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# The Journal of Public Space

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Luisa Bravo & Mirko Guaralda

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Cover image: Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Photo Credit: Linda Carroli.

EDITORIAL

## Making cities for people. Moulding urban design around human beings

Helle Søholt

Gehl, Denmark

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An interview by Luisa Bravo and Mirko Guaralda, on the 2nd of June, 2017

**HS** – Helle Søholt | **LB** – Luisa Bravo | **MG** – Mirko Guaralda

*Q (1). Gehl Architects is a leading international firm on urban design and public space and a paramount source of knowledge for scholars and professionals all over the world. The practice's mind-set and whole methodology are built around people and public life, why are you so passionate about this approach?*

**HS.** We, as a practice, have an approach that is very much based on a reaction to the fact that people and public life are generally not taken into account when planning cities. Today, planners and architects have developed an expertise with a focus on the physical aspect of our environment, as well as the economic and environmental aspects, but very often life, and you could actually say essentially the client, understood as the people living in the cities, comes as an afterthought. So, the ways in which planning institutions have often approached cities haven't adequately taken fundamental social factors into account. I think that this is important because we are at a paradigm shift in planning right now; there are so many changes happening in our environment and society that we now need to deal with as designers. There is a climate crisis, we have just seen that President Trump has taken the United States of America out of the Paris agreement. Yet, we undoubtedly have serious climate issues that we need to deal with. We also have a transportation issue, where the number of trips taken in our urban areas is growing and growing. On top of this, we have issues with terrorism and growing insecurity in cities. The number and complexity of crises or risks are growing in our society and there are so many things that we need to address and deal with. If we do not consider the social issues when planning for our future, I think we are going to face a real risk of social cry-out or social unrest in many of our cities. We need to engage with people in the design process and consider the public-life aspects when planning. That is why I think it is so critical and so important to engage people; it's not something that we can do as an afterthought.

The situation is becoming critical for us as a society and I think this is something that we need to understand as planners, as architects, as landscape architects and in fact within the design field as a whole. We also need to be better at building bridges, so to speak, with experts in other fields, for example social scientists. Moreover, we need to find ways of addressing this at the highest political level. When we work in cities we often find ourselves crossing various levels of scale in terms of political management, strategies and

visions, but we also find ourselves dealing with various traditional silos that are often found within city government. We also need to find ways to engage people locally, at ground level, in the actual implementation of projects. An approach in which we try to visualise, through our methods, how people will react to various proposals, in order to find political arguments to scale up initiatives in the public realm and create far greater programmes of initiatives in cities. So, in that sense you could say that we work on these risks and these issues at all levels of scale in cities.

**MG.** This is a good argument, which actually leads into the second question that we have prepared. Our second question is more about your international experience. Clearly every context is different but being an expert on public space means that you work all over the world.

*Q (2). Gehl works internationally, both at the academic and professional level. Based on your experiences what are the most commonly shared values on public space and quality of life among cultures and societies and what are the foremost discussions that divide opinion?*

**HS.** The discussion of values is different from the risks we have just talked about. Public space is like a glue that enables society to be together. Essentially it's what we have in common, it's the space that we share. We see very clearly in societies that do not have a shared public realm how this absence has an impact in terms of lack of social coherence, and you could also say, connectedness. My first experience of this was when I started the company at 28 and I was probably very young and naïve at the time but I remember very clearly the first time I went to Cape Town in South Africa to lead a public realm strategy and plan for the city. I was someone coming from Scandinavia, a woman used to being able to cycle around my own town, living a comfortable life, having access to jobs, recreation, education and the means to satisfying my daily needs, all of this facilitated by a safe and accessible public realm. Now I had to face a completely different and challenging situation. My personal experience of public space back then was something that was basically not possible for some time under the apartheid in South Africa and going to facilitate a strategy for public realm development for Cape Town became a sheer eye opener for me, in terms of understanding what a great impact it has on a society when you do not have that public realm. In addition, I gained an understanding of the social and economic divide you might have if you cannot meet in public in greater groups and if you do not share that notion of common ground. And I think we still see it in many ways in cities where the lack of connectivity and the lack of public realm is impacting our quality of life and it can lead to social segregation of people; it is very clear when we see areas that are socially deprived and those areas usually have poor public spaces, lack of connections or bad connectivity and lack of transport options and so forth. Public space as a value is about supporting the shared notions in society that enable personal development as well as a collective notion of quality of life in cities. I think Bruce Mau said that citizenship is about contributing to something shared in order to gain as an individual, we could say the same thing about the public realm: it is something we contribute to collectively in order to gain as individuals.

**MG.** That's inspiring.

**LB.** Yes that's very interesting, exactly, but in the second question we also mentioned discussions that divide opinion, what you just said is really strong but do you think that many people would agree or disagree on what you just said?

**HS.** I think that more people understand these issues now than when I started Gehl 17 years ago, so I do think we are building up a movement of awareness. This is not only because there are more and more architects and planners that are speaking up about people; but it's also because more and more cities understand that the traditional way of planning is no longer possible. We cannot masterplan cities in the same way as we did in the past, when we could draw a plan, then we could just implement that plan and the world would be the same 10 years later. It's not that easy anymore. Planning has become a matter of managing cities more strategically and rather than having a masterplan, we need to think about a framework within a paradigm that can allow more flexibility, then we can easily adapt to the changes that are happening. So, in that sense I do feel that more and more people understand that in order to make cities resilient, we need to include a people perspective in it. When we boil it down, resilience and adaptation are essentially about human nature and human behaviour; we as humans can adapt to the various changes that are happening to our physical environment. The people perspective and the behavioural aspect need to be part of the way we plan and design our cities moving forward.

When we look at high level research institutions or even at the European commission and other greater organisations that are working with a more overriding systemic change, we can see that even those types of institutions are starting to realise that they can only evolve by understanding human nature and behavioural changes, and this realisation is positively impacting our field. I think public realm implementers, planners and architects are becoming part of that overall trend and leading change.



*Figure 1 (left). In 2012, “Life Between Buildings” was invited to join the ‘New Nordic Architecture’ exhibition at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark, and was then chosen as the museum’s traveling exhibition for the Venice Biennale of Architecture.*

**LB.** Yes and this is also the introduction to question 3 related to the film “Life Between Buildings”, did you show the same exhibition and film anywhere else apart from at the Venice Biennale and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art?

**HS.** We have also shown the “Life Between Buildings” big circle exhibition at IKEA’s museum in Sweden. With this exhibition, we wanted to create a space and a feeling that

was more dynamic instead of just watching panels or looking at models from a certain distance. We wanted to create a feeling of being surrounded and engaged in a new way, whilst at the same time building a classic form such as the circle.



Figure 2 (right). “Life Between Buildings” is a circular, immersive, and filmic exhibition which showcases the classic Gehl principles about the human scale, senses, and how we interact with the built environment.

*Q (3). In 2012 the director Andreas Dalsgaard launched the film ‘The Human Scale’ at the Venice Architecture Biennale, as part of the ‘Life between buildings’ exhibition previously shown at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. That was an important achievement in defining public life as a fundamental concept across different contexts and cultures, to be considered as key for all future design interventions. Do you think we are in great need of an all-encompassing global vision to understand how to make cities for people? If so, how can we effectively and sensitively put a global vision into practice at the local level?*

**HS.** When we talk about public life I think it’s about a movement but it’s also about activities. It’s about understanding both very specific needs in a specific context, but it can also be a route to explaining some of the more shared biological needs that people have. I think that Jan Gehl has always been good at addressing some of those behavioural aspects that we all share and that human nature seems to be very fond of things that are easy: things that are very direct, everything that feels safe, things that are attentive to our senses, that we can smell, hear and touch and those are things that we share regardless of which culture we are in. I think that’s one very important aspect to think about in relation to public life but then there are of course all the culturally specific elements that differ but are still related. When we studied public life in America a lot of people understood it as related to social rights, equity, and possibilities for accessing various assets in the city and I think those aspects are culturally different in various parts of the world. When we work in South America and the Global South, safety is a very important aspect, as is equity and transparency, so it is evident that these kinds of values also relate to public life: if you can access knowledge about your own neighbourhood and community and what is going on in the city, that very quickly leads to participation and engagement. So, all of these elements,

aspects and themes are the types of values which I would consider as being widely fundamental within the realm of public life and as such also for a people-first focus on design.

**LB.** Indeed, we could agree on some general principles related to public space but the main effort is to put all those principles into practice when we design and when we work with public policy makers and people and citizens. I think one of the most difficult things to develop is to establish a common language for all, we need to talk the same language and have the same aims and general understanding and consensus of what that specific space could become. There is a lot of theoretical knowledge on public space but we now need to take action. This need was clearly stated at the UN Habitat III conference in Quito last year, the fact that now we need to start to take action on what we have learnt from study, best practice scenarios and theory. But for those who are actually planning cities and working on public space how can they successfully put this theoretical knowledge into practice?

**HS.** Well we try in our office to develop some super easy methods that we can promote and that everyone can share; we often refer to our methodology as Life, Space, Buildings and we try to promote that in Italy or in Australia, or wherever. Any project you would undertake in a city has to consider these elements in this order: Life, Space, Buildings. There are often a lot of things that are not addressed in the scope of the project, for example: what the building is supposed to give back to the city, who is going to use it, how are people supposed to arrive there, what kind of activities are going to take place there and so forth. It is probably easy to understand, I think, and easy to say but it's not always easy to implement, as you said. But we try to summarise a complete holistic approach to design in Life, Space, Buildings. Often there is too much focus on the buildings or alternatively on transport, space comes afterwards when you start looking at the configuration of buildings and the public life component is something that you might not even consider before it's too late and then it becomes an afterthought. So, trying to revert that traditional process of considering buildings and then spaces and then perhaps no life we say instead; life first, then spaces and then buildings. We try to look at how the city could do this from a city management perspective and not only a design perspective and we try to promote a more iterative process that we often refer to as Measure, Test, Refine. It's about cities testing, doing things in the public realm and engaging people around real projects instead of asking people to turn up to meetings and imagine what is possible. You can do an experiment in a city, close a street for traffic for a weekend and see what happens. Close Broadway for traffic and see what types of activities take place, go out and measure, speak with people, interview them, and then try to measure the impact the intervention has on: traffic, the climate, Co2 reductions, the economy, social relations between people and social mixing across various cultures within society and so forth. If you can see what's happening you can make people visible in that decision-making process, then you can go back and revisit your design, make it better and scale up the paths that work well and then perhaps it becomes a city wide programme. That was exactly what we did in New York, Sao Paolo, Denver and many other places. Conducting this more intuitive process-orientated approach to development by testing and engaging with people through their physical environments and their neighbourhoods and the communities they're in, allowing them, to vote with their feet instead of traditionally only being able to express their opinion by either demonstrating or participating in a traditional public event.



Figure 3 (left). Based on Gehl's recommendations, the Municipality of São Paulo implemented pilot projects across the city, followed by in depth surveying and citizen statements. One project was to reconnect two plazas, São Francisco and Praça Ouvidor Pacheco e Silva, in order to create a unified public space and ensure safe pedestrian crossings across the road. This is before the pilot project.

Figure 4 (right). After the plazas, São Francisco and Praça Ouvidor Pacheco e Silva, were activated, measurements were again taken to understand if the pilot project impacted the amount of pedestrian and traffic accidents, the number of diverse staying activities, the amount of new functions in the area attracting more users, if the pilot increased the sense of community and sense of place, among many more indicators.

**LB.** I'm living in Bologna and they recently did exactly what you just said, they now close the main streets at weekends and they have a renewed commitment to this idea of engaging citizens back in the city centre. We are doing something that somehow matches your approach, but I think that there is still something missing. When you talk about public space, there are many different stakeholders and parties involved because it's not just about urban planning, you also have traffic and the environment for example. So you have different people working on the same subject and if you're lucky they all agree on the same vision but if you're not, maybe one side is just promoting cycling as one of the main issues for the city and another is suggesting closing the streets for the weekend or for specific periods. The problem is that often those projects are running alongside one another rather than being intertwined to create a common comprehensive effort to change the city to accommodate people's needs. That's why I was saying before that we have a lot of knowledge but we need to work together to get the best results and outcomes for citizens in the city.

**HS.** Yes and that's where finding ways to break down some of these traditional silos that we have built up in cities is incredibly important, because the public realm is where everything comes together and we can't make a complete design or implement complete processes with transport while looking exclusively at the traffic lanes - the landscape department only considering trees and the planning, water management, the cultural and health departments focusing only on their specific areas -that kind of blinkered approach is detrimental to the whole system. That is dissecting the public realm and that's not how people experience it, they experience it as a complete environment and space; we need to find ways to accommodate a matrix collaboration around these issues and I think what you bring up Luisa is also very closely related to political leadership because I think we

need new skills in the city. Earlier we had project managers that were checking that projects were implemented to the agreed budget and to the agreed time but that's not sufficient anymore. We need facilitators in the city who can facilitate a process, who understand engagement and who can balance these various views from the various departments involved as well as from the diverse users and stakeholders. Then we need strategic decision-making and bold leaders who can learn from the implementation of these experiments and these projects, leaders who can learn how to take positions based on the acceleration of risks and problems that the city has. That's why I think we need to work differently with planning: it cannot be a fixed masterplan idea, we need to develop more strategic frameworks for cities where the people aspect is as equally important as the environmental, transportation, and densification aspects of the plan. We need a framework that both allows and enables our political decision makers to make the right and most sensible decisions at any given time. So, it is basically different people skills, decision makers are people too and we need to train them to see the different issues holistically.



Figure 5 (left). Crossing the Street: Building DC's Inclusive Future through Creative Placemaking initiative was designed to promote community-building in over one dozen neighborhoods that are experiencing rapid demographic and social change. In 2016, communities across DC were engaged by Gehl to participate and develop catalyzing projects, including the Superstop bus stop.

Figure 6 (right): The Superstop was designed and built by over 30 people between 4 – 74 who use the DC bus stops. The project was championed by Gehl in collaboration with Public Workshop, Mark Garrett and Angel Zambarano, The Hope Foundation, and Park 7 Apartments. This project was supported by The Kresge Foundation, Gehl Institute, and The Summit Foundation.

In relation to almost any project that we have in this office, we spend a lot of time changing people's minds or bringing the politicians or decision-makers and managers along, in order to give them new tools to look at these issues in a more holistic way. We have three values in our company, the first one is a very funny value, it is called the Viking principle. There was no captain on the old Viking boats because everybody was



Figure 7. In 2007, Gehl was asked to conduct an analysis of Times Square's public realm, and to formulate a strategic vision to improve the conditions for pedestrians while promoting a balance between modes of transportation. Findings showed that despite the fact that pedestrians made up 90% of the users at Times Square, only 10% of the public realm was dedicated to pedestrian use.  
Photo by: NYC DOT.

rowing and I often use that metaphor to talk about our company here. I might be the founding partner and manager but I'm part of the rowing too, I work too and we also need cities to think about this idea: all the decision-makers are people too and we need to think about them as equally importantly engaged in all processes. Then we also have a second value in that we call ourselves pragmatic idealists, because as you mentioned Luisa, the world is never black and white and we will never get anything done if we sit as idealists and experts up in our ivory towers, looking down at the world and thinking that we know better than the rest of them. We will never achieve anything with a change of mindset and a change of paradigm if we don't get our hands dirty. So, we all need to let loose a little bit in a new way of planning and a new way of working. We need to let go and not plan so much, to trust citizens to make good decisions and to take co-decisions. Politicians need to get out of their ivory towers and trust meeting with citizens to make better decisions.



*Figure 8. Between 2008 and 2009 interventions were implemented along Broadway Boulevard including Times Square, Herald and Greenly Squares and Madison Square Park, reclaiming 45,000 m<sup>2</sup> of public space. By 2010 the project had doubled the amount of bicycle lanes in NYC, improving travel speeds for motor vehicles as well. The data showed safety increased and general satisfaction in the areas increased among residents, locals, and visitors.  
Photo by: NYC DOT.*

So we often use that term, pragmatic idealists, in order to make sure that we can get things done. Then the last principle is of course, people first, always people first.

**LB.** Well that's clear from your whole philosophy and your website, making cities for people is a very clear message, I think that anyone can easily understand what you are doing there in Copenhagen.

Well the fourth question is in relation to your new offices in the United States, in New York and San Francisco: as you pointed out, when moving to the US the concept of public space changes a little bit as its more about safety, equity and civil rights. Do you think that working in the US is different from working in Europe?

*Q (4). On the back of the momentum of the film 'The Human Scale', brand new Gehl offices were opened in the USA and the practice's network expanded on the global level. What do you think were the highlights of your work in the last 5 years? What is next for Gehl?*

**HS.** It's very different. In Europe historically we have very strong planning departments, we have stronger municipal governments, we have a history of investing in the public realm and we are very proud of the public realm. You come from Italy so you know all about the pride around the civic public spaces that we have, it is definitely a proud part of our institution and cities. That's not the case in the US, we have to constantly argue why the public realm matters and why the cities need to invest in it. The cities in the US are not strong in the same way as they are in Europe, they're not financially strong either, basically in American society it's the individual before the collective and that's why a lot of our work is sponsored by foundations.

A large part of the portfolio of our work consists of collaborations between city governments and private investors or organisations like business improvement districts or foundations that want to advocate for improvement in design processes, a more equitable society or a better environment for example and we have learnt an incredible amount through working in this way through more collaborative processes.

In Europe, traditionally we have one client, we have the city as the client or we are working for a private developer for example. But in the US we are being challenged by often having two, three or four clients, so the effort is shared in that sense. It sometimes does make the actual physical changes on the ground more difficult and it does sometimes make it slower but on the other hand it is building a movement because more people are participating and that in turn has actually made us start a new initiative.

So first we opened up the two new offices in the US and then last year we started the Gehl Institute, which is a completely separate non-profit organisation with independent management and an independent board, with the focus of building a public life movement. It is now aiming to build a new mode of practice around public space, one that is evidence based and relies on different research findings as well as on best practice scenarios of building cities for people. So now our mission is to essentially create a new practice; the mission of the institute is to impact policy making and enabling this global movement of building a new way of approaching planning and design, where public life becomes the one component that is not missing.

Gehl Institute is doing this through new types of research, through advocacy work and learning activities like seminars, master classes, study trips and so forth. It's a very young and new organisation and it's very small, we still have less than 5 staff. However, it's exciting to see how we are now gaining a huge amount of interest from the health sector and we have a collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, one of the largest in the US.

They are interested in public life but from a health perspective. We are also getting a huge amount of interest from Knight Foundation that is leading initiatives in the states on social equity; they want to better understand how the public realm is actually supporting social mixing of people across various income levels and income groups within society. So it's exciting that in the 17 years since starting the company, I think we have been successful in terms of impacting the field of planning and the field of design. But our ambition now with Gehl Institute is to see whether we can impact other fields and other practices like social justice, the health sector and the environmental sector and so forth,

to hopefully find new ways of working and a new type of knowledge that can support the public life focus.



Figure 9 (left). Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the largest health philanthropy in the U.S., visited Copenhagen in June 2017 for a three-day study tour led by Gehl Institute and Gehl, the practice to explore how public spaces contribute to individual and community health and equitable neighborhood development. Image by Boundless.



Figure 10 (right). Helle Søholt discussing the development of Copenhagen's bridges as a major public resource during the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study tour in Copenhagen. Image by Boundless.

**LB** So I think you answered the fourth question, what is next for Gehl.

**HS** Exactly.

*Q (5). Nowadays cities are facing global challenges, frequently related to evolving societies and diversifying multicultural environments. Public space is dealing with expanding conflicts and contradictions. With these current challenges in mind what would you like your legacy to be for future generations?*

**LB.** So the last question is related to global challenges, evolving societies and conflicts. Actually that's why I mentioned the Global South because although in our western-oriented mainstream of knowledge, it's true that migration is changing the face of our societies and conflicts and terrorism are now affecting safe western contexts. In other contexts such as the Middle East, where I have been working, conflicts are and have been for a long time ever-present in public space. So the last question is, with these current challenges in mind, what would you like your legacy to be for future generations in terms of a global approach to public space? Because it is already being pointed out that in the future those challenges which we in the West perceive as somewhat far away will in the very near future be more significantly affecting our urban contexts too.

**HS.** Well I think when we look to the future we can be sure of one thing and that is that everything will change. The one thing that has changed very slowly through thousands of years is mankind, is people. I think we need to find ways of understanding how we can bridge the ever-changing and more and more dynamic world around us with the fragile human being in the centre of all of that. I often hear that "oh technology is going to save us all" but I'm not so sure about that. There are already some signs that technology is going to create an awful lot more problems for us when it comes to autonomous vehicles for example; we can see Uber and Lyft in the USA is already creating more rather than less traffic, it's causing people to use private vehicles instead of public transport. We see freight in cities exploding and so forth. I think we need to understand and find a way for people to be at the centre of decision-making and planning. My wish for the future of the Global South is that we could leapfrog, I wish that we didn't have to make all the same mistakes in those developing countries but learn from all the mistakes we've made in western countries and learn from those in order to do better. And I worry when I see the building of humongous highways and flyovers in Bangladesh and Jakarta and other places, as a way of ensuring better mobility, because that is a way of repeating the mistakes of the past rather than actually leapfrogging and finding ways for technology to support shared trips in a smart way. I think we, as a field and as a professional practice, need to think seriously about how we can jump and achieve that leapfrog so that we are not repeating the mistakes of the western countries in the Global South. We don't have the time, we don't have the money or the spatial resources, we don't have the space to go through the same phases as we went through in the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, we need to find new ways. So that's kind of back to where we started I guess, that's why this is important and urgent. That would be my wish for the future and for our professional field.

**LB.** I agree, but it's very difficult, we have to work a lot, but all together.

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## Urban visions for the architectural project of public space

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### Abstract

Public spaces should be places that support an intense civic life. They have been so throughout history, even if in each culture and historical period they have taken very different shapes and followed different design principles. Nevertheless, during the XX century, the Modern Movement faced some difficulties in dealing with public spaces. Too many times the zoning approach opposed the complexity, mix of uses and intensity required by lively public spaces, where social encounters and knowledge exchanges are made possible. In the XXI century, public spaces regained a major role in city projects and urban strategies all over the world. Their appearance was enriched by new forms. Besides the traditional squares, parks and promenades of compact cities, new metropolitan open spaces and collective places related to transport network nodes emerged. This paper focuses on the urban design of such contemporary collective places. Based on an overview of the historical evolution of public spaces, we identify some design principles (from the overlap of scales to acupuncture strategies, through to the complexity of relations between urban architectures) necessary to ensure that metropolitan nodes emerge as places full of urbanity rather than as deserted non places.

**Keywords:** urban design, collective places, metropolitan nodes, urban complexity, urbanity.

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### Urbanism and lively public spaces

We think you've all seen the movie *Smoke*, starring Harvey Keitel. It is the story of a man who has a cigar shop in Brooklyn. Every day he takes a picture of the same place and collects them. One day whilst reviewing them, he realises that this space, a simple crossroad, whilst seemingly remaining the same, is also subject to constant change, hour by hour and day by day. We can also say that space is built by people. This is also clear, for instance, in the difference between Piazza Ariostea in Ferrara on a normal day and during the celebration of the world's oldest Palio at the end of May.



Figure 1. Piazza Ariostea on a normal day and during the Palio, Ferrara (photos by authors).

In that sense, the anthropologist Manuel Delgado argues that “in urban spaces which have been architecturally designed in their entirety, sometimes it seems as if sociability has not always been considered. It is as if the project designed on paper or in models was not calculated to support the weight of life which will unfold there. Within the designed space there are no presences, which implies that neither are there absences. Otherwise, the real urban space –not conceived– knows the innumerable heterogeneity of actions and actors...”.

We wish to start this paper by reminding ourselves that enhancing sociability is the main aim of urban design for public spaces and thus the focus of our research. Since the beginning of the year 2000, our research within the Department of Urbanism at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia has been oriented towards studying the transformation of public space in different cultural contexts, beginning with the European context. A Doctoral course entitled Public space: experiences, projects and management collects the ongoing outcomes of this line of research. We are interested in how urban, architectural or landscape design can produce or restore urbanity in the city, that is to strengthen urban and social relationships within the public realm. Urban and social relations are in fact closely related, as the two faces of the city, in a long term vis-à-vis between urbs and civitas.

In this research on public space we have considered several phenomena over recent decades (Roca and Martí, 2013). Among them:

- the implementation of comprehensive policies to improve public space in many compact inner cities around Europe. Policies that since the eighties of the XX century have been overcoming the reductive functional approach to public space (transportation roads, civic centres, green parks...) to introduce more integrated designs. Policies that have developed the formal quality of streetscapes as well as general visions of public space networks. Increasing concerns for sustainable mobility

have directed these policies to aim for a friendly city (that is in many cases a walkable and cyclable city) for everybody, thereby considering the different kinds of publics sharing the urban space.

- the transformation of large metropolitan open spaces into new potential public spaces for the regional city. Spaces that can play a new role as structural elements of the metropolis. Spaces that generate new composite landscapes in which natural features, infrastructures or cultural heritage elements are combined. Spaces that seek to enhance and balance new uses, mainly those serving an ecological function, such as various agricultural uses and leisure activities.
- the configuration of metropolitan nodes as collective places. Squares and facilities in central cities constitute metropolitan nodes too, but new kinds of nodes are emerging as social spaces in regional cities. They are nodes related to mobility networks or to systems of leisure and shopping centres. In such nodes, two factors are important to constitute them as collective spaces rather than non-places. Firstly, the governance of regional networks and their integrated conception are key in order to produce places with intense and mixed uses. Secondly, the urban design project is crucial in enabling the architectural and social relationships that produce a collective space. Particularly, the relationships between different levels of the city (for instance the underground levels with the city level or various skywalk levels) and the articulation between outdoor/indoor or public/private spaces are all important issues to be tackled by urban design.

The current research contribution is focused on the last question: how urban design can contribute to generating rich collective places in contemporary metropolitan nodes. We propose a reflection on some guidelines, based on a historical overview of the relationship between architecture and public space.

### **Urban design of public spaces over time**

Implicitly, the characteristics of any public space have much to do with its historical timeline, but its construction does not always coincide with a single historical period. Over time, streets, squares, parks... develop in one way or another, layer upon layer. Therefore, the time or event that has generated, ordered or reformed them deserves special attention.

The eastern city employs simple geometry as the supporting principle behind the make up of the regular grid. While in Egypt and the East, the centre of the grid had the temple and/or the royal palace, in Greek and Roman cities we already find the Agora and the Forum Square on centre stage (the latter is usually defined by the intersection of two main streets, the *cardo maximus* and *decumanus*).

Both the agora and the forum are enclosed by a wall, in order to define their scope and to differentiate amorphous spaces without a specific destination. The agora was a limited space for public buildings. It included a large covered porch, the *Stoa*, which was the meeting place of citizens. The agora thus becomes the democratic expression of Greek life. It was intended for public life, different from other spaces dedicated to the gods and priests: the *Acropolis*. I like that in the *Acropolis* of Athens we can see how all architecture is simple, Euclidean, there are no parallel lines between the different buildings, creating a large spatial tension. This can be a great lesson in modernity for some contemporary metropolitan nodes.

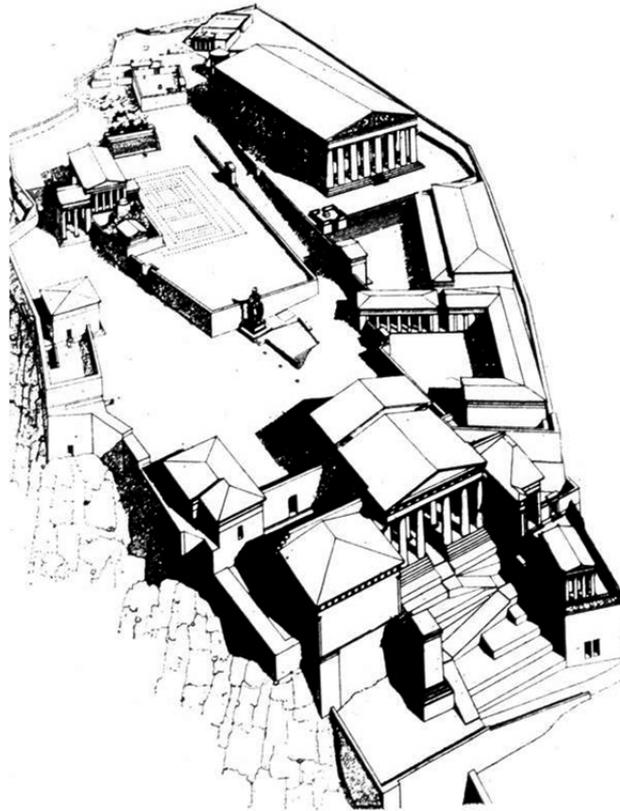


Figure 2. The Acropolis, Athens, drawn by Ludovico Quaroni.

The Roman forum, despite being a public place like the agora, was more multifunctional: business, justice and religion all shared this space. It was a rectangular space, often of gigantic dimensions, responding to a general typology of the Roman city. There was a large porch (the portico) which marked the great plaza or central open space, and a cryptoporticus coinciding with the buildings themselves which housed various offices. The large porch is characterised by a modular treatment in its construction, it regulates the perimeter of the inner space and absorbs connections to outer space.

In the medieval city, the streets were made by the houses. They arose as spaces not occupied by buildings. They were not designed and were irregular in their alignments and widths. They were often very narrow spaces with small expansions or contractions. The city had few open spaces. Public open spaces disappeared. The square was no longer as it had been before, the social meeting place. Public life in a broad sense was not celebrated in a single open space. It was more related to privacy and the street was its public backdrop. And streets were the outcome of the overlaying of a set of interventions, building after building.

The various forms of medieval squares were very diverse. Most were irregular, like streets, and arose from the intersection of two major roads, the widening of the main street in the city or the opening of compact urban fabric. The Piazza del Campo in Siena and the Piazza della Signoria in Florence are good examples.



Figure 3. Piazza del Campo, Siena (from Google).

In the overall view of the city it is possible to see the character of the different buildings. The skyline view provided a true reflection of the functions that were produced. There was a clear distinction between the public and private buildings in terms of their size, scale and the architectural treatment of their details. The spires or towers of a church or cathedral and the defence towers all stood out from the skyline. Institutional buildings were usually grouped, creating significant areas of the city. Thus, the skyline was formed by balancing rhythmic accents and modulations. It was a highly expressive profile, which stressed the primacy of spiritual aspirations.

Main squares were placed to accommodate markets and in many Spanish cities their role became even greater during the reign of Fernando and Isabel, while town halls were built under the impulse of the Ordinances of 1480 set by the Cortes of Toledo.

In the Renaissance, palaces and houses were given a geometric order. The use of perspective, the geometric configuration of the perimeter and the enclosure of space were key design devices. The Piazza del Campidoglio, by Michelangelo, is a master example of a square in which all elements are carefully thought out and organised. The Renaissance Square was not, however, a place of intense civic life as it was in the times of the Romans and the Greeks. Concurrently, the streets provided access to buildings, maintaining direct links with major regional roads and facilitating mobility between different parts of the city. Moreover, the concept of straight streets designed as an ensemble was introduced in the Renaissance. Rome is the paradigmatic example of the Renaissance city, while Paris is a prime example of a mid-nineteenth century city.

The raw Baroque principles of the straight line, the monumental perspective, uniformity and, sometimes, the surprise effect can be clearly seen in Rome. St. Peter's square was much more spectacular before the construction of Via della Conciliazione that would connect it with Sant'Angelo as part of the Borgo Nuovo reform. Figurative regulations and a general system for the city's street network were also introduced in the Baroque period.

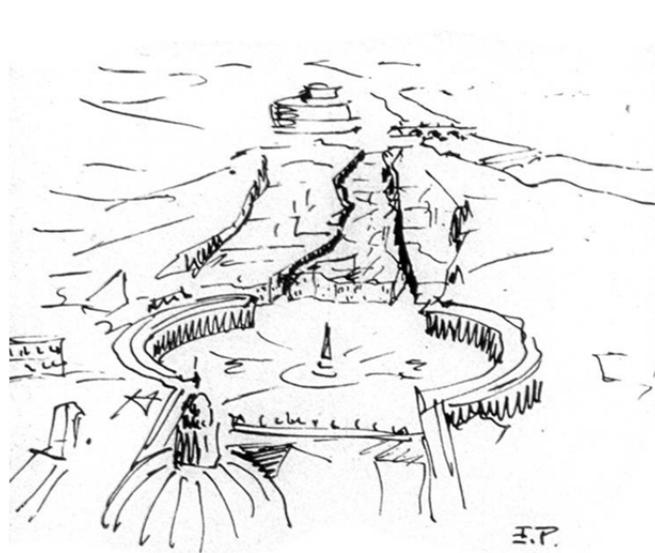


Figure 4. Piazza di San Pietro and the Borgo Nuovo, Rome (archives DUOT).

Another clear example of the tradition of Baroque urban design is a sequence of three squares in Nancy: place Stanislas, place de la Carrière and place de l'Hémicycle. Together they produce a subtle combination of axes and symmetries creating one of the most singular monumental ensembles in the history of urbanism.

But Paris is also a prime illustration of Baroque design. A couple of good examples are Place Royale or Place des Vosges and Louis Le Grand or Place Vendôme. In the case of Place Vendôme, the Duc de Vendôme commissioned Mansard, the most famous architect of the time, to design the facade of a new square in the Marais in Paris. What mattered was the facade, for what was behind it did not matter so much. It was a real-estate transaction. This often happened in the Baroque period and we can see examples of it in many other places such as Barcelona's Plaza Reial or Madrid's Plaza Mayor.



Figure 5. Place Vendôme, Paris and Plaza Mayor, Madrid (archives DUOT).

Perhaps the most extreme case of this trend can be seen in Piazza Ducale in Vigevano. Bramante designed both the square and the buildings around it, balancing their facades with the repetition of architectural elements. But many were quite upset by the fact that the facade of the church which closed the space at the north end was not perpendicular to the square. In the late eighteenth century, the city commissioned a new facade for the church. Juan de Caramuel, a bishop and Spanish-born architect, designed a front half-moon shaped new façade in order to complete the symmetry of Bramante square, but was careless with what would be a problematic transition into the existing church building. This obsession for control over the facade in the baroque and neoclassical traditions led us one day to make a comparison with higher-order animal species, which are, like the baroque buildings, symmetrical on the outside (we have an eye, a hand, a leg on each side) but asymmetrical on the inside (with the heart on one side, the liver on the other...). In these traditions, the position of the private interior did not matter as much as the public exterior.

The idea of the modern street appears in the early nineteenth century and features different contents. It is longer, which makes traffic congestion possible and it invites new architecture and new housing typologies, and most especially, it introduces new uses such as commerce. It is another type of street, a street which has been designed: a street with houses side by side. The London squares, which were really new forms of group-organised residences, constituted a design precedent for the modern street. This new nineteenth century street is a new place and generates a new image. This is exemplified by Ferran Street in Barcelona, Regent's Street in London and Rue Rivoli in Paris. It has often been said that Ferran Street is a very innovative urban intervention that radically changed the way in which we understand the city and its image.

With the Modern Movement came a substantial change concerning the functional city, based on the principles of the Athens Charter, written by Le Corbusier in 1933. It is well known that these principles establish a positivist dissection of the city following four main functions: housing, work, leisure and movement. However Lewis Mumford soon realised that this approach didn't consider one essential aspect of the city: the city has always been a place of knowledge generation and cultural exchange. Such a reflection led Sert and Giedon to conduct research around civic centres and as a result, *The heart of the city* was published in 1952. Similar criticisms were made about the proposals contained in the Athens Charter at the end of the tenth CIAM congress, which was held in Dubrovnik in 1956. There was disagreement between the rebellious architects of Team X and the orthodox architects who were loyal to Le Corbusier.

In the book *The Heart of the City*, Josep Lluís Sert argued that cities needed a process of recentralisation, to turn around the process of unplanned decentralisation. He also added: "When a city is replanned, it is divided into zones of different land uses [...]. Each of these areas or parts of the city needs its own centre or core, and the entire system results in a network or constellation of community centres, ranked from the smallest to the largest, with a main centre that is the expression of the city or metropolis as a whole, the centre of the city." Then, we will be able to speak of the heart of the city, which requires several essential conditions in order to exist: the separation of vehicular traffic from pedestrians, abundant vegetation, controlled trade, controlled development, a design that reflects general needs, spaces to shelter from the sun and rain, places with arcades and courtyards and a skilful and harmonious combination of high and low rise buildings. One of the proposals that was most criticised was precisely that of zoning. Critics expressed the need for a mix of uses, similar to that found in the historic city. A mix of

uses provides better social control of the urban space and there is no need for life to be so absolutely bounded to the timing of one exclusive activity.

In the article “La segunda historia del proyecto urbano” (The second history of urban design), which was published in UR no. 5 and in the journal Lotus International in 1989, Manuel de Solà Morales expands on criticism of Le Corbusier’s functional urban planning. He argues that there is another tradition in the modern architectural movement that does not create such a radical distinction between principles that are applied to urban planning and principles that are applied to architectural design. This tradition deals with the design of complex elements, in which discussions surrounding the city, the buildings, the layout of the roads, the division of land into plots, the organisation of movement and routes and the social intention of these contents are all interconnected. He describes the extent to which the application of abstract criteria to the organisation of the city and precise criteria to the organisation of architecture, leads to a major crisis: the crisis of the modern city.

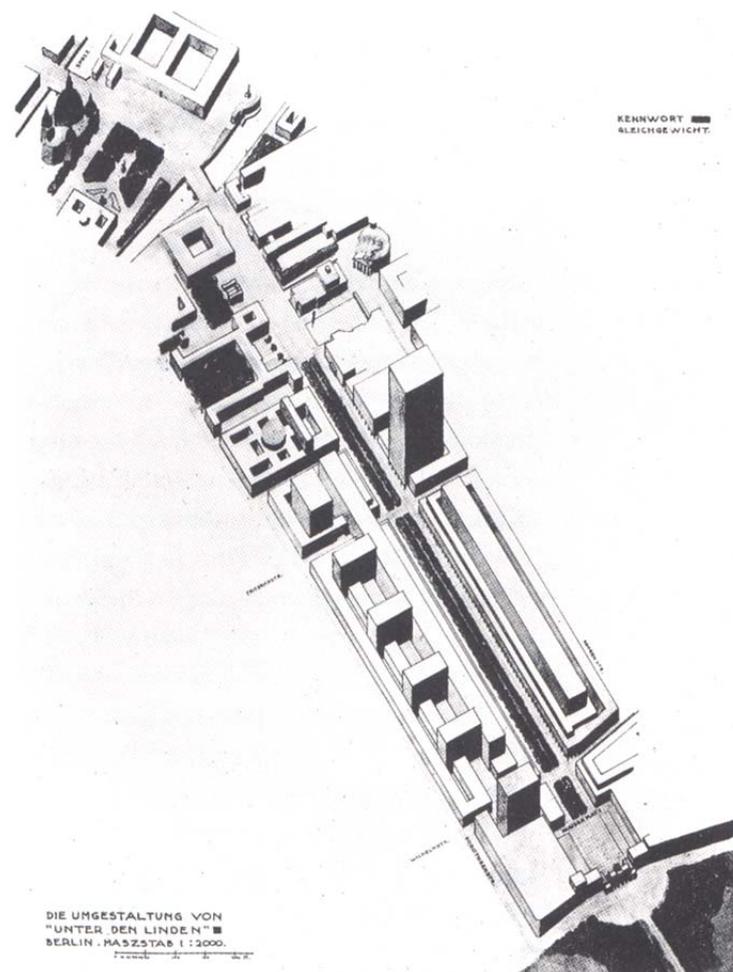


Figure 6. *Unter den Linden* avenue project, Berlin, by Van Eesteren C. (Urbanismo Revista n°8)

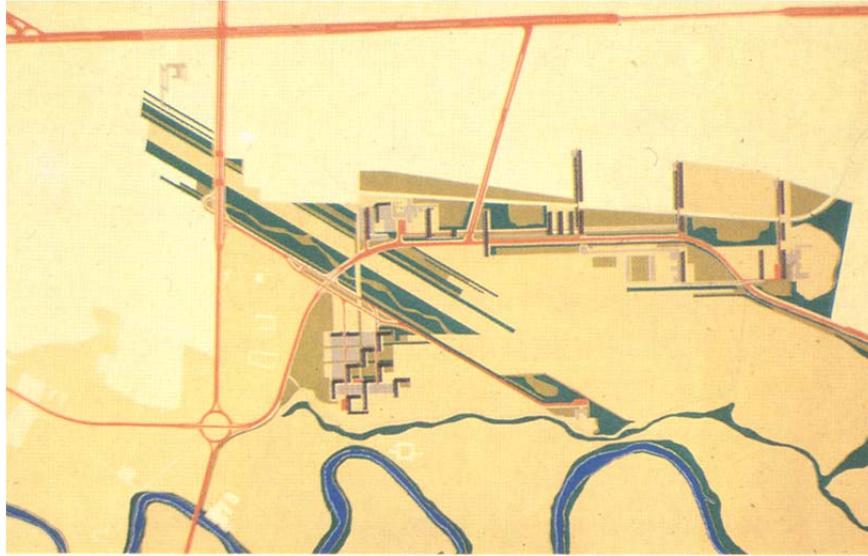


Figure 7. Planimetric detail of study for the Fiat Headquarters, Torino, by Ludovico Quaroni (Urbanismo Revista n°7)

### **On urban design for public spaces in the contemporary city**

Manuel de Solà-Morales cites Cornelis Van Eesteren, Leslie Martin and Ludovico Quaroni as examples of advocates of the modern tradition of urban design in that they share a set of commonalities, despite the fact that they approach them from different theoretical and circumstantial positions. Finally, he identifies five points that define urban designs, which are listed below:

- Territorial effects outside the area of intervention.
- Complex and interdependent contents: superseding mono-functionality (park, road, typology, etc.) and enhancing mixture of uses, users, temporal schedules and visual orientations.
- The intermediate scale, so the project can be completed within a limited time of a few years.
- Voluntarily assumed commitment to adopt an urban architecture, independently of the architecture of the buildings.
- A significant public component both in investments and in collective uses of the program.

In the opening lecture for the UPC Master's in Urban Design, entitled "Cuatro líneas, tres artículos, siete ideas: las formas de la proyectación urbanística" (Four approaches, three articles, seven ideas: forms of urban design), which took place on the 6th of March in 1995, Manuel de Solà Morales gave an extensive and reflective account of urban planning culture for the benefit of all those present. His talk made us consider the importance of urban design, with specifications as subtle as not to confuse dimension with scale. He stated that thinking about the city does not mean designing large interventions, and that the design of large interventions is frequently not about urban design. He specified that a small design is often incredibly significant for the city and that, in contrast, some enormous designs are not urban. The example he gave was the Docklands design: an impressive project in which there is no trace of reflection on what the city is. Other compelling ideas from this unforgettable master class included the need to correctly establish the right distance or the exact measure, which is essential for

controlling the modern city, and the concept of repetition. Frequently, when we work on planning residential areas, we are too concerned with patterns or minimum distances (for instance, to make sure that the sun reaches all parts of the development). However, we do not control the negative effect that excessive repetition of patterns and excessive distances between buildings has on space. In many modern residential districts, the profusion and disproportion of open spaces is so great that they become unsustainable spaces with no meaning, which leads to urban desertification.

Difference and diversity should be considered as enriching attributes of the city.

Counterpoints or differences ensure that the city can become complex. The Eixample in Barcelona, for example, which was built on an extensive regular isotropic grid, has many different identities as each block has particular architectural features. Within this miscellany of differences it is essential to find out which of these really are of interest to the city.

We particularly appreciate the acupuncture approach to strategic design. In this approach, the general organisation of the city organism is understood in such detail that if we act on visceral or critical points, we can activate the entire organism. It's like judo strategy against the boxer. The boxer uses his own strength to throw punches but equally receives blows. On the other hand, the judoka takes advantage of his opponent's energy when he makes an "ippon".

This idea has been applied to all kinds of designs and interventions. We consider that the Grands Travaux follow this urban acupuncture approach. These were a series of works of a cultural nature that were promoted from 1981 onwards by François Mitterrand, the president of France at the time, in order to democratise cultural and artistic heritage and make it accessible. They were specific interventions that put different districts of the city on the map. Such districts had been remote and forgotten until the intervention gave them a certain image or transformed them into a landmark. Projects such as the Parc de la Villette reactivated the surrounding urban fabric. The National Library of France, by Dominique Perrault, achieved the same in Tolbiac. There are many other examples. Mitterrand also applied this practice to different parts of the country: he commissioned Ciriani to design an archaeology museum in Arles and Norman Foster to design the Carré d'Art – Museum of Modern Art in Nîmes. This unprecedented and strategic creation of facilities implicitly lifted the city beyond its usual area of influence. The strategy was repeated in different French cities.

In some ways, the city of Barcelona has been adopting this strategic model, since the re-establishment of a democratic Town Council in 1979. City districts such as Nou Barris or Horta now display works by the best sculptors in the world and have architectural and urban designs of great relevance. Consequently, a cultural visit to this area is now essential. As in Paris, these interventions have implicitly reactivated the surrounding urban fabric and have put the district on the map.

Projects undertaken by Jaime Lerner are of particular importance to the acupuncture approach. He explains his experience of urban design in Curitiba in the publication *Urban Acupuncture*, in which he presents reflections and strategies on all scales that are a good recipe for urban interventions.

Another idea is that of collective spaces. Such spaces combine public and private ownership and uses and they are increasingly paradigmatic and of key importance to the contemporary city. According to Manuel de Solà Morales, it is essential to break the clichéd obsession with oversimplification and the differentiation between what is public and what is private. Instead, it is important to understand that the functional elements of

transport, commercial, leisure and culture infrastructure are the modern places for social exchange between individuals and institutions.



Figure 8. "Mistos", Horta-Guinardó, Barcelona, by Oldenburg C. Plaça dels Països Catalans, Barcelona, by Piñón H. i Vilaplana A. (photos by authors)

Therefore, public and private dimensions are involved in creating collective —and consequently urban— spaces.

In addition, the size of a public space is not its most important aspect. Its location and intensity are often more significant factors. Five hundred square meters in the dense Rambla of Barcelona is not the same as five hundred square meters in the Plaza de los Tres Poderes in Brasília, where enormous dimensions and an exclusive institutional use of the buildings that surround the square have led to the desertification of an immense space in the city, most particularly when the activity that is carried out there stops. Consequently, there is no urban life in this place, which implicitly affects the safety of citizens.

### **Towards new intense urban places**

To sum up, through urban design it is possible to contribute to the creation of real urban places, spaces or strategic points of the city that are characterised by their importance or centrality and that usually have good public transport connections. These are places for social exchange. In short, they are collective spaces or, in other words, they are intense spaces with an identity. They are linked to buildings that truly condense urban activity.

Due to their mixture of uses, we can call many areas new centres, regardless of whether they are public or private spaces.



*Figure 9. Sergel's Torg, Stockholm, by Sven Marvelous (photo by Laia Aguilar).*

A precise definition of place could be that proposed by Joaquim Español, when he said that place is the space used by an organic society. To this reflection (developed in an unpublished text entitled *The Intensive Space*), he added that when we create a contemporary urban design we first have to ask ourselves the following questions: what space is the design for and for which society is it created? Is it a formalised space—an anthropological space, founder of identity, of relationships and history—that are meaningful today? If not, it only has significance as a “non-place”. The design of a non-place is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms: the empty plots of a dispersed city are not designed, nor, basically, do leisure and transport spaces correspond to a design in the traditional sense. The design of an urban space is therefore seen as an absurdity. However, we cannot address this issue from such an antagonistic perspective. In a modern cosmopolis, the non-places of the generic city must coexist with the significant spaces of a new plural society. These are non-exclusive categories of spaces. Places and non-places, according to Joaquim Español, have to construct a complex constellation of nodes in the networks of the global city.

If we reflect on current society, we see that it is undergoing profound changes and has evolved as a result of technological progress and new labour structures. This new scenario has implicitly affected the tensions and relationships within cities, and new activities have emerged. The society of knowledge, information and communication on the one hand, and population flows on the other, mark a new horizon and a new model of the city. The need for mobility between dwellings and workplaces or between activities, which must be made sustainable by strengthening an effective public transport system, also determines the organisation of metropolises.

According to Richard Rogers, the city of the future will be compact, polycentric, sustainable, well-designed and with good transport links. This could be an effective model.

It has some similarities with the aims of the new settlement models discussed by Peter Calthorpe in *The Next American Metropolis*, which involve TODs (transit-oriented developments). TODs have a commercial heart alongside a major public transport axis, which is surrounded by economic activity. In addition, dwellings are situated beside work places, so that inhabitants can walk to work or travel to another TOD using the efficient public transport system.

Thus, without categorically being defined, in recent decades cities around the world have changed substantially and the number of new urban centres has increased on the basis of good transport links.



Figure 10. Example of student's work on Plaça de les Glòries, Barcelona (Clara Tarrats, Raimon Brustenga, Guillermo Fernández)

However, Collin Rowe and Fred Koetter were not so sure about the power that modern architecture potentially has to generate an urban place. In *Collage City*, they explain how the designs for the centre of Sant Dié or the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille by Le Corbusier differ from a fragment of a city in Tuscany. They state that they prefer the latter (which is full of complexity, identity and history), and consider that the modern city is in crisis. They suggest that the modern traditional city has not yet been established, as there are no ideal or historic references. We are not so sure. We are increasingly convinced of the force and meaning of modern architecture, which can contribute to the creation of the city when there is a commitment to urban design. We are inclined to defend the ways in which buildings may relate to each other in the contemporary world, as the protagonists and defining elements of urban space. In addition, we consider that urban architecture lies in a good architectural relationship between spaces and buildings, without which no object on its own can attempt to create city.

The city regeneration designs that we have explored in Urbanism courses and in final degree projects in recent years at ETSAB have precisely considered areas that we have tried to transform into places with an identity and an intensity of activity: the intense urban place.

