

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.¹ 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.²

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

¹ Davarian L. Baldwin, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower. How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2021).

² 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,³ but also proposal for updating the quality of the spaces for work, research, teaching such in the project of the RomeTechnopole.⁴ 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.

References

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³<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gSnLD22kxs>

<https://www.vivipolimi.polimi.it/#VIVIPOLIMI>

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⁴ <https://www.uniroma1.it/it/pagina/rome-technopole>.