, "Planning with Things," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 32 (2012) (2): 182–190.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

through the CLIM-ACT! Project is a circumscribed experience, but it makes it possible to question what we are talking about when we talk of both the social engagement of universities and universities' communities of reference.

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# New Forms of Relationships Between the University and the City: Padua, the UnicityLab Project, and the Idea of an Urban Center

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## 1. Exploring a Medium-Sized City with a Large University.

The Italian medium-sized town of Padua, in the Veneto region, represents one of the most emblematic examples of an urban context, in which the presence of the University is crucial, since it assumes a leading role in the creation of an identifying image of the city, underlying the influence of the institution in the development of the economy, as well as in the implementation of the transportation's facilities, involving also the social relations among the different populations that share the same urban space. Although the social and economic reality of the city is partly balanced by the presence of other productive activities and institutions besides the University, in recent years the academic organization has been growing a lot, gaining relevance both in terms of students enrolled, researchers involved, staff, and functions performed (beyond the traditional activities of teaching and researching), and also in terms of a conjunctural downsizing of other productive sectors that, in the recent past, had significantly affected the city's growth and its spatial organization.

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In short, the University today determines the overall functioning of the town.

However, with some surprise, during the researches performed within the UnicityLab project, what we have discovered is that, beyond the 800-year history of the University in the city, the reality of the institution and the urban condition of the student population, as well as of all the personnel who in the University and with the University work, is, on the whole, very little explored. Most of the inferences between the two spheres are still unknown or not considered, almost absent is any reference to them in major programmatic or planning documents, either by the University institution or by the local authority.

Just to give an initial idea of the size of the two contexts in comparison, we can point to some data: despite the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, that have profoundly challenged the University – in its structures, its functioning and also in its social role – in the a.y. 2020-2021 the University of Padua (considered a large University in the Italian rankings), had registered the enrollment of 69,240 students, with an increase of 6.4% over the previous academic year.<sup>2</sup> In addition to students, the University population currently consists of 2,369 faculty members and researchers, 4,773 doctoral students, fellows and residents, and 2,480 members of the technical-administrative staff. This large and diverse amount of people insists every day on a medium-sized city like Padua, which has a resident population of 208,881 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> These data alone should be enough to indicate the weight of the University over the city, prompting a deep reflection on the implications of this situation. However, not only the 2019 Urban Mobility Plan (PUMS)<sup>4</sup> did not pay specific attention to mobility determined by the presence of the University, but also in the more recent urban planning tool adopted by the Municipality in April 2021, the presence and the possible role of the academic institution in the urban growth processes is not even mentioned, except in a very general chapter dedicated to innovation, research and development, and much less does the document outline possible locations of new University services and facilities or strategic lines for a redesign of the already existing University locations, despite the fact that the “urgency of new spaces” for students in the city has long been discussed.

Thus, as absurd as it may sound, according to the urban policies of the city, the University appears to be neither a problematic factor nor a strategic element of development; the topic is not thematized at all and the relationship between the two institutions appears to be formalized

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<sup>2</sup> Worth to note that 9.7% of the enrolled students were of foreign origin (Università di Padova, Ufficio statistico, 2022 <https://www.unipd.it/dati-statistici-immatricolati>).

<sup>3</sup> Comune di Padova, Ufficio Statistico, <https://www.padovanet.it/informazione/la-popolazione-padova>

<sup>4</sup> Comune di Padova, *Piano Urbano della Mobilità Sostenibile*, 2019 <https://www.padovanet.it/informazione/piano-urbano-della-mobilit%C3%A0-sostenibile-pums-di-padova>

and consolidated only at the the cultural level, where various collaborations are ongoing for a long time, while it is completely absent in other fields, showing a complete lack of a common vision for the urban future of the city.

