

Learning the City :

Ten years after the Charter of Public Space

A virtual event at the Biennial of Public Space 2021

Date and Time: Friday 14 May 2021, 12:10 a.m. – 13:30 p.m.

Host: Dipartimento di Architettura, Università Roma Tre, Rome

Connection Link: to be provided by the host using Microsoft Teams software

Interpretation: simultaneous, from Italian into English and from English into Italian

Summary

Gli insediamenti urbani, che sono peraltro il luogo elettivo della maggioranza dell'umanità, vengono "insegnati" solo in alcuni corsi di studio universitario e prevalentemente sotto il profilo della progettazione e della pianificazione urbanistica. Il risultato è l'isolamento degli "esperti" e l'indifferenza di gran parte dei cittadini nei confronti del proprio ambiente di vita quotidiano. L'ironia è che la città, come recita la Carta dello Spazio Pubblico, ha come sua inimitabile virtù quella di favorire la socialità, l'incontro, la convivenza, la libertà e la democrazia. La volontà di "nuova scuola" scaturita dall'emergenza COVID e l'esigenza di crescere assieme come cittadini consapevoli e attivi suggeriscono l'introduzione, a partire dai primi livelli della scuola dell'obbligo, di una nuova disciplina: "Imparare la Città".

Urban settlements, despite being the elective living place of the planet's inhabitants, are "taught" only in some university curricula and mainly from the point of view of physical planning and design. The result is the isolation of "experts" and the indifference of most citizens to their everyday's living environments. The irony is that one inimitable virtue of the city, as the Charter of Public Space suggests, is encouraging social interaction, encounter, togetherness, freedom and democracy. The quest for "new schooling" emerged from the COVID emergency and the imperative of growing up together as aware and committed citizens suggest the introduction, starting from first-level education, of a new discipline: "Learning the City".

Background

This event draws its inspiration from the Biennial's Charter of Public Space (1), a document stating its main purpose as *servicing all those who believe in the city and in its extraordinary ability for hospitality, solidarity, conviviality and sharing; in its inimitable virtue in encouraging social interaction, encounter, togetherness, freedom and democracy; and in its calling for giving life to these values through public space.*

Over the years, the role and effectiveness of conventional urban planning and design have been undermined by the growing lack of communication between the planning and design profession and citizens, particularly the younger generations (2)(3). This gap undermines both the aspiration of planners and designers to achieve desired outcomes and the potential of young citizens to orient their mission. We therefore need a "new common language". Our project postulates that this new common language is not the vulgarization of existing planning and design paradigms, but rather the city itself and its spirit (Stadtgeist)(3). The foundation of this new language can be the rediscovery of the "four cities of wonder": the city as *magic of the ordinary*; the city as *miracle of co-existence*; the city as a *marvellous machine*; and the city as *hope for an ecological future*. The first two refer on one hand to the role of urban public space both in creating a new magical world made of ordinary built and natural components that we can explore, enjoy and magnify in our daily experience, and on the other to the *civitas's* capacity to enable in safety important aspects of the "right to the city"(4)(5), from the exercise of privacy in a collective setting to all forms of social interaction. The "City as a Marvellous Machine" is the city we take for granted and that not all have, the invisible place that provides for all of our basic daily necessities. Finally, the Fourth City of Wonder is the city as hope for our ecological future – the spatial, social and economic arrangement that, despite everything, has shown itself to be the most efficient and environmentally sustainable way to accommodate a rapidly growing humanity.

This positive outlook may help the youngest among us develop the appreciation and passion that can lead them one day to turn cities into the most successful answer to our social, existential and environmental predicaments.

Objectives

The event's main objective is to discuss and adopt a short statement outlining the actions to follow in developing a "Learning the City" plan of action, including the preparation of didactic material, competitions, experimental courses and proposals for making "The City" a subject of learning in the "new school" for primary and secondary education we all hope to help create after the Covid nightmare.

The English, Italian and Spanish versions of the draft statement are annexed below.

