

Politecnico di Milano  
School of Architecture, Urban Planning, Construction Engineering AUIC  
Urban planning and Policy Design

## URBAN PLANS STUDIO - 099701

Academic year 2016 – 2017  
First semester

## URBAN PLANNING – 099702

8CFU

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### Syllabus of the course

The aim of the course is to learn urban planning theories and techniques, and the focus of the course are recent and most contemporary urban transformations in Italy and in the western world (Europe and US).

Urban transformations became, since decades, a way of reinterpreting the existing cities, focusing on the unique value of living within the city and its boundaries. In recent years, after a first wave of changes that followed the end of extensive industrialization in western world cities, and not mentioning the early attempts to re invent cities through urban renewal programs (and simultaneously not considering how they failed in many cases), urban transformations became one of the tools that urban planning has to re invent cities. By themselves, they reinterpret the concept of scale, they create a different balance between interior and exterior of urbanized areas and they become new occasions of 'urbanity' even where relations and distances are not at an urban scale.

But during recent years, cities have changed, erasing differences and barriers between the 'inside' and the 'outside', expanding the compactness of traditional centers towards more sprawled regions. Above all, a strong, recognizable shift from being part of a city to acting within a region occurred.

The most interesting aspect of recent transformations is just this: they try to add 'urbanity' to places with different speeds, not necessarily compact or concentrated, not contiguous to other places, not historically characterized by compactness and urbanity. Many transformations are still in the cities centers, maybe because some areas missed the occasion of transformation's first generation, but the majority is occurring in other places, not close to the city center, and able to re invent the

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relations within urban regions. These transformations are creating episodes of urbanity all around the regions, re connecting disconnected areas, presenting themselves as points to be reached by major transportation facilities and showing their ability to create urban atmosphere.

The new urban feeling, the invention of a model where being 'urban' is cooler than before, the western culture of young, hipster, cultured and well-dressed men and women find a perfect place in recent and contemporary transformations: *urbanity*, *centrality*, *connectivity* and *sustainability* are four of the paradigms that transformations bring with them and on which the course will focus on.

Transformations occur every time there is an under used area or a use that should/want to be changed. They used to be long term, in decision-taking and constructions, due to the size that former industrial areas had, but they tend to be faster, smaller and more oriented in changing some places of the metropolitan area being able to insert, at a metropolitan level, a new presence. The speed of urban transformations and the size of the areas involved has shifted from large, very central areas to smaller, sometimes not necessarily central areas able to infuse urban life to more suburban places.

Urban planning tools, such as metropolitan plans or regional planning agendas focus a lot on transformations. These plans see in transformations a good way of investing strategically, driving real estate market and creating hot spots of changes in the metro areas. Around them, smaller processes of gentrification may occur (helping in many cases the retrofitting of many suburbs) and above all, in the smartest metropolitan areas, the distribution of uses and zones and the connectivity through urban transportation networks change.

Focusing on urban transformation will give the opportunity to understand some key concepts of contemporary, western world urban planning, and working specifically on one of them will allow to learn techniques and tools of up-to-date practice in urban planning.

The course will investigate on some concept in urban planning, studying them under a new light. Large metropolis will give the chance to study how the relations between city, neighborhoods and suburbs have shifted including a more complex idea of *region*. The change of relations and scale will give the chance to learn how transport policies have changed, considering urban networks at a larger, more regional scale and opening the division between urban, suburban and metropolitan networks to a more integrated approach and more flexible use of every network. The specific design that urban transformations seem to have will give the chance to understand how new areas have been composed by different uses and functions, and how they combined open spaces with built up ones. Green areas, parks and open lands will be seen as pieces of larger networks, with recreational and environmental uses. Again, and above all, the arena that surrounds these projects is tremendously complex and articulated. Citizens, stake holders, environmentalists, developers and policy/decisions makers compose all together a narrow pool, where each party decision collides with other ones. The result of the project, and the result of the physical transformation of an area is a specific balance of all different

interests. Or, sometimes, a lack of balance and just the result of stronger powers against weaker ones.

