



Urbanpromo 2026 INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SEMINAR

URBANISTICA DI SOTTO

Regulations, procedures, and tools shaping urban space

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Abstract

Many urban transformations do not occur during the "high" moments of statutory urban planning, but rather within the continuous and often overlooked layer where sector plans, regulations, procedures, and tools intersect with the actual city. It is here that urban planning takes shape: in day-to-day implementation, micro-decisions, ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, operational interpretations of rules, the use and reuse of spaces, and the compromises between control, adaptation, and awareness. This set of non-statutory action practices produces tangible effects on the quality of urban space—whether public or private—as well as on accessibility, safety, the timeline of transformations, and de facto inequalities, even when they are not recognized as a "project" in the strict sense.

The International Conference aims to focus on an "underlying urbanism" (*urbanistica di sotto*) that does not stand in opposition to institutions, but rather moves through their margins and interstitial spaces: sector plans and non-mandatory plans of an experimental nature¹, agendas², protocols, specifications, technical standards, authorization procedures, rules of use, informal and semi-formal practices, incremental adjustments, as well as maintenance, care, and management procedures and customs. From this perspective, the boundary between "high" statutory planning and "underground" urbanism is not a dualism, but rather a field of negotiation in which the modalities of urban transformation are continuously rethought and made possible.

The distinction is not so much hierarchical as it is one of complementarity and juxtaposition: when "underground" urbanism reinforces consistency, implementation, and coordination (multi-actor, multi-sector), it becomes a useful extension of the statutory urban plan; conversely, when it

¹ By way of example: Municipal Acoustic Classification Plan, Municipal Energy Plan, Time and Hours Plan, Plan for the Localization and Distribution of Functions, Municipal Mobility and Sustainable Mobility Plan, Commercial Plan for restricted areas, Mobile Telephony Plan, Water Plan, Fuel Station Distribution Plan, Plan for the Elimination of Architectural Barriers (PEBA), Civil Protection Plan, Green Space Plan, Color Plan, Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP), UNESCO Management Plan, Strategic Tourism Plan, Ecological Transition Action Plan, etc.

² Ecological Transition Agenda, Social Inclusion Agenda, Digital Innovation Agenda, Urban Biodiversity Agenda, Water Management Agenda, Active Aging Agenda, Integrated Municipal Agenda, etc.



bypasses the statutory sphere, it can produce a "government by exception," weakening institutional decision-making and generating inequalities of treatment within the urban space.

The objective of the Conference is to discuss how to make "underground" urbanism visible and coordinated: what lexicons and evidence are needed to recognize it; what skills intersect it (technical, administrative, managerial, social); and how to design tools and mechanisms that hold it together with higher planning levels from a perspective of harmonious innovation. The Conference invites contributions that bring cases, methods, and reflections to bring "underground" urbanism to light as a field of study, practice, and administrative action.

The sessions

The Conference will be structured into six sessions, each coordinated by a discussant. Each session proposes a specific framework for "underground urbanism," around which authors are invited to develop their reflections.

1. Notes from the Underground: Structurally Inevitable Administrative Discretion vs. Fully Eliminable Administrative Discretion

This session invites discussion on the forms of discretion that permeate underground urbanism, distinguishing between those that are inevitable and functional to handling concrete cases and those that can be reduced, made transparent, or proceduralized. The goal is to examine tools, rules, and practices capable of limiting arbitrariness and exceptions without compromising the adaptive capacity of public action.

- **Discussant:** Stefano Moroni

2. Relevance and Future of a Cumulative Practical "Sub-knowledge": Between Roots, Grafts, and Uprooting

This session explores the wealth of practical, technical, and administrative knowledge accumulated over time within underground urbanism through offices, routines, institutional cultures, and situated learning. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which innovations, reforms, and new tools can either reinforce this deeply rooted knowledge or cause its loss or unproductive uprooting.

- **Discussant:** Paolo Galuzzi

3. Like a Thucydides Trap: Emerging Practices and Statutory Urban Planning in a Rhizomatic World

This session focuses on the tensions between emerging urban practices and consolidated statutory frameworks within a context marked by increasingly rapid, widespread, and networked transformations. The goal is to question whether and how statutory planning frameworks can learn from emergencies without dissolving into episodic regulation or governmentality by exception.

- **Discussant:** Maurizio Carta



4. *The Institutional Dimension in Contemporary Urban Planning: A Question*

This session offers a reflection on the role of institutions in contemporary urban planning, navigating between formalization and informality, direct participation and representation, regulation and inclusion. The goal is to reveal which institutional and regulatory setups can support the construction of a truly accessible, liveable, and universally usable urban space today.

- **Discussant:** Patrizia Gabellini

5. *Transformations and Reconstructions Linked to Major Events, Natural Disasters, and Territorial Crises: Catalysts or Solutions of Continuity?*

This session explores the forms of underground urbanism activated during exceptional circumstances, when ordinances, derogations, and extraordinary procedures impose rapid and profound transformations on territories. The goal is to discuss under what conditions emergency and reconstruction can translate into coherent, equitable, and lasting processes, rather than fragmented, extractive, or visionless interventions.

- **Discussant:** Michelangelo Russo

6. *Between Evaluation, Decision, and Implementation: The Tools of Underground Urbanism*

This session investigates the evaluative and decision-support tools that make underground urbanism operational, guiding priorities, selections, implementation sequences, and micro-transformations of urban space. The goal is to highlight the role of metrics, protocols, support systems, experimental practices, and learning processes, discussing how to integrate evaluation and implementation without reducing urban complexity to a mere technical-performative exercise.

- **Discussant:** Ivan Blečić

DEADLINES

Authors are invited to submit an abstract (**max 500 words**) by **July 17, 2026**, exclusively via the dedicated form at the following link: <https://forms.gle/CybuxXxt3tvxE2iA8>

Submissions must indicate the first name, last name, and affiliation of the authors, and specify the two themes/sessions to which the contribution relates, in order of preference (first choice, second choice). *Abstracts received through other channels will not be accepted.*

Abstracts will be selected by **August 3, 2026**, with subsequent notification sent via email (both in case of acceptance and rejection). Selected authors must submit their full paper by **October 2, 2026**.



PARTICIPATION FEE

The publication of a paper is subject to the payment of a participation fee of **€ 275.00** (€ 220.00 for INU members, € 165.00 for INU Giovani members).

The fee is per paper (not per person) and includes the publication of the paper in the journal *Contesti. Città, Territori, Progetti* (Class A and Open Access Journal).

The payment receipt must be sent along with the completed invoicing form. Payment details and the invoicing form can be downloaded from the download section of the dedicated Call for Papers page on the Urbanpromo website: <https://urbanpromo.it/info/urbanistica-di-sotto/>

CONTACTS

For any questions or clarifications, please contact the organizing secretariat at call@urbit.it.