



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI TORINO



Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio



la Biennale di Venezia

15. Mostra
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Eventi Collaterali

Press release

BIENNALE DI VENEZIA, A JUMP INTO WORLD'S GANGS AND SUBURBS

The world of gangs narrated through exhibitions, artistic performances, shows, concerts, movies and thematic meetings. A journey into the degraded suburbs of big cities in research of deep bond between urban tissue and social phenomena characterized by illegality and violence. It is the content of **Gangcity**, collateral event of the 15th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, taking place from May 28th to November 27th 2016 inside the Thetis space at Arsenale Nord. The project, coordinated by **Fabio Armao**, professor of Politics and Globalization Processes at the University of Turin, aims to divulge and actively involve on an international scale the academic world, the scientific community and artists from different sectors to produce innovative e sustainable operative solutions to the problem of urban clusters as fertile ground for the proliferation of gangs and criminality.

Gangcity is a research program that documents the phenomenon of organized crime, a way to control suburban tissues in big cities of the world, with the purpose of studying processes of requalification, repossession and care for both public and private spaces hit by decay. The project is split into several phases and activities, structuring the study path: a collective **photographic exhibition** from May 28th to November 27th displaying 80 shots from artists such as Letizia Battaglia, Francesco Cito, Donna De Cesare, Salvatore Esposito, Walter Leonardi, Valerio Polici; a concomitant **design exhibition about gang symbols and languages** to demonstrate clothing, tattoos, accessories and ritual objects typical of criminal groups; an **international symposium**, on June 23rd and 24th, with the attendance of experts from all over the world; an educational program with course credits conferment, between June and November, that include **workshops** for students and a **series of conferences** to foster networking for professionals of all sectors; a program of **cultural activities** ranging from theatre to concerts, from movies, documentaries and short films to artistic performances; an **international photographic contest** for students, summoned to tell by images expressions and solutions of the problem.

The photographic exhibition, curated by Anna Zemella, intends to illustrate from different angles forty years of dramatic connection between urban and civil decay. The exposition extends along the tragic Palermo of Letizia Battaglia, the borderline Rome graffiti artists of Valerio Polici, Scampia's desolation told by Salvatore Esposito, Napoli with its historical camorra events and the visions of Albania by Francesco Cito, Latin America's gangs by Donna De Cesare, the violent East Los Angeles of Walter Leonardi. The photographic display is combined with a **design exhibition**, curated by Davide Crippa, Interior Design professor at the Design School of Politecnico di Milano, offering a journey into languages, symbols and rituals of gangs as integral part of daily life, both of the members and those citizens extraneous to criminal organizations. Each one of the displayed works, made by more than 20 designers, contains two values and several meanings: those from the collective consciousness and those from the gangs.



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The gang phenomenon grew in the last few years also because of the progressive welfare decrease, the exponential demographic growth and the privatization of many activities once publicly managed. “Taking advantage of the increasing infightings and social inequality – explains Fabio Armao – criminal associations expand their businesses turning entire urban areas into important strategic spots to manage illegal trafficking and to let migratory groups with a solid internal bond and strong identity settle down. In Italy the case of Milan is emblematic, with the establishment of cells from the Salvadorian Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18, international crime networks perpetrating acts of extreme and organized violence, who have been terrorizing for some time also Lombard suburbs, despite the fact that these have already been marked by the presence of other mafias”. In the absence of alternative forms of sociability and assistance, urban spaces could become fertile ground for gangs and find itself victim of a radical territorial, social and cultural change. It’s exactly the study of this phenomenon the basis of the project’s research study, standing as an inter-disciplinary international research platform to create acts of obstruction and precautionary fight against the formation of gang cities.

“Studying the connections between the installation of urban settlements and social phenomena that develop within our cities is extremely important to fulfill the needs for safety and the improvement of life quality, emerging with growing insistence from our neighborhoods, especially from the most degraded ones. The university, with the accuracy of scientific method and the multidisciplinary approach that nowadays characterize the real innovative researches in all the fields, also by using languages such as art and photography, can bring a concrete and substantial contribution to meet those needs.” **Marco Gilli**, Rector of Politecnico di Torino

The 15th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (May 28th – November 27th), titled Reporting from the front and directed by the Pritzker prize 2016 Alejandro Aravena, sees in the Gangcity collateral event a relevant international project in the world that intends to analyze, study and portray all the perspectives of the bond, as much tight and deep as little known by public opinion, between organized crime and urban tissue.

