

Alberto Valz Gris

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Currently

Post-doctoral Research Fellow

Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning
Politecnico di Torino
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Research interests

I am an urban geographer working at the intersection of heterodox economic geography and urban political ecology. My research investigates emerging patterns of urbanization through the shifting geographies of production. As such, my main research interests are rooted in the dynamics of extended urbanization, in the geographies of natural resource extraction and logistical reconfiguration, and in their associated socioecological shifts.

Education

2017–2021

Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Development, Cum laude

Thesis: Hinterlands of the Green Transition. Atacama, Lithium and the Extended Geographies of the Zero-emission City

Politecnico di Torino, Italy

2014–2016

MA in Fine Arts

Sandberg Instituut, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2014

Erasmus Thesis Scholarship

Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

2011–2014

Ms.C. in Architecture, Construction, City, 110/110

Thesis: Barcelona's Interstices, Opening up Architectural Practice

Politecnico di Torino, Italy

2011

LLP/Erasmus Semester Scholarship

École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris La Villette, France

2009–2012

BA in Architecture Sciences, 106/110

Thesis: Osservare dal Parco. Un Progetto di Trasformazione per il Parco del Meisino

Politecnico di Torino, Italy

Research

2022–now

SUR: città del sud Europa e Global Urbanism

Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino

Post-doctoral research fellow. Principal investigator: prof. F. Governa

This research program, financed by the PRIN project "Rescaling the Belt and Road Initiative: urbanisation processes, innovation patterns and global investments in urban China", seeks to construct a dialogue between the international debate on Global Urbanism and the urban experience of Southern Europe. Global Urbanism emerges as the attempt to build critical urban knowledge starting from the grounded acknowledgment of differences and their continuous mutations. Through this project, we propose to explore the question of a global urban horizon starting from the specificities and differences of various Southern European urban experiences, hence attempting theory building from peripheral loci. In its initial phases, the program will consist in the critical analysis of existing research, in a selection of three case studies and in their subsequent exploration through short fieldwork periods.

2022–now

Umrü: Fragments from the Hydrosocial Cycle of Valle Umbra

Mahler & LeWitt Studios Residency, Spoleto

Geographer in residence.

This project is developed in collaboration with visual artist Cecilia Ceccherini and part of Mahler and LeWitt Studios' Materia program. As a collaborative practice bridging geography with the visual arts, the projects maps an embodied and effective exploration of water assemblages of the Valle Umbra, asking how we might reinvent hydrosocial territories and shape them towards a more conscious and environmentally just future. Working in the form of text, sound and textile, the results of this research will be presented in June 2024 as part of Spoleto's Festival dei Due Mondi through an exhibition and an associated independent publication.

2022

I paesaggi operazionali nel Nord Italia. Geografie mobili, strategie spaziali e mappe dinamiche dell'urbanizzazione regionale

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU), Politecnico di Torino

Research consultant. Principal investigator: prof. S. Armondi

Which dynamics are reconfiguring those territories of production, circulation and support that exists in relation to large urban concentrations? This project—enabled by funding for original research by the Politecnico di Milano—critically investigates the geographies of operational landscapes in Northern Italian regions with three main goals. Firstly, it aims at tracing emergent economic geographies by updating their interpretive frameworks, cartographic representations and challenging impending urban dynamics. Secondly, it seeks to describe the plurality of policies, actors and strategies that remake urban contexts and territorial configurations; thirdly, it proposes to build evidence and spatial representations that support the activity of planners and policymakers with respect to the shifting dynamics of global production. In its initial phases, the project involves quantitative modeling, spot cartographic analysis and semi-structured interviews as a focus on case studies spanning the width of Northern Italian regions.

2021

Dream Story. Urban modernity through Italy and China

Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino

Research assistant. Principal investigator: prof. F. Governa

The project forms part of the activities financed by the PRIN project Rescaling the Belt and Road Initiative: urbanisation processes, innovation patterns and global investments in urban China, and consists in the design and production of an international exhibition and a multi-media catalog on the theme of urban modernities. Drawing on an openly comparative approach to patterns of urbanization, this research explores the emergence of multiple urban modernities by observing them through two apparently unrelated waves of urbanization: that of postwar Italy and that of contemporary China. My involvement in the project consists in supporting the curatorial team by critically selecting case studies and producing both theoretical, archival and field-based research on the driving themes of the exhibition.

