

Towards A City of Good Dwelling

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ABSTRACT

One of the main issues in contemporary urban planning is the fragmentation of urban spaces (Batty 2009) due to the relentless processes of land transformation. This phenomenon can lead to the creation of isolated urban islands and a lack of high-quality public areas. Such weaknesses particularly affect the socio-economic conditions of marginal areas within the existing city, especially those on the outskirts near rural areas. Public spaces (Low et al 2006) are essential for social interaction, community building, and improving the overall quality of urban life. They are spaces where cultural, economic, and social activities converge, contributing to the city's vibrancy and inclusiveness. Are considered the key of the new processes of urban regeneration and it contributes significantly to the making of the city of "good dwelling" (Beauregard 2020). To obtain the conditions for a good dwelling, it is proposed to apply the seven principles contained in the "Manifesto della Città del Buon Abitare" (Colarossi et al 2023): the city of good dwelling must assume the general principles of hospitality, urbanity and beauty of its public spaces. The paper proposes as innovative approach, the use of an urban planning tool with which it is possible to apply the principles of the Manifesto of the city of good living and which is called "Plan-program of public space planning and public and private services" (P.A.S.S.i.). The effort of this research is to identify a general planning tool for the redevelopment to the existing city. The multi-scalar approach of the research tool simultaneously allows an overall vision of the program and a qualitative control of each individual project.

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1. Introduction

Decades, perhaps many decades, will be needed to remedy the catastrophe and urban planning culture from the 1950s-60s to the present day has produced in the recent new urban areas of cities in Italy developed during that period.

The post-war period saw the rise of modernist planning principles, which emphasized functionality, zoning, and the separation of land uses. This approach led to large-scale redevelopment projects that

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often-disregarded historical context and local character (Jacobs 1961). Key problems included the need for housing near city centres leading to unregulated urban transformations (Beauregard 2015), social fragmentation due to the separation of residential, commercial, and industrial zones (Hall 1988), and environmental neglect with a focus on vehicular traffic and infrastructure that contributed to pollution and diminished green spaces (Staley 2020).

In contemporary urban planning, it is crucial to shift our focus to the existing city rather than solely concentrating on new developments. The existing urban fabric holds significant opportunities and challenges that must be addressed to enhance overall quality of life and sustainability (Murray & Williams 2020). Nowadays the answer of each urban planner is: what steps should be taken to regenerate the existing city?

It is essential to start with a concept of the city, an idea that can guide proposals on what, how, and when to undertake urban regeneration. This concept should address parts of the existing city, generally constructed in the last seventy years; a city that presents to those who traverse its public spaces "everyday landscapes" (European Landscape Convention, 2000) that are banal, degraded, and unwelcoming. These are spaces that many inhabitants—tens or hundreds of thousands—traverse and view daily, yet fail to see, having become habituated and unaware. These are the everyday landscapes of great ugliness.

The quality of living (Gehl 2010) is deeply interconnected with the quality of the urban landscape and its public spaces. High-quality urban environments are essential for nurturing a strong sense of belonging and attachment to one's surroundings. Research proposes seven criteria and principles to establish the basic physical conditions necessary for quality living in a city's public spaces. These principles are titled as follows:

Table 1. Synthesis of 7 Principle of Manifesto

Principle	Description
Quality of Good Dwelling	Ensure high standards of living spaces, providing comfort, safety, and accessibility.
Centrality	Develop central hubs that serve as focal points for community activities and services.
Small Cities within the City	Promote self-sufficient neighborhoods that offer all necessary services within walking distance.
Walkability versus Drivability	Prioritize pedestrian-friendly environments over car-centric infrastructure.
Collective Memories	Preserve and celebrate the cultural and historical heritage of urban areas.
Urban-Rural Pact	Foster a balanced relationship between urban and rural areas to support sustainable development.
Active Participation	Engage residents in the planning and decision-making processes affecting their urban environment

These principles aim to create public spaces that enhance the quality of life by addressing key aspects of urban living, fostering community engagement, and promoting sustainability

All seven principles are interconnected and interdependent: together, they form a system of principles for creating a city of good living. Collectively, we have defined these principles as the "Manifesto of the City of Good Dwelling."

The development of urban regeneration and redevelopment plans and projects for the cities of San Severo (FG), Bologna, Velletri (RM), and for two design competitions in Putignano (BA) and Legnano (MI), provided opportunities to experiment with the application of the principles outlined in the "Manifesto".

During these experiences, it was also possible to identify and refine the contents of those plans and projects, as well as to develop appropriate innovative urban planning tools and strategies for the timing and methods of implementing interventions. These project strategies are appropriate and useful as they are tailored to the needs of urban regeneration planning, or rather, to a "small-scale urbanism."