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## Facilitating Spatial Negotiation: a pragmatic approach to understanding public space

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### Abstract

The workshop 'Facilitating Spatial Negotiation', which took place as part of the 'Past, Present and Future of Public Space' International conference on Art, Architecture and Urban Design that took place in Bologna (2014), promoted by City Space Architecture, demonstrates a pragmatic approach to understanding how public space can be realised. The method of collaborative painting is employed within a participatory practice that adopts tactics from spatial agency and critical spatial practice. First, this paper provides a descriptive and visual insight into the discussion between six participants on the topic of the street as a public space, in light of the Social Street movement. Then, it sets out how the session can be understood, through analogy, as a creative exercise in performing a common space. By reflecting upon this event through the framework of participatory practice, the focus is on how conflict is revealed and negotiated within the group. Two instants of conflict are discussed, which raise the critical question whether people are, in fact, interested in working together towards the production and use of common space. It is suggested that the implications of this workshop are twofold. First, a truly public space cannot be realised if the principles of common space are not adopted within the process of its negotiation. Secondly, the finding of a common language in the process of negotiating public space is crucial to this process. The painterly approach offers a shared visual forum, but ultimately the use of any facilitating medium depends on people's responsibility to participate.

**Keywords:** participatory painting; public space; conflict; spatial agency; critical spatial practice.

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## **Introduction**

How to realise a truly public space? Instead of using abstract theories, this alternative contribution in the form of a workshop offers a more pragmatic approach to answering this question. The workshop 'Facilitating Spatial Negotiation' took place as part of the 'Past, Present and Future of Public Space' International conference on Art, Architecture and Urban Design, held in Bologna, promoted by City Space Architecture, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2014, and sought to provide the opportunity to actively engage participants in the discussion of public space. The provision of a platform for an interactive sharing of experience and opinions is in contrast to the conventional conference model which is based on a unidirectional knowledge exchange from speaker to audience with scarce time for a negotiation. The workshop's underlying idea is that prior to producing a physical public space, the interests of space must be negotiated to elucidate the public good. By realising such a different kind of event, the hope is to contribute towards a better understanding of the nature and characteristics of public space. So, how can an analogy be drawn between the workshop and public space, in order to arrive at a better understanding of how a truly public space can be realised? Such an analogy can be found on two levels: the first is a question of how public space was discussed, and the second of how public space was performed within the session. First, this paper sets out the methodology and theoretical context, followed by a summary of discussions held within the session and accompanied by visual documentation of the workshop. Then, the paper proceeds to provide a critical reflection on the modes of communication contained in the session, and finishes by stating the implications of this workshop.

The conference workshop was organised in collaboration with the representatives of the Social Street movement. Social Street started in Bologna, with the aim to create a social network between residents in the same street, in order to make sharing of expertise and knowledge possible and to pursue collective projects of common interest. The goal is to reap all the benefits of greater social interaction between neighbours. At the early stages of Social Street, however, there were still questions as to the realisation and impact of this social movement. For this reason, the topic 'your street, your choice' became the point of departure for the workshop. The invitation to participate in the one and a half hour session was taken up by five conference attendees. As an artist-researcher, my role in this workshop was primarily as a facilitator, with certain objectives: to give participants equal time and space to contribute; to acknowledge differing and co-existing positions and to provide moments of reflection on the process. However, just like the other participants, I was also an active participant in the conversation, contributing situated knowledge as a citizen.

## **Methodology and theoretical context**

The workshop was undertaken as part of an interdisciplinary practice-led doctoral research project, which explores how contemporary painting practice can become an agency-based strategy in the architectural design process. The workshop employs the method of painting and adopts certain tactics from spatial agency, as explained in more depth in 'Painting Architecture: Towards a Practice-Led Research Methodology' (Mlicka, 2014). In this research project, painting is more than just a medium or mode of (re)presenting: it is a critical and engaged practice which has the potential to have a transformative effect. The method of collaborative painting is employed for the particular advantages it offers above other tools and mediums concerning facilitating collaborative

thinking. First of all, this method has been developed to improve accessibility and participation. The large dimensions of the canvas sheet, laid horizontally on a table, enable all participants to contribute to the conversation visually, thereby literally giving form to their ideas. This visual 'forum' functions as common ground on which to accumulate ideas, juxtapose arguments and construct shared goals. The relatively low-skill method of painting enables participants to communicate without jargon and is more accessible than the exclusive high-tech tools being developed today. Secondly, the medium-specific qualities of painting make it possible to reflect a diverse range of perspectives, for example through the rich choice of colours. More importantly, the medium makes it possible to create layers, so that ideas can be built upon and changed. As a flexible working method, it uses a variety of tools and techniques, making different forms of expression possible. Finally, the method of painting enables participants to focus on the process of sense-making, rather than the production of a physical outcome. No attention is paid to aesthetic decisions or creating a finished artwork or design. Instead, the act of painting slows down the conversation, giving people the opportunity to consider and listen to others. Taken together, the simultaneous use of a visual and a verbal language can provide a platform for a more democratic mode of communication.

The approach to the methodology which informed the workshop is built upon two types of practices: spatial agency and critical spatial practice. These practices share many characteristics despite originating from the disciplines of architecture and the arts respectively. Spatial agency indicates a shift away from a focus on the architectural product towards a situated and embedded praxis which is conscious of, and works with, its social, economic and political context (Awan, Schneider, & Till, 2011). This different approach to architecture is based on the fundamental idea that architecture is dependent upon others at every stage of its development (Till, 2009). Thus, instead of spatial thinking, I employ the concept of spatial negotiation that necessarily takes place between people. A critical spatial practice is situated between the disciplines of art and architecture, investigating their modes of operation while drawing attention to the wider social and political problems (Rendell, 2006). Such investigation can use creative means, such as painting in this case, to facilitate and reflect upon how things are done. This research project harnesses the process of painting to engage people in the negotiation of space during informal meetings.

Critical, agency-based spatial practices employ various methods to transform space and to engage and empower people, while remaining critical of their own approach and aware of the entire context of existing relationships, networks and processes. One such tactic is participatory practice, which provides a relevant framework for the analysis of this workshop. As a participatory event, the workshop's goal is to take the differing perspectives about public space to a new level by creating a common space in which (situated) knowledge can be discussed. Based on previous sessions, I have defined such a process through four stages: sense-making, confrontation, negotiation and collaboration. The essence of this process is to reveal conflicts, which is an opportunity for self-critical reflection that potentially sets in motion a process of transformation. Transformation is understood here as going through a certain process to arrive at a point that is fundamentally different from the starting point. This might be manifested in changes in social relationships or a change in the way that space is produced. The approach of instigating a conflictual space builds upon the larger debate in which participatory practice is criticised for pursuing a consensus-based culture. Consensual participation, it is argued, results in stasis and perpetuation of the status quo (Miessen, 2010). A transformative

participation, on the other hand, is developed from within the context of the given situation instead of through the application of abstract professional knowledge from the outside (Till, 2005). Therefore, the underlying question raised in this paper is to what extent the process of participatory painting can excavate conflicts existing in a specific situation and in addition, whether it can set in motion a transformative effect.

### The Discussion

The first issue brought up in the group was related to the difficulties citizens face when asking for help, when help-seeking is seen as a weakness in our culture. It raised a further question as to whether people who have questions or are in need of help turn to their neighbour or rather tend to use the internet. We discussed how finding local solutions results in certain patterns of relationships (fig. 1), and the role of a Social Street therein. A schism appeared between the arguments based on an academic, if not purely scientific approach, and the more grounded approach stemming from citizens' own experiences and observations of urban relationships. This gap was further widened by the tendency of participants to talk *at*, rather than *with* other participants. In this respect, the invitation of participants to paint their argument made it possible to replace long monologues with shorter exchanges. Nevertheless, the incompatible levels on which the question of social relationships was addressed resulted in a rupture of the discussion into two parallel conversations.

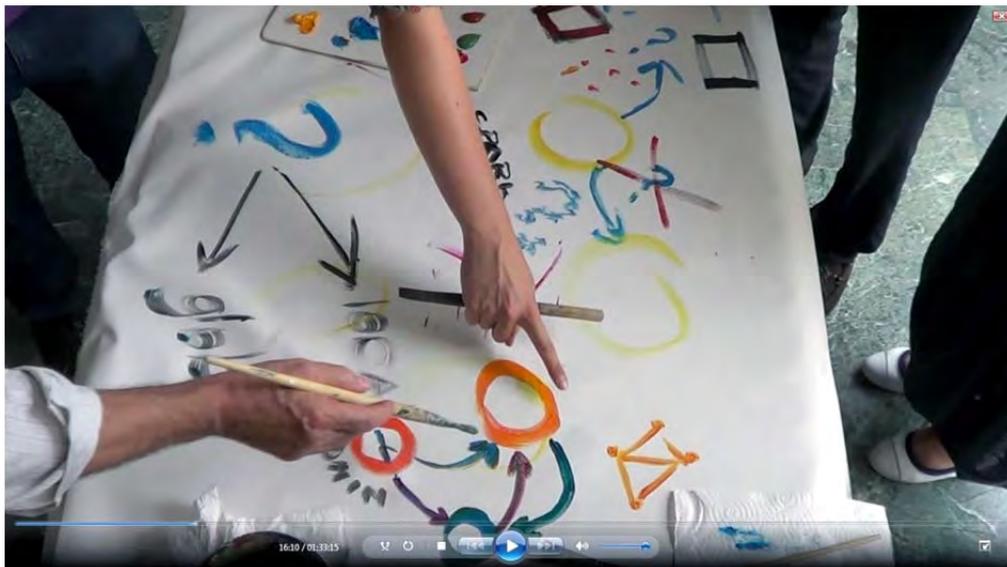


Figure 1. Video still from conference workshop on 26.06.2014, after 16:10 minutes.  
Source: Video documentation by Agnieszka Mlicka.

The discussion shifted to public space as a field of conflicted interests, adding a second layer to the painting (fig. 2). On the one hand, public space was described in terms the interest investors have in it based on its financial value. On the other hand, it was addressed as physical space that can be used by citizens. The presence of Social Street was invoked to incite an active use of public spaces to prevent the prioritisation of the financial value. Another participant argued that the problem is the external control of space. This division between citizen control and administrative control over public space

is visualised through two opposite fields: the municipality and the public. The setting out of this polar opposition as the third layer of the painting proved beneficial to the continuation of the discussion, because it was pointed to when clarifying or positioning arguments. It also revealed problems in the verbal communication related to linguistic misinterpretation, since the session was conducted in both English and Italian. Whereas 'public' was understood as physical public space by the Italian speaking participants, it signified the public understood as people for the English speakers. Accordingly, 'public' was replaced with 'people'. One participant also asked to replace the written word 'comune' (meaning municipality) with 'public administration' (fig. 3). Having clarified these terms, it became possible to continue thinking on the same level about possible bridges between the two fields.



Figure 2. Video still from conference workshop on 26.06.2014 after 20:50 minutes.  
Source: Video documentation by Agnieszka Mlicka.

While discussing approaches like urban acupuncture and micro interventions, two new questions emerged: how can we make people open their doors again to connect to others and what can the public administration do to improve the social impact on the street? The latter question resulted in a disagreement as to where Social Street's responsibilities lie and its opportunities are, and to what extent such a movement needs money, space and time. On the one hand, it was argued that things can be achieved without the public administration but on the other hand it was argued that a close relationship and collaboration between the people and the public administration is necessary. The conservative structure of Italian bureaucracy was criticised and the idea was brought up that a third actor could be useful to mediate between these two bodies. This is marked with the yellow circle in the centre of the painting (fig. 4). More crucially, the problem of passivity is brought up: people appear disinterested in engaging with others. While there are many followers on Social Street's Facebook page, very limited numbers actually attend the events.



Figure 3. Video still from conference workshop on 26.06.2014 after 37:24 minutes.  
Source: Video documentation by Agnieszka Mlicka.

We discussed whether a Social Street could be more effective through the use of incentives, such as shop discounts for local residents, incentives with the potential to change the mentality of staying indoors. Incentives could encourage the public to socialise more, in order to create a sense of community. This could fundamentally change Social Street itself, from merely a virtual platform to a movement in public space. Alternatively, people could be nudged to socialise in public spaces by offering some form of play. While this was an interesting proposition, it was not developed further in the conversation. Finally, the discussion returned to the question of whether Social Street's representatives could become mediators between street residents and the public administration (fig. 5). Although the opinions were divided, there was a clear tendency to keep Social Street as a virtual platform for the locals.



Figure 4. Video still from conference workshop on 26.06.2014 after 55:04 minutes.  
Source: Video documentation by Agnieszka Mlicka.



Figure 5. Video still from conference workshop on 26.06.2014 after 01:04:04 hours.  
Source: Video documentation by Agnieszka Mlicka.

### The Performance

The second approach to reflecting on the workshop is one that considers how the discussion took place. Through an analogy between the workshop and public space, some insights can emerge as to how such a common space can be realised. If the painting (fig. 6) is understood as a site on which relations are produced and played out (Donszelmann, 2009), it can provide certain clues as to how the session developed. In particular, it can function as an indicator, illustrating if, and how conflict played out between participants. Two types of conflict can be identified in the session. The first conflict was the incompatibility between approaches to discussing social relationships. Whereas some of these attitudes were visualised through small diagrams, they remained isolated points of view. There was no visual negotiating taking place, reflecting the lack of mutual questioning and listening within the conversation. Visual negotiation can be discerned when, for example, participants work together on one image by layering ideas and using contrasting colours. In the first iterations of this painting, the visual concepts were neither in direct confrontation nor in constructive contribution to other ideas, even if they might have been responses to previously mentioned concepts. They existed on a different level of engagement with the topic of public space. Within the verbal communication, the participants talked past each other and parallel conversations were conducted to avoid confrontation. This problem of parallel conversations revealed even more systematic problems concerning how disciplinary boundaries create barricades against interdisciplinary collaboration. As has been observed in the discipline of architecture at large (Till, 2009), there was also a tendency in this workshop to maintain a hierarchical relationship between the professional as 'the expert' and the citizen as 'layperson'. Instead, a more productive common space could be achieved if participants acknowledged that they are simultaneously expert citizens as well as citizen experts (Till, 2005). Without this attitude, negotiation is evaded rather than invited.



Figure 6. Photograph of the collaborative painting from the conference workshop on 26.06.2014.  
Source: Photo documentation by Agnieszka Mlicka.

The second conflict was revealed during discussions in relation to the question as to where Social Street should be situated between the people and the public administration. The low density of the painting at this stage reveals that participants were disengaged from the process, leaving the table for periods of time or turning their attention elsewhere. This disrupted the discussion and made constructive negotiation unsustainable. A number of images were painted out of time with the conversation, for example when participants returned to the table and started painting without joining in the discussion. On other occasions, whilst one participant was engaged in the act of painting another participant would attempt to take over the conversation, instead of allowing the discussion to slow down and in doing so make time for listening. As a result, it was difficult to bring the discussion through the four stages of sense-making, confrontation, negotiation and collaboration. In particular, what was lacking was a more critical self-conscious reflection on the participatory process. The conflicts were touched upon, but could not be played out without the full involvement of the participants. A shared concern arises by comparing the way that public space was discussed and, through analogy, performed in this workshop: are people actually interested in socialising in or through a public space? Within the conversation, this question emerged as a fundamental problem to both Social Street and the existence of public space in cities. In regard to the process of creating a shared space through collaborative painting, there was both limited contribution and a limited capacity to negotiate. At the end of the session, there was no sense of having reached a higher or different level of understanding. If public space means connecting people with each other, then the way in which public space is negotiated must reveal the willingness to connect by way of listening, asking and talking.

There might indeed be a need, as noted in the session, for incentives or nudges to bring people together. In this workshop, collaborative painting was utilized as such an enticement to work together. While this might not be a preferred or familiar mode of creativity for all involved, participants need to take responsibility to *participate* (an active form as opposed to merely being a participant) if they want to realise a truly public space. After all, a public space without a public remains a blank canvas.

## Conclusion

What are the implications of this pragmatic approach to understanding public space? There are two suggestions that I would like to make here. First, a truly public space cannot be realised if the principles of common space are not adopted within the process of thinking about public space. Without the willingness or ability to reach out to others and communicate in a constructive way there is no opportunity for a common space. This problem has been theoretically approached through three modes of proactive participation: attitude, relevance and responsibility (Miessen, 2010; Till, 2011). Such an ideal framework for participation, however, leaves unsolved the question of how to accomplish this in practice. This leads to the second suggestion, that to achieve a mode of communication which enables people to work together towards a common space, a shared language must be found. This means a shared language not only in the linguistic sense of arriving at the same interpretation of words, but also in terms of disciplinary language by discarding jargon, and in terms of how participants might address each other without a haughty attitude. If participants do not make an effort to meet each other on the same level, there is a limited likelihood of achieving a common space.

The workshop was a creative exercise in performing such a common space, with the painterly approach offering a common language. Firstly, this is because painting as a visual medium remains isolated from the problems inherent to verbal communication, such as jargon or linguistic issues, providing a secondary visual layer to develop ideas. Secondly, it is an unfamiliar medium to most participants so there is no schism between experts and laypersons, opening up ground for an equal platform for participation. The quest for a common language does not, however, mean that consensus is sought. Rather, it means that participants can: commence upon making sense of their differing perspectives; confront these differences and reveal the points of conflict; negotiate solutions and alternatives and finally, arrive at a point of a collaborative effort towards the new goal. Nevertheless, as the Chinese saying goes, if the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way. The way that painting is used as a means for facilitating spatial negotiation ultimately depends on the intentions of all participants. The workshop as analogy for creating public space implies that it is a challenge for the local community to use the street proactively, especially at a time when it is easier to communicate through Facebook than face-to-face.

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## Urban mobility and public space. A challenge for the sustainable liveable city of the future

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### Abstract

Public space and mobility are two challenging topics in many contemporary cities. These topics give rise to important questions such as how does the element of public space affect the sustainability of urban mobility in contemporary cities? And how does facilitating mobility contribute to the livability of the public realm? The purpose of this paper is to attempt to answer these questions. On one hand, the paper explores the relationship between public space and urban mobility in the contemporary city, specifically by addressing the extent to which urban mobility can create better public spaces and even assist in producing a more sustainable model of mobility. Although ignored for a long time in the discourse on urban planning, the relationship between public space and urban mobility has the potential to create livable cities. Indeed, the use of public space by walking and cycling contributes to economic, environmental and social sustainability. Hence, together with economic, ecological and social indicators, public space and urban mobility also constitute relevant city components, when measuring a city's sustainability performance. On the other hand, this paper seeks to suggest a set of measures related to public space and soft mobility that can be integrated into an already existing set of indicators commonly used to measure urban sustainability. In this regard, the paper contributes to the debate surrounding the need to invest more in public spaces and at the same time suggests to planners and policy makers that it is necessary to develop international measures for the evaluation of urban mobility and the sustainability of public space.

**Keywords:** public space; urban mobility; sustainable city indicators; contemporary city; everyday urbanism.

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## **Introduction**

In the last 20 years, public spaces have acquired a renewed visibility in urban planning discourse as an essential ingredient for urban sustainability. Public spaces play a central role in the creation of inclusive communities and more specifically, in the formation of a public culture and in enriching cultural diversity (Low et al. 2005). In particular, there is a resumed interest in re-establishing the relationship between public space and urban mobility. The creation of attractive public spaces, (which are also mobility hubs e.g. stations, airports, bus stops, intermodal terminals), and the use of streets, sidewalks and bike lanes for daily mobility (e.g. walking and cycling) constitute a key challenge for the design of sustainable mobility systems and the creation of sustainable and liveable cities (Wheeler 2013). Improving soft mobility measures and the modal shift and upgrading the quality of public spaces, constitute two important aims for any plan to realise the sustainable liveable city of the future.

Urban mobility (e.g. our daily mobility and the experience of moving) is something that involves public spaces. Conceived for a long time as two separate entities and neglected in the discourse on urban planning, the relationship between public space and urban mobility can create sustainable cities. On the one hand, two of the most environmentally and economically sustainable ways to move around the city are cycling and walking, which involve using public streets. On the other hand, a sustainable mobility system also relies on public spaces, for example: train stations, cable cars, buses, airports and any other mobile hub that people use in daily life (Lévy et al. 2010).

According to a report published by the EU, “a sustainable city must have attractive open public spaces and promote sustainable, inclusive and healthy mobility [..]” (European Union Regional Policy 2011). In light of this, contemporary trends that re-orient/re-direct cities around people by creating good quality public spaces and favoring soft mobility measures, are now taking place all over the world, especially in cities that were most affected by modernist planning ideas. Interventions include: retrofitting parking lots to overcome the current dichotomy between the motorist and pedestrian, increasing the length of bicycle lanes to create new public spaces and increasing the green space provision per inhabitant. These urban interventions with their view to creating more attractive public spaces, go hand in hand with a change in people’s mobility habits and a more intensive use of public transportation (Newman and Kenworthy 1999).

Clearly, mobility and public spaces play a relevant role in the development of a sustainable city, but how can we measure the precise degree to which they truly contribute to urban sustainability? What instruments and which indicators would be most appropriate? Several international organizations (e.g. OECD, EEA, World Bank and UN-HABITAT) have already developed a set of indicators as tools for assessing urban sustainability. In developing variables able to describe both environmental and socio-economic issues, these organizations have established both the availability of public spaces (quantitative) and the degree to which inhabitants use public transportation or non-motorized transport as indicators. In many cases, the indicators measure the percentage of green or public spaces per inhabitant and the total number of kilometres travelled by bicycle, on foot, by car or on public transport. Although these developed measures are useful, others are also required. The simple fact that public spaces exist and that soft mobility is used reveals very little about the degree to which public space and urban mobility contribute to urban sustainability.

If public spaces and urban mobility are key challenges for the sustainable, liveable city of the future, more tools need to be developed in order to better evaluate their relevance in achieving that urban sustainability. The daily movement of people around the city and their mobility habits, and the use of streets, sidewalks and bike lines for walking and cycling combined with the use of sustainable transport modes all contribute in differing degrees to forming a sustainable city.

The paper aims to identify a set of indicators that measure the degree to which public spaces and urban mobility, specifically soft mobility (e.g. walking and cycling), can support the development of a more sustainable city. It proposes that if new indicators related to public space and urban mobility, are integrated with the already existing, conventional indicators of urban sustainability (i.e. environmental, economic and social indicators) they have the potential to enrich knowledge related to how the city is moving towards urban sustainability. This paper contributes to the literature on urban studies in two ways: first, it supports and expands the discussion about indicators related to urban mobility and public space for measuring urban sustainability. Second, agreeing with the principles of new urbanism, it underlines the importance of considering public space as an active element in the discussion surrounding the sustainable and livable city. Indeed, public space is not only a space that people pass through. In the current process of re-imagining urbanity, public space plays a key role as an “urban collector, full of meaning”.

### **Reclaiming relationship of public spaces and urban mobility**

The discourses surrounding public space and urban mobility intersect,, specifically relating to the degree to which efficient usage of public spaces is important for developing a sustainable mobility system and vice versa. Public spaces are not only places where activities take place; they are also places for mobility, for people to come to, leave from and pass through. Hence, offering a good range of mobility options can foster the creation of more sustainable public spaces (Gehl 2006; PPS 2014b). Moreover, providing spaces in which people can walk, cycle, sit, stand, wait, and socialize determines how people decide to move in, out and around the city and thus influences urban sustainability.

Since ancient times, streets have played a critical role in cities: they connected spaces, people and goods, and facilitated commerce, social interaction and mobility. Until the mid-20th century, streets, together with plazas and squares, were an integrated system of movement space that contributed to defining the cultural, social, economic and political life of cities. They had a natural vibrancy and were dynamic and multi-functional places, in particular for young people and teenagers who were (and still are) the main actors in the process of public space appropriation (Torricelli et. al. 2014).

The modernist ideas of order, hygiene and aesthetics regulated the use of spaces and activities, while large-scale interventions in the 1960s and 1970s with their emphasis on traffic movements reduced the importance of streets (Jacobs 1961). One of the consequences of applying modernist ideas to urban planning was a sacrifice of the “social function” of public spaces and streets for aesthetic and functional purposes. Streets started to be seen as mere links in a road network and as elements that simply enable traveling between destinations. Since the rise of the modernist idea of zoning, which facilitated the division of the city in functional areas, the experience of moving has been associated with the concept of the car and velocity and conceived as separate elements from public spaces. The arrival of the car society has unquestionably destroyed the

collective meaning of public spaces. Managing the increase of vehicular traffic has required the form of the city to change in order to satisfy the needs of a motorized population. Streets have become “spaces for cars” and urban spaces “spaces for parking”, ignoring their significance as spaces of interaction, diversity and exchange (Davis 1990; Newman and Kenworthy 1999; Mitchell 1995; Sennett 1992).

In reaction to this view of the city, starting in the 1960s, new approaches arose that sought to re-establish the relationships between streets, neighbourhoods and society. The work of sociologist Jane Jacobs contains some of the strongest critical arguments against the modernist movement. In her work, she codified a new sense of “urban” as part of cultural openness, personal enrichment, self-fulfilment and tolerance; an urban experience characterized by a perfect balance of strong social capital, economic activities and local charm (Jacobs 1961). Today, the principles suggested in her work are frequently referenced by new urbanists (Knaap and Talenn 2005) in discussions about how to design public spaces that can enrich a sense of place and improve city liveability. Although, cars are still part of the cityscape and need to be considered when planning, we can no longer rely on cars to keep our cities functioning. We should strive to create a balanced city environment where people in cars, on bicycles and on foot can coexist. Based on this idea, streets are being re-designed to recover their “past” social and multifunctional character.

Re-balancing the relationship between public spaces (particularly streets) and urban mobility implies re-qualifying streets and public space networks, in social and formal terms, by re-establishing an integrated use of spaces and multiple means of movement. Concretely, this means making streets more attractive for all users, enhancing their ability to function as both urban living and mobility spaces, as well as satisfying new functional requirements of society.

This process can have at least two positive consequences for urban sustainability. On the one hand, by improving the mobility system, especially by re-enforcing the soft mobility scheme, we can create more socially and environmentally friendly cities. At the same time, we can establish a model for a more sustainable, urban mobility pattern and habitable public space. Denmark’s capital city of Copenhagen exemplifies how a public space network can become more sustainable where walking and cycling are the most common modes of daily movement and transport. On the other hand, upgrading urban mobility can create new public spaces or improve the sustainability of existing ones. By making major investments in infrastructure, Medellín in Colombia has created, numerous sustainable mobility systems such as an urban cable car lines to serve marginal (and often informal) sectors and an incredible 300-foot long escalator that provides access to one of the most forgotten parts of the city (Alcaldía de Medellín). Similarly, Bogotá in Colombia has improved its bike path networks and extended the Bus Rapid Transit-BRT<sup>1</sup> (Transmilenio) as well as created new public spaces, libraries and parks (Torricelli 2009). This has not only produced a dramatic drop in crime but has also re-populated the city’s public spaces. More recently, La Paz in Bolivia has significantly upgraded mobility opportunities for commuters by installing urban cable car lines between the city center and the huge and chaotic suburb of El Alto, among others. (Shahriari 2014).

By investing in walking and cycling, with a commitment to social equity, these cities have animated people to move in the streets and improved the quality of life for all residents, making neighborhoods more accessible and inter-connected. Constructing bicycle paths

and an efficient public transit system constitute typical examples of how mobility has helped create public spaces and further promoted the sustainable use of public space. Re-establishing the relationship between urban mobility and public space and restoring the social value of streets is an opportunity to: integrate people's everyday activities, make moving through the city appealing and understand how the quality of spaces affects our experience of moving. Walking or cycling through public spaces or using public transport should be a positive and enriching experience, an opportunity to enjoy the environment, be actively involved with society and interact with others who are sharing the same experience. In this sense, public spaces and associated urban mobility potential are crucial for urban sustainability.

## **Methodology**

To identify a set of indicators that can be used to assess how public spaces and urban mobility contribute to urban sustainability, we follow three steps: Firstly, we review the literature to picture existing indicators for measuring urban sustainability. Secondly, we define sustainable public space and sustainable urban mobility so as to extrapolate potential parameters from these definitions. Thirdly, we suggest a list of indicators to be used to assess urban sustainability, focusing on the dimensions of public space and urban mobility. These steps are better described in the following subparagraphs.

### **First step: review of established indicators for measuring urban sustainability through improving public spaces and urban mobility**

Over the past two decades, we have seen an increasing interest from a number of international organizations (OECD, EEA, UNCHS, CSD, World Bank, UN Habitat and IISD<sup>2</sup>) in developing indicators for measuring urban sustainability. Some of these organizations have also created programs to monitor sustainable development worldwide. Most existing and established indicators of urban sustainability tend to be amalgams of environmental, economic and social variables. Yet, there is no inter-organizational consensus on a shared set of indicators that can be considered and measured. The reason for this is that there are many different definitions of sustainability, this is due both to the polysemic nature of the term and the fact that it applies to different geographical scales and contexts, thus making it difficult to generalize (Alberti 1996). Indeed, several organizations and institutions have selected different indicators that respond to their policy focus and geographical scale. Consequently, within the existing established list of urban sustainability indicators, the category of "public spaces" and "mobility" are taken into consideration in a limited fashion, and are only included in broad categories such as "green spaces", "urban quality", and "transportation".

Table 1 below shows the most relevant existing indicators related to mobility and public spaces. Three interesting aspects emerge when examining the table. a) Indicators for urban mobility are more common than those for public spaces. b) Indicators frequently evaluate the availability of parks and green spaces, omitting the consideration of streets, squares and other more constructed types of public space. It is well known that open and green areas enhance the well-being of residents as they relate to the principles of comfort, access, diversity of use, and sociability (Chiesura 2003; Carmona et. al. 2003), yet streets, squares and constructed types of public space also play a relevant role in

people's quality of life. c) With the exception of those employed by the World Bank, chosen indicators rarely consider factors related to the physical quality of the environment and the reasons that make people choose to use public spaces, walk or cycle. Although these factors are difficult to grasp due to their subjective nature, we cannot ignore the fact that multiple elements present in the city, not only pedestrian streets or parks, contribute to an accurate assessment of urban sustainability. Certainly, the availability of public spaces and urban mobility options are necessary indicators. However, they alone are not sufficient to describe how public space and urban mobility can contribute to urban sustainability. More indicators are necessary.

In order to suggest new indicators to add to the list of existing indicators, a definition of sustainable public space and of sustainable urban mobility is not only recommended but is necessary in order to categorize new measures. While there is an agreement on the definition of sustainable urban mobility, the definition on what constitutes a sustainable public space is more complex, and will be discussed in the next subparagraph.

### **Second step: choose a definition for sustainable public spaces and urban mobility**

Defining indicators to examine how public spaces and urban mobility can contribute to urban sustainability implies having clear definitions of what sustainable public space and sustainable urban mobility are.

There are many definitions of sustainable urban mobility. Here, we adopt a definition used by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development as part of that organization's Mobility Project 2030 (2004). It considers as sustainable a level of mobility that "meets the needs of society to move freely, gain access, communicate, trade and establish relationships without sacrificing other essential human or ecological requirements today or in the future". The definition of sustainable public spaces is more complicated.

Sustainability is rarely mentioned in existing discourses on public space. In literature, the focus is on different issues related to environmental sustainability (Chiesura 2003; Sauri et. al. 2004; Agyeman et. al. 2003), gender and cultural diversity (Low et. al. 2005; Madanipour 1996), globalization, privatization and global movements (Sennet 1992; Davis 1990; Zukin 1995). Moreover, on concerns related to public space design, place making and management (Gehl 2006; Lynch 1960; Jacobs 1961; Reiter 2003; Montgomery 1998; PPS 2014a).

Although these contributions intersect the discourse on sustainability (i.e. social sustainability), the subject of sustainability remains absent from social and anthropological debates on public space. Hence, in searching for a definition of sustainable public space, our approach is to adapt the definition of sustainable development to the category of public space and consider the characteristics that a public space should have in order to be considered as sustainable.

The most common definition of sustainability is the one provided in the Brundtland report. Sustainable development is the development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This definition refers to a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment in the long term. If we want to adapt this to the concept of public space, sustainable public spaces are those able to preserve long-term usability. In addition to the temporal framework implied in the definition, the concept of sustainability

holds three dimensions: environmental, social and economic. Therefore, sustainable public spaces need to be planned and managed by integrating these three dimensions in the long term, and by considering social issues such as social justice and socio-cultural diversity, promotion of a sustainable use of natural resources and enhancement of the local economy.

This paper proposed that the theoretical and analytical contributions offered by Jan Gehl (1987), Kevin Lynch (1960), Jane Jacobs (1961) and William Holly White (1980) are essential for establishing defining measures for public space sustainability. Gehl's approach is useful in establishing these measures to investigate the physical characteristics of public space, the public spaces network and pedestrian activities, as well as understanding how people use public spaces and interact there every day. Kevin Lynch's (1960) work offers an understanding of how individuals perceive and navigate the urban landscape. By introducing the concept of place legibility, which is understood as the ease with which people understand the layout of a place, Lynch was able to see what specific components make a city vibrant and attractive to people. The work of Jane Jacobs (1961) offers a broad understanding of how urban streets and neighborhoods work and how to develop an "urban way of life", consisting of cultural openness, personal enrichment, self-fulfillment and tolerance. William H. White's (1980) work is significant as he conceived public space as a relevant element of people's quality of life. By observing people in public spaces, he defined some roles for designing public spaces for people. Sigrid Reiter (2004) suggested looking at three dimensions of public spaces: coherence, co-existence and contextuality. Coherence refers to the degree to which public spaces become places enriched with a collective identification. Co-existence denotes the ability of public places to favor the gathering of differences; and contextuality refers to the integration of public spaces into the local context. Moreover, Project for Public Spaces (PPS 2014) offers a guide on how to design sociable public spaces that are rich in activities and able to guarantee access and linkages: a guide which is widely used by urban planners to design new or revitalize existing public spaces, in a sustainable way. Although, "sustainability" and "public spaces" are contested concepts as their definitions change across space and time, it is still possible to identify common characteristics that all public spaces should have in order to be considered sustainable. In addition to that, each city has its physical characteristics (topography, geology, climate and geographical position) its culture, historical background, attitudes and lifestyle, which all determine how people use and behave in public spaces. It follows that each public space has its own spatial, historic, environmental, social and economic features that have to be taken into account. The promotion of social diversity, through creating inviting and active spaces for social and related activities is related to how public spaces are designed, what they offer and how they are managed.

According to these considerations, the definition of a sustainable public space should relate to concepts such as accessibility, diversity, community collective life, identity, public owned and network.

- From an environmental perspective, sustainability of a public space is achieved when natural conditions of the local physical environment are respected (Sauri et. al. 2004; Agyeman et. al. 2003).
- From a social perspective, sustainability of a public space is enhanced when the space stimulates accessibility, diversity, identity, interactions, openness, social cohesion and capital as well as cultural diversity (Jacobs 1961; Madanipour 1996).

- From an economic perspective, sustainability of a public space is achieved when there are opportunities to develop the local economy and when the space sustains itself economically (Heynen et. al. 2006).

Thus, a sustainable public space can be defined as: “a space that is accessible to all (Madanipour 1996), able to contain diverse behaviors, city users, activities and functions (Ghel 1987), well designed and well managed in respect of the local context (PPS 2014b), capable to provide comfort (Reiter 2003), vitality (Lynch 1960; Schiller 1994), and able to promote urban life (Carr et al. 1992).”

### **Third step: Suggesting new indicators of public space and urban mobility**

Whereas defining indicators for urban mobility is relatively easy, determining public space sustainability indicators is more complex. As stated in Alberti’s (1996) work “[...] while the task of defining objective measures of physical quality is relatively easy, we know little about how to incorporate the subjective dimension in valuing them” (Alberti 1996, p. 390). We also know little about different ways to measure people’s perceptions and values as they relate to the urban context. An important contribution to the identification of indicators for measuring public space sustainability is offered by the Global Public Space Toolkit report: from Global Principles to Local Policies and Practice, published by the UN-HABITAT in 2016, where a comprehensive list of indicators is provided for the examination of the quality of public space.

Table 2 below suggests a list of indicators that can be added to the existing ones and that specifically consider the role played by public space and urban mobility. The suggested set of indicators, which resulted from an elaboration by the authors based on both the existing list of indicators (Table 1) and thoughts on the definition of sustainable public space, consider both the physical quality of public spaces and mobility as well as people’s activities and perceptions. Indeed, the suggested list takes into account the objective and subjective dimensions of city spaces, where by subjective we refer to the individualistic perception people have about places and by objective we mean the measurable features that characterize spaces. The objective dimension is examined through the following parameters: 1) availability, 2) accessibility, 3) urban design quality (including comfort), 4) dominant uses, activities and functions in public spaces. The subjective dimension refers to people’s view of public spaces, green spaces and public transport quality.

In proposing this new set of indicators, no consideration was given to the type and size of the city. The reason for this, is that our contribution is prevalently theoretical. However, in practical terms, it should be taken into consideration. Measuring the sustainability of urban mobility in a large city or a small town is not an equivalent task. It is, for example, very difficult to compare the sustainability of a city on the plains with a town in the mountains, primarily due to the fact that residents and users have different needs, habits and behaviors. Hence, when using the list of suggested indicators it is useful to take into account the local specificities of places. Another important element to consider is data availability, which for the selected list of indicators should be relatively high. Indeed, most of the data for the suggested indicators can be collected from EU/ international data providers as well as nationally or regionally. Alternatively, data may be created by using GIS/GPS tools. GIS enables investigation of the characteristics of public spaces and measures accessibility and linkages, while GPS tracking enables the collection of data on individual and collective movements and the study of pedestrian behavior (e.g. trips,

access to transportation and public spaces, the most frequently used streets, main activities and the intensity of spaces used)<sup>3</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

This paper discussed the relationships between urban mobility and public spaces with the aim of identifying new indicators that can be used to measure urban sustainability.

Research undertaken for the purpose of the paper revealed that while indicators for measuring the sustainability of urban mobility have been studied since the late 1990s, and several indicators already exist and are in use, indicators for determining the sustainability of public spaces are less common. Literature on this subject matter includes relevant contributions that propose how to study, design, manage and plan spaces, but the list of common indicators used to investigate public spaces in both objective and subjective terms, at the international level and in a comparative perspective, is limited to the work done by the UN-Habitat.

Furthermore, this contribution aimed to ignite a debate on this issue. As a conclusion, new efforts should be made to consider public spaces and urban mobility as essential elements for evaluating, measuring and monitoring urban sustainability. As among the requirements of sustainable and livable cities, provision of spaces for social interaction and opportunities to be mobile are relevant. There is nothing new in stating that our cities need to offer adequate transportation, soft mobility options, as well as inclusive and well-designed spaces. Without coherent and efficient strategies for urban mobility one cannot expect to improve the quality, usability and ultimately the sustainability of public spaces. Simultaneously, without investing in attractive public spaces, one cannot expect to make urban mobility more sustainable. If this is correct, then more measurable indicators should be introduced to evaluate the sustainability of public spaces and mobility.

Although little discussed in this paper, analysis of public spaces data at an international level should also be enforced and promoted. Furthermore, more consideration should be paid to different geographical scales and types of cities. Much of the debate on urban mobility and public space relates to large cities where urban sustainability is most at stake. However, small and medium sized cities should be examined as well. Finally, the proposal of considering public spaces and mobility as measures for urban sustainability will require further indicators that could foster an increased examination of the topic and enrich literature on the subject matter. Evidently, the suggested list of indicators is not yet complete, and consideration of the implications of the size and type of cities must be discussed in more depth. This will be the objective of future works.

Table 1. Public Spaces and Mobility Indicators According to Various Sources

Organizations	Mobility	Public Spaces
UNCHS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modal split (proportion of work trips by car, train, bus, motorcycle, bike, walk, other)</li> <li>2. Average time in minutes for a trip to work</li> <li>3. Per capita expenditure on road infrastructure</li> <li>4. Number of automobiles per 1000 population</li> </ol>	
World Bank Thirty-seven-city Study (Newman & Kenworthy 1999)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Journey to work (JtW) %: Private / Public / NMM (*4)</li> <li>2. MJ/Pass Km: bus, rail, ferry</li> <li>3. JtW Km</li> <li>4. JtW mins</li> <li>5. Transports deaths 100,000 inhabitants</li> <li>6. % Transports Deaths of Total Deaths</li> <li>7. Total CO2 per capita (kg)</li> <li>8. NOx per Capita (kg)</li> <li>9. SO2 per Capita (kg)</li> <li>10. CO per capita (kg)</li> <li>11. VHC per Capita (kg)</li> <li>12. VP per capita (particles, KG)</li> <li>13. Road Expenditure per Capita (U.S. dollars)</li> <li>14. %GRP spent on Commuting</li> <li>15. %Transit Cost Recovery</li> </ol>	
EEA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Motorway length km/railway length km</li> <li>2. Number of average length of trips per km per inhabitants per mode of transport per day</li> <li>3. Number of commuters in and out of conurbation</li> <li>4. Total inflow and outflow vehicle in km and numbers of vehicles on main routes</li> <li>5. Number of people injured in traffic accidents per 10000 inhabitant</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accessibility of green space: percentage of people within 15 minutes walking distance of urban green areas</li> </ol>
WHO Healthy cities indicators (1994)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pedestrian streets</li> <li>6. Cycling in the city</li> <li>7. Living space</li> <li>8. Public transport</li> <li>9. Public transport network cover</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public access to green spaces</li> <li>2. Relative surface area of green space in the city</li> </ol>
Urban audit Eurostat (2014)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Automobile ownership: number of automobile per 1000 population</li> <li>10. Number of people dead in traffic accidents per 10000 inhabitant</li> <li>11. Percentage of users of Public Transient</li> <li>12. Percentage of used walking and cycling</li> <li>13. Percentage of users of Mass Transient</li> </ol>	
Green City Index (EIU)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Modal split</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Amount of parks, open spaces/ green areas</li> </ol>
Alberti (1996)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Mobility and modal split</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adequate of green areas and open spaces</li> </ol>
UN-HABITAT (2016)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Quality and quantity of public space</li> </ol>

Table 2. Indicators Related to Public Spaces and Urban Mobility to Add in Conventional Definitions

Dimensions	Indicators	Dataset	Tools
Availability	Number of green spaces per 1000 inhabitants	WHO	Statistics
	Square meters of green space per Capita	Land cover LAU2 data	Statistics/ GIS
	Number of squares/ pedestrian streets /plazas per 1000 inhabitants	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Length of bike lanes	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Length of pedestrian streets/ street network	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Type of existing public spaces/green spaces/pedestrian streets/bike lanes	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Covering of bus line network of major city neighborhoods	LAU2 data	GIS
	Incidents /collision involving biker and walkers	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Number of parking spots per 1000 inhabitants	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Traffic volumes	LAU2 data	Statistics
Accessibility	Number of people entering public and green spaces on a weekly day	-	GPS tracker
	15 min. walking distance to key access points of public spaces	Google maps	GIS
	15 min. walking distance to key access points of green spaces	Google maps	GIS
	Number of average length of trips per km per inhabitants per mode of transport per day	EEA	Statistics
	Percentage of people using bus transit, walking and cycling	Urban Audit	Statistics
	Percentage of people within 15 minutes walking distance of urban green areas	EEA	Statistics
	Main Pedestrian movement		GPS tracker
Urban Design	City topography for biking and walking	EEA	GIS
	Number of places to sit	LAU2 data	observation
	Comfort	LAU2 data	observation
	Natural elements	LAU2 data	observation
Activities and Functions	Number of social and cultural activities (e.g. events and festival) per year and per 1000 inhabitants	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Activities/uses/functions in public space	-	GPS tracker
	Most recurrent activities in public space	-	GPS tracker
	Number of Cafes	LAU2 data	Statistics
	Sociability	LAU2 data	observation
Perception	Satisfaction/perception on the beauty of streets and buildings in the neighborhoods/public parks and gardens/public spaces/markets/pedestrian areas	Eurostat	Statistics
	Satisfaction/perception on the quality of public transport	Eurostat	Statistics
	Satisfaction with outdoor recreation /e.g. walking or cycling)	Eurostat	Statistics

## **TERMINOLOGY**

Urban mobility: ability of persons to move in urban space by adopting strategies to overcome the friction of the distance that characterizes their activities (Newman & Kenworthy 1999).

Sustainable urban mobility: a set of measures designed to meet people's urban mobility needs in the present and in the future in order to ensure a better quality of life in the city and its surroundings

Sustainable mobility system: an urban transport system that adequately satisfies a citizen's daily mobility needs without (or as few as possible) incurring environmental and social external costs over time (i.e. pollution, congestion costs, etc.).

Soft mobility: includes pedestrian and cycling mobility

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan: is a strategic plan designed to satisfy the mobility needs of people and businesses in cities and their surroundings for a better quality of life. It builds on existing planning practices and takes due consideration of integration, participation and evaluation principles.

Modal shift: policy and process to encourage car users to use sustainable transport alternatives, such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Urban public space: refers to responsive, democratic and meaningful spaces in the city like streets, squares, plazas and urban green spaces, which are open and accessible to everyone for gathering and socializing. Public space is a public good and the pedestrian can be seen as the central figure within public spatial practice. (Gehl 1987, Lévy et al 2010).

Sustainable public space is a space that is "accessible to all" (Madanipour 1996); "Capable of containing different ways of doing, uses, activities, and functions" (Gehl 1987); Well-designed and well-managed with respect to the local context (PPS 2014b); capable of providing "comfort" (Reiter 2003), "vitality" (Lynch 1960, Schiller 1994) and favoring a vibrant urban life (Carr et al. 1992) ".

New Urbanism: is an urban design movement that promotes environmentally friendly habits by creating walkable neighborhoods containing a wide range of housing and job types. It arose in the United States in the early 1980s and has gradually influenced many aspects of real estate development, urban planning and municipal land-use strategies. The agenda of new urbanism is articulated in the charter of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), founded in 1993 by a coalition of architects, planners and environmental advocates (Knaap & Talen 2003).

## Notes

- (1) Bus rapid transit (BRT) is a large capacity bus network, including ordinary and rapid buses, and an electronic ticketing system.
- (2) OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the EEA is the European Environmental Agency, UNCHS is the United Nations Center for Human Settlement, CSD is the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, and IISD the International Institute for Sustainable Development.
- (3) Today, an increasing number of smartphone Apps are available allowing recovery of journeys, routes, daily movements and such, useable for measuring sustainability of public space and mobility in real time.
- (4) Not motorized mobility.

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## Peri-urban agriculture and cultural heritage. The public potential of the *in-between* areas

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### Abstract

In this paper we examine the effects of urban farming in a worldwide system of dismissed areas affected by the phenomena of large-scale industrial dismissing and shrinking cities. We study the features of urban decay and subsequent spill overs of land and soil use in private and public conduct in agri-urbanism. The connection between the city and its farmland could represent an opportunity to improve the welfare of the whole area near the city, made possible by establishing a close relationship between the development of sustainable agriculture and the city. This renewed interest in agricultural production not only depends on urban and - or economic interest, but on a new conception of city that can improve the use of agricultural gardening to overcompensate for the empty spaces between industrial and rural areas, as well as those peri-urban spaces which are included between buildings and sub-urban voids.

**Keywords:** urban planning, public space, peri-urban agriculture, rust belt, cultural heritage, shrinking city, city and food, industrial heritage.

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## 1. Introduction

The paper will illustrate that the cohabitation of agriculture and the city is possible, in particular analysing the case of the American Rust Belt, a large north-eastern area in the United States characterised by the presence of an old, dismissed iron industry surrounded by extended farm fields. In the last few years, American policy, rather unknown to European academic literature, has been promoting the standardisation of interventions in the documentation process of the heritage buildings of Detroit, Cleveland and Cincinnati, and the agricultural developments in the surrounding areas; in this paper we will evaluate the different approaches and the economic consequences related to the actions taken to reduce the issues of de-industrialisation of the Rust Belt, with the aim to formulate a theoretical model, applicable to the different urban landscapes and multiple social contexts featured in global cities. One of the goals is to define the features of what would be a universal peri-urban agriculture to be realised in the future, a new image of the city that, as Richard Ingersoll said, could be attended as a home garden. In Section 2, the idea of scapes is analysed; without disturbing the widely cited definition of “Scapes” by Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai, 1996), we can describe industrial urban Scapes as the sum of cultural, architectonic and infrastructural facilities that give complexity to a territory formerly related to mono-production and a large-scale factory, currently closed or in via of dismissal. In Section 3, we observe the features of the geographies of dismissed areas, with a peculiar focus on the cultural aspects that lead the population towards agricultural exploitation of brownfield and grey field sites. In Section 4, we exhibit selected case studies, distinguished in Urban, Peri-Urban and Extra-Urban areas; in Section 5 we will discuss the similarities and differences between the cases, focusing on global and hyper – local solutions. In Section 6, we finally conclude the paper and highlight future scenarios of research.

## 2. “Scapes” and urban decay

Until the 80’s, agricultural production took place at the edges of industrialised cities and answered univocally economic needs linked to conditions of poverty; today, the anthropic pressure created by the urbanised environment, leads to a different way of thinking about rural areas, especially concerning their role in relation to the city in environmental and social fields.

In the Modern age, Le Corbusier was already interested in the relationship between cities and agriculture, producing a personal vision of the urban farm<sup>1</sup>, but the current cultural and economic context requires a different kind of consideration on the subject. The development of infrastructures and transportations produced a physiological expansion of the relationship between agricultural areas and inhabitants, leading to an insulation occurring as a result of a “geographical division of the work”<sup>2</sup>: a phenomenon connected to the industrial productive cycle. This event resulted in an “extensive sub-urbanization” (Piazzo, 1991), a pattern which continues today as “the city grows keeping away the countryside, which transforms itself into new suburbs and uncultivated areas” (Donadieu, 2006).

This expanding process is corroborating the oxymoron of that “built countryside”, understood as being the connecting fabric between different urban environments belonging to the same metropolis; inside this dichotomy between built and agriculture, “well-observed phenomena of dragging and friction”<sup>3</sup> can be identified that are degrading

or fascinating, and involve the city and the countryside.

Contextually, it is useful to pay attention to a different urbanistic issue, a specific one, as it could be applied to areas characterised primarily by productive settlements depressed by the economic crisis. The span of the phenomenon of the abandonment of areas by inhabitants, which involved those unused geographical areas of production, has in fact resulted in urban decay and city reduction; a result quite different from that of the dispersion of the archipelago-city<sup>4</sup>.

Before attempting a broader discussion on the topic, we believe that it is important to clarify the meaning and the notion of Shrinking cities and also that of Landscape.

