How to regenerate the ordinary public spaces after Covid-19 crisis?
Recommendations for planners and urban designers

Mario Paris
DISA – Dipartimento di Ingegneria e Scienze Applicate, Università degli Studi di Bergamo
mario.paris@unibg.it

Catherine Dezio
TESAF – Dipartimento di Territorio e Sistemi Agro-Forestali, Università degli Studi di Padova
catherine.dezio@unipd.it

Irene Caricati
Independent researcher
irene.caricati@mail.polimi.it

Davide Vettore
Independent researcher
davide.vettore1207@gmail.com

The paper discusses the current practices in the regeneration of public spaces starting from research that compares case studies from Milan (I) and Copenhagen (DK) developed by the authors, trying to exceed the rhetoric of the 15-min city, that nowadays is mainstream. The aim of the paper is identifying potential approaches for designers and planners, when they intervene on daily, public spaces that have lost their meaning and identities. Testing existing proposals, the study explores a set of issues that affect the physical, social, economic condition of places and that should be took in account in the process of re-activation. Discussing the results, the study proposes a set of tools and recommendations that can support the work of the urban designers and could foster the social and physical impacts of their work. The conclusions open a perspective on the role of this type of intervention in the construction of the future city.

Introduction

The recent and multifaced crises (pandemic, climate change and global warming, Russian and Ukrainian war and the consequently international tensions, etc.) accelerated and amplified several ongoing processes in European cities, that challenge the traditional forms of urban life. Nowadays, citizens ask for healthier, more inclusive, and intense urban spaces, in which they can spend their everyday life, that have changed irreversibly. Planners, civil servants, and local leaders must take in account those issues to defining new approaches to the emergent questions –from climate change to population aging– about the living quality in urban regions. New needs raised up, as the desire to have a more direct contact with nature and new balances between private life/working life and leisure. The impact of these emerging demands in the consolidated cities and neighborhoods stresses the existing planning tools and produces a double process.

On one hand, the re-discovering of the qualities and the potentials of consolidated formulas (Marchegiani and Bonfantini, 2022) in the field of urban planning (neighborhood units, car-free spaces, environmental areas, etc.). Through them, the role of the proximity and pedestrian access to services, the attractiveness, the resilience of the "public city", and the welfare palimpsest structured with public spaces emerge as key elements of the spatial quality that could impact in the life of their inhabitants. On the other hand, and along the process, there is an explosion of public and academic debates about the need of re-think the current development model and support several (green, sustainable, inclusive) transitions.

In this light, urban designers and architects must tale in account the current shift and the renewed ways of living the space of the city. Under the pressure of EU, national and local programs of intervention financed by NextGenEU, Urban Agenda, etc., they often test their proposals in real situations, with a direct impact to the city. These experiences became testing grounds for approaches and tools which may be seen as instruments for fulfilling the needs of humans, ensuring their quality of life and, ultimately, achieving well-being and happiness (Casti et al., 2021).

This is a risky condition, where interesting opportunities and reflections go together with a set of rhetoric and mainstream discourses – as in case of the idea of the "15-min city" proposed by C. Moreno in its TED Talk in 2016 – that mix ideological frames, unreal proposals, and simplistic solutions. In addition, when the focus is on those abandoned or underused spaces that even before the pandemic represented a challenge for the public actors and experts at local scale, the risk of implementing cliches without any relationship with the local needs is higher.

The aim of this article is to exceed stereotyped assumptions when the urban designer re-think everyday-life spaces of a consolidated city and improve the existing toolkits. To achieve this challenging goal, the contribution discusses a possible alternative to current practices

starting from research that compares case studies from Milan (IT) and Copenhagen (DK). These are two cities that developed remarkable approaches to the regeneration of public spaces, one as a recent policy, and the other as a consolidated tradition.

The study[1] assumes the idea that shrinking is a multidimensional process with multidimensional effects (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012) and the research team will focus on an urban planning/urban design perspective.

