

URBANISM OF HOPE

**Multi-city
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Global Relay, 48 Hours, 6 Cities**

**The 16th Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism
(IFoU)**

12-14 December 2024



EPFL



TU Delft
Delft University of Technology

The proceedings of the Proceedings of the 16th Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU) have been prepared by:

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Proceedings of the 16th Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU)

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EPFL Lausanne

University of Buenos Aires

Chinese University of Hong Kong

University of Auckland - Waipapa Taumata Rau

Delft University of Technology

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The 16th conference of the International Forum on Urbanism (IFoU) took place from 12 to 14 December 2024.

This publication includes the papers accepted for the 16th IFoU Conference, which was organized as a collective event by six member institutions of IFoU: National Taiwan University, EPFL Lausanne, University of Buenos Aires, Chinese University of Hong Kong, The University of Auckland – Waipapa Taumata Rau, and Delft University of Technology. Under the general theme, Urbanism of Hope, each participating institution became the host for one sub-theme presented online during the conference. In this way, following the presentations of the different sub-themes from host to host, it became a virtual tour around the world.



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Preface

In the midst of a structural crisis worldwide that is characterized by natural disasters, growing social and economic tensions as well as increasing political, even military conflicts the focus of 16th conference of IFoU is on attempts, approaches and solutions on local level: to what extent initiatives on local level are able to combat or to reduce the impact of environmental disasters, to improve local resiliency, to stimulate the local economy and social integration, to bridge political contradictions and to overcome fragmentation, segregation and separation? In this framework planning approaches and design concepts are discussed under the following themes and related experiences from local governments, NGO's, CBO's, local resident movements, and initiatives for the local economy: Connectivity and Accessibility in the Age of Mediated Relational Mobility, Governmentality and Local Participation, Local Resiliency – Crisis and Catastrophes as Laboratories of Local/Global Innovation, Adaption and Socio-Ecological Change, Spaces for Local Economy, Spaces of Integration – Living Together

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Mr. Jeroen VAN AMELJD

Keynote Speakers

Patrick Bouchain

Patrick Bouchain (1945) is a French architect and scenographer known for integrating political activism into his architectural projects. His work is characterized by a commitment to social engagement and public participation, where architecture becomes a means of empowering communities and challenging traditional power structures. Bouchain's projects frequently address societal issues, placing the users and their needs at the centre of the design process, while also questioning the norms of urban planning and architectural practice. Bouchain has worked to democratize architecture throughout his career by opening up the process to public involvement, often collaborating with artists, activists, and local communities. His designs emphasize flexibility, adaptability, and the reappropriation of space by its users, making architecture a political act in itself. Among his most important works, the transformation of Le Lieu Unique in Nantes, the revitalization of La Condition Publique in Roubaix, and his influential book *Construire Autrement* exemplify Patrick Bouchain's innovative approach to architecture and social engagement.

Host: EPFL Lausanne

Deidre Brown

Professor Deidre Brown is a member of the Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Kahu tribes of the Far North of New Zealand. She teaches Indigenous design and architectural history at the Te Pare School of Architecture, The University of Auckland Waipapa Taumata Rau. Deidre is Codirector of the MĀPIHI: Māori and Pacific Housing Research Centre, a university-level research centre committed to increasing the quality and supply of housing for Māori and Pacific peoples and comprised of 20 Māori and Pacific academic staff researchers and 14 aligned PhD students. She has written several books about architecture and art, including the multi-authored *Art in Oceania: A new history* (2012) and *Māori Architecture* (2009), and curated exhibitions in galleries around the country. Her latest book *Toi Te Mana: An Indigenous History of Māori Art* (November 2024), coauthored with Associate Professor Ngarino Ellis, is the outcome of a 12 year research project. Deidre has belonged to boards of governance for arts organisations such as Objectspace, The Physics Room and the Christchurch Arts Centre and is a former governor of the Arts Foundation of New Zealand. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi and Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects, and was this year awarded the New Zealand Institute of Architects' highest honour, the Gold Medal, for her services to Māori architecture.