TO FOLLOW, FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT AND PROGRAMME

Ufficio stampa Gangcity

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Gangcity – The Project

Texts under the curation of **Fabio Armao**, professor at the DIST – Inter-University Department of Science, Project and Politics of the Territory – Polytechnic of Turin, University of Turin.

The Gangcity project is a research program that aims to document the phenomenon of urban clusters, void of any form of control of legality with the objective of activating processes for the reappropriation and protection of public and private residential properties.

The program is intended to unite researchers and artists from around the world, experts who are interested in sharing an investigation that will define the violent phenomena; this subject has never been to any great degree. The phenomena persist in some particularly fragile areas of the larger cities that are extremely difficult to access. The academic network, as a cultural catalyst, groups visionary actors who are passionate about this particular subject, who are striving to visualize alternative futures by testing the theoretical design pathways and examining the artistic, social, cultural and technological routes that can turn them into reality.

The cultural backdrop proposed with *REPORTING FROM THE FRONT* by the Director of the 15. International exhibition of Architecture, Alejandro Aravena, is the best suitable stage to present the eclectic atlas envisaged by Gangcity. This is a collection of heterogeneous articles with poly-dimensional lexical codes (research reports, articles, papers, statistical investigations, photographic exhibitions, geographical maps, theatrical pieces, artistic performances) to draw the eyes towards the physical and mental spaces occupied by the local communities in a position to activate independent processes of territorial renewal.

The Gangcity phenomena

The widespread absence of States oriented to the progressive reduction of welfare and the privatization of sectors of public administration, will lead to an intensification of the problems of civil unrest and social inequality. This provides greater room for maneuver for criminal organizations that transform entire urban areas into strategically important hubs, in terms of their policies for exerting their coercive power and their ability to extract resources (but also how they maintain a certain degree of social cohesion), and from the economic point of view of the management of illegal trafficking. New criminal groups are formed and these have a clear transnational personality, defined by migratory flows driven by globalization; they are capable of maintaining solid internal cohesion and a strong identity, that prove useful when competing for the monopoly on violence within a specific territory; they can also develop systemic relations with other criminal groups present in the same district. The dynamics activated in these ways liken these groups to industrial clusters: they practice expansionistic commercial policies to compete on a global level, at the same time conflicting with the state and other criminal actors to delimit their geographical areas of sovereignty.

Due to the total absence of state institutions, the urban districts absorb and process a vertical and managerial social model, borrowing spatial shapes that are foreign to any open system of rules and regulations. In this model the densification and the stratification of the living systems support the proliferating aggression by numerous non-state actors of violence.



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The scope of the project Gangcity

The scope is to identify a sample of locations that epitomize this discomfort, creating an abacus of physical and spatial changes in the urban territories as the driver for possible mutations of belonging, the programmed colonizing of the peripheral zones, the fractures in the urban fringes that are a fertile breeding ground for criminal groups.

The investigation will aim to reveal the mutual influence between the geography of organized crime and the development of the city, and to show how gangs spread within the quarters. In particular, emphasis will be given to how the various urban elements contribute to facilitating or obstructing the diffusion of the impact of criminal activities: sprawl, borderline areas, derelict industrial zones, high density residential zones with a low quality of life, compared to more positive elements such as the presence of public transport systems, urban structures with a range of functions, commercial connective tissues, youth clubs, social services, public or private parks and gardens.

By exploring this issue using a cross-over of disciplines – exhibitions, installations, performances, seminars, workshops – and professional figures – researchers, creatives, the business community, innovators, designers – allows experimentation of the collective dream in which the careful management of the contents – mapping, organization and classification of the locations, the populations, the criminal groups – can be used to accurately manage the contexts, re-writing the rules for access and the essential procedures for intervention.

The method

The study method

The study method will develop through the collection of experiences, reflections, visions and research from around the world sourced from other research centers, academies, associations and from artists to determine a polyphonic register of changing shapes, in an attempt to define the criminal enclaves that occupy the urban space, confiscating and transforming them into a metaphor of themselves both inside and outside of the social sphere.