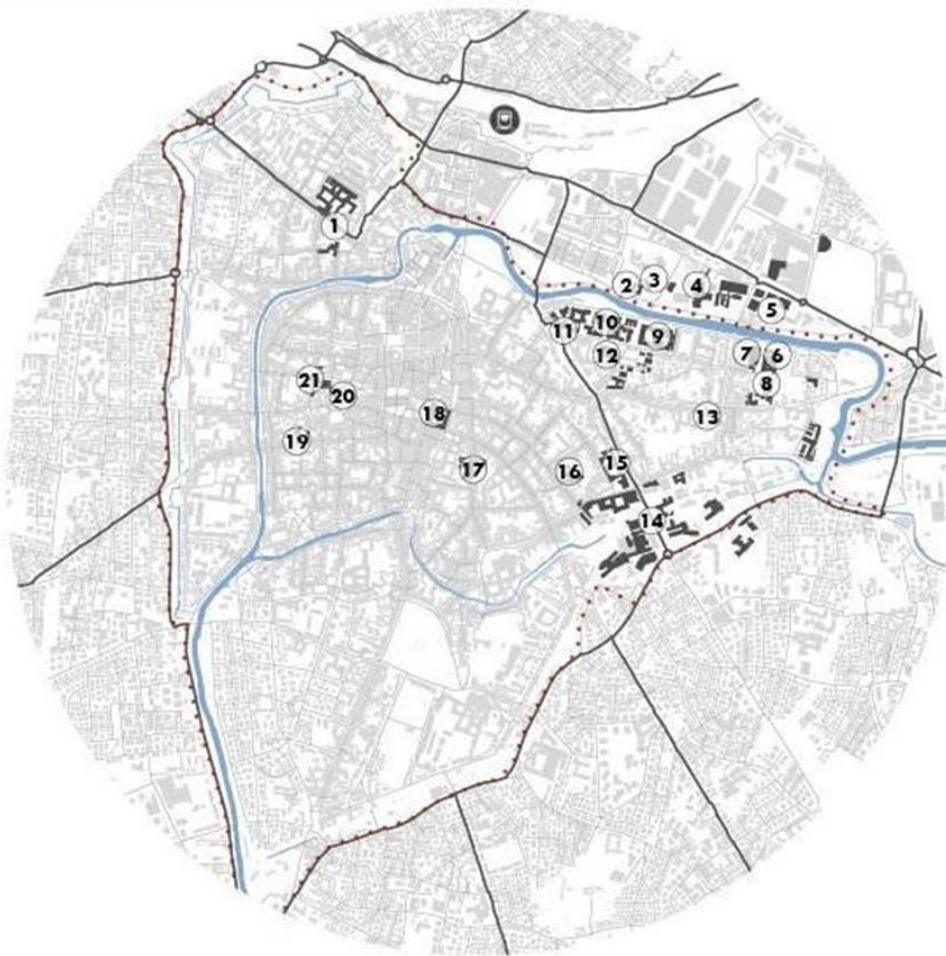
## 2. A Territorial Campus.

If we look at the historical distribution of the University's activities in the city map, we can gather some very useful elements, in order to recognize some specific features of Padua's urban layout. However, at the same time, this intersection results in a number of non-irrelevant and sometimes problematic issues. Starting from its foundation (1222) to the present, the University of Padua has established itself in a specific part of the city: around the Bo Palace (the first ancient site of the institution) and towards the Botanical Garden. It was not until the end of the XIX Century that the first expansion of the University was planned within the XVI Century walls, in the surroundings of the Piovego river, filling an area that had hitherto remained uninhabited.<sup>5</sup> The expansion was then strengthened by the Hospital hub (*Ospedale Giustiniano*),<sup>6</sup> which from the original core established in 1764 abutting the historical city center of the town, now occupies an area of almost 44.479 acres with exclusive functional specialization [Figure 1]. In the next few years the hospital hub is scheduled to move from the center to the eastern outskirts of the city, where construction will open soon on an area of nearly 126,024 acres, and at the moment there is a huge knowledge gap about the future of this area from both an urban planning and road system perspective, since the complementary services and facilities built or gradually installed in buildings and structures undergoing regeneration, essentially follow the same settlement logic expressed so far, namely, of no dialogue between the University and the city [Figure 2].

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<sup>5</sup>Pietro Del Negro, et al., *L'Università di Padova nei secoli: (1222-1600): documenti di storia dell'Ateneo*. (Treviso, Antilia, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> *Il Giustiniano: il nuovo Ospedale degli infermi di Padova*. Azienda Ospedaliera, 1998.



