Achieving proximity in Public Space: Inclusion, Flexibility and Accessibility

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Abstract

The city of proximity can be defined as a city able to offer to all its inhabitants everything they need to live, work and have fun to be reached on foot or bike in no more than 20 minutes (Moreno, 2020).
An important factor is that the city of proximity has to be created with the support of a wide process of participation with the actors involved and interested in its realization.
Starting from these premises, this study - carried out in the framework of the research project PRIN 2020 SUMMA #20209F3A37 - aims at presenting the process of participation and the proposed project interventions for the regeneration of the former fair of Rome, interested by dismission and then isolation from the rest of the neighbourhood. As a result, the 25 principles Charter of Proximity - flexible, inclusive and updatable - was realized, which consists in a holistic tool for design or verify proximity in an area and assure equitable accessibility (Sepe, 2023).

Keywords: public space, proximity, inclusion, flexibility, accessibility

Introduction

The city of proximity can be defined as a city able to offer to all its inhabitants everything they need to live, work and have fun to be reached on foot or bike in no more than 20 minutes.
Proximity - as Jane Jacobs (1961) states - allows people to exchange knowledge, ideas, ways of thinking to generate diversity. It is necessary to create the right conditions to make a place accessible to everyone as each place is different from the other; the diversity of the city is also based on the fact that so many people with different tastes, needs and abilities are close to each other. The conditions for diversity are: the different parts of a district must perform more than one primary function and must ensure the presence of people with different hours who can use many facilities in common; roads need to be well connected to each other in order to generate interest and further uses; the district must provide services, activities and goods with a different range of prices, especially accessible; there must be a dense concentration of people who are in that place for different purposes. The combination of these conditions results in vibrant districts and cities with - at the same time - good economic effects.
In continuity with these ideas, 15-minutes city (Moreno, 2024) arisen to offer more and new possibilities of use within the same place: a cinema can become a laboratory of ideas in the morning or a nightclub can act as a gym in the afternoon. Residents must have ease of access to goods and services, each neighbourhood must have a variety of housing types in terms of size and accessibility levels, including economic ones, and be close to the workplace. To achieve proximity, city plans, regulations and zoning need to be updated to ensure public services, infrastructures and public spaces accessible to all, as well as schools, small health facilities and retail including fresh product shops and pharmacies (Moreno 2020).
An important factor is that the city of proximity has to be created with the support of a wide process of participation with the actors involved and interested in its realization.
Starting from these premises, this study - carried out in the framework of the research project PRIN 2020 SUMMA #20209F3A37, within the ISMed-CNR Unit (with the author's responsibility) and the relative agreement between Sapienza Università di Roma and ISMed-

CNR, that has among the objects to create guide lines for resilient, healthy and flexible places Carmona, 2019; Corburn, 2009; D'Alessandro et Al., 2015; Gehl, 2010, 2016; Koohsari et Al., 2013), – aims at presenting the process of participation and the proposed project interventions for the regeneration of the former fair of Rome, interested by dismission and isolation from the rest of the neighbourhood, realized in the framework of the 2022-23 Urban Planning Course at DICEA Sapienza University of Rome by the author of this study and her students and the Charter of the Proximity.
As a result, the author has ideated the 25 principles Charter of Proximity, that consists in a tool for design or verify proximity in an area. The Charter is an holistic tool - flexible, inclusive and updatable - that can be adaptable to any kind of sites to assure a proximity with both equitable accessibility and attention to place identity (London, 2020; Madanipour, 2011; Montgomery, 1998; Sepe, 2023; Sim, 2019).

Urban regeneration and proximity

Inclusive regeneration

Urban regeneration consists of an integrated approach between vision and action for the resolution of various problems related to disadvantaged urban areas in order to improve their socio-economic, physical and environmental conditions with actions such as the requalification, recovery and conservation of heritage.
To the term regeneration must be added the term sustainable understood in its triple meaning (Sepe, 2021-2023), although as Evans and Jones (2008) affirm it can create ambiguity on what weight to give to the environmental, social and economic component, determining that greater emphasis can be placed in the regeneration processes on one element instead of another depending on the developers' goals (Davies, 2002).
Indeed, in the most recent studies for this purpose, additional key elements of sustainability in relation to the planning system have been identified, namely: cohesion and social inclusion; protection and enhancement of the natural environment; prudent use of natural resources; sustainable economic growth; integration of sustainable development into development plans (ODPM, 2004). This highlights the importance of integrating the components and not just ensure their presence (Forrester, Snell, 2007).
Each transformation operation may have to undergo changes due to sudden crises of different types; it is important to be able to guarantee the resilience of places and their adaptation which require flexibility of all the involved components and at all levels.
The kinds of connections between people and place are increasingly growing. Social infrastructure in urban regeneration areas is an important element in sustainable development and must have equal access for residents. It is also important to remember that stakeholders do not have equal rights and powers in the transformation process. Stakeholders in urban regeneration projects must include not only public administrators at different levels and stakeholders in the private sector, but also citizens and, in particular, those who live close to urban renewal projects.
A dynamic relationship must be created between different actors who share objectives agreed together and which must be pursued through the understanding of mutual needs and benefits (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Similarly, the creation of green and blue infrastructures is fundamental to guarantee ecological sustainability, economic regeneration and proximity. Cultural networks are another important element in sustainable regeneration as they have the potential to improve social cohesion and the city's brand. Accordingly, urban planning attentive to perceptions of one's heritage can improve interaction with this and the surrounding urban environment, with a positive effect on the health and liveability of the place. Accordingly, the integration of all the infrastructures will be the key factor to ensure more sustainable connections.

