

# Inequality and social exclusion in global cities: some research results

edited by Costanzo Ranci

Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani  
(costanzo.ranci@polimi.it)

*Questa sezione presenta gli articoli incentrati sui problemi di disuguaglianza ed esclusione sociale in corso in città globali situate in continenti diversi. Essi si basano sul lavoro svolto dai dottorandi dello Spud (Pianificazione territoriale e sviluppo urbano), dottorato di ricerca presso il Politecnico di Milano, sotto la supervisione di Costanzo Ranci. L'analisi mostra come i problemi di disuguaglianza, anche se sono diversamente strutturati in queste città, sia comunemente all'intersezione di dinamiche sociali e spaziali*

The papers included in this section have been presented and discussed in my PhD course in Global Cities, held at the Polytechnic of Milan in 2011-2012. Their main focus are social and spatial inequalities and exclusion emerging in some contemporary global cities.

For many decades after WW2, city growth had been re-conciliated with policy intervention aimed at reducing class inequalities. Welfare intervention, housing policies, urban requalification were developed to compensate the social costs of economic growth, and to favor a partial redistribution of growth's rewards to the whole population. Social cohesion was considered as one of the main ingredients of urban competitiveness.

Starting from the 1990s this close connection between competitiveness and social cohesion has been weakening.

Economic attractiveness has not seen as beneficial to the whole population.

Welfare and urban policies have been increasingly considered as obstacles to economic growth. Inequality and injustice have been incrementally pushed out of the public agenda.

A re-organization of dominant economic and social interests has been pursued through a selective process, contributing to the spread of new forms of urban marginality and social vulnerability.

While new social risks have emerged as consequence of the huge changes taking place in the demographic, social and economic structure of the city, urban policies have become more and more inadequate to deal with these problems.

In such context there is an increasing need for a new understanding.

Old concepts – such as polarization, or class stratification – must be reviewed in order to catch the peculiarity of current processes. The contributions in this section are attempts to develop an urban analysis that takes inequality and social exclusion as the main focus, and correlate it to the economic and structural changes occurring in the city.

They offer good descriptions of such processes, and give useful interpretation of such disconnections. In doing that, a social and spatial analysis have been jointly developed. Social facts are strongly interconnected with spatial transformations. Joining social and spatial analysis is one the most challenging and difficult tasks, but it's increasingly important in order to catch the complexity of current transformations. When only old words and concepts can be used to understand the present, it is time for new empirical research to be developed.

Parole chiave: città globali;  
disuguaglianza; esclusione sociale