The decaying urban areas, characterised by the presence of abandoned industrial buildings, became today's witnesses of the so called "shrinking cities"<sup>5</sup> phenomenon, or urban contraction. A phenomenon which has corroded the economic, demographic and formal structure of the contemporary city, a regressive process which, apparently, cannot be stopped. As highlighted in the report by the European URBACT program, the Shrinking experience relates to different aspects of the urban environment -iGDP, population decline, the reduction of services etc...-; this phenomenon may constitute urban conditions characterised by homogeneous symptoms, such as the abandonment of real estate assets (existing or under construction) or the definition of landscapes in decline, devoid of functions or uses. The depressive results of a similar envelopment, noticed in USA areas as well as in East Europe, are not only ascribed to the haemorrhagic drop in requests in the building market, but they are also engraved in a landscape studded with immovable "producing machines"; abandoned factories, in areas in which the city and the countryside would struggle to provide the same resources.

One can see the contraction of urban fabric, the depression of abandoned areas, the coexistence of used and unused buildings and the reduction of productive areas: all these aspects make the continually expanding city unsustainable.

Could it be possible to solve this dichotomy, the coexistence of forgotten buildings and urban agriculture, by finding a common solution which can create the conditions for sustainable development of cities?

To find this solution, it's necessary to consider urban perforation, (resulting from the contraction or sprawl phenomenon), not as a menace but as a brand-new possibility to reconstruct a different public space; a fertile field for experimenting new ways of urban, economic and politic governance. Such a theoretical approach could be seen in the applicative model of the Rust Belt, an area in the North-East of the USA, which is characterised by a free-trade economic model, based in the almost decayed iron-cast industry. The cities belonging to this denomination are peculiar because of the coexistence of abandoned industrial buildings and a wide agricultural landscape, proper of the American countryside, and also because of their need for urbanity. Where in the past, industrial development flourished, today there is a new chimera. As a matter of fact, "the utopian thought of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries wanted to build new cities abandoning the old, in the Rust Belt, the utopia experiments itself in the ruins of the latter" (Coppola, 2012) echoed similarly in (Dudley, 1997).

From this perspective, the notion of Landscape can abandon the traditional scenic function (and the perceptual-environmental appreciation) to contemplate ecological issues and to consider the effects of the conversion of abandoned areas; In this sense, Landscape design, overcoming its disciplinary limits, evaluates appropriately different interventions placed in

heterogeneous areas of the city, from the consolidated contexts to the peri-urban areas; as from this evaluation come specific urban regeneration projects produced by scholars like Chemetov, Clément or Desvigne, which transformed natural parks into critical spaces.

### **3. Geographies of industrial legacy**

The current appearance of industrial architecture, with its standardised and largely anonymous features, comes as a result of studies on the reproducibility of the work carried out by Albert Kahn during the Second World War, when the need for industrial overproduction necessitated a rethinking of production facilities due to the necessity of a massive production of war-related goods.

Certainly there have been cases of factories far away from the Kahnian paradigm, such as the Olivetti factories in Pozzuoli and Ivrea, but for the most part the one-storey factory model, organised along a linear production system and almost devoid of openings to the outside (born from the need for night obfuscation techniques during the war), remained unchanged until the '90s of the twentieth century, when new considerations on the scale of industrial production changed that pattern.

It should be noted that the Kahnian model is an evolution of a model devised by the same Kahn decades before, during experiments on automotive factories, that were widely criticised by Peter Reyner Banham (Reyner Banham, 1989).

The Kahn-planned factory universalised the concept of worldwide industry, wiping out the cottages made by Gustavo Giovannoni, the Egyptian temples by James Combe and the Ottonian towers in Frankfurt by Behrens.

The universalisation of the image of the factory was not followed by a universalisation of symbols. Le Corbusier reportedly attributed a mythological and symbolic role to the factories of Detroit and the Midwest Silos in the transformation of the American landscape pattern, and in the rhetoric narrative of Soviet Union, the Tractor Factory in Volgograd, also designed by Albert Kahn, exalted the Soviet resistance to the Nazi occupation. In other words, the creation of identical objects at all latitudes, in turn creates different metaphorical paradigms strictly related to a localist interpretation of territorial specificities.

Still, we can observe that in some languages, including Italian, “factory” is said “fabbrica”, which has a duality of meanings, both as “the place in which something is manufactured” and as “the building which is under construction and not yet finished”. An example of this is the so-called “Fabbrica del Duomo” (Factory of the Cathedral) found in most Italian cities (Rome, Siena, Milan, etc.), that represents a long-term maintenance system that is charged with replacing damaged elements in the architectural body of the church with “spare parts”.

We can observe how in this sense the same term can offer continuously mutable value, and also express the iteration of a job (a trivial example could be the replacing of degraded parts of the façade, and the industrial infrastructure – mines, freights, workers, etc. – necessary to those substitutions). At the same time, the “fabbrica” in terms of “factory” is the place for the continuous creation of goods. If this place ceases its activity (i. e. continuous and iterative action), its ultimate purpose also ceases.

We can see how many closed industrial buildings become memorials of industrial civilisation (Edensor, 2005). In these places, as often noted by scholars who have studied semiotics, the crisis that led to the closure of the factory is often relegated to a

secondary narrative construct in respect to an epic dimension of choral narration of industrial production.

The reason for the closure of the factory, and the resulting substantial uselessness of the factory, are aspects that are usually only described and interpreted, on a rhetorical level (Dicks, 2008).

Indeed, when the closed factory survives change, and appropriates its new features, it is too often linked to a non-productive dimension. Monuments, museums, memorials (in the case of traumatic events related to the factory), luxury residences and urban parks, are often the fate of the old factories.

Almost never, or very rarely, the factory recovers a more productive purpose.

Massive de-industrialisation has, however, highlighted the need for a new policy for the use of land between the city and the factory: in a number of cases, including Sendling, in Bavaria, the industrial buffer zone has been transformed into urban gardens and the former industrial area transformed into a large fruit and vegetable market at km 0.

The urban structure of the industrial city is often typical: two large hubs, one tertiary-residential (the city), and the other one production related (the factory). This structure acts as a binary star, one of the two hubs, the factory, matters to both the human and productive aspects of the city until - when its life ends - so to does the life of the urban core.

Two belts exist between the two hubs: the first a belt around the city consisting of residences and services and the second, a belt around the factory, characterised by the presence of small processing industries and services associated to the largest factory. Cleaning companies and maintenance, small business owners and engineering companies for the repair of vehicles, they are all located exactly halfway between the industrial complex and the workers' residences.

As we shall see in the next paragraph, the urban, suburban and peri-urban dimension of industrial areas, at diverse scales, allows urban agriculture to fill the capillary voids created by shrinking cities.

On a theoretical level, the coexistence of new models, related with sustainable, shareable and green economy, for the exploitation of industrial monuments is observable (for example in social and artistic spaces, for instance, in the former Ruhr area). In addition, the presence of agri-urbanism on different scales (educational gardens, small private gardens, large production plots) is feasible, and in moments of tremendous crisis and social tension, could serve to generate a communal field of shared skills and resources and social cohesion (Percy, 2008).

#### **4. Examples and case studies**

It is now necessary to inquire about the condition of these intermediate areas and about the possibilities they offer concerning urban reconversion and regeneration: “truly because they are places of competition and antagonism between different tendencies, whether to be ascribed to natural environments [...] or to the purely perceptive grade, [...] or to the social order” (Romani, 1983). This condition is very close to the situation that Gilles Clément (2005) describes in his *Manifesto Del Terzo Paesaggio*, as being particular to “shade and light places”, in which it is useful to “start a process of re-qualification of the vital substrata- air, soil, water- modifying the peripheral practices to

the spaces of the Third landscape, in order to avoid altering the practices of the latter and make its influence possible”<sup>6</sup>.

What a thought, but how could it be realised? And according to which modalities? Again, the Rust Belt cities could be taken into consideration to answer these questions. Within the identified geographic framework, we believe it is possible to find three different methods of intervention, related to the dimensional availability of the urban, peri-urban and extra urban areas. These interventions to the small, medium or large-scale are oriented towards defining a new concept for and a new image of urban and productive landscapes.

#### *4.1 Re - appropriation exercises within the urban environment*

The first intervention method is well represented by the urban micro-operations of recovery, namely interventions involving modifications to incomplete or abandoned small scale spaces, usually immersed in consolidated contexts.

These zones have undergone the shrinkage process, leaving room for urban orchards and unexpected as well as fascinating public gardens, creating attractions for visitors and new meeting places. A phenomenon which has two European practitioners in France: the AAA Group (Atelier d’Architectur Autogérée) and the Collectiv Etc, which are interested in the promotion of use and management of abandoned places. Typical examples of these reinvention methods are the Place au Changement in Saint- Étienne and the Eco-interstice in Paris<sup>7</sup>. The second example is particularly interesting as the AAA Group promoted a public consultation concerning the usage of place, and also arranged the necessary synergy between local institutions, associations and professionals, bring the aim of returning a degraded public place to a public domain, into fruition. Today, the interstitial area, in which there is a vegetable garden and a hothouse, is used by seventy people as area for gardening activities and for the production and selling of biologic goods.

Since 2005, we can trace the progress of a successfully implemented strategy in Detroit: through the addition of more than 1,400 urban gardens, the city has changed its productive vocation; the same vegetable gardens, together with the “Mufi agribusiness park” (located on the northern edge of the city), produce over 2,000 tons of fruits and vegetables annually. More minimal interventions programmed within a wider transformation of urban fabric – if realised in appropriately and strategically selected areas – can also produce considerable interest and useful outputs. If the growth of the city by adding volumes does not constitute an urban value in and of itself, the overwriting of specific characters, made with reference to the socially sustainable agriculture language, can edit the new image and economy of city. Is it possible in this way to identify an architectural identity, in sharp contrast to the alienating character of the abandoned city<sup>8</sup>.

#### *4.2 Transformation of soils in the sub-urban areas.*

A second way of action can be located into the peri-urban areas of the cities. In in this case of interventions, on an intermediate scale, between the urban and the industrial areas we found projects like the Value Farm designed by Thomas Chung in 2013 in Hong Kong, the visionary garden towers proposed by Vincent Callebaut, or experiences of Prinzessinnengärten, an Urban Farm in Kreuzberg, Berlin. It is actually quite difficult to interpret projects just by considering the architectural aspects alone, which will inevitably require an evaluation oriented towards understanding the complexity of different

overlapping systems. The importance given to the issues of green, permeability and redeems the interventions by the simple exercise in design, define areas of transformation physically homogeneous and anchored to the middle of the urban scale. In fact, in this case it is not only possible to refer to typically architectural fields, but it is also appropriate to point out how actions can affect the average extension of surfaces located at the outskirts of the city, and how they have interesting economic implications. Let's consider, for instance, the Hantz Group, a financial and insurance society which operates in Michigan and Ohio. The owner, John Hantz, diversified the Group's investments, preferring to privilege soil over shares. Thanks to an agreement reached with the city of Detroit, he created a for-profit timber society called Hantz Woodlands, which includes an agroforestry operation for the recovery of abandoned grounds near industrial areas, in order to plant a wood of beeches. As a result of this experience, the "Hantz Farms" were also created, farms of medium dimensions settled in abandoned areas, which create an environmental and ecologic continuity between the agroforested areas and the properly intended "urban areas". The final aim is not only to give a landscape infrastructure, but, above all, to link investments with territories, in which there is the risk of an impoverishment of the soil due to the accumulation of debts. Although this is one of the most virtuous examples, an aspect should be underlined: the agreement between Michigan's Department of Human Services and the Hantz's does not expect bonds on oil exploitation. It is possible to observe that Hantz's operation (which has proposed his model as the world's largest urban farm) gave an essential contribution to the definitions of some of the dynamics involved in the occupation of soil occupation for agricultural aims. This specific kind of occupation, has played a fundamental role in a renewed environmental wellness in Detroit itself.

This strategy includes various forms of intervention in the landscape; contrary to the previous experiences we analysed, the result of this intervention is based on the presence and distribution of different layers: permeable surfaces for public and private use, the economy and the management of the areas in disuse, to give a different importance to the economic features of the entrepreneurialism of the actions.

#### *4.3 Amendment of the peri-urban landscape*

The last strategy refers to the realisation of large scale projects that are able to match ambitions for sustainability, regardless of the sole functional appropriateness or efficacy of intervention. This way of thinking about extra-urban areas and abandoned industrial areas, can offer agriculture the opportunity to reinterpret the environmental conditions, "lifting up the unproductiveness until giving it politic dignity"<sup>9</sup> and exploit growth and biologic development, as opposed to the economic conditions. It should be highlighted, that among the ruins of a contracting city, there are not only alienating places and cartographical voids of small dimensions, but also industrial buildings that bring cultural heritage with them, as aforementioned, and which now, after being abandoned and disused, are available for different usages which could offer economic and social support to the permeable edging between city and countryside, also on an economic level, thanks to rescuing and retrofitting activities. Shelby Farm Park could also be mentioned here, a wide, green area of 1800 hectares, situated outside Memphis (a city belonging to the Rust Belt), well known for its penal settlement, which is now an agricultural urban garden. Abandoned at the end of the 60's, the penal settlement has been the subject of a

competition in 2008, with the purpose of reconvertng the area and its structures. The building is now a research centre for experimental cultivations and its 400 hectares in the south-east area are occupied by vegetable gardens. Meanwhile, the remainder of the masterplan is divided into twelve landscape-rooms, each one characterised by intensive or biological cultivations. This division into rooms and the coexistence between private agricultural areas and public ones, permits one to experiment with a different perception of the park, in particular, and of public space in general. These examples are all aimed at significantly affecting the metabolism of the geographical territory, assuming the value of an ideological program, both in the functional and figurative sense.

These experiments were born as a mix of different uses, already oriented towards defining the environment and extra urban landscape otherwise without specific vocations except for low-quality agricultural monoculture or pasture land.

## **5. Discussion: between global and hyperlocal**

Over the past 15 years we have developed several trends in the field of reuse of industrial ruins.

On one hand, a European tendency towards iconisation and musealization of the ruin, on the other a US vision, linked to a nostalgic and hipster relationship with the ruin, well summarised in the concept of “Ruin Porn” (Strangleman, 2013). This expression is related to a series of photographic books, artistic and architectural experimentations and movies, focused on a simplified and superficial narration of the industrial past, decayed and reduced in scenic backdrop.

These simplifications are a typical phenomenon of Western culture, in many cases (for example the former sugar factory in Cesena), the industrial ruins are reduced to a dumb symbol, typically a chimney, around which the new city grows.

The symbol, then, is silent, neither communicating something about the previous situation nor collaborating with a different form of urban aggregation.

However, in many cases, where industrial ruins have been replaced by agricultural development, we can observe a multitude of positive aspects, including the conservation of biodiversity by experienced growers, who transmit knowledge, skills and know-how to newcomers (see for example the experience of “BUGS” at the University of Sheffield). At the same time, in the Lake Park of Upper Lusatia we have seen the creation of a shrine to species of fish, in an area that until a few years ago was ecologically compromised.

The problem of agricultural diversity is already part of ancient history. Over ten years ago, in 2002, Vandana Shiva wrote one of the most illuminating essays, which tells the tragedy of the apparent variety of products: “It seems that there is a wide variety, but it is a variety of names. In fact, the variety does not reflect a biological variety. It is the result of the manipulation of a few basic materials: corn, wheat, rice and potatoes”<sup>10</sup>.

This illogical exploitation of agricultural production has effectively blocked, for more than 50 years, the creation of native, or at least varied, crops. This type of agriculture is unsustainable by its intrinsic nature: in fact we cannot imagine a production of intensive standardised goods taking into account the sustainability issues that we face today and are essential in a complex urban design.

In the cases in which the “greening” of brownfield land was implemented, we can observe that the intervention, even on a small scale, results in a number of benefits in the medium and long term.

The first goal of the greening policies of brownfield land was to manage the process of shrinkage reducing land consumption, also in the case of shrinkage in urban areas, due to the problem of soil-pollution and urban-related management issues (public transport, criminality, water pollution, etc.), and secondly, to provide tools to the classes affected by unemployment, so that they might have access to credit and employment. The role of the community was therefore to create a network of neighbourhoods so as to ensure sufficient quantities of goods to be sold in local markets, implementing outcomes and verifying positive externalities such as the reduction of the deficit in ADHD children who lived or studied close to urban green fields (Taylor, 2001). Some choices, exhibited almost a decade ago in the seminal work of Schilling and Logan (Schilling, 2008) may seem outdated or unenforceable in Europe; a choice, however, was crucial, and can be exported and replicated: with the use of local banks as the basis of investment. The big problem with shrinkage was precisely that it was difficult for banks to grant mortgages on urban areas on which it was difficult to build.

What role can agriculture actually play in the regeneration of public space planning for the portions of a city in decline? To find an answer, it helps to read the publications by the FAO (FAO, 2007) on "Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture" (Henceforth "UPA").

In fact, the United Nations Food and Agriculture agency, distinguishes between two extreme types of UPA: a subsistence-oriented UPA, defined as "social" and a UPA focused on the sale and marketing of the product, defined as "economic".

The first kind is strongly developed in micro-organised sectors in urban suburbs, the second one is focused on the sale of property surplus.

In between these two, we can identify a third form of UPA, which is a "Multifunctional UPA", called "ecological", which aims to create a healthy and environmentally sustainable city that links the logic of the diversification of agriculture and agro-forestry areas and inner suburban buffer areas.

This logic, apparently utopic, also includes a supply of fresh products in markets, the decentralised reuse of municipal waste, links with the eco sanitation of water and sewage and connection with other urban functions, such as recreational and educational facilities. It is evident that the first type of UPA is the basis for an inclusive and social city such as those found in PVS, while the second involves the advanced functions of a typical business, and has been implemented in areas previously affected by agricultural infrastructure (India, Cuba, etc..).

Instead, the case of a city, transferring its industrial knowledge to a peri-urban agricultural knowledge (or rather, what's called "Kanju" a term that describes "the specific creativity born from African difficulty." according to Dayo Olopade, as opposed to a "European know-how"), is still under discussion, in particular regarding the effects that this produces, and the level of investment, which must necessarily be increased and granted long term. The above definition of UPA helps us to understand how to design an urban agriculture that is useful and efficient.

Given that it is impossible to envisage a standard model, we can now think about a global utility of agri-urbanistic model in all countries with pre-eminent capitalist vocation that today are living a crisis of heavy-industrial sector (Dorstewitz, 2014). Similar approaches were tested in the Ruhr and in European industrial countries as well as in Latin America, and with some peculiar specificity in Africa, related to vulnerability context and livelihood strategies (Prain and Lee Smith, 2010).

In these cases we can say that the creation of a system of Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) certainly allows the creation of local and social capital systems at a global level?. On the other hand, the individual market specificities (land acquisition, the role of the public actor, local governance by individual private actors, market presence) varies between different regions.

It seems naive today to imagine that the system of “Canastas Comunitarias” of Latin America is applicable *tout court* on a large scale in Europe but similar systems, tailored for urban needs, are also seen in Italy (in Zolle and Cortilia, for example).

The factory's role is crucial for these systems: on one hand it offers land for growing at ultra-low prices, on the other hand, if properly designed, it offers a “landscape iconography” recognised and accepted by entering functions and businesses.

One of the agri-urbanism risks is indeed a substantial territorial anonymity. The urban garden, is imagined as an old-fashioned green-utopia, poorly economically efficient.

The recognition of a space previously bonded to a productive destination and deliberately converted not into a museum or memorial, but still productive, guarantees the identification of actions that take place inside a continuity in the civilisations, without underlying the tragic passage of crisis and closing.

The “Hyper Local” actions, catalysed by the widespread presence of IT in communities, including rural ones, (on this, see a recent issue of AD) (Willis, 2017) can now allow the sharing of knowledge summarised by the motto “Think Global, Act Local”.

## 6. Conclusion

Although European cities do not show such symptoms to make necessary an urgent debate about the “smart shrinkage” as happened in the USA, it seems quite clear that the peri-urban environment is undergoing a violent crisis of identity, which is perceived as being a result of a “catastrophe produced by the consumistic bulimia<sup>11</sup>”, already mentioned by Latouche in his own work. It is a phenomenon of a consumeristic race in an unsatisfiable global market, in which it is necessary establish new social and aesthetic values, according to cultural heritage, and the cultivation of public space (Assmann, 2012). In this way, urban space is mingled with and melts into evolving areas and public heritage, able to preserve the standard meaning both of social sharing, and of productive surplus value. In such an urban space, in a city which has lost its ties with social experience, and moreover is perceived as a place in which to fulfil consumeristic desires, public space, in its most wide meaning, is a place in which to socialise and gain different and complex values. Urban agriculture, lacking the educational and social value coming from its gratuity, becomes in fact speculation? In the meantime, industrial archaeology, lacking a real connection to the city and to public space, is no more a landscape but a back-drop. In conclusion, we can see that today urban agriculture is one of the most used practices to redeem degraded soil. Today, major issues are not only about the *if*, but about the *how*. The problems related to soil remediation are central to this field: from Cuba to Japan, from the USA to Kenya, the techniques for securing clean and secure soil for agriculture in polluted areas are increasing in number and quality.

Future targets will be related to the construction of a social background, catalysed by low-cost IT systems, able to redevelop large parts of urban and peri urban soils in an economic and agricultural way. In this way, it becomes clear the urban importance that the philosophy of Expo 2015 in Milan suggests, using the metaphor of the global agricultural

market; philosophy already inquired by Clément in the exhibition *Le Jardin planétaire*, which took place in 1999 in *La Villette*, Paris. But now, in a growing common dimension of public space, it becomes more inescapable. We now need to study, also starting from new themes of sustainability (green finance, ESG Analysis, Impact Investments, Green Bonds, etc.) new tools able to define a possible sustainable future for urban life, able to accept and fulfil the requests of its cultural and physical heritage, and able to offer to the city the care given to a small vegetable garden<sup>12</sup>.

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## Notes

\* Although the article should be considered a result of the common work and reflections of the two authors, Spada takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 1, 3 and 5, Bigiotti takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 2 and 4.

- (1) Cfr: Le Corbusier, (1961) *L'urbanistica dei tre insediamenti umani*, Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, pp. 76-96.
- (2) Concerning the relationship between productive cycles and urban morphology, see Piazza P., (1991), *Città, insediamento e territorio. Riflessioni su genesi, evoluzione e interazioni*, Roma: Edizioni Kappa.
- (3) Romani V. (1983). “Appunti per una approssimazione consapevole ai problemi delle interfacce peri-urbane”, in Della Rocca G.A., Lapadula F. (eds). *Rapporti fra agricoltura e urbanistica nello spazio peri-urbano*, Padova: Cedam, p. 125.
- (4) The definition of archipelago-city is referred to Indovina F. (2008), *Dalla città diffusa all'arcipelago metropolitano*, Milano: Franco Angeli.
- (5) With “shrinkage”, it is intended that phenomenon of reduction of the urban environment, as described in Simonetta Armondi (2012), “Gli insediamenti produttivi nelle società post-crescita. Riscrittura di politiche e progetti” in *Planum. The journal of Urbanism*, n. 25, according to which this experiment is described as “an inversion on the paradigm, related to a classical vision about the politics of expansion and the urban growth.[...] It is a notion that recalls a group of economic, demographic and/or social regressive dynamics which take place in the urban space”.
- (6) Clément G., (2005). *Manifesto del terzo paesaggio*, Macerata: Quodlibet, p. 63.
- (7) Cfr: *Lotus International*, n. 149, pp. 54-57.
- (8) It is referred to Armondi, especially the paragraph *Retrofitting territories: smontare il nesso abbandono/riuso* in which the subject of rescuing and conforming of the abandoned buildings is not analyzed according to the mere architectural respect, but as an useful attitude, which permits “to focus on different possibilities of understand the meaning of the productive settlements concerned by under-use phenomena, without automatically working on the sequential connection disuse/reuse”.
- (9) *Ibidem*, p. 64.
- (10) Website reference: Bevilacqua, P. in <http://archivio.eddyburg.it/article/articleview/1624/1/286>.
- (11) Latouche, S., (2012). *Per un'abbondanza frugale. Malintesi e controversie sulla decrescita*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri. Already mentioned in Nicolin, P., (2012) “Il bello dell'agricoltura urbana”, in *Lotus International*, n. 149, p. 43.

(12) It is intended to paraphrase the suggestion made by Richard Ingersoll, according to which the city “could be handled with the same care as a garden”. Translation by the authors. *Op. Cit.* p. 119.

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## Architecture of the landform and settlements identities. Cycle-routes as new linear public spaces

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### Abstract

One of the contemporary problems of dwelling concerns a threat to the interrelationship between settlements and geomorphology. We think that one of the most important peculiarities of public space is the power to represent these relations by means of architecture. Good quality architecture in public spaces would allow inhabitants to be a part of the places and territories in which they live. In the context of these problems, cycle-routes could play an important role, as a new kind of linear public space. They could become “geographical architecture” (Ocelli & Palma, 2008).

**Keywords:** landform; cycle-routes; infrastructures; identity; architecture; geography.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the most significant contemporary difficulties concerning dwelling concerns the threat to the relations between architecture and geomorphology. It is a serious threat because landform represents the main layer on which settlements are founded. Indeed, inhabitants' identities largely depended on this relation.

In history, public space represented this relation by means of its architectonic features, and the architecture of public spaces allowed inhabitants to be apart of the places and territories in which they lived.

Nowadays this relation is at risk of being eliminated because the architecture of public space is becoming more and more indifferent towards landform. Our research aims to study the relationships between the architecture of cycle-routes, settlements and landform. Indeed, in this problematic context, cycle-routes could play a strategic role as a new kind of linear public space. Our first hypothesis is that cycle-routes could become 'geographical architectures', i.e. linear public spaces able to represent the geographical identity of our settlements. The second hypothesis is that, if cycle-routes run along infrastructures like canals, railways, etc., they can take advantage of the deep relationships that infrastructures have with landform.

## 2. 'Representation spaces' and settlement identities

*"One of the schizophrenic aspects of contemporary architecture is ... the renunciation of the relation with the ground as antropogeography and its history of settlement systems ... the refusal of the architectonic relationship with the ground and its reduction to neutral support without any mediation, corresponds well to the denial of any relations with history and geography"* (Gregotti, 2010, p. 43)

In *The Production of Space* Henry Lefebvre outlines the distinction between the following three concepts: "spatial practice, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and special sets characteristic of each social formation ...

Representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order', which those relations impose ... Representation spaces, embodying complex symbolism, sometimes coded, sometimes not ..." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33).

In contemporary times, a need for communities to share public spaces has arisen. These spaces should represent the identities of the local communities despite the complexity and the layered structure of contemporary territories. In fact, every space is lived differently by different users, communities or groups, but geographic features – the landforms – constitute the layer on which all the other layers stand. Therefore, a very important facet of inhabitants' identities is founded on landform.

Accordingly, public spaces are not to be considered as *a priori* entities but instead as being the result of a project that makes them architectonic representations of the landform. If public spaces represent landform, they can become 'representation spaces', according to Lefebvre. These kinds of spaces make the territory intelligible and liveable, because they provide inhabitants with an architectonic reproduction of the territory in which they live. Therefore, in order to design public spaces, it is necessary to recognise the landform and represent it faithfully in the architecture produced by the project.

Urban history underlines that such a re-appropriation of landform produces a re-foundation. Indeed, to found means to perform a new description of existing place. For instance, the foundation of Rome appears to be – as recent archaeological studies confirm

– a new distribution of the previous social and urban spaces in the same location, by means of a series of architectonic facts (events? or processes?) that had the role of creating 'representation spaces'.

According to studies by Andrea Carandini, Romulus' project consisted of adding one monumental and representative layer over previously sprawled villages. A new town centre was realised after the birth of the settlement (Carandini, 1997). This foundation was political and spatial at the same time: the configuration of the Palatino-Campidoglio-Foro complex as the new centre of the archaic Rome provided Roman people with a new representation of the landform of the site of Rome. The platform of the Roman Forum was the architectonic representation of the previous marshes that occupied the valley between Palatine Hill and Capitolium Hill. The construction of the defensive and sacral wall around Palatine – i.e. the realisation of the *Roma Quadrata* (Squared Rome) – represented the architectonic description of the hill itself. However, above all, the cruciform scheme of the *Auguratio* – that returns in the military scheme of the *castrum* – describes the cruciform figure of the site of Rome, formed by the two channels of the Tiber and their prolongations in the *Murcia Valley* and *Velabrum Valley*.

Like archaic Rome, contemporary settlements are often described as being un-founded places, both by many scholars and the public. However, like Rome, these territories could be re-founded if a new description can be given to their public spaces. Indeed, as the foundation of Rome clarifies, foundation is a project that can be repeated many times. In this sense, our settlements could be described as places waiting to be founded rather than places with no foundation. That means creating 'representation spaces', i.e. designing public space architecture (made of surfaces, paths, buildings, vegetation, etc.) able to represent a geographic reality: the inhabited territory, with its stratifications made of anthropic and natural dimensions.

It is, therefore, necessary to think about 'geographical architectures' and their role in the construction of contemporary public spaces.

### 3. 'Geographical architectures' and cartographic devices

Rome's public space was not built on the seven hills but on the marshes in the valleys below. There is an intriguing monument in the middle of the Roman Forum, called *Lacus Curtius*. It is a pit in the floor of one of the most famous public spaces in the ancient city. According to legend, a young soldier on horseback called *Marcus Curtius* sacrificed himself to placate the Gods and save the city, by throwing himself and his horse into a chasm, which had suddenly appeared in the ground after a storm. Ever since that day the hole was called *Lacus* ('Lake') *Curtius* and it was venerated until the fall of the Empire. The *Lacus* is a small but disturbing place, a hole that linked the ground of the city with the Gods of the underworld. Revered for centuries, the Lake was an incessant reminder to Roman people of the presence of the ancestral marshes upon which they built the first public space of the city.

The *Forum* was the first true example of Roman public architecture, built before the construction of the other edifices – the temples, the *basiliche*, the palaces and the *domus*. The imposing monument is in fact a simple built surface that filled the *Velabro Valley* and both shrouded and recalled the waters of the marshes. Archaeological surveys indicate that the valley was filled for the first time around the period in which the city was founded - the 'Romulean Project' as it is called by Andrea Carandini - dates back to the second half of the 8th century B.C. (Carandini, 1997) (fig. 1).



Figure 1. View of Foro Romano and the Lacus Curtius.  
Source: Photography by the authors.

This transformation of landform to architecture was a real transfiguration, i.e. a 'changing state', from water to stone. A stone surface substituted and, at the same time, represented the image of the water: the abstract perfect image of the undisturbed still water was substituted by a solid architectural surface. The floor of the *Forum* became the architectural translation of the unforgettable ancestral image of the primitive marshes. Before becoming walkable ground on which social and political relationships could be developed, the *Forum* worked as a kind of map that represented the original waters. Together with *Lacus Curtius*, a number of small monuments were connected to the waters, like *Umbilicus Mundi* and *Lapis Niger*, which constituted a system of hole-like architectures inscribed within the thickness of the *Forum* slab. Paradoxically they represent both the pre-existing primitive valley covered by marshes and the obliteration of the valley (Farinelli, 2009). As the *Forum* replaces the ground by means of its architectural representation, it becomes a 'geographical architecture': a public architecture that produces a 'foundational description' (Magnaghi, 2005) for the whole community. This description allows citizens to assert their identity as inhabitants of a specific territory, characterised by a specific geography (Ocelli & Palma, 2009). The floor of the *Forum* also represents a series of boundaries: the boundary between the natural marshes and the buildings that have been constructed upon it; the boundary (but also the bridge) between the unsafe marshy valley and the stable hill slopes. This representation of the waters does not imply a re-discovery of natural and uncontaminated origins beneath artificial architecture. Ever since humankind began to observe it, the Earth has been seen as an architectural entity. The role of spaces like the Roman *Forum* is to keep the relationship between Earth and Architecture open and unsolved – 'indiscernible', in Jacques Derrida's words. One of the purposes of public spaces in contemporary territorialised cities is to perform the spectacle of this indiscernible condition that embraces Water, Earth and Architecture (Pizzigoni, 2011). Therefore, in order to design public space, we have to reverse the logic of classic representation: the space, the canonical object of the 'representation', becomes the agent of representation. The *Forum* is not only an architectonic space but it is also a solid map

and it opens up the possibility of studying the design of public spaces as representations of landform.

The fact that a designed space represents another space, another territorial or geographic space, is usual for architecture. This representation is often based on the relationships between architectural design and cartographic representation. In their study on architectural design theory, Giancarlo Motta and Antonia Pizzigoni describe cartography as one of the 'machines' which produces architecture (Motta & Pizzigoni, 2006). In architectural design, the solution to the problems of a site is always a cartographic figure as the solution is found on the map and it is the product of cartographic devices. This is the way in which the cartographic 'machine' works and involves the whole production of the architecture: sometimes the building itself works like a map. Therefore, scaling, layering, use of grids, disposition of the elements of the project in a form of a cartographic legend, are at the same time cartographic devices and techniques of architectural composition (Palma, 2002). Refer, for example, to all those projects that deal with the problem of the representation of territory: the problem is often solved by means of the cartographic dimension of architectural design as it happens, for instance in Peter Eisenman's projects, such as the California State University Museum project. This tradition gathers theatres of memory and landscape gardens, and it is based on the capability of architecture to represent geographic and imaginary spaces simultaneously (Halbwachs, 1941; Rossi, 1966).

#### 4. Infrastructures and 'geographical architectures'

The architecture of linear infrastructures like irrigation canals, aqueducts, roads or railways overlaps the landform with its own utilitarian logic. Paradoxically, we are uncertain as to whether infrastructure exalts landform similarly as landform exalts infrastructure (Furlong, Biraghi & Albrecht, 2012).



Figure 2. The Maddaloni aqueduct by Luigi Vanvitelli.  
Source: Photography by the authors.

For instance, the aqueduct of Maddaloni designed by Luigi Vanvitelli to carry water to the *Reggia* of Caserta, produces a spectacular representation of the valley in an architectonic

form that reveals the topographical section: the orders of arches of the aqueduct fill the void between the slopes underlining the monumental shape of the valley that had never been pointed out before. The performance required from the aqueduct is to transport water for many kilometres using slight, incremental inclinations. These are not considered at the architectural scale, as to be so requires a particular fixity, or permanence, of architecture. As a fixed architectural element is a constant feature of all infrastructures, infrastructures can easily become 'geographical architectures'.

One paradigmatic example of a fixed architectural element is San Francisco's urban grid. In San Francisco, despite the fact that the ground is very hilly, the grid layout of the roads is rigidly ruled by orthogonality. At all the points where the conflict between geomorphology and infrastructure becomes difficult to solve, we find a monumental piece of architecture that exalts the landform. The conflicts were overcome by a series of architectural solutions that were applied where the rigid application of the grid was impossible because of the angle of ascent of the new roads. The solutions – huge stairways, mighty embankments, duplication of parallel roads at different levels - solve the contradiction between geometry of the grid and altimetry of the ground and in addition serve as a monumental interpretation of the landform (Lipsky, 1999). Between the architecture of infrastructures and the geography of places there is no imitation but there is a mutual becoming that is based on a molecular process: architecture replaces landform but in some way landform remains a part of architecture. It is only a matter of changing state (Pizzigoni, 2011).

## 5. Cycle-routes as new linear public spaces

Nowadays the ancestral relation between dwelling and landform is often denied by the architecture of settlements, which are ever more extraneous regarding geography. For instance, this denial brings very dramatic results when rivers flood. However, it seems that architectural and urban design have left this problem out: in particular public spaces have lost their role as 'representation spaces' of the landform. More and more often they become abstract, generic spaces enclosed in shopping centres.

Our research hypothesis concerns the role of cycle-routes in order to reconcile this relation. In fact, wherever a cycle-route is associated with an existent infrastructure, the spectacular and architectonic representation of the landform becomes a feature of the bicycle path. It is possible to claim that cycle-routes are not only important for sustainable tourism and development but they could also become new kinds of linear and interconnected public spaces, highly important for the identities of settlements themselves. Indeed, cycle-routes can represent new kinds of 'representation spaces' along which inhabitants can recognise the geography of the places where they live.

Thus, cycle-routes aligned side by side with existent infrastructures could play the role of 'geographical architecture', linking people to landform and in turn to their geographic identity. Sometimes in the history of settlements, public space was a linear space: for instance, we can think about the merchant and pilgrim paths, the *Sacri Monti*, which are sacred Italian paths that represent Jesus Christ's passion through a series of chapels, and so on. Cycle-routes exhibit many features of traditional linear public space. In particular, cycle-routes are used by different kinds of people: tourist cyclists, runners, walkers, but also people who travel to work by bicycle. The simultaneous presence of these different kinds of people, the polarisation and concentration of facilities and the randomness of events that could happen along the path, are all features of public space.

Our research is developed through theoretical work and architectural projects, that attempt to answer some questions such as: what kind of space are the cycle-routes? Can settlements connected by this public space be redesigned on the bases of the new relationships created by cycle-routes? Another set of questions concerns the relationship between cycle-routes and geography: can cycle-routes be designed as 'representation spaces'? Can they represent an identification value for inhabitants, who are arguably less equipped to attribute meaning to places in today's world? Can cycle-routes be designed so that they could tell their users about the landform? We attempted to answer these questions through developing a set of projects. Two of them are described and discussed below.

## 6. Project I: Cavour Canal Cycle-Ruote

The Cavour Canal (1861-1865) was the first great infrastructure built after the unification of Italy. The Canal brings water from the Po River to the Ticino River, allowing the irrigation of a wide portion of the Padania plain, characterised by rice cultivation. The Canal is 82 kilometres long and provided service paths. It crosses rivers, torrents and others pre-existing canals, and runs near cities and rural settlements with important historical and cultural heritage. It flows into the Ticino River where it meets the medieval system of the *Naviglio Grande Canal*, which connects Lake Maggiore with Milan. Over the last few years, the *Naviglio Grande Canal* has become a cycle-route used intensively by tourists and the local population.



Figure 3. The connections between the cycle-route of the Cavour Canal and the European context.  
Source: Ocelli, Palma and Sassone 2012.

The Cavour Canal, cutting the plain with minimum gradient, represents a section line on which the hydrographic system of the Piedmont side of the Alps is projected. Indeed, each intersection is marked by monumental hydraulic works that aim to solve the crossing and/or the mixing of waters. In this way, each intersection is also an architectonic representation of the landform and cycling along the canal becomes a dynamic experience of travelling through histories, cultures and the geomorphology of the territory.

Our project also finds its reasoning in the strategic importance of the Cavour Canal in the European network of cycle-routes. In fact, the Canal could offer a solution to the intersection of Route 7 from Cape North to La Valletta with Route 8 from Cadiz to Athens. It allows both a connection with France and Milan, taking advantage of the route along Lake Maggiore, and the historical path of the *Naviglio Grande*. At a national scale, this path offers a new and important connection between Turin and Milan that can assume compensation value in terms of low-velocity travel for the recent realisation of the high-velocity railway.

This research, commissioned by the *Parco del Po tratto torinese* at the Department of Architecture and Design at the Polytechnic of Turin, concerns the role of the Canal on multiple levels: the touristic development of this territory on a European scale, that is not yet valorised; the improvement of the quality of the sustainable mobility system in Piedmont and Lombardy; the connection with the theme of Expo 2015 in Milan, "Feed the Planet", because of the importance of the Canal in rice cultivation; the potential role of the Canal as a distribution element for a system of public spaces that will be able to connect the settlements it traverses; the development of a 'geographical architecture' 82 kilometres long.

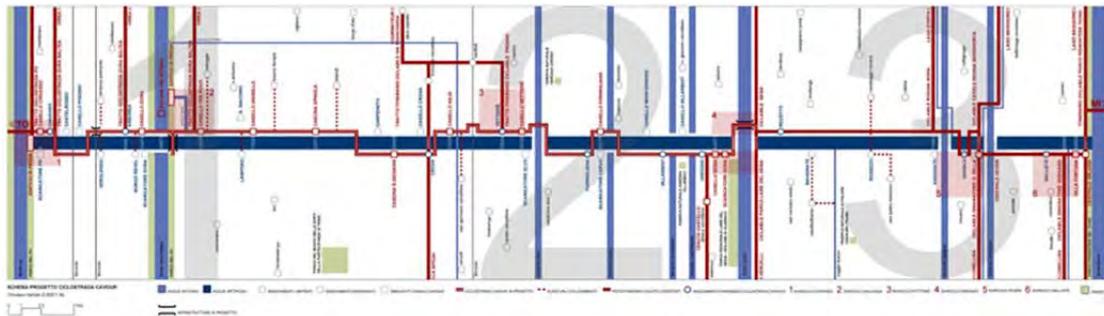


Figure 4. Functional diagram of the cycle-route of the Cavour Canal.  
The scheme shows the intersections with the other cycle-routes and the hydrographic elements.  
The project fixes the main public spaces in these intersection points.  
Source: Ocellì, Palma and Sassone 2012.

The developed guidelines of the project attempt to match the problem of conservation and valorisation of the historical and architectural features of the Canal with the requirement to maintain the hydraulic system's efficiency. The project works by superposing not deleting: in order to have a correct and non-mimetic dialogue between the pre-existing and the new interventions, the project uses the architectural figures that are expressed by the different representations of the Canal. Thus, for instance, the new infrastructures like footbridges or protected paths have the same section of the monumental siphons, which allow the Canal to pass under the rivers (Ocellì, Palma and Sassone, 2012).

Moreover, the project aims to play an important role not only in restoring the Cavour Canal but also in enhancing the territory that this monumental infrastructure has generated. The agrarian landscape, an exemplary human construction, is at the centre of a project based on an element that seems weak, the cycle-route. Indeed, the experience of cycling along the Canal allows travellers to intersect all the geographical elements that form the territory. Indeed, in our study the Canal has been considered as a kind of 'geographical theatre' able to represent the entire geography of the eastern part of

Piedmont. The whole complex of monumental intersections - bridges and siphons - between the Canal and the hydrographical system represents an 'architectural section' of the territory crossed by the Canal.



Figure 5. View of the cycle-route on a bridge-canal.  
Source: Ocelli, Palma and Sassone, 2012.

This project aims to restore international fame to the Cavour Canal, the kind of international fame it had when its monumental architecture reached a mythical dimension. In fact, during and after its realisation the Canal became famous among engineers all over the world, for example, among the US engineers of the Sacramento River Canal (Ocelli, Palma and Sassone, 2012).

## 7. Project 2: services pavilions along the cycle-route of Lake Varese

The bicycle path of Lake Varese in northern Lombardy is already successful and much used by inhabitants. For this reason, our project, developed in the context of an architectural competition, does not concern the path itself but attempts to add new layers of meaning to the existing cycle-route. The project envisages the whole bicycle path as a new linear public space.

The first layer is symbolic and concerns the identities of the settlements: the project foresees a path articulated in fourteen pavilions, like the fourteen chapels of the *Sacro Monte* in Varese. This analogy solves two different problems: the first is the path's lack of architectural unity; the second is the specificity of the places and the settlements, which share the Lake. Every pavilion is part of the whole path but in addition each one represents the identity of a single settlement by means of the variations in its architecture. Following this analogy, the fourteen pavilions are little buildings that provide services to cyclists and to people who walk along the path. The section of the buildings is always the same and is generated in analogy with the drawing of the section of the *Sacro Monte* chapels

The second layer of the project concerns the accessibility system to the Lake and the provision of services along the path. The project mobility scheme is composed of three concentric rings: the first is that of the Lake itself and of places along the coast that are

accessible via tourist navigation; the second is that of the cycle-route itself; the third is that of the vehicular roads which surround the Lake.

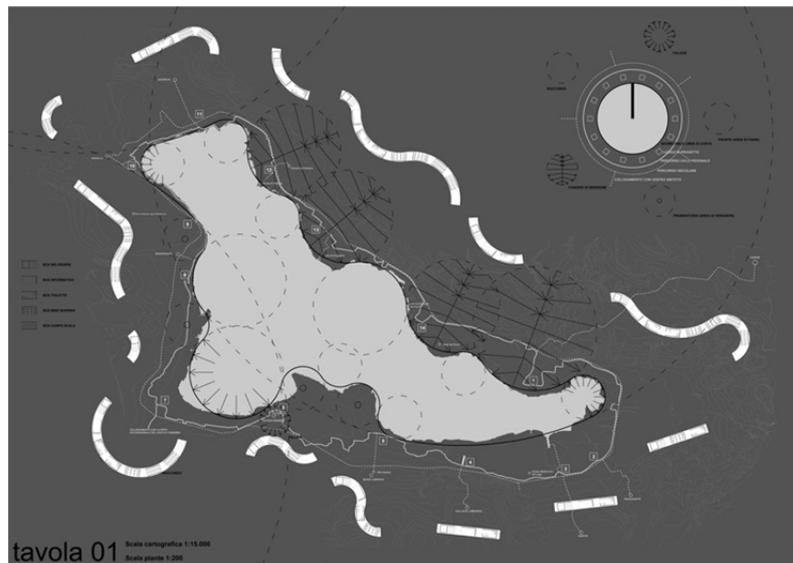


Figure 6. The cycle-route and landform: facilities buildings plan  
Source: N. Besenval, C. Occelli, R. Palma, M. Sassone with D. Campolo, A. Dutto,  
Cycle-route project around Lake Varese, 2013

These three modes of travel around the Lake are crossed by the ancient paths that connect the existing settlements to the Lake. Therefore, the pavilions are placed at the intersections between the cycle-route and those paths. The plan of the pavilions – formed by a three-metre-wide double wall in which all services are placed – is drawn on the basis of the line that describes the geometry of the Lake coast. In this way, every building represents the portion of the coastline that belongs to a different settlement. In fact, this line is not only an abstract geometric representation of the cartographic shape of the coastline, but it also expresses the geomorphological features of the Lake. The different kinds of circumferences that compose the line describe: the sequence of alluvial fans, the headlands of the Lake's glacial basin and the low marshy coasts. Overall, the projected pavilions translate the geomorphology of the Lake into 'geographical architectures'. The third layer concerns the architecture of the single pavilion. The different services (information point, bicycle rental, panoramic point, place of rest, public facilities) are all placed in wooden boxes, which all have the same modular dimensions. The boxes are contained within a metallic structure covered by perforated sheets that allow a view of the inner boxes. This transparency uncovers a last figure that the project wants to exhibit: a figure of a stylised fish, design to appear as though a child had drawn it. In fact, each box corresponds to a part of this fish: the information point is the 'head', the panoramic point is the 'tail' and all the other boxes in-between are pieces of its 'body'. This zoomorphic allusion remembers both the religious symbolism related to Christ and, above all, the identity of the Lake that was once one of the most fish-rich Italian lakes. Although bicycle paths could be easily be perceived as being unimportant for the structuration of settlements, the bicycle path of Lake Varese takes on the meaning of a re-foundation, where it becomes a linear public space that assumes the role of 'geographical architecture'.

In the great water-plaza constituted by the Lake, our project recognises a resemblance with the current centre of the city of Varese.

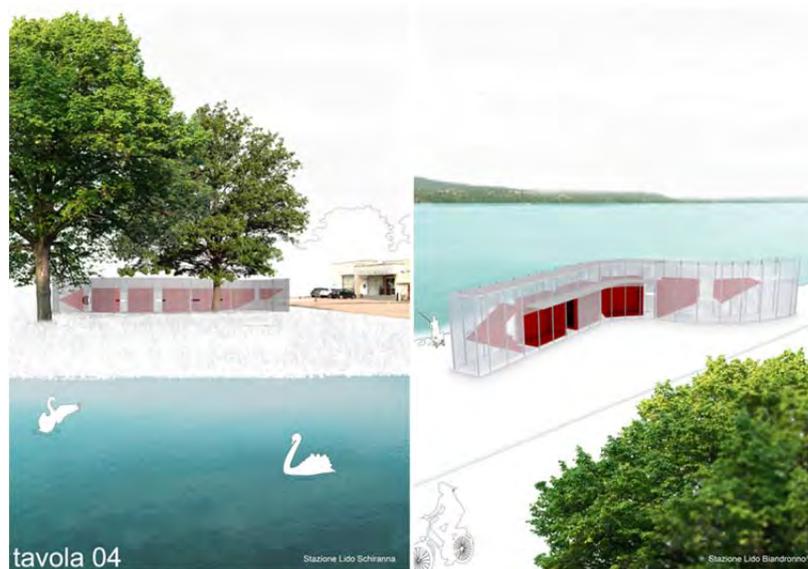


Figure 7. Views of service buildings along the cycle-route  
Source: N. Besenval, C. Occelli, R. Palma, M. Sassone with D. Campolo, A. Dutto.  
Cycle-route project around Lake Varese, 2013

The centre was only built in the 20th century, around a system of boroughs called *castellanze* and until then it had been largely empty, characterised by the presence of water. In the same way our project transforms the Lake into a water architecture that the bicycle path and its pavilions embrace, represent and interpret as a single, archetypal, identitarian public space.

## 8. Conclusion

To sum up, the proposed hypothesis foresees that in the future the role of cycle-routes in tourism and in supporting mobility will increase in importance, together with the need for new kinds of public spaces, characterised by their linearity and capability to represent the landform. Therefore, nowadays cycle-routes represent an opportunity for inhabitants, in that they both enhance touristic development and elevate consciousness surrounding geographic features in their territories. The challenge for architects is to design cycle-routes as linear public spaces with a consciousness of their role as 'geographic architectures'. In this way, along all cycle-routes people will have an experience that could contain the potential to contribute to a re-foundation of their settlements. An experience based on the ancestral relationship between the architecture of public spaces and landform.

## Notes

\* Although the article should be considered the result of the common work and reflections of the two authors, Occelli takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4, Palma takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

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## Victor Gruen: the environmental heart

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### Abstract

Victor Gruen is the pioneer of the regional shopping centre, he is the “Mall Maker”, which, is also the title of a book by M. Jeffrey Hartwick about this Austrian-born architect. Well known for his first commercial projects, which have been copied and analysed worldwide, mostly negatively influencing the structure of cities and societies, Gruen had focused his attention on the importance of the environmental crisis in his both theoretical writings and projects as early as the 1960s. How can Gruen be personified as both the “Mall Maker” and the “Architect of the Environment”? In the early 1970s Gruen presented Die Charta von Wien, as an attempt to readapt the CIAM’s Charte d’Athenes to the contemporary conditions, with a brand new emphasis on the ecological environment as well. This paper will deal mainly with these contradictions and synergies between “consumeristic” architecture and its role in the city in relation to the environmental issues posed by its inventor. The complexity of the connections between consumerism and ecology and the references to CIAM and Gruen, appear to be important themes for a discussion on public space and our contemporary urban condition.

