



**POLITECNICO**  
MILANO 1863

DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA  
E STUDI URBANI  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
AND URBAN STUDIES

RIBA 2021 **Seminar** - 8 September 2022, 9:00-13:00

# Operational geographies

## International Case Studies



## **Draft Program**

**09:00** Introduction to the Seminar on the background of the RIBA project

*(Simonetta Arondi, Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani)*

**09:30** The planning strategies and urban implications of the technological change in the automotive companies of the US Mid-West

*(Mark Wilson, Michigan State University, Director of the PhD Program in Planning, Design and Construction)*

**10:00** The urbanization of green internationalism and the city-regional governance and planning: learnings and challenges from the 'industrial reshuffling' of Greater Seattle (and the comparison with other US cities)

*(Yonn Dierwechter, University of Washington, Urban Program)*

**10:30** Industrial policies, economic restructuring, and planning in Valladolid urban region

*(Juan Luis de las Rivas, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, Universidad de Valladolid)*

**11:00** Coffee Break

**11:15** Logistics and Urban Change of container ports in the Americas. A focus around the Panama Canal and in the Panama City

*(Martin Danyluk, University of Nottingham, School of Geography)*

**11:45** Urban design in complex projects of large scale development and densification. The spatial impact of high-speed train stations on small and medium-sized European cities and their contemporary design challenges. The Dutch and French case studies

*(Manuela Triggianese, Delft University of Technology, Department of Architecture, Section of History and Complexity)*

**12:15** The prospect of international network for funded research beyond the RIBA project

*(Stefano Di Vita, Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani)*

**12:45** Conclusion

*(Carlo Salone, Università di Torino, Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze del Territorio)*

## **The seminar is an activity of the RIBA Project 2021:**

### *Operational landscapes in Northern Italy. Mobile geographies, spatial strategies and dynamic maps of regional urbanization*

The RIBA Project 2021 is funded by the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU), Politecnico di Milano.

The DAStU Interdisciplinary Research Group:

- Simonetta Armondi: coordinator
- Fabrizia Berlingieri
- Matteo Bolocan Goldstein Bertrando Bonfantini
- Bertrando Bonfantini
- Stefano Di Vita
- Beatrice Galimberti, Giorgio Limonta: research collaboration
- Lucia La Giusa: web design

As external members from other universities

- Carlo Salone (University of Turin)
- Alberto Valz Gris (University of Turin)

## **Questions**

How are the territories of production, exchange and support of large concentrations and dispersions changing in regional urbanisation as a result of recent global crises? How do trace their geographies, spatial strategies, actors and powers emerging in a framework of accelerated planning and increasing complexity? How can we be content with an interpretation that tells us that cities, and regions, are losers or successful, metropolitan or remote if this reading stops at the 'flat' contiguity of administrative boundaries?

## **Themes**

It is from these questions that the research proposal moves, into a broader panorama of critical reflection that takes on the urban question as a matter of networks (Scott, 2001; Taylor, 2004), powers and scales (Hall, Pain, 2006; Brenner, 2019). In the context of planetarisation and regionalisation of the urban (Soja, 2000; Lefebvre, 2014; Brenner, 2014), the research initiates an exploration of certain territories and *topoi* (production platforms manufacturing, logistics platforms, combustion and energy production plants) of operational landscapes (Harvard University, GSD, 2015; Brenner, Katsikis, 2020) of Northern Italy. These are territories that are not typically 'urban' or even peripheral, specialised, infrastructure-dense and industrially intensive industrial point of view, with extensive material, operational and information links, with a precise 'service' character to the sustenance of the urban whose declinations, is all to be understood in our country. Concerning global value chains, the dynamics of manufacturing, logistics, and the energy cycle reveal the complexity of flows and spatialities of phenomena and policies that studies and plans confined to the municipal, provincial and regional scale, on the one hand, and 'dematerialised' at the national and European scale, on the other, cannot explain. Moreover, the recent and close global (and geopolitical) crises affect the dynamics underway for an already complex stratigraphy of networks/coalitions/assemblages of actors, powers and strategies, which write and rewrite the urbanisation of the territory at multiple scales.

It is not only the dimension of the urban that changes and make us change our perspective (Perulli, 2021), but it is above all the spatial granularity and transcalarity of socio-technical processes that

dismantle the local-global and urban-extra-urban dichotomies and many of the methodologies of analysis and intervention.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, which brings together the plan of policies, plans and spatial strategies with that of the transformations of regional urbanisation, statistics and its representability, the research proposes an update of graphic restitution, but also critical geographical readings critical in a context of profound socio-economic change (the economic and financial crisis, 2007-2012, the health emergency caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus) and political (the New Green Deal, 2019; the New European Bauhaus, 2020; the New Leipzig Charter and the Plan for the Recovery of Europe - European Commission, 2020a, 2020b; 2020c; the National Recovery and Resilience Plan - Italian Government, 2021).

Despite the health crisis, Italy has maintained second place in the European manufacturing ranking. An unexpected result that over time has become a garrison of international reputation and against which the composite regional urbanisation of Northern Italy represents a case study to be 'revisited'. If the one on the one hand, the country's northern regions are exposed to the risk of becoming a periphery with less added value the added value of northern European production systems, on the other hand, they are in a position to seize all the opportunities that the new framework of European industry and recovery programmes (Censis, 2020). Although the North presents itself as a dynamic and attractive territorial macro-region, analysing the EU-SPI index (index of social progress index of social progress constituted at the European level), one can also see some very strong points of weakness, on which it is need to be acted upon, particularly regarding the quality of the environment (European Commission, 2020d).

## Objectives

These considerations translate into three research objectives:

- (1) to develop an open repertoire of processual and dynamic maps of 'constructed' operational geographies, on a macro-regional scale (concerning sectors, dimensions, morphologies, connections with global networks and flows) and on an urban scale (related to specific transformation dynamics and spatial policies), through the identification of some territorial thematic focuses.
- (2) To experiment with a double register of critical-visual reading between policies and projects through attempts to the spatialisation of the explicit territorial agendas of institutional powers and actors, but also implicit powers and economic actors involved, and the impacts of choices for the theme of ecological transition (of productive activities and the built environment), recognising and verifying the spatial narratives and rhetoric of such responses.
- (3) Re-reading and updating critical reflection and interdisciplinary debate on the geographies of the most recent more recent operational landscapes through attempts at spatial figuration (extended insularities, remarkable fabrics composite corridors, conspicuous places); In this trajectory, the research considers Northern Italy, not as the territorial vessel, but as a starting point and a dynamic and open field of observation 'in the plural', which sees in operation – and tension – a complex articulation of operational landscapes made up of more or less connected nodes-platforms-corridors. A territory that expresses the socio-economic and spatial change underway, but also different forms of crisis and dispossession and the growing demand for the 'spatialisation' of political visions at different scales.