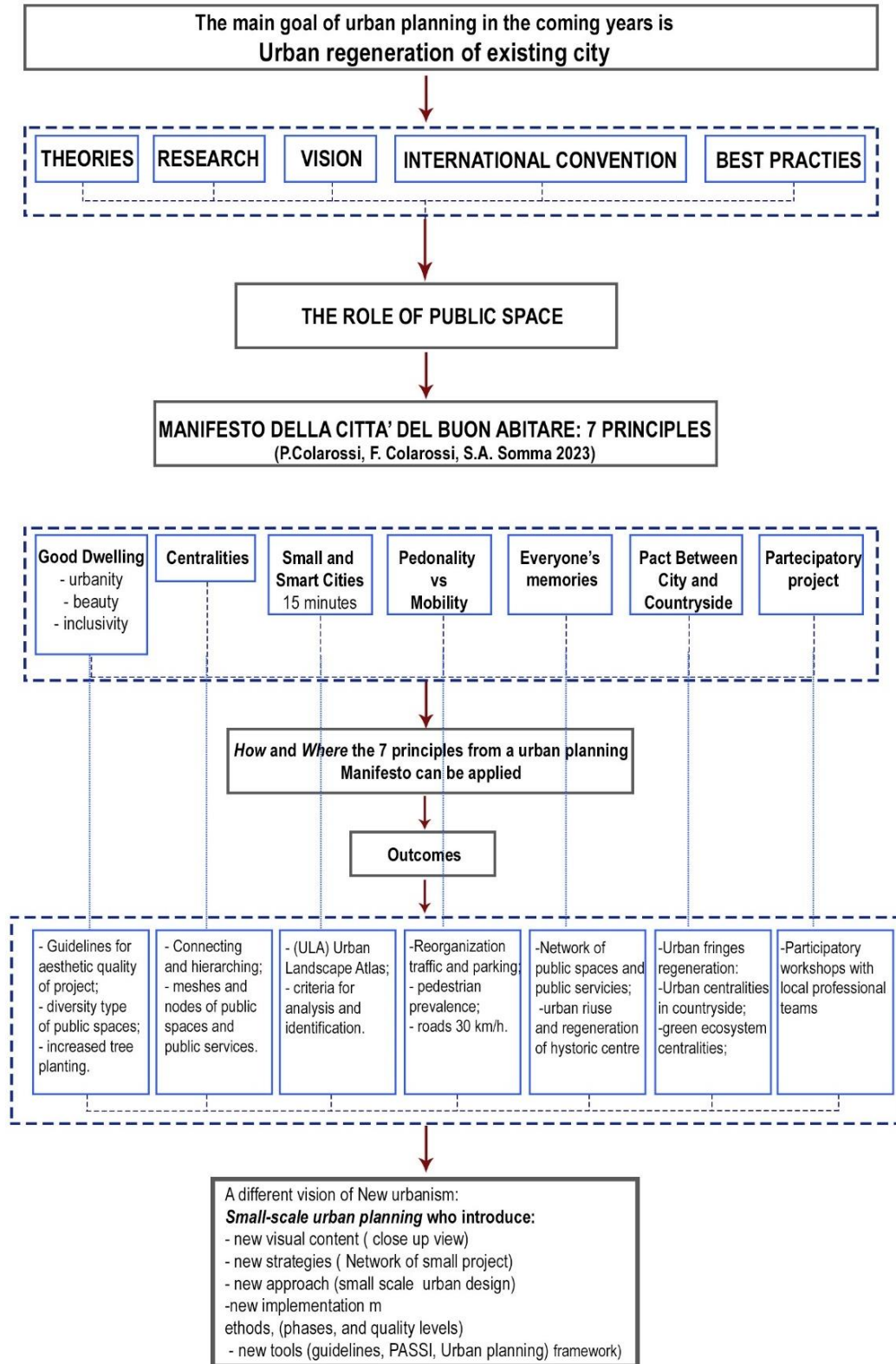


Figure 1. Methodological process (Developed by Authors)

The diagram represents the entire and complex methodological process, of which the text presented here is the third and, for now, final phase.

In the first phase, the process of awareness and evaluation of the low-quality living conditions in recently developed urban area, built in the last sixty to seventy years, is illustrated, along with the ideas and proposals from the international urban planning culture aimed at improving these conditions, highlighting the significant role of public space.

In the second phase, based on a synthesis of the findings and reflections from the first phase, a system of seven principles for good living (Colarossi et al 2023) was proposed, which should form the foundation for urban redevelopment and regeneration interventions.

The third phase focused on testing the application of the seven principles of the City of Good Living in several Italian cities of varying sizes. The main outcomes of this experimentation are discussed in the text presented here. These results form the basis for further experiments, following a process of successive insights and refinements, towards the creation of a necessary new urban planning: a small-scale urban planning for quality living.

2. Innovative Urban planning tool

For the quality of living, as mentioned, a crucial role is entrusted to public space. Or rather, to primary systems of public spaces (centralities), as will be clarified further. The focus on small-scale (Talen 2024). urbanism is essential for improving the quality of living in contemporary urban environments. To operationalize this approach, the following strategies and tools can be employed many aspects like: flexible zoning regulations and human-centered design principles should prioritize mixed-use developments, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and universal accessibility. Incorporating sustainable, resilient infrastructure and leveraging smart city technologies will enhance urban management. Additionally, initiating small-scale pilot projects and using prototypes can help to test and monitoring urban transformation and new concepts, ensuring effective and adaptable urban planning solutions. Overall urbanism of small scale is the one through which it is possible to address the qualities of living because it requires a close examination of the city, which traditional urban planning tools (general urban plans and related implementing tools) struggle to achieve.