**Keywords:** Gruen; CIAM; commercial; environment; public sphere.

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## Victor Gruen

Victor Gruen (Victor Grünbaum, Vienna, 1903 – 1980) was an architect born and professionally trained in Vienna. Here Gruen worked in an architecture office and in cabaret shows until 1938, when he emigrated with his wife to the US to escape Nazism. In the US, Gruen soon began to experiment and hybridise multiple roles within his architectural profession, exploring the dynamics of the interaction between private commercial spaces and public spaces, between the design interest and the theoretical interest and between the cabaret-musical character and the architectural process, from both the perspectives of architectural scale and urban scale. More interestingly, he developed a crucial interest in research and design surrounding environmental issues, modernist references and commercial design.

The complexity of Gruen's work, a man who is considered to be the pioneer of the regional shopping centre or the “Mall maker” (Hardwick, 2004), is certainly of great interest for a contemporary discussion on the public sphere. This is clearly evident if we consider, for instance, the profound contradiction between, on the one hand, the lacuna in most academic history books which hardly mention Gruen's name and, on the other, the real influence of his work on the development of commercial types in architecture and, more broadly, even on the structure of cities throughout the world.

Indeed, if in the early 1990s Margaret Crawford claimed that “*the world of the shopping mall [...] has become the world*” (Crawford, 1992, p. 30), then Gruen is certainly one of the main people responsible for this change regarding the commercial evolution of the public sphere and their contradictory relationship. This friction seems even stronger today, since the contemporary crisis of the consumerist economy, which has affected the built environment as a whole and, as a consequence, many examples of the degenerate, parasitical evolution of Gruen's architecture have turned into *zombie-like* dead malls. Therefore, faced with this contemporary condition, it is worthwhile to re-examine, rediscover, reconsider and reinterpret the original design and theoretical work of the Shopping Centre pioneer, who remarkably foresaw many issues in our contemporary debate, such as the environment, beyond the mere commercial-consumerist-capitalist strategy.

Since his first proposal in the early 1950s, Gruen's commercial projects were imbued with an ethical attention to environmental and social issues. In his own words, all his commercial projects were conceived not only as mere consumerist machines, but as “*urban crystallisation points*” (Gruen, 1973, p. IX), which could on the one hand

“*offer to the suburban population significant life experiences*” (Gruen, 1973, p. IX)

and on the other

“*create environmental qualities that will help fulfil the human heart's desire in the city's heart.*” (Gruen, 1973, p. 299)

The Regional Shopping Centre was Gruen's first attempt to generate urban crystallisations in the suburbs. It represented a new architectural archetype, germinating outside the traditional core with the idealistic intention of attracting and polarising the dispersed community.

This mix of consumerism and urban structure went from being an architectural expression to a real urban proposal, firstly with the renewal of existing city centres, such as Fort Worth. “*Downtown Needs a Lesson From the Suburbs*” (Gruen, Business Week, 1955) is the general expression of the redesigning of US downtowns through the shopping centre experience.

However, at the same time Gruen also considered the possibility for a complete transformation of his architectural experiment into a newly founded urban centre. If the lack of social and physical connections with the surrounding urban context partially caused the failure of and the main criticisms of the Shopping Centre, usually enclosed within a huge anonymous parking belt, then the context itself turned into the main topic of the project. The Architectural crystallisation point was scaled up into a broader urban crystal. The Regional Shopping Centre became an integrated part of Gruen’s urban model, together with its residential units, where both the commercial design devices and the environmental-humanistic values were re-interpreted.

### **Vienna as paradigm**

If Gruen adopted the medieval market as a main reference for the pedestrian cluster evolution of the shopping centre, then the medieval European urban centre became the main influence for new urban projects.

In particular, his city of origin, Vienna, Europe’s “*centre of intellectual and cultural life*” (Gruen, 1973, p.173), embodied Gruen's professional link with European modern architecture and his personal affection for the European historical city. For Gruen it represented a sentimental synthesis of architectural schooling and traditionalist urban origins. This became evident, for instance, when Gruen metaphorically transplanted Vienna to the USA, as the main reference for his American Fort Worth project, shown at the First Urban Design Conference at Harvard in 1956.

Vienna was indeed the main paradigm for attaining the right compactness and the right distinction between ‘*Cityscape*’, as “*a setting where man-made structures are predominant*”, and ‘*Landscape*’, as “*an environment in which nature is predominant [...]; the successful marriage of nature and human endeavour*” (Gruen, 1955), which was very much lacking in sprawling North American cities.

The limited size and the enclosed medieval structure of Vienna was re-interpreted by the Austrian-born architect as a correct frame and design for contemporary inner cities, whose human scale and life was in danger from the assault of vehicular traffic, under the “*invasion of mechanical hordes*” (Gruen, 1964, p. 214). Indeed Vienna's concentric historical defensive walls, which saved the city and Europe itself from the invasion by the Turks in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, became a first inspiration in Fort Worth: Gruen designed a system of concentric rings of highways whose purpose was to gradually filter and limit the access of cars to the centre, preserving the central pedestrian nucleus.<sup>1</sup> Hence the historical urban reference was not merely an ideal urban metaphor used as a discursive counterforce to the “*process of constant and unchecked decentralisation and land speculation [...]*”, which are “[...] *a real menace to all our cities and to the stability of civic values,*” as Sert affirmed (1952, p. 3). It was a concrete physical model able to re-adapt, re-interpret and hybridise with new contemporary urban infrastructures, in the brand-new urban context of the “*Shopping Town USA*” (Gruen, Smith, 1960).

However, in contrast to Vienna, the Fort Worth project was conceived on an artificial platform. Besides the defence system, the separation between cars and pedestrians was also guaranteed by a podium, a new artificial pedestrian ground level inside the inner pedestrian ring, which separated the underground goods delivery space, parking garages and the cluster of new buildings above.

Interestingly and contradictorily, on the one hand in Fort Worth the traditional city was the main reference for a return to a new human environment. On the other, Fort Worth became the “*first of the business-districts-on-a-podium*” according to Banham (1976, 42), a huge brand new megastructure, an over-scaled element representing the total artificiality of both the natural level and the “*milieu humain*”<sup>2</sup> (Lefèbvre, 2003, p.17) itself.

Besides this ambivalent urban-social condition, Gruen’s humanising-crystallisation process and split between car and pedestrian flows echoed the importance of the right of the pedestrian, “*la royauté du piéton*” as praised by Le Corbusier. This was an outstanding characteristic of the Core asserted during the eighth edition of CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture). In the final “*Summary of needs at the Core,*” the book published on CIAM 8, we find points 3 and 4:

“3 – *That the Core should be a place secure from traffic – where the pedestrian can move about freely.*

4 - *That cars should arrive and park on the periphery of the Core, but not cross it*” (Tyrwhitt, Sert, Rogers, 1952, p. 64).

Moreover, at CIAM 8 the split between pedestrian and vehicular flows also raised a symbolical value, between the heart as a humanist symbol “*which springs directly to the senses without explanation*” (Giedion, 1952, p. 17), and the “*mechanized killing*” (Giedion, 1958, p. 35), the “*tyranny of mechanical tools*” (Giedion, 1952, p. 17) which led to the destruction of War.

Gruen seemed to carry this legacy of CIAM 8, stressing this symbolical humanising process inside the city. This was first experimented and tested on the architectural scale of the shopping centre, such as at the Northland Shopping Centre, near Detroit, designed in 1954: the first modern pedestrian commercial centre with a ‘merchant city’ form, composed of a cluster plan, where the pedestrian space was the introverted void formed inside the composition of the full shopping volumes. Another important example of Gruen’s commercial designs was the Southdale Centre which became the first shopping centre with air conditioning, where the topic of the human scale was melded with the artificial climate as a commercial strategy.

On the one hand, the CIAM 8 even became a “*reference point for the new forms of public space, including Shopping malls [...]*”, as Mumford affirms (2000, p. 215). On the other, the new forms of commercial space fascinated CIAM members Sert and Tyrwhitt, who described these shopping centres as

“*an idea of what these new urban cores might be like [...] our open expression of the new humanising trend in the urban scene*” (Sert, Tyrwhitt, 1961, p. 106).

Remarkably, CIAM’s references soon became hybridised with Vienna itself. The relationship with his native city became so strong that in the late 1960s, Gruen decided to retire from his firm in Los Angeles, Victor Gruen Associates, and move back to his old

central district in the Austrian capital. There he opened another architectural firm, Victor Gruen International, which was characterised by project attitudes that differed from those implemented at the US firm, which was based and founded on shopping centre design.

In the same period, Gruen recognised the general American perversion and bastardisation - still present nowadays - of his original shopping centre idea, represented by thousands of new banal reproductions spread around the US. “*I refuse to pay alimony for those bastard developments*” (Hardwick, 2004, 216), Gruen affirmed in 1978. His original and idealistic concept of a mix between commercial and humanistic values, between functional and urban themes has been adsorbed only in its purely economic character. The failure of Gruen’s purpose for the shopping centre was evident when, as described by Hardwick, the mall maker himself started to fight against the construction of a shopping centre outside Vienna, which would have sucked all the commercial attractions out of the city.<sup>3</sup> The “*Irresistible Empire*” (de Grazia, 2006) of consumerism was infiltrating his old Europe more and more. In a certain sense, it was his own invention which turned against him, destroying the life of his beloved native city.

Faced with this failure, in the early 1970s Gruen proposed a project for Vienna which was similar to that at Fort Worth. It envisaged an external ring of viability and fingers of parking garages, hosting approximately 20,000 cars, inserted in the pedestrian Core. The scheme was proposed as the only way to save his beloved city from its traffic problem. On the other hand, in Vienna he concentrated his theoretical and design activity on a particular theme of his “*The heart of our cities*” (Gruen, 1964): the environmental issue.

### **The Vienna Charter**

In 1970 Gruen founded the Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning, while his beloved Vienna even became the main reference for his new manifesto for architecture, centred on the ecological theme: “*Die Charta von Wien*” (The Vienna Charter) (Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning, 1973).

The direct reference to CIAM itself, in particular to the Athens Charter, written by the CIAM founders in 1933, was finally and clearly stated. The CIAM’s charter was not a mere reference, but a cohesive portion of the new charter, due to its highly influential insight and the fact that it had already proposed outstanding, widely accepted principles. For instance, the 76<sup>th</sup> paragraph concentrated on the right shape of the human environment, which should be highlighted again within the new manifesto of environmental planning: “*Le dimensionnement de toutes choses dans le dispositif urbain ne peut être régi que par l’ échelle humaine*” (CIAM France, 1943, chap. 76).

However, at the same time, Gruen stressed the need to rethink and update the Athens Charter to contemporary conditions and requirements, which have both changed profoundly over the last forty years. The Charter had been a powerful means of both urban transformation and professional training for many architects and this had led to the diminution of construction density and to the separation of urban functions. However, these principles had been vehemently asserted and highlighted during the 1930s when their validity was still intact. Unfortunately, their myopic application, without considering the new urban conditions, caused urban decay and the division of the city into “*mono-functional ghettos*” (Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning, 1973). Moreover,

the Athens Charter was proposed on the analysis of thirty-three cities (twenty-eight in Europe, three in the USA and two in Asia), while Gruen reminds us that in the 1970s there were 131 megacities across the world (38 in Europe, 35 in Central-North America, 10 in South America, 42 in Asia, 4 in Africa and 2 in Australia) and it was no longer possible to ignore the diversity and complexity of all of them.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, he stressed that 16-18% of the total world population lived in urbanised districts: it meant that cities, even in a crisis, were (and are) still attractive destinations.

These new conditions and issues were also described in his book *Centers for the Urban Environment. Survival of the City*, published in the same period as the Charter, in 1973. The book

*“represents an expression of the effort of the Foundation to bring about a greater public understanding of the decisive role which “Environmental Planning” should and must play if the ecological and biological balance of our planet, which is essential for the continuous existence of the human species, is to be assured.”* (Gruen, 1973, p. V).

Similarly to the Charter, the “Center of urban Environment” is centred on both the human and environmental issues in the city. This charter exactly mirrors the honours bestowed on the founder of the Foundation. Indeed Gruen proudly reminded the reader in the introduction that he had been officially recognised as both *“Architect of the People”*, during his presentation at Rice University, and *“Architect of the Environment”* (Gruen, 1973 p. X) in an article in Fortune Magazine.

Furthermore, both the book and the charter represented a continuity with CIAM’s statements, in particular with the Heart of the City. In fact the efforts made towards securing the humanising process inside the city, were the same at CIAM 8 as in Gruen’s writings. As Alex Wall affirms

*“[...] the link between Gruen’s own thinking and the CIAM debates on the city, was probably CIAM 8’s 1952 book The Heart of the City”* (Wall, 2005, p. 227).

The brand new element introduced by Gruen was the emphasis on the ecological environment, as a rising necessary theme, in the early 1970s, in addition to the preservation of human values.

We can therefore consider Gruen’s environmental interest as an updating, or translation to his contemporary context, of those humanistic purposes expressed for instance by Giedion, quoting the humanism and existentialism of Sartre. Indeed the mechanical tools *“which take commands”* (Giedion, 1948) and the excess of trust on progress were considered by Gruen as the same enemies for both environmental and human entities. Moreover, the environmental aspect was already subtly present in some of the discourses at CIAM 8 too. For instance, Gregor Paulsson drew connections between Habitat, Ecology and Heart of the City during his speech *“The past and the Present”* (Paulsson, 1952, p. 28), in Hoddesdon. But the 1950s was too soon for CIAM members to recognise environmental sustainability as a key theme for planning. It was difficult for Gruen himself to introduce it as the basis of planning 20 years later, as Alex Wall affirms

*“when the threat to the environment was neither widely accepted nor understood.”* (Wall, 2005, p. 231)

Indeed the UN's first major conference on international environmental issues (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment), held in Stockholm in 1972, was coeval with the Vienna Charter.

As far as the latter is specifically concerned, the principle theses are listed and summarised in four points in the first part:

- "A. Man stays at the medium point of each urban planning and architecture.*
- B. The first aim of both urban planning and architecture must be therefore the satisfaction of both human needs and human hopes.*
- C. The conquests of Science and Technology must be used in order to satisfy the main aim: the greater satisfaction of Human life.*
- D. It is necessary not to allow Science and Technology to become mere purposes. Indeed they can neither tyrannize nor liquidate the Humanity."* (Victor Gruen F. E.P., 1973)

The Charter then continues with six other short chapters explaining these principles. The second one concerns the ecological theme and is indeed entitled '*The global environmental crisis*': Gruen focused his attention on the problem of the battle between Man and Nature, hoping that the first will never win. A way to survive would be to transport the hierarchy of values from "*increase and quantity*" to "*humanism and quality*" (Victor Gruen F.E.P., 1973), in a new organic approach to planning.

The urban proposal for a foundation of a new Cellular Metropolis, a scheme for a new Urban Pattern presented by Gruen, would be his attempt to consider the city as an organic structure in continuity with a living organism, keeping humanity as the first qualitative element for planning.

The third and fourth chapters entitled '*The needs and hopes of Man*' and '*The essence of urbanity*', defined urbanity as the place of total 'personal freedom', where everyone is free to choose where to work, where to live, where to exchange ideas etc. As fundamental conditions he listed:

- 1- compactness
- 2- maximum integration of human functions
- 3- maximum separation between mechanical-service functions and human functions.

The essence of urbanity, sometimes called the essence of *urbia*, was nothing more than

*"the Core of the city, which I shall call its 'heart'"* (Gruen, 1964, p. 12)

as he mentioned some years before in his book '*The heart of our cities*'. Therefore, the Heart of the City was an integrated part of the new rising human-environmental theme. The three conditions were also the same as the CIAM 8 discourses but with differences. In particular, the aim of centralisation and compactness of the urban structure shifted from the survey of civic values (Sert) to the rescue of the environment (Gruen).

The fifth and sixth chapters deal with the '*Bureaucracy of the Project*' and '*The essence of the Architecture*'. Gruen denounced the fact that cultural urban principles, which were dictated by the master architects of the 1930s for their present conditions, have been translated anachronistically into laws, rules and urban regulations in a totally transformed contemporary society. For instance, *zoning*, which was originally conceived in order to control the dispersion of industrial zone development, negatively transmuted the city, changing "*the urban organism into ghetto-like enclaves*" (Victor Gruen F. E.P., 1973). The

latter were the opposite expression of the “multifunctional” Heart, which was sustained by the integration of different urban services and functions in a three-dimensional design. In this scenario, the architect passively witnessed the metamorphosis of his profession from the original Greek profession of 'Architekton', the master of construction, to a mere 'décorateur de façades'. Only the recognition of the urban and environmental crisis could finally enhance the Role of the Architect in her “*all human society*,” as Gruen affirmed. Finally, in the last chapter ‘*New opportunities, ways and paths*’, Gruen attacked traffic specialists, whose work was causing the augmentation of traffic volume and speed and the consequent laceration of the city structure. The Athens Charter, Gruen stated, had already foreseen that traffic would cause total chaos in cities, even when there were very few cars in comparison with his own contemporary situation. Moreover, traffic was another theme already explained and criticised before in “The heart of our cities”, where Gruen considered its excess as the main disease infecting the proper blood circulation system towards the pumping heart. Traffic was a counterforce, an enemy in front of the complexity of the Heart of the City, considered as both a humanist-environmental symbol and functionalist-mechanical metaphor.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the humanising process of CIAM 8’s Heart of the City became a main reference for both the theoretical and design work of Gruen, who hybridised it with his personal research on commercial design and with the mounting interest in the environmental issue.

Moreover, in the 1960s Gruen re-interpreted the CIAM 8 theme, the Heart of the City, when he applied it to his shopping design experience in the North American context; while, in the early 1970s, he used the Heart issues to re-envision and resume CIAM itself. Indeed the environmental interpretation of the Heart of the City allowed Gruen to reinterpret all CIAM’s principles many years after its decline. In particular for Gruen, the first theoretical expression of CIAM, the Athens Charter, was still a valid and contemporary tool rather than an obsolete and dangerous vision of the city, as it was considered by Team 10. Fifteen years later, at CIAM's end in Dubrovnik at the hands of young Team 10 members, Gruen detected a possible legacy of the Modern Movement. Its basilar principles were recognised by the ‘Mall Maker’ as tools that were still useful for contemporary and future environmental discourse, which needed only to be constantly updated in line with mutable urban-social conditions in order to reaffirm their validity. Interestingly, Gruen’s shopping centre design experience became his first link with the Modern Movement and its idea of the humanising core. This connection was then developed through urban projects, transatlantic encounters and flows of ideas, and urban references, culminating in a reinterpretation in Vienna of the most intense manifesto of CIAM.

Finally, Gruen reconsidered the Athens Charter within his coeval new urban-social conditions, through his personal commercial-urban design experience, and the Charter remains a worthwhile contemporary reference in order to tackle our contemporary built environment, when, for the first time ever, the majority of the world's population lives in cities. It is no coincidence that after Gruen, other Athens Charters have been proposed at the last UN Habitat conference in 2016, pivotal thinkers such as Richard Sennett and

Saskia Sassen emphasised the need for an updated Athens Charter, the original of which still affects our lives in the built environment.

## Notes

- (1) Indeed, the inner ring is the impenetrable wall, inside which only pedestrian or public vehicles are allowed to enter. Motorists, coming from the metropolitan region, have to leave their automobiles inside the car parks. These multilevel parking terminals are thought to have space for 60,000 cars in total; they are organised over various levels and extend from the ring-road towards the inside, “penetrating like fingers” into the central zones. Gruen’s team estimated that it would take 2-4 minutes on foot, to reach the pedestrian areas from the car parks.
- (2) “De Metropolis de Fritz Lang au Cinquième Élément de Luc Besson, en passant par Blade Runner de Ridley Scott, l’artificialisation du milieu humain conduit à la catastrophe.” (Lefèbvre, 2003, p.17)
- (3) “American cities, with their comparatively short histories and small traditions [...] offered people little beyond traffic jams.[...] for Europe the thoughtless copying of the American shopping centre has been truly catastrophic.” (Hardwick, 2004, p. 217-219).
- (4) “In den 131 Millionenstädten der Welt leben zur Zeit 320 Millionen Menschen. [...] Von den 131 Millionenstädten der Erde liegen 38 in Europa, 35 in Nord- und Zentralamerika, 10 in Südamerika, 42 in Asien, 4 in Afrika und 2 in Australien“ (Victor Gruen Foundation for Environmental Planning, 1973).

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## The shopping mall as an emergent public space in Palermo

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### Abstract

As Doreen Massey (2005) pointed out, space matters. Does public space still matter today? Since the early seventies, several studies have explored public space as an emerging, and in many ways innovative, universe of actors, spatiality and socio-territorial practices which invaded the public spheres of our cities (Habermas, 1979; Rossi, 2008). However, 'public space' may have a wide variety of interpretations which relate to a semantic overlapping between a sensitive material sphere -The Space- and an intangible metaphorical sphere -The Public- (Bianchini, 1990; Crosta, 2000; Hajer and Reijndorp, 2002; Harvey, 2006; Low and Smith, 2006; Rossi, 2008). As Crosta (2000) reveals, a new dichotomy stems from those inseparable elements of public space: material space, conceived as the product of the relationship between territory and its society, and public, conceived as the result of the relationship between a society and its country. This means that material space and public sphere become the cognitive domains and functions within which public space takes shape. From a disciplinary point of view, this duality, as Smith and Low (2006) emphasised, produced two different scientific literatures: first a series of studies, developed in the philosophical and political context, which investigates an a-spatial public sphere, while a second trend almost exclusively relates to the spatial dimension, including disciplines such as geography, urban planning and anthropology. Therefore, together with the constitutive uncertainty of the planning discipline, which has been thoroughly discussed in urban literature (Faludi, 1986; 1987), an additional uncertainty must be taken into account, proceeding from the polysemy of the term, and from the co-existence of different approaches.

From a critical reflection on the concept of public space as it is now used by urban scholars and city managers, this paper suggests that public space should not be considered a 'product' (defined through quantitative and objective parameters), but rather as a 'construct' (defined through its qualitative and relational dimension) and a 'process' (thus referring to the performative and deconstructional theories inspired by Jacques Derrida). Public space will therefore be related to governance effects, considering the social interactions between institutional and non-institutional actors and practices (Ferraro, 1990; Crosta, 2000). Much has been written on the role of public space in contemporary societies, and many scholars agree that today public space is a controversial and arguably critical concept. It may actually seem that even the basic idea of what is or should be 'public' is experiencing a deep and troublesome reconsideration, as new forms of privatisation slowly but firmly erode its fundamentals. Within this conceptual framework, this paper aims to critically analyse the idea of public space which exists today, with particular attention to the idea of public space as a shopping mall. Characteristics of the Italian way of using shopping malls, and their social and spatial consequences, are investigated and analysed through a case study in Palermo.

**Keywords:** public space, local and regional planning, identity, shopping malls.

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## **I. Introduction**

Since the early seventies, several studies have explored public space as an emerging, and in many ways innovative, universe of actors, spatiality and socio-territorial practices which invaded the public spheres of our cities (Habermas, 1979; Rossi, 2008). Nevertheless, many studies agree that the rooting of the neoliberal economic and social model is the most plausible explanation for the current crisis and, at the same time, the primordial reason that caused new cultural categories to take hold in western societies, such as uncertainty, fragmentation and a generalised distrust in values and common goods (Giampino, 2012). Within the process of radical change that societies are going through, space, and namely urban space, has been affected by a shock wave caused by what scholars from different fields have named 'urban neoliberalism' (Sennett, 1977; Boyer, 1992; Davis, 1992; Sorkin, 1992; Mitchell, 1995; Fillion 1996).

Hanging in the balance between commercialisation and privatisation, urban space in western cities has also been challenged by increasing social polarisation. Concerning planning practices and instruments, the progressive withdrawal of the State (Dewey, 1927) in the name of the alleged efficacy and peculiarity of public intervention measures, has questioned any traditional urban policies based on public monopoly, leading to major repercussions for administrative structures, subjects involved (Geddes and Le Galés, 2001) and the democratic and inclusive nature of urban government (Hindess, 2002; Purcell, 2003). As Sharon Zukin (1995) argued, public space is «(the) window into the city's soul». If we embrace as a working principle, the idea that «The city is not an artefact or a residual arrangement. On the contrary, the city embodies the real nature of human nature. It is an expression of mankind in general and specifically of the social relations generated by territoriality» (Janowitz, 1967, p.VIII), the structural transformation of public and private spaces offers inputs and alternative pathways for the theoretic interpretation of the non-excludable nature of public space. Over the last few years a growing body of literature has critically analysed the concept of public space. However, 'public space' may have a wide variety of interpretations which relate to a semantic overlapping between a sensitive material sphere -The Space- and a intangible metaphorical one -The Public-. As Crosta (2000) reveals, a new dichotomy stems from those inseparable elements of public space: material space, conceived as the product of the relationship between territory and its society, and public, conceived as the result of the relationship between a society and its country. This means that material space and the public sphere become the cognitive domains and functions within which public space takes shape. In urban planning, public essentially means a space for collective use (as opposed to private) which is considered as destined and fit for collective use by a public authority. For Crosta (2000), this interpretation defines a relation between society and State where society expects the State to acknowledge and meet its needs: society is, and expresses, a social demand; it does not meet this demand itself, on the contrary it delegates that response to the political system. This paradigm is marked by the conviction that the solution to collectively perceived problems cannot be freely determined by individuals and their interactions. Furthermore, according to Crosta, "public" is not the space permanently destined for collective use. This would be a simplistic association: collective use does not equal public space,

*[...] but rather a space is public when it is designed by social interaction under certain*

*conditions: it is a possible, not a necessary social construct, [...]. The public connotation is assigned to a place if and when all those who find themselves interacting in a situation of co-existence, using different methods and for different, unshared, reasons (co-presence can be – and usually is – characterised by tensions and conflicts), learn by directly experiencing diversity (of which they “feel” the problems) and by experiencing co-presence in terms of co-existence. Through this learning process they “become” public (Crosta 2000, p. 43).*

The construction of the public space as product of social interaction (possible outcome) can thus be considered as public policy. Such arguments have different implications for urban public space, its ambivalences have fuelled its politicisation in different ways. From a critical reflection on the concept of public space, as it is now used by urban scholars and city managers, this paper suggests that public space should not be considered a product (defined through quantitative and objective parameters), but rather as a construct (defined through its qualitative and relational dimension) and a process (thus referring to the performative and deconstructional theories inspired by Jacques Derrida). Public space will therefore be related to governance effects, considering the social interactions between institutional and non-institutional actors and practices (Ferraro, 1990; Crosta, 2000). Among the many kinds of public spaces which are becoming more and more common inside our cities, shopping malls hold a distinctive place due to their decades long history and their growing diffusion in most Western countries. Several scholars have been reconsidering the relationship between contemporary public space and the existence of shopping malls. Can shopping malls be considered as a new form of public space? Or should they rather be considered pseudo-public spaces (Davis, 1992)? This issue will be addressed according to the Italian case of Palermo, a Southern city which is now experiencing a very late growth of shopping malls in and around its area.

## **2. Palermo 1990: year zero**

The first significant date in Palermo's contemporary history is the year 1990, which marked the first change to the city's structure and local urban planning and its institutional approach. Many rapid and fundamental changes occurred in Palermo during this decade: in 1990 Palermo hosted the FIFA World Cup which brought in some public investment for projects pertaining to sports facilities, mobility (infrastructure) and accommodation; at the same time the *Piano Particolareggiato Esecutivo* (Detailed Executive Plan) was adopted for the restoration of the historic centre, where traditional models of public policy were replaced with new modalities of public-private intervention for the regeneration of degraded urban districts.

During this period it is possible to identify a common essence or thread in these projects: a redefinition of regulatory mechanisms that define the provision of urban goods and services. A renovated interest in urban public space is visible in the new Palermo masterplan (PRG) approved by the Sicilia Regional Government in 2002.

The new Plan for Palermo is thus the result of a “process”, defined by distinct steps that have progressively led to its adoption by the City Council. The initial phase, which corresponded with the beginning of the Orlando government, placed a great deal of focus on the protection of green spaces and the implementation of services across the 1989 plan, a variation of the old Plan adopted in 1962.

The next step was the approval of a new masterplan, the so-called *Variante Generale al PRG del 2002* which was based on three different axes: the construction of the environmental system, the control of urban expansion and the re-qualification of the peripheries through the construction of public spaces.

In this sense, the new masterplan was relevant in that it made the problems that a lack of public spaces in neighbourhoods can cause, visible, both to citizens and to the administration. It is a fair plan, with regulations and opportunities that are equal for everyone. As recently stated by Edoardo Salzano (2010), in relation to the idea of public space as the presence of goods and services in the peripheries, "[...] the opposition between quantity and quality is contrived, and instead minimises the great conquest achieved on the ground of the 'right to the city'. A result that has had a positive impact where it has been applied as a tool to improve the living conditions in a regime of fairness and defence of the most vulnerable groups (Ibid, p. 248)".

The new plan had set out to make important improvements to the quality of public space, but this process finished due to the introduction of neoliberalism inspired urban practices, causing traditional models of public policy to be replaced with new modalities of public-private intervention for the regeneration of degraded urban districts. These tools defined new strategies of urban intervention whose processes caused complex physical urban transformations and had lasting effects. The case in Palermo is the example of a condition that has characterised different cities in Italy over the last twenty years.

Shopping malls in Palermo may be considered a late, yet complex example of economic globalisation processes. They have appeared suddenly, during an economically critical time, when the traditional State-funded control policies have been declined in favour of governance-based, private-funded strategies of development (Rossi et al., 2010). This critical moment has favoured the reception of shopping malls as a positive solution to the traditional economic issues that a fringe city like Palermo might have. Nonetheless, shopping malls have been built around the deceptive idea that they might redefine the essence of, or perhaps even replace, traditional public spaces, which have increasingly become unbearable for money-lacking administrations. These issues will be the focus of the case study of the San Filippo Neri neighbourhood, in the next section.

### **3. Once upon a time this was the 'Conca d'Oro'...**

Built in the second half of the 20th century, the Zen neighbourhood of Palermo is generally considered one of the clearest examples of those issues that characterise Southern Italian outskirts (Magatti, 2007). Physical, economic, social and cultural marginalities are the defining elements of the *Zen cliché* that serve to strengthen the sensation of exclusion for its citizens, due to social deprivation, lack of facilities and public spaces and precarious health conditions.

Therefore, retracing the genesis of this neighbourhood allows us to critically reinterpret the results of forty years of public urban policies in Palermo. The neighbourhood is situated in the formerly cultivated fields north of Palermo (the so-called 'Conca d'Oro'), and hosts two social housing areas that were built in the northern part of the city between 1958 and the second half of the Eighties. These areas were the product of an improper local declination of social housing policies, strategically conceived to legitimise the expansion of the marginal areas of Palermo. After all, this interpretation is also rooted in the events that followed the realisation of these social housing experiences:

conditioned by the economic opportunities and some subsequent variations (Sciascia, 2003), the number of houses and facilities to be built was significantly reduced.

The emblem of these long and complicated instances lies in the steps that led to the design and realisation of the 'Zen 2', with the unexplainable bankruptcies of several construction companies, the consequent invitations for competitive bids and the variants to a project that was already strict and 'alien' to the physical and social context of the area. All of this determined a shrinking of the available residential areas, the unsuccessful construction of facilities and public spaces, and a late completion, in the Nineties, of the primary urbanisation works.

The Resolution no. 176/2000 of the *Giunta Regionale Siciliana* gave way to the *Programma Integrato di Intervento* for San Filippo Neri (a.k.a. the Zen), as well as to a couple of *Programmi di Recupero Urbano* for two similar areas, Borgo Nuovo and Sperone. More than 47 million euros were allocated to promote the completion of the facilities in these areas, and to start urban renewal and socioeconomic improvement processes that could allow the inhabitants to get out of the deprived status they lived in. The three aforementioned areas (Zen, Borgo Nuovo and Sperone) presented similar issues: the lack of public and/or green spaces, the absence of facilities and the decontextualization of these districts from the rest of their urban system.

In the case of the Zen 2, the *Programma Integrato di Intervento* (PII) includes 22 public interventions that were grouped in 14 'renewal' projects, and 6 private interventions worth a total of 51.7 million euros, aimed at the creation of new infrastructures, facilities and public spaces for one of the most troublesome social housing areas of Palermo. This *Programma*, though apparently addressing the insufficient presence of basic facilities and the inertia of the ordinary praxis of urban policies, actually failed at improving the quality of life in the area. Although we have already discussed these issues in previous works (Giampino, Todaro, 2009; Lo Piccolo, Giampino, Todaro, 2014), it is now worth noticing how bureaucracy irreversibly slowed down the administrative procedures, so that the administration did not carry out several planned interventions, thus prolonging the story of unfulfilled promises, a story that characterises this area.

Even the most recent urban policies follow the same model. In fact, a new detailed plan for a municipality centre called 'Fondo Raffo' was approved in 2007 as a master plan variation. This plan authorised the construction of the Conca d'Oro<sup>1</sup> shopping mall by a Construction Company called 'Monte Mare S.p.A.', belonging to Maurizio Zamparini. The area hosting the shopping mall is close to the *insulae* of the Zen 2, and the whole process was considered a stratagem for finally building those facilities that the public administration never managed to build within the area. Several years after the opening of the shopping mall, however, the public facilities that were part of the agreement between Zamparini and the Municipality (a swimming pool, a public green area surrounding Villa Raffo, a sporting area, and so on) have never been constructed. Moreover, the municipality centre that Zamparini was supposed to build according to the agreement is now included in the *Programma Triennale Opere Pubbliche 2014-16* (a list of public works to be realised), as something that the Municipality will be responsible for taking care of, thus excluding any private intervention from Zamparini.

The construction of the shopping mall, which should have been the 'fee' for the building of the much needed facilities and public spaces that the Zen neighbourhood did not have,

actually involved a reduction of the available green areas and irreversibly compromised a part of the Conca d'Oro that the Master Plan marked as a 'historic green area'.

#### **4. ... and now there is the Conca d'Oro shopping mall**

On March the 14th, 2012, the day when the *Conca d'Oro* shopping mall was opened, a documentary crew led by director Ruggero Gabbai was shooting some sequences by the new mall. Gabbai had been working for a couple of years on a new film called *CityZen*<sup>2</sup>, and had arranged some meetings with key people in charge of the mall. Unluckily, Maurizio Zamparini, the president of the local football team and owner of the mall, was not present. I was walking side by side with the crew, hoping to conduct some interviews with citizens on the topic of the new mall. I was also planning to exploit the two years I had spent as a teacher in the middle school of the Zen neighbourhood (see Picone, 2006; 2008; 2011; 2012a; 2012b). There is no point in hiding the reluctance and perplexity I bore towards the political and planning motives that had convinced the Municipality of Palermo to grant a construction permit for the mall. In fact, according to the 2004 Master Plan, the area where the mall had later been built was labelled as a 'historic green area' (Curioni, 2010). Moreover, most of the local intellectual elite was clearly against the construction of a new shopping mall in the city (actually the third), convinced that it would decrease job employment for the more traditional local stores and that it would do nothing but worsen the already troubled situation of the Zen. The predicament could be easily summed up in a sarcastic, rhetorical question: do we really think that a shopping mall, the symbol of the worst neoliberal trends (Rossi & Vanolo, 2010; Picone, 2012c), can solve the social and housing issues of the neighbourhood?

Therefore, try to picture the cognitive dissonance provoked by the answers I got to my questions. The most repeated sentence that I kept hearing from the Zen residents was:<sup>3</sup> "At last now they built us a place where we can spend the weekends with our kids!"

There were also a few variants, like: "It took the president of Palermo [i.e. the football team] to finally do something for the Zen, the Municipality never did anything for us".

And, in a sense, those answers were true, if we consider the point of view of the residents as *active listening* suggests (Sclavi, 2003; Guarrasi, 2011).

Despite my initial denial, there are some elements deserving consideration. The Zen has never sported any kind of urban facilities that so many other places generally have, even the most basic ones (green areas, meeting places, and the like). Although the criticisms were abundant, the original plan for the neighbourhood, designed by Vittorio Gregotti, actually foresaw the construction of facilities that were never built (Sciascia, 2003; 2012). The *Conca d'Oro* mall was designed close to this (in)famous neighbourhood, well known both in Italy and elsewhere for its very deprived conditions. But the story deserves a more thorough historic reconstruction.

#### **5. I Zen-parini**

The municipal resolution no. 365 (December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006) approved a "piano particolareggiato" (detailed plan) for the use of the area of Fondo Raffo.

This plan envisioned a private commercial area, private facilities for public usage, public facilities for institutions, public services of various types, and so on<sup>4</sup>. The local edition of

the *La Repubblica* newspaper published this information in December 2006: «The Regional Assembly (with the favourable votes of the centre-right parties, the abstention of DS [a centre-left party] and the nays of Rifondazione Comunista and Primavera Siciliana [two leftist parties]) has approved a detailed “Use Plan for the centre of the municipality known as Fondo Raffo” and gave way to the relative concession agreement and to the zoning variance. The real estate company “Monte Mare spa”, whose sole director is in actual fact Maurizio Zamparini, proposed the project. The total area is 288,000 square meters wide, of which 122,000 square meters will host the new shopping mall. The mall will be composed of a central hypermarket 13,788 square meters wide, two warehouses and a shopping gallery with a stained glass roof, which will accommodate a hundred stores, two commercial warehouses for retail and finally of two parking lots (consisting of an outdoor parking area 58,484 square meters wide and an underground parking area, 13,400 square meters wide). A public parking lot over 25,000 square meters wide is also foreseen. The eastern shopping gallery will end in a round plaza, suited to restaurants and bars; the western gallery will end in a space meant for home furnishing stores. At the same time, Zamparini will create a “municipality centre”: a citadel that will host municipality bureaus, a clinic doctor facility, another medical clinic, and various sporting facilities, like a gym, an Olympic swimming pool, and four soccer fields. There will also be a public library with reading halls, a medical care facility for the blind and another for the elderly, a public garden, a piazza and a Steiner private school. Finally, the ancient *qanat*, which is composed of underground tunnels used by Arabs to collect water, will be renewed and taken care of»<sup>5</sup>.

Maybe the general tone of a related article in another local newspaper, the *Giornale di Sicilia*, is even more interesting. These are the words used, a few years later, to describe the resumption of works on the shopping mall after a significant period of interruption: «The works for the construction of Zamparini’s shopping mall in Fondo Raffo have been resumed. The project continued to be blocked due to a regional ordinance of the Assessorato Territorio e Ambiente [Department of Territory and Environment] which required the presentation of additional papers to give permission for the construction. The Consiglio Regionale dell’Urbanistica [CRU, Regional Urban Counsel] shed light on the procedural regularity. The municipal department of Urban Planning made several remarks against the misinterpretations of the ordinance. According to the Regional Government, the papers were incomplete. “We have made many remarks against the regional ordinance, says Milone, Chief of the Urban Planning Department, and pointed out the correctness and legitimacy of the process. We are glad to acknowledge the decision of the CRU, which complied with our requests and thus favoured an atmosphere of cooperation between our departments.” After this step, the project is now in conversation with the Sportello Unico [Point of Single Contact], which is preparing a draft agreement between the Municipality and Zamparini’s company. Afterwards, the Regional Service Conference will have to approve the commercial project and then finally all the permissions will be granted» (*Giornale di Sicilia*, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008; see Curioni, 2010, pp. 26-27). The almost enthusiastic tone of the journalist provoked many equally cheerful replies on blogs and forums. Since 2006, most of the comments have repeated the “At last!” adagio, with a few rare exceptions (notably the observation of the Department of Architecture at the University of Palermo, together with Legambiente and INU Sicilia).

Right now, however, the mall has been active since 2012, while the “centre of municipality” has not yet been inaugurated. This fact alone could question the legitimacy of the whole shopping mall operation. And yet, Zamparini’s ambitions went well beyond the mall. In an interview published in the *Giornale di Sicilia*, he would later claim that «The new football stadium will be built in the Zen district. We will demolish the Velodromo [cycle track stadium] and build this new structure in its place. This is the best solution, economically speaking» (*Giornale di Sicilia*, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009). The new football stadium was always a major concern for Zamparini, given the most recent privatisation of these stadiums in Italy: a well-known tradition in the Anglo-Saxon world, diffused in Italy by the Juventus Stadium in Turin. Who cares if the old but perfectly working ‘Renzo Barbera’ football stadium of Palermo—obviously, a public stadium—is abandoned as a consequence, or if the even more recent Velodromo ‘Paolo Borsellino’, inaugurated in 1991 close to the Zen limits, is smashed down to give space to the new stadium? The stadium and the shopping mall would have probably created a synergy of flows and means, by creating what we could definitely call, as *La Repubblica* suggests, the new “Zamparini city”. Or, perhaps, a whole new neighborhood which could easily be labeled “Zen-parini”, as a testimony to how today private initiatives overshadow—both in terms of sheer economic potential and political relevance—the actions of public institutions that should be managing planning issues, according to Italian law.

Anyway, so far the story of the football stadium has not had a happy ending for Zamparini. As the newspapers say, the process of approving the guidelines for the new master plan has frozen the beginning of some works: «The Town Council approves the guidelines for the master plan and stops some major works by postponing the discussion on them, starting with the new football stadium designed by Maurizio Zamparini. The latter declared: “These losses of time are an all Italian habit. But the stadium belongs to the people of Palermo, not to me. If they want it, I will help them build it.” The Municipality will not open the door to projects included in the strategic plan and approved by the Cammarata administration in the last three years, but neither will it close that door entirely»<sup>6</sup>.

The change in the administration has clearly hindered Zamparini’s requests, but even the relegation of the football team to the lower series (serie B) in 2013 must have undermined the passion that moved so many people in Palermo (politicians included).

## **6. From panacea to delusion**

The late arrival of shopping malls in Palermo (along with Southern Italy) has initially persuaded most social groups that the malls could be a viable solution for the deprived local economy. However, if we consider the real consequences of the opening of these malls, the truth seems quite different. As always, it is a matter of representations and propaganda, and deconstructing the imaginary linked to the shopping malls of Palermo reveals a more complex situation.

Long before the grand opening of the *Conca d’Oro*, shopping malls were demanded, almost faithfully and universally praised, with few discording voices. As soon as the first urban mall was opened (*Forum Palermo*, November 2009), the web site *MobilitaPalermo* described the situation with enthusiasm: «We are just back from the inauguration of Forum Palermo. There is a lot of fervour for the opening of the first real shopping mall in

our city. A long line of cars welcomed us before the entrance, as the extremely careful staff checked their permits. As soon as we entered, we immediately saw the Forum in all of its grandeur: the wonderful coloured lights play and the beacons aiming at the sky, pointing out the magnificent architecture of the structure. [...] Overall, Forum Palermo is a really splendid mall, a gust of fresh air for Palermo and for the meaning of the word 'shopping'»<sup>7</sup>.

Also in November 2009, another website presented an interview with the president of the company that built the mall: «Forum Palermo expresses the values and extraordinary abilities that Multi exhibits in all its works in the region»- stated Paolo Tassi, president of Multi Development-C Italia, the Italian subsidiary company of the Dutch multinational corporation, European leader in big retail & leisure structures development. "It will be a meeting place to discover new trends, taste local and ethnic food, shop and have some nice times, being fully immersed in a solar and Mediterranean environment. It will also be a fundamental driving force for development of the city and its surrounding areas, thanks to a catchment area that encompasses over one million potential customers'»<sup>8</sup>.

The «fundamental driving force for development» is a good definition to suit the neoliberal *topos* that turns shopping malls into the panacea for all urban ills. Not only, however, did the *Forum* let down all those who expected an increase in job possibilities for the residents of the nearby neighbourhoods; not only did it mine the system of the surrounding local stores and services, but it also endangered the urban and social identity of a very close 'historic borough' (Roccella). Neither the form nor the ideology that characterise the *Forum* share any common characteristics with Roccella. For those who visit it today, the *Forum* seems like a white suburban elephant, amongst the fringes of urban development.

The case of *Conca d'Oro* is quite different, as it lies not within a historic borough, but close to a much more recently built neighbourhood. Zamparini repeatedly asserted, even during some interviews with Gabbai during the making of *U' Zen*, that his shopping mall— together with his new stadium, of course—would turn the Zen from a deprived slum into a full "business centre" of the city. He also promised to hire only (or mostly) local employees, and obviously to provide the neighbourhood with facilities that would enhance the local quality of life, as aforementioned. On the contrary, the hiring of local residents was actually kept to a minimum, and the facilities are not operating yet. The general attitude of the population turned from enthusiasm to scepticism, as the shopping mall turned from panacea to delusion.

And yet, despite all we have said so far, one must not forget the words that the residents of the Zen kept repeating during the opening day of the *Conca d'Oro*. "At last they gave us a place to spend the weekends with our children": what does this sentence hide?

It clearly reveals a most serious political inability to consider public spaces as *the* places that can/must provide the residents with the facilities and meeting places they need. We live in the bleak panorama featuring an ever-worsening chronic lack of public spaces, and in a hyper-technologic society that considers a *forum* not as its etymological meaning would suggest (as the *agora*, the *piazza*: see Arendt, 1988; Bonafede & Picone, 2012), but as a virtual place over the internet, where one can chat while in the comfort of his/her own house. So much so that we have called the first shopping mall of Palermo *Forum*, with no respect for paradoxes. The mall is now the new form of pseudo-public (Davis, 1992) or post-public (Tulumello, 2012) space, and stands alone in its attempt to provide citizens

with things that politics cannot provide anymore. Seen from the perspective of a Zen resident, who always had to move away from his/her neighbourhood to enjoy the benefits of an urban lifestyle, and who always used the phrase “scendere a Palermo” (move down to Palermo) to reveal how the Zen is *not* part of Palermo, the construction of a shopping mall such as the *Conca d’Oro* may not mean keeping all the initial promises that Zamparini made, but at least it has proven, perhaps for the first time ever, that the Zen is actually at the vanguard of Palermo. It brought customers, nice stores and a diffused, yet misleading, sense of wellbeing. It somehow, perhaps absurdly, forced a few citizens who had never, ever, visited the Zen (and who would have never thought of visiting it) to consider this deprived neighbourhood and the “trip to hell” that is part of visiting it (Fava, 2008) under a new light.

Let us just clarify one thing: this text is not an apology for shopping malls, nor does it want to be. The authors of this paper still believe that the economic model of the mall should not be applied light-heartedly and with global replicas of the same structure. They still believe that the shopping mall is a terrible answer to the questions of contemporary social life. And yet, they grudgingly have to acknowledge that shopping malls are the most serious issue that Palermo, although it comes late, has to discuss today, leaving no space for aprioristic and snobbish stances. Because, unfortunately, shopping malls are the synonym of the last bits of public spaces in Palermo today, even if they are not clearly public at all: in other words, they deny the spirit of what should be public, but in doing so they mimic the public and disguise themselves as public. They rhetorically persuade the residents of the Zen, dejected by decades of indifference concerning possible strategies of politic change, that this is their only and last chance to get a seat on the train of social welfare. They create new types of social interaction: how many people gather at the *Conca d’Oro*, in the company of their families, during the long days of the summer heat wave or on stress filled weekends when there are no other places suited to meeting in public or enjoying attractions? They have changed the daily habits of the residents of the Zen and of the whole population of Palermo, from the choice in places where you can go shopping, to the election of new and unexpected meeting places. We have personally witnessed how young people in particular now spend their afternoons visiting the *Conca d’Oro*, rather than gathering in the empty square of the Zen 2, as they had done before. Therefore, is there a recipe to reduce the proliferation of new shopping malls? In these terms, the question may be too complex; however, it may probably be rephrased: what could be a viable alternative to the pseudo-sociality granted by a shopping mall? Which urban policies should Italian municipalities pursue so that shopping malls do not become the only remaining place for social interactions? And what do we lose if the *agora* model succumbs to the *mall* model?

## 7. Conclusion

As we have highlighted before, given the political indifference towards the social exclusion of the inhabitants of the Zen district, the weakening and absence of public space lead us to think that the pseudo-sociality that shopping malls offer is truly the new frontier of contemporary public space. With regards to this point, even accepting the difficulty of designing a space that aims to create some forms of sociality, we must acknowledge how the debate about the urban standards in Italy has led to significant results.

Private actors have taken care of the absence of public spaces by generating new mono-functional, hyper-specialised spaces that are managed and controlled with the typical dynamics of private property (i.e. by restricting the hours in which these can be accessed or limiting the category of users that can be accepted). The hyper-specialised shopping malls have generated a process of privatisation of public space (Mitchell, 1995; Smith, 1996; Low, 2000) based on policies that aim at maximising profit instead of caring about the common good. These private places of trade and business are meant to become the new post-metropolitan public spaces. In fact, building these 'consumerist temples' implies turning some traditional architectural elements and spaces into the elements of a marketing strategy. In the ongoing sequence of piazzas, pseudo-urban façades, fountains and benches lies the misunderstanding of our own ephemeral consumerist society, unable to grasp the true essence of that *infra* (Arendt, 2001) which is the base of public space. Atopy, homogeneity, exclusion and control are the main features of these new spaces, and it is hard to believe that they will be able to generate new or alternative forms of public spaces, regardless of how many people use them or praise them.

Margaret Kohn (2004) has described the societal effects of these private public spaces, emphasising how the forms of control and exclusion exerted in these spaces regulate the exercise of freedom, which is the basis of both public space and democracy. Even admitting the existence of diverse and complex forms of public space, this, as a conceptual and spatial category, should nevertheless lean towards including as many citizens as possible.

The acclamation of shopping malls from local communities in Italy is rooted in the absence of facilities, especially in urban areas. When facing this deficit, the local administrations just activate new variant procedures that simply increase the privatisation of urban space. In this sense, we can consider the praises of these pseudo-public spaces coming from the citizens of a deprived neighbourhood as the catastrophic result of the lack of an institutional actor, of its inability to manage troublesome situations and to guarantee that public interest will be the main goal of urban policies.

The challenges that urban neoliberalism forces our society to face, in terms of democracy and social justice, press us to acknowledge the citizens' request to share and participate, to experience a recognition of their citizen status beyond the occasional reclaiming of a physical space. This leads us to reflect, from a disciplinary point of view, on the meaning of public space, by overcoming the 'physical vs. social' divide that the technical approach implies (Scandurra, 1999). Public space is both the greatest challenge of our contemporary times and a chance to recreate a dialogue among the several public and private actors operating in the city. The goal is to build up a shared projectuality, in which resorting to the private actors is no longer the only alternative to the absence of public policies.