Host: Chinese University of Hong Kong / The University of Auckland - Waipapa Taumata Rau

Cynthia Goytia

Professor Cynthia Goytia is one of the leading urban economics academics in Latin America. Head of the MSc. in Urban Economics at Torcuato Di Tella University in Buenos Aires, Argentina, she chairs the Urban Policy and Housing Research Center (CIPUV), two prominent institutions devoted to teaching and researching urban policies and housing. She is David Rockefeller Visiting Scholar at Harvard University and has also lectured at the University of Cambridge, London School of Economics, in the UK, UCLA, UC Berkeley and University of Southern California, and the Institute of Housing Studies, in the Netherlands. She has developed a relevant and influential body of academic research on urban policies, housing, land markets, and their regulation, with a particular focus on inequalities, that is contributing to informing urban policies in developing countries. She publishes in specialized publications and books, some of them recently released in Chinese. As a senior consultant, she works for Argentina and other Latin American governments,



and for multilateral organizations, including the World Bank, United Nations, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and CAF (Banca de Desarrollo de America Latina). She is a fellow of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. She holds an M.Sc. in Urban Economics and a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science, in the UK.

Host: University of Buenos Aires

Tseng Shu-Cheng

Born in 1961 in Hsiaying Rural Township of Tainan County, he graduated from Cheng Kung University's Department of Architecture, obtained a master's degree from Tunghai University's Department of Architecture, and earned his doctorate from National Taiwan University's Graduate Institute of Civil Engineering. He held academic positions, including as an associate professor at Tamkang University's Department of Architecture, and administrative roles like OURs' chairman, Community Empowerment Society's director, and Republic of China Community Building Association's president. He also served in politics and government as Tainan County's deputy governor, Tainan City's deputy mayor, and the National Development Council's vice chairman. Currently, he teaches architectural theory and community design at Tainan National University of the Arts. He's actively involved in the GuKeng International Spiritual Ecology Village's construction, showcasing his dedication to sustainable community projects.

Host: National Taiwan University

Maaïke Zwart

Maaïke Zwart is the alderman for the Municipality of Delft for Sustainability, Work and Income and Economy. Her responsibilities include Energy Transition and Circularity, Work and Income, Economy, Delft Southeast, Innovation District, Redevelopment of Schieoevers District, Events, Tourism and City Marketing, Innovation and Field Labs, and International Policy. Maaïke Zwart was trained as an urbanist at Delft University of Technology. After studies, she has worked for multiple institutions in economics, urban development, and water management. For example, while working at Ecorys, she worked on urban development, regional development and water challenges in the Netherlands, the EU and the world, helping public authorities with spatial and economic advice. Before working for the Delft municipality, she worked for the Municipality of Amsterdam as coordinator of the city-wide program 'Make Space for the City', program manager and team leader in sustainable area development.

Host: Delft University of Technology



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Spaces of Integration – Living Together

Strengthening Local Networks Under the Rain of Post-Pandemic Projects in Italy. The Case of Central Lazio, Between the Tyrrhenian Coast, Rome and the Apennines

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Abstract: The combined effects of the global economic crisis, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic have underscored the urgent need to address spatial inequalities. NextGenerationEU, materialised in Italy through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), stands as a pivotal strategy to tackle this challenge by providing unprecedented resources across all political and administrative levels. Yet, questions arise about the sustainability and equity of local regeneration efforts funded by the PNRR. In this scenario, the research project of national interest (PRIN), Reframing Spatial Justice. A Co-Operative Approach for a Fair Distribution of Benefits From PNRR Projects, explores the spatial-justice impact of the PNRR implementation. Examining justice from a critical spatial perspective, the research assesses whether PNRR interventions reduce regional, urban–rural, and local disparities in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. Focusing on the Lazio region, the research adopts a collaborative approach to develop balanced spatial strategies for equitable growth. This paper presents initial findings, mapping emerging regional geographies and examining spatial dynamics within selected projects. By creating “living labs”—spaces for stakeholders and users to collaborate—the project will seek to strengthen local networks, ensuring that PNRR initiatives are integrated into and benefit their communities.