	2017–2021	<p>Hinterlands of the green transition. Atacama, lithium and the extended geographies of the zero-emission city Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino <i>Ph.D. candidate.</i> Tutor: prof. F. Governa</p> <p>This doctoral dissertation project explores the dynamics of lithium extraction on the Atacama plateau as an analytical move to understand flows of urban metabolism between cities and hinterlands at the planetary scale. Combining theoretical frameworks from the areas of critical urban studies, economic geography and urban political ecology, the project deepens our understanding of the persisting extractivism of urban green transitions. This argument has been developed through the deployment of ethnographic fieldwork in Argentina and Chile, document and cartographic analysis and visual methodologies. The completion of the project has involved autonomous research design, the organization and fulfillment of international fieldwork and a sustained program of discussion in international conferences and seminars.</p>
	2017	<p>Cittadella di Alessandria: Scenari di riuso adattivo Department of Architecture and Design (DAD), Politecnico di Torino <i>Research assistant.</i> Principal investigator: prof. M. Robiglio</p> <p>This research was commissioned by Compagnia di San Paolo with the goal of investigating scenarios of adaptive reuse for the Cittadella di Alessandria, a military complex dating to the second half of the Seventeenth century, beyond its current state of under-utilization. The involvement of my expertise in the project consists in the spatial analysis of existing architectural structures and a qualitative survey around the existing use strategies of the Cittadella as an architectural and environmental complex. The latter has involved the organization and fulfillment of a short ethnographic program that worked as a springboard for designing scenarios of adaptive reuse.</p>
Teaching	2022–2023	<p>Socially Engaged Art Winter Project Accademia Unidee, Biella and ArtEZ Academy, Arnhem <i>Course leader</i></p> <p>This academic year, the annual exchange with MA Fine Arts students of the ArtEZ academy explored the theme of the Mediterranean as an imagined geography, as a represented and contested space. Coordinating the didactic environment of a mixed group of BA and MA students in Biella involved giving group lectures and individual project development tutorials, culminating in a collective exhibition during ArtEZ Project Festival in the city of Arnhem.</p>
	2022–2023	<p>Tecniche di rappresentazione dello spazio Accademia Unidee, Biella <i>Course leader</i></p> <p>Teaching this semester-long course to first-year BA students in Fine Arts for the Environment involved designing the course syllabus, planning and giving lectures on the fundamentals of cartography, photography and sketching, followed by tutorials on the development of an individual project. Finals exams consisted in the making of an exhibition showing the work developed throughout the course.</p>
	2020–2021	<p>Fattori ambientali e geografici dello sviluppo del territorio Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino <i>Teaching assistant.</i> Course held by prof. M. Santangelo</p> <p>Activities completed in this course have consisted in sessions of territorial analysis highlighting the role of physical geography in shaping patterns of urbanization and the making of moving- image materials across the design site for supporting the students' activities.</p>
	2020–2021	<p>Urban Studies Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino <i>Guest lecturer.</i> Course held by prof. F. Governa</p> <p>This guest lecture for master students in Architecture focused on the planetary dimension of urbanization patterns, covering debates on city-country relations, urban metabolism and extended urbanization through the reconstruction of theoretical lineages and the analysis of empirical case studies.</p>
	2019–2020	<p>Urban Studies Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino <i>Teaching assistant.</i> Course held by prof. F. Governa</p> <p>This guest lecture for master students in Architecture focused on the planetary dimension of urbanization patterns, covering debates on city-country relations, urban metabolism and extended urbanization through the reconstruction of theoretical lineages and the analysis of empirical case studies.</p>
	2018–2019	<p>Urban Economics Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino <i>Teaching assistant.</i> Course held by prof. L. Buzzacchi</p> <p>This assistance position in an interdepartmental course at the Bachelor level has involved both lecturing on the subject of urban political economy, supporting the students in the course empirical exercises and marking through the final examination.</p>
	2017–2018	<p>Urban Economics Department of Regional and Urban Studies (DIST), Politecnico di Torino <i>Teaching assistant.</i> Course held by prof. L. Buzzacchi</p> <p>This assistance position in an interdepartmental course at the Bachelor level has involved both lecturing on the subject of urban political economy, supporting the students in the course empirical exercises and marking through the final examination.</p>
	2012–2013	<p>Urban and Architectural Design Department of Architecture and Design (DAD), Politecnico di Torino <i>Teaching assistant.</i> Course held by arch. M. Ortalli</p> <p>My involvement in this course consisted in completing design crits with BA level students in Architecture in order to review and support their work-in-progress designs.</p>
Publications		A list is also available online .
Journal articles	forthcoming	Valz Gris, A. Beyond the boom. Genealogies of corridor urbanism in the making of the Lithium Triangle, Argentina and Chile. <i>Geoforum</i> , 147.