The investigation method

The methods of crowd mapping used by the academic research groups, and more generally by smartphone users thanks to the diffusion of open data, allows rapid control of the territory to register, measure and map, the modification processes affecting the living spaces.

The activities that monitor the territory with input from the attentive urban populations, developed in continuity with expert academic initiatives, could drive the routine analytical actions that focus on the activities of organized crimes in the city precincts; they examine the issues on different scales: urban, district and individual.

The beneficial and synergetic sharing of scientific innovation in the academic world, the activism of the citizens and the ethical and financial responsibilities of the institutions can orient the architecture of the new policies and suggest a series of valid educational pathways.

Project method

Intellectual curiosity regarding the public space and its possible changes by installing appropriate specifically designed furnishings will increase the sensitivity of professional practices to project high-impact and efficacious urban images that reflect the changes underway and attempt to determine input geared to the positive resolution of the phenomena, transforming them into a source of hardship that drains the collective resources, through the widespread form of shared responsibility.



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The participation of academic institutions

A specific section will be dedicated to the work of University students from around the world, accompanied by the lecturers and the artists invited to join the *educational* program of Gangcity; the initiative is generated by the idea that an educational didactic experience can emerge from a theoretical reflection and supported by design practices, interactive and performing actions that can explore new behavioral modes; these can experiment aspects of team work and personal discovery, producing open events with laboratory situations that are changing and work in progress.

Students of architecture and urban planning, art, design and social sciences will demonstrate their ability to activate processes, to put into motion, to offer ideas that interpret a potentially visionary role with energetic enthusiasm for a multisensory rewriting of reality.

The workshops will therefore be open training grounds for ethically sustainable experimentation, joined by seminar talks, theatrical performances, film projections, artistic performances and short design lectures; the results will be presented in an exhibition organized with the addition of material over the whole event. The projects will be classed as the documentary material that will be stored on the Gangcity website, in the hopes that it will form a legacy that will undergo structured growth in the long term. A sort of digital handbook of good practices will be produced to direct the repair of the city, for temporary reuse and suggestions for the addition of infrastructures to the public spaces activating, as suggested by Giancarlo De Carlo, a construction process based on a collective dimension.

The students from the universities around the world will be able to enter a digital photographic competition that focuses on the urban locations of the gangs; this initiative will group the iconographic uploaded online in the Spring of 2016, and be adjudicated by a specialist international jury.

The participation of professionals

The educational activity will be oriented to design professionals, architects, city planners, designers, all summoned to perceive the multiple energies in the city to exploit and contrast these forces, transforming them into actions and opportunities; they may assume an even contradictory role compared to the widespread practices and they can reformulate environments, perimeters and relations of urban facts and may enter into active relations with dynamics that already exist on the territory. The professional educational workshops, organized in partnership with the associations, will help furnish the instruments to make the *care centers* evolve transforming the projects into collaboration practices with the association organizations of the third sector.

The levels of action

The action unfolds in three levels:

- project of **academic research** for research universities and institutes;
- project of **education** for professionals and companies;
- Project of **education and cultural promotion** for citizens, institutions and associations.

The aforementioned levels aim at an evolution of theoretical thinking, about practical experience and ethical dimension of the problem of gangs settled in urban settings, to produce programs and projects able



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to behave as therapies for the health of urban spaces, as an apparatus for social control, as growth instruments for the common good.

Gangcity avails itself of innovative multidisciplinary approaches crossing *bottom-up and top-down* methods able to grow the international *networking* activities so to create an inter-University research platform, proposed as critical mass for a global interoperability in the actions of contrast and opposition preventive the formation of Gangcity, meant as revealed systems “others” of self-organization from the bottom of the physical spaces, of prefiguration of precise social rules and of managing the indelible bonds until death.

Spazio Thetis at Arsenale Nord

A shuttle boat allows covering, every twenty minutes, the few meters of the arm of sea that separate the South Arsenal from the North Arsenal. The choice of the Spazio Thetis was favored for the quality and the variety of the available rooms, that allow a contemporary use of the internal halls and in plain air, able to produce a vibrant narrative path between the “sight themes” and the “speech themes”. The visual paradigms of architecture and city planning will come to life with art installations, theater performances, displays of photography and architecture between the garden, the court and the adjacent internal spaces, where there will also be seminars and workshops for students and professionals.