Therefore, this game is not only played on the technical dimension of projectuality or on the ability to produce significant changes in administrative policies and praxis, but also on the ability of our scholarly discipline to contribute to an urban future in which all the social actors, be they strong or weak, public or private, work together to «define the common good and elaborate the rules of living together in the city» (Macchi, 2001, p. 51).

## Notes

\* Although the article should be considered a result of the common work and reflections of the three authors, Giampino takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 2 and 3, Picone takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 4 and 5; Schilleci takes primary responsibility for paragraphs 1 and 6.

- (1) The name of the shopping mall to be built was clearly inspired by the geographical features of the area.
- (2) *CityZen* is described as a “docu-fiction on the way young architects from Palermo reconsider the disputed Zen neighbourhood of the city” (<http://www.zerocento.it/portfolio/u-zen/>). The shootings for the film began in 2010, as the movie was directed by Ruggero Gabbai and produced by Daniele Manno and Rodolfo Drago. It includes interviews with local citizens, architects, politicians, entrepreneurs and scholars, including Rita Borsellino, Tiziano Di Cara, Marzia Messina, Marco Picone, Giuseppe Romano, Italo Rota, Bice Salatiello, Mario Vigneri and Maurizio Zamparini.
- (3) The answers here were often pronounced in a strict local dialect, not in Italian, as a proof of the low social condition of the neighborhood.
- (4) [http://www.nadiaspallitta.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2341&Itemid=65](http://www.nadiaspallitta.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2341&Itemid=65) (accessed on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014).
- (5) *La Repubblica*, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006; <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2006/12/08/via-libera-zamparini-city.html>, (accessed on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014).
- (6) *La Repubblica*, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013; [http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/06/05/news/linee\\_guida\\_del\\_piano\\_regolatore\\_il\\_consiglio\\_d\\_il\\_via\\_libera-60445531/?ref=search](http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/06/05/news/linee_guida_del_piano_regolatore_il_consiglio_d_il_via_libera-60445531/?ref=search) (accessed on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014).
- (7) <http://www.mobilitapalermo.org/mobpa/2009/11/24/il-centro-commercialeforum-apre-a-palermo-foto-video-dell-inaugurazione-24-novembre-200-a-voi-lanteprima/> (accessed on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014).
- (8) <http://archivio.siciliainformazioni.com/cronaca-regionale/forum-palermo-domani-linaugurazione-del-centro-commerciale/> (accessed on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

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## A public space project on grammar, poetics and management

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### Abstract

This article is a result of my PhD research activities. The main goal of the research was to understand the key factors of success and failure in public space design and management. Accordingly, the first part of the article investigates what a public space is and what makes it successful. The term "success" is ambiguous since it refers to multiple different views on public space. A less uncertain area is that of the design quality of public spaces: many authors have treated this subject more or less explicitly, including aspects such as accessibility, the perception of space and its use. The second part of the article presents the methodology used for the study of public spaces, explaining why Zaragoza has been chosen as a case study and describes the stages of research. The third part of the article presents the case of the public spaces of the city of Zaragoza, Spain. This case study is used in order to find correspondences and discrepancies with the conclusions previously made in the literature and eventually to identify other qualities of public space design. The analysis aims to identify which factors are essentially insignificant for the success of the project (such as the available budget or the design process), and which elements, by contrast, strongly affect the attendance and the appreciation of public spaces by the population. In particular, three elements were singled out that have the potential to become the drivers of the project: "grammar" (distributive features of spaces and buildings, microclimate, etc.), poetics (identity, recognisability of the space, etc.) and management (functions performed within the area and at its borders). The fourth part of the article examines these three elements (grammar, poetics, management) and the way they may be present within different projects. In some cases, the project succeeds in creating an optimal balance between all three elements, in other cases one element prevails over the other two; sometimes there is only one element, but it is so powerful that it compensates for the others (e.g. the entertainment activities on-site can animate even an ordinary space exposed to the elements). In conclusion, some reflections are offered regarding grammar, poetry and management, and their interrelationship.

**Keywords:** public space; design quality; grammar elements; poetics; management.

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### **What is a successful public space?**

Recent years have witnessed a renewed debate on public space; public space themes like scale, functional use and usability are now subject to multiple reflections. The present thesis derives from the critical observation of many public space projects which the Italian authorities have been carrying out in recent years: projects, among them very expensive ones, that mainly deal with the repaving of streets and squares and improving street furniture. As a result of such interventions, the city is provided with a better "business card", but if the spaces were not lived in before the intervention, they usually continue to be unused.

Here, the main goal of the research was to understand the key factors of success and failure in public space design and management. Hence the first step was to investigate what public space is and what makes it successful. Many definitions of public space can be found in Literature and at times they contradict one another (Listerborn, 2005; Németh, 2009; Cicalò, 2009; Boniburini, 2010). The resulting ambiguities have an impact on criticism on public spaces and so some authors argue their decline and other authors their revival (Carmona, 2010a and 2010b).

The resulting ambiguities also have an impact on the objectives of the projects: there is a marked difference - in political terms as well - between a popular public space and a public space frequented by all. The presence, the gathering, the debate and the clash are four ways to enliven a public space, but they have very different impacts and require different strategies and actions. When a government embarks on a public space project, it becomes necessary to share the main vocabulary and meanings with designers and citizens.

### **From successful spaces to design's quality of public spaces**

Many authors approach the issue of success or failure of public spaces by identifying parameters for the interpretation of their design quality.

For example, since Jane Jacobs, the Berkeley school has acknowledged that the distributive features of space are of fundamental importance. According to Jane Jacobs (1961), a public space must be safe and vital, and for this to happen there must be a clear demarcation between public and private space and the street must be continuously watched (by residents, business owners and passers-by)<sup>1</sup>. Oscar Newman (1972; 1976) and Clare Cooper Marcus (1990) place great emphasis on the safety of public space, starting with studies on crime prevention through environmental design. Allan B. Jacobs (1993) and Peter Bosselmann (1989) consider thermal comfort (sunshine, wind, etc.) to be a key element and study its possible variables.

According to Jan Gehl (1987; 1996), a good public space must be "saturated" with people and activities (building density is necessary but not sufficient); the system of public spaces should be potentially open for any kind of use (and not just specifically address a single function or a single category of users); it should be social-life friendly and there must be visual permeability.

For Matthew Carmona (2012a), the key to designing successful public spaces is to consider diversity: different types of audiences, use and contexts within the same city. Many considerations converge on the issue of integration between these components, thereby avoiding functional specialisation.

## **A methodology for the analysis of public spaces**

The actual research refers to research-on design(ing) (Lenzholzer, Duchhart, Koh, 2013) and borrows from the “case study research analysis” developed by Mark Francis on behalf of the LAF – the Landscape Architecture Foundation (Francis 1999; 2003). The “Post-Occupancy Evaluation”<sup>2</sup> has proved to be highly important to the case study’s analysis, and has also been implemented for public spaces (see Newman, 1972). In all those methodologies the ability to observe is essential. The research refers to the first degree direct examination, developed by the Berkeley School and Jan Gehl (A.B. Jacobs, 1985, 1993; Porta, 2002; Gehl, Svarre, 2013).

In order to verify the results coming from Literature it was necessary to go in-depth into the real public spaces of a city. In order to compare both living and abandoned spaces in the same city, an “ideal” context is needed. Therefore, it was necessary to look for a city that could respond to specific criteria: dense, solid and with a mix of uses; citizens accustomed to occupying public spaces and spending time outside; public spaces named by Literature as “best practice”; a well-stocked and diversified network of public spaces, different spaces being used in different ways and in addition, recently designed public spaces, which can be testaments to an ability to respond to current political, social and economic trends (economic crisis, increasing unemployment etc). The case study should not have been investigated solely and wholly according to the Literature but instead have been researched in a more original way. Moreover, due to the fact that the research is based on Anglo-Saxon Literature, we wanted to see what else is under development, in different contexts. These criteria have led us to Zaragoza as the prime choice.

The study of Zaragoza has been developed in different steps. The first analysis<sup>3</sup> was aimed at a reconnaissance of Zaragoza’s squares and urban streets. The analysis aims to identify which factors are essentially insignificant for the success of the project (such as the available budget or the design process), and which elements, by contrast, strongly affect the attendance and the appreciation of public spaces by the population. Through an initial comparison between reading activities and the results of surveys and interviews, certain design's features were identified that can positively or negatively affect the use of a public space. These features refer to three main components: “grammar” (distributive features of spaces and buildings, microclimate, etc.), poetics (identity, recognisability of the space, etc.) and management (functions performed within the area and on its borders, etc.).

The second phase of the study was aimed at answering several questions that emerged in the first phase of the analysis. In the design of public space, what is it that matters most: the technical and functional aspects, the poetics or the management of the place?

Considering the great importance of poetics for the success of a public space, does it still make sense to develop guidelines?

Can a space without poetics be a successful place, even if it is well-designed from a technical and functional perspective? Can a space with technical and functional problems be a successful place, even if endowed with great poetic force?

Does the design end with the construction of the space or is the project continuously modified over the course of time?

To this aim, 10 very different projects were selected and for each project, a 12-hour on-site survey was conducted, producing a time-lapse movie and interviews.

The last phase of the analysis provided data verification, specific studies and analysis of the interviews and movies. The topics that emerged from the analysis of Zaragoza's public spaces were then compared with other European case studies through Literature, in order to verify that they were not local phenomena; for example the cities of London

(Nucci, 2012; Punter, 2011; Carmona, 2012b), Zurich (Gehl, 2004) and Copenhagen (Gehl and Gemzoe, 2000), and some examples of temporary cities (Bishop and Williams, 2012) were all studied.

### **Case study: the Municipality of Zaragoza**

Zaragoza offers an interesting range of public spaces. Its complex and heterogeneous mosaic of different spaces is characterised by a range of elements: the presence of public spaces remodelled in the '80s and '90s according to the "Barcelona's style"; open spaces inherited from the Expo and planned as part of its Plan de Acompañamiento; a remodelling of the open spaces along the route of the tramway and by the spaces of the Estonesunsolar program. These spaces join the traditional public spaces such as the squares of the historical city and the open spaces of residential complexes.



*Figure 1. Plaza José Sinues y Urbiola is one of the squares remodelled in the '80s. These squares are characterised by smooth granite flooring, urban furniture made with corten steel and little vegetation.  
Source: Daniela Corsini, 2013/09/17.*



*Figure 2. The open space inside the Recinto Expo and along the Ebro is now a new public space for the city, equipped with playgrounds, sport facilities and relaxation areas.  
Source: Daniela Corsini, 2013/10/11.*



Figure 3. Paseo Fernando el Catolico renewed by the Tramway's project. This rambla, richly endowed with urban furniture, is now one of Zaragoza's most popular public spaces.  
Source: Daniela Corsini, 2014/05/09.



Figure 4. Estonoesunsolar II - Calle Coso. The initial goals of the programme Estonoesunsolar were to elaborate on an employment plan for 50 workers who had been unemployed for a long time, and to clear the unbuilt plots in the Casco Historico of Zaragoza. In 2009, with a small budget and within a timeframe of a few months, the programme transformed fourteen spaces in the historical city, both public and private, into urban gardens, sports areas, squares, playgrounds etc. Building on the success of the programme, in 2010 another fourteen spaces were redesigned, this time public properties located throughout the city. In recent years, other plots have been added, with all projects having in common the ability to transform the space with limited resources (few materials, scarce financing, a small timeframe), making them usable and lived-in.  
Source: Daniela Corsini, 2013/10/06

In addition to the planned spaces, the city has a capillary structure of small spaces and small practices which, with their complexity and heterogeneity, form the public life of the city. There are many squares of an informal character, often with greenery, children's playgrounds and benches where the locals sit down to read their newspapers; sometimes there are small paved areas, which work especially well when adjacent to bars, restaurants and institutions such as community centres and schools.

Overall, the city shows that the success of public spaces should not be sought only in the single space, but in the system of public spaces as a whole, which must include the highly visited spaces (the places with nightlife) the spaces for relaxation, and the meeting places for discussion, socialising etc., confirming the concept of diversity as a key to success, illustrated by Carmona (Carmona, Matos Wunderlich, 2012).

The city's main public spaces (of which there are approximately 120) have been studied through a multi-criteria analysis of the following factors: the year of their design, to understand if there have been any changes made to the design of these spaces, or indeed changes in the relationship between space and customer; localisation, with a particular interest in the established areas and new neighbourhoods, to understand the elements they do and do not share; the design process, in order to understand how and in which cases participation has had a positive impact on the success of the project and where, on the contrary, there was little or no success; any changes incurred by the project over time, to try to understand the differences between constantly evolving spaces and projects "completed" at the time of construction; the economic factor, in order to compare the efficiency of both the low-cost projects and the very expensive projects. Though these factors proved to be substantially indifferent to the success of the project.

### **Grammar, poetics and management**

From the continuous comparison between Literature and case-study numerous elements have emerged that are capable of facilitating or hindering the attendance of a public space. The shape of public space can encourage activities and stopping. The project must meet the technical and functional aspects such as accessibility, thermal comfort, visual comfort, sensory stimulation, road and personal safety, right size, visual permeability, street furniture suitability (the relationship between form and function) and the presence of water and vegetation.



*Figure 5. The Balcon de San Lazaro is situated in a beautiful location on the river and has magnificent views of the Cathedral, but it is an uncomfortable place.*

*Source: Daniela Corsini, 2014/10/14.*

However, these results do not offer clear answers to the project's line of enquiry and do not propose mathematical formulas or certainties, they are instead complex and

articulated issues that need to be included in considerations surrounding public space and understood as being in relationship with the context in which you are working. For example, the overall size of a space, and the measure of its furnishings and its spaces should correspond to the number of expected users and the type of activity that will take place. Very often there are signs of an inability to make viable proposals based on the aspect of architectural spectacularity. The aspects related to the shape of public space have been defined as "grammar", and as such can be transmitted and learned. If well done, this grammar is only noted by the expert; In any case it must exist. The analysis of public spaces of Zaragoza shows that, in different contexts, numerous technical and functional aspects can assume different weights: in the mentioned case study, the protection from sun and wind proves to be a necessary condition for the attendance of a space. However, despite being a sunny and windy city, the idea of protecting people from the sun and wind in Zaragoza's public spaces has been deemed trivial and many plans have neglected this important aspect. There are projects, like that of Balcon de San Lazaro in which people have to adapt to the shape of the space, chasing the shade cast by the few trees that are present. It's easy to understand why this public space is poorly attended.



*Figure 6. Jardin en Altura and Plazas Delicias, beloved public spaces of Delicias, one of the most populated and multiethnic districts in Zaragoza. Jardin en Altura is a space developed vertically to evoke associations with a tree one could climb. The Jardin expands the space, while making the square very recognisable and affording shade to it. The place is very popular among the people of the Delicias district, especially in the afternoons and evenings. The neighbourhood association "Manuel Viola", located in the basement of the Jardin, performs many activities in the square and its surroundings. The project integrates grammar, poetics and management.*

*Source: Daniela Corsini, 2014/05/06.*

Literature and case study combined show that the technical and functional elements (grammar) alone are not enough: do not forget the site's character and its ability to evoke a *genius loci* (sense of place), its image and anything else that helps to convey a deeper meaning; cultural heritage, urban art and - potentially - all manner of shapes and design elements. While some functions, such as the technical or the social, can be spelled out relatively easily, this is not usually the case when it comes to poetics: generating a meaning is not something that can be rationally expressed and planned. The meaning emerges from the dialogue between the users and the site. What the designer has to do is prepare the ground, acknowledging that the meaning will emerge, and probably the best

way to achieve this is to make sure that the design is closely connected to its context (Stiles, 2010, p. 46).

The case of Zaragoza offers food for thought on this issue. In the case of Jardin en Altura the poetics of the design enable the residents to feel the uniqueness of the place, thus triggering the Jardin to go from an attended space to a space taken over by the population.

Plaza Santo Domingo shows that a space can be experienced even if it lacks poetics (no visual theme, catalog furniture, a functional and practical place but one lacking in charm and meanings), but the case of the Jardin en Altura confirms that a space that features poetics, which processes and "translates" the place, is not only popular, but it is adopted by citizens who take care of it and participate in its maintenance. If the meaning is deep rooted, it survives and lives on for different users and different uses of space, even over time.



*Figure 7. Plaza Santo Domingo is a space that is highly frequented by the population thanks to the functions that can be performed inside the square (the children's playground, meeting areas, etc.).*

*Source: Daniela Corsini, 2014/05/11.*

Comparative analysis of the Literature and case study found a third essential element, that of management, which includes the functions, tasks and purpose - planned or unplanned - in public space and in its immediate surroundings, the relationship between order and disorder, maintenance and animation. The essence of social life is created by the activities and functions that take place in a space or at its edges. The multiplicity of uses includes both those provided and those that emerge from the dialogue between users and the site (Stiles, 2020). Particularly significant is triangulation (Whyte, 1988, p. 94), the elements and the activities which have the ability to induce people to overcome the threshold of personal privacy: two examples are the sports facilities and playgrounds for children. The management of public space seeks to ensure that public space is able to fulfil all of its legitimate roles over time. This includes the management of: the uses and conflicts between uses; scheduled maintenance; new investment in public space; finding the resources and the coordination of interventions on public space. Particularly attractive functions on the edges or initiatives specifically designed for that space can also lead an ordinary and sunny place to become a highly experienced and appreciated place, like Estonoesunsolar Octavio Paz.



Figure 8. Estonoesunsolar Octavio Paz was built with a very tight budget and so it was unable to respond appropriately to all technical and functional problems. Despite that, the animation provided every afternoon by the free time centre makes it very popular and it is widely appreciated, especially by children.

Source: Daniela Corsini, 2014/05/10.

## Conclusions

The best projects are those that integrate the three components (grammar, poetics and management) considering technical, functional and perceptual aspects as well as the life of the site. Integration is a key issue, also according to the European Landscape Convention (ref. 5.d). The case study shows how spaces can be frequented areas even if there is a lack of one of these components, but the absence will not be painless: an area without poetics can be attended, like Plaza Santo Domingo, but it lacks the sense of belonging, pride and attachment that citizens might otherwise feel, affecting people's attitude towards it. If the project is lacking in technical and functional aspects, especially if it is uncomfortable, it should have really attractive functions in order to work as a space, as in the case of child entertainment in Calle Octavio Paz.



Figure 9. Plaza Portillo is a quiet and secure place, much loved by the elderly population who go there despite the fact that it is not the closest public space to people's homes.

*Source: Daniela Corsini, 2014/05/13.*

Finally, these functions greatly encourage interaction between people, but a space with few functions that does offer the opportunity for people to meet - if comfortable - can also be very popular. A good example of this is the case of Plaza Portillo: some comfortable and shaded seating, in a peaceful and secure environment, create the perfect setting for the elderly population to meet.

The public spaces that are less successful in Zaragoza are the ones that have viewed the square as "something that can come later", for example, after the construction of an underground parking space (e.g. Plaza Eduardo Ibarra or station square in Delicias). In these projects, public space is a subordinate element, compared to more important issues such as infrastructures. The underground parking space dictates the size, arrangement, and the presence of trees and consequently its exposure to the sun, leaving behind the design of the square elements that are then difficult to resolve and subject to major limitations.



*Figure 10. Citizens complain about Plaza Eduardo Ibarra, in particular about the lack of shade and its uncomfortable benches.*

The complexity of grammar elements, the great importance of poetics and management and the importance of the environment, make drafting effective guidelines difficult, but their study is a way in which professionals can become more aware, through continuous training, of the issues presented in the project and what constitutes good practice. The case studies are very useful both in evaluating the outcomes of a project and as references. While some items are related to the specific context, other principles are generalisable and can fit comfortably within similar projects.

The case study confirms that a project often shoulders a great responsibility in connection with the failure of a space, sometimes the lack of response from the local community is caused by a deficiency of investigations, by an over-project or by a lack of stimuli and functions.

Designing public space in the contemporary city is a complex empirical affair, and strongly relies on the evaluation of the results. It is normal for landscapes and cities to evolve as a result of these experiments, therefore, the lack of acceptance and vitality of a designed space should help us to realise that it was, from a certain perspective, a mistake: if the population did not respond there is a reason for that. At some stages, a project cannot be

expected to ensure a certainty - of an almost deterministic kind- of operation. The process continues even once the project has been realised, and the phase of monitoring and possible intervention to correct the path taken is a fundamental part of the process.

## Notes

- (1) "There must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind". Jane Jacobs (1961).
- (2) "The process of evaluating buildings in a systematic and rigorous manner after they have been built and occupied for some time" (Preiser et al, 1988).
- (3) It took two months to conduct a survey of the nearly 120 public spaces identified.

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## Contemporary landscape urbanism principles as innovative methodologies. The design of an armature of public spaces for the revitalisation of a shrinking city

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### Abstract

This paper explores the potentials of a series of Landscape Urbanism strategies for the revitalisation of a 'shrinking city', through the construction of an armature of public spaces and the reactivation of collective activities and social encounters. Looking through a series of theoretical approaches and case studies, mostly associated with Landscape Urbanism theory, this paper looks for typical interventions in the design of public spaces in a pattern of decreased socioeconomic activities. In addition, the paper provides an original contribution in the form of a review of a Studio research project developed during a Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia University, New York, in 2008. In more detail, the first part of the paper introduces the theme of shrinking cities with a series of theoretical approaches and a toolkit of possible interventions. The theoretical approaches derive from a new consideration of the contemporary city in the light of its spatial morphology. This is described through an excursus of previous studies and contributions to the analysis of the urban form and to the change of state that many cities are experiencing together with the decaying of their economic activities. A few case studies, beginning with the project by Oswald Mathias Ungers on the city of Berlin, further explore the role of open, 'left over spaces' in providing opportunities for a networked system of public spaces in contemporary urban conditions. The last part of the paper introduces a series of strategies that respond to similar situations on Governors Island, in New York, and the small town of Cohoes, in the State of New York. In particular, in the case of Cohoes, the proposal looks for opportunities in the existing downtown area- and articulates a series of strategies focused on the reprogramming and conversion of the existing 'left-over' open spaces- to turn them into 'public spaces'. These mechanisms aim to trigger several micro processes within the project, in order to follow through on the shrinking pattern in a positive, ecologic way. The last part of the paper offers a critique of the theories and case studies analysed, using these case studies as a way to test the theories already reviewed. Moreover, the conclusions introduce some definitions of networks from the theory of Space Syntax. In this way, the paper offers itself as a theoretical tool for the approach to shrinking cities and their evolutionary patterns through the design of an armature of public spaces.

**Keywords:** shrinking cities, landscape urbanism, programming open spaces, community, urban agriculture.

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## Introduction

When approaching the topic of revitalising a decaying town through the design of its public spaces, we have to take into consideration the main theme of shrinking cities, which involves a great body of both theoretical and design work on several case studies, beginning with micro-interventions on small towns and moving to wide- and sometimes only idealistic scenarios- applied to major cities such as Berlin or Detroit. First of all, the contemporary conditions of cities with decaying urban life require a new conceptualisation. Contemporary cities, in general, have experienced a general process of decentralisation due to the development of a new, diffused model of production activity. This new, decentralised urban condition can be defined as 'post-industrial'. Due to the dismantling of the industrial industry, many industrial cities have developed into shrinking cities. As Graham Shane (2005) explains, the Landscape Urbanism discussion stemmed from the reality of Detroit provides the most significant example of a shrinking city. A profound understanding of what constitutes the material of the post-industrial city and new design methods were required, especially in comparison to those applicable to the traditional and historical European city, with its clear distinction between 'built environment' and 'open spaces', and between 'city' and 'countryside'. The Landscape Urbanism discussion responded to this necessity by proposing, on the one hand, a new understanding of the American post-industrial city, and, on the other hand, a series of strategies "*defining phases in time rather than defined forms, and considering landscape as a tool for growth patterns under conditions of uncertainty*" (Smets, 2002, cited in Cermasi, Psarra, 2013: 1). Most importantly, Landscape Urbanism theory inherits the description of the contemporary city as a 'networked system', with a transportation infrastructure interconnected with a significant amount of open spaces. This paper explores the potentials of this form of a 'network of open spaces and connections' to become an armature of public spaces in a city with a shrinking pattern.

When looking for theoretical conceptualisations to describe what a shrinking city is, it is necessary to take into consideration both the two phases of growth and shrinkage: on the one hand, urban growth occurring as a result of industrial activities, resulting in a diffused pattern of urbanisation, and, on the other hand, urban shrinkage, determined by the dismantling of industrial activities. Without the first phase, one cannot explain the second. Firstly, one needs to acknowledge the new, diffused form of urban growth derived from industrial development. Secondly, one needs to understand the new urban condition of a city that is dealing with a decaying economy, the dismantling of industries and the creation of a particular pattern of breaking down urban centres, and as a result, a loss in population due to this decay and a marked abandonment of entire complexes of workers' housing quarters. Somehow, it could be said that the problem of shrinking cities lies in the diffused pattern of urbanisation derived from post-war industrial activities, considering that not all industrial cities developed into shrinking cities. This could be explained by the degree of density and interconnection of different cities' urban fabric. Dense and well interconnected cities seem to survive the dismantling of industrial activities.

As an example, as explained by Amanda Pluviano and Sophia Psarra (2014), both Turin and Detroit "*are characteristic examples of manufacturing decline, having experienced the rise and weakening of automotive industries in the twentieth century. Both were defined by Fordism, a socioeconomic model, a manufacturing management system and a 'total way of life', encompassing mass production and consumption*" (Harvey, 1990, cited in Pluviano, Psarra, 2014: 394). Moreover, "*since the 1970s the two cities have differed radically*" (Pluviano,

Psarra, 2014: 394). The two authors analyse the two cities with Space Syntax, in order to investigate the way they compare spatially, in regards to industrial distribution. Space syntax, a theory and a method of analysing architecture and urban patterns in terms of their systems of relation, allows us to analyse the street networks of Turin and Detroit in different moments in time and overlay these onto the distribution of industries. The findings of this study are very useful to this discussion.

Both cities experienced a distribution of industries beyond the urban centre, but evolved very differently after 1970. On the one hand, it seems that Turin managed to evolve together with the changing industrial distribution, due to the integrated urban network that allowed new land uses when the industries migrated to the periphery, while, on the other hand, the decentralisation of industries and the suburbanisation of Detroit had negative consequences for the residential street network. In particular, Detroit was a lively American economic centre, in which the urban network was functioning according to the evolution of economic activities, until the decentralisation of industries required the construction of highways and freeways that extended the urban network but, at the same time, cut the urban fabric in pieces. What was developing as a flourishing industrial city, until the evolution of production into the Fordist model, developed into a whole, different urban pattern after the 1970s. The dismantling of its industrial activities created holes in the urban fabric of the city centre, that was already separated by the highways that were constructed following the general pattern of decentralisation of production activities and which acted as physical barriers. As Sophia Psarra (2014) explains, the street network itself contributed, together with the dismantling of the industries, to segregate the urban fabric of the city centre. In fact, Detroit now consists of a decaying urban centre, surrounded by wealthier peripheral quarters (Pluviano, Psarra, 2014).

To conclude, it is obvious that not all post-industrial cities are shrinking cities, but in general, a shrinking city was previously an industrial city, that, at some point in time, suffered as a result of changes in economic patterns and industrial production and couldn't adjust to them. This failure to adjust to changes in production methods, and, more in general, to declining economic patterns is apparent both in terms of the urban fabric of a shrinking city and its pattern of connections. Detroit, in particular, was chosen as a model by Landscape Urbanism, of a new urban form- the post-industrial, American city- necessitating a particular focus. Together with Landscape Urbanism, other theoretical contributions wished to define the evolution of the pre- industrial urban forms in terms of urban growth, before, and urban shrinkage, afterwards. The next section of the paper provides a bibliographical review and a comparison of all these approaches, wishing to provide a path to a Landscape Urbanism theory for shrinking cities.

### **The path to a Landscape Urbanism theory for shrinking cities**

As explained by Francesco Indovina (1990), the way in which many cities have developed into diffused cities constitutes not only a form of urban growth, but an evolution into a different 'state'. In fact, as I have explained in the paper named "Space Syntax, Landscape Urbanism, and the peri-urban condition. A theoretical tool through Space Syntax and Landscape Urbanism", published in 2013 with Sophia Psarra, when new forms of urbanisation derived from industrial growth resulted in new and alternative territorial identities, "traditional concepts and distinctions between 'urban/rural', 'centre/periphery' had to be revised, as they were in effect influenced by the old models of urbanisation and

perception” (Cermasi, Psarra, 2013: 2) . The paper describes, in its introduction, how Graham Sahen (2005) “traces the evolution of cities from the traditional, Eurocentric definition either as dense settlements distinct from the countryside or as broken beyond their former borders due to the industrial revolution, to a third conceptual and normative model” (Cermasi, Psarra, 2013: 2). Moreover, as Sophia Psarra and I explain in the paper, in the book entitled *Recombinant Urbanism* (2005), “Shane analyzed this particular 'organic' city form, alongside the *Ecological City*, and the catalog of heterogeneous urban systems proposed by Kevin Lynch in “*Good City Form*”, in 1984” (Cermasi, Psarra, 2013: 2). As the paper explains, Shane (2005) defines the work of Kevin Lynch as a step forward towards a new conceptualisation of cities. In particular “Kevin Lynch invented a terminology of heterogeneous urban systems to deal with the new urban situation, providing tools for the discussion of what later critics termed the ‘reverse city’ (Viganò) or ‘net city’ (Oswald), which are ultimately descended from Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Broadacre City*, the city claiming vast landscapes”. (Shane, 2005: 9). In fact, in contrast to the Modernists, that criticised both the sprawling determined by the industrial revolution and the pre-existing historical centres, Lynch provided a definition for the contemporary city by developing a conceptualisation of the urban network, defined by Shane (2005) as “a complex structure, with compressed nodes of activity and areas of widespread sprawl, that vary from low-rise development to the agricultural settlements that supports city life” (Shane, 2005: 27). Moreover, Shane assumes that “the form of 'sprawl' as the one envisioned by Wright for *Broadacre City*, with the landscape merging together the city with the countryside, was considered by Lynch as a positive evolution towards a new, 'organic' city model” (Cermasi, Psarra, 2013: 2).

Proceeding with an *excursus* on the analysis of the urban form, and of the evolutionary processes of cities in relation to their economic patterns, I will move forward from the organic city model, corresponding to a moment of economic growth and industrial expansion, to the theoretical and design approaches applied to cities exhibiting aspects of decay both in terms of their economic activities and their social patterns. In particular, I will look for concepts that can be placed in relation to the re-activation and public use of a 'common ground'. When tracing a possible trajectory of the Landscape Urbanism discussion, it can be argued that the theoretical understanding of post-industrial, American cities as 'reserves' of open spaces stemmed from another discussion, on post-war urban conditions, traceable in the work of Oswald Mathias Ungers on the city of Berlin, which he developed while working at Cornell University. In particular, “The city in the city: Berlin, a green archipelago” is the title of the publication in which, in 1977, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska, presented the results of research that focused on the creation of an intellectual approach to shrinking cities. Oswald Mathias Ungers and his colleagues presented a model of intervention which opposed the popular trends of reconstruction of the time: the city of Berlin was envisioned, in fact, as a polycentric urban landscape. This conceptual project constituted an advancement where it exchanged the 'design for the growth' approach for new approaches. As explained by Jasper Cepl, the study by Oswald Mathias Ungers was considered to be one of the most important planning concepts for an 'ideal city' (2006). West Berlin was experiencing a massive economic crisis during the 70's, and the whole city had been rebuilt in a fragmentary way, with empty lots all over. It was difficult to see the continuity between the physical remains of the post war years. In a moment when architects and urban designers were trained to build for large numbers, as an incipient population increase was expected, Oswald Mathias Ungers embraced the challenge to

reverse this perspective and start conceiving methods of 'controlled decrease'. The project on Berlin, in particular, took into consideration the physical constraint: the West side could not decrease in size, as the wall had fixed its borders. Consequently, the idea was to preserve specific zones of the city that retained interesting characteristics, to complete those zones and on the contrary, to demolish the other superfluous areas that worked badly both in terms of the architectural quality and the patterns of social interaction. This way, the liberated *enclaves* would combine into an 'urban archipelago' of islands connected to each other over a background 'lagoon'. This background could be, in subsequent phases, gradually re-transformed into a natural environment, or possibly agricultural land, without considering rebuilding. The criteria for selecting which areas should be preserved considered their extremely different structures and fabrics, and particular morphological features that could be developed further. What Ungers envisioned, in conclusion, was a collection of possible ideal cities, divided by 'strips of green'. Most importantly, this vision was followed up with the new interpretation of the urban form as a 'networked reality' that ideally continually moves forward according to the models previously described. As a result, this project provided inspiration on preserving a series of existing public spaces in a city that could no longer support its own size with its economic activities, and reinforced those public spaces by selectively reducing the importance of other areas, not so relevant for public activities and collective uses. Those activities are considered by Ungers as being strongly related to the morphological aspects of those selected areas when compared to others. Another relevant aspect of the project is the necessity to provide actual connections between those areas, in order to construct a network of public spaces. In fact, Oswald Mathias Ungers was influenced by the reality of the American cities, and imagined a scenario of *"an ideal city that integrates the experience of the American city, with its extensive highway networks and endless suburban spaces, with the ideal forms of the European city with its dense public spaces"* (Cepl, 2006).

This approach to the city of Berlin introduces new means of understanding cities with shrinking patterns and at the same time new conceptual tools that provide a theoretical background for new projects, strategies, and interventions. The project for Berlin by Oswald Mathias Ungers could seem idealistic and not applicable as a practicable policy: as urban building land is often in private hands, the criteria of 'dis-urbanisation' of certain areas and not others could seem arbitrary. What is very inspiring though, as a practical tool, is the aspect of a 'reversed perspective' between the built environment and the open spaces, and, as mentioned before, the idea of a city as a 'networked system' where the movement network infrastructure ties together different areas through its open spaces. As Rem Koolhaas designed a proposal for the new town Melun-Senart in France, he declared that the urban archipelago project had inspired his concept of a system of green belts and corridors- described as 'active voids'- as the main determining elements of the project- on a background of 'urban islands'. The theoretical work of Pierre Donadieu, even if in a very different form, also proposes a reversed approach compared to the one derived from the historical perception of the European city, considered as a 'compact entity' physically separated from the rural landscape. In fact, Donadieu argues, that as it is not possible anymore to build 'the city in the countryside', it is now time to transform cities into an innovative 'rural urbanity'. In this sense, those voids that are 'left over' in the contemporary city can become the structuring armature of a new urban form, as long as they remain open spaces: *"what if we built the urban fabric starting from its open spaces and*

the rural areas, instead of trying to control the growth with green belts and barriers?" (Donadieu, 2006).

In this sense, landscaping emerges as a model for contemporary urbanism, capable of integrating new models into the mutability of the contemporary city. When approaching the topic of a city with decaying economic activity, a reduced population, and a shortage of possibilities for social interaction, it seems that any possible intervention should work on reconfiguring what is already there, and on promoting strategies geared towards the reactivation of some form of urban life. Working on a network of open spaces and on interrelated systems incremented by infrastructural networks, means contrasting a form of stagnation consequent to the economic crisis, with an overlay of different strategies. When Charles Waldheim organised the exhibition entitled "landscape urbanism", in 1997, several American cities were still experiencing a massive crisis in the industrial sector, that lasted over twenty years, and were presented with an abundance of abandoned workers' housing, entire vacant areas and redundant commercial strips in mostly deserted down towns. The main concept of the exhibition was that the landscape could become a saviour for this condition and, in the words of Graham Shane (2006) "*replace architectural form as the primary medium of city making*" (058).

The interpretation of this post-industrial urban form enlightened the left-over void spaces of the city as new, potential commons. In fact, those *terrain vagues* could be connected, reactivated, and reprogrammed, founding a new "*interstitial design discipline, operating in the space between buildings, infrastructural systems, and natural ecologies*" (Shane, 2005: 059). As Shane explains, in the design activity of Field Operations, James Corner's professional practice, it is possible to trace a concept of a "*performative urbanism, based on preparing the setting for programmed and unprogrammed activities on common land*" (pag. 059). When approaching the theme of the abandoned downtown areas of former industrial centres, James Corner proposes the concept of "*landscaping*", as a strategy for approaching the shrinking aspect of Detroit documented in the publication named "Stalking Detroit", published in 2001. (Shane, 2006: 059). As explained by Graham Shane (2005), the architect interprets the creation of these inner voids of cities like Detroit as the result of the industrial organisation and consequent territorial evolution, and conceives the resultant voids as constructions produced by an industrial logic and as 'reserves of indeterminacy' and places of potential action. This logical and performative future action, as in the past, will emerge from social codes and conventions that regulate the relationships between urban stakeholders or actors in industrial societies (059,060). According to Shane (2005), these codes become embedded in infrastructural regimes that are best depicted as diagrams of organisation: these diagrams show the mechanism necessary for something to be enacted, including erasure (pag. 058-059). In addition, Charles Waldheim proposes a Landscape Urbanism strategy for Detroit in a project named "Decamping Detroit", envisioning four stages in which the land would be decommissioned from city control (Shane, 2005: 059). In particular, these stages are named: "*Dislocation (disconnection of services), then Erasure (demolition and jumpstarting the native landscape ecology by dropping appropriate seeds from the air), followed by Absorption (ecological reconstitution of part of the Zone as woods, marshes, and eropic village like enclaves)*". (Corner, 2001: 122-125 cited in Shane, 2006: 059).

According to these theories, when conceiving a toolkit of strategies for a shrinking city, taking into consideration the decaying economic activities, and the indeterminacy of its future evolution, a model based on a formal approach alone does not provide a remedy.

In fact, the approach of Landscape Urbanism is somewhat distant from both the post-modernist and New Urbanism approaches, where it proposes more open-ended, strategic models. In fact, Charles Waldheim (2005) explains that the post-modernist critiqued the modernist for not creating meaningful and livable public spaces and for not taking into consideration the city “*as an historical construction of collective consciousness*” (038). It was however post-modernist architecture, that could not address the reality of the new, post-industrial urban condition, and while producing incredibly scenographic architecture, couldn't solve the 'crisis of urban life' in the conditions already explained in the first part of this paper. In fact, in taking European precedents for traditional city form, postmodern architects proposed designs featuring sometimes spectacular individual buildings, however, according to an absent context, and without producing significant changes in the use of the public spaces that they would create. According to Charles Waldheim, this practice seems to be a cultural regression: in fact, he argues that “*the indeterminacy and flux of the contemporary city, and the bane of traditional European city making*” are precisely the aspects explored in recent works on Landscape Urbanism and are more related to a modernist, rather than post-modernist approach to the contemporary city in relation to its public spaces (Waldheim, 2006: 039). Waldheim proposes Barcelona as a case of how the approach to public space has changed from a perspective which considers public spaces in terms of plazas, boulevards, etc, as the elements of the traditional city centre (during the 90's) to a new approach, featuring experimentation on how large-scale infrastructural landscapes can influence the redevelopment of a city. In fact, Barcelona's most recent urban project involves the redevelopment of airports, logistical zones, industrial waterfronts, metropolitan river ways, etc. Waldheim (2005) explains that, by the mid '90s, both Rem Koolhaas and Kenneth Frampton, usually very distant, were occupying a similar position on this subject, by declaring that landscape, rather than architecture, was mostly capable of ordering contemporary urban patterns. It is “*landscape rather than object formalism*” that can overcome the fragmentary aspect of the contemporary city (042).

In fact, the landscape urbanism theory provides interesting approaches in terms of the definition of a process of 'adaptation' of cities to their uncertain conditions. This open-endedness, flexibility, and adaptation to temporal changes, are all principles of landscape design that can be employed in urban design. In more operative terms, the strategies include the staging of horizontal surfaces, defined by James Corner (2005) as “*the preparation of a ground plane, the 'field' of action*” (030), and the creation of networks of connections between those surfaces and the rest of the city, resulting in the preparation of a common ground that can accommodate different uses and events in time. Charles Waldheim (2006) presents the 1982 Competition for the Parc de la Villette as an example of how the design of a public space can “*orchestrate a urban program as a landscape process*” (040). This very well-known competition invited architects to submit ideas for a new ‘Urban Park for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, that would occupy a wide stretch of land consisting of 125 acres, remaining as a result of the demolition of one of Paris' largest slaughterhouses. The former industrial site was expected to be replaced with a new park. As Waldheim (2006) explains, on the one hand, the project by Bernard Tschumi uses the previously explained landscape principles- including the layering of horizontal surfaces under a network of connections- as the preparation of a 'common ground' adaptable to multiple uses. This common ground can be used to order evolving arrangements of urban activities, a complexity of programs and social changes over time. The interest was, of

course, to re propose 'event' and 'program' as the main concern when designing a public space, in opposition with the longstanding interest in stylistic issues that were dominating the architectural discourse of the postmodern era. On the other hand, the project by Rem Koolhaas proposes a variation on this concept, with the design of a series of "*parallel strips of landscape*" (Waldheim, 2006: 041), recalling different uses and programs to be juxtaposed yet not necessarily have them interacting. Both these new concepts of parks shared the programmatic indeterminacy of their future uses. As Waldheim (2006) concludes, the infrastructure of the park, in both projects, provides a flexible, non-hierarchical, layered and strategic design, capable of accommodating events, public life and multiple uses (040-041). This kind of project represents perfectly the typical intervention undertaken on a post-industrial area, with the replacement of left-over urban voids with intensely programmed public spaces. The proposals by Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tshumi both constitute precedents for the concept of applying landscape design principles to the urban scale for the transformation of a decaying area. In other words, both of the two architects use landscape as an articulate medium to create an urban infrastructure. This infrastructure is made up of a pattern of development of horizontal surfaces and a network of connections, that will provide a stage for future collective activities and public events.

As this paper explores, the potential in transforming existing under-utilised open spaces into public spaces, as a tool for contrasting a crisis in the economy and, consequently, the social activities of a city, a scenario depicted in "Ecological reconfiguration of an urban center" constitutes an interesting contribution. The project by Ecosistema Urbano for the city of Philadelphia was selected from among five finalists by the Van Alen Institute, NY and the city of Philadelphia, as part of a competition they had launched in 2006. The objective was to regenerate approximately 40,000 urban voids, and in this case, the act of revitalisation of downtown Philadelphia needed to be a pervasive and diffused intervention. This approach differs from the approach undertaken in the case of la Villette and others involving the redevelopment of a former industrial area. In this case, the project proposed to employ a form of 'urban acupuncture' and proceed with interstitial insertions of 'urban catalysts' on a series of parallel corridors. The urban catalysts involve several participatory activities, in order to develop an economically-viable landscape, and to generate a strategic mechanism as a starting point for the self-reparation of the urban fabric. Light and demountable structures are strategically placed in areas with a high percentage of urban-voids, a short distance away from each other. The reactivation of the corridors would involve the re-programming of existing buildings, sometimes necessitating a retrofitting for accommodating new uses. The corridors interconnecting these new places of interest, in terms of social and cultural activities, would become the new public spaces of a revitalised area, thanks to the affluence of a mixture of different users. The corridors also demanded an intervention strategy based on the concentration of budget and effort in order that they might be turned into a sort of structural-line of program and activities. Moreover, the project necessitated a strategy for the reconfiguration of the existing connections into a new form of ecological mobility. By regenerating the networks of social, environmental, and physical elements, the project aimed to revitalise a decaying downtown area and transform it into a flourishing, livable urban community. The city of Philadelphia, with its strong history of citizen participation, would then contribute to developing a sustainable and economically-viable landscape. Surely, this case study inherited and heeded many of the lessons that were learned

throughout the previous case studies. The idea of working within the existing patterns, without building new architectural objects, and implementing community participation strategies, is a starting point for a series of methodologies of intervention that can be applied to other case studies. As final examples, I will present two school projects which employ landscape urbanism strategies on two different shrinking scenarios: Governors Island in New York and Cohoes, a small former industrial town in upstate New York.

### **Governors Island and Cohoes: the design of an armature of public spaces**

The last part of this paper presents a Studio project developed during a Master in Architecture and Urban Design at Columbia University in 2008. The Studio, directed by Mojdeh Bartloo, was assigned two sites to develop strategies for creating a form of “zero state”, intended as a state of balance, in the context of abandonment, economical shrinkage, and reducing population. The two sites, very different from one another, were Governors Island in Manhattan and Cohoes, a former centre for the textile industry, located in Upstate New York.

Governors Island was once a military base. The prohibition of introducing residential uses resulted, in turn, in disincentives for other uses, as the activities taking place on the island were limited to recreational biking. In 2006, GIPEC launched an international competition for the design of the Island's 97 acres of park and public spaces. Conversely, the Urban Design Studio project, on the other hand, looked for a more efficient use of the island's resources, as turning the whole island into a park didn't seem to be an efficient strategy. Located in downtown Manhattan, Governor's Island is very close to the city but can only be reached by ferry boat. The character of the northern area of the island is defined by a historical district with neoclassical buildings, while the rest consists mostly of green open spaces. For these reasons, the proposal for Governor's Island was to prepare a pattern of development for both a wetland park and a small university campus. The existing buildings, possibly retrofitted with low-cost interventions, could accommodate some of the university departments. This way, the investment made by the university would trigger new economic processes, and would finance a process of re-naturalisation. In fact, the southern part of the island, more subject to future flooding, would be partially given back to nature with the reinstatement of a wetland environment. An *abacus* of differently landscaped open spaces, and a series of experimental pathways would define the different areas of the campus. The combination of programs would then combine an every-day use of the island by the students with an affluence of visitors exploring the new Governors Island park during event days and weekends.

The strategies presented for the second case study of the Studio project respond to the decaying character of Cohoes, and the resultant ‘doughnut pattern’ of an emptied downtown and a dispersed settlement pattern to its extents. Cohoes belongs to an axes of former textile industry centres in Upstate New York, tied together in a linear system by the Hudson river. The reversed pattern came about once the industrial activities were dismantled: the downtown centre, formerly connected to the industrial sites along the river, was progressively emptied as the constantly decreasing, and now elderly population, moved out in the peripheries. Moreover, since 1970 and the dismantling of the area's industrial activities the population has decreased by 25% and the unemployment rate has increased by 6% in less than 50 years. The current cost of gas has rendered this car-dependent system unsustainable for the population of Cohoes, while the absence of a

downtown centre reflects an economic stagnation that has resulted in a social pattern of isolation and a complete absence of any 'common good' and public activity. The project proposal looks for opportunities in the existing downtown area- and develops a series of strategies focused on the reprogramming and conversion of the existing 'left-over' open spaces- in order to turn them into 'public spaces'. The strategies are considered as articulated into a time line, in which the objectives are implemented at different time intervals. The mechanism aims to trigger several micro processes within the project, in order to follow through on the shrinking pattern in a more positive, ecologic way. In a first phase, the public transportation network is re-designed in order to make the city's historical downtown more accessible from the peripheries and also better connected internally speaking. Car traffic would consequently be reduced, as the new public transportation routes would permit pedestrian movement. In order to create a network of public activities, the project proposes the reprogramming of a series of existing unused open spaces, including redundant parking lots, space left between buildings and leftover green areas, in order to create a system of open spaces that can be efficiently used by the city's inhabitants. This network of continuously productive 'urbanscapes', reconnects the disjointed layers of pathways, open spaces, public facilities and green areas into a new system. As the existing under-utilised green areas become patches of urban agriculture for community use, the redundant parking lots adjacent to the existing few commercial services are retrofitted with the addition of necessary public services and the activation of recreational events and turned into new congregating areas for the community. The waterfront area is involved in the network of urban activities and turned into a large productive park, proposing urban agriculture as a way of envisioning a possible return of economic activities to the town's historical centre, triggered by a new, productive use of the existing public spaces.

## **Conclusions**

The theoretical contributions analysed in the first place, including the "city in the city" by Oswald Mathias Ungers and the Landscape Urbanism discussion, suggest an approach to post-industrial shrinking cities that should now be verified through the analysis of the projects presented. This way, the paper can be developed into a theoretical tool on the revitalisation of shrinking cities through the design of an armature of public spaces. The projects presented, in fact, suggest a series of considerations on the Landscape Urbanism theoretical discussion that can be organised into a set of macro-themes that I have defined as: 'working on a network of open spaces', 'the necessity of a multi-scalar approach', 'a toolkit of interventions', 'accessibility as a must', 'how to define a network of public spaces?', 'the necessity of an economic engine', and 'a polycentric urban landscape'. What this paper discusses more generally is the potential that lies in the transformation of under-utilised open spaces into networks of public spaces in order to revitalise cities with a decaying economy, loss of population, and entirely abandoned workers' housing quarters. This implies an understanding of the idea of 'network' and of the city as a system of relations. For this reason, these conclusions introduce Space Syntax as an additional theoretical tool to complement the Landscape Urbanism discussion.