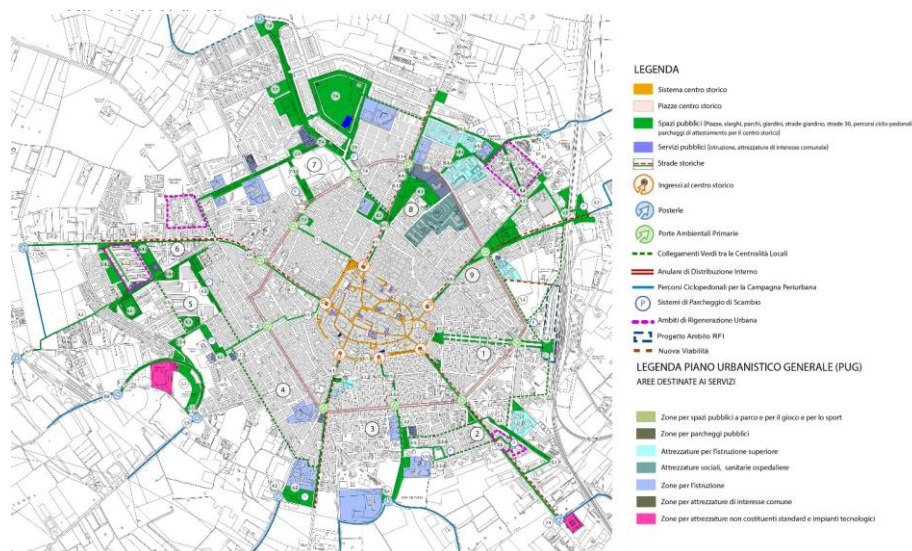


Figure 2. The design of centralities (General Arrangement Urban Scheme - GAUS) in the Urban Regeneration Program Document (DPRU) for San Severo (Developed by Authors).

This tool, although innovative, is compatible and complementary to the usual tools of urban planning technique and current legislation. It is a tool for the regeneration of the existing city that contains an overview of its future arrangement, to be achieved through a system of interventions; a necessary degree of flexibility, that is, a balance between prescriptions and directions and ease and speed of integrations and modifications; finally, a proper attention to the scale of intervention projects, which means urban design (or rather: urban landscape), which is the competence and the adequate and necessary scale to design the qualities of the urban landscape. This tool should be formalized as a document attached to General Regulatory Plans and Urban Plans for Sustainable Mobility and coordinated with them. In the experiences presented here, all the principles of the Manifesto have been applied in relation to specific context situations.

The following paragraphs describe the contents of the tool applied to the selected case studies, which were chosen based on eco-social context type, city, neighbourhoods, and design competition. The selection of diverse case studies was intended to test the applicability of the method.

2.1. Qualities of Good Living

The Urban Arrangement Scheme of a centrality is always articulated in projects: one project for each of the public spaces that make up the system of that centrality (fig. 3). Centralities are such because the best urban qualities are concentrated or should be concentrated in the public spaces and services that compose them. For each of the component projects, Guidelines are developed, which are directions for drafting the implementing projects with contents that can be used by the municipal administration in drafting the Design Guidance Document.

In the development of the Guidelines, in all cases presented here, three qualities for good living have been assumed as design principles and directions: hospitality, urbanity, and beauty. (Colarossi 2008) That is to say, public spaces and public and private services for everyone, suitable for location, quantity, and formal and functional social quality. In particular, for the quality of beauty, primarily two project strategies have been used, connected with each other: the type-diversity of public spaces and tree plantations.



Gli spazi pubblici componenti il sistema della Centralità Locale Via Palmiro Togliatti – Parco Baden-Powell sono:

- 7.1. Sequenza connessione Centro Storico / Parcheggio della Centralità Via Gaetano Salvemini / Tratto di Via Palmiro Togliatti (lunghezza circa 800 m.) fino a Via Fortore/ Via Fortore (fino alla Campagna Periurbana - Posterla Via Fortore, lunghezza circa 1650 m.)
 - o 7.1.1. Via Giuseppe De Cesare (da Piazza Luigi Allegato fino a Viale Due Giugno)
 - o 7.1.2. Viale Due Giugno nel tratto dall'innesto di Via Giuseppe De Cesare fino all'innesto con Via Gaetano Salvemini
 - o 7.1.3. Via Gaetano Salvemini fino a Via Palmiro Togliatti.
- 7.2. Piazza IV Novembre
- 7.3. Via Palmiro Togliatti
- 7.4. Via Fortore (dall'incrocio con Viale 2 Giugno fino alla Posterla Via Fortore)
- 7.5. Piazza dell'Amicizia
- 7.6. Parco Baden-Powell, Via d'Orso e strade di margine del Parco
- 7.7. Parco 8 marzo

