

Mutations of Bologna: the contemporary city seen through social mobilizations

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The paper presents a theoretical fresco of the contemporary city and an empirical investigation, starting from the case study of Bologna. The hypothesis that guides this research is that, today, we are confronting with the emergence of a new phenomenon: the globalized city, a common urban matrix that shapes and at the same time is shaped by almost every city. However, this does not mean there is a trend towards homogenization, but rather we assist to a complex dialectic between the local and the global, to a tension between heterogeneity and homogeneity.

Organized through a sort of cartography, the article proposes a grid of events and the brief description of some social subjects, and gives some theoretical glances, to produce an urban rhapsody through which to distill some suggestions about research prospects on contemporary urban scenarios.

During the last years new forms of protest and social struggle have emerged in Bologna, and they are taken here as a lens through which to put light on new urban dynamics and on the crisis of the neoliberal city. There are five main axes taken into consideration:

- 1) a significant wave of strikes and pickets that have perturbed the Bologna's logistics sector, mainly played by a migrant composition;
- 2) a movement of homeless and people under threat of eviction;
- 3) an informal network of many different experiences of self-organization about urban gardens, popular canteens, critical food consumption and markets of independent producers;
- 4) political collectives from high schools and universities;
- 5) activists organized within the so called "centri sociali", occupied spaces located at the periphery of the city.

These different social subjects have tried, in the last year, to built up a common space of action. Moreover, each of them indicates critical thresholds of the new urban spaces: logistics struggles enlighten the crucial dimension of commodities circulation and the related infrastructures (1); the right to housing movement put evidence on the economic crisis and the erosion of the welfare State

(2); the third experience is related to the ecological dimension and on critical food consumption (3); the students collectives are radicated in the heritage of social movements of the city (4); the occupation of empty spaces (mainly abandoned factories) indicates the legacy of de-industrialization (5).

The hypothesis that guides this work is that this new kind of social mobilization is the product of the transformations of the contemporary city, but at the same time they are actors that, producing political contestation, act as vectors of the crisis of the urban governance. The deep heterogeneity of these struggles (in respect to their social composition, the different generations involved, the spaces of the city where they act) is an indicator of the changing relationship between social movements and the city's transformation. On one hand the economic and the city planning shifting configurations of the city seems to produce different forms of resistance. On the other hand, many social struggles often produce anticipations on the city developments. The paper presents, at the end, a reflexion about the concepts of “de-gendered city”, and discusses the notions of the city as an aporia and the city as a battlefield.

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