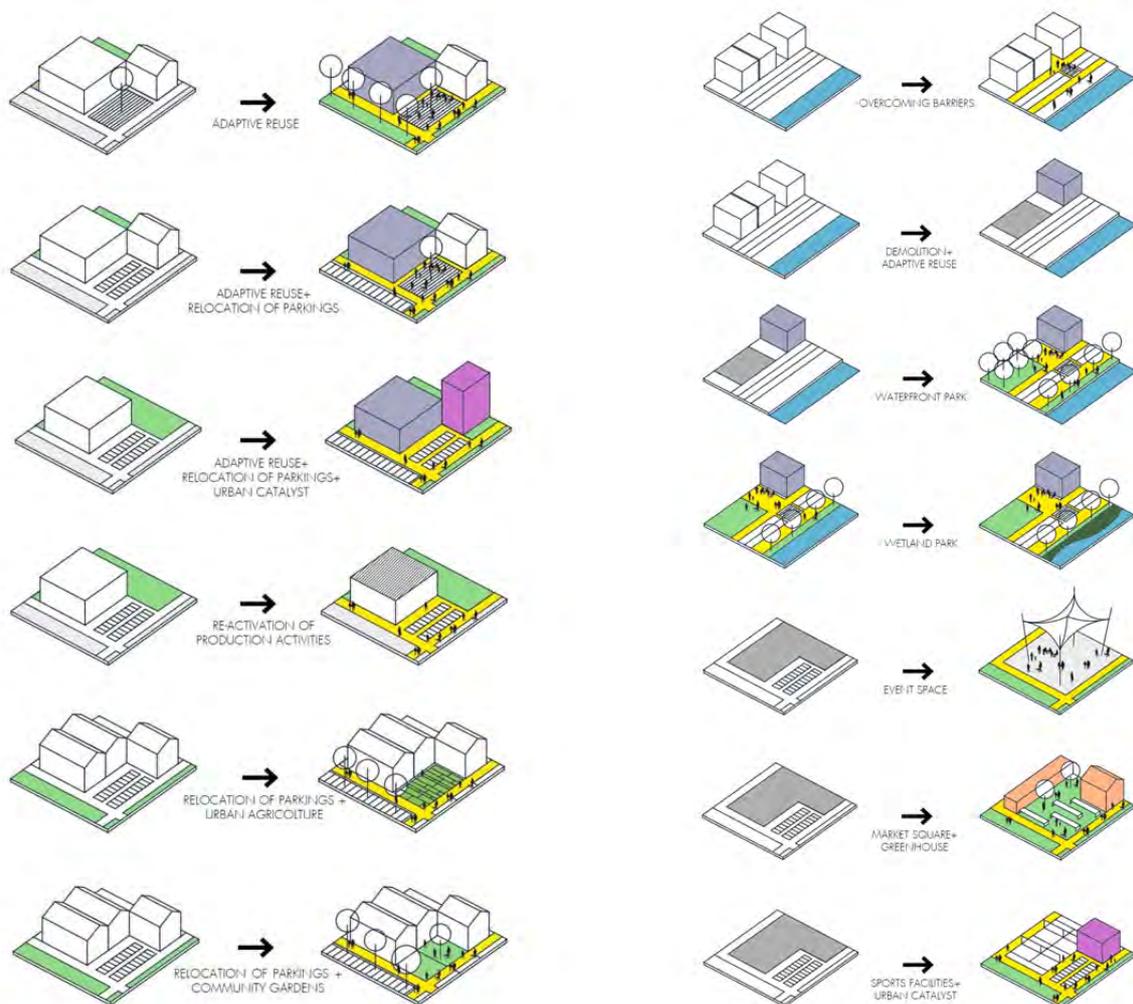


Fig. 1-2. A toolkit of strategies for the revitalization of a decaying post-industrial town.

### 1. Working on networks of open spaces.

Many theoretical contributions, including the Landscape Urbanism discussion, suggest that the city has to be observed with a reversed perspective. In fact, dispersed urban conditions such as those seen in post-industrial American cities cannot be approached through conceptual tools that once belonged to European, historic cities. The overabundance of under-utilised land, within a dispersed urban environment, requires one to look at the city through its open spaces rather than its built environment. This discourse applies to post-war urban conditions, such as Berlin, as well as to shrinking cities. Shrinking cities are, in some cases, comparable to dispersed urban landscapes. In the case of the city of Detroit, as well as post-war Berlin, the urban fabric is fragmented and a strategy of 'filling the voids' doesn't seem practicable. This also implies a different interpretation of public spaces. In fact, dispersed urban conditions suggest that we ought to understand public spaces not only as squares and parks, but also as systems of interconnections. As explained by Charles Waldheim, in the city of Barcelona, the macro-scale infrastructures of mobility are, themselves, public spaces. The interpretation of cities

as systems of flows suggests an approach on public spaces focused on networks and movement as well as on more “static” public spaces. As Bill Hillier (2007) explains, the open spaces of a city constitute a system of convex spaces and linear spaces, as people interact in convex spaces but also move in lines, and movement itself has to be considered as a form of interaction.

## 2. The necessity of a multi-scalar approach.

The strategies of the two school projects presented belong to different scales of intervention. The projects propose both very small scaled interventions, such as the design of a network of small scale community gardens, as in the case of Cohoes, and macro-scale designs, as in the case of Governors Island. Similarly, the strategies of Ecosistema Urbano in Philadelphia consist of a series of small-scaled, interstitial interventions, while the Park of la Villette is a macro-scale intervention. For the purpose of this discussion, I will introduce another concept of Space Syntax. The theory explains the difference between the ‘foreground network’, which consists of the armature of spaces connected to the economic activity of the city, and the ‘background network’ consisting of small-scaled, residential fabric. (Hillier, Vaughan, 2007). Every city presents both networks and this suggests that turning open spaces into public spaces means working on both these two networks at the same time, by activating macro-scale projects such as la Villette but at the same time, developing a finer grain of pocket parks, community gardens, small clusters of activities and public squares, at the local scale. Moreover, this also suggests that a micro-scale network of public spaces should be inserted into a well-designed macro-scale network of connections. At the scale of the city, one should look at parks, like the one at la Villette, as successful interventions, but at the scale of the neighbourhood, a city should provide a finer grain of public spaces and ‘urban catalysts’, addressing the livability of the area, and allowing pedestrian movement and human interaction. As explained in the previous point, both the two scales of intervention need to be developed in a systemic way, as networks of spaces, as opposed to isolated, fragmented interventions. This is done through the reconfiguration of mobility, in particular through public transportation, in order to reduce car dependency.

## 3. A toolkit of interventions.

From all the projects presented in the paper, I have extracted a toolkit of possible interventions for the revitalisation of a shrinking city through the design of its public spaces. (fig.1) The diagrams presented summarise a series of possible strategies to reconfigure under-utilised open spaces to create active, lively urban spaces. For instance, as in the case of Barcelona, the waterfront can be reconnected to the downtown area by overcoming existing barriers. Empty lots, such as in the case of Philadelphia, can be transformed into pocket parks, urban agriculture, event spaces, etc. Where there are few existing public services, as in the case of Cohoes, these can be implemented by urban catalysts and integrated within a public square. An ideal intervention (fig. 2), summarising all of this strategies in one project, would then involve: selective demolition, the reconfiguration of certain empty lots into pockets of green land, a productive urban landscape, event spaces, the adaptive reuse of existing abandoned buildings and the insertion of ‘urban catalysts’ to activate social encounters and economic triggers. All the reconfigured lots should be then tied together by public transportation networks, and pedestrian and bicycle lanes. In a way, this ‘urban acupuncture’ strategy on open spaces is

a modest intervention: it requires bottom-up strategies for the reconfiguration of under-utilised land and buildings and the reorganisation of existing public transportation in order to create a pattern of accessibility within an armature of open spaces.

#### 4. Accessibility as a must.

Within my ideal toolkit of interventions I have included the overcoming of barriers between the city and its waterfront. In such cases, as in the project by Oriol Bohigas on the city of Barcelona, the barrier is a physical object- the freeway running parallel to the city's waterfront- and the strategy for overcoming it is actioned through the construction of infrastructures, such as pedestrian bridges, allowing access. In the case of Detroit, the freeways are physical barriers cutting the city centre in pieces. In other cases, as Space Syntax explains, the "barriers" to human interaction are more invisible. They depend on the structure of the network of streets, which can result in integrated or segregated patterns. As the shape of the network influences movement and co-presence (Hillier, Vaughan, 2007), an intervention on the existing network can improve the patterns of human interaction. An analysis of the existing conditions can be employed in finding the issues to be resolved in terms of flows and accessibility. In fact, the analysis with Space Syntax allows one to pick up not only a general structure of the city, but also shows both the most accessible street segments for all kinds of movement – pedestrian and vehicular- at all scales, and the segregated street segments (Hillier, Vaughan, 2007). This analysis can therefore identify areas necessitating interventions related to the 'reconnection' of an existing network of streets. Moreover, the analysis can be employed into verifying different possible scenarios of intervention by mapping them within the context of the existing networks. This allows one to select the best intervention in terms of the creation of accessibility at all scales.

#### 5. How to define a network of public spaces?

Not all open spaces are destined to become public spaces. In general, one should work with what is already there by reinforcing existing centralities. Potential new centralities, on the other hand, are not always 'visible'. Bill Hillier (2007) argues that all cities present a foreground network of centres at all scales. For this purpose, Space syntax provides a strategic tool through which analysing existing networks, picking up the general structure of the city, and understanding the existing pattern of centralities is made possible. In our particular case, when talking about the toolkit of interventions, the analysis with space syntax could suggest which network should remain accessible to cars only and which other network(s) should be reconfigured for pedestrian movement, achieved by creating a system of interconnections via public transportation and the activation of bicycle lanes, pedestrian pathways, etc. Moreover, it could also suggest how to distribute what I called the 'urban catalyst', the adaptive reuse of buildings, and the other urban functions: those could be located in correspondence with existing networks of very accessible streets in order to create a sort of 'main street' within the project.

#### 6. The necessity of an economic engine

Urban acupuncture seems to be a very sensible approach, but is it really possible to revitalise a city with these strategies? How does an open space become transformed into a lively, vibrant public space? It seems to me that an approach focused on designing public spaces within a decaying urban area can result in failure if no actual economic

revitalisation of the city or densification of human activities, jobs, production and economic engines are gained. For example, nowadays, the city of Detroit presents acres of abandoned land within the urban centre and wealthier quarters in the suburbs. But how could it be possible to revitalise the urban centre with this toolkit of strategies whilst attracting people to actually live and work there? What kind of economic trigger could be attracted in order to provide jobs and an actual revitalisation of the city centre?

Contemporary discussions envision a possible reactivation of the industrial compounds of cities like Detroit, in order to reactivate the economy and allow other kinds of interventions in the city. The project on Cohoes, for instance, proposes the location of a server farm as an economic trigger and a generator of jobs for the surrounding area. All this suggests, as a conclusion, that production activities in the city centre be reclaimed, not only in terms of agriculture but also in terms of artisanal production and green industries. These kind of ideas question the Landscape Urbanism approach of transforming all former industrial sites into parks. It would be necessary to study and envision healthy patterns of accessibility, both at the global and the local scale, in order to properly locate the economic engines, or 'urban catalysts', on the envisioned networks of interventions. Public and private transportation flows should be reconfigured in order to intensify economic activities. Space Syntax, for instance, provides tools through which designing networks of interconnection according to socioeconomic factors is made possible. In particular, it allows one to make previsions in terms of how certain networks would function, compared to others, to create patterns of accessibility which allow the development of lively urban spaces. In this way, Space Syntax could be employed to verify macro-scale as well as micro scale networks, determining, for instance, what would be the most accessible paths within the small scale network best developed into cycling or pedestrian pathways and accompanied by the insertion of urban catalysts, economic activities and public spaces. Those selected pathways, in other words, could then consist of the areas to be revitalised through the set of "urban acupuncture" strategies derived from the analysed projects and summarised in the diagram.

### 7. A polycentric urban landscape

After all these considerations, when approaching the issue of the revitalisation of a shrinking city, it seems to be necessary, first of all, to think of a methodology that involves the whole structure of the city. In fact, intervening on particular areas such as waterfronts or dismantled industrial sites can have fragmented results, if the whole urban system appears as disconnected and dispersed. Conversely, it is possible to envision strategies that are related not only to the retrofitting of existing open spaces, but which are also geared towards the development of a 'healthy' urban structure in terms of its system of relations. The project by Oswald Mathias Ungers on Berlin, as well as Charles Waldheim's ideas for the city of Detroit described into "Stalking Detroit", suggest that we approach dispersed urban environments by developing a polycentric urban landscape. Density seems to be a requirement for urban life, so, starting with the idea of selective demolition, this could be taken into consideration in order to create denser areas rather than a homogeneous, low density urban landscape. The form of a polycentric urban landscape could be implemented through policies geared towards the relocation of people from abandoned, unhealthy urban areas, in terms of crime rate, poverty, unemployment, etc, into revitalised urban areas. Learning from the concept of a polycentric urban landscape, density could be increased in certain areas in which,

subsequently, it could be possible to intervene with the presented toolkit of strategies at the neighbourhood scale. In other words, the theoretical contributions analysed suggest that we envision large-scale urban strategies, such as the creation of a polycentric urban landscape, in which we apply a set of strategies at the neighbourhood scale. In both scales of intervention, it would be necessary to create new networks, or reinforce existing ones, through the development of a system of connections within the existing and renovated centralities. The interconnectedness of the proposed system of interventions, at all scales, constitutes, as previously explained, a fundamental tool for the success of a project on public spaces.

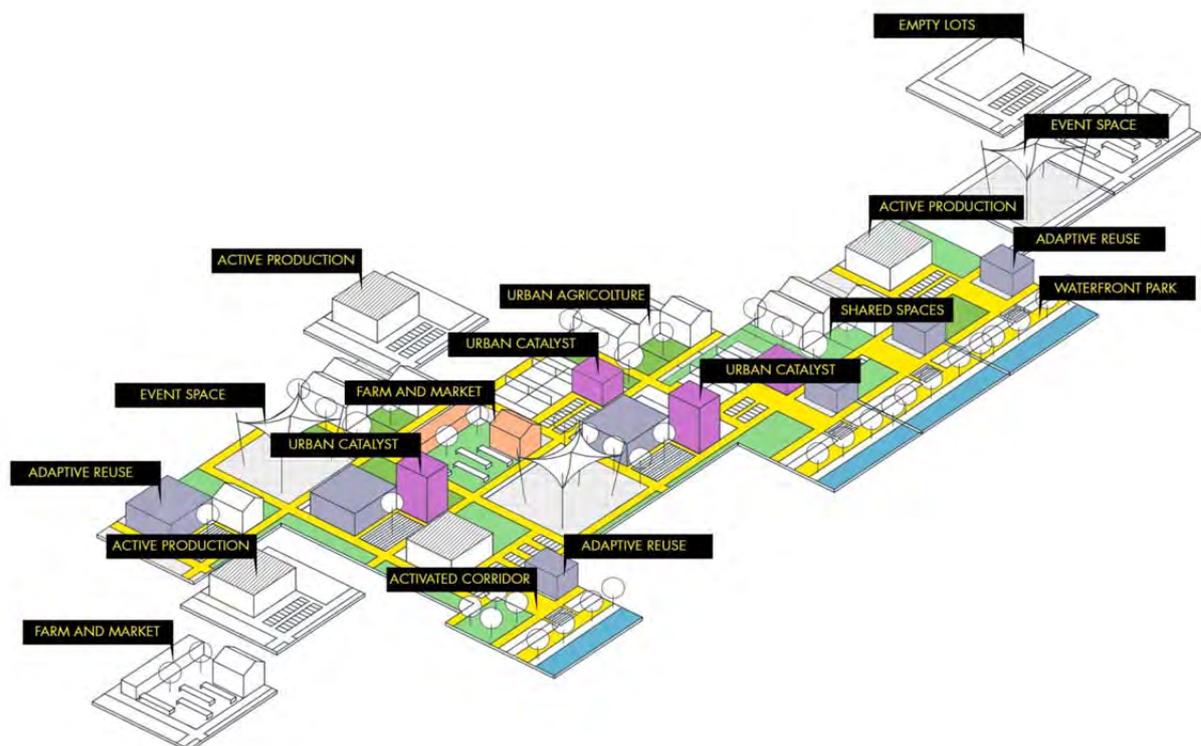


Fig. 3. A toolkit of strategies for the revitalization of a decaying post-industrial town.

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## European creativity and urban regeneration

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### Abstract

Since the end of the 1980s, in the light of research conducted by Charles Landry that theorized and formalized the concept of the Creative City, Creativity, along with other economic activities, has been considered as something that marks the life of cities. Under its sign, a large part of post-industrial societies found the necessary momentum for urban and economic revitalisation, responding to the stagnation resulting from the collapse of industrial society (Albuquerque, 2006). Through the production of art and the strengthening of its cultural fabric, through the support of artists and infrastructures, Creative Industries grew and developed. Cities like Manchester, London and Liverpool saw their economy grow, the latter becoming a major cultural hub in the UK, incorporating music, performing arts, museums and art galleries, as well as an active and attractive nightlife.

Through a literature review focused on the key concepts and studies relating to the economic potential of Creativity, we seek to understand Creativity's state, its impact and economic impulse and the importance of cultural policies, with the ultimate objective of understanding Creative and Cultural Industries as a secure source of sustainability for the future.

**Keywords:** creative cities, creative industries, urban regeneration, creative economy.

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## **I. Introduction. The basics of Creativity**

### *1.1. Creative Cities - emergence, evolution and concept*

Created by human beings as a reflection of the needs of social and economic organisation, the constitution of the first city dates back to about 3,000 years BC in Mesopotamia (Reis, 2008). Appearing and functioning as centres of command and the exchange of agricultural surpluses, since the medieval period cities began to assume important roles in industrial production, and as such they became marked by great migratory waves from the countryside to the city.

In the twentieth century, with the emergence of the Knowledge Society and Economy, a new type of capital began to be explored and recognised: Human Capital (Reis, 2008). Despite the awareness of the Human Capital potential and the growing understanding of the value of artistic and cultural production, it was only from the 1980s onwards that the first reflections centred on the role of Creativity as an economic aspect, and as a booster of the urban space potential appeared. Although this factor has been shaping the life of cities ever since, and the importance of Gothic art for the economic and cultural flourishing of cities between the 12th and 16th centuries, it was in the post-industrial era that Creativity and cultural activities had a critical impact on the flow and economic impulse for the Urban and Economic Revitalisation of several Cities.

Through the strengthening of cultural fabric and the support of artists and infrastructures, the Creative Industries grew and developed themselves (Albuquerque, 2006). Many European cities were reborn, some of them becoming poles, such as Manchester, Berlin and Barcelona, poles that in addition to generating intense industrial and commercial activity, are still even now distinguished by their cultural scenes and intensive creative activity.

At the end of this decade, the issue has aroused the curiosity of the British urbanist Charles Landry. Thus, the development of one of the most relevant works for the dynamics of the Creative Industries began: a new concept of thinking, planning, developing and managing the City - the Creative City (CC).

English cities played a fundamental role in the story of Creative Cities and the urban space core under the idea of Sustainable Creativity. In 2000, Landry pointed out that the urban code, as a creative economic space, provided alternatives for creating conditions for individuals to think, plan and use their imagination in the search for opportunities or to solve unattainable urban problems (Landry, 2000, cit. Reis, 2008). The reconnection between Creativity and the promotion of urban development, along with the recognition of the significance of cultural and creative activities in terms of economic promotion, territorial development and even the search for competitiveness through the attraction of the Creative Class, have been some of the most highlighted aspects in discourses and spheres related to public action on public spaces at the international, national, regional and local level (Costa, Seixas and Oliveira, 2009).

Although, on initial impact, it was regarded as a purely aspirational concept, the notion of Creative City took shape and emerged as a global movement that changed the way the city's dynamics were faced. Landry (Landry, 2000, cit. Reis, 2008) imagined, thus, a city where technology that formed abstract and tolerant opportunities was generated, attracting creative talents and skills. However, today it is believed that the concept of Creative City was not in itself capable of being implemented and put into practice - the design of the Creative Industries concept was also fundamental.

Believing that the number of cities with potential and favourable conditions for development of the knowledge economy and creativity was still small, Landry presented the Creative City as a “tool for urban innovation” (Landry 2000, 2008). In the same vein, and in keeping with Richard Florida’s theories (Florida, 2002), the author concluded that cities can be considered creative as soon as they congregate and are functional in three specific areas (3Ts): talent, technology and tolerance.

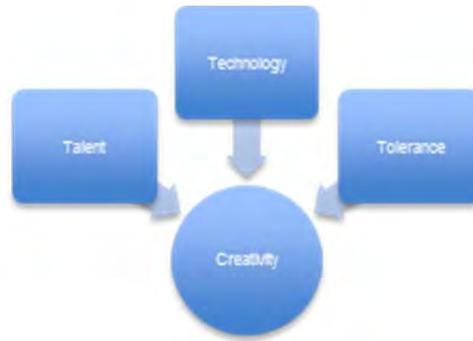


Table 1 Richard Florida’s model of Creative Cities.  
Source: Authors’ elaboration.

This aspect lead us to question: whether a city can become self-sufficient solely through the exploitation of its Creative Economy?

Creativity leads to Innovation, which powers the Technological Change. This, in turn, leads to an increase in Productivity and Economic Growth. This is the motto, that since 2001, has been being asserted by the Australian economist David Throsby. An author, who in that same year explained that Cultural and Creative Industries refer to the marketing of ideas with significant value, value having already being identified as having six dimensions (Throsby, 2001).



Table 2 The 6 dimensions of value by David Throsby.  
Source: Own Elaboration.

It is therefore possible for us to understand that Creativity is seen as more than a simple concept. Instead, it presents itself as an element of Human Capital that unquestionably contributes to increasing productivity (of any industry or service) as a relevant input that enhances business competitiveness, and a key factor that defines the Creative and Cultural Industries.

Although there is a striking disparity between the romantic vision of those who live from Creativity - moved by the creative vision and devoid of material motives - and the reality - that sometimes tilts towards little financial return, meets with difficulty inherent in valuing creative work, and results in the low prices generally charged for work - these contributions are important for society and its balance, since these artists promote Creativity, Identity, Criticism and Diversity, “public values that if sufficiently valued guarantee support for the public purse “(Throsby, 2009).

We can then assert that enhancing sustainable cultural development promotes the maintenance of cultural resources in the long term, equitable access to cultural participation, respect for cultural diversity and the recognition of the cultural interdependence between economic, ecological and cultural systems.

But there are also different ways of looking at Creativity and its potentialities. Costa, Seixas and Oliveira (Costa, Seixas, Oliveira, 2009) explored two different ways of approaching this concept. The first relates to the fact that Creativity asserts itself as transverse to the economy and to society, being a potential source of value creation in current economies, across all economic sectors. The second refers to the fact that it is possible to focus only on those which have been considered creative activities associated with the plastic arts, scenic arts and so on. However, it is important, first of all, to understand the requirements and conditions that a City must contain in order for it to be designated as Creative. Thus, compiling opinions and theories from several authors, makes it possible to construct a summary table as presented below (Reis, 2008):

<b>THEORY</b>	<b>GENERAL LINES</b>
RICHARD FLORIDA's 3 Ts	Talent, Technology and Tolerance
CHARLES LANDRY's 3 Cs	Culture, Communication, Cooperation
VERHAGEN	Clean, Green, Safe
HOWKINS	Learning, Collaboration, and Innovation
KAGEYAMA	Functional, Secure, Comfortable, Festive
FONSECA E URANI	Connections, Culture, Innovations
STRICKLAND	Justice, Equality, Diversity
LERNER	Sustainability, Mobility, Solidarity
PARDO	Free Citizenship's exercise. Socially Complex environments. Areas culturally Dynamic. Quality of democratic life. Security.

Table 3. Requirements and intrinsic conditions for which a city is considered creative. Source: Reis (2008)

The analysis of this summary table allows us to conclude that the opinions of the various authors are intertwined, and similar factors that delimit, in themselves, the aspects that a City should concentrate to bear the title of Creative are mentioned. But, in addition to being successful, a Creative City “needs to be based on good Governance, supported by a long-term strategy that is capable of generating consensus and trust” (Reis, 2008).

It is assumed, therefore, that creativity drives the search for new forms of government that reconcile the public, private and civil society, as well as, alternative forms of financing, innovation, the city itself, its valorisation and collaborative models. We can assume that rather than understanding Creativity’s value and dimensions, it becomes necessary to analyse and understand what kind of policies, strategies, models and actions are adaptable to different cities, since these measures cannot be reproduced - it is important to remember that on the basis of the definition of Creative City we find the territory’s singularity - cultural identities, economic vocations, history, contexts, dynamics, among others. So, another question arises: *in order to assert itself as creative, does a city need to live exclusively on a creative economy or should it seek ways of coordinating its creative economic potential with other areas of economic activity?*

### 1.2 Urban Creativity Cycle and the Creative Economy

A concept and dynamic instrument developed by Charles Landry, the Urban Creativity Cycle is presented as a tool that “seeks to promote an urban renewable energy form with the ability to lead a city or locality to the pinnacle of its development potential” (Fundação de Serralves, 2008). Through this model, Landry (Landry, 2000 cit. Reis, 2008) assumes that Creativity can not only be used and exploited for the development of a place, as it can be wasted if its management is not intelligently and strategically developed. The concept is based on the 3c’s - Culture, Communication, Cooperation - and focuses on the importance of the connection between agents and spaces in supporting activities, and the support developed through the exploitation and use of natural resources on the basis of new technologies. It is on the basis of these concepts that this Creativity management model unfolds. It is considered that Creativity is a resource that can be managed, contradicting the idea that it is nothing more than a mechanism that is available to an artistic and scientific privileged elite. The model integrates five points (Fundação de Serralves, 2008):



Table 4 Charles Landry’s Urban Creativity Cycle.

Source: *Estudo macroeconómico – Desenvolvimento de um Cluster de Indústrias Criativas na Região Norte (2008)*.

It is important to remember, however, that it is not only these five phases that shape and circumscribe the Urban Creativity Cycle. By reaching and satisfying the public or the market through the development of creative ideas and products, it is possible to generate a dynamic that, in addition to rewarding the creative process, lights the fuse to trigger new ideas generators. Therefore, in an endless cycle, creativity creates creativity, leading to new cycles, attracting new people and new resources. In this way, creativity is understood as a sustainable and reusable resource (Fundação de Serralves, 2008). Therefore, creativity seems to acquire an economic dimension, that was translated into the concept of Creative Economy in 2001. Coined by John Howkins, the Creative Economy is defined by the aggregation of “activities that result from the exercise of the imagination by individuals, exploiting their economic value” (Howkins 2001). In addition to aggregating all the processes that involve the creation, production and distribution of products and services, it revitalises manufacturing, services, retail, and the entertainment industries. As a result of having knowledge, talent, creativity and intellectual capital as main productive resources, the Creative Economy has been changing the places where people want to live, work, learn, where they think, invent and produce (Howkins, 2001). The concept asserts itself as an aggregator, uniting ideas about the Creative and Cultural Industries, Creative Cities, Clusters and the Creative Class and consolidates itself as an emerging concept that deals with the interface between Creativity, Culture, Economy and Technology in today’s world, where images, sounds, texts and symbols predominate. Both the academic and power spheres have gradually come to understand that the movement driven by the Creative Economy matters, mainly due to the impact of the goods and services it produces in the areas it integrates, but also due to the directly generated wealth and to research and production processes that are incorporated by almost all economic sectors. In addition, the concept is considered relevant, as it establishes creativity as the major source of human capital and the main fuel for commercial and artistic production.



Table 5. Creativity in today's Economy.  
Source: Adaptation of the UNCTAD's model (2008)

We understand, therefore, that the Creative Economy involves all cultural and intellectual production that arises from Creativity exploration, adding symbolic and commercial values that can, above all, represent a society at a local level. Promoting wealth creation, employment and export growth, the Creative Economy drives economic, cultural and social aspects by interacting with technology, intellectual property and tourism and promoting parallel aspects such as social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development.

Today, it is known that the Creative Economy brings benefits to the sustainability of a place, city or even a country, since it is a greener economy - less energy consuming. In addition, it has been a great boost for the world's major economies - such as in the case

of England, where creative industries clusters are already responsible for the biggest employment and production numbers (Garske, 2009).

With regard to the dynamization work, the author Lala Deheizelin (Deheizelin, 2007 cit. Garske, 2009) argues for a need to boost the Creative Economy, which would necessitate that financiers, cultural managers - public power, private initiative, Universities - and various sectors of society - culture, economy, tourism and external relations - are aware of the need to work together. For this to happen, it is necessary that four dimensions be contemplated: symbolic, social, environmental and economic.

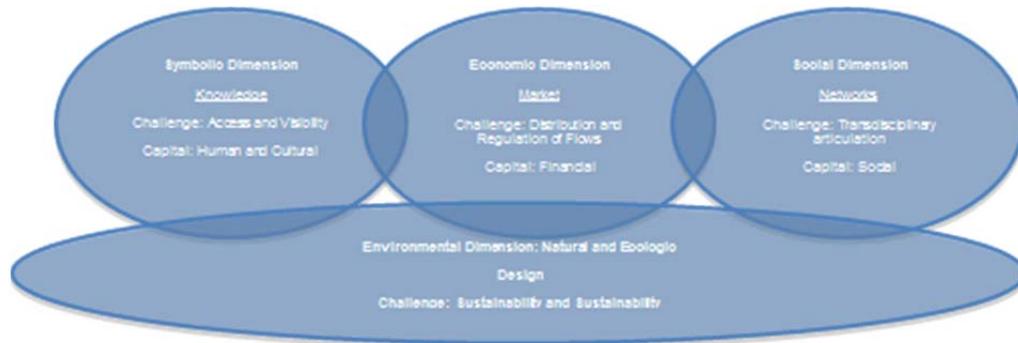


Table 6. The four dimensions of the Creative Economy.  
Source: GARSKE, 2009

It is therefore essential to promote the development of new businesses resulting in new applications of artistic languages and new formats for the dissemination and distribution of cultural products, which are aimed at new audiences in new spaces. In addition to economic growth, employment and exports, developments in creativity-related activities promote social inclusion, cultural diversity and development (Deheizelin, 2007 cit. Garske, 2009). Above all, the evolution of creative activities promotes the evolution of the human being in his professional, personal and economic environment.

## 2. The Creative Europe. Regeneration, branding, policies and economic impact

### 2.1. The Creative Europe and City Branding

Urban Regeneration and City Branding concepts have been walking side by side. When carried out, it is important that the renovation of a city is not only physical, but that it also incorporates a series of measures that relate to its personality, identity and message. These aspects gain influence and special importance after the theorisation of the Creative City concept along with the understanding of the need to renew a city as a whole and not only as a place where people, the economy and infrastructures cohabit.

Over the decades, a wide range of cities have become famous for various reasons: Santiago de Compostela for its position on a road that pilgrims travel, Montecarlo for the annual Formula One event and Monaco for tourism of the upper classes. In all of them, various marketing and branding mechanisms were explored in order to seek to demonstrate cultural, economic and natural attributes that shaped their identity and made it strong and pronounced.

Since the Marketing and Branding phases are distinct, it is necessary to understand that the first mechanism incorporates an important function in terms of sales and promotion, while the second is related mainly to the creation of an image and the promotion of an identity. The success of the development of a Marketing and Branding work will always depend on its focus: a city must, first and foremost, be able to state itself as a solid product that deserves to be communicated (Martinez, 2011). It is only after analysing a city or even a country that it is possible to decide on what measures to take in order to boost its image: is it appropriate to promote urban regeneration or to establish a national infrastructures plan? Will it be more appropriate to partially renovate some areas or just study their message if the place is already in good condition (Martinez, 2011)?

Understanding the requirements of each city and the needs each one presents before taking action to communicate a message or marketing is essential, since the “consideration of these phases would support the framework based on a holistic approach, a marketing process that ends with the place’s brand, instead of a mere name or slogan, which contributes to the creation of a corporate identity in order to communicate a range of physical and psychological attributes” (Martinez, 2011).

It was with these characteristics in mind that in the year 1985, Melina Mercouri, then Minister of Culture for Greece, and Jack Lang, her French namesake, devised the establishment of an annual event whose main purpose was to promote European culture - European Capital of Culture (ECOC). After 32 years, this project and these cities continue to be one of the most ambitious and productive cultural activities in the world, involving budgets far superior to those of other cultural events. To date, 54 cities have held the title, succeeding not only in terms of gaining prestige within European communities, but also in terms of promoting and publicising what they have in common, for example culturally, ideologically, sociologically, politically and demographically speaking. Above all, the European Capitals of Culture aim to assert themselves as an event of diversity.

European cities have been investing large sums of money and energy in the organisation of these cultural events for various reasons and with various aims, including: putting the name of the city on the map, developing the cultural offerings in the long term or even improving tourist flow. Culture and creativity are perceived as being matters of national pride and self-confidence and these stimuli don’t appear to be neglected by cities hosting the event. Given that a ECOC seeks to bring citizens closer together by promoting European cultural diversity, drawing on common history and values, this event presents itself as an opportunity to generate cultural, social and economic profits, promoting urban regeneration and boosting its visibility on an international scale.

Investing in an image enhancement, most of the cities that were integrated into this project developed specific brands, which sought to make the unique aspects of the city visible through carefully chosen graphic elements and characteristics. But issues related to the link between the city brand and the event brand have emerged (European Commission, 2004). Some studies have found that the prevalence of city-marks and their projection, only occurs when the identity of the event's brand is established, based on the identity of the city's brand.

In a study conducted by the European Commission, in 2004, two trends in the event’s management were verified – aiming to ensure benefits that would last beyond the duration of the event. The first referred to Urban Regeneration. The British city of Glasgow, European Capital of Culture in 1990, is considered to be a case of “good

practices” (Myerscough, 1992; 1994 cit, European Commission, 2004). Indeed, it is still being pointed out as an example of good practice, in the history of European Capitals of Culture, for its use of the event as a catalyst for urban regeneration. The second tendency is the concern of developing graphical identification systems to identify the event. In recent years, a practicing of greater caution became evident, concerning relating the city’s branding graphics with the event itself. There have been cases of success, such as Graz in 2003 and Guimarães in 2012, ECOC's that were awarded due to their communication strategy. However, continuity, continued to be questioned (European Commission, 2004). The notoriety and exposure of the name of a city tended to be lost over time, generally because from an integrated management perspective, the event branding had not been adequately developed in line with the city brand. However, this trend has been contradicted, especially in regards to the affective and emotional value that the brand of a city can acquire within the minds of its inhabitants.

## *2.2 The economic and political importance*

In the last decade, the central challenge facing policies aiming to stimulate the Culture and Creativity sector has been centred in the synergies between supply and demand and between creative activities and other economic activities (Mateus, Augusto, 2016). Culture and creativity have gained a dimension of great relevance in the economic reflection spheres, for the regeneration of the competitive and economic models of cities and regions.

The aftermath of the international economic and financial crisis and a trend towards segmented consumption and affirmation of education, highlighted leisure and culture areas as sectors of consumption marked by high dynamism, and a Culture and Creativity sector that needed increased regulation - the development of “policies aimed at business competitiveness by encouraging, inter alia, investment, organisation and management projects, human capital development, innovation and internationalisation aimed at a broad range of cultural and creative activities, including support and the production of content and the programming and performance of artistic and cultural shows and events”(Mateus, Augusto, 2016).

In a study presented in the year 2016, Augusto Mateus & Associados also focused on the importance of “closely stimulating supply and search”(2016). Rather than promoting production in the sector, aspects such as capturing, educating and training publics, promoting equal access to culture and combating social exclusion through activities of an artistic and cultural nature were advocated as relevant aspects, already covered by the European Community’s current strategy.

Today, the creative industries make up one of the most dynamic sectors in world trade, introducing a flexible market structure and integrating independent artists, micro-enterprises and large multinationals.

According to the “Creative Economy Report of the United Nations”, in the year 2005 the fever of the global export of creative goods and services reached 424.4 billion dollars, a value that corresponded to approximately 3.4% of world trade. Already 9 years before, in 1996, the same goods and services amounted 227.5 billion dollars (Creative Economy Report 2008, UNCTAD, 2008); it was, therefore, a registered increase of 196.9 billion dollars in the value of world exports of goods and services in the Creative Industries.

On the European continent, in 2006, according to data from the study “Economy of Culture in Europe” (European Commission, 2006), the Creative Industries represented a turnover of 654 billion EUR, corresponding to approximately 2.6% of the GDP of the European Union. The same data shows that these industries grew 12.3% above the average, employing, back then, 5.8 million people (European Commission, 2006). Despite the sector's contribution to the economy, which grew by 6.3% between 1999 and 2003, the increase in Eastern Europe was the most relevant on the continent: in Lithuania it grew by 67.8 %, in the Czech Republic by 56 %, in Latvia by 17 %, in Slovakia by 15.5 %. In the same period, the turnover of the sector increased at an average annual rate of 10.6 %, twice the overall average for the EU (5.4 %) (Fundação de Serralves, 2008). On the European continent, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Spain are the main parties responsible for about one third of the cultural and creative sector. In addition, the GDP's added value is higher in France, the United Kingdom, Norway, Finland and Denmark, surpassing the 3 %, while the weight of the cultural and creative sector is higher in the Nordic countries, particularly in Scandinavia and Finland (DANTAS, 2007). In 2002 “Creative intelligence”, a joint publication by Richard Florida's Creativity Group and Catalytix, Inc., introduced new data on important issues concerning the future of regions, exposing new indicators. When it comes to wages and salaries, and comparatively to the secondary (industry) and tertiary (services) sectors, while the creative class represents approximately 30% of the work force, it represents the largest share of wages and salaries (Suciu, 2008).

Class	Percentage of Workers	Wage Percentage
Creative	30%	47%
Secondary (Industry)	26%	23%
Tertiary (Services)	44%	30%

Table 7 Wages vs Percentage of Workers in the economic sectors.  
Source: SUCIU, 2008

More recent data point to a continuation of the sector's growth trend. In the year 2015, the “Creative Economy in the EU and the UK” study, developed by NESTA, sought to analyse the contribution of the creative industries to employability levels in Europe. The results point to the fact that the Cultural and Creative Industries employ more than 11 million Europeans, representing - on average - around 5.21% of the total value of European employment. The estimated growth between 2011 and 2013 of employment in the area of creativity was 2%. Compared with the study published by KEA in 2006, the data collected by NESTA pointed to a higher growth and potential - in 2006 KEA estimated that the sector employed 5.8 million workers (based on the EU25), which represented 3.1% of total employment (NESTA 2015). Focusing mainly the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden, the study further concludes that (NESTA, 2015):

- Employment generated by the creative economy in Germany was shown to be the only one capable of surpassing the United Kingdom (3.14 million workers compared to 2.94 million in 2013), despite assuming less weight in the total economy (7.96 % Versus 9.93%);

- In France, the sector employed about 1.92 million workers, representing 7.54% of total employment;
- In the Netherlands, the creative economy generated 834,000 jobs (10.9% of the total economy), registering a significant growth between 2011 and 2013 - the study concludes that this growth was mainly due to the increase in the number of creative professionals “outside” the Creative industries;
- In Poland, employment in the Cultural and Creative sector was comparable to that in the Netherlands (873,000 workers), but represented a significantly lower share of total employment (5.6%). Creative employment was therefore on a rising trend, but at a slower pace than in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom;
- In Sweden, the creative economy employed a relatively small number of workers (557,000). Despite this, it represented the largest share of employment among the economies studied (11.9%), despite the trend of relative stabilisation of the number of workers between 2011 and 2013.

In today's digital age the intangible value is the one that dictates the material value, since consumers seek to live new and enriching experiences every day. In order to continue to be competitive in the global context, and knowing the value that creativity has in the economy, Europe has been seeking to create suitable conditions for creativity and innovation to thrive in the new business culture, as pointed out by the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, as evidenced in one of the political guidelines for the next Commission.<sup>1</sup>

It is known that prosperity depends on three main factors: how resources are used, the *existing know-how* and creative talent. The combination of these factors favours and encourages innovation. In Europe, the CCI “present real potential to respond to these challenges, contributing to the strategy *Europe 2020* and for some of its flagship initiatives such as the *Innovation Union* and the *Digital Agenda*”(European Commission, 2010). Recognised as growth sectors, the CI are seen as highly innovative enterprises with great economic potential. But they still have a long way to go – they are still young in the context of the global economy. Thus, in order for these industries to take advantage of the opportunities that arise from factors such as cultural diversity, globalisation and digitalisation, the *Green Paper on the Creative Industries* points out three challenges: firstly, it is necessary to create the appropriate means, increasing the capacity for experimentation, innovation and success, by facilitating the access to financing and the acquisition of combined skills; secondly, it is important to help cultural and creative industries to develop in terms of local and regional dynamics, including through greater exchange and mobility; and thirdly, to go forward with a strengthening of the Creative Economy, taking advantage of the positive effects of the CCI in a variety of economic and social contexts.

In this context, the European Council underlined the importance of strengthening the link between Education, training and maximising the potential of SME's belonging to the cultural and creative sectors, calling for the creation of synergies between culture and economy. At the same time, it clarified the criteria that constitute the European vision of Culture, Creativity and Innovation, through the development of policy measures that seek to develop CI communities and their integration into the European strategy for promotion and cultural appreciation.

The need for the existence of cultural policies that boost the cultural and creative life of a city is urgent. However, the copy or duplication of cultural policies in other cities can be

a disastrous experience – not to establish governments linked with the private public, public and civil society doesn't favour the creation of collaborative essential connections. Before discussing the importance of specific policies for the development of the Creative Economy it is important to understand what they are.

A cultural policy can be understood as a set of initiatives or measures that promote constant institutional support, carried out either by the government or by non-governmental organisations, community groups or private companies that are charged with guiding the recognition, protection and encouragement of material and immaterial development in a society (Teixeira Coelho, 1997). Teixeira Coelho (1997) explained that the initiatives of these entities aimed to “promote the production, distribution and culture usage, the preservation and dissemination of historical heritage and the planning of the bureaucratic apparatus responsible for them”.

Much of the discussion focused on the question of the concept of cultural policies relates to their field of action and to the actors involved in their constitution and exercise. In order to make it simpler to understand, develop and implement cultural policies, Isaura Botelho (2001) recognised that culture has two distinct dimensions that should be considered as the targets of cultural policies: the sociological dimension - which refers to the market and culture designed with the intention of “building certain meanings and to achieve some kind of public, through a specific means of expression”; the anthropological dimension - which refers to the culture designed day-to-day and that is represented in the lives of individuals, ensuring them stability and easier social interaction. It is this dimension that represents the greatest challenge for cultural managers.

What is more, the biggest dilemma refers to the extent to which a cultural policy recognises public nature. So that it might take effect and achieve the necessary, a cultural policy must be developed and actioned by different sectors and social agents, acting together. As a result, the transversality of the cultural field would be covered, including various social life areas, such as the economy, communication, law, behaviour, diversity and (trans)national policy.

Despite the fact that the inequalities in access to culture and creativity have seen a decrease, mainly due to the provision and promotion of cultural events and centres for the development of business in the creative sector, the need to access policies and support for cultural goods remains acute.

In March 2000, the *Lisbon Agenda* introduced the European commitment to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world, with the ability to achieve sustainable growth with greater employability and social cohesion. Through the definition of these objectives, the European Commission agenda introduced and emphasised the importance of technological development and the awareness of the competitive and economic advantages of Creativity powers in the Global Economy. 4 Years later, the EC<sup>2</sup> understood the need to proceed with the mapping of the cultural sector to outline ways in which they could contribute to achieving the strategic objectives that were defined previously. At this time, creativity was recognised as being a competitive advantage and the need to include it in agendas, policies and regional programs was understood.

Through its diverse national and regional agendas, the EU has sought to enable cities and regions to take place in the global race to attract investment, talent and tourism and Culture is considered to be a key tool for achieving this.

It is possible to conclude that cultural policies are a complex subject of analysis. But having such a document is undeniably important in the regulation and boost of the

Cultural and Creative Industries and must be understood as being a strategic issue on the part of governments. However, there is still the question of who should be the regulator of Creativity. The importance of municipalities in the definition of cultural policies grew, given the increase in investment and responsibility, in creation and management, whether that came in the form of cultural support equipment for arts and crafts, or equipment and initiatives connected to creativity.

### 3. Conclusion

The studies carried out have shown that the process of interpenetration between culture and economy, and the penetration of creativity into conventional economic activities, has resulted in a significant expression, at a European level. The sector's size and the dynamism it has instilled in the transaction of goods and services and in social flows themselves, support the need to strengthen and regulate the activities in the sector. The main purpose of this literature review was to point out guidelines for future reflections on the importance of Creativity at a European level. Not seeking to focus on the undeniably economic aspect underlying the production of Human Creativity, we seek instead to convey the importance of understanding the potential of the creativity phenomenon and pointing out responsibilities for its management, promotion and regulation.

In general terms, we can say that this exploratory article allowed us to understand that the concept of Creative Industries is not watertight, being still at the centre of the great discussion surrounding Economy and Culture. In addition, the Creative Economy is understood as one of the current paradigms. Several studies have affirmed that Creativity is an engine of sustainability and creator of wealth for cities, defending the assertion that Creativity generates economic value. With this concept in mind, territories and organisations have been responding to a growing need to increase their level of competitiveness and innovation, by trying to design strategies that attract a strong and productive creative class, to develop their skills and resources. This idea is underpinned by the registered growth in employability in the sector, which in 2015 employed around 11.4 million people at the European level - 5% of the overall European workforce. At the same time, the literature pointed to understanding Creativity as an element that can be used and exploited to develop a city or a place - it is in Creativity and in its intelligent and strategic management that revitalisation and urban regeneration are based. The analysis of several case studies also points to the fact that Urban Regeneration and the Creative Economy go hand in hand. In addition, we understand that the great creative examples at the European level are regularly associated with a renewal of creative spaces and infrastructures - a city with a strong and productive Creative Economy requires that its infrastructures are modern and enable Creativity promotion, all of which highlights the importance of conducting projects of revitalisation and regeneration that sustain the transformation of a City into a Creative City.

Another aspect that this literature review allowed us to understand was the need to develop sustainable cultural and creativity policies - meeting not only the needs identified by the creative class, but also the needs of the city itself. Only then will it be possible to obtain the greatest benefit from existing human and material resources, keeping in mind the importance of culture as an economic and social tool, for the regeneration of urban territories and the socio-demographic dynamics of space.

## Notes

- (1) <http://www.dn.pt/>
- (2) <http://www.dges.mctes.pt/dges/pt/reconhecimento/uni%3a3o+europeia/estrat%3a9gia+europa+2020/estrategia+lisboa.htm>

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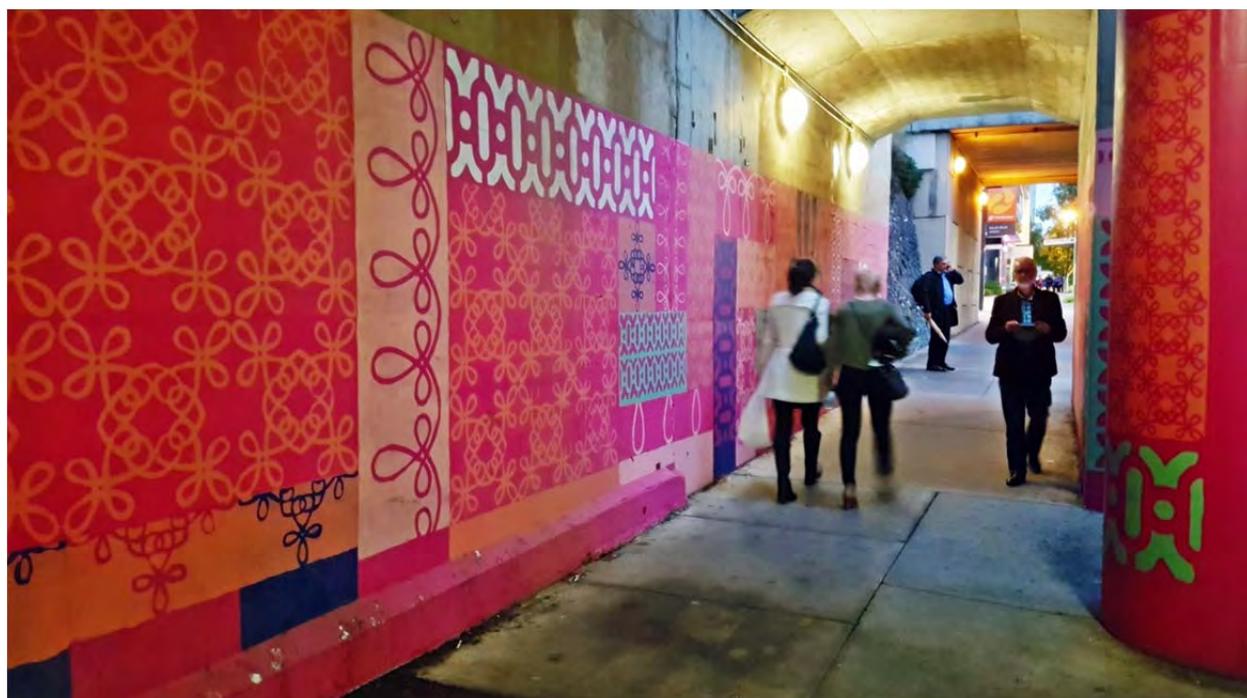
## VIEWPOINT

### **Flourish. A project by Harbinger Consultants and Mandy Ridley in Brisbane, Australia**

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*Figure 1. Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Photo credit: Linda Carroli.*

The Public Art projects that Harbinger Consultants undertake always provide a curatorial framework and strategy that draws out and documents the multi-layered histories of the area/site and its communities of users (both historic and contemporary). These are central to the development of the brief for the artist/s and the ensuring collaborative process between public art curator and artist. It is essential to understand the factors that influence perceptions of place, paying particular attention to personal and community interpretations of culture and make these available to the artists so the artistic process and artworks relate in a holistic and creative way to the specific resources of the area including existing artworks in the vicinity. Public artworks are principal elements, statements and markers of place encountered by people in their everyday experience of a locale.

Central to the development of the curatorial rationale is a comprehensive analysis of the merits and particularities for each site. Artwork/s scope and scale are explored to ensure fit with a sense of place through integration with the streetscaping as well as the current

and future use of the site/s. If appropriate there may be opportunities within the artwork development phase by the selected artist/s to involve the community in some form of creative engagement to generate some components and/or content for the new artwork/s.



Figure 2. Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Photo credit: JM John Armstrong.

An example of a placemaking Public Art project developed, curated and managed by Harbinger Consultants is Flourish by artist Mandy Ridley at Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane for Brisbane City Council, Queensland Rail and South Bank Corporation. The tunnel is formed by a railway line passing over a street and pedestrian pathway. With many constraints on the site, the client called for painted mural treatments of the tunnel walls and columns.

As with many pedestrian environments located under transit infrastructure, the area was uninviting and dark, dominated by the heavy rail footing. Our process involved undertaking a street survey of pedestrians at the site. This street was one of several over which the rail line passed and which formed entry and exit points for pedestrians to cross into different precincts. Through the survey, we learned that pedestrians had mixed experiences and feelings about the site ranging from a desire to rejuvenate and reconnect the area, make it feel safer and value the industrial and infrastructural history of the location. This feedback informed the curatorial rationale which drew on the concept of 'fabric' recognising that "the railway's physical form creates an edge; it is a site where the fabric seems frayed and disjointed".

The artist responded with a proposal that uses fabric and emblem details from historic railway staff uniforms as a key reference to develop a richly textured and layered patterning of the space. The artist also considered the adjoining retail and residential precinct and aimed to blur the distinctions between work and home. Ridley worked with the stylistic language she discovered within the textile sources and created overlaid images and motifs to convey a multiplicity of histories to reflect the urban experience and the changing nature of the immediate locality.