According to a largely accepted definition provided by T. Wiechmann and M. Bontje (2015), this buzzy word described a multifaced and dramatic decline that affect the economic and social bases of a city, that asymmetrically and asynchronously manifests itself on different scales (Frolov et al., 2022). The evidence is in the progressive abandonment of large-scale public and private properties (as factories and corporate headquarters, or military areas

and public assets), but also in the "minimum landscapes" (Ferlinghetti, 2019) or the "spazi minimi di prossimità" (Rossi and Perrone, 2020) where the inhabitants spend their daily life. Therefore, shrinking involves also public squares, shared spaces in large housing compounds, local high streets with a weak attractiveness for customers and ongoing processes of demalling, neighborhoods' centralities that lost their identities, etc. The shrinkage process on these places is a condition and not an exceptional event (Rieniets, 2005), and the study provides and tests a set of four recommendations for the re-design of public spaces, that could support the future interventions of architects and urban designers.

After this introduction, the paper presents the results of the explorations developed in the two cities and in two specific areas: "Sundbyøster Plads" in Copenhagen and "Piazza Sicilia" in Milan (2.). The study presents in the following section the outcome of the simulations developed for the research (3.) and the emergent design recommendations. In the conclusions (4.), it figures out a set of potential fields to explore in the future.

The regeneration of daily public spaces: learning from two international experiences.

This section aims to tackling the strategies of two cities that faced off the issue of design

or re-design the spaces that usually host the "life between buildings" (Gehl, 2011) in recent times, and that showed innovative approaches that evolved even more during and right after Covid-19 crisis: Copenhagen and Milan. Both cities, involving different approaches and dealing with their specific conditions, developed a set of new regeneration projects based on the citizens' behaviors oriented to reactivate parts of the city, that were usually underused or degraded. Even if this process is apparently slow and, sometimes, the results of the public initiatives are subtle, the policies developed by the cities shown some promising results that achieved international visibility. Milan and Copenhagen produced actions related to the sphere of public life, with particular attention to the quality of public spaces, devoted to the immediate reaction to the "new normal" after Covid-19 and they have been presented as good practices in the international debates (e.g. UN-Habitat, 2021; O'Sullivan, 2020, Laker, 2020).

The research approach selected by the team involves two different methodologies:

• a direct observation of behaviors and social practices developed by inhabitants and city users of public spaces to collect information about the current living forms of these areas.

• a "research-by-design" methodology (Corner, 2006), intended as a form of qualitative

research into people's behaviors and choices when they inhabit a space, according to the Landscape Urbanism sensitiveness and recent declinations in the field of urban planning (Dezio and Paris, 2023). In this light, the "project" intended as the formalization of a way to live and perceive a space, is an opportunity to read and influence the living practices of its inhabitants. This operation starts from a succession of composition and decomposition actions and, through them, explore the crossroads between the need of improving the quality of urban spaces, the reactions, and the new need of urban populations after Covid19, and the role of the designer.

The analysis that was conducted allowed to register different results in terms of what can be defined as a "slow process of rediscovery" the urban space and its subsequent reactivation. This process was possible following a series of activities that came directly from the citizens during the period of the pandemic and in some parts, they persist.

The observations and interviews collected during the on-site visits were essential in understanding how some types of public spaces gained more success or were unlikely rediscovered. The presence of unused or resourceful spaces allowed to reinvent uses and habits because people were naturally inclined to socialize and meet, as in their nature. In this

---

1   The research has been developed by Caricati Irene and Vettore Davide in the context of their MS thesis at Politecnico di Milano (I), intitled "Designing public spaces after Covid-19 – Learning from the experience of Copenhagen and Milan" (A.Y. 2022/2023). Mario Paris and Catherine Dezio supported this study as supervisors. Tacking advantage of the produced materials, authors re-worked part of them, and the present paper is one of the first opportunity to disseminate the results of the subsequent study. Although the authors cooperate in the writing of the paper, Mario Paris and Catherine Dezio took main responsibility of the sections 1. and 4. Irene Caricati Irene and Davide Vettore of the sections 2. and 3.

way, it was necessary to identify new ways to re-establish, for what possible, the public life but at the same time guarantee proper social distancing. This factor was the main driving force in which people had the occasion to experiment with different solutions leading to reinvent some spaces and redefining the concept of urban resilience (Han et al., 2021). From another point of view, this aspect was a natural continuation of the tactical urbanism technique, which provided an interesting toolkit for revitalizing urban spaces in post-covid cities (Nieuwenhuijsen, 2020). This was a great opportunity to relaunch different urban spaces and improve the system of public space in the city.

