

Foreword

by

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Researching on Water Cities.

Rome, Hangzhou, Karthoum, Miami a further research proposal for the Consortium of Hydrogenerated Urbanism UF.

In every culture, many major cities were founded in close vicinity to one or more waterways. As celebrated historian Carl Smith affirms: “water is all things to all people. It is a universal necessity, whether for drinking, cooking, sanitation, transportation, manufacturing, or fighting fire. It is the primary component of the human body and of the earth’s surface, so that life is inconceivable without it. Water is a bearer of aesthetic, symbolic, and sacramental meaning in every culture, central to so many rites, from baptism of newborns, to cleansing of the dead.”¹ The research and didactic work of the Consortium for Hydro-generated Urbanism lies on the fertile edge connecting the strong American tradition on the culture of the cities and the recent attention of educators on issues concerning environmental change. I had been informed about the American Schools of Architecture interests in the Climate Change issues through the a conference held in Rome by Richard Plunz published in 2010 as *Urban Climate Change Crossroads* – soon after a joint research held in Rome on Corviale, an extreme public housing case study. Plunz recalls in his book that “New York City was very much affected by the impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and is aware of the probability of some similar event happening in New York in the future”. So I learned about the competition “What if....” organized by OEM (Office for Emergency Management) of New York City and the scenarios that it produced. Plunz continues: “What if... competition was the positive example whereby New York City gave public acknowledgment of the possibility of an extreme climate event and began to talk responsibly about what to do [...] Public Knowledge is crucial in building toward public engagement”. And I also had been informed about several initiatives organized in the last decade in United States by governative organization or researches and design competitions supported also by several important institutions such as the Van Alen Institute. But also through the recent research activity at Columbia University, CURE Center Urban Real Estate, in particular the *Climate Adaptive Development* approach and the research of Jesse M. Keenan² and the one for *Lower-Lower Manhattan (LoLo) Plan for Coastal Adaptation*. This is why for the UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Urban Quality and Urban Culture it is significant to stress the importance of the work of the Consortium of Hydro-generated Urbanism of the University of Florida – Profs. Martha Kohen and Nancy Clark – by this publication and to build up awareness, responsibility and public engagement in water city issues

1. Carl Smith, *City Water, City Life. Water and the Infrastructure of Ideas in Urbanizing Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago*, The University of Chicago Press 2013, p.1.

2. Jesse M. Keenan, *The Art & Science of Real Estate Development*, “Volume” Archis 2014 #4, p.17.

through comparative international research experiences and cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary themes as Nancy Clark discusses in her introduction.

A further research proposal for the Consortium of Hydrogenerated Urbanism

Considering such premises I am developing research with the Consortium of Hydrogenerated Urbanism on Rome, Hangzhou, Karthoum, Miami. It focuses on the historical and working relationships between a city and its river (or rivers) and aims to take into consideration four cities, belonging to four different cultures and political systems, in order to examine and compare what roles certain basic variables – urban development, land ownership and environmental issues – have played in creating three different relations between city and its waters, as well as, most importantly, what effect they have had on the manner and direction taken in those cities' modern and contemporary development along or around their rivers. Naturally a fourth variable has a peculiar importance: that is the role played by the cities' rivers in local, national or international transportation. The four cities chosen for comparison are: Rome (the capital of Italy); Hangzhou (the capital of the province of Zhejiang, in the P.R. China); Khartoum (the capital of Sudan); Miami (the capital of Miami-Dade County). The variables to be examined are: urban development (spontaneous or planned); land ownership; environmental issues; the transportation functions of the waterways. In the last ten years I have had direct knowledge of Rome, Hangzhou, Khartoum. Having a very little knowledge of Miami I expect more advanced knowledge and to acquire a comprehensive methodology approach related to the four cities from the academic exchange with the Consortium for HydroGenerated Urbanism: Profs. Martha Kohen and Nancy Clark. In the meantime, some bibliographic references have been collected.