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Milano 2: the conceptualization of the 're-definition' of urban life

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, the majority of Western cities have been discussing sustainable urban development in order to respond to increasing poverty, crime, and unforeseen patterns within our urban environments. Social and economic inequality plus security issues are central themes in this public debate. Moreover, principles of neoliberalism have led to the constant privatization and economization of social life resulting in private entities in urban contexts playing a pivotal role in the last few decades. This has brought about new and extreme forms of urbanism and developed a new narrative in the urban political discourse. Through the example of Milano 2 (Italy), this paper investigates how an elitist project can establish an alternative conceptualization of 'the urban' and considers its implications on 'the political' and general urban development. Milano 2 operates on the pretense of giving its residents a 'better place to live' which involves a 're-definition' of lifestyle and management organization through governance strategies. In order to assert that Milano 2 represents a 're-definition of urban life', this paper builds up an argument starting from the analysis of public discourse about lifestyle. Furthermore, the paper considers management organization and its governance technologies from a conceptual point of view. By starting to study the sustainable urban development question from the elitist perspective, this paper adds to the discussion by regarding the normalization and acceptance of these urban experiments and it considers how master-planned communities work within the re-definition of lifestyles and management.

Zusammenfassung

Seit den 1960er Jahren begann die Debatte über die nachhaltige Stadtentwicklung an Bedeutung zu gewinnen. Ziel war es, eine Lösung für die wahrgenommene aufkommende Armut, Kriminalität und den Verfall der Stadtmitte zu finden. Soziale und ökonomische Ungleichheiten waren dominierende Themen im öffentlichen Diskurs. Der Neoliberalisierungsprozess, der in dieser Zeit seinen Anfang nahm, hat auf eine kontinuierliche Privatisierung und Ökonomisierung des Soziallebens hingewirkt. In diesem Szenario haben die privaten Akteure in den letzten Jahrzehnten zunehmend eine zentrale Rolle für die städtebauliche Entwicklung eingenommen. Durch deren privatwirtschaftliche Initiativen entstanden neue und extreme Formen der Urbanität und somit wurde ein neues Narrativ im stadtpolitischen Diskurs entwickelt. Am Beispiel von Milano 2 (Italien) untersucht dieser Artikel, inwiefern ein elitäres Projekt eine alternative Konzeptualisierung des 'Städtischen' schaffen kann und welche Folgen auf 'das Politische' und auf die allgemeine Stadtentwicklungsdebatte zu betrachten sind. Um zu zeigen, wie Milano 2 sich als 'Re-Definition des städtischen Lebens' darstellt, analysiert dieser Aufsatz den

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öffentlichen Diskurs über Milano 2, basierend auf den dargestellten Lebensstilen. Im zweiten Teil des Artikels werden, auf einer konzeptionellen Ebene, die Managementorganisation und deren Governance-Technologien betrachtet. Durch die Diskussion der nachhaltigen städtebaulichen Entwicklungsfrage aus einer elitären Perspektive vertieft dieser Aufsatz die Debatte über die Normalisierung und Akzeptanz dieser städtischen Experimente und betrachtet, inwieweit die Master-planned Communities die Lebensstile und das Management redefinieren.

Keywords sustainable urban development, lifestyle, Post-Politics, Milano 2, master-planned community

1. Introduction

Garden cities, new urbanism and eco-cities are just some of the urban models which urban planners and local institutions have been dealing with since the 1960s in response to the desire for a more habitable urban life and in order to create better urban communities (Prigge 1998). Within this scenario, private actors offer a fundamental contribution towards developing experimental privatized urban projects (Keil 1998; Lenger 2009; Frieden and Sagalyn 1990). In doing so, they produce extreme forms of urbanism with the goal of creating their ideal society. Master-planned communities are the private actors' favorite form. These communities follow the indicators of the concept of urban sustainability which is defined by alternative traffic organization, green spaces, walkability and architectural and urbanistic homogeneity (Newman 2011). Sustainability in the master-planned communities involves creating a series of strict rules which every resident must follow in order to live in the community. In this way, the concept of urban sustainability assumes a meaning which moves away from the common ideas of sustainable urban development in terms of renewable energy or mobility and focuses more on sustainability which can generate a sense of safety and cleanliness allowing the creation of social control due to residents abiding by strict rules. In doing so, a specific discourse about the sustainability of master-planned communities is built up and compared to the usual development of a metropolis. The terms used to reinforce this discourse are put together under one general definition of a concept of urban sustainability whilst on the other hand they cancel out the different significances of the terms used (Lacau 2007: 37f.).

For this reason, both master-planned communities and the concept of urban sustainability have to be considered from a more critical point of view as they are the private developers' expression of urban and societal visions. Consequently, master-planned com-

munities are part of a process of "gaining political power to decide, to exclude, to construct hegemonies and create and maintain social inequalities" (Mössner 2016: 972). In this sense, they are political objects because they offer a profound transformation of the urban way of life, changing the way people think about urban development and reshaping urban societies, economies, and urban administrations (Swyngedouw 2010; Paar 2009). They differ from 'normal' cities in the way their developers have understood the concept of 'city' and 'urban'.

Most of the developers of such communities have a functionalist vision, like Le Corbusier. This means that the city and its societies functioned in a way that adhered to a mere architectural and urban plan (Lefebvre 1996: 98) or rather social relations were determined by the creation of a specific environment. This is the main topic of garden cities and new urbanism towns; a static and functional entity. However, according to Henri Lefebvre, a city is not just a material entity, namely a series of relationships of different social levels and their histories which produce a constant change (Lefebvre 1996: 100). Under the term 'urban' all dynamic processes and relations i.e. "assemblage of differences" (Lefebvre 1996: 109) which characterize city life are described. These aspects cannot be found in the basis of the master-planned community which instead communicates a static and homogenous architectural and social space polarizing aspects of urban life and driving privatization and economization to extremes.