Keywords: spatial justice; living lab; PNRR

1. Socioenvironmental justice, a way of spatial research

In recent years, the combined effects of the global economic, climatic and pandemic crises have significantly exacerbated spatial and social inequalities on a global scale. These interconnected and often overlapping crises have significantly affected the socioeconomic and environmental structures of territories, deepening existing disparities between urban, rural, and regional areas. In this context, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)¹ proposes a series of interventions aimed at stimulating economic recovery and fostering structural change towards greater territorial equity, despite territorial inequalities in Italy, already marked by historical divisions, risk being further amplified by the combined impact of these crises, unless specific and well-targeted measures are implemented (Viesti, 2021).

Funded by NextGenerationEU, the PNRR aims to reduce these territorial disparities and enhance social and regional cohesion, aligning with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. However, the distribution of PNRR interventions raises critical questions regarding their actual capacity to promote spatial and social justice equitably. Spatial justice, seen as social and environmental fairness, involves more than just resource

⁹ PNRR is Italy's strategic programme under NextGenerationEU, aimed at addressing the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting sustainable, inclusive recovery. It is structured around seven key missions: 1) digitalization, innovation, competitiveness and culture; 2) green revolution and ecological transition; 3) infrastructure for sustainable mobility; 4) education and research; 5) inclusion and cohesion; 6) health; and 7) RepowerEU.

distribution; it emphasises the quality and impact of actions tailored to each area's needs. In Italy, enduring urban–rural and regional inequalities call for policies sensitive to local specifics.

In this context, the research project of national interest (PRIN), *Reframing Spatial Justice: A Co-Operative Approach for a Fair Distribution of Benefits From PNRR Projects*¹⁰ seeks to critically examine the spatial impacts of PNRR implementation, with particular attention to the equitable distribution of socially and environmentally valuable resources. Through a collaborative approach involving local and regional stakeholders, the research aims to develop strategies for territorial regeneration that foster a more balanced and inclusive spatial transition. This contribution will present initial reflections from the ongoing research project conducted by three research units, focusing on three case studies identified within corresponding transects in regions of northern (Veneto), central (Lazio), and southern Italy (Sicily). The aim of this paper is primarily to present the experimental methodology (both in fieldwork and in cartographic exercise) adopted in the Lazio case study, along with its challenges and potential aspects, thereby describing the territory and the initial sociospatial findings that have emerged. The case study discussion presents initial findings related to three issues: the political intentions and technical constraints that guided project selection and spatial impact; the design, governance, and spatial representation challenges tied to each analysed project; and the impacts and influences of these interventions concerning specific issues of socioenvironmental justice.

2. Spatial Justice as a theoretical framework

The concept of spatial justice has gained increasing attention in academic and policy circles. Rooted in critical geography, spatial justice involves “the fair and equitable distribution of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them” (Soja, 2010), highlighting the idea that inequalities are not merely socioeconomic but are also deeply spatial. This perspective underscores that space is both a product and a driver of inequality, as the geography of a given area—whether urban, rural, or regional—can exacerbate or alleviate social disparities. In public policy, spatial justice has had significant implications, particularly addressing how resources are allocated and how policies are designed to reduce inequalities across territories. Many countries have undertaken efforts to map the distribution of social and environmental resources to understand their impact on spatial inequalities. For example, the European Union has supported various initiatives aimed at assessing the geographical distribution of key services, such as healthcare, education, and environmental infrastructure, to ensure that underserved areas are prioritised in policy interventions. As Dikeç (2001) points out, such mapping efforts are essential for revealing hidden spatial disparities that are often masked by aggregate national or regional data. These initiatives have shown that an uneven distribution of critical services can perpetuate cycles of poverty and marginalisation, especially in rural or remote regions. A major framework for promoting spatial justice in Europe has been the European Pillar of Social Rights, which emphasises the need for social cohesion, equal opportunities, and access to essential services, regardless of geographical location. The Pillar lays out principles aimed at reducing territorial imbalances by ensuring that all regions, regardless of their level of economic development, have access to quality services and infrastructure. Cohesion policy within the European Union has long been concerned with these issues, attempting to bridge the gap between more developed and less developed regions. According to Faludi (2018), territorial cohesion represents one of the core goals of the European Union's structural policies, aiming to reduce regional disparities and promote balanced development across its member states. In the context of Italy, territorial cohesion policies have historically been central to addressing the country's pronounced regional divides, particularly between the more affluent northern regions and the economically disadvantaged southern regions (the Mezzogiorno).