Figure 3. One of the centralities of the Urban Regeneration Plan (DPRU) of San Severo with the list of projects comprising the system (Developed by Authors)

The type-diversity of public spaces requires enriching the meager catalog of different possible types of public spaces that they can find in the recent city: streets (primarily reserved for motor vehicles), parking lots (usually expanses of asphalt), and public green spaces (areas usually devoid of a recognizable and attractive design). Therefore, traditional spaces such as Squares, Avenues; Gardens and Parks will be part of a centrality's public space system, as well as: Walkways (streets or tree-lined paths reserved for pedestrians); Garden streets (pedestrian streets or 30 km/h streets with a strong presence of greenery and conceived as places to linger); Residents' trees (parts of avenues or garden areas intended for tree planting by residents); Meeting corners, Micro-place, and Micro-gardens (arrangements of small equipped places for gathering to be created along sidewalks of sufficient width or within squares or gardens or in parking lots - (fig. 4); Green gates (equipped places to signal the passage between different neighbourhoods or different parts of the city); Pedestrian walks in the peri-urban countryside (paths derived from historical streets and trails); Green connections between centralities (30 km/h streets with protected pedestrian and cycling paths).



Figure 4. Type of public spaces: garden street (top) and two meeting corners (Developed by Authors)

A good type-diversity of public spaces acts as a factor not only of environmental quality but also of beauty in relation to the recognizability and characterization of a centrality compared to others and also in relation to the possible spread of small interventions that, organized as a system in a unitary design of a centrality, can produce, as a whole, significant positive effects of urban quality.

Tree planting should be used as a strategy to introduce a first level of beauty into the public spaces of the recent city. Planting many, many trees. Trees that are always beautiful in themselves (which tree can be said to be ugly?) and which, because they grow rapidly enough, can beautify the spaces of the city even by hiding or minimizing views or artifacts of low quality. Trees that mark and support the

fabric of streets, avenues, and paths and mark and highlight the squares and gardens and parks of centralities; and contribute with their beauty also to environmental quality by creating the "urban forest", that is, the complex of trees in a city capable of beneficial effects: biodiversity, cooling, oxygenation, fine dust reduction.

2.2. Centralities and Small Cities within the City

The General Arrangement Urban Scheme (GAUS) proposes and represents the design of centralities and connections between them in a unified and comprehensive vision for the city. Centralities, in summary, are formed by a network in which public spaces (with their public and private services), such as squares, parks, and gardens, constitute the nodes, while streets, avenues, and paths are the meshes; a network that structures and characterizes an urban area definable as a small city within the city.

A small city (Moreno 2021) where the maximum distances to reach the spaces and services of the centrality are of the order of 700-1,000 m (pedestrian travel times of about 15 minutes). Identifying possible small cities and possible locations of centralities requires analyses and evaluations of the landscape of an urban area through readings of the morphological characteristics of the orographic substrate; urban fabric morphology; the location and mutual distances of public and private services, public spaces, and landscape, environmental, and historical-archaeological assets (identification of possible or current aggregations in a system); the preferences, habits, and traditions of use of public spaces and services by residents; and finally, the maximum lengths of pedestrian routes. These are analyses and evaluations aimed at identifying public spaces and public and private services that could form primary systems, that is, identifying the different centralities and components of each centrality.

Preliminarily, for these purposes, it will be necessary to proceed with the elaboration, for a city or part of a city, of an "Atlas of the urban landscape" in which to classify the public spaces and the related existing public and private services according to a hierarchy of four levels: base level or fabric; neighbourhood centrality level (meeting spaces or proximity services distributed within a small city and not insertable in the system of a local or urban centrality); local centrality level (centralities of a small city with spaces or services of local scale); urban centrality level (role of urban centre, city centre).

Using the classifications of the Urban Landscape Atlas, the different centralities (local or urban) can be identified, and hypotheses of arrangement can be proposed for each one by drafting the General Arrangement Urban Scheme, the individual Urban Arrangement Schemes of the centralities (UASC), and the Guidelines to guide the quality of implementing projects.

In the case of San Severo, the PASSi covers the entire city with a General Arrangement Urban Scheme (GAUS). The design represented by the GAUS (fig. 2) is the result of the identification and design of nine local centralities and one urban centrality (the historic centre). In turn, the design of the centralities is the consequence of urban morphology and current functional arrangement: a radio centric morphology, structured by some roads that connect the historic centre (also the centre of the proposed arrangement) with the surrounding neighbourhoods in concentric bands and finally with the countryside. The structure of the functional arrangement is given by alignments of commercial and tertiary activities mainly along historical streets, some aggregations of education services, and areas of public greenery.

The result is an overall design, obviously radio centric in structure, built by centralities whose catchment areas (maximum distances of about 750 meters) cover the entire recent city and all have as a dorsal axis a sequence with, on one side, an entrance to the historic centre (memories of all) and on the other, an entrance to the peri-urban countryside (called "posterla", a small equipped public space - city-countryside pact) from which walks to the peri-urban countryside start using existing rural roads (fig. 5). The length of the sequences of paths between entrances to the historic centre and those to the countryside varies between 700 m and 1,000 m approximately.



