

University of Palermo | Department of Architecture
Master Programme in Spatial Planning | Year II
Academic Year 2026-2027 | First semester

Urban and Regional Policies

Module of Planning 2 Studio + Urban And Regional Policies Integrated Course

Prof. Ignazio Vinci

Introduction

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

		Thursday (10:00-12:00) Room 0.3	Thursday (12:00-14:00) Room 0.3
24.09.2026 > 05.11.2026	WEEK I	Lecture	Reading
	WEEK II	Lecture*	Reading*
	WEEK III	Lecture	Reading
	WEEK IV	Lecture	Reading
	WEEK V	Lecture	Project Work
	WEEK VI	Lecture	Project Work
	WEEK VII	Lecture	Project Work
BREAK (09.11.2026 > 17.11.2026) – INTERNATIONAL INTENSIVE PROGRAMME CLIMET			
19.11.2026 > 17.12.2026	WEEK VIII	Lecture	Project Work
	WEEK IX	Lecture	Project Work
	WEEK X	Lecture	Project Work
	WEEK XI	Lecture	Project Work
	WEEK XII	Presentation	Presentation

* To be rescheduled

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WHAT IS URBAN POLICY?

Urban policy is the **cluster of initiatives** that are intended by **public authorities** (government, partnerships, single-purpose agencies, nongovernmental organizations, foundations, and others) to have an impact on **how people live in urban areas**.

What counts as urban policy has varied over time, the definition of urban areas has changed, and what makes urban policy distinctive (i.e., separate from architecture, urban planning, and housing policy) has also been in flux.

Urban policy has a long history and has played a significant part both in defining how urban areas and cities are viewed by governments and in the **remaking of social and welfare policy** over the past half-century.

“Urban policy”, in Hutchison R. (Ed.) (2010), *Encyclopedia of Urban Studies*, 908-910, SAGE Publications, DOI: doi.org/10.4135/9781412971973.n317

WHAT IS URBAN POLICY?

The shared **distinguishing feature of urban policy is that it is area based**. In other words, whereas other forms of social policy focus attention on particular client groups (e.g. the poor, children, tenants, patients), **urban policy focuses attention on particular areas** (even if they are associated with particular groups, e.g. minority groups or migrant populations).

The **size and nature of the areas**, however, **have varied significantly** depending on the **time period** and **national policy context**.

So, for example, urban policy has at times been focused on **inner cities** and at other times on **public housing** on the **edge of cities**.

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WHAT IS URBAN POLICY?

In one sense urban policy is no more than the **cluster of public policy initiatives intended to have some sort of impact on the lives of urban residents**. At a basic level, it is distinctive because it is **targeted on territories or geographical areas** rather than **particular ‘client’ groups**. There is nevertheless a danger of defining urban policy solely through the words of the policymakers, because **there are also strong alternative visions of the urban**, of what it is and what it might be.

(...) What matters is to find ways of **encouraging forms of interaction and negotiation** which draw on the **richness of the multiple identities experienced in the city**.

“Urban policy”, in Cochrane A. (Ed.) (2020), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 93-96, Elsevier, DOI: doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10229-X

WHAT IS URBAN POLICY?

Urban policy is **not simply a set of technical activities**, but it is framed through **contested meanings and contested politics**. The ways in which the **various strands and themes** of urban policy **overlap**, and interweave at **different times** and in **different places**, reflect and shape **contemporary understandings of the city** and its potential.

Urban policy further highlights the **changing shapes of welfare and postwelfare states** (in neoliberal economy). There are continuing tensions between different forms of urban policy oriented toward solving the (social as well as economic) **problems associated with urban life** and those seeking to use the urban as a **catalyst for social and economic change and urban development**.

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WHAT IS URBAN POLICY?

The term **‘urban policy’** refers to the **myriad of policy issues, problems, and solutions** that are addressed by the **government and other political actors** in **cities or metropolitan areas**. Although it often reflects national policy issues and agenda setting, the **urban environment presents unique policy challenges**.

