

FOCUS

Revitalization by Reconciliation addresses the issue of bringing politics back to their original place: the city. The Romans used the terms *urbs* and *civitas* to denote respectively the material city, with its walls and buildings, and a cultural political dimension, the citizens who populate it, those living in communities, with the same habits and under the same law (Cacciari 2004) ¹ administrating its common good through forms of public space. The city embodies this duality. These century old concepts have contributed to shaping our contemporary cultures. However, with the hypertrophy experienced by modernity since the Second World War, the spatial dimension of cities has become corollary to productiveness and economic planning of their material dimension. The dominant urban and territorial models, which originated at the time of the industrial revolution, and continue to shape contemporary living environments, are those of planning and modernity, based on the model of economic development (Mumford 1968)² . Exacerbated in the post-war period with the advent of neo-capitalism, they carry an ideology that is structured around confidence in exponential growth. The social dimension of cities has been sent to the background, often reduced to its market value. The relevance of contemporary models of urban and territorial governance is now contested, or at least questioned, precisely because of the fickleness of economic development and of the distribution of its wealth. The top-down responses they generate by means of marketing strategies and blueprint master plans are proving incapable of ensuring the social, cultural, and democratic intensity, for which European cities are known. In parallel, the galloping commodification of public space, and the palimpsest of regulations that facilitate it, leave less and less space for imagining alternatives. However, innovative urban strategies, such as the ones shown by IBA or Grand Paris and other City Regions in Europe, are examples of Public Authorities taking advantage of loopholes in order to privilege the human, ecological, social dimension in the shaping of our living environments, thereby augmenting their political empowerment. These inclusive and flexible approaches are a unique opportunity to restore a necessary dialogue between citizens and authorities to obtain coherent governance to avoid conflicting projects. According to many contemporary thinkers, including Alberto Magnaghi, and the Territorialists, a new approach should be founded on cultural, economic, and citizen resources, revealing the potential of territories approached as action–design sites (Magnaghi 2010)³ . The involvement of both civil Society, entrepreneurial actors and public authorities is needed to activate them and to capitalise on them, may not be a new phenomenon. However, in light of recent crises, it is a testimony of the emergence of this new approach throughout Europe, based on a form of innovative urban governance on which we should be able to rely in order to design our future.

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1 .CACCIARI Massimo, *La città, Villa Verucchio*, [Verucchio], P. G. Pazzini, 2004.

2. MUMFORD Lewis, *The City in History*, San Diego, Harvest Books, 1968.

3. MAGNAGHI Alberto, *Il progetto locale*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, coll. « Temi », 2010, 256 p.