## DIPARTIMENTI E SEDI UNIVERSITARIE

### LEGENDA

■ Edifici universitari

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| ① Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari                | ⑧ Dipartimento di Ingegneria dell'Informazione          | ⑮ Dipartimento di Medicina Molecolare                                     |
| ② Dipartimento di Matematica "Tullio Levi-Civita"              | ⑨ Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, Edile e Ambientale | ⑯ Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche                                     |
| ③ Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche e Aziendali "Marco Fanno" | ⑩ Dipartimento di Scienze del Farmaco                   | ⑰ Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche, Giuridiche e studi internazionali    |
| ④ Dipartimento di Biologia e Scienze Biomediche                | ⑪ Dipartimento di Scienze Chimiche                      | ⑱ Scuola di Giurisprudenza  |
| ⑤ Dipartimento di Psicologia                                   | ⑫ Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia                   | ⑲ Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell'Antichità          |
| ⑥ Dipartimento di Ingegneria Industriale                       | ⑬ Dipartimento di Neuroscienze                          | ⑳ Dipartimento di Filosofia, sociologia, pedagogia e psicologia applicata |
| ⑦ Dipartimento di Geoscienze                                   | ⑭ Dipartimento di Medicina                              | ㉑ Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali   |

Figure 1| Distribution of Unipd sites in the urban area.

Credits: Michelangelo Savino, Patrizia Messina, Lorenza Perini for UnicityLab.



## SERVIZI PER GLI STUDENTI

### LEGENDA

-  Ufficio Carriere Studenti
-  Biblioteche
-  Mensa
-  Residenza universitaria
-  Aule studio



L'Università mette a disposizione di studentesse e studenti e di tutto il personale, un vastissimo patrimonio bibliografico e informativo reso accessibile dalle biblioteche e dalla Biblioteca digitale che costituiscono il Sistema Bibliotecario di Ateneo.



La ristorazione universitaria a Padova - RistorESU - ogni anno, attraverso 3 ristoranti e 16 strutture convenzionate dislocate sull'intero territorio regionale, garantisce circa 1.500.000 pasti, rivolgendosi a tutta la popolazione studentesca dell'Università di Padova.



Alla residenzialità degli studenti fuori sede provvede l'Esu, l'Azienda regionale per il diritto allo studio universitario: in 14 residenze sono più di 1600 i posti letto a disposizione, 230 dei quali riservati a studenti Erasmus, a cui se ne aggiungono altri 900 offerti in convenzione con istituti privati senza finalità di lucro.



Le aule sono ambienti indispensabili per la vita quotidiana dell'Ateneo. Sono a disposizione di studentesse e studenti aule studio di diversa capienza e dotate, quasi tutte, di rete wifi; ma anche sale di consultazione e aule informatiche dislocate nei punti strategici della città.

Figure 2| Distribution of the Unipd services and facilities in the urban area.  
Credits: Michelangelo Savino, Patrizia Messina, Lorenza Perini for UnicityLab.

In this scenario, the processes affecting the city due to the growth of the University seem to follow more or less these three paths:

- the strengthening of a central core (the historic buildings of Bo and Liviano, the administrative hub of Palazzo Storione);
- the gradual occupation of various locations in historic as well as in new buildings throughout the downtown area;

- The expansion beyond the sixteenth century city walls and along the Piovego river in the northeast part of the town, suggesting the intention to create a “University citadel,” with the implementation of new facilities, the redevelopment of some warehouses located on the site of the “Padova Hall” (*La Fiera*) in the eastern outskirts of the city, and the construction of brand new buildings on vacant land.

At the same time, there are also other operations – already established and ongoing – to relocate the University to peripheral areas: for example the Pediatric Research Institute “Città della Speranza” established in the Industrial Zone of Padua (ZIP), or the Environmental Engineering Centre in the nearby neighborhood of Voltabarozzo, or, again, the headquarters of the School of Veterinary and Agricultural Medicine (“Agripolis”) in the municipality of Legnaro, six miles away from Padua where the National Institute of Nuclear Physics (INFN) and the National Laboratories Research (CNR) are located as well.

This scenario clearly outlines a typically Italian structure of a “widespread campus”,<sup>7</sup> a definition that underlines a situation of “ordinary disorder,” which has little to do with the strategic creation of an organic University system and in which problems are exacerbated both inside the enclosure and outside the enclosure.<sup>8</sup> While the “inside” (the University) continues to suffer from a general insufficiency and inadequacy of spaces, the city “outside” (the surrounding city) increasingly manifests the discomfort produced by congestion of different activities, determined by functional destinations that are not always compatible, accessibility that has become more unease, and conflicts between residents and city users (not only students) on the agenda.

