

PRESENTATION OF PROJECT

Public-private arrangements and urban production: an area that needs to be (re)explored

The multiplication and diversification of relations between the public and private spheres make it necessary to identify the **individual and collective bases of action** of stakeholders involved in such arrangements without neglecting historical trajectories. On the one hand, we are witnessing the extension and even the creation of new urban resource markets in sectors as varied as mobilities, housing, public spaces and services, but also things like access to digital data or landscape amenities. On the other hand, tight budgetary restrictions and austerity combine with scarce public investment and the deployment of increasingly entrepreneurial strategies to unlock the value of public real estate and resources. As part of an **approach that focuses closely on material, architectural and urbanistic forms** produced by the wide range of these public/private arrangements, their effects on the production of urban forms need to be documented. To do this, we will tackle the question of the design and circulation of any models, bases for programming guidelines for urban planning projects and the influence of private stakeholders on this programming.

The deployment of public-private arrangements in urban production triggers **diverse reactions among the stakeholders concerned** – from distanced consent to wholehearted participation in building new markets via resistance and challenges – and merits discussion within the territorial and political context in which it takes place. In particular, we need to analyse its effects on collective action and organisations. Accommodation, consent and co-production arrangements are recasting power relationships, restructuring social and political hierarchies and building new substantiation registers and benchmarks. Far from being a standardised and unanimously accepted process, this restructuring is also helping to drive social and spatial inequalities that need to be brought up to date. In exchange, we need to analyse the mechanisms for consent and resistance to these situations of inequality that are facilitated by the shift in public policy priorities. The whole question of the practices and solutions that facilitate these public-private arrangements (legislative developments, use of contractualisation, digital models, etc.) will also provide a focus for group collective reflection.

However the unbridled commodification that neoliberalism-obsessed academia tends to focus on does not by any means subsume all of the actions and strategies of local authorities faced with these cuts in public funding. The spaces confronted with forms of degrowth and economic decline – and more generally “off-market” territories or those located in “failed” markets – also require **exploration of counter-examples of assumptions of generalised commodification of resources and urban production**. A critical perspective needs to be maintained concerning arguments over the neoliberalisation of urban policies, a transformation that by no means provides an explanation of all of the various dynamics affecting contemporary urban production and the associated systems of stakeholders. We can focus on the urban development strategies deployed by certain local authorities to tackle the shortcomings in conventional economic approaches. The idea of “global commons” currently brandished by multiple stakeholders and/or disciplines could also be harnessed as a framework for analysing these new strategies. Focusing attention on the future of certain parts of local urbanism plans dedicated to the public interest and “global commons” (such as “reserved parking spaces”) should make it possible to get some worthwhile diachronic perspective that does not limit our view to the apparent historical newness of these arrangements. In the same vein, longstanding reforms in Southern urban environments and the diverse forms of public service privatisation that we have witnessed in these countries over the past 40 years call for a change of perspective.

Bringing together specialists of “Southern” and “Northern” cities, the working group will seek to enhance our understanding of these processes by systematically comparing public-private arrangements in urban production in different contexts that have been affected by austerity policies to various different extents. The group brings together researchers who have conducted research in Europe (Italy, France, United Kingdom, Turkey), Africa (Benin, Nigeria, South Africa), the United States, India and China. It also includes researchers who focus on rapidly growing cities as well as on territories confronted by degrowth.

Consequently, the project aims to **analyse** the following themes *inter alia*:

- **urban illustrations of public sector reforms** (organisational and managerial changes, spatial aspects of austerity policies, etc.)
- **trends in urban capitalism** (digital transition and “platformization”, investment and divestment geography, etc.)
- **socio-spatial fragmentation forms and processes** triggered by these new arrangements
- **joint territorial construction processes** evolving with the introduction of new stakeholders and new approaches (delegation, experimentation, etc.), and under the impetus of a closer relationship with the future