Figure 5. The city-countryside relationship in the Urban Regeneration Program Document (DPRU) of San Severo (Developed by Authors)

For the design of the system of public spaces and public and private services that forms a centrality, the main keywords should be: connecting and hierarchizing. For the first: connecting, in a unitary system design, parts of an urban area (of a small city) different in social, functional, and formal values: connecting urban areas with the countryside, commercial streets with parks and gardens, services with squares and walks (fig. 5). For the second: hierarchizing, that is, giving identity and recognizability to the centrality through the overall design of the system of public spaces and services of the centrality. For

example, by adopting simple layout schemes easily receivable in the mental maps of residents: linear, annular, cardo-decuman.

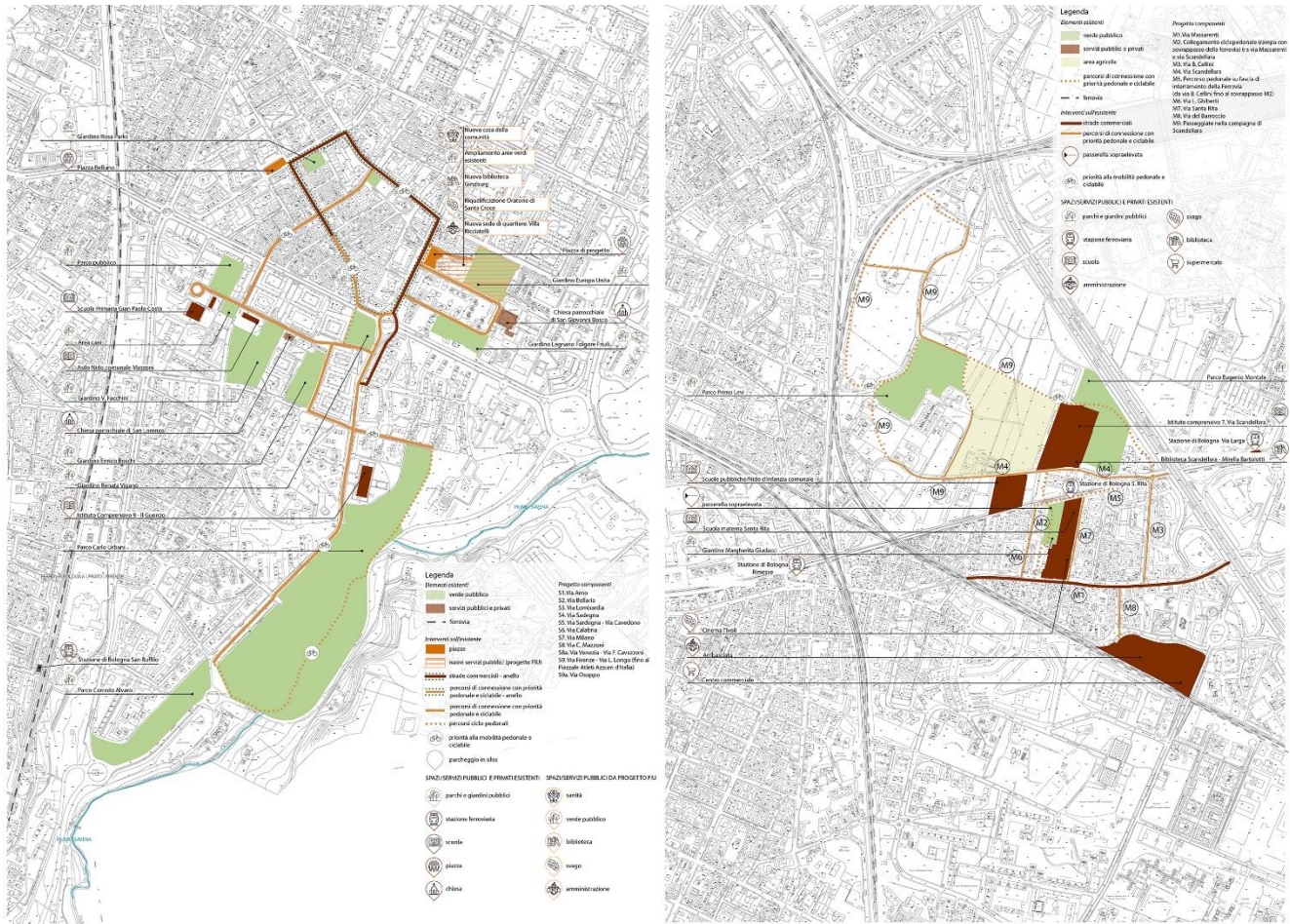


Figure 6. Connection and hierarchization in the Urban Arrangement Schemes (UAS) of centralities. System of commercial streets and system of greenery and public services (Savena area) and commercial street and areas of peri-urban countryside (Massarenti - Scandellara area) in Bologna (Developed by Authors)

But, primarily, through interventions to improve the quality of those spaces. So that each small city will be identifiable and recognizable for the character of its centrality (fig. 6). The implementation of an UASC can also occur using incremental temporal strategies based on the availability of economic resources. Incremental strategies both in implementation and in the levels of quality of interventions. Incremental in implementation because it will be possible to implement over time the overall design of an Arrangement Scheme of a centrality for functionally autonomous parts, but always part of a single system (of a unitary design). Incremental in quality levels because, following the Guidelines of an Arrangement Scheme and the principles of Tactical Urbanism, it will be possible to intervene multiple times on the same public space to improve the qualities of hospitality, urbanity, and beauty over time, until achieving the result.