In recent years, the University has also started the expansion of its headquarters on Via Beato Pellegrino, with the redevelopment of the former Geriatric Hospital, creating within it the Department of Human Sciences. It has also acquired from the State Property Office the former “Piave Barracks” (located in the western part of the historical area of the city) for the realization of the new Social Sciences Department. As for other disused areas scattered throughout the city, there are ideas for possible acquisition and reuse by the University, but without an overall vision or strategic plan. It seems clear that we are dealing with a particularly complex system, the implications of which, both on the spatial structure and on the functioning of the city, are easy to guess. Meanwhile, an image of the University as a real estate developer has been clearly spread over the last few years.

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<sup>7</sup> Nicola Martinelli, *Spazi della conoscenza. Università, città e territori*. (Bari, Mario Adda Editore, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Patrizia Messina and Michelangelo Savino, “UnicityLab. Un’esperienza di ricerca a Padova per agire sulle relazioni tra Università e Città,” *Regional Studies and Local Development* 3, no. 3 (2022): 331-354. DOI: 10.14658/pupj-RSLD-2022-3-15.

### **3. The Knots of a Challenging relationship: Mobility, Housing, and Services.**

#### **3.1 Mobility.**

In relation to the scenario above mentioned, it is clear that many aspects of this intertwined structure of “city with University” and/or “University within a city,” have yet to be fully understood, in order to grasp the rich variety of inferences and the complexity of the issues involved. First, the issue needs to be analyzed from the point of view of the mobility: such a “diffuse” system certainly creates problems of accessibility and travel, in a city already plagued by an underutilized public transport system, unable to limit the use of private vehicles-both because of the high number of incoming commuters and city users, and because of the reduced capillarity that the urban structure allows, with few relevant road axes, and the existing ones already saturated and all converging towards the city centre, which is now configured as a hypertrophic historical core of activities and services.

Rail and bus stations, nearly coincidental access points for most students and workers, appear eccentric to the distribution of major University sites, facilities and laboratories, not infrequently creating widespread discomfort [Figure 3]. Where the remedy seems to be the private vehicle, beyond peak hour congestion, there is no shortage of difficulties in finding sufficient surface area for parking, in addition to the dramatic increase in Pm10 emissions (which makes Padua one of the most polluted cities in Italy). Pollution, congestion, difficult co-existence between cars, bicycles, and new means of electric locomotion (used mostly by students, less so by residents), insecurity, and inadequate routes have become a new emergency that neither the University's Mobility manager nor the Municipality's Mobility manager have thought to address jointly.





**SERVIZI PER GLI STUDENTI**

**LEGENDA**

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-  Aule studio





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-  Le aule sono ambienti indispensabili per la vita quotidiana dell'Ateneo. Sono a disposizione di studentesse e studenti aule studio di diversa capienza e dotate, quasi tutte, di rete wifi; ma anche sale di consultazione e aule informatiche dislocate nei punti strategici della città.

Figure 3| Pedestrian routes of the Unipd population within the city of Padua.  
Credits: Michelangelo Savino, Patrizia Messina, Lorenza Perini for UnicityLab.