The PNRR, which represents Italy's strategic response to the COVID-19 crisis, has incorporated territorial cohesion as a key objective, seeking to address these long-standing imbalances. Funded through NextGenerationEU, the PNRR outlines a series of investments and reforms aimed at reducing disparities by prioritising the development of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability in regions that have been historically marginalised. As argued by Gianfranco Viesti (2022), the PNRR presents a unique opportunity for Italy to tackle its territorial disparities; however, its success hinges on the ability to implement policies that are tailored to the specific needs

¹⁰ The working group involved in the PRIN includes project coordinators Maria Chiara Tosi (IUAV), Marco Ranzato (Department of Architecture, University of Roma Tre) and Vito Martelliano (Department of Architecture, University of Catania).

of different regions. The guidelines set forth by the PNRR emphasise a multi-faceted approach to territorial cohesion, prioritizing public service reinforcement in underserved areas, particularly in healthcare and education, to enhance local capacities and ensure equal access to critical services. Additionally, the PNRR focuses on improving infrastructure, especially in remote and rural areas, as well as promoting digital connectivity, which is essential for reducing both social and economic disparities. According to the guidelines, the goal is to ensure that all citizens, irrespective of their location, have access to high-quality services and development opportunities (PNRR, 2021).

Despite these ambitious goals, scholars have raised concerns about the actual implementation of the PNRR. Viesti (2021) argues that while the plan represents a significant step forward, its effectiveness in reducing disparities depends on the careful coordination of interventions across different levels of governance and on ensuring that resources reach the areas most in need. In this context, the notion of spatial justice provides a critical lens through which to assess the success of PNRR interventions. Policies that do not account for the specific spatial characteristics of territories risk perpetuating existing inequalities. As Bagnasco and Trigilia (2020) suggest, territorial policies must be deeply contextualised; otherwise, they risk reinforcing the very inequalities they aim to address.

In conclusion, the concept of spatial justice, with its focus on the fair and equitable distribution of resources, offers a valuable framework for evaluating territorial cohesion policies. The European Pillar of Social Rights and the territorial cohesion goals of the European Union provide important reference points for ensuring that public policy addresses spatial disparities. Italy's PNRR, as a key instrument in this endeavour, aims to reduce inequalities through targeted interventions in healthcare, infrastructure, and digital connectivity. However, the success of these initiatives will depend on their capacity to address the specific needs of diverse regions, ensuring that policies contribute to a more equitable spatial distribution of resources across the country.

3. Methodology

Driven by the desire to understand if and how the projects funded by the PNRR are affecting, or could affect, inequalities and conditions of justice within individual territorial contexts, the researchers from the three research units involved in the PRIN have carried out a series of operations in this first year of investigation. First and foremost, an initial cartographic effort was necessary to create a spatialized view of the projects distributed across the national territory. Focusing on the three regions under investigation—Veneto, Lazio, and Sicily—the three research units initially concentrated on transforming quantitative databases into maps that would show the distribution of funding at the municipal level and, subsequently, the specific spatial location of each intervention. The latter task proved particularly complex due to the large number of interventions and technical issues, such as missing attributes (addresses), as well as interpretative challenges, especially in the case of “intangible and invisible” interventions that are difficult to geographically pinpoint (for example, the digitalization of public administrations). The goal of this initial phase was to illustrate the geographies that the PNRR is shaping and to make them comparable across regions to better understand local dynamics. Thus, the objective of this first part of the research was to build a “PNRR Atlas” for the three regions.