The course strongly believes in the importance of *plan*, as the smartest way to manage all the issues and interests and preview the effect and the impact of transformations. It believes in the importance of *master plan* as a way to test rules and rights, share the vision and build consensus and foster a strong, visional and physical sense of belonging to the proposed changes. But it shows how plan and master plan conceptual frames need to be expanded, widening the approach to urban planning and investigating on the role of policies, geography, social sciences and economy.

Travelling around European most recent transformations and reading the most interesting processes of regional strategic planning together with the deep analysis of the physical changes that urban transformations brought to cities, students will work practically on a transformation area located in Milano regional, urban area. They will put into practice the theories learnt attending classes and they will find the best scenario to plan the transformation of the area from three different points of view.

Reinventing the different roles of developers, or as citizens or as decision makers, students will compose the difficult arena of decisions and interests, they will be required to act as one of these three groups, developing a project able to defend and foster their specific set of interests. Every group should develop one specific project aimed at planning a new destiny for the assigned area, and every group should show, with the project, how its specific set of interests is defended by the project. The different sections of the course will help students learning different theories and using different techniques moving through the development of the project.

The course aims at giving to students a broad variety of ideas and concept, but it focuses on a specific set of theories and a specific way to urban planning. As course taught at Polytechnic of Milano, School of Architecture, the course shows how urban planning is studied and theorized at this school. Upon the shoulder of Italian rationalism, with the teachings of some fathers of urban planning, after the long dispute between plans and projects and having understood how structure and strategy should compose in a good balance every plan, *the teaching of Marco Facchinetti is focused on showing how Milan's school balances the European way to urban planning, above all focusing on transformations, with an eye open to quality, design, urban composition, size of the cities and quality of life within them.* It is not just a matter of mixing good techniques: it is a matter of understanding that every place is unique, and people who will live there should consider it as the best place in the world. Taking inspiration from specific moments in Italian planning (the idea of neighborhood as a social way of combining different levels of society and as urban typology between urban and suburban, the mix of uses every block has been called to host), considering many missing things that urban areas still show compared to others around Europe, students will learn Milan school approach to urban planning

and techniques, with eyes open towards European trends and western world practices.

The course is integrated by a second course, held by Marika Fior, about urban design. Urban design is the discipline between planning and architecture; it gives three – dimensional physical form to policies described in a comprehensive plan. It focuses on design of the public realm, which is created by both public spaces and the buildings that define them. Urban design views these spaces holistically and is concerned with bringing together the different disciplines responsible for the components of cities into a unified vision.

Compared to comprehensive plans, urban design plans generally have a short horizon and are typically area of project specific.

Students will learn key elements of urban design, including the plan itself, the preparation of design guidelines for buildings, the design of the public realm (the open spaces, streets, sidewalks, and plazas between and around buildings) and the public interest issues of buildings. These include massing, placement, and sun, shadows and wind issues.

At the end of the Urban Plans Studio workshop/course, students should learn at least three things:

- the strong tradition of planning that AUIC School brings within its history. A very proud history, that dates back from the Italian Rationalism and it is still the most important active and cultural framework for planners in Italy. Plans and policies are now seen under a different perspective, as tools of a same process of planning, where plans give vision and structure and policies give management and strategies. There are different schools and different approaches but all together they belong to the Milan specific way of interpreting and considering urban planning;
- the most successful techniques to achieve a winning masterplan, within a contemporary, post suburban strategic framework;
- a relevant feeling with good design and the ability to create urban, contemporary and livable urban places all around the region.

The course is organized into four different sections, plus an introductory lesson and a final evaluations' day.

The first section, *the **shape** of urban transformations*, focuses on the different ways in which urban transformations have been built. From the 1980's first transformations up to today's most recent and contemporary project, this section will understand how urban regeneration can change the aspect and the image of the city. A very relevant part of this section will be dedicated to urban design and how urban design techniques can help the success of a urban project.