These results need to be analyzed considering the time frame of reference, that is two years after the pandemic, which could be still untimely to assess more solid changes, but the analysis has shown some prominent results for reactivating parts of the urban space and regaining confidence in the public life.

The researchers applied the methodologies in two different European cities, in which try to understand how public life and the use of shared spaces changed after the pandemic.

Copenhagen is a cities internationally recognized for the highest standard of living and, above all, since the '70s is an example for the use and design of public space (Peterson, 2017; Alfaro et al., 2019). Traditionally, local

governments integrated the strategies and public policies for people's well-being and quality of life in their actions at different levels. This was a movement promoted by the architect and professor Jan Gehl (2004, 2020a and 2020b), who sought to recover the basic human needs of interaction, inclusion, and intimacy, forgotten during the process of urbanization and with functional planning approach (Andersend et al. 2008; COBE, 2016). In 2022, the researcher had the opportunity to develop research stay (March-May) to complete the field work and to conduct interviews in the city.

The choice of Milan follows different reasons. It is the city in which the teams' member live, in which they work, they move. It was obvious use it as a sort of "control case" for the approach. After a long time in which the urban development of the city stopped, today is one of the booming urban systems, nationally and internationally recognized and it proposed new plans issued following the pandemic that take advantage from the current dynamism of the city (Barbarossa, 2020; Sposini, 2020).

Although the two cities are different, they experienced similar problems and they implemented parallel actions aimed at reusing/redeveloping degraded spaces in cities. These are spaces located within residential neighborhoods, to provide citizens with new gathering spaces for outdoor activities and the

The area of Sundbyøster Plads
Fig.1
Municipality of Copenhagen, 2020

research focuses on a comparison between height cases for each city.

What emerged from the analysis is that the city of Copenhagen in recent time strengthened its role as an international reference in the field of urban regeneration and capacity to take care of public spaces, thanks to its long-term policies in the field of planning (COBE, 2016), that consider both: design solutions and socio-economic impacts at local scale. The attention for both factors, and the consideration for the context conditions and the human behaviors, made Copenhagen a source of good practices to study about (Alfaro et al., 2019). These two factors are quite different in Milan, where a long-time prioritization of cars in the city has been recently subverted by municipal actions that focus on bikes and pedestrians (Barbarossa, 2020).

For this paper, we also proposed two focuses on squares raised in front of schools, located in residential neighborhoods: Sundbyøster

Plads for Copenhagen and Piazza Sicilia for Milan. These are two examples of the ongoing experiences of transforming underused and degraded spaces in squares, providing needed amities and a better design. These cases show the similar patterns proposed by inhabitants of the neighborhoods over the recent times and how the two public initiatives tried to answer to them in different ways.

Sundbyøster Plads lies on the southeast border of the municipality, on the island of Amager. The square is located along a vital residential street, next to a primary school. It occupies a large area (4131 mq) that also hosts a playground (which offers amities for children of all ages to stimulate the interactions and the dialogue among generations) and an unused plot.

Before the Covid period (Fig. 1), this was a marginal space, used only by children and their parents. During the pandemic, it became more popular, and it hosted other kinds of users,

Sundbyøster Plads, The development project
Fig.2
BOGL, 2021

Piazza Sicilia before the transformation
Fig.3
Comune di Milano, 2019

such as teenagers and young adults, who have brought new activities to the square (i.e. physical exercise).

The addition of these new activities entailed making changes to the square, and the strategy chosen by the Municipality of Copenhagen was to modify and readapt the unused area adjacent to the playground according to the needs of the citizens.

The project proposes (Fig. 2) the addition of a new aggregation space with green areas, benches, and workout stations.

In this case, therefore, the recycling of a disused space was made possible thanks to the experience of the citizens, who discovered needs during a period of rediscovery.

Piazza Sicilia is located in La Maddalena district, a historical area between Piazza De Angeli, Piazza Gambara and Via Washington in Milan developed according to the Beruto plan (1889). It is surrounded by elegant houses and an Istituto Comprensivo (an aggregation of

primary school and kindergarten) dedicated to Umberto Eco (Arsuffi, 2019).

