The keyword of this seminar is ‘Rome’, the national capital of Italy and its largest city. We will aim to define contemporary Rome from the vantage point of urban planning. The inevitable starting point will be its peculiar social structure – characterized by a burgeoning bureaucratic middle class and a vast underclass mostly made up of low-skilled internal migrants – and its profound and long standing effects on the structuring of the political context of urban planning. We will address this topic from the opposite perspectives of failing bold visions of state-led reform and the entrenched reality of spreading informality. The rise of what has been termed the ‘informal metropolis’ will therefore be the seminar’s empirical focus. Specific case studies will be examined – ranging from informal urban settlements to public housing squatting – with the aim of illuminating the politics and policy of informality in Rome, its successes, contradictions, paradoxes and conundrums.

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