Preparatory Activities

The project has become one of the programmed activities of the 2021 Biennale since the beginning of its preparatory work. It has been initially developed by Pietro Garau and Marichela Sepe, both as a contribution to the 2021 Biennale's main theme, "Children and Public Space", and as an opportunity to revisit the Biennale's "Charter of Public Space" ten years after its inception in 2011 at the Naples World Urban Forum.

Early on, thanks to the contribution of Professor Borthagaray, the project received an important impulse through the mandate and activities of the International Association of Educating Cities, thus providing a global linking of the project's two key words – "cities" and "education". The Biennale will thus receive key inputs from the President of the Association appointed by the city of Barcelona, Maria Trüno – who will address the Biennale's opening session – and from Marina Casals Ramoneda, General Secretary of the Association, who will speak at the "Learning the City" Biennale event.

The project also needed to explore synergies between its "educating city" approach and barefoot initiatives conducted by design-profession academics engaged in neighbourhood public space improvement projects directly and explicitly involving children. Professor Fabiola Fratini, with her project "Oasi Verdi dalla scuola al quartiere", represents such a synergy and is therefore a welcome addition to the team. She will also hold a webinar of her own during the Biennale's Saturday afternoon webinar on the same subject.

Finally, we welcome the participation of Professor Michele Talia, current president of the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (INU). INU has been both the initial mentor and supporter of the Biennial of Public Space and a strong partner of UN-Habitat both in public-space research work such as the Global Public Space Toolkit – whose Spanish version will be presented at the Biennale – and in the preparations for the Habitat III UN Conference in Quito, Ecuador. Professor Talia has long expressed interest in making planning and design a more approachable field of endeavour and we are confident that INU will be a strong partner in the project's next steps.

The project has also profited greatly from a dialogue with university students, and has learned much from the comments and suggestions of such diverse academic communities as those in Naples, Rome, Buenos Aires and Cordoba.

Speakers

Prof. Andrés Borthagaray
Presidente Fundación Furban and Latin America Director,
Institut pour la ville en mouvement

Marina Canals Ramoneda
General Secretary, International Association of Educating Cities

Prof. Fabiola Fratini
Sapienza Università di Roma and project leader, "Oasi verdi dalla scuola al quartiere"

Pietro Garau, INU
Founding member, Associazione Biennale Spazio Pubblico APS

Prof. Marichela Sepe
Coordinator, INU Public Space Community; National research Council;
University Federico II, Naples

Prof. Michele Talia
President, Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (INU)

Format

The 90 minutes scheduled for the event will be divided in three sections. The first one (55 min) will consist of introductory statements. The second one (15 minutes) will allow for quick feedbacks from all the speakers. The third one (10 minutes) will be devoted to the conclusions and adoption of a consensus document.

The meeting will also collect comments from viewers in the “chat” mode.

Programme

12:10- 12:15 Introduction (P.Garau) (from the host station in Rome)
12:15 – 12:25 A. Borthagaray (from Buenos Aires)
12:25 -12:35 M. Casals Ramoneda (from Barcelona)
12:35 – 12:45 F.Fratini (from Rome)
12:45 – 12:55 M. Sepe (from Naples)
12:55 – 13:05 M. Talia (from Rome)
13:05 - 13:20 Round Table
13: 20 – 13:30 Conclusions and adoption of document (M.Sepe)

References

- (1) http://www.inu.it/wp-content/uploads/Inglese_CHARTER_OF_PUBLIC_SPACE.pdf
- (2) Garau, P, Sepe, M. “A scuola di città” (2021) in Moccia F.D., Sepe, M. a cura di *Benessere e salute delle città contemporanee* Inu Edizioni, Roma ISBN: 978-88-7603-2018-9
- (3) Garau. P. “Imparare la città”, Urbanistica Tre, 2021, <http://www.urbanisticatre.uniroma3.it/dipsu/?portfolio=imparare-la-citta>
- (4) Garau, P. “Stadtgeist: Stadtgeist o lo Spirito della Città: escapismo romantico o umanesimo urbano?” e Garau, P. “Stadtgeist or the Spirit of the City: Romantic Escapism or Urban Humanism?” in Planum Magazine, 2021, <http://www.planum.net/planum-magazine/themes-online/garau-stadgeist-or-the-spirit-of-the-city>
- (5) United Nations, *The New Urban Agenda*, <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>
- (6) International Association of Educating Cities, *Charter of educating Cities*, http://www.bcn.cat/edcities/aice/estatiques/angles/sec_charter.html
- (7) A bilingual introduction to “Imparare la Città / Learning the City”:

<http://www.biennalespaziopubblico.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Imparare-la-Citta%E2%80%99-Per-una-rinascita-dell%E2%80%99-urbanistica-nel-post-Covid.pdf>

ANNEX “Learning the City” – Draft Statement

- We, the participants in the “Learning the City” event held on May 14, 2021 during the concluding session of the VI Biennial of Public Space devoted to the theme “Children and Public Space”;
- Recognizing the importance the “New Urban Agenda” adopted by all states, including its principle of “The Right to the City”;
- Stressing the relevance of the Agenda 2030 target “By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities”;
- Mindful of the principles of the Charter of Public Space, including the recognition of the city’s “extraordinary ability for hospitality, solidarity, conviviality and sharing; its inimitable virtue in encouraging social interaction, encounter, togetherness, freedom and democracy; and its calling for giving life to these values through public space”;
- Convinced that the future of urban civilization also rests on the full awareness of the positive values of the city, especially on the part of younger generations;
- Equally convinced that this awareness can be nurtured by a better understanding of the disciplines and practices devoted to the improvement of spatial aspects of cities, and by the involvement of young citizens in projects aimed at improving public space;
- Keen to underline that among the city’s positive values recalled above from the Charter of Public Space are the City as the Magic of the Ordinary (*i.e. the sights and experiences to be found every day in a typical neighbourhood*), The City as a Miracle of Coexistence, (*the freedom to choose in safety between privacy and socialization*), the City as Wondrous Machine (*its ability to provide essential public spaces, utilities and services*) and the City as Ecological Hope (*by being the most effective spatial configuration in the efficient use of land and energy resources*);
- *Conscious* that these values are traceable to the work of eminent scholars from a wide range of disciplines and of many international organizations including UN-Habitat, INU, and the International Association of EducatingCities;

- *Determine* to continue working on the “Learning the City Project”, including by preparing study materials, engaging interested local administrations and promoting participatory planning and design processes involving children and young citizens, with the objective for the city and its positive values to become a field of experimental educational work and, ultimately, a universal educational goal with particular reference to formative-age school curricula.

“Imparare la Città” - Bozza di dichiarazione conclusiva

- I partecipanti all’evento “Imparare la Città” svoltosi il 14 Maggio 2021 nell’ambito della manifestazione conclusiva della VI Biennale dello Spazio Pubblico dedicata al tema “I bambini e lo spazio pubblico”;
- Consapevoli dell’importanza della “New Urban Agenda” adottata da tutti gli Stati, ivi compreso il suo principio del “Diritto alla Città”;
- Sottolineando la rilevanza del traguardo dell’Agenda 2030 di fornire , entro quell’anno, “accesso universale a spazi verdi e pubblici sicuri, inclusivi e accessibili, particolarmente per donne, bambini, anziani e persone con disabilità”;
- Consci dei principi della Carta dello Spazio Pubblico, ivi compreso il riconoscimento della straordinaria capacità della città “di accoglienza, solidarietà, convivialità e condivisione; nella sua inimitabile virtù nel favorire la socialità, l’incontro, la convivenza, la libertà e la democrazia; e nella sua vocazione ad esprimere e realizzare questi valori attraverso lo spazio pubblico.”;
- *Convinti* che il futuro della civiltà urbana dipenda dalla piena consapevolezza dei valori positivi della città, soprattutto da parte delle generazioni dei più giovani;
- *Convinti altresì* che questa consapevolezza possa essere alimentata da una migliore comprensione delle discipline e pratiche dedicate al miglioramento degli aspetti spaziali delle città, e dalla partecipazione di giovani cittadini in progetti finalizzati al miglioramento degli spazi pubblici;
- *Desiderosi* di sottolineare che tra questi valori positivi della città richiamati dalla Carta dello Spazio Pubblico figurano la città come “magia dell’ordinario” (*le tranquillità visive e sensoriali riscontrabili ogni giorno in un tipico quartiere*), la città come miracolo di convivenza (*la libertà di scegliere in sicurezza tra la privacy e la socializzazione*), la città come macchina meravigliosa (*la sua abilità nel fornire spazi, forniture e servizi pubblici essenziali*), la città come speranza ecologica (*con il suo essere la*

configurazione spaziale più efficace nell'uso efficiente del suolo e delle risorse energetiche);