Once these regional maps were created, and in light of the critical issues that emerged related to the difficulty of working with a complex and sometimes imprecise body of data, a downscaling became necessary to better manage the data and begin to examine projects from a qualitative perspective. For this reason, in each region, the respective research units decided to employ the transect survey method, identifying a specific area (20 x 100 km) characterised by a variety of spatial and social conditions. Operating at the scale of a smaller territory (better described in the following paragraph) allowed us to precisely locate all those projects that seem to have a stronger relationship with the dimension of spatial justice.¹¹ This approach allowed us to better assess the distribution of projects and observe areas of absence and concentration. It is precisely in these areas of concentration that we decided to begin our field investigation. Four urban contexts are currently under examination: the municipality of Fiumicino in the coastal sector, the Tiburtino III neighbourhood in the quadrant of Roma Capitale, the municipality of Fonte Nuova in the metropolitan area, and Poggio Mirteto in the inland area within the province of Rieti. Each

¹¹ For example, projects such as the renovation of welfare services buildings such as schools, hospitals, cultural places such as public libraries and civic centres; and road maintenance interventions, territory safety measures, restoration of water networks and construction of a renewable energy production system.

of these "concentrations" features various types of projects, but all share the commonality of being affected by at least one project related to welfare facilities, at least one intervention involves the production system, and one is about infrastructure.



Figure 1. Transect map. Highlighted: built environment, *Grande Raccordo Anulare*, via Salaria and the course of the Tiber river. Credits: Volpe, Rizzuto, D'Angelo.

In addition to more detailed work at the scale of individual projects, the initial fieldwork activities in the four identified cases are enabling us to establish and initiate a deeper dialogue with several stakeholders directly involved in receiving the plan, translating it into concrete projects, and integrating it with regular territorial planning. Technical officers, PNRR managers, deputy mayors, municipal councillors, and even individual citizens currently form the mosaic of interlocutors with whom we are working to understand how—from a governance perspective—local contexts have prepared to welcome this major plan and adapt it to specific needs. This phase of dialogue is proving to be extremely valuable, both for the opportunity it provides to engage with the real mechanisms of implementing a national plan and because it paves the way for the subsequent phases of the research. These upcoming phases will involve establishing one or more living labs, envisioned as spaces for dialogue, collaboration, and the co-design of shared strategies. These living labs aim to interconnect the multitude of projects with each other and anchor them within the individual territories.

4. Transect reading

The case study is the transect drawn in the Lazio region from the Tyrrhenian coast, the metropolitan area of Rome, and the foothills of the Apennines, a portion of territory that includes a wide variety of landscapes and urban conditions, from the Tiber delta to the Sabini mountains, tracking the Tiber valley, crossing the Farfa river valley and the via Salaria, an ancient Roman route. Here follows a complexity of geomorphological varieties, from the low and sandy Tyrrhenian coast, followed by the reclaimed alluvial plain, passing through the Agro Romano countryside and ascending then to the mountainous region of Sabina. Moreover, different urban conditions: from the coastal city of Fiumicino, an important hub of mobility and logistics (airport–harbor), then enters the dense metropolitan area of Rome, through its peripheral neighbourhoods outside the *Grande Raccordo Anulare*, then moving through the consolidated and then historical urban patterns. Gradually leaving the metropolitan context, the urban area thins out and

includes large rural areas, ancient towns, and sprawled urbanisation whose character is still strongly influenced by their proximity to Rome. The upper part of the transect is distinctly characterised by a rural landscape, with historic villages (*poggio*) and other recent settlements along the Tiber and infrastructures such as routes and railways. By this variety, the transect was subdivided in four quadrants, specific areas of 20 x 20 km, focused in concentrations of projects: Isola Sacra on the coast, Tiburtino III on the eastern outskirts of Rome, Fonte Nuova along Tiber valley, and Poggio Mirteto in the sub-Appenines area. As mentioned in the previous section, for each in-depth study, three projects funded by the PNRR were selected to be analysed in greater detail.