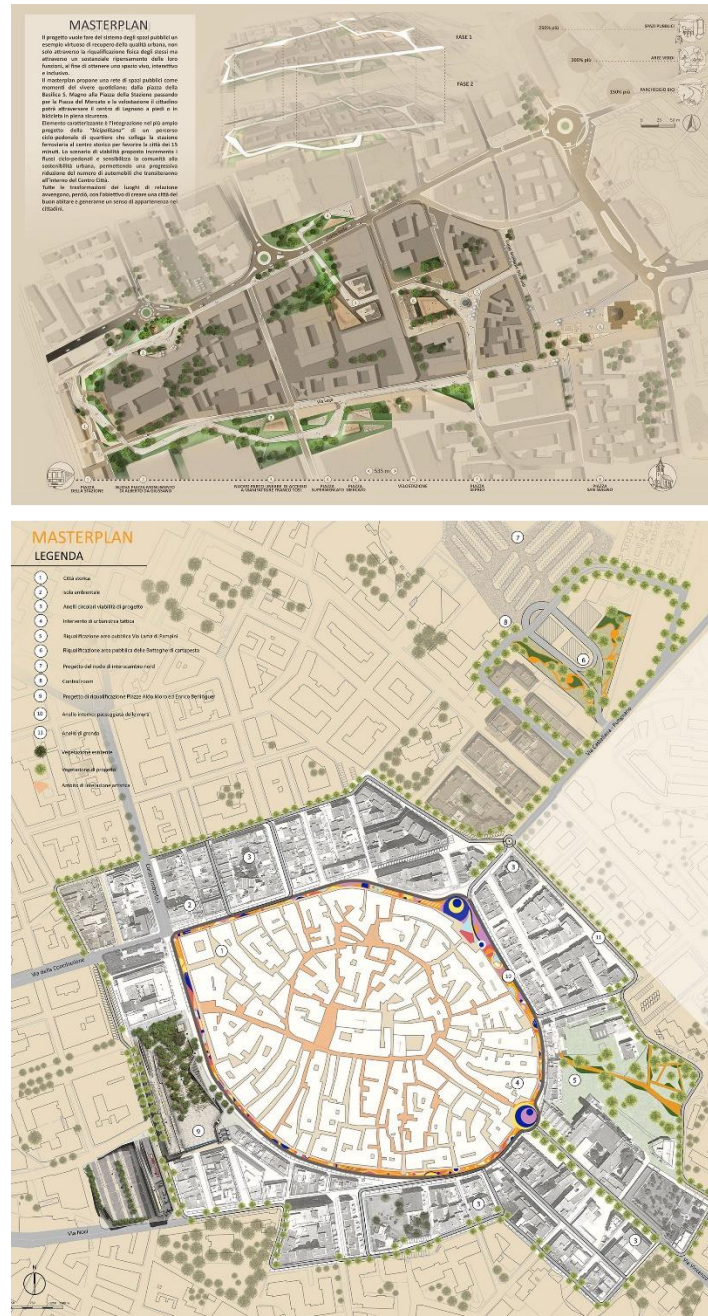


Figure 7. Identity and recognizability of centralities: Legnano, above, and Putignano (BA), below (idea competitions) (Developed by Authors)

2.3. Walkability versus Drivability

The urban quality of the system of public spaces in a centrality also depends on the quantity, location, and safety level of spaces dedicated to pedestrians. This always requires traffic and parking restructuring interventions in favor of pedestrian paths or areas for residents to linger.

Generally, this involves acting on the existing state and introducing a 30 km/h speed limit for all roads belonging to the centrality system, with interventions such as widening sidewalks, potential pedestrianization of secondary streets, and modifications and rationalization of parking.

For the latter measure, it's essential to maintain, as much as possible, a balance between eliminated parking spaces and newly created ones.

In this case as well, incremental strategies for interventions should be adopted, especially concerning the necessary transition towards the new arrangement and the gradual acceptance of changes in residents' established habits. Temporary experimental tactics should also be employed for testing the proposed interventions, potentially modifying specific local proposals for road and pedestrian arrangements based on the results (fig. 8).



Figure 8. Interventions for improving the pedestrianization-motorization relationship proposed for the Massarenti area in Bologna (existing state and proposed arrangement plan of a section of Via Massarenti and view from below with existing state on the left and proposed arrangement on the right) (Developed by Authors)

2.4. Collective memories

Every historic centre or place that should be considered as a centrality, indeed, as the centre of centralities. This applies to the historic centre centrality as well as to the project of an Urban Arrangement Scheme (UAS): development of an Urban Landscape Atlas, the design of the

organizational framework for Public and Private Spaces and Services (fig. 9), Guidelines for implementing projects, and implementation strategies.

