

IDENTITY, HEALTH AND URBAN LIVEABILITY: CREATING SPACES FOR PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

The study illustrated in the paper was carried out in the framework of the ISMed-CNR research titled *Analysis and design of the contemporary territory: identity, health and urban liveability for resilient and sustainable places*, the INU *Community Public Space*, both coordinated by the author, and *Urban Maestro. New Governance Strategies for Urban Design Horizon 2020* research project.

The ISMed-CNR research aims at identifying methodologies, databases and guidelines to support policy makers, professionals and scholars in the realization of healthy and liveable public spaces.

The *Community Public Space* has the objective to collect best practices of public space in Italy, starting from the Charter of Public Space adopted during the second Biennial of Public Space held in Rome in 2013.

The *Urban Maestro* Project – coordinated by the UCL and in partnership with UN-Habitat – ‘looks at the ways European cities are being designed and financed, focusing on innovative ways of generating and implementing urban spatial quality’. Among the objectives, the project has the comparison of the experiences in Europe to international practices. Accordingly, the author, as a member of the Advisory and Support Group, shared the Italian good practices in the public space field.

Starting from these premises, the main results of this study will be illustrated. The Charter of Public Space is a sort of guidelines for liveable and sustainable public spaces. In order to comprehend the relationships between theory and practice and verify the validity of the Charter after 10 years of its creation, about 30 Italian case studies were collected. Of these, emblematic case studies with particular attention to the sustainability meant in its three-fold meaning will complete the paper.

Keywords: best practices, public spaces, sustainability, urban liveability, urban design, urban regeneration.

1 INTRODUCTION

The typologies of the public spaces are increasing changing, welcoming new uses, materials and urban furniture, trying to meet more needs together, including walking, cycling, sport, games for all ages and abilities, specific design for the protection by flood and other environmental events and the presence of wireless and qr codes to have information of many kinds [1-11].

The new or regenerated sites not always are sustainable and of quality. For this reason, a Charter of Public Space was carried out and adopted in the framework of the second Biennial of Public Space held in Rome in 2013 [12]. The Charter is composed by 50 principles that are a sort of guidelines for both quality and sustainable public spaces.

Its main criteria are based on that the Charter – as reported in it – should contain reasonable and shared principles with regard to the conception, the design, the realization, the management, the transformability and the enjoyment of public space and, just like public space, accessible to all. The Charter of Public Space aims at serving all those who believe in the city and in its virtue in encouraging social interaction, encounter, togetherness and freedom, and in it calling for giving life to these values through public space. At the same time, cities show the worsening of economic, social, ethnic, cultural and generational inequalities. For

this reason, public space should be the place where citizenship rights are guaranteed, and differences are respected and appreciated.

Starting from these premises, the present study, aimed at comprehending the relationship between theory and practice and verify the validity of the Charter after 10 years of its creation, was carried out by the author in the framework of the ISMed-CNR research titled Analysis and design of the contemporary territory: identity, health and urban liveability for resilient and sustainable places, the INU Community Public Space, both coordinated by the author, and Urban Maestro. New Governance Strategies for Urban Design Horizon 2020 research project.

The Urban Maestro Project ‘looks at the ways European cities are being designed and financed, focusing on innovative ways of generating and implementing urban spatial quality’. Urban Maestro – coordinated by the UCL and in partnership with UN-Habitat – has as an object the comparison of the experiences in Europe to international practices. Accordingly, the author, as a member of the Advisory and Support Group, shared the Italian good practices in the public space field.

The ISMed-CNR research aims at identifying methodologies, databases and guidelines to support policy makers, professionals and scholars in the realization of healthy and liveable public spaces and the creation of indices capable of providing a numerical evaluation of the degree of health and liveability of a place.

The Community Public Space of the INU – Italian Institute of Urban Planning – has the objective to collect best practices of public space in Italy, starting from the Charter of Public Space.