Isola Sacra is “urbanised countryside,” the result of spontaneous expansion on reclaimed land, recently formalised with the construction of some services such as public lighting and transportation. Otherwise, the area still suffers from the low quality and quantities of public facilities and the environmental issues linked to the lack of services such as sewer and stormwater drainage systems. The first selected project involves the renovation of a multi-sport pole, part of a cluster of a wider renovation of municipal sports facilities. The project is part of a wider transforming area that includes the renovation of a public school and the transformation of a former thermoelectric power plant into a public auditorium, both projects funded separately from the PNRR. The second intervention involves a private farm area where an agrivoltaic system will be installed, underlining an interesting integration between energy and food production and new scenarios of ecological land use. The third project focuses on the urbanised area of Focene, a coastal settlement, with similar conditions to Isola Sacra prone to frequent flooding, and in which PNRR programmes aim to upgrade the infrastructure of the territory with systems of capture and drainage of meteorological water.



Figure 2. Visit of the worksite of Via Roma in Poggio Mirteto. Road restoration intervention due to geomorphological instability. Credits: Valeria Volpe

Tiburtino III is a neighbourhood along the historic via Tiburtina, on the northeast outskirts of Rome, developed in the 1930s as a public housing district and heavily reconfigured between the 70s and 90s. The neighbourhood is characterised by the presence of a welfare district composed of schools, sports facilities, and public parks involved in a complex renovation partly under PNRR programmes such as the construction of a new healthcare facility. The second project includes a reforestation programme in a large public area adjacent to a roadway, an important action of environmental mitigation and improvement of public facilities. Lastly, the third project involves a significant mobility transformation by the construction of a new tram line along the western borders of the neighbourhood, which will change the mobility behaviours and it is also an occasion to rethink the street space of a long infrastructure.

Fonte Nuova is a municipality formed in the 2000s by two main centres, Tor Lupara and Santa Lucia, a result of an intense, and often informal, urbanization since the 1950s. The area is characterised by large cultivated areas, partly meadows, partly olive groves, and horticultural production and by the presence of fragmented forest area. The informality of part of the urbanised area has led to various issues, such as the distribution of utilities (electricity, water), lack of infrastructure to mitigate hydrogeological risks (such

as the absence of water drainage systems), and the limited offerings or poor quality of some welfare services. The selected projects in this area represent the three project clusters proposed by the local municipality: school buildings, hydrogeological risk mitigation, and public facilities. The first project provides the construction of a new cafeteria and nursery in a school's settlements characterised by accessibility and mobility criticalities, as it is located within a rural grid and on minor roads. The second project aims to mitigate hydrogeological risks by the construction of systems for capturing and draining stormwater along street spaces. This is a paradigmatic project for the case study, affected by many flooding episodes due to the absence of water infrastructures and by the hilly configuration of the territory. The last selected project involves the construction of a cycling path that symbolically and physically connects the two urban areas passing through an agro-urban landscape and sprawled urbanisation.



Figure 3. Site visit to the Parco Agrisolare and Strutture Rurali projects in the Municipality of Poggio Mirteto. The projects fall respectively under the Mission 2 of the PNRR “Green Revolution and Ecological Transition” and Mission 1 “Digitalisation, Innovation, Competitiveness, Culture and Tourism”. Credits: Valeria Volpe

Poggio Mirteto is located in the historic region of Sabina, a hilly area widely cultivated with olive groves, vegetable production, pastures, and arable land. Like other neighbouring municipalities, the historic centre is built on a poggio, a hillside structure, elevated above the rest of the territory. About 6 km away, the area of Poggio Mirteto Scalo is situated in the Tiber valley; a 20th-century urban development that grew around the railway station, largely populated by commuters. The entire municipality is classified as an “intermediate area” as defined by the Aree Interne strategy, which highlights a context with certain sociospatial vulnerabilities. At the same time, under the influence of intense commuter flows towards Rome (facilitated by rail connections), the municipality has experienced demographic growth, especially in the area of Scalo. The selected projects within the context of Poggio Mirteto cover a variety of themes and settings. The first intervention involves the construction of a new school canteen at the Poggio Mirteto Scalo primary school. The second project is installing an agrivoltaic system on the buildings of an agricultural cooperative that brings together various dairy producers from the local supply chain. The final project, related to hydrogeological risk mitigation, involves stabilising a long section of the main road leading up to the historic hill, which has been prone to several landslides.