The second section, *the **role** of urban transformations*, aims at understanding how urban regeneration processes are no longer a city's affair but they became since decades a regional aspect of the growing relations between city and regions. The course will understand how to consider a urban project in terms of its position, its role, its being or not being strategic in the metropolitan assets. Understanding the

position and the role of a transformation means being able to decide its used, its weight and its balance between public and private

The third section, ***Uses and functions of urban transformations***, focuses on the way in which a master plan for a urban transformation should be done. According to Marco Facchinetti planning method and respecting Milan's School tradition and history, students will learn how to compose and design a master plan, and how using it as an implementation tool. Master plan is considered by this approach as the main urban planning device to manage, design, create urban transformations.

The fourth section, ***Governance and management of urban transformations***, aims at understanding how management could influence on masterplans layout and organization. The first and most important thing behind a planned transformation is that it should be realized and built up. Governance and policies can help the development of the project, the control over its impacts, the building of the consensus needed and all the implementation policies to help the project survive the time.

The Urban Plans Studio is part of the research and exchange's program **UR Urbanizing the Region**, between Politecnico di Milano AUIC and York University at Toronto, ON (Canada), State University of New York at Albany, NY (USA) and Rice University at Houston, TX (USA), promoted by Marco Facchinetti. Master students will be eligible at participating to some of the activities proposed by the UR program.

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## Students' Trip

Students' trip will be organized as soon as courses calendar stabilizes during the first weeks of the semester. Tentative date could be on **November, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>**. Proposed destination is **AMSTERDAM**. Every student will take care of reaching Amsterdam as preferred and every student will take self-care of accommodation. Destination will be discussed with students and changed if different options come out. During the visit, Marco Facchinetti lectures will help students reading the most recent urban and regional changes, meetings with city and regional planners could be organized and finally a *fast-track workshop* will be held, to help students getting some initial credits for the course.

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## Final Exam

**Final exam will be on January, 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017** and it will be a special, one-day workshop on a site redevelopment project in Toronto, ON (Canada). Students will develop a master plan on a specific site, after having studied and learnt all the techniques and expertise during the semester. Final master plan will be evaluated together with a printed copy of the master plan developed during the year, on the same day.

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## Books and references

*Marco Facchinetti*, **Masterplanning the adaptive city. The use of masterplans to create urban environments**. Editore: Pitagora Editrice. Anno edizione: 2011

Marco Facchinetti, *From Urban fringe to regional hub: re inventing Milano Porto di Mare*. LightningSource, UK Ltd, Milton Keynes, UK, 2016

Marco Facchinetti, *From City to Region. Transformations and the urbanization of the metropolis*. SilvanaEditoriale, Milano 2016

*Gabriele Pasqui, Balducci Alessandro, Valeria Fedeli*, **Strategic Planning for Contemporary Urban Regions: City of Cities: A Project for Milan (Urban and Regional Planning and Development Series)**, Editore: Ashgate, Anno edizione: 2012

*Willem Salet, Enrico Gualini*, **Framing Strategic Urban Projects: Learning from current experiences in European urban regions**. Editore: Routledge, Anno edizione: 2007

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## Workshop activities

Students should organize themselves into small teams (4 students each team). Teams will develop a project for the area of **NOVATE MILANESE**, on the northwestern fringe of the city of Milano.

The area is within the municipal boundaries of Novate Milanese, but it is on the south side of A4 highways and completely surrounded by the city of Milano. The area is very close to some of the most important and promising, strategic redevelopment areas of the region: Bovisa on the south, Expo on the west. At the same time, the area is flanked by A4 and Ferrovie Nord Milano (even if not directly accessible from the site) and, much more relevant, it is side by side the back of Quarto Oggiaro, one of the most problematic social housing complex of the city of Milano. Students should understand the role of the area and the importance of being “between” things, its strategic importance and its potentiality in re shaping already existing housing complex.

Every group should immediately consolidate the team. Four students each team is the perfect composition. Names and composition of the teams should be decided on the first week of October; changes are never a good thing, but they may happen during the year. Please, contact prof. Facchinetti as soon as changes occur.

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## Calendar of the course