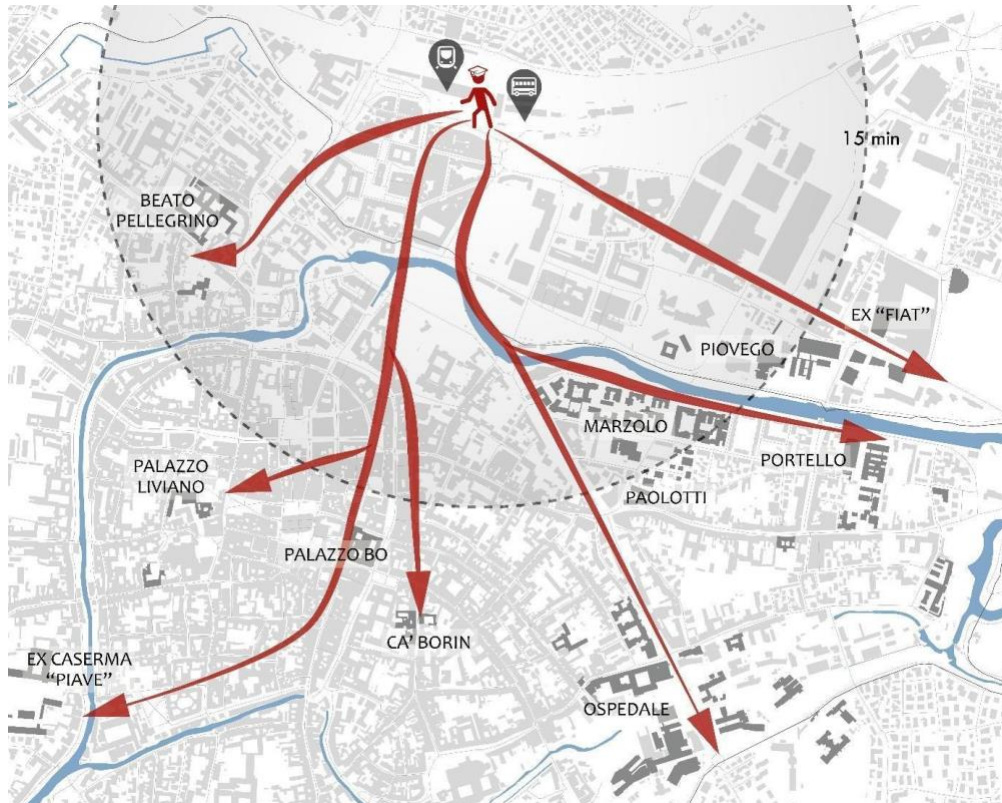


Figure 4| Students' main routes to Unipd sites.

Credits: Michelangelo Savino, Patrizia Messina, Lorenza Perini for UnicityLab.

### 3.2 Housing.

In this context, the student housing emergency, not perceived in the city before the strong student protests in the summer of 2022, denouncing the lack of housing facilities and the exorbitant rent costs, was a surprising discovery for the city's main institutions [Figure 4]. In fact, if a “student issue” had emerged in the past months and years, it was understood only in terms of public order and safety, imputed to the excessive student nightlife in the Portello University district, prompted by residents' protests, and thus addressed as a specific and local issue, so much so that the University did not feel involved in such a clash, intended as one of the many disputes between residents and municipality. The housing shortage, thus, emerged out of the blue, with the discovery of a very large number of students seeking an accommodation in town, which led to the identification, unambiguously and for the first time, of a problem that required specific attention [Figure 5]. On the other hand, the numbers of students enrolled in Padua seeking accommodation, according to some surveys, are fluctuating and unreliable, and if one looks at the data related to the commuters both short distances (5-40 miles and 15'-60' average travel distance) and long distances (40-90 miles and 61'-90' average travel

distance),<sup>9</sup> it is possible to note that in many cases, either because of the need to take some particular courses or due to a choice related to other factors, students residing in municipalities very close to Padua, choose to reside at least for a defined period in the city. More stable are the numbers of the off-campus students, coming from other regions (although, during the pre-Covid years, there had been a sharp decrease coinciding with the decline in enrollment in the Law and Medicine schools, now in strong recovery). In this scenario, even less known and not considered is the issue of the international student population, composed of those who are attracted by Erasmus flows and by foreign students regularly enrolled at Unipd. This population has increased in recent times due to some generous welcoming policies put into place by the University toward student refugees and toward those who have fled war scenarios. Beyond the difficulties of these types of students in finding affordable housing, what is important to note is that, in many cases, there have been strong forms of discrimination against them.<sup>10</sup>

As anticipated, it is surreal that in a University city like Padua, surveys of student housing conditions are non-existent and housing demand has never been investigated and the data available we owe them all to the local press.<sup>11</sup> Detailed surveys of the local housing market are also lacking,<sup>12</sup> even in light of the first phenomenon of alternative tourist accommodation, marked by the increase of B&B and tourist rentals in other University cities, where tourists turn out to be real competitors to students in the search for housing.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, with great difficulty, the real housing demand in the city is inferred (in its exclusive quantitative dimension), which also shows opacity in the data collection of both the regional office for the right to study (ESU) and the religious institutes, whose presence is significant in the city.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, among the causes of this difficulty in monitoring there is the nonavailability of data regarding the number of off-site students who decide to find accommodation outside Padua, in the nearby towns of Mestre or Vicenza for example (as would appear from some interviews). Beyond this scenario, what remains

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<sup>9</sup> An off-campus student is defined as a student residing in a municipality or locality more than 50 miles away from the university site or requiring travel time of more than 80 minutes, and who for this reason is staying on a paid basis with a regular contract at the university site for a period of not less than 10 months. A student residing in a municipality or locality more than 50 miles or more than 80 minutes away from the university site who does not take lodging on a paid basis is considered a commuter (<https://www.unipd.it/borse-studio-alloggi>).

