

Acronym – RESISTING

Title – Reconnecting Social innovation with InSTitutions in urban planning

Scientific coordinator – Elena Ostanel

Department – Department of Architecture and Arts

ERC sector – SH7

Strategic emerging topic – Human Wellbeing

Cluster – Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society

Iuav role – lead partner

Other partners – University of Catania, Polytechnic University of Turin

Duration – 24 months

Start – 30/11/2023

Closure – 29/11/2025

Project budget – € 265 263.00

Iuav budget – € 116 885.00

Funding to Iuav – € 116 885.00

Source of funding – MUR (Ministry of University and Research) - Call PRIN 2022 PNRR

Description – For decades, social innovation – voluntary, non-statutory, citizen-led initiatives providing services or goods, beyond the State – has been increasingly commended for offering enormous potential by both academic and policy discourses. However, it has often become a convenient concept for local governments to justify their disengagement from tackling a wide range of problems around exclusion, deprivation, and lack of well-being, through public action. Despite many agreeing on the fact that local communities can unrealistically find alone progressive and long-lasting solutions for deep-rooted problems, we still miss a comprehensive and critical understanding of the relationship between Social Innovation (SI) and institutions in urban planning, and how to overcome current drifts.

RESISTING will work on bridging the current knowledge gaps surrounding social innovation by repositioning the pivotal role of institutions in the SI debate. To do so, the project will develop an original comparative analysis at several levels – regional and sub-regional, within diverse local governments and policy settings in Veneto, Piedmont, and Sicily – to clearly assess factors shaping the SI-institutions relationship, how these relational patterns emerge, and overlap with the socio-spatial distribution of disadvantages, and what are the conditions for institutional learning, from an urban planning perspective. Finally, RESISTING will act toward the internationalization of the Italian research system and the improvement of the scientific community, not only through high-impact publications, but also through the organization of an international conference that will be the testbed for discussing the advancement of knowledge in the field, and future research steps.

Objectives – The project builds the research endeavour on what we claim are two major missed opportunities in current research:

- the investigation of the spatial relationships between SI and institutions, providing a critical discussion of how SI-institution relational patterns overlap with the socio-spatial distribution of disadvantages;
- the analysis of the enabling role of institutions to the emergence, evolution, and effectiveness of social innovative practices, and the possibilities that institutions themselves can learn by engaging with SI with an impact on public action and urban planning practice.

In the long term, RESISTING overall goal is to break new ground in the study of social innovation applied to urban planning contributing in the long term to reframing social innovation concept thanks to a deep understanding of its relationships with institutions and its interplay with social and spatial dynamics.

From a theoretical point of view, RESISTING will advance the-state-of-the art by supporting the idea that social innovation cannot be anymore considered as a force of local societies that can alone find solutions to pressing urban problems but should be viewed as a social construct that might need to be mobilised ad hoc within specific spatial and institutional settings.

RESISTING is aimed at impacting on planning domain, ultimately supporting the design of a planning practice that is not regulatory, rule bound, procedure driven, obsessed with order and certainty. But at the same time, one that does not use the capacity of communities to organize as an excuse to build an ideology of the unplanned that justifies the absence of the State in finding progressive solutions for a whole range of problems of exclusion, deprivation and lack of wellbeing.