

# KEEPING THE PUBLIC SPHERE ANCHORED TO SOCIAL CHANGES.

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# la vie est ailleurs...

- ▣ from the regulatory approach (land-use regulation) to the «soft» (Faludi, 2010) and «**synaptic**» (Scoppetta, 2012) dimension of planning theory;
- ▣ 3 (interrelated) research paths explored since the end of the '70s: **networking, governance, rescaling** ;
- ▣ European policies and visions : **learning dimension** as a basis for further implementation, physical and social aspects strictly inter-connected

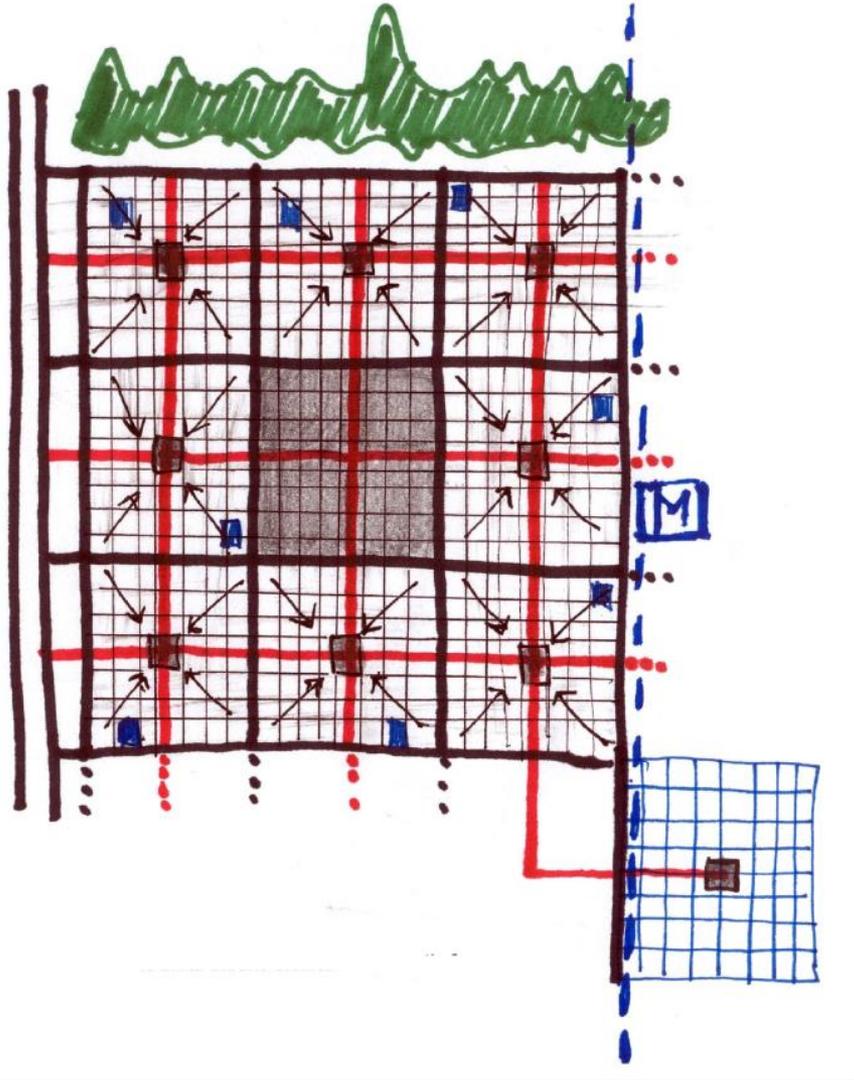
**but**

a “stellar” distance still remains between urban planning and social practices, formal projects and true life, “shadow” and official «production» (Lefebvre, 1974) of urban space, and the continue irreducible re-emerging of what formal planning tends to exclude (de Certeau, 1980).

# a strong resistance...

- ▣ difficulties in abandoning a (also professional) **“mythical” role of planner** by making space for further social actors;
- ▣ planners (**and academic research**) too often «intricately **involved** in framing and re-framing **property markets**» (Adams & Tiesdell, 2010) ;
- ▣ bureaucratic and sectoralised **administrative context** (too often collusive or, at least, concentrated in preserving its fragment of corporative power);
- ▣ each administrative step can correspond to a «**dis-regulation**» (Donolo, 2001): a hypertrophic characteristic of formal system, used by particularist circles ;
- ▣ the latter strengthen their power of intermediation and the production of non-decisive regulations: preserving *ad infinitum* their power by multiplying the opportunities that **allow the mediators to mediate.**

# an (extreme) example ...



Final result of a 2-years Italian (**publicly funded**) academic research (carried out at the University of Roma Tre) aimed at individuating a “scientific” methodology for regenerating (already existing) urban deprived peripheries: a **1000 x 1000-meters “rational” grid** (whose origins are attributed also to “**the Etruscans**”), with a central place obviously located in the centre (**where, otherwise????**).