By following the concept of urban sustainability¹ linked with the privatization process, which produces a strict regulatory system, this paper presents the example of Milano 2. This master-planned community was built by Edilnord Sas, a Silvio Berlusconi company, at the end of the 1960s in response to the unsustainable development discourse of Milan. Milano 2, whose name signals the idea of reproducing a better and more habitable Milan, was a reaction to the spread-

ing public housing politics of the 1960s (Crainz 2005; Turri 2000). During these years Milan was expanding without any urban plan and was dominated by real estate speculation which was favoured by the local government (Oliva 2002; Turri 2000). Furthermore, at the end of the 1960s, a long phase of social protest and political dissent began (Crainz 2005). In this scenario, Milano 2 represented an elitist project which offered a way to escape from the unsustainable environment of Milan. Even though Milano 2 is now over forty years old, the community is a current expression of the privatization process in urban spaces. Furthermore, Milano 2 encourages a 're-definition' of urban life (Teaford 2011) and establishes a new social order. This 're-definition' of urban life is characterized by two main aspects: the 're-definition' of lifestyles and the 're-definition' of administration. This paper discusses how an elitist project can establish an alternative conceptualization of 'the urban' and looks at its implications and consequences on political and general urban development.

Firstly, by starting with an overview of the theoretical background of the *Bourdieuian* concept of *habitus* and *habitat*, this article offers a concise study of Milano 2. In order to show how a privatized community is established through *a priori* choice of social actors, the lifestyle concept of *Bourdieu* is used as a basis for understanding the goals of the master-planned community developer, who aims to offer 'a better place to live in'. Secondly, the article looks to illustrate how Milano 2 works to re-define a specific idea of society through ways of governance. The study of Milano 2 should not be considered in a historical way but as a specific example for analyzing present privatization processes and their political consequences. The article's contribution to this special issue aims to point out through its research how the sustainable urban development concept reveals a strict social distinction and demonstrates how this active differentiation is promoted by specific discourse concerning Milano 2. Finally it will show how Milano 2 tends towards a post-political condition in order to maintain sustainable urban development. The actual manner of governing has to be re-structured in order to achieve the urban vision of the developer and this reinforces the post-political condition of the master-planned community.

In the first part of the paper, the case study of Milano 2 is introduced through the concept of *habitus* and *habitat*. Following this, the research methodology will be presented. This consists of the three methods (adver-

tisements analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation) used to conduct the empirical analysis. By focusing on the data collected through the advertisement analysis and interviews, this paper is concerned with the self-representation of Milano 2. The goal is to show how a *habitus* can be rendered attractive and (re-)produced through marketing in order to offer an appropriate *habitat*, which is portrayed as an alternative to unsustainable urbanism discussed in the debate. The self-representation and imagery of Milano 2 can be understood as a precondition for the administrative system. The latter will be briefly discussed in the third part of this article. Here, the paper will explore the link between the image and discourse about Milano 2 and the administrative functions. Consequently, the way in which the discourse on unsustainable urban development and lifestyle has been reinforced by the management will be demonstrated. This paper will conclude by reflecting on Milano 2 and its role within the academic debate on post-politics and recent sustainable urban development before calling for more critically engaged research into this area.

2. The master-planned community of Milano 2

During the economic boom, governments and speculators often worked together in response to the waves of workers moving from southern to northern Italy to work in the manufacturing field (Sapelli 1989: 16f.). Consequently, the pressure of real estate speculators and other political forces in Milan prevented the passing of any restrictive city planning laws which consequently meant that real estate speculation drove the pace of growth in most Italian cities (Crainz 2005; Turri 2000). The rapid growth of the metropolis formed a new middle class which fueled the creation of a mass-consumption society. Therefore, this also created a rising inequality between the new industrial middle class and the working class, which had not reaped the benefits of their country's 'economic boom' (Lanaro and Pes 1996; Crainz 2005). Student and worker protests kept Milan in a state of constant tension and, these took the form of violent political terrorism from the extreme right-wing and radical left-wing (Crainz 2005). Within this scene, the new upper-middle class of Milan moved from the city center out into new suburban communities created by private developers (Pivetta 1985; Campos Venuti et al. 1986). Edilnord Sas built Milano 2 in an urban fringe of Milan called Segrate between 1969 and 1971. This master-planned community was inspired by

English New Towns, which had mostly been founded after the Second World War to control the growth of metropolitan area of London (*Edilnord Sas* 1976). The goal of this type of urban project is to create a residential ideal of urban life and by doing so, create an ideal society (*Filippo De Pieri et al.* 2013: XIII).

In total, the plan for Milano 2 foresaw 28 condominiums, four public schools, two hotels, a sports club, a church, and a shopping mall with a community center (*Edilnord Sas* 1976) (*Fig.1*). The latter was never built and was replaced by the headquarters of Berlusconi's Media Company *Mediaset* (*Ruggeri* 1994; *Ruggeri and Guarino* 1994). Furthermore, the project proposed the separation of vehicular traffic from pedestrian and bicycle zones. This proposal was hailed as an innovation in Italian urban planning (*Edilnord Sas* 1976). First, *Edilnord Sas* built the welcome center for the master-planned community: a condominium with model apartment homes, a playground, and a bar to create a small-town feeling for potential residents (*Fusani* 2009; *Ferrari* 1990: 37). The original plan for Milano 2 was to host 10,000 people but today it is home to only approximately 6,500 residents. The population decline is mostly due to the aging of residents and the fact that the younger generation of inhabit-

ants has moved away. There was a noticeable population decline in Milano 2 at the beginning of the 2000s, although in the last few years it has become attractive once again for many individuals who are looking for a different way of life.

Milano 2 was a reaction to Milan's urban crisis and consequently the crisis of its society. The developer has built on an urban vision both on a discursive and a material level which, in comparison to the 'normal' cities, re-defines lifestyle in all contexts from the social to the economic. For this reason, this master-planned community provided a new narrative for urban politics. In fact, Milano 2 strives to communicate specific values in order to (re)produce the 'right' way of urban life. This occurs through the construction of a particular aesthetic of urban environment which is highlighted by attractions and high-services (*Shen and Wu* 2012: 185). The organization of the administration has a central role to satisfy the goal of the Milano 2 developer. To establish the re-definition of lifestyle the developer has constructed a social discourse on the master-planned community. Through the administration the original concept of the master-planned communities is reproduced and operationalized.