To achieve the aim of the whole research, about 30 case emblematic studies were collected. The criteria to choose the categories of the case studies were multiple, namely: parks, transportation open-air hubs, waterfronts, squares, gardens, nature paths and projects on large scale [13].

Accordingly, the paper is organized as follows. The second section will show the database used for the collection of information concerning the case study and the recent update with respect to the current Covid 19 emergency. Section 3 will report the case studies which are particular emblematic for to their social, environmental and economic sustainability, achieved in different ways. Finally, section 4 shows the main changes at the principles of the Charter and draws the conclusion.

2 THE DATABASE

The database was created collecting information useful both in the phases of design and realization of a public space, and in the management ones. The data are collected by different sources, including information by the professionals or technicians who realized the spaces, internet, bibliographical references and on-site visits.

The first elements are the year of realization, the city, the address, the surface, the planimetry and the images. These elements are important to localize the public space and understand the dimension, the kind of project and its design.

Then the other important elements are constituted by: the Institutions that are involved – public and/or private; the funds – public and/or private – for the realization and, if previewed, the management; and the urban project or planning tools of reference.

The kind of uses and fruition are the other factors that contribute to the comprehension of the quality of the space together with the elements that testify the success.

Finally, the presence on the social media and relative, pages, hashtag and followers, the bibliography and sitography.

All these elements are related to both tangible and intangible data and contribute to the whole knowledge and success of the public space in object.

Thanks to the flexibility of the database, this was slightly adapted to allow the collections of elements to comprehend changes of the spaces in Covid 19 phase. Indeed, due to the current pandemic event, public spaces were not used for months and then reopened, requiring suitable physical distance between people to avoid crowded situations; accordingly, some information were added to the database aimed at verifying their changes in the current Covid period [19].

The update of the database and of the case studies allowed to update the Charter of Public Space as well.

3 THE CASE STUDIES

The case studies of the whole research concern squares, gardens, parks, transportation open-air hubs, waterfronts, nature paths and projects on larger scale.

The public spaces which will be illustrated in the following concern: ArteNatura Park in Trento, Trentino Alto Adige Region; the Public Garden, in San Donà di Piave, Veneto Region; Portello Park, in Milan, Lombardia Region; the Gardentopia Gardens in Matera, Basilicata Region; the Open Laboratory Project in Bologna, Emilia Romagna Region; and Piazza Matteotti in Catanzaro, Calabria Region [13].

These emblematic case studies are related to one or more principles of the Charter. The general framework which emerges shows different design, planning, cultural, geographical, social and financial factors that can determine in multiple ways the quality and sustainability of a public space [14-19].



Figure 1: ArteNatura Path, Daniele Salvalai – L_alveare (Source: Photo by Giacomo Bianchi, Copyright Arte Sella).

The first case is the ArteNatura Path in Val di Sella (Trentino Alto Adige, North of Italy) which has existed since 1986 with the first installations and exhibitions created in the garden of Villa Strobele in Val di Sella. Since 1996, the Arte Sella project has developed along a wood path on the southern side of Armentera Mount: this is how the ArteNatura path is defined, an itinerary that *winds through the woods*. Since 1998, the area of Malga Costa has been added to the ArteNatura itinerary, an exhibition venue and then a concert hall. Val di Sella is accessible from Borgo Valsugana. The surface of ArteNatura route is 3 km, of which Malga Costa area is 1 km and that of Villa Strobele is 500 m. The Malga Costa area is owned by the Municipality of Borgo Valsugana, while the garden of Villa Strobele is privately owned, leased to Arte Sella.