Before the Covid period (Fig. 3), this space was used more as a parking lot instead of a public space for the citizens. The space was therefore not only dangerous, especially for the children and the grandparents that usually passed through it.

During the Covid period, residents of the area felt the need for new outdoor living spaces close to home, and Piazza Sicilia was an example of the rediscovery of space. In addition, right after the most rigid phase of the lockdown the municipality of Milan included the piazza in the program "Piazze Aperte in ogni quartiere" (Open squares in every neighborhood), that has the aim of involving the territory in the

regeneration and care of public space (Comune di Milano, 2019, 2020a, 2020b).

The proposal involves (Fig. 4) an existing green area with trees and a new floor-painted area, and the use of the color green aims to generate an homogeneous space. It is a space dedicated to the students at the near school and the square host different amities such as ping-pong tables, benches, pick-nick tables, vegetable gardens and free space for drawing on the painted concrete.

The difference among these projects is the perspective of the action: while in Copenhagen the municipality developed a permanent project, in Milan the proposal follows the tactical urbanism approach.

Piazza Sicilia after the transformation
Fig. 4
Comune di Milano, 2019

Improve a new design approach for shrinking public spaces.

The outcome of the analysis of the set of good and bad practices in the two cities ended in a series of policy recommendations for planners and architects when they work on the banal – but relevant – public spaces of the existing cities. The aim is to wrap out the suggestions raised up from the lessons learned during the study. This approach is also a test that challenges the most common design solutions promoted by several organizations and governments to implement a better urban structure (e.g. WHO, 2020 - OECD, 2020).

The research-by-design developed within the study translates them in real contexts and simulates their impacts. Those simulations reconsider the urban mobility, the issue of public gatherings, the system of paths and the collocation of services to guarantee each citizen a balanced set of amenities. Thanks to the exercises, the study re-frame the well-known concept of the 15-min city (Lydon and Garcia, 2015) declining the emergency solutions (Laker, 2020) raised up in recent times due to the Covid-19 crisis in a more structured urban design strategy, with a long-term perspective.

1. Recommendation 1: The design of squares should follow a clear organization of the space, and as for streets, the perception should be a safe space in terms of openness. The traditional structure of squares or public spaces considers a different set of elements, that is composed of urban furniture, such as benches, wastebaskets, sports equipment, or playground. All these components become an important piece of the structure of a space, defining areas for different activities and organizing the space according to a program. In this way, these elements create at the same time functional schemes and define the paths for flows and accesses. Because of this, the main layout of the room should be obvious to users right away, allowing them to find their way about quickly and effortlessly. This sense of "safe space" is related to the need to remain in a location without worrying about contracting an infection in the event of a pandemic, as well as in non-pandemic situations since it assures that individuals may move around and do so unhindered. To allow for flexible usage or to prevent congestion, it should also be thought about leaving some of the areas unoccupied. Indeed, urban furniture might influence how a place is seen and aid to prevent some degree of disarray. It should be helpful to organize areas according to a logical plan so that people can stroll through them without restriction. The duties should be instantly apparent in this way, preventing confusion about where to sit or move, for example. Like streets, a square should be a location where people may sit and stand freely without any restrictions, allowing for appropriate distance and preventing crowding.

2. Recommendation 2: When designing a square or a public space it should include and take in account all types of users, different time zones and activities or services. Urban populations on different individuals, which differs in age, gender, status, habits and so on. All these characteristics have a strong influence on how people tend to use space, and this should be a changing factor in how space is designed when considering which type of activities. With the pandemic, people started to use public spaces more, so that the urgency now is to provide spaces for a wider type of users according to different needs and uses–because not everybody has the same habits. Not always is possible to understand which type of users to be expected in a certain space, but there is an interesting solution that can help in shaping public space. The strategy of tactical urbanism has proven to be an effective tool to improve urban space by testing the space and understanding how it

can be used. This design approach has been recently implemented in Milan with Piazze Aperte program in 2019, and more recently with Strade Aperte. Those programs aim to design short-term solutions to test space and activating a more permanent design solution to be a better fit in the urban system. It also provides a new sense of community because people are more than welcome to suggest and propose solutions that can be included in the final design proposal. To make more livable spaces, it should be considered that these spaces mix several kinds of users (such as solo adults, young adults, or the elderly) at very different times of the day. Adding appropriate services and tools for these users would probably improve the livability of the space for both users and residents. To this, it can be added a set of temporary activities or services to activate the neighborhood and bring it closer to the well-known concept of the 15-min city.