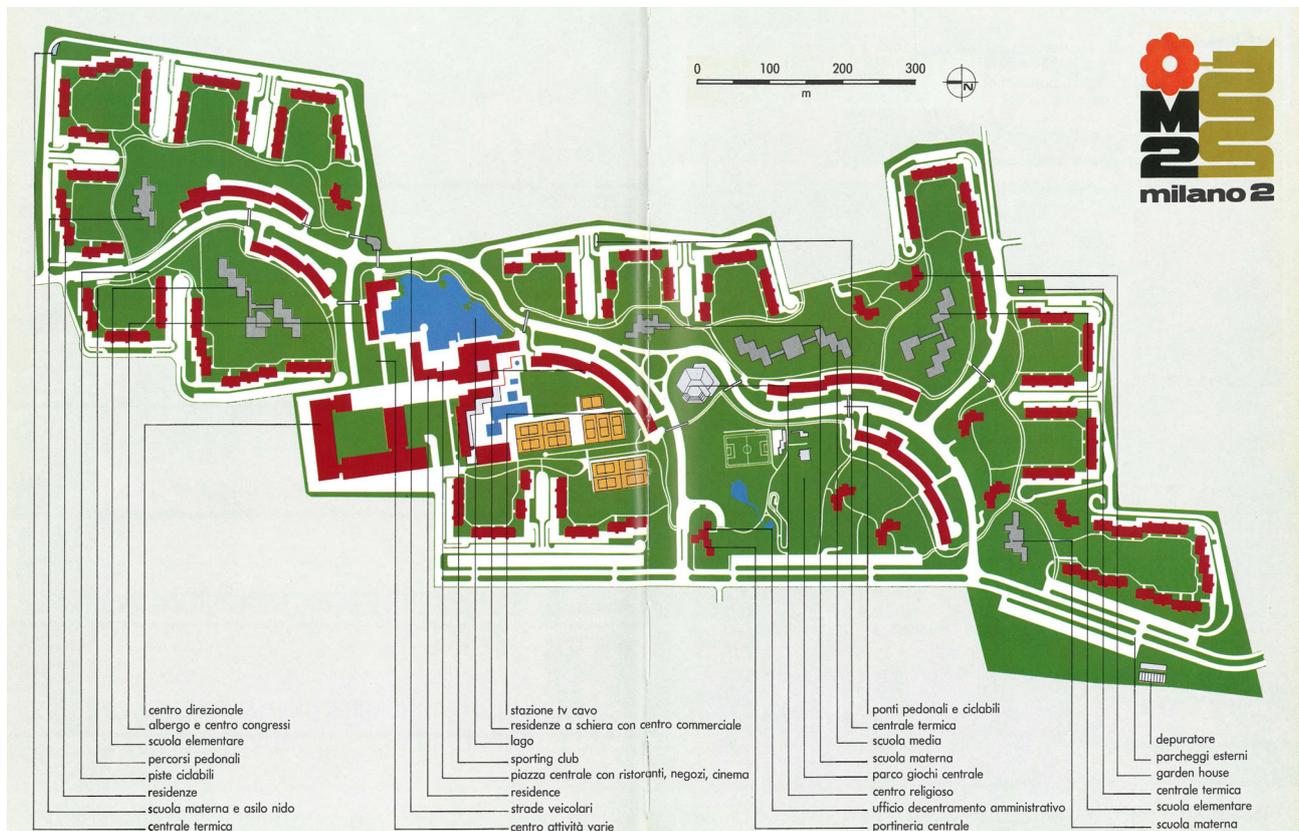


Fig. 1 Masterplan of Milano 2. Source: *Edilnord Sas* (1976: 1)

3. *Habitus* and *habitat* as a theoretical concept

The conceptualization of social difference based on the work of *Pierre Bourdieu* represents a fundamental notion when considering the organization of urban spaces. He conceptualized the notion of *habitus* to explain the results of his research in Algeria regarding the Kabyle in the 1950s (*Bourdieu* 1962). However, in his first works, *Pierre Bourdieu* did not line up the link between the *habitus* concept and spaces, which was illustrated more thoroughly in later works (*Hanquinet et al.* 2012). Since the 1990's, human geography researchers increasingly noted the theory of *habitus* developed by the French sociologist. Most of the empirical studies based on *Bourdieu's* theories do not explain the social mechanisms which produce spatial and social segregation but they rather quantify them (*Marom* 2013: 1345). Active or enforced distinction is, according to *Bourdieu* and more recent critical approaches, an expression of power relationships among different social actors but the generative process of social differences often remains under-explored (*ibid.*). As previously mentioned, this article presents a concise study of Milano 2 as a master planned community in which it will show the discourse of its establishment as well as how it operates today. Building on *Bourdieu's* ideas of lifestyle as a major part of the organization of a *habitat* built for a particular *habitus*, Milano 2 is considered as an example of a 're-definition' of urban life (*Teaford* 2011).

By classifying the decisions and the perceptions of structures, *Bourdieu* analyzed distinctions within the social structure (*Bourdieu* 2001: XI). His thesis states that cultural preferences, social perceptions, decisions and ways of thinking are strictly linked to the education and specific social contexts (*habitus*) of every person. *Bourdieu* points out how every social agent has an exclusive position within social space, or rather "[...] the mutual exclusion (or distinction) of the positions that constitute it, that is, as a juxtapositional structure of social positions" (*Bourdieu* 1998: 124). This position is both physical and relational and defines the relations with all other positions, it is also determined by the volume of capital possessed by each social actor. The volume of capital for each individual is defined by their social origin and the process of socialization that they have experienced, in other words through the *habitus* (*Bourdieu* 2001: 173).