Gangcity – The Agenda

Vernissage: May 27th 2016, Thetis space

Photographic exhibit, May 28th – November 27th 2016, Spazio Thetis

Artists: Letizia Battaglia, Francesco Cito, Donna De Cesare, Salvatore Esposito, Walter Leonardi, Valerio Polici.

The photography exhibit wants to narrate, through 80 selected shots, the dramatic relationship that exists between urban decay and civil decay. They are stories about places and of gangster matters that participate in one common business: corruption, violence, fatigue and pain between streets, neighborhoods and disorderly places at ethical and materialistic levels. They are authors of whom we recognize, each in different ways and beyond the testimonials and stories, the strength of a gaze that is born from a deep research work and by the participation to human Life. Authors who confirm with their work how photography could be an instrument to build a fairer society. (Anna Zemella)

Design exhibit about symbols and languages, May 28th – November 27th 2016, Spazio Thetis

The photographic display is combined with a **design exhibition**, curated by Davide Crippa, Interior Design professor at the Design School of Politecnico di Milano. The language of gangs consists of symbols, signs, rules; it is a ‘society within a society’ and the dynamics it moves with are similar but the moral codes are very different. “The selection of displayed works creates a system of mirrors, an effect that would bounce



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between the dynamics and logic of the gangs and the everyday routines reviewed according to their values. We propose 'irreverent' codes that relate directly or metaphorically with the former. These are new interpretations that design, under its magnifying glass called project, examines in the light of new sensitivity. Therefore, we adopted a transversal examination of the disciplines and this resulted in a selection consisting of stochastic leaps – it is not a linear pathway, but a sequence of small articles, gestures, rituals positioned and juxta positioned with (and against) one another. It is a series of 'dangerous' analogies staked to create unpredictable correspondence of the meanings: solar tattoos for the trendy gangs, flexible vases, guns printed in 3D that are only apparently playful, unlikely 'killer combs', assembly instructions that manage to transform even innocent Ikea products into weapons, patches for the code of silence, notebooks that consider themselves to be the 'bibles of the project', comfortable crosses for sleeping in restricted spaces. This exhibition is not based on a single, predetermined criteria of interpretation, but affords each visitor the freedom to return along multiple (and personal) pathways and interpretations." (Davide Crippa)

The six months of Gangcity will be enlivened also by the presence art installations, that will be announced on the website www.gangcity.it

International Symposium, 23-24th June 2016, Lamierini Thetis

Speakers:

Michele Bonino, professor of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Polytechnic of Turin

David C. Brotherton, professor of Sociology, J. J. College of Criminal Justice and City University of New York

Luisa Collina, professor of Industrial Design, Polytechnic of Milan

Diane E. Davis, professor of City Planning and Design, Harvard University of Boston

Donna De Cesare, photographer documentarist, professor of Journalism, University of Texas, Austin

Stephen Graham, professor of Cities & Society, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne

Carlo Ratti, director Senseable City Lab, MIT of Boston

Marco Santangelo, professor of Geography, Environment, Landscape, Polytechnic of Turin

The international symposium proposes to present the vast public of Biennale the scientific itinerary launched to get to the length of the exhibition project Gangcity. The aim is to spread thoughts and stimulate proactive suggestions, polyphonic writings of new collective scenarios about problematic and cruel situations. These episodes are embedded in walls of silence, interrupted only by news flashes that report particularly violent or blood-riddled events.

The conference is split into two separate parts that will introduce, propose, explicate, problematize the widespread presence of gangs in the cities around the world. The narrative register that emerges from the scientific investigation unfolds in this way with maps, organizations and classifications of the criminal gangs – integrated with the choral stories of artists and designers, actors with the inhabitants of new life cycles of urban clusters that are subtracted from the control of violent criminal gangs. Districts of the cities that have been reclaimed to be inhabited according to site-specific processes and logics of social innovation are a proto-abacus of spaces and places repaired thanks to the cathartic intervention of artists and sensitive intellectuals, who define collective dreams as the pathways for learning and understanding, or a form of empowerment in the true sense of the word.