<sup>10</sup> Dario Lucchesi and Vincenzo Romania, "L'Università di Padova tra internazionalizzazione e pandemia: l'impatto del Covid-19 sulla comunità studentesca internazionale," *Regional Studies and Local Development* 3 (2022): 89-116. DOI: 10.14658/pupj-RSLD-2022-3-5.

<sup>11</sup> "L'aumento di case per turisti "inguaia" single e studenti," *Padovaoggi*, August 7, 2023 <https://www.padovaoggi.it/economia/aumento-case-turisti-inguaia-single-studenti-7-agosto-2023.html>

<sup>12</sup> Roberto Antonietti and Elena Botton, "Flussi studenteschi e mercato immobiliare: il caso dell'Università di Padova," *Regional Studies and Local Development* 3, no. 3, (2022): 139-160.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Gainsforth, *Oltre il turismo. Esiste un turismo sostenibile?* (Roma, Eris edizioni, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Diocesi di Padova, <https://www.diocesipadova.it/uffici/pastorale-della-cultura-e-delluniversita/collegi-universitari/>

is the private market, which is largely definable as irregular: a system that probably, until recently, ensured adequate supply to meet demand, and which has now also entered a crisis.

The scarcity of real estate has undoubtedly been influenced by fluctuating market trends, but also by the increase in student demand for the reasons mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> The press, reporting some data from different sources, indicates for the month of August 2022 an average cost of a single room in Padua of at least 458 Euros, with an increase in value over the previous year of 42.2%, the highest in the country:<sup>16</sup> a situation that could depend on the one hand on the reduction in supply, but also on the speculative processes determined as a result of student demonstrations.



Figure 5| Unipd students' protest for housing (October 2022).  
Credits: Michelangelo Savino.

### 3.3 Services.

As regards to “services,” they should be understood in a broader sense. In recent years, in fact, many Italian universities have begun to equip themselves with a series of spaces and facilities intended not only for students, but for the whole academic population. In many cases, this has resulted in an intervention to improve comfort and reception facilities (i.e. study rooms, meeting and gathering places), as well as in the upgrading of existing conventional endowments (libraries, canteens, equipped refreshment areas, equipped open spaces, sports facilities). In some cases the improvements are related also to the improvement of working conditions (i.e. welfare measures for the academic staff). Many

<sup>15</sup> “Posti letto nelle città universitarie: effetto Covid sui prezzi, in discesa dopo anni di rialzi,” <https://www.immobiliare.it/info/ufficio-stampa/2021/posti-letto-nelle-citta-universitarie-effetto-covid-sui-prezzi-in-discesa-dopo-anni-di-rialzi-2197/>

<sup>16</sup> “Stangata sulle stanze per gli studenti: a Padova i rincari più alti d’Italia,” [https://corrieredelveneto.corriere.it/padova/cronaca/22\\_agosto\\_24/stangata-stanze-gli-studenti-padova-rincari-piu-alti-d-italia-d9c96a08-238c-11ed-a0c3-ae9646f5ccac.shtml](https://corrieredelveneto.corriere.it/padova/cronaca/22_agosto_24/stangata-stanze-gli-studenti-padova-rincari-piu-alti-d-italia-d9c96a08-238c-11ed-a0c3-ae9646f5ccac.shtml)

universities in Italy seem committed to increasing these kinds of spaces (both quantitatively with more places and more facilities, and qualitatively with greater design care, especially after the pandemic), or to providing new services (co-working places, fab-labs, incubators or innovation hubs) in order to change the traditional idea of “University space” and change the way in which University buildings are usually conceived.

However, this is not the case in Padua. In Padua this new trend has not yet been grasped, and the response-when there is one-is more conventional (increase in study rooms, extension of library access hours) and wholly insufficient, even for services that have long been part of the University offer (for example, the University Sports Centre-CUS) and that in Padua are little used because, like some student halls, they are located in peripheral areas poorly served by public transportation. Needs are thus met by resorting to the public services the city offers – not infrequently creating conditions of antagonism with residents – or to spaces with little or no facilities.