Pierre Bourdieu defines *habitus* as a stable manner of being, acting and thinking. It is a system of dy-

namic dispositions which are determined by socialization as well as early social experiences. According to *Bourdieu*, *habitus* is a system of differentiation between social actors. In fact, social actors differentiate from each other and define their own identities according to the *habitus* they possess (*Bourdieu* 1997). An individual's way of thinking and acting is a social product determined by the social experiences and the socialization structures each person has been exposed to. Socialization and social experiences are connected to the availability of different capital to each social actor. *Bourdieu* outlined the categories of capital through which the *habitus* is produced; the social, the economic, and the cultural capital in particular (*Bourdieu* 1983). Depending on the availability of capital, the combination of different types of socialization and experiences form the preferences and taste of a social actor. At this point *Bourdieu* aims to illustrate that social actors with different socialization contexts are unable to have a social proximity (*Bourdieu* 1991: 31). To explain this notion, the sociologist introduces the expression of the lifestyle, which is determined by tastes and behaviour. *Habitus* has two facades; on the one hand it produces a system of structured praxis whilst on the other hand it is able to create distinct structuring praxis ('taste'²) (*Bourdieu* 2001: 174). The link between these characteristics forms what *Bourdieu* defines as the *space of lifestyle* (*ibid.*). The different positions within the social and physical space produce individual experiences through which the schemata of thinking and manner are formed and consequently the *habitus* is produced. The social distinction (*habitus*) is reflected in the lifestyle. To simplify and summarize, the concept of *habitus* may be explained by looking at the purposes of the different social spaces which regard the actions of social actors and how social identities are defined through different distinctions. This leads to a person's or group's manner of thinking and acting being determined by class. This class determination shows the unequal ability to access capital and thus to access particular spaces, objects, and relations with other actors (*Bourdieu* 2001; 1998).

Bourdieu points out that the property of a particular *habitus* determines relations of power which are expressed through social class and the organization of spaces and places. For this reason, the French sociologist states that the *habitus* produces the *habitat* (*Dirksmeier* 2009). Indeed, according to *Bourdieu*, social actors belonging to different social classes do not tend to live close together because they do not share

similar lifestyles or ways of thinking and behaving (*ibid.*). Therefore, social actors with a similar *habitus* tend to converge in isolated spaces where they interact and influence each other, reinforcing the same political and social values. That means that social divisions become evident in the physical space therefore creating boundaries. In doing so, they contribute to the assembling of spaces around social class and intensify social segregation in urban spaces, which is unavoidable (Marom 2013: 1347). This is the expression of the *habitus* into the *habitat*. This argument is backed up by the way specific areas are defined as either 'good' or 'bad' addresses to have (Bourdieu 1991: 32; Schroer 2006: 103f.). A 'good address' is a desirable place for people to live in because it offers access to exclusive spaces and services that others cannot use. What Bourdieu calls the 'club-effect' (Bourdieu 1991) is linked to this 'good address' concept. He defines the term as places in which social actors possess a high level of social, economic, and cultural capital which allows them access to exclusive infrastructures, locations, and objects as well as relationships. This sort of 'translation' of the social space into the physical space takes "long-term historical processes" according to Nathan Marom (2013: 1347). This means the physical space is relatively immobile which creates a kind of inertia of the social structures making it impossible to modify them. In the case of Milano 2, the inertia of social structures and the relatively fixed physical space was not a long-term process, but it was accelerated due to the privatized character of Milano 2 and the developer's decision adopted in advance in order to achieve the desired *habitus* for whom the adequate *habitat* was being created. In this way, Milano 2 is considered a 'good address' which produces a 'club-effect'. Furthermore the inertia of social structures is maintained through the governance strategies of the Milano 2 management which is a representation of power, as pointed out by Bourdieu (1991: 30), since it either allows or denies access to exclusive spaces.

Regarding this, the relationship between the daily life of social actors and the production and administration of spaces must also be considered. This relationship is most apparent in Milano 2 in comparison to 'normal' cities. Due to the privatized nature of Milano 2, the master-planned community ensures a sustainable form of urbanism, dictating detailed boundaries and rules by which a desired *habitus* is created and advertised. Consequently, an adequate *habitat* is developed. In doing so, the developer creates a guaranteed product which predefines social and political values

in order to be sustainable. These values have to be regulated. The appropriate form of administration for this master-planned community is private management because it safeguards the interests of the developer. The management's purposes are to reinforce the urban vision of the developer and to render Milano 2 marketable to potential residents. This promotes the production of a specific regulation which protects a new social order based on the economization of a way of life.

4. Research design

I have conducted an extensive empirical study in order to investigate Milano 2 and analyze the extent to which it has responded to Milan's urban crisis. The analysis of the gathered data forms the first step towards understanding the connections between the vision of the developer, the lifestyle expectations of the residents and other social actors (e.g. the city council of Segrate) of Milano 2. I have then considered the various roles of the management apparatus of Milano 2 and its strategies. In this paper, I outline the link between the first level of analysis, the establishment of the urban vision by the developer, to the second level which regards the organization and strategies of the management.

Firstly, I have reconstructed the discourse about the urban crisis in Milan during which the developer, Edilnord Sas, had the goal of building Milano 2 as an alternative to Milan. Clear examples of this are evident in the examination of advertisements for Milano 2, not only when taking the textual elements used in these advertisements into consideration but also when analyzing the imagery (Laclau 1981: 176). Regardless of whether or not these images are accurate representations of reality, they are cultural artefacts that represent the aspirations of truth and validity (Schlottmann 2009: 5). Although they do not represent the real-world, they still propagate powerful meanings about it (Schlottmann and Miggelbrink 2009: 2). From this perspective, the advertisements are both products and producers of the discourse. The composition and production of these images refers to a particular cultural background, or rather to a particular *habitus*. Visual media therefore has a social setting and forms a prospective resource for a geographer's analysis of discourse (Schlottmann 2009: 7).

The purpose of analysing the advertisements for Milano 2 has been to gain an understanding into the developers' idea of *habitus*³ and *habitat* and their reconstruction of the presentation of Milano 2 for potential clients. To achieve this, I have analyzed the advertisements published in the newspaper "Corriere della Sera" between 1971 and 1978. My analysis focuses on the self-representation of the master-planned community, Milano 2. How is Milano 2 spoken about? What are the main characteristics of Milano 2? How is a respectable lifestyle constructed? In order to answer these questions, I have analyzed the texts and images, considering how the places and spaces were presented and categorizing images according to whether they were outdoor or indoor photos.