5. Discussion

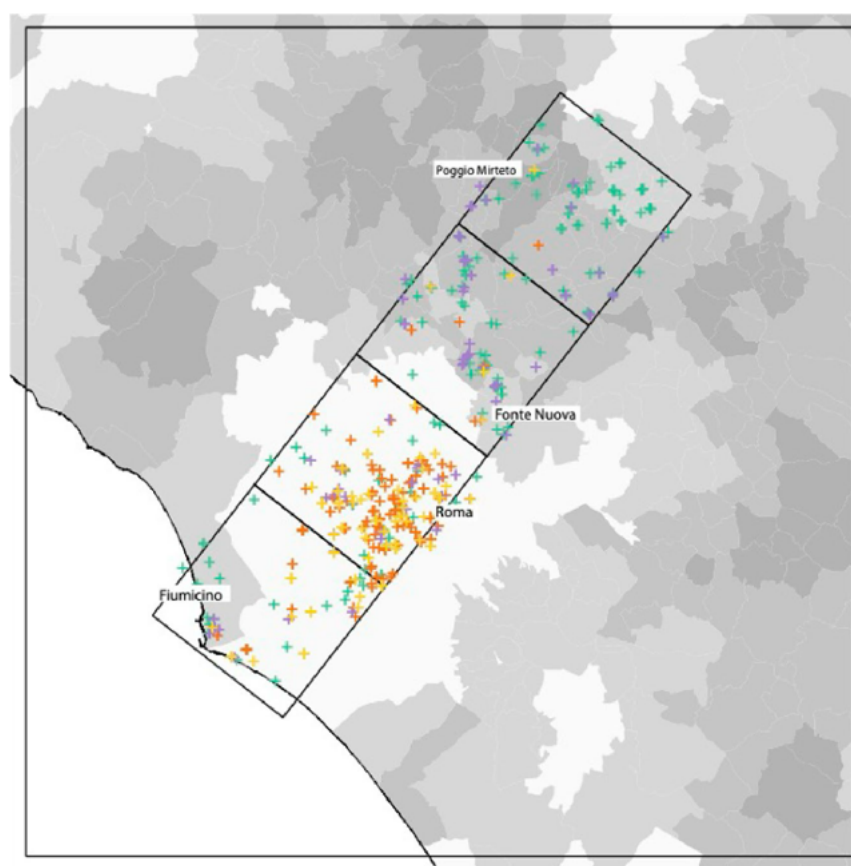


Figure 4. Inner areas gradient and PNRR projects on the transect. Credits: Volpe, Rizzuto, D'Angelo.

What is this intricate mosaic of projects, scattered like confetti across the Italian territory, showing us? How does this gradual approach to the territory help us understand the effects of the PNRR in terms of spatial justice and disparities between regions and populations? Given that this work is currently underway, the discussion presented here should be considered an intermediate stage of the process, comprising several considerations and hypotheses based on various elements: exploratory interviews conducted with institutional stakeholders in the territories under analysis; field crossings and initial indepth studies carried out both by the researchers of the unit and together with students from the urban planning lab currently engaged in work complementary to that of the PRIN project; and a thorough review of the projects through an examination of technical documentation gathered through collaborations with municipal and local institutions established in the case studies.

The first element concerns the reception of the plan at the administrative level. When it arrived in the territories, municipal administrations found themselves needing to reorganise, and in some cases, to open new positions for the hiring of technical staff specifically dedicated to managing the PNRR; this was the case, for example, in the municipality of Fiumicino. In other cases—especially in smaller municipalities located in internal and peripheral areas such as Poggio Mirteto—the same municipal technicians, already heavily burdened, had to take on the responsibility of translating the plan into a system of calls for proposals and implementation programmes. This point alerts us to the risk of widening gaps between those areas where a solid administrative structure has proven ready to implement an unprecedented plan and others where the lack of human resources and technical expertise may be hindering both the execution of the plan and, in later stages, the follow-up of the projects.