The Institution involved in the creation of the space is ArteSella Association. The Institutions involved in the space management are as follows. Contribution: Autonomous Province of Trento – Trentino Alto Adige Region – Municipality of Borgo Valsugana – APT Valsugana – Service for employment support and environmental enhancement – CARITRO Foundation – Valsugana and Tesino Community. Sponsor: Montura – Ceramiche Keope – Dolomiti Energia – Levico – Finstral – Nerobutto – Foradori – Ferrari – Cassa Rurale Valsugana and Tesino – Consorzio Lavoro Ambiente – Ecoopera – Ottica Valsugana – Grucolo Refuge. Partner: European land + art network – Grandi Giardini Italiani – Trentino – The sounds of the Dolomites – Opera Estate – La Coccinella – Lito Delta – Silvana Editoriale – Sadesign – S.T.E.P. – T.S.M. – Science Museum – MART – Buonconsiglio Castle – FAI – Coop API – Borgo Valsugana Library – Forestry and Fauna Service of the Autonomous Province of Trento – De Bellat Foundation – Dancing Museums – Italian Touring Club. Media Partner: crushsite.it

The funding for space management are public (18%) and private (sponsors and tickets). As regards the urban planning tools of reference, in the third variant of the PRG – Regional General Plan – (November 2018) the park falls within the wooded area.

As regards the policies activated and types of use, this is a path in the mountains between art and nature, for walking, stopping and observing. In the last 30 years, dance, music and art in all its forms have assiduously organized in the paths of Arte Sella, giving shape to unique projects and events, such as Fucina Arte Sella or La Natura del Pensiero.

These are mountain paths with small and somewhat steep sections. Therefore, it is not possible to access with wheelchairs. The ‘ArteNatura Path’ is freely accessible, the path at Malga Costa is subject to a fee.

The Arte Sella Association constantly collaborates with Italian and foreign artists and cultural associations. The new projects ensure that the park has become not only an artistic but also a social and cultural centre of prominence and reference.

The local community is very close to the cause of the park, as on the occasion of the fundraising for the damage of bad weather in a few hours a lot of money was raised, and part of the population decided to materially help the foundation. In the current Covid 19 period specific paths have been carried out to allow a safe and agreeable visit.

With respect to the social network, on there is the hashtag: #artesella; on Facebook: Arte Sella page has 26,284 followers and 26,202 likes; on YouTube it is present but not with its own channel. Within these social media, there are no photo of people with face mask

The second case is the Public Garden, in San Donà di Piave (Veneto Region, North of Italy), which was realized between 2004 and 2007. The surface is of 20,000 sqm and the property is public (Fig. 2).

The Institutions involved in the creation of the space include the Municipality of San Donà di Piave and Borgo Vecchio Consortium, while the institution involved in the space



Figure 2: San Donà di Piave, Public Garden (Source: CZstudio).

management is the Municipality of San Donà di Piave. The urban project was carried out by Cino Zucchi Architetti.

As regards the type of uses, the park is a typical meeting place designed for both young and old people. It is used as a place for reading, resting and feeling tranquillity. To isolate the area from the parking lot and the surrounding suburbs, dunes and embankments were built. The park is also equipped with pedestrian paths, seats, auditorium, fountain, children's meeting place, cycle paths and picnic areas, made with white stones covered by white concrete. A concave space, defined by trees, lights and seats – always in white stone – welcomes an informal amphitheatre to host events. Furthermore, there are a series of radial paths that connect the central nucleus of the park with the pedestrian and cycle paths that connect the district to the city. The children's playground is protected by a wooden spiral and characterized by a high lamp that comes out of the ground.

The park is fully accessible on foot or with wheelchairs. It is also easily accessible by emergency vehicles in case of need.

Among the elements that testify the success of the case study, spaces of different environmental qualities have been created (children's play areas, small sports fields, etc) which are easily recognizable by all and safely used also in the current Covid 19 period.

These are designed to avoid the establishment of univocal relationships with user groups and hours of use. The space is therefore not only used by the inhabitants of neighbouring houses but is open to external users. The park responds to the well-being and leisure needs of a park, helping to reduce the visual and spatial disorder of the suburban dispersion.

The third case is the Portello Park (Fig. 3) which is located in Milan (Lombardia Region, North of Italy). It was realized in 2011 in the area of the former Alfa Romeo and Lancia. The total area is 385,000 sqm, of which 60,000 sqm of the park. The property is public, it is an area conceded to the municipality. The institutions involved in the creation of the space include public bodies, namely the Municipality of Milan Urban Planning, Private Construction, Agriculture Department – Implementation and Strategic Urban Planning Sector; and private, namely Pirelli Real Estate, Nuova Portello-Auredia and the World Jewellery Centre.