To gain a more profound understanding of the Milano 2 way of life and manner of thinking, I conducted semi-structured interviews⁴ with fifteen different social actors. Among others, I interviewed residents, the community manager, the priest, and the mayor of Segrate. These interlocutors allowed me to gain a thorough idea about Milano 2 and the way of life. All interviews took place in Milano 2, some were conducted at residents' homes, some in offices and others in public spaces such as bars or community centers. I decided to interview residents as well as members of institutions in order to understand the daily life of both residents and the administrative organization. The purpose was to investigate the expectations, impressions, and experiences of Milano 2 residents. The semi-structured interview method allowed interviewees the freedom to explore their thoughts on a particular theme, while providing me with the possibility of jumping from one question to another, if necessary (Flick 2009: 113f.; Meuser and Nagel 1991: 449).

To complete my investigation of Milano 2, in addition to the methods specified above, I included participant observation in my analysis. The field work experience allowed me to simultaneously explore the connections between the actors and analyze them (Schmid-Lauber 2007: 219). The purpose of including participant observation in this study was in order to construct a deeper context for the interviews and advertisements by combining them with my own experiences in Milano 2. In the following presentation of results I focus on the data obtained from analyzing the advertisements and interviews as a basis for defining the lifestyle created by Milano 2.

5. Milano 2 – a 're-definition' of lifestyle

A discussion of how Milano 2 established an alternative conceptualization of 'the urban' would be incomplete without analyzing the advertisements that Edilnord Sas published in order to promote it. What is of even greater interest in order to understand the development of Milano 2 more than 40 years later is the comparison of the marketing portrayal of the lifestyle within the conducted interviews. To this day Milano 2 still remains a different way of considering 'the urban' and 'the political' despite it already being over forty years old. Moreover, the study of Milano 2 in the last decades has been more about the architectural plan and less about the socio-geographical and political implications that a master-planned community can have on the general concept of sustainable urban development.

The representations of Milano 2 in the advertisements serve a two-fold function: on the one hand, they dictate the discourse around what the ideal *habitus* is whilst on the other hand they aim to attract actors who share Edilnord Sas' social ideals and way of life. The social actors are attracted by the offer of an adequate *habitat* as portrayed in the imagery of Milano 2. The analysis of the advertisements and interviews brings up a few themes which reconstruct the discourse on sustainable urban development and provide an insight into how Milano 2 is presented. Indeed, Milano 2 is portrayed as "[...] a new way of life: the right solution to the crisis of the big city. Certainly this is an opportunity that shouldn't be underestimated" (Edilnord Sas 23rd March 1974). This kind of discourse favours the choice of Milano 2 as a place to live and helps one understand the sustainable urban development according to Edilnord Sas' view.

'Living close to nature' is one of the recognized themes which exemplifies a sharp contrast to Milan's metropolitan area. One of the advertisements states:

Who has not dreamt of living in a villa with a beautiful green garden all year long? Feeling completely free, away from the chaotic city, away from the traffic and noise: use your own time as you always wished, in the green, in the peace.⁵ (Edilnord Sas 23rd March 1974)

In this quote, it is clear that Milan is portrayed as chaotic, dangerous and dirty – namely unsustainable – while Milano 2 is its opposite – clean and safe, without traffic

and surrounded by nature. *Bourdieu* (1991: 163) claims that each individual occupies a multidimensional *social space*, which not only forms the structures of spaces but also the structures of thinking which are in turn a part of the assimilation processes of these structures. Concerning Milano 2, this means that the images in the advertisements promise a specific *habitat*, which helps the texts of the advertisements attract social actors who would conform to the *habitus* desired by the developer. The promotional article in "Corriere della Sera" (*Edilnord Sas* 22nd June 1974) portrays precisely who the desired actors are: "new, young, original solution specifically for someone who wishes to live completely free and close to nature. It is a unique opportunity for someone who is searching for something more than just a normal apartment".

The second theme is 'family'. The advertisements promote an evocative description of the traditional⁶ image of the family, where gender roles are clearly defined. For example, women can sunbathe on the terrace, while their children play alone in the park because Milano 2 is a safe place (*ibid.*). In this context these women are portrayed as 'happy' because they have more time for hobbies such as gardening, fitness, or organizing parties (*Fig. 2*) (*ibid.*). Women's role as represented in the advertisements for Milano 2 is clear, demonstrating that women's emancipation is just a formality. Despite the fact that women are encouraged to work, they still adapt to a man's society, in which they are required to tend to the family.

In addition to women, children also play an important role in representing the image of a safe place in contrast to Milan (*Edilnord Sas* 14th April 1977). The masterplan of Milano 2 is said to follow the principles of the garden cities thereby achieving a more sustainable development. Moreover, Milano 2 added an innovative traffic system to Italian urban planning. In fact, the master-planned community separated the community's cars from its pedestrians and cyclists via a bridge system. In this way, "children can play freely around the community, far away from danger" (*ibid.*). Thus, 'safety' is another main theme in the advertisements for Milano 2. The master-planned community is a safe place to live in, offering more chances to spend free time out in the open. For this reason, advertising announcements for Milano 2 proposed a wide range of sports available in close vicinity to nature or home. In fact, the "Sports Club Milano 2" was said to offer a notable fitness and recreational center to all the residents of the master-planned community (*Edilnord Sas* 23rd March 1974).



