

Department of Architecture, “Federico II” University of Napoli  
PhD Program in Architecture

**PhD workshop on Assemblage Methodology**

# RE – CONNECTING THE MATERIAL CITY



Representing urban architecture *for what it does*

in collaboration with RMS - Research Methodology School

**Napoli, May 22-26, 2017**

## **Workshop description and scientific content**

The aim of the workshop is to experiment with alternative modes of representing the built environment inspired by the idea of buildings as ‘indeterminate and contestable’ objects. Buildings are not passive and inert, but rather a relational field where physical structures are intermingled with social practices and larger political-economic processes. In this perspective, buildings are considered to be socio-material assemblages where different actors congregate with norms, policies, social issues and cultural codes.

The workshop comes after a pilot experiment on relational studies held in 2016 at Copenhagen University (PhD Workshop “Constructing criticism: methods for relational studies of spatial design and planning work”). Both initiatives are inspired by the growing interest, in the field of urban studies, toward Actor Network Theory, new materialism and assemblage urbanism. They acknowledge the relational capacities of urban things and focus on how they affect users and usages and are able to transform socio-spatial contexts over time.

Assemblage studies are becoming increasingly relevant for architectural design, strategic planning or user-driven design, while they require new methods, investigative techniques and forms of representation.

Representation is here regarded not just as a technical matter but also and foremost as a political practice (in both senses: giving voice and report) dealing with the heterogeneity and dynamism of urban practices and material contexts. The 2017 workshop is focused on the representation of physical things in the city – buildings, open spaces, streets, monuments, urban furniture, casual objects, and the like – that goes beyond the finitude of things and place them within

networks of associations. The central idea – addressing the practice of representation – is that ‘buildings do politics’, in the sense that they enroll and are enrolled within networks where they make a difference. Their physical characters and the way people use and institutions acknowledge them are conducive of broader processes of enchantment and hardship as well as social innovation.

The workshop is designed as a 5-day intensive course that provides both theoretical guidance and design-driven field work. Porta Capuana, a neighborhood in Napoli’s historical center, will be the site.

During the first 2 days, Invited guest lecturers will present theoretical frameworks and methods for conducting relational investigations of urban things and how they perform within socio-material assemblages. Different scholars (historians, social scientists, planners) will also provide a multi-faceted overview of the workshop site, in order to give participants the basic coordinates and main critical perspectives to address their fieldwork, designed as a 2-day intensive practice in the neighborhood.

PhD students, in relation to their own PhD research and their specific background, will discuss their projects with faculty and will engage a practical experiment of assemblage representation during fieldwork.

### **Workshop site**

The fieldwork will be carried out in a neighborhood – Porta Capuana – on the eastern edge of Napoli’s historical center. The neighborhood is named after the city gate built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the Aragonese domination, as well as the nearby Norman castle – the major Court in Naples until a few years ago. The Court’s closure produced a ‘void’ (of users and economic activities) that gave way to new populations and place-making practices. Porta Capuana is a vital and controversial place, densely populated, with a high concentration of historical heritage and active street life, with traditional food and scrap markets and retail shops. In recent years, the neighborhood also became one of the main destinations of newcomers, mostly migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. A relevant social connotation of the place is informal economy, that combines local culture and immigrant life style. Illegal activities (prostitution, narcotics, street crime) are also present. Porta Capuana is also a place of social and cultural mobilization, with artists and community organizers renovating old buildings to make art galleries, theaters and cafes.

### **Learning outcomes**

The course will offer state-of-the art knowledge of theories and methods for relational studies of spatial design and planning work. By presenting and discussing their PhD projects, the students will gain new methodological skills and competencies for theoretical reflection, while they will simultaneously have a unique opportunity to expand and fine-tune their dissertation work in dialogue with international scholars working on assemblage urbanism and relational design.

The design-driven workshop will enable participants to collaboratively test and train an experimental approach to representation of the physical city, while being 'on site' and having the opportunity to be fully immersed in a complex urban context.

The PhD workshop is directed at PhD students from different curricula: planning, architecture, urban design, landscape design, and social sciences.