	2022	Valz Gris, A. COSCO e l’urbanizzazione ‘turbolenta’ del porto del Pireo. <i>Territorio</i> (103), 31-36. https://doi.org/10.3280/TR2022-103***
	2022	Valz Gris, A., Iacovone, C., Safina, A., Pollio, A., Governa, F. Il ‘campo’ geografico di un’etnografia sottile. <i>Rivista Geografica Italiana - Open Access</i> , 1(1), 5-31. https://doi.org/10.3280/rgioa1-2022oa13364
	2021	Iacovone, C., Valz Gris, A., Safina, A., Pollio, A., Governa, F. Breaking the distance: Dialogues of care in a time of limited geographies. <i>Dialogues in Human Geography</i> , 102(2), 124-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620934940
	2019	Valz Gris, A. Tangling a bi-oceanic corridor. <i>Lo Squaderno</i> , 51, 17-20.
Book chapters	2020	Valz Gris, A. Logistica e urbanizzazione: Uno sguardo dal corridoio bi-oceanico. In Benvegnù, C., Cuppini, N., Frapporti, M., Milesi, F., Pirone, M. (Eds.), <i>Logistica e America Latina</i> (pp.174-182). Bologna: Dipartimento delle Arti, Università di Bologna. https://doi.org/10.6092/unibo/amsacta/6434
	2019	Valz Gris, A. Appunti su città e piattaforma. Dentro e oltre la metafora. In <i>Il Campo di Battaglia Urbano</i> (pp. 95-103). Roma: Red Star Press.
Conference proceedings	2022	Valz Gris, A. Il paesaggio operativo del Salar de Olaroz (Argentina): Diseguaglianze e conflitti spaziali delle catene globali del valore. In Amato, F., Amato, V., de Falco, S. La Foresta, D. Simonetti, L. (Eds.), <i>Catene/Chains, Memorie Geografiche</i> , 21, 43-48.
	2018	Valz Gris, A. Lavoro, spazio, movimenti. Mobilitare l’urbano dentro e oltre il capitalismo delle piattaforme. In Zaar, M., Capel, H. (Eds.) <i>Las Ciencias Sociales y la Edificación de una Sociedad Postcapitalista</i> . Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona/Geocrítica.
Book reviews	2020	Valz Gris, A. City air beyond the city: Can the planetary mine lead us to emancipatory urban futures? <i>City</i> , 24(5-6), 865-870. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2020.1833547
Public writing	2020	Valz Gris, A., Iacovone, C. Il virus è un prodotto del Capitalocene. <i>Jacobin Italia</i> . Available at https://bit.ly/3Kw8yua
Presentations	2023	Enclaves and borders. A walking ethnography of Silk Road urbanisation in Piraeus, Greece Paper presentation. <i>Silk road Cities and Beyond International Workshop</i> . Barcelona, Spain.
	2022	Questioning Asian urbanism: grounding the Belt and Road Initiative in Piraeus, Greece Paper presentation. <i>The 10th East Asian Regional Conference in Alternative Geography</i> . Taipei, Taiwan (online).
	2022	On the shores of tidal development. A grounded analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative in Piraeus, Greece Workshop presentation. <i>Comparative dialogues on the infrastructure-led urbanization of Global China</i> . Malmö, Sweden.
	2022	Infrastructural afterlives. Genealogies of corridor urbanism in the making of the Lithium Triangle Invited seminar. <i>Urbanism + Landscape Week 2022 - Calibrating Thresholds</i> . Delft, The Netherlands.
	2021	Hinterlands of the Green Transition Paper presentation. <i>EXALT Conference 2021 - Concurrent Crises and Sustainable Futures: Global Extractivisms and Alternatives</i> . Helsinki, Finland (online).
	2021	Atacama: le infrastrutture della città a zero emissioni Invited seminar. <i>Spazi di contaminazione- Seminari di geografia critica</i> . University of Bologna, Italy (online).
	2020	Extractivismo y Logística en América Latina Roundtable. <i>V Congreso de Estudios Poscoloniales - VII Jornadas de Feminismo Poscolonial</i> . Buenos Aires, Argentina (online).
	2020	Where the veil remains: preclusion as method in follow-the-thing research Paper presentation. <i>RGS-IBG 2020: On methods of thing-following</i> . London, UK (canceled due to covid-19 pandemic).
	2020	Development at the big finance-microfinance nexus: a political ecology of the Cauchari Solar plant, Argentina Paper presentation. <i>NECS 2020: Transitions: Moving Images and Bodies</i> . Palermo, Italy (canceled due to covid-19 pandemic).
	2020	Lithium: Exploring the frontiers of urbanization Invited seminar. <i>Department of the Arts, Alma Mater Studiorum</i> . Bologna, Italy.
	2019	Green cities and extractive hinterlands: on the urban infrastructure of commodity production Paper presentation. <i>Infrastructural Futures across Cities of the Global North Workshop</i> . Manchester, UK.
	2019	Urbanization along the li-ion network Paper presentation. <i>Annual Meeting of American Geographers</i> . Washington, DC.
	2019	Lavoro, Spazio, Movimenti Paper presentation. <i>XV Coloquio de Geocrítica</i> . Barcelona, Spain.
Languages		Italian mother tongue English excellent French excellent Spanish good
Software		Code Latex, markdown, html Office Word, Excel, Powerpoint Adbode InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Premiere