3. Recommendation 3: Expand the wide range of accessibility to all the city's public spaces. Public space should be accessible to all citizens, always favoring public transport. The location of public space around the city is usually supported by the city planning framework and more often by the emerging needs of the citizens, pointing out districts with not enough public spaces or not well-

maintained, "forcing" not intentionally citizens to over-crowd some other space in the city creating chaos and erasing, for example, the feeling of "stick out" from the busy city life of every day. For this reason, it should be important not only to enlarge the number of public spaces in cities, but also to think in foster the network that they form together, at district and urban scales. In this light, public spaces must be accessible, and designers should provide alternative ways to reach them, considering also the different physical conditions of the users, following the "design for all" principles. Sometimes the presence of "architectural barriers" discourages accessing a specific space, marginalizing some potential users or creating wild paths or accesses. In these cases, design has failed its purpose, leaving room for its misfortune and wild usage. It's also relevant to mention that every public space has to be reachable by public transport and also slow mobility, maybe placing a public transport stop or a bicycle parking could ensure the reachability.

4. Recommendation 4: Improving the presence of green spaces in squares and other public spaces, providing benefits for citizens' health and air pollution. The pandemic showed how important green spaces and parks are, acting essentially as "public back-yards", they provide enormous

benefits both for citizens and for the environment. In every public space there should be at least some green surface, maybe grass and some greenery, to ensure these and, ideally, create a green network in the city. The presence of green would likely help more residents connect with nature frequently, potentially resulting in psychological and physiological benefits. The green solution provides small green lungs within neighborhoods all over the city, fighting smog and pollution and reducing air and land temperature, caused by the urban heat island, which is becoming more and more frequent nowadays. All of these benefits are linking to what scientific community call "ecosystem services" (MEA, 2005), so all benefits that environmental system can provide to life cycles, nowadays becoming helpful planning tools. Trees are special tools for the planning of public spaces because they offer greater advantages despite requiring constant upkeep. For this reason, the presence of trees should, whenever possible, be supported by constant maintenance. They could also help as a sunscreen, creating a barrier between sun and city users, especially in areas where are planned "static" activities" such as sitting, playing chess, reading, etc. This factor is especially influenced by the type of vegetation, which

affects how well it can block out sunlight and is determined by the size of the leaves. Even the placement of green areas needs to consider a suitable size and be planned to prevent root damage to the paved surface as well as maintain health of the greenery itself. Designing of green spaces can help with the beautification of city, but also, more importantly, with various health problems, related to pollution. The ideal creation of a network of public green spaces could also improve the neighborhoods' quality and livability so that everybody can access and enjoy the greenery.

The recommendations are, in our perspective, a set of effective ideas that should integrate the current approach of planners and urban designers in the definition of future public spaces. They form an initial toolkit that could be implemented, thanks to the application of these and other approaches in real contexts, under the pressures generated by present programs and actions in this field (developed by public bodies at different levels dedicated to the regeneration of the existing cities).

The necessity to regain confidence in urban life demands a more organized strategy, with particular attention to the different users that each urban space can host and, in some cases, should host (Bereitschaft, 2020). In many cases, considering the international policies that were published, the translation
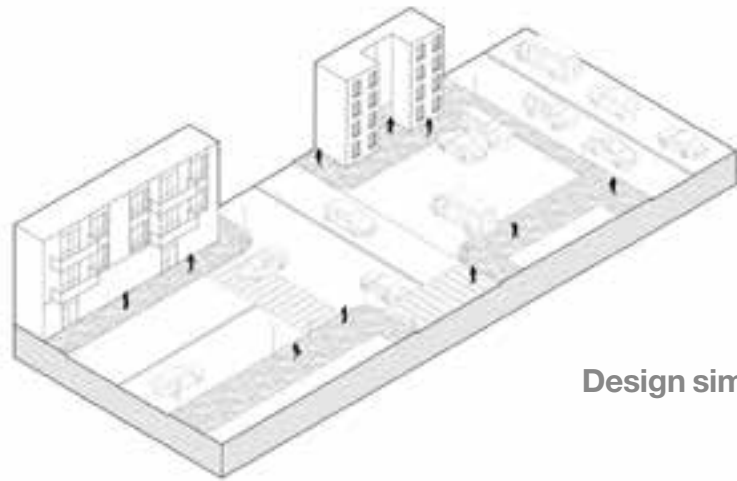
Design simulation: Existing situation
Fig. 5
Caricati & Vettore, 2023