Figure 3 (left). Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Pink wall. Photo credit: Rod Buchholz.  
Figure 4 (right). Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Blue wall. Photo credit: JM John Armstrong.

With motifs sourced from the decorative trim of railway uniforms Ridley succinctly articulates the qualities of the site. The insignia and emblems were magnified and transferred to the site using large stencils and the result is reminiscent of tiling or wall paper to address the conflicting scales in the site.



Figure 5 (left). Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Pink wall. Photo credit: Rod Buchholz.  
Figure 6 (right). Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Blue wall. Photo credit: Rod Buchholz.

Many major projects are collaborative in nature and their success is reliant on the ongoing and creative involvement of all stakeholders and potential users of the sites and environments. Since 2005, Harbinger has sought to enhance locales and sites by working with stakeholders and the public to create spaces and places that are meaningful and enduring. Harbinger Consultants have accrued extensive experience working in curatorial development, project management, community engagement, urban contexts and the cultural sector. Building on our experience in the development of curatorial rationales for urban and regional public artwork projects ranging from medium scale Suburban Centre Improvement Project (SCIP) sites to healthcare environments to large scale infrastructure sites, Harbinger works collaboratively with clients and other stakeholders to generate understanding and dialogue about a site. Harbinger's experience in the development of

curatorial frameworks and strategies at a variety of scales ranging from major regional heritage tourism projects to intimate artworks within the suburban context is built upon an acute awareness of the complexities of places and their users and uses. The approach is informed by diverse thinking drawing on community cultural development, place activation and placemaking in the public realm.

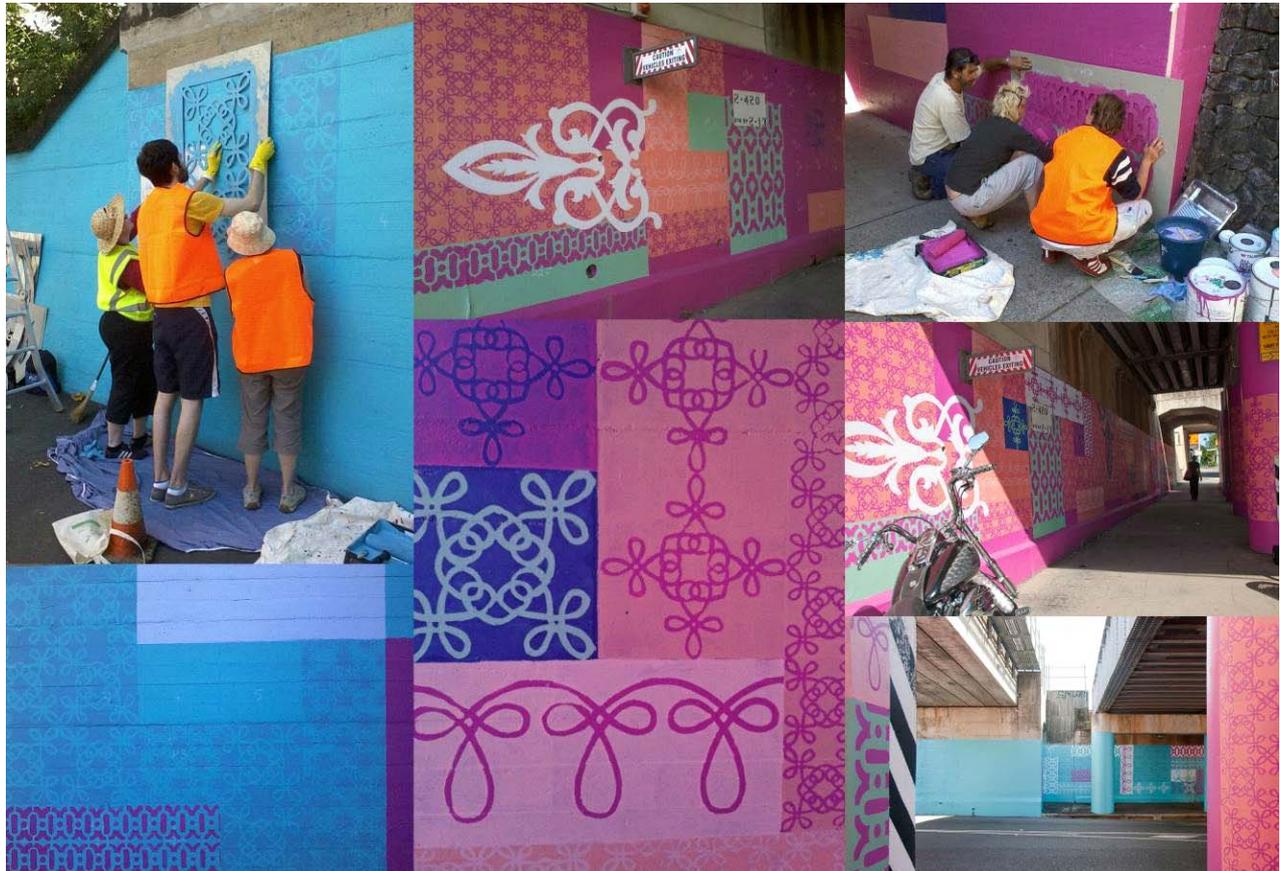


Figure 7. Ernest Street Tunnel, South Brisbane. Photo credit: JM John Armstrong and Rod Buchholz (bottom right).

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## VIEWPOINT

### **Making public space. About the same or about difference?**

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*Architecture restructures the basic elements of being, physically, into places, spaces and their complexes; the human habitat...<sup>1</sup>*

*[It] builds and rebuilds ideas and ideals of the world and human and the world...ideas of house, city, place; the human landscape...ideas of the world as it is... and ideals of the world as it should be...<sup>2</sup>*

This text is about making public space out of and within the omnipresent entirety of space which is the defining circumstance of the macrocosm that holds us and that we inhabit. It begins with a propositional discourse on how that omnipresent space differentiates into public space and further articulates into human places. It concludes with a comparative précis of eight actual projects for public space as programmed, designed, realised and adopted for different purposes in the different socio-cultural and geo-locational situations of five established cities. The focus is on similarity and difference, or how social demands, human aspirations and design rationales for public space might depend on their originating context. It is also more about socio-cultural constants from which design approaches or, better, attitudes arise than the socio-political, economic or otherwise practical variables of procurement and implementation of public space, which are fleeting and fluctuate by time, government, and popular opinion.

The text is organised in sections, which form a collage of things that matter in making public space in the contemporary world which is essentially defined by the contemporary urban condition where global interconnectedness—networks and inclusiveness—negotiates with site-specific differentiation—otherness and exclusiveness. The order of the text is from general to particular, abstract to concrete, so as to set the subject matter in the context of the larger whole it belongs to.

The problematics of similarity and difference in attitudes and practices of making public space are complex rather than just being an immediately lucid simplex which can be de- and reconstructed from set pieces. Rather than polar opposites, the problematics constitute a flux of incremental transformation of the degrees of different-ness and sameness between the two. The very definition of 'public space' is not a unanimous one amongst its makers, at least—what actually counts as public space, and how does the notion of 'place', or 'public place' fit into the equation?

*Statistics project that two thirds of the world's total population will live in cities by 2050. Concentrations and densities of urbanites will conceivably vary for varied reasons, but at least 80% of people in North America and Europe, and 90% in Japan and Scandinavia are by then expected to be classified 'urban'.<sup>3</sup>*

An increasing number of urban residents suggests increasing mobility, interaction and variability of action, which all suggests increasing requirement for public space in cities. In parallel, an increasing number of urban people suggests increasing requirements for housing. But the availability of any land for any purpose is a set, geographic quantity, the acquisition of land for public purposes further inhibited by any prioritisation of private rather than public function, and the potential to increase the public diminished by any horizontal densification of the built fabric by appropriating 'voids', or unbuilt land between buildings for something perhaps less democratic than urban public space. If, then, potential land for public purposes in the physical world is shrinking, thus delimiting opportunities for public space to fulfil its urban roles, do we need the cyberspace to compensate? Can some functions shift from physicality to make true public space of virtuality and so extend the concept and reality of public presence there, that is, make the virtual also tangibly actual?

### **City-ness | Urban-ness**

The notion of public space and the actuality of its historically near-self-appointed presence in human settlements are definitely urban phenomena. There is an innate need for order in human beings as a structuring mechanism for life in groups. In the case of urbanity, the ultimate form of group living, this surfaces as a desire to arrange city space in a fit manner for structural, civic and civil purposes; fundamentally, to control the city and the citizen; and so display the authority from which the control sparks in the city's morphology to remind everyone of its power.

In settlements outside cities, there is no real rationale for such prescribed order. Outside urbanity, life follows different cycles. Conceivably, there is spatial order to serve human needs, but one which originates externally in interdependent, self-generating patterns of nature and production rather than being internal to the human mind. Self-evolving landscape attributes instead of formal space create the public context, and landscape management rather than urban design measures take priority in fostering the public good.

*...a structural perspective of space identifies "urban" as the product of social structures and relationships that typify urbanization....<sup>4</sup>*

A cultural artefact and social construct, public space inseparable from cities since their ancestry. This is exemplified in the layouts for Uruk, Athens, and Becan<sup>5</sup>, from 5<sup>th</sup>C BCA and the first cities we know, which are all structured around a sophisticated public spaces system dimensioned to accommodate specified city functions; governance, ceremony, announcements and public gathering; and arranged around concentrations of associated public buildings. Rather than a nondescript thoroughfare or a separator of built forms, public space was from the start conceived of as a multipurpose civic feature with socio-political and cultural meaning and a sense of hierarchy communicated in a spatial language.

*Civic space is created by a set of universally-accepted rules, which allow people to organise, participate and communicate with each other freely and without hindrance... [It is] a concept central to any open and democratic society and means that states have a duty to protect people while respecting and facilitating the fundamental right to associate, assemble peacefully and express views and opinions.<sup>6</sup>*

Materially, the being-nature of public-cum-civic space as a fundamental part of a city implies that a city without such space cannot readily be imagined, possibly except for manufactured 'villages' for prescribed demographics such as gated neighbourhoods, where 'public space' of any type allows only elite access by residence or permission and, hence, can factually be classified as only semi-, or pseudo-public. Conceptually, though, a city with no public space outside of buildings can be envisaged (and also physically made): If voids voids-cum-public spaces between building walls compress to zero and building walls meet or merge, external space will disappear. But since logically nothing restricts public space to the outdoors only, it can—and conceivably will—re-emerge indoors in new configurations that still fulfil the criteria of being 'public' and of being 'urban', so again: no city, not even the most unlikely one, is left without an innate, inbuilt public space.

### **Definitionless-ness**

In professional terminology, the concept of 'public space' appears remarkably ambiguous in any precise definition. This is quite remarkable, considering the length of the socio-cultural history of public space and its multiple, time-conscious, morphing role in the daily physical and social frame of urbanites. What is the entity we refer to, when we speak of 'public space'? Can we even make intelligent discussion, or valid propositions about the subject on a level platform without confidence that we have a like understanding of it and actually are discussing the one, same thing? Firstly, do we speak about 'public space' or 'public spaces'—or, perhaps, 'urban space'?

In sociological science, definitions of 'public space', used parallel to 'urban space' and sometimes 'civic space', rotate around the notion that the term primarily, if not exclusively, refers to 'social space' for public interaction, that is, for citizens to gather, meet and socialise. Public space is 'meant' for mutual interaction of its users and public life in general, including public displays of opinion and talent by means of demonstrations, street preaching, performances, street art, *exempli gratia*.

*[In open civic-cum-public space]... citizens and civil society organisations are able to organise, participate and communicate without hindrance... to claim their rights and influence the political and social structures around them.<sup>7</sup>*

In geographic science, the focus of the definition is on the idea of 'place' rather than 'space'. This notion attaches human emotion to the definition equation in nominating a particular part of the infinite, non-defined, thus abstract, spatial whole as 'place' distinguishable from other localities and the remainder of 'general' space by emotional attachment, or a sense of belonging to it; its *genius loci*, or 'sense of place'.

*...place is a personal connection with activities and functions which are geographically located. It exists at the level of the individual and is at the same time shared to the extent that lived experiences relate.*<sup>8</sup>

*Place is defined as location and meaning. Each place has a different meaning to different people and is therefore highly personal, experiential and subjective...A sense of place then refers to those meanings which are associated with a place.*<sup>9</sup>

The notion of placemaking (also: place-making, place making), originates in the 1960s-era writings of American-based planning professionals Jane Jacobs and William H Whyte, and has since been adopted by considerable numbers of the urban planning community particularly in the new western world including Australia and the United States. Like geographers, the propounded placemaking philosophy and terminology speak of 'place' instead of 'space', or 'urban space', and of the importance of an emotional attachment; 'ownership'; and social life instead of mere functional utility in developing the public environment. It is also detectable from writings that the term 'place' is less strictly urban, or 'made' than 'space' and, hence, useable more freely in non-urban cases, as long as emotional attachment exists.

The practice of placemaking has also introduced 'place governance' and 'place management' into the equation in emphasising that for successful results, the design of temporal processes, programs and participation is as important as is that of any physical frame:

*Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. Place-making is both a process and a philosophy.*<sup>10</sup>

*...most importantly—good place-making demands that we consider the end-users by inviting them into the conversation...as an important part of the design process.*<sup>11</sup>

Global age architecture and urban design theorists avoid literal definitions. Instead, they rely on analogy, allegory, and (or) metaphor, conceptualising 'public/urban space' as an incarnation—or a special case—of something else, or they apply concepts borrowed from the study of aesthetics<sup>12</sup>, with the entire city and each its part regarded as an artefact<sup>13</sup>. The drawing of parallels between (urban) public space and its object of reference in the thinking of these theorists includes qualifying 'public space' through its (i) perceived symbolic, signifying, and (or) 'meaning' aspect: For some, it is (ii) a 'stage'<sup>14</sup>, or (iii) a set of 'patterns'<sup>15</sup>, semiotic 'events'<sup>16</sup>, ephemeral situations<sup>17</sup>, or signifying 'programs'<sup>18</sup>, or (iv) a 'meeting space'<sup>19</sup>, 'interaction space'<sup>20</sup>, (v) a 'symbol-space'<sup>21</sup>, or, in planning terminology, (vi) a planned-for-a-purpose, manufactured-by-social-subscription 'place'<sup>22</sup>. Further, many theorists speak of 'urban' space rather 'public' space but, but this a somewhat mute point, since, in essence, any free, open-to-all urban space is, by default, always public. Theoretically taken, it is both a 'subject' and 'object' of physical, cultural, social and individual-emotional appropriation.

*The city is the locus of the collective memory...of its people...and like memory it is associated with objects and places. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the*

*city's predominant image...  
...we are compelled to designate all types of space between buildings in towns and other  
localities as urban space...it is a continuous flow of negative volume between  
buildings...geometrically bounded by a variety of elevations.  
Every building must create coherent and well-shaped public space next to it...pedestrian space,  
gardens, streets, and parking spaces...[must be] formed by the buildings, not vice-versa.  
If architecture is both concept and experience, space and use, structure and superficial image  
(non-hierarchically), then architecture should cease to separate these categories and...merge  
them into unprecedented combinations of programmes and spaces.  
Live streets and piazzas create the outer frame for the social activities...Inherent in them is the  
quality that people are enabled to meet.  
We shall emphasize image—image over process or form—in asserting that architecture depends  
in its perception and creation on past experience and emotional association.  
Symbol dominates space. Architecture is not enough...[it] becomes symbol in space rather than  
form in space.*

In sum, we do have a body of theory and methodology for the spatial analysis and design of cities, but not really any 'grand unified theory' that would bring together thought to define public space in an unambiguous, useful way for contemporary design and discussion purposes. Yet, from the perspective of architecture, the concept and reality of 'public space' involves much more than merely locational and functional attributes, which is obvious when considering the extent of space-ness of non-conventional concepts of public surroundings such as virtual ones. Obviously, we are dealing with a very complex, intervolving entity.

### **Virtual-ness**

Electronic culture; the immediate connectivity-at-will and the ensuing virtual communities-at-will extend our conception of the 'public'. Is virtual space also public space in like ways to the actual? Apart from being carried by detectable electronic particles and (or) waves, it has no tangible physicality, hence no configurable form or measurable dimension.

Everything within it happens in 'real time', but 'time' as definite points and durations is irrelevant, since everything entered into virtuality becomes suspended in a non-temporal vacuum with zero gravity or any definite directionality.

In virtual space, we can make our own 'reality' as a model of what we might like it to be<sup>23</sup>, project our self-manufactured self, or rather, its *alter ego*, into a self-made space framed and filled with self-selected things, and have a permanent presence in (cyber)space through electronic tracks of our travels. Hence, virtual space is equally 'designable' as physical space, if not more, but can it in any conceivable way replace the plural being-nature of the actual as public space? Can we even dare to consider it as a postmodern re-interpretation of public space, or an extension of it, or a new type or subset of that space?

Virtual space is entirely made (of) and determined by technology and associated promises for advancement, change, transformation, and speed, but near equally so is any material public space that incorporates, or is 'made of' multimedia, hence in a constant time-space transformation in singular, but endless combinations. Virtual space operates by visual and aural cues, intuition and probability, near-negating our (inner) interactive sensibility and any

(outer) contextuality, all ambience-evoking facets of material space, public or otherwise—which, of course, only exists by virtue of and relative to its context.

Despite its intangible being-nature and the paradox of the intangible being space where the tangible travel, virtual space can be regarded as public space: it is an open, free citizens' forum as well as a site and a medium for anyone to project information and opinion to the world. But can this radical permutation of public space also classify as essentially 'urban' in the same sense as the conventional, actual one, that is, does it in any similar way structure and control cities and citizens, and display the society's official order?

As a phenomenon, virtual space clearly belongs to an urban society and upholds an urban culture, which both are dense and fast moving. As a physicality, it only exists by virtue of electronic units filling it with constant motion rather than dimension, which condition fails to build any corporeal structure—void nor solid—and so can only metaphorically form any tangible urban architecture. And virtual space does not want to be confined to any physicality, but rather be an all-encompassing, omnipresent, global entity which is accessible to everyone regardless of their earthly space-time location. Might the entire earth, then, become 'the city', internally structured, and (or) articulated, by its virtually organising space?

### **And the 'public sphere'?**

Considering proposed definitions in social theory, 'public space' in virtuality parallels the 'public sphere' of actuality: A 'sphere' is not necessarily a 'space', but in socio-theoretical discourse, these two terms appear intermittently, and loosely, in texts as each other's synonyms, plausibly through their similarity of having assigned a social role as locations for people's mutual interaction.

*[The public sphere]...is a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and...to reach a common judgment about them.<sup>24</sup>*

*The traditional idea of public sphere...is centred mainly in face to face interactions...[but] modern society is characterized by a new form of "mediated publicness"...*

*[it is] de-spatialized...non dialogical...[with] wider and more diverse audiences...<sup>25</sup>*

*This mediated publicness has altered the power relations in a way in which not only the many are visible to the few but the few can also now see the many...<sup>26</sup>*

From this perspective, the public sphere could easily extend into virtuality in which both could become each other's special case or, para-thinking in set theory, each become a subset of the other.

### **Aside: experimental space?**

Considering creative industries, virtuality is a design space for making models of the world and of ourselves and 'things' in and 'made out' of the world in whichever guise we require or desire in each case. So, considering its latent potential to allow us to manufacture infinite, pan-directional changes to parametric processes in 'cyber-space-time' which allow glimpses towards otherwise unknowable futures and pasts, virtuality is also an experimental space for actuality. Infinitely programmable, malleable, manipulate-able, and

calculation-proof, it is verifiable to science and plausible enough for testing spatial matters for the purposes of public architecture.

### **Conceptualisation. Internal context – human - language - relation**

Language—an aggregate of words with designated values—is highly conditioning of the human conceptualisation process, that is, how we grasp the meaning of words and terms and the ideas they represent. It is the basis and expression of our world view, which by extension, is the basis and expression of our attitude towards the world, its beings and its phenomena.

Our interpretation of the meaning content of a word or term shapes our regard for and interactions with the object it signifies. Regarding 'public space', for example, to envision it to be a 'stage' for something to occur or be displayed upon evokes a completely different image from envisioning it as a 'symbol system', which is a representation of something outer, or a 'meeting place', which notion implies social action, reaction and interaction. Design-wise, this conditioning influences our design attitude or, in other words, from which angle and with which weightings we approach and negotiate a design task, at least beyond the fundamental functionality required to be achieved by design. While any public space fulfils multiple purposes, a stage, symbol system and meeting place are hardly identical as design objects, nor can their design solutions really be.

Generally, regarding the exchange of Information and opinion, unambiguous communication of messages about them cannot happen without a collective understanding of the meaning content of the words we use for concepts or objects we discuss. Here a consistent semiotic terminology will ensure we have a degree of common understanding, and all discuss the same, not something actually different.

As for public space, if we cannot define it, we cannot design it either, at least not in any satisfactory, role-fulfilling way—instead, we near *de facto* deny its very being as any discernible, identifiable, designable object.

*[And]...what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.*<sup>27</sup>

### **External context. Human-habitat-relation**

Context—the positioning of human beings across the earth and its phenomena—parallels and complements language as a powerful conditioner of human processes, attitudes; in general, how we regard our surroundings.

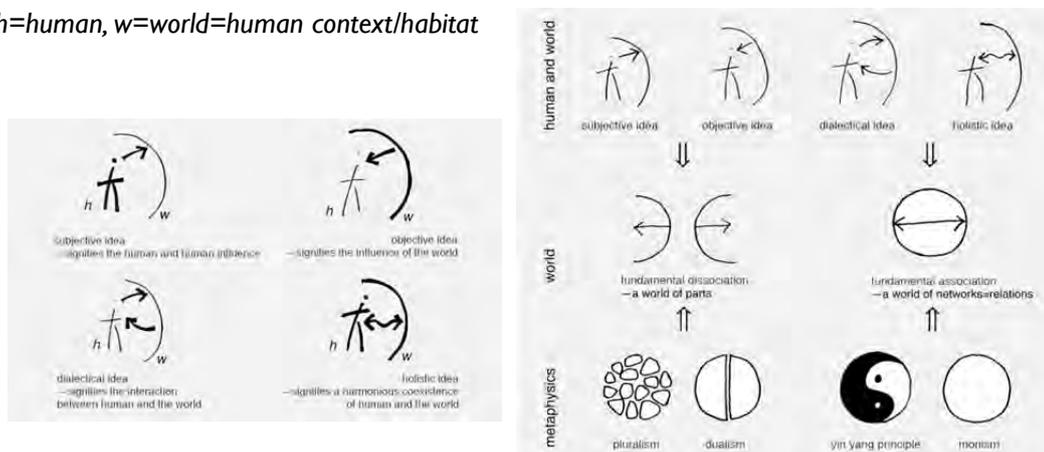
People are social beings who choose to live together in communal, cultural, socio-political, geographic and climatic contexts across the world. Regardless of the commonality of humanness, any difference in each individual's context, or habitat, results in different individual relationship(s) between us and our habitat and, therefrom, produces different attitudes in how we value it and interact with it—thus contributing to our living ethos and adding substance to our world view.

*...the acts and thoughts of human beings are the final ground for judging quality. These apparently ephemeral phenomena become repetitive and significant in at least three situations: in the persistent structure of ideas which is culture, in the enduring relationships people which are social institutions, and in the standing relations of people with place...*<sup>28</sup>

Living things exist by virtue of their contextual relationships, hence have a fundamental interdependent relationship with it to sustain life; human and her habitat, or environment, are both subjects and objects of that reciprocal connection and interaction. Philosophically, with the human as the subject, this translates into how our habitat-context - a composite of the parallel physical, cultural, socio-political and media-information frames of human life - influences our experience, use, mental imagery, images and associative memory of it. With the human as the object, it influences how we treat that context, by design or otherwise, ultimately determining the degree to which the entropy and (potential) atrophy caused by our manipulation and wear affects its evolution.

Metaphysically, public space is a creation of the human mind to interpret and influence its surroundings, which is the (urban) human context. For making public space, contextual influences by geography join linguistic ones by culture as complementary parables of the design equation which, due to the way they are born and albeit sharing aspects and philosophies, make for variables of difference in different design situations.

*h=human, w=world=human context/habitat*



*Four types of idea of human and the world*

*Relationships of the fundamental types of idea of the world and human and the world*

Figure 1. Typology of possible human–context /habitat relations and their correlation with public behaviour, conduct, and design attitudes.<sup>29</sup>

### Behaviour | conduct | attitude

Public life happens in public space(s), since public space in all its guises generates, accommodates, and adapts itself to it. ‘Public space’, then, implies ‘public presence’ which, in turn, implies ‘public behaviour’. This differs from behaviour in private, perhaps less so in contemporary circumstances than prior ones with stricter rules of ‘properness’, but still different enough to be specific to people’s presentation of themselves in public.

*Public space is for negotiating the interface between our homes, our businesses, our institutions, and the broader world. Public space is how we get to work, how we do our errands, and how we get back home. Public space is where nearly half of violent crimes happen. Public space is where policing ensures safety for some but not others. Public space is for buying and selling, or for meeting, playing, and bumping into one another. Public space is for conveying our*

*outrage and our highest aspirations, as well as for laying the most mundane utilities and infrastructure. And when we let it, public space can be a medium for creativity, expression, and experimentation.*<sup>30</sup>

In public spaces, formal laws and by-laws regulate and sanction, but it is the non-formal, unwritten-still-adopted civil etiquette which actually compels us to act in specific ways in public situations and geographies. In cities, the etiquette directs how we negotiate pedestrian traffic, board public transport, select a street side seat, deal with small wheel traffic, graffiti, aural stimuli, mundane street life and anarchy—in all, how we share our public space with others. Remarkably, perhaps, considering all that happens by incident and accident, there generally exists a sense of tolerance and decency of people in the seeming mayhem of urban public space—a heightened awareness of and self-preservation from others, certainly, and a desire to present the self favourably to other members of the public as fellow social beings, anonymous or otherwise.

Behaviour in public space is regardable as a specific manifestation of the relationship of city people with their urban context. It stems, as defined above, from the broader, fundamental connection of humans with their habitat and, by that virtue, gives rise to related experience and action. The experience and action may tend towards what is deemed positive or negative by law, or even more importantly, by people's mindset, depending on the degree and type of value they perceive the subject space deserves. Public space is a 'designable'; a 'made' space rather than a self-generating object; so the first properties to affect behaviour are its manufactured attributes. It is the design, not the circumstance *per se*, which can radically influence human behaviour in the (urban) public, including social and cultural attitude. These, when practiced, will become absorbed in public ambience of space and, through the interactive human-context process, proceed to participate in any kind of future influence on people coinciding with affected space. Design matters.

*While architecture may not always be...politically expressive...[it] has social meaning beyond cultural expression. Physical space, as [British ex-premier Winston] Churchill reminded us... affects its present occupants.*<sup>31</sup>

## 'Space' | 'place'

By dictionary definition, from the universal to the particular and in the context of architectural thought and terminology, and humanity, 'space', physically, refers to—the dimensioned, but unmeasurable infinite:

*'the unlimited three-dimensional realm or expanse in which all material objects are located and all events occur', an extent or expanse of a (two-dimensional) surface or three-dimensional area [or] the portion or extent of this in a given instance, and 'the absence of objects; a wide and open area; the area available for use'*<sup>32</sup>.

And metaphysically, in the context of the democratic aspect of public space, it refers to—the ego:

*[the] sufficient freedom from external pressure to develop or explore one's needs, interests, and individuality; freedom or opportunity to express oneself, fulfil one's needs, have privacy...*<sup>33</sup>

As for 'place', does 'space' equal 'place' in architectural thought and terminology, and, by extension, does 'public place' equal 'public space' in the context of city structure and operation, and the urban social order<sup>34</sup>? Again, in dictionary terms, 'place' (originating in a merge of the meanings of old French 'place': open space and Greek 'platei': broad street) refers to 'a particular position or point in space'<sup>35</sup> which, structure-wise, may be:

*'an area with definite or indefinite boundaries; a portion of space...of definite or indefinite extent'... 'a particular portion of space allocated to a person or thing'... [or] a building or an area set aside for a specified purpose.'*<sup>36</sup>

More site-specifically, in a geo-morphological, -locational or -typological sense, 'place' refers to a portion of a larger three-dimensional entity; a container, as it were, to hold practically anything within:

*'an open space or square in a city or town...a short street or court.....a particular geographic area; a locality, such as a town or city... [or] an area of habitation, as a city, town, or village'*<sup>37</sup>.

And, if 'position' as a definer of 'place' is interpreted as 'status', 'place' will also refer to a physicality which exhibits:

*'a proper or designated role or function'*<sup>38</sup>; *'a particular situation or circumstance... a specified type or... holding [of] a specified position in a sequence or hierarchy'*<sup>39</sup>.

In sum, a 'place', then, would be a measurable part of space—a portion of space with boundaries—with a distinct locality, identity and purpose which differentiate it from the surrounding remainder of 'general' space. In the public environment, a 'place' would appear as part of the wider public space which, applying placemaking philosophy<sup>40</sup>, fosters social interaction and instils a sense of community, pride and belonging of people in a shared contextual frame—the community's physical and social surrounds the it conceptually represents.

The above-quoted last point of the dictionary definition is, perhaps, the most revealing in any differentiation between 'space' and 'place': It brings an intangible, conceptual dimension to the so far material equation, arising from the human psyche. Designating human and social values as contributors to understanding 'place-ness' implies 'significance', which allows a comparative ordering of different spatial portions systematically into a hierarchy and so both rationalises and justifies a greater attachment to one portion than another. Imbuing a spatial portion with 'place-ness', that is, an identity and associated 'sense of place', or *genius loci*, qualifies it by common definition as a distinct 'place' with distinctiveness and human purpose.

In the case of 'place', 'significance', indeed, implies 'purpose' but even more importantly, it implies 'meaning', that is, the possession of a relative, comparative role in human and social perception, emotion-horizon and the entire human value system.

It could be argued that the introduction of significance-by-purpose and the human value-horizon into the notion of 'place' re-creates it as a true point of reference to its

associated people, that is, the ones who feel towards it a sense of 'ownership'. By that virtue, and considering the crucial role context plays in human life, might people's relationships with their surrounding context, including attitude, behaviour, and ordering of experience transform? 'Place' begins to point at 'rightfulness', that is, towards being a portion of space which legitimately ought to be.

In sum, in this arm of definitions, while 'space' merely exists as a dimensionally undefinable cosmologic being of material reality, or matter, 'place' is a set spatial quantity with special meaning. Ephemeral or constant, it is defined by being manufactured in and of material reality by wilful human action and (or) in the human mind by associative relations with its surrounds.

### **Place: typology and constitution**

For the purpose of this text, a 'place' is now typologically regardable as a phenotype of the genotype of 'space': 'Space' is raw, unplanned, ambiguous, and limitless. 'Place' is processed—manufactured, determinate, delimited, and designated for a purpose, be that general or personal, or both. Understanding public space this way shifts design thinking from the general to the particular—universal to delimited, abstract to actual, global-ness to local-ness, ambiguity to authority, constant-ness to spontaneity, modern to postmodern-contemporary—in sum, from design by the mechanical machine paradigm to design by the human, social parable.

Moreover, while we really cannot name 'space', we can name a 'place' in space (*'Place de l'Étoile'*, not really *'Espace de l'Étoile'*, for example), and we do, for identity and orientation, but also to commemorate a place's history, enrich our collective memory, and locate us in the continuum of human culture.

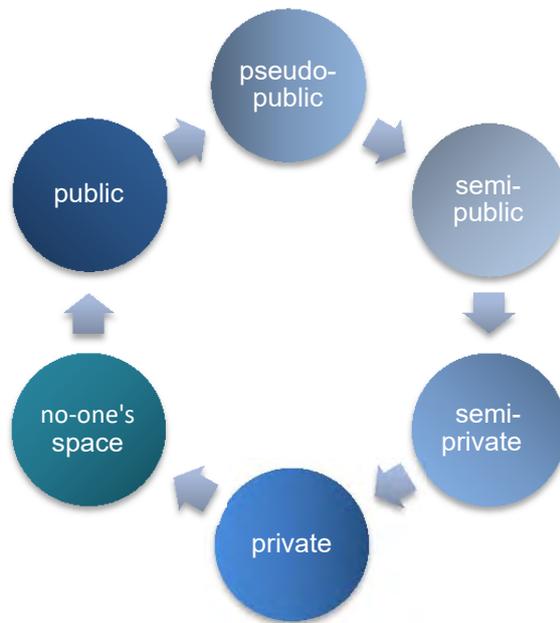
Public space is made (out) of space and public places (out) of that (made) public space: We might allegorise that design densifies the initial *wabi-sabi* quality<sup>41</sup> of naked space. It metaphorically compresses non-differential space-matter into concentrations of material objects, people, other living beings, and action within the uniform 'nothing-ness' of all of space. Since all the concentrations exist in each other's contexts—in fact, they constitute that context—everything compressed and thus concentrated is available to all and, by that virtue, is public.

Converting the emerging public whole into a design object, if we introduce hierarchy to the whole by a valuation of its concentrations and their (degrees of) interconnectivity, adaptability and self-generation by significance (that is, rank their status, positioning and dynamism relative to each other), we get the beginnings of a public spaces web or framework.

### **Public-ness | private-ness**

What, then, counts as 'public' space and, as such, is designable and usable for public purposes? At first thought, 'public' and 'private' seem like polar opposites. On closer observation, though, they instead establish the two extremes of a sliding scale of degrees of public-ness, where overlaps rather than strict boundaries mark transition zones. The categories of 'pseudo-public space' and 'no-one's space=everyone's space' above are not actually static divisional units, but instead dynamically dimensionable stretches of surface which constitute the very transition zones in which the scalar sliding happens. The

concept of 'no-one's space=everyone's space' implies inherent potential for transformation into 'public space' in a myriad of forms. Hence, in this figurative elaboration of public-ness to private-ness, the transition process becomes an *ad infinitum* loop of change instead of a pre-set linear progression between two points.



**public space:** factually free, government-owned, open to all at all times  
 ~city streets, squares, waterways, parks, gardens, and recreation areas

**pseudo-public space:** perceptually and factually free to all, **but** only during operating hours  
 ~shopping malls, sponsored museums, and gated parks

**semi-public space:** perceptually free to all, **but** factually only free for those who pay for the privilege and only during operating hours  
 ~commercial cafés, exhibitions, theatres, cinemas, performance spaces, and their like on public or private premises, and also most of public transport

**semi-private space:** factually exclusive of any public access **but**, by its public location, grants visual and (or) aural 'ownership' to passing people  
 ~streetside buildings, façade and window verges, front gardens and in-block courtyards)

**private space:** factually exclusive of any public access; occupation only by invitation  
 ~individually owned, occupied and managed houses+gardens, work+recreation spaces, proprietary company, and like establishments

**no-one's space=everyone's space:** the wilderness outside private ownership which is perceptually free and so belongs to everyone  
 ~the sky, earth's atmosphere, oceans, the geographic landscape

Figure 2. Applied classification: the 'public-ness-private-ness' axis-loop of urban space by perception, sense of ownership / appropriation, and freedom of access

In the global context, though, regardless of attempts to classify, there really cannot be a single scale of public-ness to private-ness. The concepts of ownership and privacy are too different in different world cultures, geographies and legal frames. But the model with its

sliding scale transition principle can still remain a valid reference tool for analysing and making space by type in public circumstances.

### **‘Shared space’?**

Designers regard ‘shared space’ as a physicality, hence a ‘designable’, but encyclopaedic definition dismisses this notion by referring to it as more of a ‘design approach than a design type characterised by standard features’<sup>42</sup>. Essentially, this designation makes ‘shared space’ the philosophical foundation of a management strategy for a piece of urban infrastructure to facilitate different, parallel modes of traffic in a single movement corridor and, ultimately, a legal epithet which sets the objectives and parameters for safety, amenity and personal security for all who use the corridor. But, in design terms, a ‘shared space’ remains a piece of the physical urban fabric which is capable of being modified for specific public space needs to fulfil objectives or, perhaps, an overlay of the fabric as its specific case. Either way, in this ‘designable’ guise it can legitimately be manipulated in its own right on its own terms of existence to have suitable physical qualities for its designated purpose.

Arguably, the concept and reality of ‘shared space’ belong to densely populated busy cities which generate unpredictability of movement patterns. Roads outside cities—perhaps excepting highly regulated freeways—conceivably do not need specific ‘shared space’ allocation, nor associated legislation as they always are the only real, or decent travel option.

### **Everyman’s right | no-man’s right**

Globally thinking, to extend the concept of ‘public space’, a small group of countries in North Europe share an ancient, unquestionable, now legal right of the ‘freedom to roam’, also referred to as ‘everyman’s right’. Based on the principles of sharing and joint responsibility of care for the land, it recognises the significance of nature as a life-supporting element in an often-inauspicious climate for human habitation, guarantees free, open public access to wilderness including forests, waterways and their native produce as public assets that must be equally, anytime and at will at everybody’s reach. Apart from Australian aboriginal culture—and, conceivably, also other ancient cultures preceding any private ownership of land elsewhere in the world—by which the natural environment belongs to no-one and thus to everyone, ‘everyman’s right’ is the most generous and lasting interpretation of public-ness in human culture:

*In Scotland...Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden...Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania...Austria, Czech Republic and Switzerland, the freedom to roam takes the form of general public rights which are sometimes codified in law. The access is ancient in parts of North Europe...[and so] sufficiently basic that it was not formalised in law until modern times.*<sup>43</sup>

*...everyman’s right gives everyone the chance to enjoy outdoor pursuits...forests and fells...lakes and rivers, with few restrictions...With the freedom...comes the obligation to leave the environment undisturbed and preserve Finland’s rich natural heritage for future generations...*<sup>44</sup>

The legal principles and clauses are much alike in all participating countries. Paraphrasing the Finnish adaptation, 'everyman's right' applies to anyone living or staying in the country, cannot be prevented without just cause, and is always free of charge. It is not affected by land ownership, nor requires any formal permit or permission to enjoy. The only areas out of public bounds are the immediate surrounding yards of private houses, the cultivated fields during growing seasons, and areas reserved for special use by planning or defence legislation. In parallel laws, any disturbance to private homes, their immediate surrounds, public places of assembly or defence and, by extension, private citizens in public places, is prohibited by the legal notions of 'domestic peace' and 'public peace':

*Intentional invasion of domestic privacy is prohibited...[and there] is no public right of way through other people's yards.<sup>45</sup>*

In counterpoint, countries that hold privacy and property as first priorities, Australia included, reserve no legal right for anyone to freely access any part of someone else's land regardless of distance to any home. Responsibility for land is exclusive and private to its owner, as well as the liability for any damage to others legally or illegally within its boundaries. Fences demarcate land boundaries and control access to protect the owner's privacy and the legally stipulated management of property.

### **'Nothing' to 'something'**

Semantic definitions and hierarchical classifications aside, public space remains a designable quantity; it is a real, factual design object. Making public space essentially means making space public, that is, fit for public purposes and for the acceptance-and-appropriation by the public.

While the conditioning of the human mind, *per se*, is a constant of the human-with-context, or human-with-habitat interrelationship, the resultant influences on thought patterns and, hence, design attitudes in making public space are variables of the geo-locational, cultural and socio-political definers of the human context, which differ in content and focus depending on their combined state in each case. Consequently, to put it simply, while design imperatives, principles and propositions for public space will always reflect public needs and social situations as they arise, design habits and processes for it cannot but differ as per situation, since situations do not self-repeat. In short, at different space-time situations, different eyes see different things and things differently.

hb=human being; w=world; ws=world-state;  
c=culture-projection; e=environment-projection

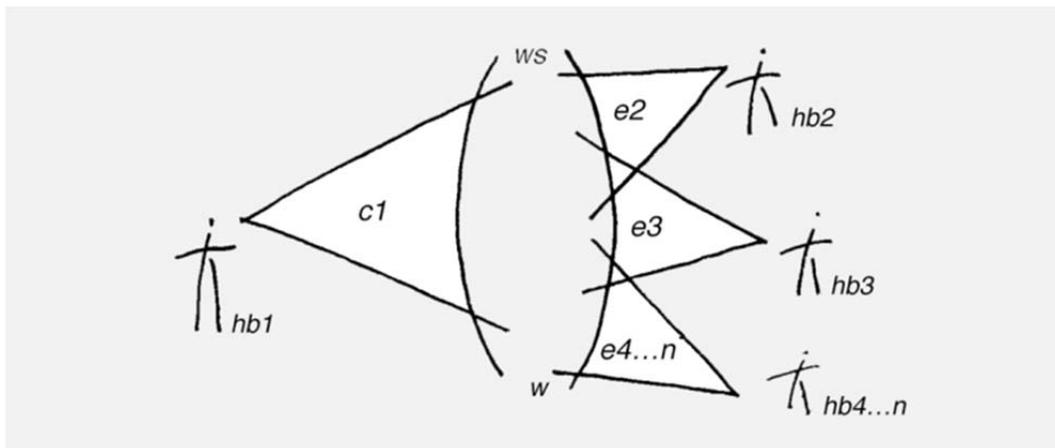


Fig. 3. Human culture - projections (physical and conceptual artefacts) into the world affect the world - state and so affect all 'later' or 'remoter' contextual/environmental projections of each world - state (e) into human beings, with implications to human experiences, actions and reactions.<sup>46</sup>

### On variables...

An inherent global difference; a kind of 'otherness'; is a fundamental feature of the variations that exist in any social subscriptions<sup>47</sup> for public space, including design aspirations and attitudes, design objectives and typologies, design morale and ethics and, ultimately, design results and their acceptance, that is, the eventual 'ownership'; by the public for whom the space was subscribed and made. Contemporary people in a postmodern world are mobile, some displaced. Yet, due to humankind's inherent cultural inertia, we cannot completely transcend any initial geographic separation or cultural differentiation of transplanted people (including designers) from their contextual origins—not even by any universal tolerance of people's difference, regardless of our aspirations for global unity and social understanding of the 'other'.

Planning history is a major determinant of (and apology for) the typology, morphology, form-function logic, and cultural status of public space in cities: The initial urban layout and its modification through time sets the frame within which a public space system can develop. The system's inferred form-function logic and aesthetic idiosyncrasy house the potential for it to become charged with significance and relevance to city people.

The nature of the public space system in a strategic, planned city is quite different from that of an originally unplanned, spontaneous one: The formal, regulatory system of the former allocates function and articulates the city form in a purposeful way to provide fit-for-purpose, measured room for the multiplicity of urban activity. The informal, spontaneous system, except for main street concentrations, has evolved—or not—*extempore*, as if by incident or accident, out of leftover land or exists as a loosely zoned network of 'reserves' for public utility rather than urban-focused public space.

In this differentiated circumstance of urban origins and evolution, design imperatives and aspirations for public space are, again, differentiated: Originally planned cities prioritise comprehensive land use economy, destinational distance, urban mobility, mass housing, and their consequences. Their public space may be limited in size, but in counterbalance, it is near-unlimited in its potential for use, re-use and identifying character. Originally unplanned cities prioritise the utility of land allocation for functional and (or) economic

demands as they arise, and the availability of suitable land in suitable locations for the arisen purpose. Their public space may be near-limitless, but due to its composition from leftover land, it is limited in any potential for conscious programming for even temporary non-utilitarian public use or spontaneous opportunity.

As for completely non-planned types of built concentration, slums, refugee camps and self-generating, opportunistic towns at the conceptual and physical fringes of the city are definitively purpose-built; they are urban hybrids made by and (or) for people in anticipant transition from one life phase to another—but their very genesis and resultant physical make-up leave no space for anything beyond a shelter and an access way.

Paradoxically, near-everything is near-exposed near-all-the-time and so (in) public, but not in any public capacity or public space, since obviously, none exists. The intention of these settlements is being temporary, but are they actually such? We see quite a few around the world outlive their 'transitory' residents. To risk overextending the scope of public space in human settlements to where it might not be 'legit', is there a case for a mechanism of public spatial logic in these poorest contexts?

### **...and parameters**

Such phenomena as urbanisation, displacement and re-placement of people, resilience and sustainability of the environment, the finiteness of natural resources, hostility and urban terrorism, the multiculture–panculture pendulum, and religious singularity *versus* secular and (or) spiritual plurality have been in factual existence far longer than in any global consciousness or public recognition. These are aspects of contemporary humanity in its world-context, with implications to how and what we choose to contribute to that context. Regarding making public space which, in abstract, models prevailing relationships between human and her world-context, they conceivably belong to the group of urgent foci to consider, interpret and address in any design intervention—perhaps moving from the singularly aesthetic, scholarly and formal towards the multiply narrative, counterbalancing and re-conditioning, so as to strengthen people's bonds with their surroundings and, thereby, their continual process to re-position themselves in their ever-morphing world.

The problematics of the resilience, sustainability and finiteness of the human biotope—the living human context—point at a renewed typology of 'made' urban ecosystems and biotypes. Hostility and urban terrorism-in-waiting point at renewed conceptions of safety-in-togetherness in public. The multiculture–panculture pendulum that arises from a restless cross-movement of urban people and is exacerbated by yet unprecedented forms of spiritual singularity and plurality point at least at a renewed symbol-content of public space to communicate the morphing urban condition relative to citizens. Patently, to be relevant at all, this symbol-language must be construed to capture every citizen in their specific way of reading signs which, of course, is a derivative of their originating background culture. Quite obviously, relevance of symbol-content gives relevance to associated public spaces and significance to the experience of being there.

In conclusion, we cannot consider making public space as clever problem-solving only, nor, however elegantly composed, is the space a polemic piece of art to express its artist-designer's mind. With people in the space being both the subjects and elemental parts of

the made and experienced design object, public space wants to be a joint creation of all its co-creators including people referenced in its resolution.

### Comparative collage

Having so far probed what might philosophically and theoretically underlie different approaches to making public space in different design instances across cities in different geographies and cultures around the globe, this text now turns to specific practice. Below is a comparative collage of eight actual cases of making public space in three categories of project—place, program and strategy, which together seek to establish whether design approaches tend towards similarity or difference across inherently different locations across the world. The projects represent three climatically and socio-culturally distinct circumstances and are drawn from this author's portfolio and associated knowledge. The latter fact admittedly limits the scope of the discussion, but the range of project type and origin still allows for legitimate conclusions by author and, independently, by the reading audience for whom the questions are left open.

### Place

*Hyväntoivonpuisto* (Park of Good Hope): Helsinki City Centre•Finland<sup>48</sup>



**Type:** new city centre park.

**Classification:** public.<sup>49</sup>

**Shape:** curvilinear undulating corridor.

**Size:** five hectares; 88m x 550m.

**Urban context:** (i) component of a new residential and mixed use redevelopment on decommissioned harbour land; (ii) physically and visually contained by a uniform edge of medium-rise building façades in a linear arrangement.

**Urban role:** (i) recreational space offering multiple purpose-built activity nodes for residents and workers with different recreational aspirations; (ii) green seafront-to-city-centre pedestrian and bicycle link; (iii) a physically and visually articulating element of the urban fabric; (iv) representative of a new urban ecotype.

**Functional objectives:** (i) inviting, safe, thoroughly accessible for all abilities; (ii) lastingly robust for easy and economical maintenance and management; (iii) multi-allocation of path intersections as urban squares and event nodes.

**Spatio-experiential objectives:** (i) completely new green landscape where there was none such before; (ii) timeless contemporary image; (iii) pleasant, functional series of landscape spaces that combine into a harmonious whole; (iv) well-articulated view structure; (v) integrated landscape art drawn from local features and history.

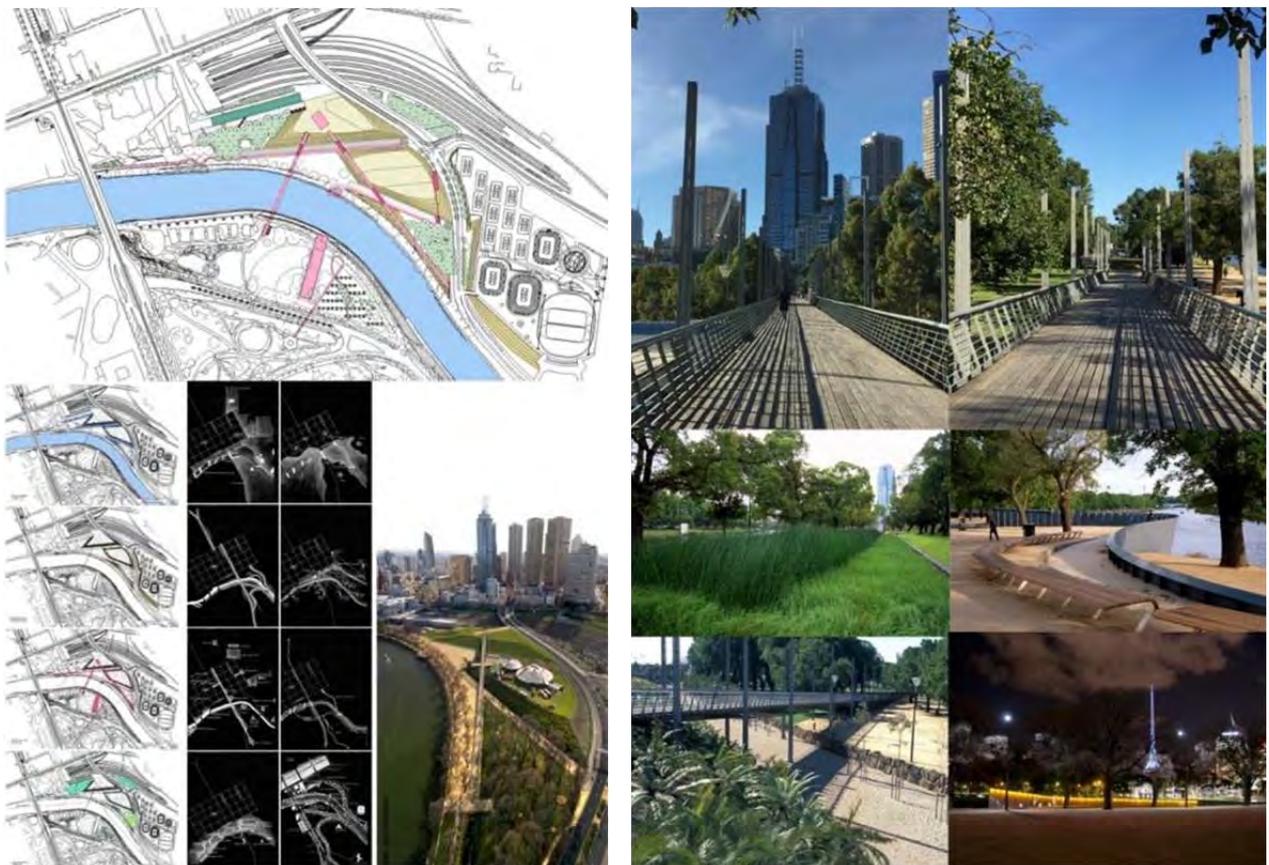
**Design ethos:** contemporary milieu; temporal and environmental sustainability, high quality, non-intensive maintenance; microclimatic control, wind minimisation, application of eco-technology in environmental and waste management.