See:

[http://www.urbanisticatre.uniroma3.it/RICERCA/cerasoli\\_periferie\\_cittalia.pdf](http://www.urbanisticatre.uniroma3.it/RICERCA/cerasoli_periferie_cittalia.pdf)

# suspicious intentions...

- ▣ distrust towards the «suspicious intentions» (De Carlo, 1980) of **the rhetoric on civic engagement** in planning processes;
- ▣ the comforting recipe of **standardised and self-referential participatory “best practices”**: the first five – «manipulation», «therapy», «informing», «consultation», «placation» – of Arnstein’s (1969) «ladders of citizens participation»;
- ▣ «**system maintaining**» and «**system transforming**» (Chawla & Heft, 2002) approaches.
- ▣ the «collaborative rationality» (Innes & Booher, 2010) ends to support the structure of hegemonic power, as it supposes mainly cooperative interactive networks and tends to **deny the existence of conflict**.

# something happens in residual urban spaces...



- ▣ **urban voids** caused by structural changes: de-industrialisation and the emerging of the so called “new economy”;
- ▣ large remained unused urban containers caught between the complexity of decision-making and **speculative expectations**: resources diverted from cities and places of insecurity;
- ▣ repopulation of such **free-zones** by spontaneous, creative and often illegal and temporary actions reflecting the self-organising capacity of urban communities and their minorities.

# official vs. “shadow” planning



the network of re-appropriations on the left side of river Tiber in Rome, overlapped to the zoning of the masterplan

- in blue: the former industrial areas close to the river Tiber (in some cases restored and used by the Third University of Rome);
- on the right, in red: the “garden city” working-class neighbourhood of Garbatella (risks of gentrification);
- in yellow: the network of (more or less temporarily established) free-zones.

# compensating for deficiencies in public action?

- ▣ **new urban actors** generally excluded or undervalued by the traditional planning practices and urban policies,
- ▣ their presence may **enhance the general cultural diversity** of an urban area by introducing those uses that the existing urban form, property values, institutional regulations had previously precluded.



# cognitive capitalism...

- ▣ post-industrial “free zones” and “creative” activities as a driver of attractiveness of the city: the **Richard Florida's theory** (2002);
- ▣ **new role of urban cultural policies** in both consumption-oriented and production-oriented version;
- ▣ from flagship projects and city marketing to the “construction” of **mutations in the social behaviours and lifestyle** (Zukin, 1995): a new post-industrial identity (Cochrane, 2007);
- ▣ «culturalisation of entrepreneurialism» (Ribera-Fumaz, 2009) as part of the new «cognitive capitalism» (Moulier-Boutang, 2007), based on the «**convergence of economic and culture**» (Garcia, 2004);
- ▣ «goods and services whose consumer appeal is derived pre-eminently from the fact that they transmit **non-utilitarian aesthetic and semiotic signals**» (Scott, 2007);



the cultural  
dimension as  
**empowerment**  
(in the sense  
used by  
Friedman, 1987)  
or as an  
**“instrumental”**  
**goal????**

# shadow planning in the city

- creative *milieus* in those areas (and related to those themes) left unplanned: contested and “waiting” spaces in-between different projects and city ideas;
- a case of **post-fordist production** exploiting niches of amortised investments for accelerating their re-commodification and optimising their economic potential by cultivating new consumer groups????
- both creative actors and unused spaces as «the few remaining pools of untapped resources» (Colomb, 2012a), **new goldfields of symbolic capital** fitting well to neoliberal demands????
- parallels between creative re-appropriation and **earlier waves of gentrification**????
- «entrepreneurial self-starters» or «**role models for a neo-liberal society**» (Lange, 2007)????
- alternative informal creative activities to be framed within the neo-liberal shift from stable government-led urban service provision and regulation to **flexible governance** and increasing reliance on entrepreneurial private investments????