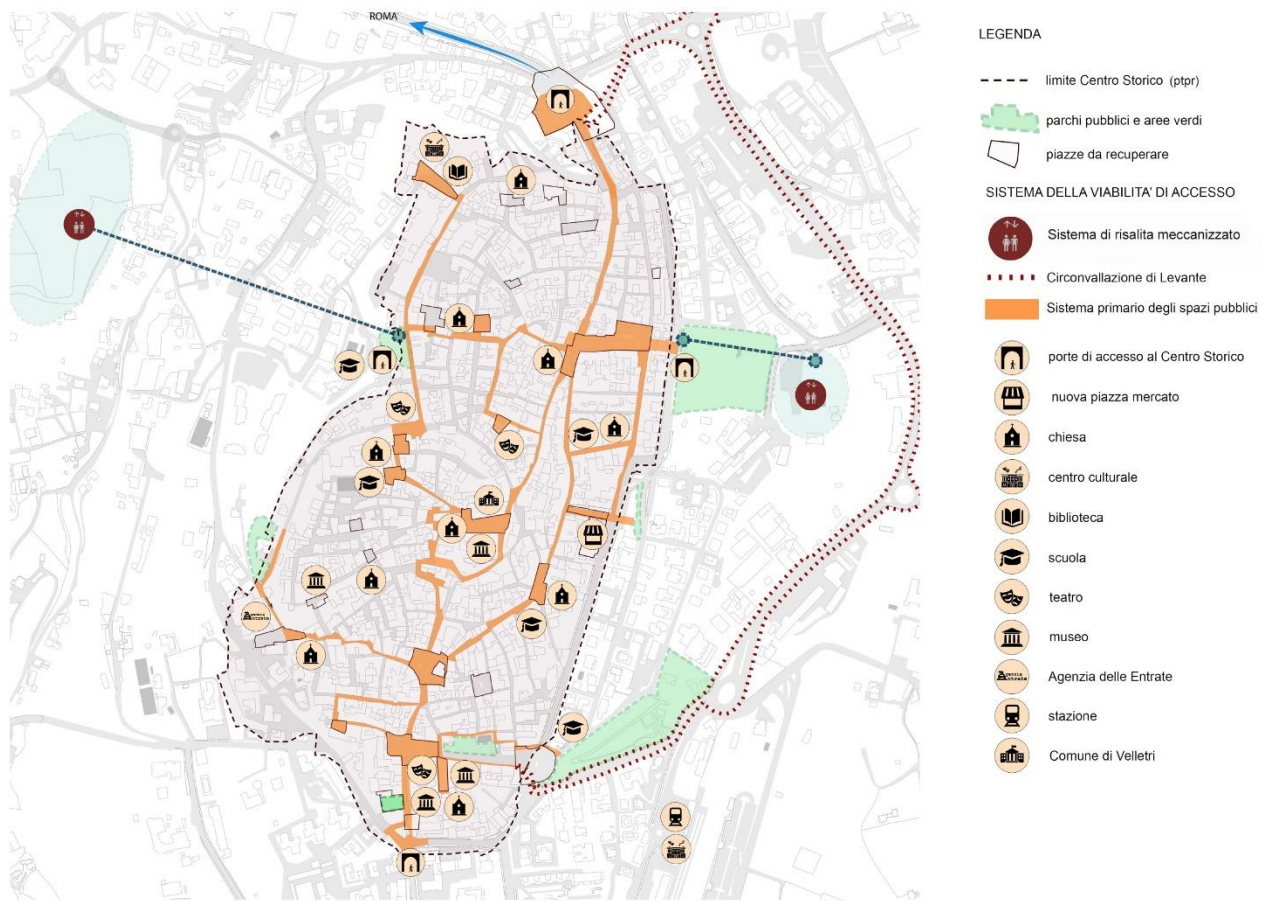


Figure 9. Urban Arrangement Scheme for the "Historic Centre" centrality of Velletri. - (Developed by Authors)

Therefore, the contents of recovery plans for a historic center should also include necessary attention to public space as a factor in the preservation and redevelopment of the collective memory of all. In the application for the historic center of Velletri, the suggested guidelines aim at creating a structure of spaces recognizable for their aesthetic qualities and urban furniture designed to establish a cohesive and unified language; Elements such as paving, trees, and street furniture that contribute to creating a cohesive and recognizable environment are fundamental in defining a unified language that respects and enhances the historic character of the center.

2.5. Pact Between City and Countryside

A new relationship between the city and the countryside entails a mutual redevelopment between urban areas and peri-urban countryside areas.

For those urban areas located on the outskirts of the city, peri-urban agricultural areas could contribute to the quality of good living. These areas, with their environmental and aesthetic qualities, could play a role not only in production but also, with appropriate path and service arrangements, in attracting residents.