Design simulation: Temporary solution and Long-term solution
Fig. 6
Caricati & Vettore, 2023

Design simulation: Temporary solution and Long-term solution
Fig. 7
Caricati & Vettore, 2023

of these was usually followed by an example with a design solution or a practical application (Bliss, 2020). Therefore, in the study a set of simulations supports each recommendation as a test for them and for the identified design solutions. This further step was possible thanks to the observations collected during the direct-observation phase of the study, which allowed to define a selection of design solutions considering the reactions that will generate in the users/inhabitants/customers of the public spaces. To render these policies visually at their best, the study provides a set typical situations/urban contexts and implements the solutions with three-time perspectives: short, medium and long-terms. Due to synthesis reasons, in this paper we can only point out an example, related with an urban square and its transformation.

The first simulation (existing solution) presents the degraded space of the consolidated square, located in a residential neighborhood, that is just used as a parking plot. The square is therefore bare, impersonal and unsuitable for neighborhood life. (Fig. 5)

The second simulation (temporary solution) presents the first phase of change (Fig. 6), that following the protocols of Tactical Urbanism applies temporary design interventions aimed at qualifying urban public space using limited resources to catalyze long-term change (Lydon & Garcia, 2015). With this approach, the design solution creates an impulse, triggering regenerative processes with little expenditure of energy that can profoundly change and improve the livability of public space and the quality of life of the people who use it daily. Reactivating, through temporary interventions, areas that can thus be returned to the people. This approach uses iterative development processes, efficient use of resources and creative potential generated by social interactions. It allows for the immediate re-appropriation, re-design, re-planning, and re-use of public spaces (Lydon & Garcia, 2015). In the simulation, the temporary interventions apply the recommendations: a) closing of the street and the painting of ground with colorful patterns (Referring to R. 1); b) inserting temporary urban furniture, such as stands,

tables, benches, food carts, string lights, umbrellas and so on (R.2); c)influencing the traffic management, adding a new bike lane and zebra crossing for the new pedestrian area (R.3); d) and adding green areas with planters, and flowers, in order to create a better atmosphere, protect from cars and try to improve the air quality (R.4).

The third and last scenario shows how these design interventions can become in the long-term perspective (Fig. 7). The result of this square is made possible with the help of the users of the space implementing – together with actions in the material conditions of the space in which they can take part – a process of co-design about the program and the management of the area.

Through them, the playful and colorful paving was transformed by opting for a more uniform and continuous paving in which urban furniture became permanent and more durable. Thanks to these actions, the change of the streetscape radically shifts, and the project could also evolve adding services or elements that encourage slow mobility, such as curbs, ramps, bike parks and bike sharing stations. Even for the greenery, temporary plants could be replaced with trees and shrubs planted on the ground, to continue the idea of improving air quality.

The final image of this new area should suggest the opportunity to transform a parking plot in an urban space marked by vibrancy and urbanity, able to host a local community that took part into the process and improve its sense of appropriation and belonging to this area and to the neighborhood.

Conclusions

The paper presents the outcome of an experience of research-by-design in which current practices of urban design applied to daily public spaces have been tested and enriched with several recommendations, starting from the examples of policies implemented in Milan and Copenhagen.

Over the time, the discussion around the idea of "public space" evolved, involving definitions that captured various characteristics. From the approaches based on the ownership of these spaces (Kohn, 2004) to other features, e.g. as the human behaviors that they host (Gehl and Gemzoe, 1996), or their capacity to support the public life (Carmona, 2008). In parallel and, especially in those contexts marked by processes of degradation and underuse, shared and accessible public open spaces have been replaced by more orderly places exposed to control power, exclusion, and inaccessible narratives (Kohn, 2004; Davis, 2017; Mitchell, 2003). Expectations and knowledge of the high caliber of the urban environment have taken the place of the uncertainty of diversity, urban spontaneity, and captivation of urban character. This was the end effect of a planning and governance framework that reacts (or does not react) to societal deeper structural changes. (Henry et al., 2015).