Workshops and conferences, June – November 2016, Spazio Thetis

Gangcity will offer a series of workshops for students and educational conferences for professionals. The events will be available on the website www.gangcity.it in June 2016.



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Photography International contest for students, with award ceremony in November 2016.

The goal of the contest is to involve young university students called to document the decay status of Gangcities all over the world and the solutions shown in some cities to weave new threads of repossession of public spaces once abandoned, prerogative organized crime groups. The photographs will be voted by the visitors of the online gallery on the website www.gangcity.it. This evaluation will be combined with one of an international jury that will work to select the winners. All the collected pictures will stay online as a document heritage of the Gangcity scientific program. The competition announcement will be published online in June 2016.

Art performances and installations, theatre, movies and readings, June - October 2016

Movies, documentaries and short films are selected in collaboration with Museo del Cinema di Torino (www.museocinema.it), while the theatrical performances will be brought by Farm Cultural Park di Favara (www.farmculturalpark.com) and Festival delle Ombre di Staggia Senese (www.festivalombre.it). Concerts and dj sets complete the offer of cultural events. The schedule will be constantly upgraded on the website www.gangcity.it.

Associations and cultural institutions, excellences of the production and preservation of contemporary artistic heritage are the prestigious cultural partners selected to enrich the education of those who will attend the formative workshops. A way to offer the guests a fruition of public spaces spread on all the levels of artistic representation. A multitude of trails and perceptual paths, shocks and jumps rewriting a dense texture of connections, so vibrating that could shape new urban interiors. Rewriting, renovation and recovery spaces for social capital; gathering spots for young creatives and supporting citizens with breaths of redemption and liberation. Experiences of sublimation of public spaces with the shadows of Festival di Staggia Senese. Practices of creative exaltation with the installations of Farm Cultural Park di Favara, born to "build a piece of a better world, creating with a small community new ways of thinking, inhabiting and living".

Colophon

Curatela/Curator

Fabio Armao

Organizzazione/Organization

Mila Sichera

Coordinamento sezioni espositive/Coordination exhibition sections

Alberto Barbera, sezione film/Movie Exhibition

Andrea Bartoli, sezione arte/Art Exhibition

Lorenza Branzi, sezione moda/Fashion Exhibition

Davide Crippa, sezione design/Design Exhibition

Marcella Fragapane, sezione teatro/Theater Exhibition

Roberto Lavarini, sezione arte sacra e tatuaggi/Exhibition

Anna Zemella, sezione fotografica/Photo Exhibition

Installazioni Area Esterna/Installation Outdoor Area

Marco Imperadori

Alessio Pesenti



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Comitato scientifico/Scientific Committee

Pierantonio Bertero
Michele Bonino
Luisa Collina
Davide Crippa
Diane E. Davis
Marco Imperadori
Davide Rampello
Cristiana Rossignolo
Marco Santangelo
Giovanna Segre

Espositori/Exhibitors

Letizia Battaglia, Stefano Boccalini, Simona Brugnetti & Simona Zappi, Valeria Bruni, Alejandro Carrini, Giulia Cerrato, Francesco Cito, CTRLZak, Lorenzo Damiani, Donna De Cesare, Salvatore Esposito, Valerio Fogliati, Pietro Gaeli, Ghigos, Steve Graham, Marta Grignani, Alessandro Guerriero, Giulio Iacchetti, Ideas, Walter Leonardi, Marcello Nieto, Valerio Polici, Matteo Ragni, Philippe Starck, Santino Stefanini, JoeVelluto, Lisa Wade, Cody Wilson, Thanos Zakopoulos, Zero31

Progetto Allestimento/Design Exhibit

Ghigos

Progetto Grafico/Graphic Project

Ghigos with Silvia Bortot

Installazioni in cartone e stampa 3D /Installations in cardboard and press 3D

Ideas FabLab

Allestitore/Outfitting

We Exhibit
Foto-Grafia

Ufficio Stampa/Press Office

Lorenzo Foti

Sito web/Website

Cultural Farm Favara with Marco Claude

Traduzioni/Translations

Fiona Johnston

Produzione Video/Video productions

Lorenzo Attardo