Within this framework, Padua (understood both as a municipal administration and as the governance of the University, and in some ways also as a community) – lagging far behind other cities that have tackled the problem (e.g., Bologna, Milan, Turin) – does not yet seem to have understood either the dimensions of the problem and the extent of the discomfort that affects the University population (because those seeking housing are not only students, but also faculty and researchers who come from other cities or countries), or how housing discomfort can be translated into a change in the choice of University to study or do research. Above all, it is not understood how the demands for housing and services of the University population, residents, or new incoming populations are intertwined and face the same difficulties requiring effective and strategic responses.

All of this confirms that the attractiveness of a University also depends on the quality of urban services offered by the “University city,” not only to the residents and the inhabitants, but also to all the city users in terms of services and facilities.

#### **4. The UnicityLab Project: a Starting Point.**

In this context, the Laboratory on University-City Relations of Padua (UnicityLab)<sup>17</sup> was launched in 2018, as a multidisciplinary observatory at the University of Padua attentive to urban development processes involving the University, but also as a proactive “service” to the University and the City, wanting to open also to the contributions of strategic actors of urban development, who are involved in the research path with the aim of working on the construction of a *cohesive University city*. The first

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<sup>17</sup> The website of the project: <https://www.unicitylab.eu/>

attempt, when six research departments participated in the activity, was primarily to solve the lack of information on the impact of the University on the city. In the following years, research developed different issues, enlightening the complicated inferences between the two realms. Today, UnicityLab is a permanent research hub that not only offers an understanding of the processes and relationships that are created between the city and the University, their impacts and thus the effects produced by mutual influences, but also constitutes a space for comparison and connection and co-design of joint policy interventions for the strategic development of Padua as a “University City.” A laboratory, therefore, at the service of the University-city, characterized by the interweaving of multi- and interdisciplinary knowledge, gathered through the contribution of researchers interested in participating in collaborative work beyond the usual departmental barriers. To this end, there is a clear need to obtain and process up-to-date data, quantitative and qualitative information, reflections, studies, and evaluations on the dynamics that are triggered by the presence of a large University in a rather small urban structure, as well as the need to develop evaluation and measurement tools useful for the promotion of social cohesion within the different spheres of interaction that are determined in such a particular context.

UnicityLab's research methodology, therefore, favors an open approach, strongly marked by applied research, appropriate to the University's “Third Mission,” in order to explore different fields of observation, fostering dialogue between different but complementary disciplines, unaccustomed to working together, as often happens in the Italian system. The goal is to arrive at the identification of actions and strategies that can ensure that the University can effectively assess the impacts (and perverse effects) of its interventions, enhancing the benefits not only for the academic community but also for the city, ensuring the degree of knowledge useful to activate policies and concerted actions involving public institutions, private actors, profit and nonprofit sectors, as well as resident citizens. UnicityLab would also increase academic awareness of being a strategic element of social and economic urban development and an affecting actor of urban changes, an influential player in the public policy process.

UnicityLab wants to pursue the fostering of shared responsibility among all the actors involved in this process, with the intention of acting as a generator of territorial social capital, understood as a resource of primary importance for an integrated and sustainable development of the territory; it wants to strive to strengthen a strategic alliance between the University and the city, starting from the awareness that the attractiveness of a University also depends on the quality of services, understood as “collective goods for development,” that “its” city is able to offer.

In this scenario, it becomes clear that the laboratory's objective is to produce not only “knowledge,” but also “relational goods,” making available important information and data to plan urban development policies, develop and share medium to long-term strategic actions, and generate shared urban development projects that hope to be networked with other Italian and international experiences. Therefore, UnicityLab has set out to become a real place of meeting between the University and the city, where to develop applied research, design and public policy proposals, but also an opportunity to co-design events and occasions for comparison, exchange, and collective participation for a common action to be shared with the city of Padua and other “University cities.” The need for a place where University impacts can freely and usefully be discussed about urban issues, where University contribution to social and economic growth of the city is taken into account properly is strongly evident and, beyond the complex articulation of “networked” research, it is important to emphasise that the intent of the Lab is not only to explore problematic issues in the local context but rather to promote a strand of research within the University, integrated and shared by a concretely multidisciplinary and interdepartmental community. Always stated and pursued, in fact, is the desire of the research group to contribute to the solution of certain urban problems; to support the formulation of more appropriate urban policies; to foster policy confrontation and inter-institutional cooperation; to improve and intensify the forms of relationship of institutions with citizens; and to be able, finally, to guarantee, above all, a contribution to the construction of strategic visions for the future of the city and its territories.