Historically, public spaces have been regarded as timeless, transformative, and elusive entities for a city's urbanism (Sengupta, 2017). It was critical to first consider the conscious structuring of places to minimize unsettling encounters with people who could threaten the accepted narratives of a specific place (Kohn, 2004). Additionally, there was a paradox in how inclusive and exclusive public venues may be at the same time. For instance, depending on the person and the associated public, public areas may be more closed while also being somewhat more accessible. However, Covid-19 has significantly highlighted the lack of accessible and usable public space. Continuous development trends have deprived people of adequate local public spaces or suitable alternatives in their homes, including semi-private or semi-public spaces (Kordshakeri, 2020).

There is a need to translate these relevant discussions, about the idea of public spaces and their role in the quality of life of their inhabitants, in real contexts. Only exceeding the distance between the aulic but abstract proposals and the reality of existing spaces, we can advance in the reflections and produce helpful and effective tools to improve the existing cities and to support their ongoing transitions.

As planners and urban designers, active also in the academia, we must exceed the definition of void "good practices" and move – or return, following the example of G. De Carlo – to real contexts, identifying problems based on their sensitivity and curiosity. Working in real situations that affect the life of real people – and not supposed inhabitants – is the key to discover the ambiguities associated with urban contexts. They enhance their awareness of ongoing dynamics, and they become able to articulate a critical reading of the urban environment.

This process, that as pointed out by D.A. Schön (1985) is a process of 'reflection-in-action', is even more important working on the daily public spaces of existing cities –especially when they are affected by degradation, abandonment of lack of identity and programs. The study proposes a set of attentions and aspects for planners and urban designers when they work in these contexts and suggests an approach that could be implemented, working with local communities, prefigurating the impacts of different choices and considering different time spans.

All these attentions and tools should integrate the current approaches and improve the capacity of designers to re-frame their space of action, working in the public dimension and formulating solid proposals for the shared spaces because they have – and they will have – a crucial role in the future quality of urban environments. Because only improving the quality of existing daily spaces we can improve the quality of the life of their inhabitants.

Bibliografia

Alfaro K.E., Ariza M.C., Quintero M.C. (2019) Public space for all: what makes Copenhagen the city for the people? Available at: https://blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/en/public-space-for-all-what-makes-copenhagen-the-city-for-the-people/ (Accessed: 14 March 2023).

Arsuffi R. (2019), Milano | La Maddalena – Piazza Sicilia, ognuno si è sistemato il proprio lato. Available at: https://blog.urbanfile.org/2019/11/28/milano-la-maddalena-piazza-sicilia-ognuno-si-e-sistemato-il-proprio-lato/ (Accessed: 14 March 2023)

Barbarossa L. (2020) 'The Post Pandemic City: Challenges and Opportunities for a Non-Motorized Urban Environment. An Overview of Italian Cases', in Sustainability, 12, 7172.

Bliss L. (2020) Mapping How Cities Are Reclaiming Street Space. Available at: https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2020/04/coronavirus-city-street-public-transit-bikelanes-covid-19/609190/ (Accessed: 14 March 2023).

Casti, E., Adobati, F., Negri, I. (editors), (2021) Mapping the epidemic: a systemic geography of covid-19 in Italy. Amsterdam, Elsevier.

COBE (2016) Our Urban Living Room. Learning from Copenhagen. Copenhagen, Arvinius+Orfeus Publishing.

Comune di Milano (2019) Piazze Aperte. Milano, Comune di Milano.

Comune di Milano (2020a) Milano e i suoi Quartieri. Milano, Comune di Milano.

Comune di Milano (2020b) Milano 2020 - Strategia di adattamento. Milano, Comune di Milano.

Corner, J. (2006) 'Terra Fluxus', in C. Waldheim, (ed.) The landscape urbanism reader. New York, Princeton Architectural Press.