A second element from this perspective relates to the extreme speed, as is well known, that characterises the rollout of the PNRR. From the outset, the plan triggered an acceleration of processes due to the necessity of meeting certain deadlines and requirements imposed by the European Union. This dynamic has certainly not facilitated the construction of a unified strategy for the suite of projects. Instead, these projects have emerged more as a sum of actions that seem to suggest the need for a post hoc corrective

and adaptive approach, which municipalities are now trying to implement by integrating the PNRR programming with regular planning. Another common element across the various cases that undoubtedly contributed to this fragmented structure of projects concerns the integration of pre-existing projects—sometimes already underway, other times still in preliminary stages—into the list of projects funded by this extraordinary policy. In other words, a series of ongoing projects, as they are termed in public administration language, were simply “transferred” onto this new programme, which has transformed the execution methods and administrative imperatives, often complicating the processes involved.

One noteworthy point that we find particularly interesting is the specific type of intervention being released in these areas. In most cases, we are dealing with a set of actions aimed at restoring and/or upgrading ordinary architectural or infrastructural assets. This includes school buildings, sports, and health facilities, as well as wastewater disposal networks, roads, and bike paths. Additional reforestation or land security measures supplement these. Rather than new large-scale constructions, these represent a significant intervention in the extraordinary maintenance of those structures essential to improving livability conditions in certain areas. As some of the interviewees point out, these are often essential interventions, though not always sufficient to mend certain existing fractures in terms of inequalities and territorial injustices.

6. “To reweave” projects and territories

Based on the current stage of the research and the interpretive hypotheses, a series of possible and necessary actions seems to be emerging, which we have decided to unify under a single action: “reweaving.” Borrowed from the world of tailoring, this term is understandable as “repairing a stitch in a fabric that has unraveled” that allows a posteriori restoration of both physical and relational connections. On one hand, a reweaving appears desirable between the ongoing PNRR projects and the territories they affect; on the other, some of the cases analysed suggest possible design stitchings between them.

This operation takes on various forms and could draw on all those “grey areas,” those undefined aspects that the PNRR leaves on the ground. It could be interpreted as a physical reconnection between the architectural spaces currently being worked on, as a functional reconnection between the different functional programmes and future developments, or even as a transformation that addresses the socioenvironmental vulnerabilities forgotten in the rapid execution of the PNRR.

Another way to interpret this reweaving concerns the networks of actors already involved and those that could potentially be engaged. What we would like to suggest is the possibility of adopting an empirical approach that, by contextualizing the PNRR projects within specific networks of existing relationships and spaces, attempts to propose the possibility of making “kin,” here understood as Haraway (2016) suggests, as a system of relationships between subjects (and between places) “that co-create and influence each other.” The proposed set of actions could translate into concrete operations within individual territories through the space–time framework of living labs, which brings together the various stakeholders and local inhabitants, and serves as spaces for co-designing possible future scenarios. A fundamental dimension to keep in mind is the temporal one. While the PNRR has a defined timeline ending in 2026, the living labs could extend planning horizons, establishing a post-PNRR framework that continues to support the projects in the long term. This work frames the living labs as an opportunity for reweaving PNRR projects to bridge physical, functional, and relational divides across territories, fostering connections that outlast the project’s timeline. This approach offers a pathway not only for implementing current PNRR projects but also for shaping and guiding future initiatives, creating a framework for territorial transformation that extends beyond the time imposed by fundings and fosters lasting connections.

Data Availability Statement

Available data on PNRR projects can be found on Italia Domani platform <https://www.italiadomani.gov.it/content/sogei-ng/it/it/home.html> and Open PNRR <https://openpnrr.it/>

Contributor statement

The introduction and conclusion were jointly written by all authors of this article: Valeria Volpe, Flavia Rizzuto, and Fabrizio D'Angelo. Chapter 2, “Spatial Justice as a Theoretical Framework,” is attributed to Flavia Rizzuto; Chapters 3 and 5, “Methodology”

and “Discussion,” to Valeria Volpe; and Chapter 4, “Transect Reading,” to Fabrizio D'Angelo.

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