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Editors

# Integrated Evaluation for the Management of Contemporary Cities

Results of SIEV 2016

 Springer

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# Preface

The volume comprises a selection of the best papers presented at the SIEV (Italian Society of Appraisers and Evaluators) 2016 Conference on The influence of the “*Laudato si*” Encyclical letter on Evaluation approaches—urban areas between conflict and solidarity, decay and regeneration, exclusion, and participation, which was held on April 2016 in Rome, Italy. The scientific conference brought together experts from different fields: economics, appraisal, evaluation, architecture, urban planning, sociology, decision sciences, in addition to energy companies, ONG, government and public administration representatives.

The purpose of the Conference as well as of this collection of papers is to encourage a reflection on the cultural, methodological, and procedural rationales of the evaluation of territorial transformations, with a special focus on urban regeneration. Urban regeneration is a more complex process than the renovation of existing buildings, as it concerns social and environmental problems, inhabitants’ quality of life, protection of tangible and intangible resources, innovation processes, and business activities. In this historical phase of urbanization—when the control of urban spreading is becoming a necessary and shared strategy—urban regeneration interventions always have a strategic content. In fact, the physical and structural transformations profoundly change the territorial organization of the city, producing irreversible long-term effects. Therefore, those projects characterize the medium- and long-term policy of the city.

Pope Francis’ *Laudato si*’ Encyclical mainly focusses on the issue of urban transformations and, more generally, on the questions of the protection and enhancement of the environment and the territory. In fact, the Encyclical addresses some crucial issues concerning the development, management, and transformation processes of the territory. Moreover, it principally reflects on the present ecological crisis and on which strategies may be envisaged to overcome it according to the principles of sustainability and solidarity. The way in which the Encyclical declines these arguments raises important questions. Essentially, the document considers the urban issue as one of the most important contemporary global structural crises and it correctly provides an interpretation which overlaps the environmental and social issues tackling them at the same time and as a single problem.

The 72% of European people live in an urban environment and this percentage is expected to rise to 80% by 2050. Due to this trend, cities are continuously growing with an ever greater risk of social segregation, decreasing security and enhancement of environmental problems. All these phenomena, together with the structural fiscal crisis of the States, are the main features of the contemporary urban issue. Moreover, the urban actors' wide range of values, and the decreasing power of public interest in favor of individual or partisan interests, calls into question the credibility of both the decision-making process and the anticipated results of projects and plans. Therefore, local politics is itself failing to deliver effective strategic decisions in coping with globalization, market conditions, and local individualism.

One of the key aspects of the urban issue is the spread of distressed urban areas. Urban suburbs and distressed pockets within historic centers are the places where the social and environmental crises overlap each other. They are symbolic places where economic exclusion and social relegation dominate, where any attempt to improve people's social and existential conditions is defeated by first, the progressive erosion of opportunities, and second, the lack of confidence in the effectiveness of State's and their own actions. The polarization of urban spaces (mirrored, on one hand, by anonymous outskirts, and on the other hand, by set-apart communities of the privileged) threatens to undermine the very idea of the city as well as the reason for its existence. In this context, the policies of the city governments are in many cases fragmented, contingent and partisan. As a consequence, the urban policy became merely an arena where many different (public and private, strategic and contingent) interests compete.

The "*Laudato si*" Encyclical tackles the contemporary urban issue integrating social and environmental issues, interpreting the city as a common good, characterizing urban degradation as a social issue, stressing the right of everyone to participate in the city government. This interpretation rises both important ethical demands and, from a theoretical-methodological point of view, a question about whether this interpretation can have implications on evaluation theories and practices in use. According to that vision, the decision-making of urban regeneration should not be longer considered individual, but collective and multilateral. As a consequence, also the very nature and the aims of evaluation changes.