The institution involved in space management is the Municipality of Milan. The funding for the construction of the space are 8,500,000.00 euros (public and private funds)

The urban planning tools of reference is the Variation to the PRG – General Regulator Plan: PII Portello (Integrated intervention plan) stipulated between AUREDIA srl and the Municipality of Milan.

The Urban project was designed by Charles Jencks and Andreas Kipar. As regards, policies activated, The Accordo di Programma – Programme Agreement – ‘Portello Project’ Integrated Intervention Program (PII) as a variant at the current General Regulator Plan (PRG) had, among the main objectives, the redevelopment of the former Alfa Romeo and former Lancia abandoned areas through the creation of a new large park.

The plan is divided into three large units that create a vast integrated settlement between residential buildings, partly with agreements, commercial and tertiary settlements as well as public services.

The uses concern the creation of equipped areas and squares, services and new residential, commercial and tertiary settlements in order also to reconstruct and reconnect the compact fabric of 19th-century origin of the inner city to the ring road with the more recent city of the peripheral area of the north-west.



Figure 3: Milan, Portello Park (Source: Studio Land).

The entrance to the park is free and the garden is suitable for any type of users. Between the elements that testify the success, the park represents a small corner of tranquillity and silence used for various activities including walking, cycling and parking, and the park is used – respecting the physical distances, also in the current period of Covid 19.

The presence and opinions on social networks include Instagram with the hashtag #parcoportello and Facebook with Alfa Romeo Portello Park, both page and place.

The fourth case is the community gardens of Gardentopia (Fig. 3). These are located in 26 municipalities of Basilicata region, centre of Italy, namely, in: Matera – Agoragri Garden, Garden of MOMenti, White Spikes Garden, L'Erba del Vicinato Garden, Namastè Garden, Matera Nord 2000 Garden, Casino Padula Evolutionary Garden -; Potenza – Horizontal Grove Garden -; community garden of Stigliano, Rionero in Vulture, Barile, Palazzo San Gervasio, Castelsaraceno, Bernalda, Sasso di Castalda, Pietrapertosa, Vaglio, Montemilone, Muro Lucano, Pietragalla, Salandra, Chiaromonte, Vietri di Potenza, Oliveto Lucano, Irsina, Lavello, San Costantino Albanese, Rapone, Maschito, San Mauro Forte, Campomaggiore, and Cirigliano.

The total surface is of 4,800 sqm. Gardentopia is a project promoted by the Matera-Basilicata 2019 Foundation. In 2015, four associations were involved as partners and managers of four community gardens, three in Matera and one in Potenza, in partnership with the Municipalities of Matera and Potenza. Since 2018, 24 other municipalities have been involved as partners and active subjects in the management of community gardens: Stigliano, Rionero in Vulture, Barile, Palazzo San Gervasio, Castelsaraceno, Bernalda, Sasso di Castalda, Pietrapertosa, Vaglio, Montemilone, Muro Lucano, Pietragalla, Salandra, Chiaromonte, Vietri di Potenza, Oliveto Lucano, Irsina, Lavello, San Costantino Albanese, Rapone, Maschito, San Mauro Forte, Campomaggiore and Cirigliano. In each of the 24 municipalities an association is involved, as a partner and manager of the individual community garden, which lead the municipality of reference, for a total of 24 associations involved.

As regards the found, the co-financers of the Gardentopia project are public, namely: European Union, MiBact, FSC, Basilicata Region, Municipality of Matera with 165,000 euros in the 2015–2018 period and 500,000 euros in 2019.