- *Consci* che questi valori trovano riscontro nell'opera di eminenti studiosi di un vasto arco di discipline e di molte organizzazioni internazionali tra cui UN-Habitat, INU, e l'Associazione Internazionale delle Città Educatrici);
- *Decidiamo* di continuare a lavorare al progetto "Imparare la Città", ivi inclusa la preparazione di materiali di studio, il coinvolgimento di amministrazioni locali interessate e la promozione della pianificazione partecipata con bambini, bambine e giovani cittadini, con l'obiettivo che la città ed i suoi valori positivi diventino un campo di lavoro pedagogico sperimentale e nel lungo periodo un obiettivo educativo universale, con particolare riferimento ai curricula educativi delle scuole dell'età formativa.

Aprendiendo la ciudad / borrador de declaración final

- Nosotros, los participantes en el evento "Aprendiendo la ciudad" realizado el 14 de mayo de 2021 durante la sesión de clausura de la VI Bienal del Espacio Público dedicada al tema "Infancia y Espacio Público";
- Reconociendo la importancia de la "Nueva Agenda Urbana" adoptada por todos los estados, incluyendo su principio de "El Derecho a la Ciudad";
- Destacando la pertinencia de la meta de la Agenda 2030 "Para 2030, proporcionar acceso universal a espacios verdes y públicos seguros, inclusivos y accesibles, en particular para las mujeres, los niños y niñas, las personas mayores y las personas con discapacidad";
- Conscientes de los principios de la Carta del Espacio Público, incluido el reconocimiento de la "extraordinaria capacidad de la ciudad para la hospitalidad, la solidaridad, la convivencia y el compartir; su inimitable virtud en el fomento de la interacción social, el encuentro, la unión, la libertad y la democracia; y su llamado a dar vida a estos valores a través del espacio público";
- Convencidos de que el futuro de la civilización urbana también se basa en la plena conciencia de los valores positivos de la ciudad, especialmente por parte de las generaciones más jóvenes;

- Convencidos igualmente de que esta conciencia puede alimentarse mediante una mejor comprensión de las disciplinas y prácticas dedicadas a la mejora de los aspectos espaciales de las ciudades, y mediante la participación de los y las ciudadanas jóvenes en proyectos destinados a mejorar el espacio público;
 - Deseosos de subrayar que entre los valores positivos de la ciudad recordados anteriormente en la Carta del Espacio Público se encuentran la Ciudad como la Magia de lo Ordinario (*es decir, las vistas y experiencias que se encuentran todos los días en un vecindario típico*), La Ciudad como un Milagro de Convivencia, (*la libertad de elegir con seguridad entre la privacidad y la socialización*), la Ciudad como Máquina Maravillosa (*su capacidad de proporcionar espacios públicos, utilidades y servicios esenciales*) y la Ciudad como Esperanza Ecológica (*al ser la configuración espacial más efectiva en el uso de la tierra y los recursos energéticos*);
 - Conscientes de que estos valores tienen su origen en el trabajo de eminentes personalidades académicas de una amplia gama de disciplinas y de muchas organizaciones internacionales, incluidas ONU-Hábitat, INU y la Asociación Internacional de Ciudades Educadoras;
 - Decidimos continuar trabajando en el “Proyecto Aprendiendo la Ciudad”, incluyendo la preparación de materiales de estudio, involucrando a las administraciones locales interesadas, promoviendo procesos de planificación y diseño participativos que involucren a niños, niñas y jóvenes ciudadanos, con el objetivo de convertir a la ciudad y sus valores positivos en un campo de experimentación de la labor educativa y, en definitiva, una meta universal de educación con particular atención a la curricula de los años de formación escolar.
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