Fig. 2 Article in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* "Milano 2: una villa all'ultimo piano". Source: *Edilnord Sas* 22nd June 1974: 4

Interviews confirmed these ideas created by the advertisements. In the interviews that I conducted during the research period in 2013 the majority of the Milano 2 residents that I interviewed had the impression that they were 'living on vacation', away from chaotic Milan (*Lorenzo* 4th July 2013; *Gabriele* 8th July 2013; *Pia* 30th July 2013). Connected to this feeling, they asserted that they chose Milano 2 due to the possibility of being able to 'live close to nature', which is seldom an option in a big city (*Riccardo* 20th January 2014). In this context, green spaces are associated with a feeling of a healthy, authentic and simple life; something that Milan cannot offer. For example, Pia explained during her interview that she relates Milano 2 to freedom:

[...] we just wear functional clothing here. We don't need to show off to anyone [...] when I go to Milan I wear something really different compared to the dresses I wear in Milano 2, where I feel much freer and where I ride my bicycle.⁷ (*Pia* 30th July 2013)

According to most of the interviewees, the small dimension of Milano 2 offers the residents an informal way of life, which is also characterized by a 'better community' because residents know each other better.

Furthermore, they can share their daily life and help each other when necessary (*Pia* 30th July 2013; *Chiara* 1st July 2013). Many of the interviewees consider the community to be charitable, as they can volunteer and help those who are not living in Milano 2, or can give jobs to foreign workers (*Don Giorgio* 18th July 2013). The latter are welcome, according to *Carol*, a Peruvian interviewee. *Carol* pointed out an interesting scenario concerning the role of foreign workers in Milano 2. She explained that the residents of Milano 2 "are used to foreigners, for they see them every day" (*Carol* 16th July 2013). This statement shows that, for the Milano 2 residents, foreign workers or 'foreign bodies' remain something to get 'used to'. Foreign workers are not really accepted and therefore remain in the margins of the image that Milano 2 gives itself. *Carol* and *Don Giorgio's* descriptions point out another aspect of Milano 2: the residents of Milano 2 do not mix with social actors belonging to other *habitus* and *habitat*. However, this could be due to another aspect of Milano 2 and its residents, which was also confirmed in several interviews: the fact that "Milano 2 is exclusive, it costs a lot. To live here, you have to be able to afford the costs. It is not malicious [...]"⁸ (*Lorenzo* 4th July 2013).

Due to the costs and the discourse which was constructed regarding Milan's unsustainable development, the developer of Milano 2 was able to build a homogenous community. The community organization was also possible because the residents of Milano 2 belong to the same social class – they have the same *habitus*. According to most of the interviewees, social homogeneity simplified social contact between the residents (*Pia* 30th July 2013). In fact, they asserted that they have quite a homogeneous *habitus*, which they identify with a wealthy social class. Moreover, some interviewees explained that in Milano 2, no real form of poverty exists but rather a high economic and social standard has been maintained. *Gabriele* (8th July 2013) described the social structure of Milano 2 as follows:

According to me, the social structure belongs to the upper-middle class. Here the residents have highly skilled work positions. There are many types of jobs, but they all involve a big responsibility. There are managers, and then there are freelancers with a high profile, and then there are the retirees, [...] but they are also retired managers.⁹

This affirmation could be read in terms of *Bourdieu's* 'club-effect'. To emphasize the importance of highly skilled clientele, which belong to the upper-middle class, Milano 2 is described in the advertisements as:

The town of the 'number one': a town where a 'number one' can be found in every sector and a town which is aimed at important and qualified clientele.¹⁰ (*Edilnord Sas* 06th April 1974)

This sentence has a double meaning: on the one hand it makes it clear that Milano 2 was designed for winners – the 'number ones' – which includes the firms and the developers of Milano 2 and its residents. On the other hand, it communicates a message that if a person chooses to live in Milano 2, this person will also become a 'number one'. This image of Milano 2 and its residents shows how the presented advertisements coincide with the claims of the interviewees about the clientele of Milano 2.

The analysis of the advertisements and interviews demonstrated that Edilnord Sas had the goal of creating an 'ideal society' which was produced following the sustainable discourse of urban development and was based on the social homogeneity of the residents. These residents are able to afford the costs of the master-planned community in terms of both apartment and facility maintenance costs. As some of the residents affirmed, the social homogeneity creates a 'sense of identity'. Most of the interviewees identify people who are not living in Milano 2 as 'external people' and this kind of definition shows how the non-residents of Milano 2 are perceived as 'foreigners'. Moreover, the non-residents have been seen as a disturbance to the way of life of the residents and have even been said to lack respect for Milano 2 because they are not a part of it (*Chiara* 1st July 2013; *Pia* 30th July 2013). These feelings show that the 'emotional location-dependent' argument put forward in the advertisements has had consequences on the creation of the sense of place among the residents. In this context, Milano 2 produces a 'club-effect' and also represents a 'good address' because it proposes a more habitable place than Milan, offering exclusive places and spaces and a representation of power (*Bourdieu* 1991: 30).

The themes presented above have to be understood as empty signifiers. According to *Laclau* (2007) the empty signifiers are an important structural element for the production of political discourse because they

do not clearly identify the significance (Nonhoff 2006). The main characteristics of the empty signifiers are the limits of the sign system and the structure's limit of the significant processes, which is unclear and presumes an exclusion of different significances (Nonhoff 2006: 125f.). This kind of presumption produces the empty signifiers, which do not define anything in particular, although they are the result of the articulation of equivalent chains (Laclau 2005a; Torfing 1999). In doing so, the empty signifiers enrich the general definition of a concept, on the one hand, meaning they construct themselves whilst on the other hand, they cancel out the different significances of the discursive articulations (Laclau 2007: 37f.). In this way, the empty signifiers assume different significances in different contexts and consequently they determine ideas and opinions which contribute towards building a social discourse (Laclau and Lillian 1994: 37f.; Laclau 2005b: 43f.). The discourse created through the presented empty signifiers offers the developer the possibility to build an adequate *habitat* for a particular target of social actors. The constructed discourse about Milano 2 has been depicted as the solution to the unsustainable urban development of Milan. For this reason, the presented empty signifiers include a particular idea of society (Nonhoff 2006: 11f.), which proposes a conservative lifestyle aimed at social actors who belong to a particular *habitus*: the upper-middle class. This address is directly announced in the advertisements in which it is said that Milano 2 is intended for those who are managers, freelancers, and professionals, and for those who can afford prestigious apartments (Edilnord Sas 23rd March 1974). Here, another period of the Italian socio-economic background should be specified: the late 1960s and early 1970s. The 'economic boom' formed a new middle class who were able to afford the prestigious Milano 2 apartments, while the working class lived in social housing or in old pre-war homes (Sapelli 1989: 25f.; Ginsborg 1989: 325f.).