The town planning project of reference is a Regional project. The policies activated in 2015 include: the partnership with the Municipalities of Matera and Potenza for the regeneration of some abandoned areas in their respective municipalities to be transformed into community gardens; Call for Lucanian associations for the regeneration and management of these abandoned areas. Launch of four projects for the regeneration of abandoned areas in community gardens on public areas, managed by four Lucanian associations, namely MOM Association for the Garden of MOMenti, Matera, Agrinatural for the Agoragri garden, and Istituto comprensivo Pascoli for the White Spikes garden in Matera, and UIL Potenza for the horizontal Boschetto garden in Potenza.

The policies activated in 2016–2018 include: the implementation of the activities on the four gardens.

The policies activated in 2019 include: meetings, garden tours, workshops, artistic residences on 32 community gardens throughout the Basilicata region, with 18 international artists coordinated by the curator Pelin Tan. The artists involved include: Luigi Coppola, Italy, Leone Contini, Italy, Errands, Greece, Futurefarmers, USA, Rirkrit Tiravanija, USA/Tainlandia, Martina Muzi, Italy, Volumezero, Italy, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Holland, OrtiAlti, Italy, Michael Leung, Hong Kong, Anton Vidokle, Russia/USA, ABOUT A WORKER, France, Atelier delle Verdure, Italy, Emily Jacir, Mediterranean meson ro studio, Italy, Michela Pasquali, Italy, Nomeda & Gediminas Urbonas, Lithuania/USA, Otobong Nganka, Nigeria/Belgium.

With respect to the type of uses, Gardentopia are community gardens with planting activities and care of the public green, convivial and festive moments. Public events are also held, such as theatre, talks, readings and educational activities. In the Covid 19 period, the activities are carried out with attention to the physical distance.

The elements that testify the success of the case study concern the presence of artists and the tool of art as a connector and element of hybridization between active citizenship and gardens: namely the process is not exclusively based on traditional participation models, or on simple planting activities, but within an artistic production with international artists.

The fifth case study is the Open Laboratory Project which has been realized in Bologna, Emilia Romagna Region (North of Italy) between 2016 and 2018 in a surface of 2,000 sqm. The Institution involved is the Municipality of Bologna and the cost was 3 million euros.

The town planning project of reference is the municipality Urban Redevelopment Program. The policies which have been activated concern as follows. The spaces are all connected each other through a covered path obtained by reorganizing the old underpasses and using the square of the Sala Borsa and the courtyards of Palazzo d'Accursio. The new public space is a place of connection, which is contemporary, comfortable and usable in any climatic condition by citizens and tourists.

The *containers* are networked with each other through appropriately equipped spaces with a view to creating a single 'open laboratory' devoted to the interactive use of cultural heritage and creative collaboration between citizens, administration, associations and businesses.



Figure 4: Gardentopia gardens (Photo credits: Digital Light House 1-2-560x420).

The basic idea is that this public space constitutes a meeting and socialization place, but also a space for technical laboratories and meeting rooms.

The different Labs Spaces are in fact places specially equipped and connected to each other, with a strong coordinated image. They are spaces suitable for welcoming the public with the aim of making information and activities easily accessible and experimenting with technologies and software, with tables for collaborative work and tools for presenting information, spaces to manage moments of aggregation and spaces for meetings and meetings, audio-video equipment for amplification and streaming of meetings and videoconferences.

The intention is to intertwine the production of innovative intangible services and offer consolidated cultural services (the library, exhibition venues, cinema).

The elements which testify the success include: the spaces are frequently used by people of all ages and for different uses and, thanks to the covered path, they are also used on days with unfavourable climatic conditions. Also in the current Covid period the space is used, respecting the physical distances.

The presence on social media concerns the Instagram page with 1,224 followers, the Facebook page with 9,250 followers and the twitter page with 11,700 followers.

The last case is Matteotti Square in Catanzaro, Calabria Region (Fig. 5). The first project was realized in 1991, while in 2015 the restoration and completion of the square were carried out.

The total surface is 1.00 ha while the Institution involved is the Municipality of Catanzaro. With respect to the urban project, this first was realized by Franco Zagari, Ferdinando



Figure 5: Piazza Matteotti, Catanzaro, detail, (Source: Photo by Franco Zagari).