### **Key-note speakers**

Robert Beauregard – Columbia University

Laura Lieto – Federico II University

Anne Tietjen – University of Copenhagen

### **Scientific committee**

Robert Beauregard, Ferruccio Izzo, Laura Lieto, Michelangelo Russo, Anne Tietjen.

### **Tutors**

Annie Attademo, Alberto Calderoni, Vanna Cestarello, Fabio Landolfo, Marilena Prisco.

### **Media**

Students are invited to experiment different media to provide assemblage representations revolving around 'meaningful objects' selected in the fieldwork site. Drawings, short essays, mockups, installations, photographs, videos, and other media are welcomed.

Organizers will provide online desk materials on Porta Capuana (maps, photos, examples, references) to help attendees organizing their fieldwork.

### **Venues**

Lectures will be held at the Department of Architecture, 36 via Forno Vecchio. The workshop's home base, during fieldwork, is Made in Cloister – cultural hub in Porta Capuana (<http://www.madeincloister.it/en>).

### **Application**

Applicants are required to send 1) a short CV, 2) an abstract of their dissertation (500 words) and 3) a statement about their motivation for the workshop (200 words).

Applications in pdf format must be sent to: [reconnectingthematerialcity@gmail.com](mailto:reconnectingthematerialcity@gmail.com)

### **Important dates**

CV-Abstract-Statement submission: April 20, 2017.

Notification of acceptance: April 30, 2017.

Registration: May 3 – 8, 2017

Desk materials available on line: May 3, 2017



## Fee

The workshop is free of charge. Attendees are required to provide themselves with travel and accommodation. Info about accommodation in Napoli will be provided later on.

## Preliminary reading list

- Hutchby, I. (2001). Technology, Texts and Affordances. *Sociology* 35 (2):441-456.
- Latour, B. (1999). Where Are the Missing Masses? In Bijker W.E. and J. Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, pp. 225–258.
- Latour, B. (2004). Nonhumans. In: Harrison S. et al. (eds.), *Patterned Ground*. London: Reaktion Books, pp. 224-227.
- Latour, B. & Yaneva, A. (2008). Give me a gun and I'll make all buildings move. An ANT's view of architecture. In: Geiser, Reto (ed.), *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*. Basel: Birkhäuser, pp. 80-89.
- Lieto, L. and R. Beauregard (2013). Planning for a material world. *CRIOS* 6:11-20.
- Tietjen, A. (2011). Towards an urbanism of entanglement: Site explorations in polarised Danish urban landscapes. *Arkitektskolens Forlag*.
- Yaneva, A. (2009). Making the social hold: Towards an actor-network theory of design. *Design and Culture*, 1(3), 273-288.

## Draft program\*

Monday May 22	Tuesday May 23	Wednesday May 24	Thursday May 25	Friday May 26
<b>9.00-9.30</b> <u>Welcome / Intro</u>  9.30-12.30 <u>Keynotes</u> <i>ANT methodology</i>  Venue: Dep. Of Architecture	<b>9.00-13.00</b> <u>Site Keynotes</u>     Venue: Made in Cloister	<b>9.00-18.00</b> Workshop <u>In the field</u>    Venue: Made in Cloister	<b>9.00-18.00</b> Workshop <u>In the field</u>    Venue: Made in Cloister	<b>9.00-12.00</b> Workshop <u>Setting up the            exhibition</u>   Venue: Made in Cloister
<b>13.00-14.00</b> Free lunch	<b>13.00-14.00</b> <i>Eat&amp;learn</i>			
<b>14.00-16.00</b> <u>Keynotes</u> <i>Field research            perspectives</i>   Venue: Dep. Of Architecture	<b>14.30-17.30</b> <u>Walking lectures</u>   17.30-19.00 <u>Brief and open art            studio</u>  Venue: Porta Capuana	<b>18.00</b> <u>Feedback session</u>   Venue: Made in Cloister	<b>18.00</b> <u>Feedback session</u>   Venue: Made in Cloister	<b>13.00-15.00</b> Exhibition walk and talk  15.00-15.30 Course Evaluation  Venue: Made in Cloister
				<b>Food &amp; drinks</b>

\* An updated version of the program will be provided as we approach the date of the workshop.