# tolerance vs. revanchist urbanism?

- ▣ **examples from the British case: the New Labour's "zero tolerance" program:**
  - a «**politics of behaviour**» (Field, 2003): removing forms of «intimidation» and «tyranny» (Bannister *et al.*, 2006) in public spaces?
  - Crime and Disorder Act (1998), Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003), Respect Action Plan (2006): **not only crimes**, but a wider spectrum of incivilities and anti-social behaviours;
  - the "majority" as a specific target group: the «**respectable**» (Bannister *et al.*, 2006) consuming urban dwellers;
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Child Curfews, Parenting Orders: **control especially over the youth** ;
  - "quality" of public spaces: an extremely detailed design as «**interdictory architectures**» (MacLeod, 2002) of regenerated urban spaces;
  - expectations of specific behaviours (Atkinson, 2003): **non-consumption as a form of deviance?**
  - spreading of **surveillance and control techniques**, such as Closed Control Television systems .

# creativity's paradoxes

- acceptance of a **multiplicity** of compatible or conflicting outlooks, lifestyles, codes of behaviour and urban expressions is assumed as a prerequisite for creative innovation

but

planning **rigid** rules and “**zero tolerance**” for wild-side activities;

- free-zones activities take shape in a place (a zoning perimeter)

but

they are organised around autonomous **networks** of like-minded participants;

- creative activities/uses are intrinsically “**bottom-up**” (they cannot be created “top-down”);
- **temporarity** vs. long-term visions.



# some questions...

how should policies respond to bottom-up movements?

how should the free-zones – «micro-utopias under construction» (Paba, 2004), «spaces of insurgent citizenship» (Sandercock, 2003), «places of possibilities» (Lefebvre, 1968) – be facilitated in a way which **preserves their own dynamics and characteristics?**

# free-zones as re-activation devices

- ▣ “**colonisation**” as an earthquake, flooding space with new activities and communication codes, upsetting established local balances and activating energies and competencies that are able to re-organise the area (but also to arouse strong oppositions and turmoil) : sometimes **an "event" as a pioneer tactic**;
- ▣ rooting through a "graft": **sowing, flowering, and harvesting**;
- ▣ to be collected and cared for by a «**community of practices**» (Wenger, 1998);
- ▣ **networking** with other organisations and establishing larger coalitions.

**TIME IS NEEDED!!!**

## a more sensitive planning approach

- ▣ emerging **deliberative** planning theories: new forms of interaction and innovative not codified answers and solutions to urban (social) problems (i.e.: “rational” grids);
- ▣ city not only intended in a physical (material) sense, but also as a complex plot of **inter-subjective emotional inter-relations** which involves places;
- ▣ allowing the construction of a local (not global) «**actionable knowledge**» (Argyris, 1996) enlarging the objectives of planning to the **production of social capital**:
- ▣ **a subtle and contaminative path, which is difficult to lead within a model.**

# creatively managing free-zones

- ▣ a «**visionary leadership**» (Sandercock, 2003) for overcoming traditional and codified procedures and practices: time factor, risks in terms of political consensus,;
- ▣ from an only “material” renewal of spaces to a broader meaning of **regeneration as empowerment**;
- ▣ **ambiguities** connected to «processes of construction of images» (Scoppetta, 2006; 2009);
- ▣ risks related to **gentrification**;
- ▣ **regeneration purposes** by the local institutions (traditional models of demolition/renovation of spaces for setting up traditional functions and/or conventional services) *vs.* the aspirations of the informally/illegally settled groups.

# co-evolution of people and places

- ▣ negotiation as an **inter-active space** within which mobilising additional skills and expertise;
- ▣ ideas for project not derived from pre-established patterns, but as innovative **outcome** of both the area and the long rooting process of new activities;
- ▣ managing models **deriving from the practical organisation and functioning of spaces**;
- ▣ introducing **temporary uses**;
- ▣ radical **shift in public administration**: greater inter-sectoral and integrated approach;
- ▣ the involvement of creative resources of the society **not as a strategy of conflict anticipating/mediating** or as an action aimed at building consensus in advance on institutional initiatives.

# re-connecting “shadow” to formal planning

- ▣ means considering citizens not as passive recipients of services but as **active agents**, with knowledge, experiences, skills and abilities that are no longer exclusively concentrated within the institutions;
- ▣ does not deal with the need of **subtracting urban spaces to irregular, anti-social and dangerous activities** according to a pervasive (presumed) “safety” demand (too often hiding **not explicit interests of specific groups**);
- ▣ deals with **the enlargement and re-conceptualisation of the public sphere** by intercepting the new and not always easily decipherable **social needs** (Amin & Thrift, 2005) that have added to the well-known traditional ones, which are (were) normally faced by conventional services;
- ▣ means **keeping the public sphere anchored to social changes** by abandoning the traditional (but no longer useful) logic based on the **old concept of “needs”** (which requires direct strategies) and rather privileging the opportunities for action, which refers to **indirect strategies** through which the new emerging needs may be intercepted.



THANK YOU VERY  
MUCH!