Gabellini, Enzo Amantea and Antonio Uccello; the restoration and completion of the square were realized by Franco Zagari, Ferdinando Gabellini, Giovanni Laganà and Domenico Avati.

The funds are constituted by the European funding for the restoration and completion of the square, namely 233 thousand euros.

As regards the policies which have been activated and uses, the square constitutes a large agora with a strong public image that restores harmony and balance to the entire urban context where the space is located. The limitation of vehicular traffic has allowed the use of the square to prevail as a place for people, for socialization, aggregation, parking, observation.

There are narrative themes, such as the name and motto of the city, and more purely celebratory themes that consolidate the relationship of this place with the surrounding context and the city.

The permanent and temporary works of art in the square aim to promote a vocation of the city towards contemporary art.

The elements that testify to the success of the case study can be summarized as follows. A strategic area was created with this garden, considered the bridgehead of the historic centre, divided into four sections: the historic garden, the Vasely promenade, the new Piazza Rotella and the Piazzetta del Cavatore.

The idea that came to fruition was to create an urban space for socialization and a space with a naturalistic-environmental matrix completely integrated into the surrounding landscape. A contemporary public space where safety and hospitality requirements represent two fundamental and distinctive factors.

Finally, the presence on social media and liking on social media concerns Instagram, namely the hastagh # piazzamatteotticatanzaro, with 13 posts. In the current Covid period the space is used respecting the physical distances [13].

4 OBSERVATION AND CONCLUSION

The paper presented a study carried out in the framework of the Ismed-CNR research, INU Community Public Space and Urban Maestro Horizon 2020 project. The researches have a common object – the main topic of this paper – to collect best practices of public space in Italy, starting from the Charter of Public Space which was adopted during the second Biennial of Public Space, held in Rome in 2013, and, contemporaneously, to verify its current validity.

With the database which was used for the case studies, it is possible to collect the information, images and planimetries useful both in the phases of design and realization of a public space, and in the management one. Information relative to the success of the space and its presence on the social networks are also inserted. The data are collected by different sources, including information by the professionals or technicians who realized the spaces, internet, bibliographical references and on-site visits. Thanks to the flexibility of the database, this was slightly adapted to allow the collections of elements useful to comprehend changes of the spaces in this Covid 19 phase.

The chosen case studies are related to one or more principles of the Charter. Indeed, the cases of public spaces which were illustrated in the paper represent emblematic spaces before and during this period, because these were built with logics that can be defined of liveability and healthy, according with different needs of people [19-26]. Now, in the current Covid 19 period some uses were actualized, allowing safer uses for all. For these reasons, some principles of the Charter of Public Spaces [12], needed to be updated, allowing an actualization. In the following, some of the main changes are reported, inserting in *Italics* the new parts.

6. Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive. Each public space has its own spatial, historic, environmental, *identity*, social and economic features.

7. Public spaces are a key element of *individual and social safety and well-being*, the places of a community's collective life, expressions of the diversity of their common natural and cultural richness and a foundation of their identity. The community recognizes itself in its public places and pursues the improvement of their spatial quality.

16. Every public space should be designed with full consideration for diversity *of different age groups and people abilities*.

21. The urban public space system requires a unitary view capable of bringing out the features to maintain, enhance and communicate. It is therefore advisable for local governments to adopt a specific strategy for *public space networks with different and flexible functions which can welcome people also in pandemic periods*.

25. Design must pay full attention to maintenance and management costs by using simple solutions and materials that are durable, simple, easily replaceable *or modifiable* and climatically adequate.

31. The following can be considered constraints on the creation, management and enjoyment of good public spaces: design choices that ignore *multifunctional and healthy* criteria and structural connections; the absence of wireless networks that can widely support new uses of the public spaces; the absence of directions and references, which may cause a condition of deep disorientation in users of urban space *in both normal and pandemic situations*.

Updating the Charter the principles constitute an actual reference for all who – with different roles – participate in the construction of a more liveable and healthy city.

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