

12. Urban Regeneration: Policies and Effects

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Format: traditional (call for abstracts and individual presentations of around 15 minutes)

Over the last decades, many large-scale urban areas have been dismissed, thus losing their traditional functions. At the same time, urban growth has altered the classical center-periphery dichotomy by integrating semi-peripheral large-scale sites within the more central urban areas. Today railway areas, former industrial sites, barracks play a key role in neoliberal urban policies and city branding strategies: on the one hand, their regeneration is considered pivotal to the activation of “real estate markets in so-called underperforming areas” (Savini and Aalbers, 2015); on the other hand, due to the current phase of urban austerity, their conversion represents an important tool to generate massive revenues and increase local governments’ fiscal budgets.

Since the early 2000s, urban political economists have produced a wide range of accounts on large-scale regeneration projects (Swingedouw et al., 2002; Orueta and Fainstein, 2008; Kaika and Ruggiero, 2013; Guironnet and Halbert, 2014, Savini and Aalbers, 2015; Anselmi and Vicari Haddock, 2019). Analyses point to the tendency of public and private actors to treat large-scale areas as financial assets and, accordingly, question how this affects urban policy, power relationships, and urban governance. Nevertheless, the regeneration of large-scale sites is a very complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It follows different trajectories depending on a set of structural and local constraints that, altogether, define the city’s attractiveness to financial capital. It moreover comprises not only property-led mixed-used flagship projects (e.g. King’s Cross in London or Porta Nuova in Milan) but also experiences of housing-led developments (e.g. Tivoli Green City in Brussels, both the Harbour and former rail land in Copenhagen) and temporary regeneration projects (e.g. Les Grands Voisins in Paris, Ex Dogana in Rome, DumBo in Bologna). Inspired by Henry Lefebvre’s writings, with this session we want to critically engage with state and market-led urban regeneration policies in European cities, in order to analyse processes and consequences of state and market-led restructuring of cities. Thus, the session intends to challenge the rhetorical description of these experiences as socially inclusive, innovative and sustainable. We welcome original empirical papers, from all disciplines working in the interdisciplinary field of urban studies, focusing on:

- The contradictions arising from neoliberal urban regeneration policies, namely related to the oppositions between the use value and the exchange value of housing;

- The – political and financial – logics driving urban regeneration experiences, the actors involved and resources mobilised;
- The regulation of urban regeneration;
- The relationships between such practices and the political and economic agendas of cities;
- The socio-spatial impacts of urban regeneration policies as a consequence of processes of commodification and displacement.

References

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