## **5. From the UnicityLab to the Urban Centre: a New Perspective for the Future.**

After these first three years of intense interdisciplinary research, based on the persuasion that a push toward a public policy formulation center is necessary, the action of UnicityLab, which aims to involve institutions in a support structure in the formulation of strategic lines and urban policies for shared interventions, turns out to be crucial. The idea – discussed also with some components of the Municipality board – is to establish a shared place for the up-to-date collection of data to be provided to a steering committee that would address the critical nodes of urban development in the University City of Padua, with the indispensable contribution of the University, but also of the main stakeholders who could constitute themselves, in this case, not as stakeholders (partisan stakeholders) but as community holders – i.e., stakeholders of the city community.

Such a space/place can be a valuable informative support on the processes taking place not only in Padua, but also in other University cities, as a strategic factor for policy orientation and for the

implementation of innovative projects, through an open and transparent confrontation, both for the different actors involved in the planning process and for the administration to be able to conceive scenarios that are more adherent to the local reality. For example, the role of the University in the development of the most innovative economic sectors (research, innovation, technology, knowledge-based, etc.) but also to identify the University students as a possible resource for the demographic growth of the residents (thanks to their rootedness in the city once they have completed their studies) and of greater dynamism of the local labour market.

In this scenario, the urban centre seems to be an important and necessary “tool” to foster the development of a system of virtuous relationships that will ensure social cohesion, economic, and cultural growth of the area with a perspective toward the internationalization, but also able to enhance the resources and values of the local community. Thus, the idea of an urban centre includes actions at both the city and the regional level, and in this second case, in particular, UnicityLab could be an important factor in favor of a “Regional University City” strategy, something that is completely lacking in the Veneto region.

In order to boost research in a wide variety of fields (of which health care is among the most heartfelt issues in the territory) and by pushing technological innovation, the City Region University could establish a federated and integrated academic system of universities with differentiated competencies, according to the system of local preferences, rather than an omnibus decentralization like the one that is present today and that has reintroduced, in its evolution, a “photocopy” educational system, in the sense that each University has tended to offer, in a progressive expansion, the same educational offerings that the large generalist universities do.

Various experiences inform about some similar places – actual and sometimes also virtual – in which public policies take shape trying to be progressively adequate to the social demand of urban communities, but also to the increasingly rapid changes of the city:

- organization where the focus is on the transformation processes of the city, but where the ‘narration’ of what happens is intended as an opportunity for a public debate on the objectives, on the impacts, but also on the possible changes to be introduced in the projects to encourage an effective improvement of living conditions in the city (such as Urban Lab in Turin);<sup>18</sup>
- multidisciplinary research centers but above all a meeting point for interactive communication on urban transformations that are strongly aimed at ‘building the future imaginary of the city’ with the explicit intention of ‘playing a driving role’ in relations between public

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<sup>18</sup> UrbanLab, Torino <https://urbanlabtorino.it/urban-lab/>.



administration, universities, firms and the ‘third sector’ and local communities (as the *Fondazione Innovazione Urbana* in Bologna);<sup>19</sup>

- a permanent working group aimed to encourage and promote events of confrontation, communication and collaboration between public institutions, managers, and citizens concerning the local development, to innovate and increase inclusion in region and city management and development practices, ensuring constant exchange of information and having incentives to collaboration (such as the Urban Digital Centre - Innovation Lab in Rovigo).<sup>20</sup>

Three experiences, in which the University is directly involved, in some cases also as promoter of these initiatives, show a very effective change in some public action aimed at city development. UnicityLab, as the next step and the upcoming goal, points out the activation of such an urban centre capable of sustaining knowledge-based public policies and university-supported public participation.

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<sup>19</sup> Fondazione Innovazione Urbana, Bologna:

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<sup>20</sup> Urban Digital Centre, Rovigo: <https://urbandigitalcenterrovigo.it/it/content/chi-siamo> .

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