Thus, Milano 2 represents a 're-definition' of lifestyle, maintaining a social order which criticizes and denies the secularization of Italian society which had started back in the 1960s. Moreover, Milano 2 proposes a retreat into the private sphere in contrast to the community found in the unsustainable urban development of Milan. The social discourse created around Milan's urban crisis has permitted the developer of Milano 2 to address specific social actors and to emphasize their *habitus*' characteristics. In doing so, the developer gave these social actors the possibility of

having a suitable *habitat*. Both the 're-definition' of the lifestyle and the production of a suitable *habitat* for specific social actors make up only one part of urban life within Milano 2. The other part consists of the fact that these two aspects must be governed.

6. Milano 2 – governance and post-politics

The advertisements have shown how the idea of homogeneity was conceptualized through the creation of a particular discourse and how this could then be spread to potential clients. Management is linked to the 're-definition' of lifestyle as a response to the urban crisis of Milan which was made evident through the discourse on Milano 2. The advertised lifestyle can be maintained through the administration system which has the goal of (re)producing the urban vision of the developer. The management of Milano 2, as well as the management of master-planned communities in general, is characterized in large part by a privatized manner of governing. In relation to Milano 2, the public municipality of Segrate is only responsible for schools, public transportation, and roads; the rest is managed by a so-called *Supercondominio*, made up of all the condominium representatives chosen by each condominium (Lorenzo 4th July 2013). Therefore, master-planned communities become part of a greater discourse regarding the urban crisis, whereas their administrations provide an alternative to 'normal' cities working through governance strategies.

Following the arguments of some critical scholars, such as Swyngedouw (2010), I consider governance as an example of neoliberal organization of social order in which new power relations are consolidated and reformed through governance strategies. Indeed, governance is mostly defined as a horizontal structure in which hierarchies do not exist. According to critical scholars, governance is considered as a system of power which tends to depoliticize the context where it can be applied. This means that the management of Milano 2, summarized under the presented discourse themes, reproduces the original vision of the developer.

In Milano 2, a government strategy and governance technology can be observed. The government strategy tends to concentrate the power of decision-making on the figure of the manager. He represents the only decision-maker of Milano 2 and he is responsible for the maintenance and (re)production of the way of life

as stipulated by the developer. Governance technology assists with the manager's work which is represented by the governing documents as well as by the regulations of Milano 2. All residents must sign and abide by these documents to assure that the settled homogeneity is maintained. Moreover, the regulations, as well as the decision-making process being concentrated on the manager, tend to maintain the consensus of the residents of Milano 2. This means the absence of dissent within the master-planned community. According to some post-fundamentalist scholars, the absence of dissent through governance structures and strategies is typical for a post-political condition (Swyngedouw 2010; 2011). These scholars differ between 'politics' and 'political', where 'politics' concerns "the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created" (Mouffe 2005: 9). Politics refers to the specific social sphere which consists of the institution, such as the parliament and government. In contrast, 'the political' denotes the order of representation or a discourse through which society is given its meaning: the acknowledgment of the existence of power, conflict, division, and contingency in society (*ibid.*). According to the post-fundamentalist scholars, any system produces certain exclusions and therefore generates conflicts or dissent in order to accentuate the established power relationships. The rise of dissent is welcomed by these scholars because they believe that the possibility of expressing dissent enriches the political debate and, consequently, the democratic systems (Rancière 2000: 124; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014: 13).

By looking at Milano 2, it appears that the management apparatus and the governance strategies prevent the possibility of dissent, or rather prevent the formation of collective requests which attempt to minimize the political dimension. My assertion is that in Milano 2, particular negotiations are created which (re)produce an ideal regulatory model of administration. This is based on a matter-of-fact and bureaucratic way of organization or rather a managerial manner of running the master-planned community. Due to this, the conflicts are not negotiated in an agonistic way but rather through juridical proceedings in contentious administrative matters. This means that politics is reduced to a mere negotiation of individual conflicts, which are regulated by the regulations of Milano 2. The rules given by the developer and followed by the management have the goal of maintaining the original order, plan and atmosphere of Milano 2, which creates the way of life.

Milano 2 can be inserted into the post-political debate, where conflicts and exclusion remain invisible and uncontestable (Žižek 1999). The management apparatus and governance strategies drive towards a post-political condition, because

[...] everything is politicised, can be discussed, but only in a non-committal way and as a non-conflict. Absolute and irreversible choices are kept away; politics becomes something one can do without making decisions that divide and separate. When pluralism becomes an end in itself, real politics is pushed to other arenas. (Diken and Laustsen 2004: 7)

In this scenario 'the politics', as described by Mouffe (2006) in the Greek sense of the term, are shifted and thus generate new forms of negotiations. Post-politics are therefore to be understood as a (pre)strategy for the (re)production of governance practices and, at the same time, the post-political condition is produced by governance practices. Žižek (2002: 203) claims that the way of governing in a managerial mode denies the political dimension of its properties, or rather the right of dissent. This does not mean that politics comes to an end, as many scholars have asserted (Dean 2009; McCarthy 2013; Lerner 2014), or that it is already a closed process, i.e. a global diagnosis. Rather, it means that post-politics produces a shift in the way of negotiating in and with urban administrations.

Following this argument, I propose that the master-planned community of Milano 2 can be considered a place where post-political strategies clearly demonstrate their potential and where *the political moment* – as in Rancière's and Žižek's terminology – is minimized. I argue that conflicts are not erased but that they rather take on another form and are dealt with in a new way. Thus, *the political moment* should be understood in this form as a reinforcement of the post-political condition which is established through the articulation of discourses. This articulation has the purpose of spreading particular ideas and images which regard spaces and is made perceptible through the decision-making process.