**Critical parameters:** (i) generally—implications of a cold maritime climate @ 60°N, 25°E, long dark winters, deep ground frost, freezing sea surface, short growing season, and slow plant growth to construction and landscape development; (ii) on site—repercussions of industrial harbour landfill remediation, soil stabilisation, stability of groundwater levels, and non-tidal but high seawater levels on structures and plant growth.

**Process:** Council-led with input from MARK—the Finnish Institute of Landscape Architects. International ideas competition: 2005. Initial commission: WES LA, Germany. Design development and documentation: specialist local consultants. Zoning and detailed development plan: endorsed post-approval of the final design concept by Council as per legal protocol. Community input via public exhibitions and public comment on drafts as per legal protocol (official documents) and adopted practice (freedom of information).

**Schedule:** First stage: 2019. Full completion: 2027.

### Birrarung Marr: Melbourne CBD•Victoria•Australia<sup>50</sup>



**Type:** re-purposed former railyards ->new city centre park.

**Classification:** public.

**Shape:** inclined triangle with substantial level differences.

**Size:** eight hectares; 50m-200m deep,  $\cong$ 750m long; non-tidal, so no width fluctuation.

**Name:** Birrarung Marr='River of Mists' in the original local *wurundjeri* language.

**Urban context:** (i) component of an urban river corridor at the edge of Melbourne's CBD grid; (ii) framed by primarily free-standing cultural and sporting institutions and entertainment venues of distinctive volume and form, including Federation Square; (iii) distinctive views to surrounding landmark buildings.

**Urban role and objectives:** *Strategically* (i) connect the city to Yarra River; (ii) provide the 'missing link' between surrounding historic parks and the CBD; (iii) extend the use pattern of its sister project, the Federation Square arts-events-entertainment complex to the outdoors; (iv) create a new landscape context for the complex; and (v) add to the Yarra River events precinct extending from Melbourne's Exhibition Centre in South Bank to the city's famous sports and entertainment precinct in Jolimont. *Functionally*, (i) make the most of the rare opportunity to create significant new public space at the city centre for the day-to-day use by urban citizens.

*The design is for an active, urban space, more like a beachside promenade than the older public gardens elsewhere in Melbourne. It is a robust setting for mass events such as Circus Oz and the Moomba Waterfest, changing sculpture exhibitions, and community festivals while providing an attractive setting for passive recreation at other times, as well as walking and cycle access between the CBD, the neighbouring sports precinct and the Yarra River Trail.<sup>51</sup>*

*The new park will be a new type of open space beyond the traditional notion of city parks...*

*An urban space that embraces society and civic life and celebrates public activity as a source of interest in its own right.*

*A social space, where many different activities can occur and that is interesting and accessible to people at all times, and playful, to appeal to the interests and imagination of children and adults.*

*A creative engagement with traditions of landscape design and Australian senses of place...<sup>52</sup>*

## Design ethos

Overall concept—focus on the views, the river and the railways:

*... the design fuses three concepts abstracted from the site.*

*[It is] framed around a series of view-lines to city landmarks. Construction of...[the] pedestrian circulation system and arrangement of...major structures along these lines provide visual and physical connections with the surrounding city.*

*...the design responds to its context by abstracting the concept of the river as a land-shaping process. A contemporary interpretation of this principle of landscape formation evokes the former river alignment and billabongs on the new park site.*

*...the design responds to the railways as an important historical and civic aspect of the site.*

*They generate linear forms in plan and offer a range of models for spaces and structures in the park...<sup>53</sup>*

Internal structure—design for site-specificity, spatial potential and programmatic robustness:

*...the design is composed of four layers of structural elements [canals, terraces, paths and bridges, (single-native-species) tree grids and building canopies]. Each...encompasses references to the role of the park, views to city landmarks, the geomorphology of the river and qualities of*

*the railways. The design as a whole builds relationships between these elements and the existing site features; the park grows out of its site.*<sup>54</sup>

*... the park as a whole is a series of spaces, but individual spaces were not designed with prescribed uses or single-purpose facilities, offering freedom of choice for people in their use of the park and future evolution of the park's use... [but] have different characteristics that make them suitable for particular types of activity.*<sup>55</sup>

*... the characteristics and locations of spaces... suggest where spontaneous activity will occur, and create opportunities for programmed events... the varying robustness of different zones of the park will withstand and encourage activities with different degrees of intensity.*<sup>56</sup>

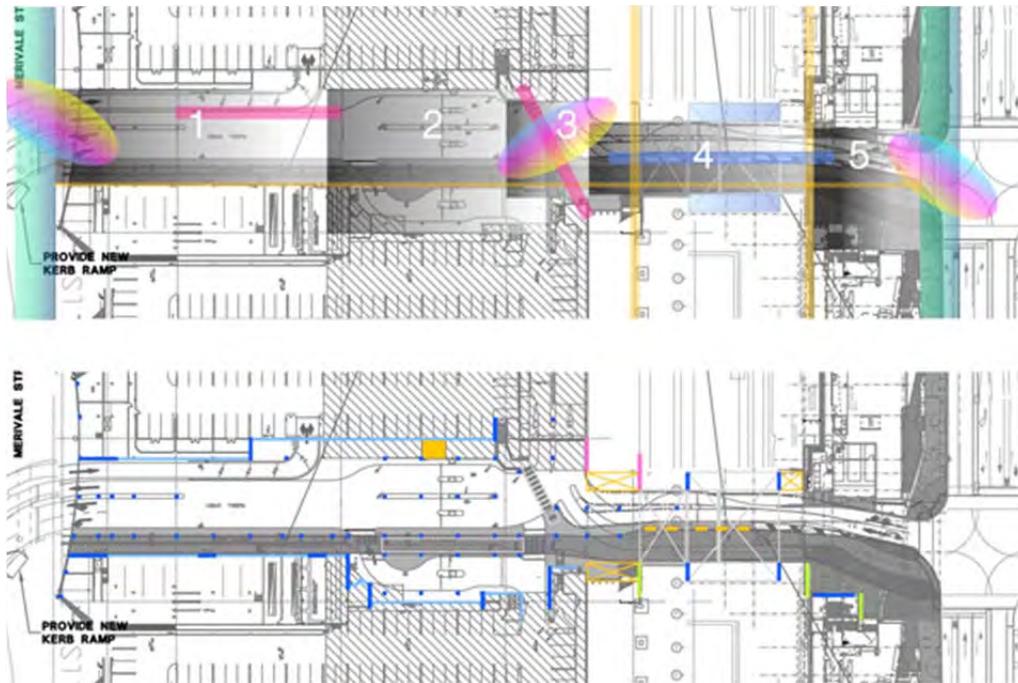
**Critical parameters:** (i) *topographically*—a seven-metre level difference from the river's edge to the CBD grid boundary; (ii) *structurally*—the geotechnical stabilisation of large, geometrically shaped terraces; (iii) *financially*—limited initial budget necessitating staged development; (iv) *functionally*—demands for additional cross access to expanding sports facilities, and (v) *politically*—pressures to (a) respond to short term expectations with conventional fixed solutions and paraphernalia already available in adjacent parks, (b) minimise any overshadowing via deferring the planting of projected, stylised urban forests, and (c) prioritise quick crowd access expectations of the sports industry over more complex public amenity and ambience of the park for everyone.

**Process:** Joint initiative by the City of Melbourne and the State of Victoria: 1997 onwards in conjunction with the Federation Square international design competition and ensuing development. Input from the Federation Square design team LAB, United Kingdom, and AILA: Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. Design brief and concept plan: Council. Design development and documentation: specialist consultants from select panel as per adopted Council practice. Art installations via competition-based commissions and donations; Heritage Commission input. Community and stakeholder consultation via public exhibition and comment. Several industry awards: 2003, 2004.

**Schedule:** First stage and official opening: 2002. Implementation and related design modifications continue in stages as per need and budget allocations.

**Latest addition:** Tanderrum Bridge to Melbourne Park events: 2017.

Russell Walk: South Bank•Central Brisbane•Queensland•Australia<sup>57</sup>



**Type:** reconfigured and extended pedestrian path through carpark. **Classification:** semi-public to pseudo-public.

**Shape:** linear flat corridor.

**Size:** 640sqm; 3.5m x 200m; clear height circa 2m.

**Urban context:** (i) component of Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre; (ii) internally and visually contained by building walls and open carpark space with exposed services.

**Urban role:** (i) pedestrian and bicycle link from West End and South Brisbane to South Bank and its cluster of public-orientated venues; (ii) pedestrian access to the recently extended Convention and Exhibition Centre.

**Functional objectives:** (i) to convert an existing, purely utilitarian carpark access tunnel into an exciting, programmed, safe, shared, and accessible urban thoroughfare-cum-public space; (ii) to design for robustness in adverse climatic situations and environmental events.

**Spatio-experiential objectives:** to use digital art, sound, and messaging to make for an ever-changing through journey with elements of surprise and sensory stimulation.

**Design ethos:** a new type of dynamic, experiential concept of urban thoroughfare with integrated, curated art—a gallery through the building; (ii) a sophisticated but innovative architectural image in keeping with the new building extension; (iii) demonstrated sustainability by design, procurement, and management practice, in keeping with South Bank Corporation's ethos.

**Critical parameters:** (i) *contextually*—climatically determined, hence inevitable but otherwise unpredictable river flooding events with associated construction and accessibility dilemmas; (ii) *internally*—(a) very low floor to ceiling heights due to above-head services at non-negotiable locations, (b) multimodal safety, (c) personal security; and (iii) *design-and-procurement-wise*—positive negotiation with multiple stakeholders with varied interests.

*Making public space*

**Process:** Statutory Authority-led: Design Brief, Creative Arts Brief, and Procurement Strategy: South Bank Corporation in consultation and collaboration with the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre: 2010. State Government-led Project Steering Committee. Approvals by Corporation Board.

**Schedule:** First stage completion: 2012 in association with Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre extension works. Expansion to full concept subject to political will and any associated funding opportunities.

**Uber-Hip-And-Uber-Cool  
Place-Making—Place-Program-Strategy**

High Line: Westside Lower Manhattan • New York • NY • USA<sup>58</sup>



**Type:** re-purposed historic rail corridor and viaduct ->new city centre park.

**Classification:** public.

**Shape:** elevated weaving flat-ground steel structure with long straight sections between and through buildings.

**Size:**  $\cong$  2,500m long; width corresponds to underneath street reserve.

**Urban context:** (i) established, manufacturing turned mixed use medium to high rise development with original air-rights to buildings; (ii) formally contained by building façades on each side; (iii) through movement and local views directed by the alignment and edge conditions of the rail corridor, distant views by the skyscraper backdrop characteristic to the locality.

**Urban role:** Public landscape and 'greenway'.<sup>59</sup>

**Local objective:** to preserve and re-purpose a disused piece of infrastructure as a public green space.<sup>60</sup>

**Global objective:** to inspire people worldwide of how cities can reuse industrial spaces to create beautiful, hybrid spaces<sup>61</sup>—or perhaps 'places': the High Line has, indeed, been referred to outside the USA as 'a popular poster child for Creative Placemaking'<sup>62</sup>.

**Design ethos:**

Planting:

*The High Line design is inspired by the self-seeded landscape that grew on the out-of-use elevated rail tracks during the 25 years after trains stopped running... The species of perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees were chosen for their hardiness, sustainability, and textural and color variation... These grasses and trees inspired the planting designer Piet Oudolf to "keep it wild."*

*Many of the species that originally grew on the High Line's rail bed are incorporated into the park's landscape [and] ... Nearly half... are native to the United States. The design ... also emphasizes year-round interest and bloom.*<sup>63</sup>

Sustainability:

*The High Line is inherently a green structure... [its] landscape functions essentially like a green roof... [the] porous pathways contain open joints, so water can drain between planks and water adjacent planting beds... to allow the plants to retain as much water as possible...*<sup>64</sup>

Programming:

*High Line Art produces and curates a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions... [It] invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.*<sup>65</sup>

**Critical parameters:** (i) *structure*—initial disrepair and consequent calls for demolition; the iron frame was eventually deemed structurally sound, ergo salvageable; (ii) *politics*—wave of discontent and lack of adaptive ownership amongst public housing tenants regarding prohibition of popular uses in the new public space, and the perceived basis of these restrictions; (iii) *scepticism*—regarding negative effects on property values; *de facto*, the new public space, conversely, became a catalyst for local urban renewal; (iv) *behaviour*—fears of heightened criminal behaviour, which have been alleviated by observed low crime rates, conceivably due to (a) the immediate proximity of buildings and large visitor volumes at different times, hence practically constant passive surveillance, and to (b) the overall quality of public space management and control.<sup>66 67</sup> **Process:** Open ideas competition: 'Designing the High Line', 2002–2003. Design commission: collaborative between specialist consultants: James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio+Renfro, and

## Making public space

Piet Oudolf, USA. Zoning amendments: as per Council protocol. Owner: the City of New York. Maintenance, operation, programming, and associated fundraising (98%): non-profit organisation 'Friends of the High Line'<sup>68</sup> in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and with support from volunteers. Presenting Green Sponsor 2017: TD Bank.

**Schedule:** Constructed and opened to the public in stages: *Section 1* (Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street): June 9, 2009; *Section 2* (West 20th Street to West 30th Street): June 8, 2011; *Section 3* (northernmost Rail Yards section): September 21, 2014.

## Program

Joensuu Arboretum: Joensuu City Fringe • East Finland<sup>69</sup>



**Type:** re-purposed natural forest—>new city fringe park.

**Classification:** public. Shape: elongated flat bandeau with a steep hill and varying width.

Size: 71 hectares;  $\cong 200\text{m} - 1,000\text{m} \times \cong 2,600\text{m}$ .

**Urban context:** *city-wide*, a physical and visual component of the mediating green zone between the city centre grid and its surrounding suburban-cum-semirural zones; *locally*, a landscape transition zone between clusters of semi-urban, single-storey, single-house blocks and a natural lakes system; *formally*, a major scale determinant of urban geography with clear physical and visual boundaries to the surrounding built areas.

**Urban role:** dual-purpose area—integrated arboretum and open space which acts as (i) a dendrological research and education object for the local university and (ii) a passive recreational area and visitor destination for the city.

**Objectives:** (i) *synchronicity*—to achieve a functional and spatial whole where (i) the physical arrangement of space into subareas and plant communities, (ii) the alignment of circulation paths, and (iii) the placement of tree species synchronise with (iv) the conceptual reading of the whole by visitors into articulated sub-milieus, view corridors and landscape imagery; (ii) *aesthetics*—to recognise that due to unique colour, shape and size palettes, tree species placement strongly influences both the internal image of the arboretum landscape and the external views towards it; (iii) *harmony*—to take advantage of this fact to create a serene, impressive, large scale vegetation entity, which simultaneously provides surprising small scale views, a sense of the forest, and experiences of the macro-microlandscape; (iv) *mobility*—to make circulation path intersections into milestones via typological differentiation and both unifying and differentiating detail which, considered together, create associative overlays of interlinks and patterns for orientation both in fact and concept.

**Design ethos:** (i) a new type of arboretum arrangement according to the intrinsic ecological and experiential potential of the local landscape and its natural forest (bio)types rather than the conventional, systematic and scientific arrangement of dendrological collections so far by genus or species group; (ii) in parallel with research and education use, a true, living forest park by design where layers of exploration, discovery, learning and interpretation fuse into memorable experiences to complement urban living; (iii) overall, a site-specific, adaptive new urban ecology based on long term self-sustained and self-managed natural processes rather than intensive external intervention.

*The detailed experiential milieu of the arboretum park will develop gradually during its long-term development, planting phases, and growth cycles. The majority of the park now and in the future will be a spatially enclosed, volumetric forest. Hence, the central urban concept throughout the design process has been to shape the paths system as a continuous internal series of spaces across and around the park. The degree of openness of the spatial components will depend each moment by the stage of growth their plantings will have reached.<sup>70</sup>*

**Critical parameters:** (i) *generally*—implications of a cold continental climate @ 62°N, 29°E, long dark winters, deep ground frost, freezing lake surface, short growing season, and slow plant growth to construction and landscape development; (ii) *on site*—(a) implications of a river delta-lakefront terrain and ecotype to spatial planning, (b) identifying suitable eco-niches for desired arboretum species from outside the available ecotypes, and (c) achieving a self-regulating forest succession within the limitations of climatic conditions and thin, nutrient-poor natural soil; (iii) *context-reliant management*—implications of (a) maintaining town water supply from the adjacent lake to on-site ground water levels which affect forest growth including managing the long term after-effects of prior lake

## Making public space

draining, (b) eco-management of zones with remaining high groundwater levels, potential flood events and postglacial rebound, this meaning the still ongoing rising of the ground around the Arctic region dating back to the Ice Age.

**Process:** Joint initiative by the City of Joensuu and Joensuu University. Principal landscape architect consultant: *Rakennus-ja ympäristösuunnittelu Piha&Sakkinen* (Building and Milieu Design Piha&Sakkinen), Helsinki, with multi-disciplinary subconsultant team for dendrological, ecological, and horticultural detail. Public comment by exhibition as per local protocol.

**Schedule:** First three-step cycle of forest succession: 1988 onwards. Continues to proceed for programmed completion in 2050, after which the cycle re-begins.

St Kilda Foreshore—>St Kilda's Edge—>St Kilda Promenade: South Melbourne, City Of Port Phillip•Victoria•Australia<sup>71</sup>



**Type:** refurbished city park, beach and promenade.

**Classification:** public with public-to-private leisure and entertainment venues. **Shape:** linear, undulating dune and beach with moderate level differences and tidal variation.

**Size:** 100m-750m x  $\cong$  2,000m; varies with marine sand movement and replenishment as required to maintain the beach.

**Identity:** an iconic, historic, multifunctional urban foreshore with colourful, part notorious history and an array of associated remnant items of heritage significance.

**Urban context:** *functionally*, distinctly seaside urban mixed use pattern comprising permanent and ephemeral residential blocks, entertainment venues, cafés and restaurants, vertical mixed use, and water-based recreation; *geographically*, (i) a composite of lineally organised landscape zones—the sea, beach, back dune and promontory; (ii) a culturally modified environment with extensive exotic planting—notably palms—alternating with native, sand-binding vegetation; *structurally*, composed of four basic elements—a regular street grid, dense pattern of blocks and, two sweeping main seashore avenues, and a visually open foreshore with pavilion-like buildings make for objects in space; *formally*, (i) open public space set against a tightly built, private building backdrop; (ii) an established, interconnected network of streets, squares, parklands and the beach. *height-wise*, largely two to four stories regardless of use, which makes for a distinctly horizontal, linear image reflective of the linear organisation and three-dimensional structure of the natural foreshore.

**Urban role:** *In the Capital City context*, a (i) leisure destination, where people come to socialise, absorb the ambience and interact with the sea; (ii) place of residence for people who ‘do not wish to part with it, but rather be its part’; (iii) busy thoroughfare and truck route between Melbourne City and its southern suburb—throughout history vehicular access through St Kilda Foreshore has been characteristic of its use. *In the local context*, a (i) significant and accessible public space component of the circa twenty-kilometre long string of beaches and parklands from Webb Dock in the north to Sandringham in the south; (ii) playground for urban people of any denomination; (iii) mediating structural element between built city areas and Port Phillip Bay; and (iv) embodiment and container of local urban memory and heritage, particularly that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Project objectives:** (i) to achieve a major, image-conscious renewal of the iconic St Kilda residential, leisure and entertainment precinct on Port Phillip Bay; (ii) to guide seafront development towards the new millennium and mitigate the effects of increasing use in the context of cultural objectives, community values, and popular attraction.

**Project vision:** to recapture and reinforce the Foreshore’s ‘St Kildaness’ and make a high quality public space which is an ecologically sustainable, wear-resistant natural environment in the context of a diverse and environmentally aware community.

**Thematic objectives:** (i) *culture and heritage*—to maintain the cultural heritage of St Kilda; (ii) *built form*—to respect and enhance the ‘St Kildaness’ of the Foreshore—its sense of place; (iii) *public open space*—to enhance the quality of public space; (iv) *movement networks*—to improve pedestrian circulation and promote integrated transport; (v) *environmental sustainability*—to protect, celebrate and enhance the environmental integrity of St Kilda Harbour and Foreshore.

**Design ethos:** an integrated, analytical resolution for guiding the future development of St Kilda Foreshore as a specific and contextual entity, deriving directly from its physical and historic qualities, community values and imagery while recognising current planning policies as the context for any physical interventions; focus on improving the public domain and the interface of the public domain and private realm.

*The opportunities and proposals identified in this Framework have a total value of around \$130 million in 2002, including public works in the order of \$40 million. ...a successful implementation of the Framework vision will require the coordination and commitment of State Government, Council, the community, and the private sector. A whole-of-government approach is paramount.*<sup>72</sup>

**Critical parameters:** Consistent, long-term adherence by now and future local and state governments to the legally endorsed (i) objectives and strategies for developing and improving the St Kilda Foreshore and (ii) their correlated urban design principles and actions, together with (iii) a synergetic capitalisation of identified development opportunities, particularly involving critically located key sites—significantly, all available opportunities within the St Kilda Foreshore Urban Design Framework area affect each other in multiple ways and so need to be considered relative to one another.

**Coordination and commitment measures:**

*Adopt the St Kilda Foreshore Urban Design Framework as an approved Coastal Action Plan by the Minister of Environment and Conservation.  
Ensure coordinated approaches between Council, Government agencies and key stakeholders that have a responsibility for St Kilda Foreshore.  
Ensure a commitment from responsible authorities to funding and implementing Framework proposals.*

**Planning and design measures:**

*Establish statutory controls that provide a level of certainty about the future use and improvements of the Foreshore within the parameters defined by the Framework.  
Establish mechanisms that can help achieve quality design outcomes in keeping with the context and parameters set by the Framework.*

**Management measures:**

*Arrange long term leases for Crown land that assist in long-term planning and investment.  
Consider opportunities for Council management of sites where this would be appropriate  
Consider opportunities for Council management of sites where this would be appropriate and advantageous for the community and area.  
Maximise improvement opportunities arising from leases coming up for renewal.*

**Funding measures:**

*Provide the opportunity to forge Government and private partnerships to fund improvements to fund improvements to the public realm.*

**Monitoring measures:**

*Ensure that the progress of improvements to St Kilda Foreshore is monitored and that the Urban Design Framework is regularly reviewed.*

**Process and schedule:** Stage 1: Urban Design Framework: 2002: Council-led in close consultation with the State Government, local community, specialist consultants—urban design, strategic planning, traffic planning, engineering and economic planning—and other

key stakeholders. *Steering Committee:* Joint Working Group with membership from Council, State Government—Department of Industry, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, VicRoads, Central Coastal Board, Parks Victoria—and key Victorian Universities. *Funding:* Council budget and recipient of State Government’s ‘Pride of Place’ grant. *Timeline:* (i) completion of St Kilda Foreshore Planning and Design Framework discussion document: 2000; (ii) preparation and public display of the St Kilda Foreshore 20–20 Vision. Community Reference Panel set up to inform preparation of a Draft Urban Design Framework: 2001; (iii) public exhibition and comment of the Draft Final St Kilda Urban Design Framework: 2002. Government endorsement and inclusion in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme: 2002. *Stage 2:* St Kilda Foreshore Area Policy as per Victorian planning legislation: 2009. The well-received Framework plan and vision also inspired key amendments to the Port Phillip Planning Scheme, such as new policy directions, new built form and height controls, and revised planning controls along St Kilda Foreshore. *Stage 3:* Foreshore Promenade / St Kilda’s Edge: 2004–2011: Council-led initiative to scope a key Framework opportunity, expanding on the Framework concept to contemporise the Foreshore’s public image and functionality. *Timeline:* (i) Council-invited proposals from a group of specialist consultants for the design development of the Foreshore Promenade and boardwalk space towards prospective implementation; (ii) winners Jackson Clemens Burrows proposed a wider and more dynamic promenade-cum-boardwalk and extended beach to encourage multiple, diverse activities: 2011; (iii) completion of the St Kilda Pier and St Kilda Harbour Masterplan: 2015; (iv) public space upgrades along the Foreshore Promenade: 2017. Works continue as per Council resources and budget.

Hobart Waterfront: Central Hobart • Tasmania • Australia<sup>73</sup>



**Type:** re - purposed and reconfigured working harbour—>new cultural city precinct.

**Classification:** public with semi - public to possibly pseudo - public cultural venues.

**Shape and Size:** *contextually*, the city centre grid and its fronting docks; *focally*, the docks and three axially aligned blocks within the grid.

**Urban context:** *Locally*, (i) centres on Sullivan's Cove; (ii) faces River Derwent to the east, docks to the north and south, and the city centre grid to the west; (iii) two busy through roads between the eastern perimeter of the city centre grid and the docks delimit physical and conceptual connections between the two; (iv) framed by a string of urban parks, cultural institutions, medical establishments, and dining venues; (v) visually contained by the Hobart's mountain backdrop rather than its relatively low-rise skyline. *Remotely*, the traditional point of departure for Antarctic expeditions and research since the early 1900s, and now houses the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies with related structures and programmed activities with potential implications to urban thematic, activity programs and local imagery.

**Urban role:** multiple: paired with Hobart's existing commercial spine the proposed civic axis *structurally*, (i) creates a double urban axis between the city centre and waterfront providing a new civic context for existing and future cultural spaces and their public use; and (ii) defines and articulates the physical urban fabric; *functionally*, constructs points of obvious access to the water and related activities; *spatially*, extends and consolidates meaningful public space; and *visually*, directs attention beyond the city centre boundaries and so makes for an entry-exit corridor.

**Design objectives:** (i) to re-energise the Hobart waterfront and former working harbour as a major cultural focus with connectivity to the adjacent retail core; (ii) to attract activity across Sullivan Cove, still embracing and interpreting local cultural and environmental heritage.

**Design ethos:** a multi-layered, contextual urban design vision to capitalise upon the waterfront's latent urban quality, collective memory, and local value system.

**Critical parameters:** The universal problematics of urban renewal and transformation, such as (i) re-distribution and re-purposing of land and assets, (ii) related socio-economic implications, (iii) goals and prioritisation, (iv) the gauge of radical-to-conservative interventions, (v) government foci vis-a-vis public opinion, (v) 'best practice', and the question of (vi) the 'greatest common good'.

**Process:** Led by Sullivan's Cove Waterfront Authority. (i) Urban Design Framework: 2004; (ii) International Design Competition; 2006; (iii) Review Panel, specialist workshops and modelling to establish directions, priorities, and programs: 2007; (iv) The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA): Vision for the redevelopment of Macquarie Point: Fender Katsalidis and Rush Wright: 2016.<sup>74</sup>

**Strategy**

**City-related Harbour Areas: Central Aarhus•Jutland Peninsula•Denmark<sup>75</sup>**



**Type:** large re-purposed and reconfigured part of working harbour—>new common city space.

**Classification:** public with anticipated semi-public to pseudo-public components.

**Shape and size:** contextually, the city centre, its fronting docklands and surrounding public parks; focally, north dock, south dock and adjoining city edge strip.

**Urban context:** defined by six form/use elements of downtown Aarhus: (i) the city centre, (ii) the (Kattegat) sea, (iii) the (Aarhus) river, (iv) the perimeter city blocks that contain the seafront—the ‘wall’, (v) the common spaces, public grounds, and institutions that surround the city centre—the ‘commons’ and (vi) the harbour that continues to dominate much of the city’s function and visual image.

**Urban role:** the interface between the city and the sea in active transition from industrial docklands to mixed urban use, skyline, and image.

**Design objectives:** (i) to recognise the potential of the six form/use elements for forging mutually reinforcing relationships in the future design resolutions for the city and its waterfront via focused design themes and mechanisms:

The city centre–sea relationship  
*implies the need to interface through the creation of an urban-marine use mix at the seafront.*

The city–city wall–sea relationship  
*implies the need to transcend the visual barriers between the city and the sea through creating a transparent, translucent water's edge.*

The city–river relationship  
*implies the need to interlink...through the creation of a continuous interconnecting river-seaside walk.*

The city–commons relationship  
*implies the need to transcribe the essence and image of the cultural and natural spaces through their interpretation in the form/use resolution of the seafront.*

The city–harbour relationship  
*implies the need to qualify the nature of their scale, grain and architecture through mediation at the waterfront.*

The city–harbour–sea relationship  
*implies the need to recognise and signify the nature of the relationship through the resolution of the city structure and creation of an open city bay that integrates all elements.<sup>76</sup>*

(ii) to rearrange the city/harbour transport pattern to free the seafront for flexible, complex urban use and recreate the intrinsic, open character of water, beginning with (a) the undergrounding of the rail line between the city and the sea and (b) the redirection of the harbour road across the bay to lessen the traffic load on the seafront and enable its transformation into an urban common space [with] (c) the existing former gas works site and structures as a related cultural place.<sup>77</sup>

**Design ethos:** an integrated, interdependent, and interpretational form/use system by design and programming which is a new addition to Aarhus's existing typology of public space.

**Critical parameters:** (i) *politically*—the willingness of each government for radical engagement and decision-making towards a lasting, positive, and progressive comparative status of Aarhus in the context of the European Union; (ii) *practically*—universal issues related to urban renewal processes regarding (a) the ownership and proportional distribution, designation and differentiation of land portions for public and private uses, and (b) the negotiation of ensuing, necessarily substantial, infrastructure problematics including economics of cost and long term sustainability; (iii) *design-wise*—devising mechanisms to introduce change and refine imagery in such ways and towards such outcomes that the public can identify with and adopt as reflective of its evolving aspirations.

**Process:** Government-led with an ambitious, forward-looking agenda befitting the open-minded Danish spirit. (i) initial international ideas competition 'City-related Harbour Areas

in Århus, Ideas Competition on Urban Planning': 1999; (ii) subsequent, specific design competitions to find resolutions for the entirety of the project area, its contributing component spaces, and image-and-activity-generating new edifices—these are a common practice to locate ideas in the design-conscious Scandinavia.

## Conclusion

It begins to appear that as long as human bio-ecological and socio-cultural needs and sources of emotions remain 'human', there might be more universal similarity than local difference in what the public expects from public space and the way it is made, including design attitudes and rationales. At least, nothing lucidly perceptible in the theory or practice of making public space so far points at any other direction.

Perhaps all and any detected 'difference' is only superficial, coloured by the context in which it is observed, or the language in which it is spoken of? Or, perhaps it is subtle, hinting at some kind of inner source rather than a learned custom, habit, or mode of action that might reveal intent? 'Plus ça change plus c'est pareil' (as in the Canadian Parliament's rephrasing of philosopher Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr's original epigram 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose' while discussing Afghan detainees, of all things<sup>78</sup>)—a true global condition for global citizens.

Returning to the title of this exposé, is, then, making public space about the same or about difference? We might imagine 'humanity' as a genotype of specific existence and each human as its phenotype. Or 'space' as a genotype of universal existence and 'public space' as its phenotype. While, contextually, 'same-ness' concerns the innate public-ness—the social nature and need for a frame of reference—of human phenotypes, 'difference' concerns individual reactions to each one's particular frame—the direction and degree to which 'context' moulds reactions. And while, ethically, in human culture, 'same-ness' concerns the universal concept of the 'greatest public good'—the common benefit of human interventions—'difference' concerns individual local needs for that and the differential potential of any public space to fulfil demand.

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## NOTES

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- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.civisanalytics.com/>
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- <sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic\\_space](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic_space).
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- <sup>12</sup> Here refers to 'the sphere of the aesthetic as a specific manifestation of man's value relationship to the world and the sphere of man's artistic activity', as per: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/aesthetics>.
- <sup>13</sup> Here refers to 'any feature that is not naturally present but is a product of an extrinsic agent', as per: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/artefact>.
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- 46 Piha, A H, *Architecture—>Culture: connections, representations, interpretations and implications*, Volume I Thesis: Theory and Methodology, part I, p. 40 Fig. 46, Deakin PhD, Melbourne, 2000, unpublished.
- 47 Here in the sense of a request or instruction for something to fill a social need, as distinct from 'social order', which term is sometimes used as an alternative.
- 48 Image credits—top row: WES LA competition entry submission; middle and bottom row: City of Helsinki.
- 49 All classifications: refer to discussion above under subheading 'Public-ness | Private-ness'.
- 50 Image credits—aerial photograph: John Gollings; other photographs: Helena Piha, Ron Jones, Ben Wrigley; drawings: City of Melbourne: New riverside park draft concept plan report.
- 51 Piha Helena&Sakkinen Petri, 4D Form project sheet, 'Birraring Marr'.
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- 71 Image credits—illustrations: St Kilda Foreshore Urban Design Framework, St Kilda's Edge: Rakennus-ja ympäristösuunnittelu Piha&Sakkinen and City of Port Phillip; photographs: St Kilda Promenade: Jackson, Clements, Burrows Architects.
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- 73 Image credits—left and top row: 4D Form PtyLtd: Competition entry submission; right: Fender Katsalidis & rush\wright associates.
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## PORTFOLIO

### Urban Coding in Logan. Teaching urban design with the support of local government

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Since 2015 Logan City Council (LCC), a major urban area south of Brisbane in Queensland, Australia, has hosted students from the Bachelor of Design (Architectural Studies) at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) for an intensive two-day urban design charrette. The charrette is delivered as coursework and assessment for an architecture unit on urban morphology and urban dynamics; the format of this learning experience allows students to directly interact with Council personnel and to gain an in-depth understanding of the urban issues they are asked to solve. Over the years, LCC has offered engaging and challenging briefs to the students.



Figure 1 (left). QUT students presenting their ideas to LCC staff in 2015.  
Figure 2 (right). Logan City Council Chambers entrance with welcome messages  
in the different languages spoken within the urban area

In 2015 the theme was the densification of Wembley Road, the main commercial spine of Logan Central currently characterized by the fragmented forms of big boxes and large carparks. In 2016 students were challenged with the design of a new masterplan for Logan Central Civic and Community Precincts with the aim of creating a new civic and urban centre. In 2017 the focus was Springwood and the brief sought the creation of a new CBD alongside the M1, the main motorway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast and southern states. In each instance, LCC has provided both the facilities where the workshop was hosted, and engaged several stakeholders to speak to the students. This mix of perspectives presented diverse issues and questions from the local area.

The approach suggested to students was initially developed in collaboration with Prof. Peter Richards and is based on the use of collage as the main tool to understand spaces and

relationships. Architecture students often find designing at urban scale challenging specifically designing public spaces. Asking students to source information and images of public spaces they regard as successful to use in creating their own proposition has proven to be an effective way of achieving innovative design propositions in a short span of time.

The six projects presented in this paper, have all been developed over just two days, plus some extra time to polish the graphics and finalise the presentation boards, they illustrate a summary of the work by David Pauli in 2015; Ethan Fitzpatrick, Izak Hollins and Alexandra Illuk in 2016; Jessica Fenton and Kristofer Rhodes-Estes in 2017. The workshops were organised by Unit Coordinator/Senior Lecturer Dr Mirko Guaralda with the valued support of sessional academics Linda Carroli and Dr Kirralie Houghton. This interdisciplinary facilitation team was highly experienced in working with local government across diverse portfolios. The first half day of the workshop is dedicated to presentations by stakeholders, Council staff and site visit. The second half of the first day and the majority of the second day are devoted to brainstorming ideas and developing the collage, using samples from other cities to quickly suggest possible networks of public spaces and urban landscapes. The workshop is closed with presentations of the students' ideas to Council and general feedback is provided. After the workshop students have one week to polish their masterplan and finalise their propositions before they are exhibited.



Figure 3 (left). Student developing their concepts during the 2016 charrette.

Figure 4 (right). Johnny Pong from Logan City Council explaining the brief to students during the 2017 charrette.

The format of the charrette has successfully provided students with a unique real-world learning experience and Council with a range of ideas and scenarios that have shown possibilities and potential development avenues for the localities investigated. In recognition of this positive experience, in 2016 LCC has included a student category in its Logan Urban Design Award, which was conferred to Ethan Fitzpatrick for his design proposition on Logan Central Civic and Community Precinct.

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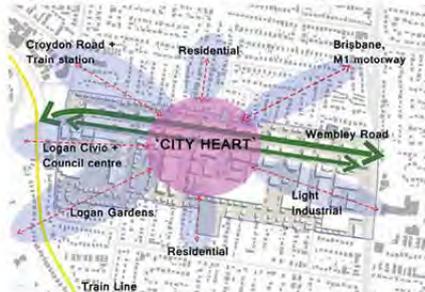


DAH525 Architecture and the City 2015 | Urban Coding in Logan  
David Pauli  
Logan Central Masterplan



- Legend**
- Master Plan Core Area
  - Public buildings
  - Bus station
  - New proposed marketplace
  - Mixed Use buildings
  - Residential buildings
  - Shared pedestrian/car green road
  - Commercial/Retail buildings
  - Retained Commercial + Retail buildings
  - Public Square
  - Public green space

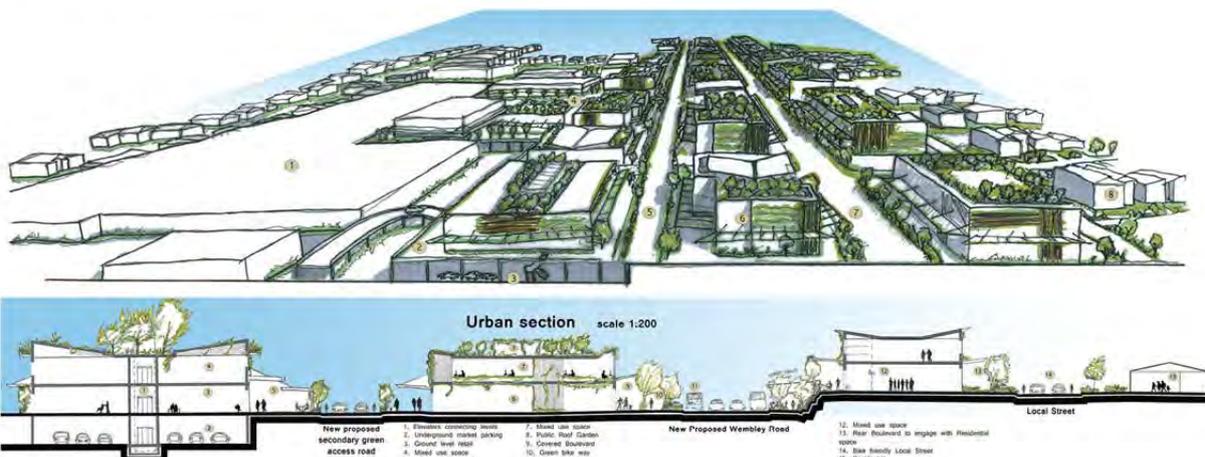
**Logan Strategic Context Plan** - visual tool identifying the proposed 'City Heart' and surrounding elements



The proposed Master Plan for Logan Central is designed to be a successful and sustainable urban scheme. It strives to be an exceptional outcome economically, environmentally and culturally. Throughout the design the immense cultural diversity of the area has been considered along with the 'way of life' common to locals in the Logan area. It is also envisaged that the new Master Plan will attract visitors to the local area.

- Wembley Road conversion  
Wembley Road has been identified as the main thoroughfare for vehicular traffic through Logan Central. With this in mind it will stay the main access road. However, to transform Wembley Road into a more pedestrian friendly space Wembley Road will be narrowed down from six lanes to four. This will steady the flow of traffic, furthermore it is hoped it will increase the rate in which the city is perceived.

- Safe Places, Private Spaces  
People need to be able to move around easily in places that feel safe and pleasant. Streets and public spaces in the Master Plan are designed so as many people as possible want to use them for a variety of reasons. At the same time people living in these areas are provided with privacy whilst having convenient access to facilities.



- Urban section scale 1:200**
- 1. New proposed secondary access road
  - 2. Elevated concrete level
  - 3. Underground market parking
  - 4. Ground level road
  - 5. Mixed use space
  - 6. Covered Boulevard
  - 7. Mixed use space
  - 8. Public Roof Garden
  - 9. General Boulevard
  - 10. Green bike way
  - 11. Bus way
  - 12. Mixed use space
  - 13. Rear Enclosure to engage with Residential space
  - 14. State friendly Local Street
  - 15. Residential



- CULTURE
- LEARNING
- GOVERNMENT
- RECREATION
- ENTERPRISE
- LIVING
- INDUSTRY

*This master plan envisions a unique Genius Loci for Logan Central by creating an organic city grid, allowing for unique building shapes. Taking inspiration from the current council administrative building, the master plan calls for new buildings to be connected via pedestrian bridges, creating the opportunity for unique architecture, and architectural focal points. Thus achieving a greater versatility of buildings, and activating the urban core above street level. The urban core would be built primarily for pedestrians. Multiple pedestrian spines connect from Woodridge Train station, through the existing North Central Logan master plan area into the Logan Gardens Master Plan and beyond into residential areas.*

*At the center of the Master Plan is the Logan Gardens which have been expanded to stretch from Brownhill Ave and Karri Ave in the south east to Wembley Road and Bardan Road in the northwest. This greatly improves street frontage and exposure of the parklands, with the added benefit of more open space. Such large open spaces would be framed by medium to high density housing in North East, South and West park boundaries. In particular, housing on the western side of the gardens have smaller parks at their center. These extensions of the gardens act as local parkland, putting a 'community backyard' at the center of housing - ideal for families. Given that Logan is a starting point for newly arrived Australians, this focus on community space is to foster greater bonds between the various cultural groups and encourage sharing of knowledge.*





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 Izak Hollins  
 Logan Central Gardens Masterplan



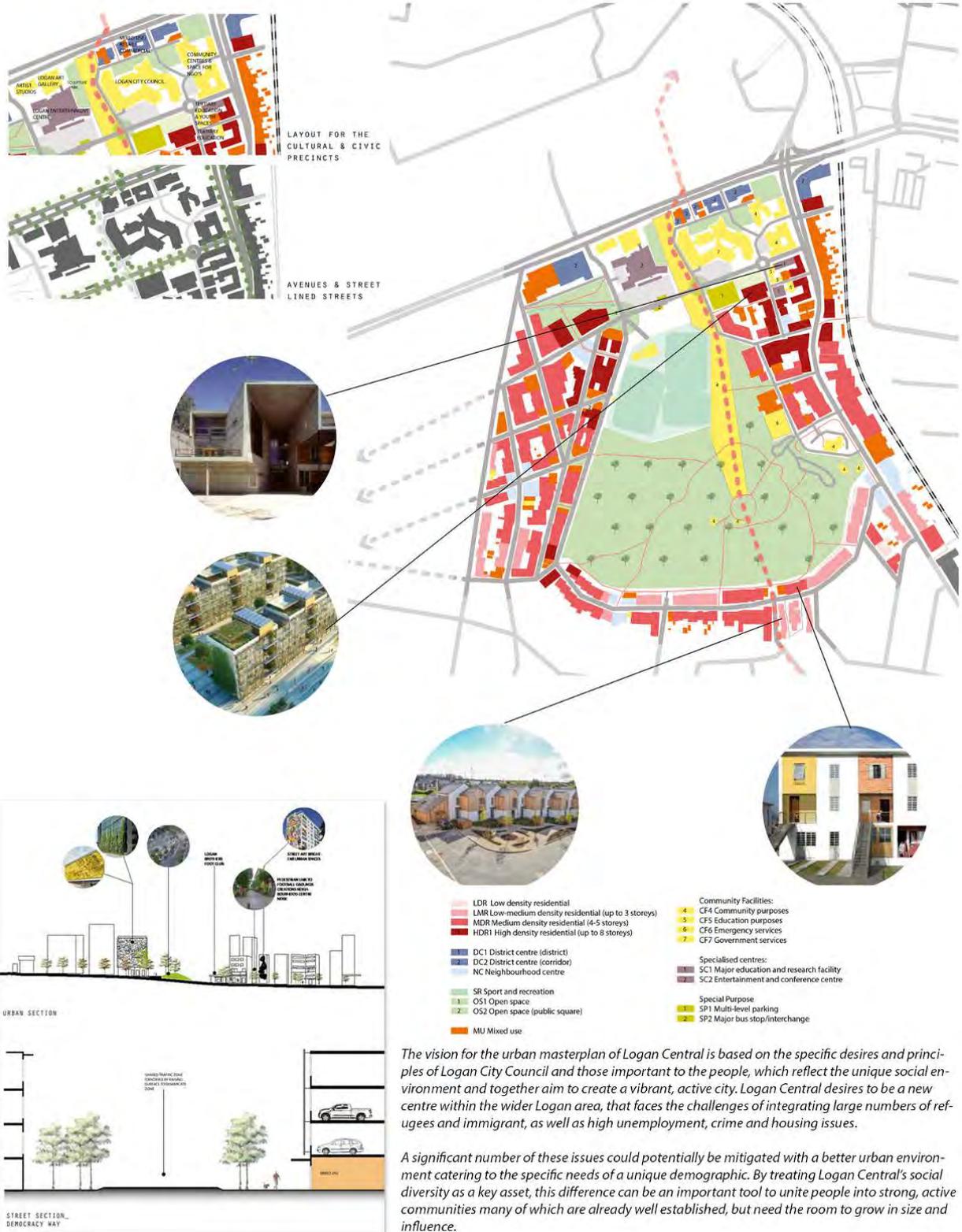
The vision for Logan is a city that embraces the cultural diversity and facilitates the development of art, sport, economy, education and society. Districts for each of these objectives within an urban village will form the cultural heart of Logan.

The first step in accomplishing this will be inviting people to interact with the city, giving people the opportunity to walk and explore places rather than prioritising roads and cars.



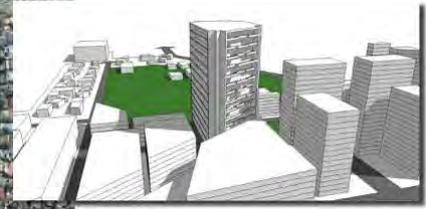
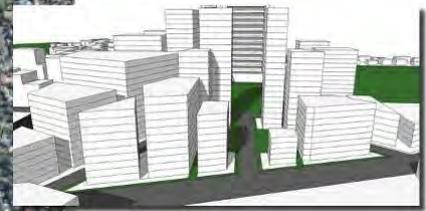
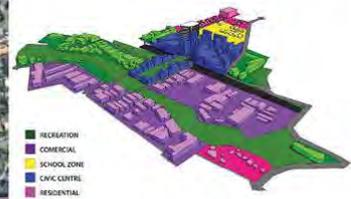


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 Alexandra Illuk  
 Logan Central Gardens Masterplan



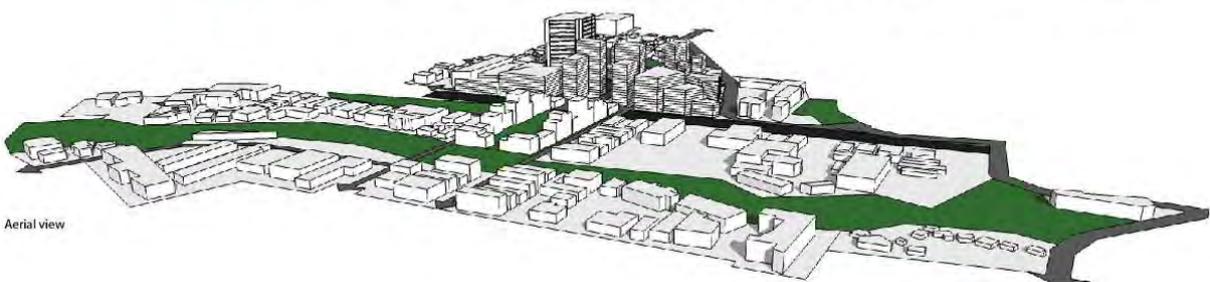
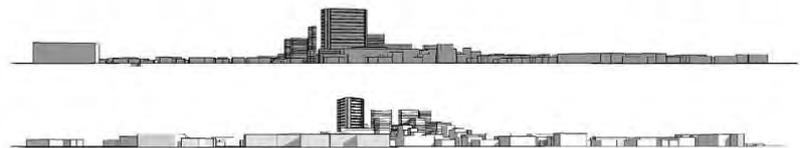


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 Jessica Fenton  
 SpringWood | CBD



Mobility Study

The proposed masterplan for the new Springwood CBD is based around the connection and flow of green spaces. This creates the opportunity for a higher community involvement and activity. The City Centre, built up around the small square offers opportunity for job growth in the area whilst the redirected roads remove the strain and pressure of the now removed service road. Flowing outwards, the green channels are fringed with the variety of cafes, attractions and various recreational activities to draw the Springwood community together. Maintaining part of the city's original functions, commercial businesses can be found to the opposite side of the highway from the main square. Drawing them together is a land bridge built up of a private enclosed square and surrounded with various businesses. Creating the connections between the zones aims to draw people around and through the city.



Aerial view



Design Intent

The overarching principles for the proposed Springwood central masterplan is to create green linkages and streetscape activation to encourage users into the next South East Queensland CBD, Activate the Slacks Creek corridor, and develop the Springwood central state school to incorporate primary and secondary schooling close to the CBD. The green linkages connect the new commercial district to a Slacks Creek Corridor redevelopment that aims to engage users with their environment and to activate the creek frontage. Development will consist of mixed use residential/commercial zones and commercial only zones with vibrant streetscapes incorporating many roads into shared carriageways. Combining mix use residential/commercial buildings into the urban fabric of the CBD will allow for workers to utilise the walkability of the springwood central CBD and introduce possibilities for new communities to form.

Building Heights



30m Max height      20m Max height  
 75m Max height

Movement Networks



M1 Highway      Main flow  
 Cross block flow      Pedestrian

Indicative Streetscape



Morphology



Slacks Creek Corridor      Commercial  
 Mix Use

Green Linkages



Main user flow      Natural flows

Thank you for reading!

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