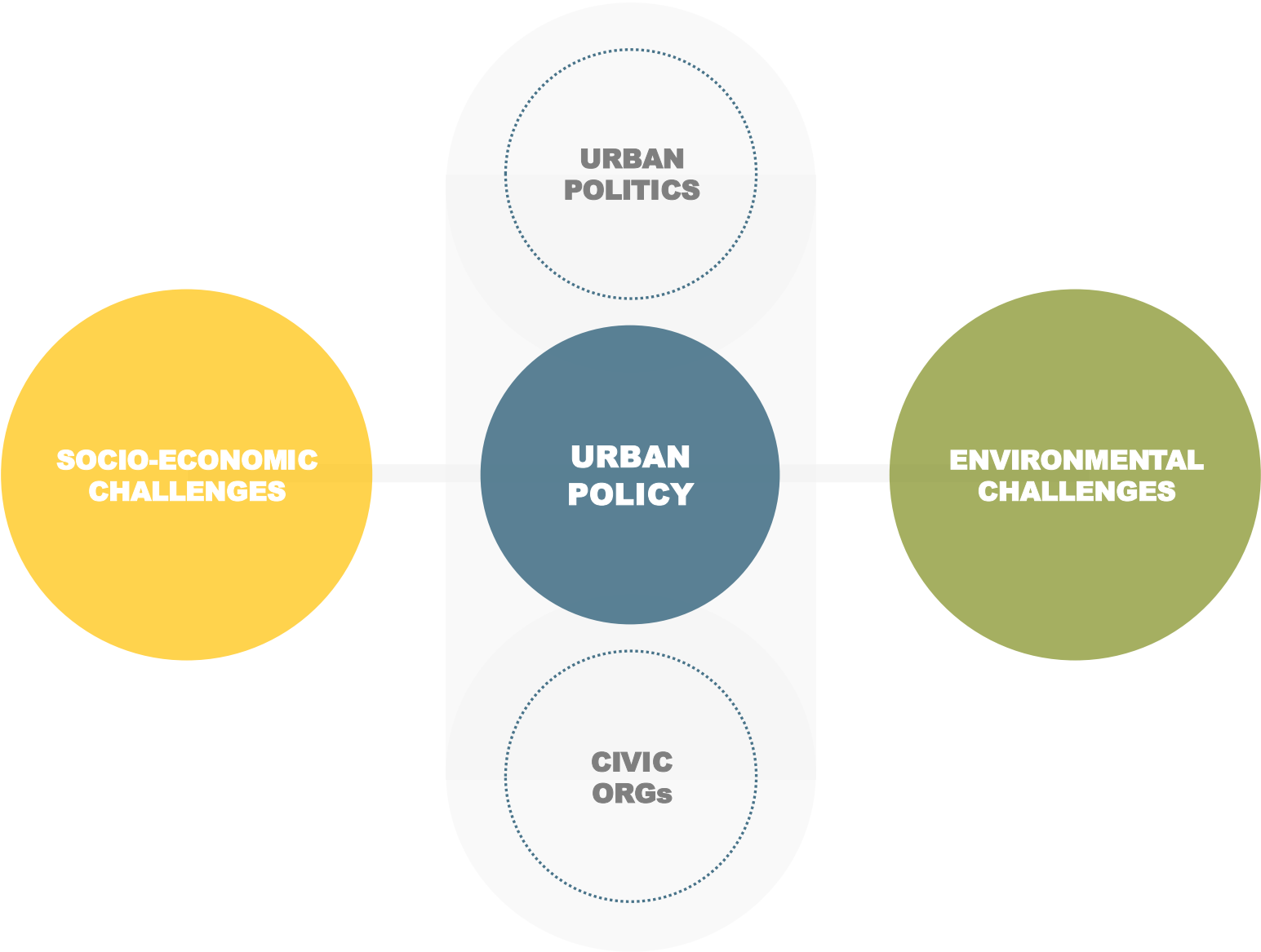
Every city has its own **political, social, and economic history**, which influences the development of **specific institutional relations** within the city as well as a particular **political culture**. Within this unique political, social, and economic context, urban policies are generated and implemented.

“Urban policy”, in Ward D.E. (2006), *Federalism in America: An Encyclopedia*, Center for the Study of Federalism, Accessible at: <https://federalism.org/encyclopedia/no-topic/urban-policy/>

CHALLENGES DRIVING URBAN POLICY



THE SOCIO-POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF URBAN POLICY



URBAN GOVERNANCE

Urban governance is the process through which a city is governed.

It involves **different government agencies** at **different levels** with **diverse interests and responsibilities** in relation to the urban arena. It also involves other, **non-governmental actors and interests in the private and third (non-profit or community) sectors.**

Urban policy is therefore characterised by the '**search for co-ordination**' as the policy challenges cities face are **cross-cutting** and **multi-level** and require **multi-agency, cross-sector responses**. Policy co-ordination across the government portfolios of transport, infrastructure, environment, housing, finance, education, health and social services would be required to build a '**multi-dimensional policy perspective**' on cities.