7. Conclusion

Through the development of the master-planned community as a green, safe and tranquil place, Edilnord Sas has implemented an alternative conceptualiza-

tion of 'the urban' for the Italian urban planning of the 1960s. However, the construction of this idea has shown that Milano 2 promotes the creation of an ideal society which re-defines the lifestyle of its residents. In doing so, Milano 2 addresses a specific *habitus* belonging to the upper-middle class.

The construction of a sustainable town – i.e. the master-planned community – in comparison to the urban development of Milan is done through creating and establishing a discourse which reacts to the social, political, and economic situation of the metropolis and which generates the idea of homogeneity as the proposed response. Homogeneity is the key to understanding Milano 2. In fact, through the carefully composed advertisements, social actors with a specific *habitus* were attracted to an imaginary ideal *habitat*. The latter proposes a green, people-oriented place where a better community can be established. This mode of discourse and the linked *empty signifiers* pointed towards the possibility of creating a suitable *habitat* for social actors who belong to the same *habitus*.

Conceptualizing and producing homogeneity creates an element of political and economic order in order to maintain the lifestyle which must be governed. Thus, the community's management plays an important role as it represents both the 'watchman' of the developer's urban vision and the producers of the new 'political' order. I propose a link between the establishment of the homogeneity and the governing of it.

The management organization of Milano 2 and its governance strategies maintain homogeneity and consequently preserve the social and economic standards. Moreover, due to its homogeneous *habitus*, the management structure of the master-planned community defines a post-political condition. This does not mean that politics disappears in the master-planned community but rather that it assumes another form. The rules that govern Milano 2 reduce political disputes down to the economic aspects of individual negotiations with the objective of maintaining the standards of the community. Milano 2 is aimed at a clear and homogeneous segment of the market and this narrow directive makes the development and acceptance of this management structure possible. Consequently, the homogeneity of the *habitus* and lifestyle seems to be a precondition for the establishment of a post-political condition in Milano 2. The private management apparatus of Milano 2 represents the space where politics

is discussed, and the 're-definition' of lifestyle is continuously (re)produced in line with the original idea of a new sustainable form of urbanism and society.

Sustainable urban development represents a concept which urban planners and political institutions have followed for over 20 years in order to satisfy the desire for more habitable urban worlds. Having provided a more accurate look at Milano 2, I claim that a critical engagement with the study of master-planned communities and their form of urbanism is necessary. Moreover, the acceptance of master-planned communities as people-oriented communities and better places to live in conceals the neoliberal way of developing and consequently governing the actual urban contexts. Indeed, the current article showed how Milano 2's proposal to be a sustainable town becomes a form of commodity of the 'natural' realm, as Heynen et al. (2006) suggest. The 'nature' in Milano 2 is urbanized; the green spaces are planned and governed by behavioral rules in order to respond to the social, political, and economic standards and relations within the master-planned community. Consequently, I affirm that the sustainable urban development of Milano 2 illustrates an active social and spatial distinction which creates exclusive places. Alongside this, the spread of the post-political condition rises, through which we contribute to the economization of social life. In doing so, the marketing of the sustainable urban development's label allows the master-planned communities to be normalized and thereby accepted by the majority of societies and institutions. Moreover, examples like Milano 2 are also advantageous to municipalities which do not have to administer these privatized spaces and are therefore consequently able to save money. Municipalities then receive less state funding, furthering the cycle of privatization (Harvey 1989). For this reason, it is still relevant to analyze how the conceptualized urban vision of homogeneity is governed and what effects this has on a political level.

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Notes

- ¹ The concept of urban sustainability is understood not only as an idea of a better environment in the sense of no automobile mobility or renewable energy, but as a whole concept to understand the urban, namely the safety, cleanliness etc.
- ² With the term 'taste' Bourdieu understands the inclination of a specific class at the material as well as the symbolic appropriation. The taste is therefore the production form for the creation of lifestyles: the collection of different preferences, as mobiles, mode or languages (Bourdieu 2001: 179).
- ³ I conducted an analysis on the way a specific *habitus* is attracted and not an analysis of the *habitus*. The goal is to understand which kind of social actors with a specific *habitus* have been wishing to live in Milano 2 and not so much how this *habitus* is formed. Indeed, for my work it is interesting to study how persons with the same *habitus* become concentrated in one space and how this space (*habitat*) is suitably constructed for them and in which way this space (*habitat*) is maintained.
- ⁴ All interviewee's names have been changed in order to protect the identity of the people I met while conducting my research.
- ⁵ Original version: "Chi non ha mai sognato di vivere tutto l'anno in una villa con un bel giardino attorno? Sentirsi talmente liberi, lontani dal caos cittadino, dal traffico, dal rumore: padroni di utilizzare il nostro tempo come abbiamo sempre desiderato, nel verde, nella quiete".
- ⁶ The term 'traditional' is understood here in terms of the organization of familial life as well as a society based on a clear division of gender roles.
- ⁷ Original version: "[...] qui noi siamo sempre vestite in maniera molto sportiva, non abbiamo bisogno di sfoggiare, [...] però se io vado a Milano mi vesto in una maniera diversa che non qui a Milano 2, dove mi sento più libera e vado in giro in bicicletta [...]" (Pia 30th July 2013).
- ⁸ Original version: "Milano 2 è elevata, costa tanto, ti permette di entrare, però te lo devi permettere. Non è cattiveria" (Lorenzo 4th July 2013).
- ⁹ Original version: "La struttura sociale secondo me è composta da un ceto medio-alto. Quindi sono tutti professionisti. Allora c'è una gamma di professionisti che continua a lavorare a un certo livello, quindi professionisti dirigenti, c'è una gamma di liberi professionisti, quindi anche loro

con un certo livello, e c'è una gamma di pensionati, [...] sono però pensionati dirigenti" (Gabriele 8th July 2013).

- ¹⁰Original version: "[...] Milano2 è la città di numero uno: una città realizzata dai numero uno di ogni settore e destinata ad un pubblico esigente e qualificato" (Edilnord Sas 6th April 1974).

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