This can be achieved in two ways:

1. Some centralities can be formed on the edges between the city and the countryside. By utilizing narrow strips of land on the urban outskirts to locate services and public spaces that may not be feasible within the urban fabric, the city can have a significant presence towards the countryside. These areas can also host services for agricultural productions and small public spaces equipped as gateways between the city and the countryside (city-countryside gates).
2. Similarly, to the Urban Landscape Atlas (ULA), drafting an Atlas of the peri-urban landscape would allow for the creation of a rural network of circular paths and interconnected green spaces, enhancing accessibility and promoting walks, starting from the city-countryside gates. This network would consist of pathways as links and significant nodes of historical, archaeological, environmental, scenic, and productive interest in the peri-urban landscape (fig. 5).

2.5. Active Participation

In the implementation of all the aforementioned principles of the Manifesto in the experiments presented here, processes of participation and consultation of stakeholders should be considered and promoted. This applies both to the formation of Urban Arrangement Schemes (UAS) and over time for their implementation. Particularly, active participation processes for the care and maintenance of public spaces should be encouraged.

For example, in San Severo, a Laboratory called the "Mosaic of San Severo" was successfully experimented with, where approximately fifty local technicians contributed their ideas to the formation of various Urban Arrangement Schemes for centralities. In some of these schemes, the establishment of "Participation Workshops" has been planned, serving as places for discussion and debate among citizens, associations, committees, and the municipal administration.

3. Results

Currently, the "planning schemes" together with the "guidelines" and the "project scenarios" assume the role of a new tool for territorial and urban planning. They are proposed as the primary instrument for Urban Regeneration and territorial transformation, enabling the rapid implementation of its component projects. Furthermore, they promote a homogeneous vision of the interventions to be planned and, most importantly, greater versatility over time in their execution.

The experience with the urban planning tool of the General Regulatory Plan established by Law No. 1150/42, to date, demonstrates that cities require a more dynamic instrument capable of transforming the territory and regenerating existing structures. In fact, the economic opportunities granted in recent years by Regional and National Funding Plans, distributed broadly across all Municipal and territorial Administrations in Italy, have allowed those municipalities that had pre-emptively equipped themselves with a Framework Plan of interventions to access these funds.

The ongoing experience with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), which finds ample confirmation in previous Regional Operational Plans (POR) and the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), demonstrates that municipalities lacking such a tool risk being unable to access these funds, thereby losing a crucial opportunity to requalify their public spaces and consequently ensure quality of life of their citizens. Through the development of PASSI, the municipalities of San Severo (fig.5) and Velletri (fig.9) have had the opportunity to realize part of the specific projects outlined within the scheme, initiating a regeneration process that not only involves the urban area but also improves the socio-economic aspects of the citizens.

4. Conclusions

Until now, urban planning has been perceived as an abstract activity of city and landscape programming, with few or at least slow impacts on the territory. This criticism cannot be entirely refuted, although it should be excused by the length of the administrative procedures that follow. The main flaws of Italian regulatory instruments are well known, particularly their rigidity in comparison to the difficulty of predicting an urban future that the regulations aim to determine. Additionally, they have a limited ability to determine and control the quality, including the aesthetic quality, of implementations, especially concerning public spaces.

These flaws can be reduced and minimized by reversing the traditional approach that involves preliminary regulatory planning from which the intervention project subsequently derives, along with all the aforementioned issues.

To address urban transformations that increasingly focus on adapting to climate change and evolving lifestyles in the city, it is essential to reconsider how urban regeneration can ensure a level of living quality that meets the well-being of its residents. Research in this regard proposes a continuous study of new forms of urban planning and their potential future impacts on the city.

In this sense the principles of the "Manifesto" and the results of the experiments applying those principles, previously discussed here, fall within the framework of an underlying idea about the necessity/opportunity to start building principles, content, and methods for a new urbanism: an urbanism of small scale.

An urbanism that places people (cultures, desires, perceptions) and their living conditions (aesthetic, functional, and social qualities of living spaces) at the centre of its objectives.

Urbanism of small scale is therefore one that adopts the scale of neighbourhoods, proximity, and public spaces to effectively and concretely implement the qualities of good living.

In summary, an urbanism of small scale requires the definition of new content, new strategies, new techniques, and new implementation methods.

New content, which may arise from the necessary close examination needed to identify urban issues and define proposed solutions.

New strategies, where the qualities of living are achieved through small-scale interventions, which together produce significant positive effects.

New techniques required for the requalification of urban design practice at a small scale (urban design in small dimensions).

The methodology presented offers an opportunity for the urban regeneration of all those areas that today no longer require extensive territorial expansions, but rather a careful requalification of existing urban structures, which are often lacking in the qualities of beauty, urbanity, and hospitality that constitute a city conducive to good dwelling.

New implementation process for subsequent increments of interventions and for subsequent levels of quality.

The characteristics thus outlined of an urbanism of small scale, in turn, require new content and new techniques in the formation of urban plans.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

Ethics statements

Studies involving animal subjects: No animal studies are presented in this manuscript.

Studies involving human subjects: No human studies are presented in this manuscript.

Inclusion of identifiable human data: No potentially identifiable human images or data is presented in this study.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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