It is key to note that, the more decisions move from traditional individual interests to the common ones, the more the evaluation content moves from market assessments to collective/social evaluations, where the general (political) interests are intertwined with individual (market) interests. In this case, general management rules of public and collective activities (e.g., transparency, accountability, political and social control, etc.) become important. Furthermore, urban regeneration processes have substantial effects on the natural and built environment of distressed areas, as well as their inhabitants' quality of life, employment, etc., that foster segregation, relegation, and exclusion processes and, in so doing, deeply change their prospects. As a consequence, in order to promote the citizens' right to an active participation, the nature of the decision-making itself should become deliberative. This requires that the inhabitants of the suburbs should be informed, empowered, and enabled to think "evaluatively".

It goes without saying that such choices have important consequences on the evaluation methodologies. This means to accept the multiplicity of values in the decision-making process and, as far as evaluation is concerned, to take into consideration a complex vector of values where the traditional economic-financial ones are only one of the many kinds of value to be considered. It also means that the decision-making is an interactive dynamic process, which requires an evaluation able to take into consideration uncertainty and, consequently, to accept the variability of decision parameters namely, the change of interest, objectives, structures of preference, and, consequently, evaluation criteria. Moreover, it may ask for dealing with the structure of the interests at stake that is, not simply with “traditional” cost and benefit, losers and gainers. But, and above all, it is important to establish both their social distribution and who are entitled to and who are excluded from taking part in the collective decision-making process.

It is a common understanding that evaluation plays an important role in building informed, shared, and efficient decision-making processes. Therefore, focusing on the roles of urban regeneration interventions evaluation is important for many reasons.

From the point of view of (public or private) promoters of the regeneration project, the evaluation is important due to its capacity to identify and explicitly state the objectives and the critical interests to be pursued (as well as their related strategic priorities), the constraints to be tackled, the values to be supported, the feasibility of the investment, etc. In so doing, the evaluation helps the decision-makers to make successful decisions, but at the same time, it is the main tool that the public administration and the market actors use to legitimize their regeneration projects in front of citizens.

From the point of view of the civil society (particularly of the distressed areas people), evaluation is also the main tool to recognize and understand the positive and/or negative consequences of the project. In this way, people will be able to make decisions and to behave with awareness of the facts, since the evaluation may be able to disclose the contents (i.e., results, effects, and consequences) of the alternatives from the point of view of the periphery (e.g., verifying the source and reliability of the information, the plausibility of the reasons, clarifying the responsibilities, establishing costs and benefits, identifying who -and how much-gains and/or loses, etc.). This means that evaluation provides justifications for choices.

In the difficult, complex and even conflictual context of urban regeneration projects, the evaluation process may build an orderly and comprehensible system of relevant information, useful experiences, effective practices, explicit and scientifically sustainable judgements. As a consequence, it is a suitable tool to aggregate interests and unify expectations toward credible and shared social and economic objectives and to avoid ill-advised (often ideological and opaque) judgements based on irrational fears and beliefs.

But, to be successful, these evaluations require to renew their own principles, techniques, and procedures. This means that it is necessary to look for conceptual and methodological paths that are, in some way, different from those prevailing at present.

The bulk of essays presented at the Conference proves that Pope Francis' Encyclical proposes new and innovative approaches able to cope (in an impressive and concrete way) with the complexity of the urban regeneration issue and, to set up and direct the (necessarily) integrated, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary evaluation process.

The book aims to encourage experts' and scholars' participation in a multidisciplinary cultural dialogue about urban regeneration projects, as a consequence its organization provides the widest possible room to contributions, from various points of view, about the following four main themes: (1) Human Ecology: Values and Paradigms; (2) Integral Ecology and Natural Resource Management; (3) Intergenerational Equity; (4) How to Enhance Dialogue and Transparency in Decision-Making Processes.

In addition, two introductions highlight the main issues, namely the role and functions of the evaluation of urban transformation projects in distressed suburbs, and the integrated evaluation of environmental damage at territorial scale also in terms of intergenerational equity.

Rome, Italy

Enrico Fattinanzi



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