Dezio, C., Paris, M. (2023) 'Three Case Studies of Landscape Design Project of Italian Marginal Areas. An Anti-Fragile Opportunity for an Integrated Food Governance in a Post Covid Perspective', in Cities, 135, pp. 1-12.

Ferlinghetti, R., (2019) 'Paesaggi minimi: tra riconciliazione ecologica e salvaguardia dell'armatura territoriale', in E. Casti, (ed.) La geografia a Bergamo. Nuove sfide per l'analisi territoriale e il mapping, Rome (I): A.Gei, pp. 57-75.

Frolov, D., Volkov, S., and Akimova, O. (2022) 'Ecosystems of Old Industrial Cities: Complexity and Multifacetedness of Urban Shrinkage', in R. Polkarov, (ed.) Ecosystems Without Borders. Opportunities and Challenges. Chaim (CH): Springer Nature, pp. 73-88.

Gehl J. (2020a) Public Space and Public Life during Covid-19. Available at: https://covid19.gehlpeople.com/ (Accessed: 14 March 2023).

Gehl J., (2020b) Public Space and Public Life in the reopening phase. Available at: https://covid19.gehlpeople.com/ (Accessed: 14 March 2023).

Gehl, J. (2011) Life between buildings. Copenhagen, The Danish Architectural Press & The Royal Danish Academy of Fine arts.

Gehl, J., (2004) Public spaces public life – Copenhagen. Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen.

Gehl, J. & Gemzoe L., (1996) Public Spaces. Public Life. Copenhagen, Denmark: The Danish Architectural Press and Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architectural Publishers.

Han, S., Sim, J., Kwon, Y. (2021) 'Recognition Changes of the Concept of Urban Resilience: Moderating Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic', Land, 10, 1099.

Laker L. (2020), World cities turn their streets over to walkers and cyclists. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/11/worldcities-turn-their-streets-over-to-walkers-andcyclists#maincontent (Accessed March 14, 2023)

Lydon, M., Garcia, A. (2015) Tactical Urbanism, Washington, Island Press.

Marchegiani E., Bonfantini B.G. (2022), 'Urban Transition and the Return of Neighbourhood Planning. Questioning the Proximity Syndrome and the 15-Minute City', in Sustainability, 14(9), 5468.

Martinez-Fernandez, C., Audirac, I., Fol, S., and Cunningham-Sabot, E. (2012) 'Shrinking Cities: Urban Challenges of Globalization', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 36(2), pp. 213–225.

Nieuwenhuijsen M. (2020) Covid-19 and the City: the Covid-19 pandemic and the transformation of the city. Barcelona, MJN Publisher.

O'Sullivan, F. (2020) Europe's Cities Are Making Less Room for Cars After Coronavirus. Available at: https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2020/04/coronavirus-reopencities-public-transit-car-free-bike-milan/610360/ (Accessed March 12, 2023).

OECD (2020) City, policy responses. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policyresponses/cities-policy-responses-fd1053ff/ (Accessed March 12, 2023).

Peterson, A.L., (2017) 'Exporting Strategies for Urban Livability: Examining Copenhagen, Denmark as a Model City for Quality of Life Generated through Denmark as a Model City for Quality of Life Generated through Urban Design'. MS Thesis and Project at Trinity College.

Rieniets, T. (2005) 'Global shrinkage', in P. Oswalt, (ed.) Shrinking Cities: Volume 1: International Research. Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz, pp. 20–34.

Rossi, M., Perrone, C. (2020) 'Homing city. Un progetto di ricerca sulla gestione degli spazi minimi di prossimità nel welfare per il superamento delle crisi pandemiche', in Contesti, 2, pp. 119–130.

Schön D.A. (1985) The reflective practitioner. New York, Basic Books.

Sposini, R. (2020) Milano, Cosa Prevede Strade Aperte, Il Progetto per Ridurre l'Uso Dell'auto Nella Fase 2. Available at: https://www.lifegate.it/milano-cosa-prevede-strade-aperte-progetto-auto-fase-2 (Accessed: March 12, 2023).

UN-Habitat (2021) Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future. Nairobi, United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

Wiechmann, T., Bontje, M. (2015) 'Responding to Tough Times: Policy and Planning Strategies in Shrinking Cities', European Planning Studies, 23(1), pp. 1-11.