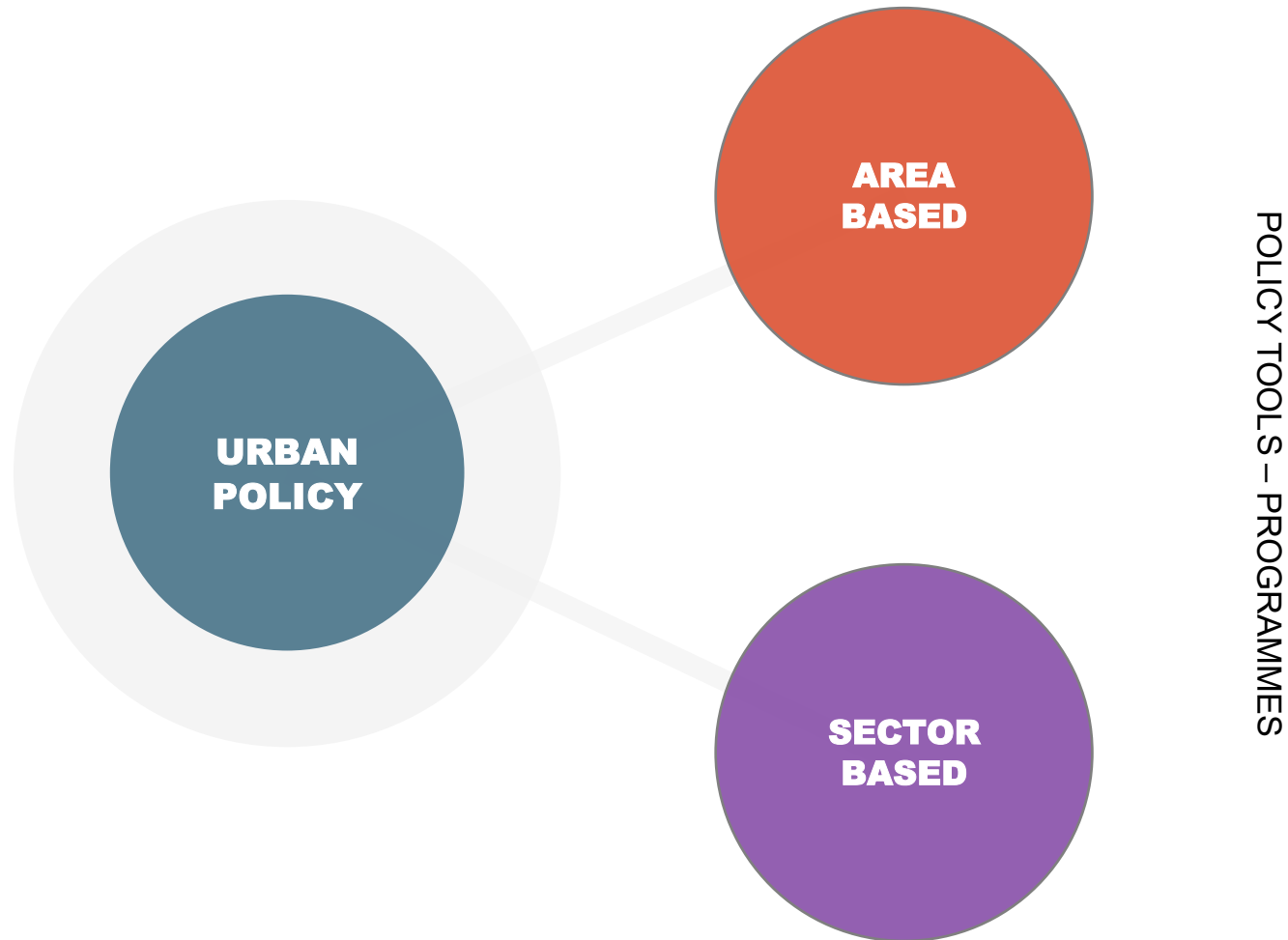
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INTEGRATED APPROACH

Contemporary urban policies refers to a wide and complex range of urban issues that – to be effectively addressed – requires an **integrated approach to the design, planning and implementation of local action plans**. This means, particularly:

1. Connect **different types of action**, combining projects on the built environment (e.g. physical interventions on buildings, public space, infrastructure) with immaterial interventions (to support welfare, local jobs, education, health).
2. Act at **different scales of intervention**, including the metropolitan, urban, and neighbourhood dimensions.
3. Rely on **various policy-makers and stakeholders**, both public and private, to strengthen commitment and share responsibilities.

URBAN POLICY IN OPERATION



STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Lectures

- Policy challenges in contemporary urban areas
- Actors and policy-makers in urban policy
- Targets of urban policy
- Urban policy as a process
- European Union urban and regional policy
- Case studies

Readings

- Articles and papers

Project Work

- Policy analysis exercise

PROJECT WORK

- In the **project work** students will be required to make a **policy analysis exercise on a city or metropolitan area at their choice**.
- The policy analysis exercise should be focused on a **project** or **programme** led by a **municipality** or a **metropolitan authority** in fields such as urban regeneration/renewal, sustainable mobility, strategic planning, etc.
- The analysis must be accompanied by a **description of the social, economic and institutional context** behind the project/programme.
- The output of the project work will consist of a **ppt presentation** that will be part of the final evaluation.
- To carry on the project, students are allowed to create group with a **maximum of three members**.

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Contacts and materials

Prof. Ignazio Vinci

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Teaching materials for the course will be published on a web page at the following link: **www.ignaziovinci.net/insegnamento/urban-and-regional-policies/**