

## URBAN ICONOGRAPHY OF CONFLICT - TALES FROM A CITY IN TRANSFORMATION

Author: Romanato Matteo Giuseppe  
PhD Politecnico di Milano. Università degli studi di Milano

*In recent times many European cities have tried to increase their development or revitalize their social framework through mega-events and large urban transformations.*

*Wide derelict industrial sites, former military compounds, no longer used warehouses or factories have been involved into a process of rehabilitation. The engagement of international investors as well as "archistars" brought an intense and wide phenomenon of urban metamorphosis. This process of regeneration cannot be understood without considering the great effort in city marketing and urban brand.*

*The outcome was a great production of images, building projects, footages on the media system to arouse people's expectations about the process. The case of Milan and of its EXPO 2015 is only a part of a large process occurred in this city in the last years and still working. Many evidences of this iconic strategy can be found. But in this huge amount of media productions is there still room for alternative views about the city? And where?*

*If the digital communication is actually a must in the analysis of contemporary societies then new urban tribes, underground movements, activism, critical positions, informal ways of living and possible alternatives to the present can be inquired more on the web than on newspapers and TV reports. Some interesting cases of urban resistance to a commoditized city are hard to detect if not with a specific look on alternative grassroots movements which find on the internet an opportunity to come out. An accurate approach on the web can tell some of these stories.*

*Outside the centre of Milan, away from the fashion and financial districts, some old farmsteads of the nineteenth century are still publicly owned. Often marginal and without any agricultural functions left they are now targeted by property speculation. Groups of spontaneous settlers occupied these abandoned buildings to prevent an almost certain future of selling off by the municipality. Some of such farms were restored by ordinary people and became a space for social interaction, art performances, public discussions, meeting point to organize protest against eviction etc...*

*Although few possibilities to communicate widely their proposal these citizens had the capability to narrate themselves through a different image of the city. A supportive and inclusive city that can rescue past buildings, through an adaptive reuse, and bring them to new life without unconditional surrender to the driving forces of capitalism.*

*These closely-knit groups could probably not find alternative way to express freely their expectations if not on the web. But the most important issue here is that this new image of spatial equality shows an unexpressed dissatisfaction for the traditional ways to plan a city.*

*Anyway it is still hard to claim if we are in front of a silent revolution or even a sustainable change of perspective. Probably we are more in front of a slow birth of a new urban paradigm.*

*We can imagine that it will be possible to engage the hidden intelligence of citizens to create an embodied social space. An innovative vision could be found in the possibility to foster a converging culture between ordinary people, stakeholders, architects and public actors.*

*In other words contemporary cities can display a new landscape of opportunities for scholars and architects to envision alternative hypotheses of future.*