The monitoring of the regeneration process throughout its path is also important to obtain more sustainable results and improve existing programs by modifying the proposed solutions with others that are more adequate to actual needs.

Indeed, the holistic approach to the design of places is an approach that considers all the components that determine their implementation in terms of sustainability, healthiness and liveability, as well as all those involved in a logic of integration and inclusion. The holistic approach (Lehmann, 2010; Xu, 2011) can be read in various Charters, Agendas, Principles, International Reports which in recent decades have formed the framework within which local Agendas have been built. Some principles of the New Urban Agenda and of the 17 Sustainable Goals which constitute an important reference for the contents of this Book will be reiterated below.

Many principles that are contained in the Agenda concerns topics related to public spaces, liveability, healthy and inclusion. It was adopted during the UN-Habitat III Conference which was held in Quito in October 2016. It represents - as can be observed in the following principles - "a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future" (UN-Habitat, (2016).

Principle 36. "We commit ourselves to promoting appropriate measures in cities and human settlements that facilitate access for persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment of cities, in particular to public spaces, public transport, housing, education and health facilities, public information and communication (including information and communications technologies and systems) and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, in both urban and rural areas". This principle sets out a very important element for the health of places, i.e. facilitating access for people with disabilities in public spaces and built structures but also in the sphere of communication and information, allowing inclusive access to tangible and intangibles of a territory.

Principle 37. "We commit ourselves to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks, that are multifunctional areas for social interaction and inclusion, human health and well-being, economic exchange and cultural expression and dialogue among a wide diversity of people and cultures, and that are designed and managed to ensure human development and build peaceful, inclusive and participatory societies, as well as to promote living together, connectivity and social inclusion".

The important points that are expressed in this principle concern the promotion of public spaces of all types that have different functions - an important aspect even in times of pandemics in which it is important to have different uses to be carried out outdoors - and that are designed and above all managed to promote a dialogue between all. Public space, if it is of quality, is also able to promote health and well-being in those who live it, but also economic and cultural exchange.

Principle 67. "We commit ourselves to promoting the creation and maintenance of well-connected and well distributed networks of open, multipurpose, safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, to improving the resilience of cities to disasters and climate change, including floods, drought risks and heat waves, to improving food security and nutrition, physical and mental health,

and household and ambient air quality, to reducing noise and promoting attractive and liveable cities, human settlements and urban landscapes and to prioritizing the conservation of endemic species".

In this principle, the issue of resilience to environmental disasters is associated with that of creating networks of public spaces, understood as places that can help improve resilience along with other aspects such as air quality and the liveability of urban landscapes.

Principle 118. "We will encourage national, subnational and local governments to develop and expand financing instruments, enabling them to improve their transport and mobility

infrastructure and systems, such as mass rapid-transit systems, integrated transport systems, air and rail systems, and safe, sufficient and adequate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and technology-based innovations in transport and transit systems to reduce congestion and pollution while improving efficiency, connectivity, accessibility, health and quality of life".
This principle highlights the improvement of all transport and mobility infrastructures in the logic of integration on the one hand but also of safety and healthiness on the other. Reducing air pollution due to transport systems also has a positive effect on slow mobility systems – and proximity - and therefore on the quality of life.
Before the III Un-Habitat Conference, in 2015 the General Assembly of United Nations Member States the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided (UN, 2015). The Goals contain strategies to improve health and education, reduce inequality and incentive the economic growth. These include: 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture, 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages, 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all, 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation, 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries, 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development, 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests, combat desertification and biodiversity loss, and halt and reverse land degradation, 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.
These 2030 Agenda goals present a holistic approach as the principles concerning the 2016 New Urban Agenda. Topics such as resilience, inclusion equity, health, safety, sustainable economic growth, resilient infrastructures, nutrition improvement are some of those in common between the two Agendas and constitute the wider framework of the proximity regeneration topic.

Proximity
The proximity city is a city able to offer all its inhabitants everything they need to live, work and have fun to be reached on foot in no more than 15-20 minutes.
The starting point of the 15-minute city model, conceived by Carlos Moreno (2020), is that it needs to move from urban planning to planning urban life. This can be achieved by creating a 15-minute city in a compact area accessible to all and where people can live, work, take care, refuel, have fun and educate themselves. To preserve the quality of life for Moreno, two components must be changed, namely time and space. To this end, a new urban planning must be created with other rhythms of life and ways of using the urban space in order to access the main functions of the city; it is a question of transforming the monofunctional urban space into a polycentric city, connected and with public spaces accessible to all.

In this way, active mobility on foot or by bicycle can be promoted by reducing the use of the car and long journeys by public transport. All the actors of urban life are involved in this transformation as for its realization it is necessary to connect the demand of the inhabitant with the offer through different actions: creating an adequate mix of social, economic and cultural functions, increasing public spaces of meeting, transforming the streets into spaces of free movement for walking or cycling and rediscovering hyper-proximity.

The city of proximity offers more and new possibilities of use within the same place: a cinema can become a laboratory of ideas in the morning, a nightclub can act as a gym in the afternoon, but also bring art and culture on the street with digital cultural platforms or to raise awareness of historical traditions with multimedia technologies. The desired city is in solidarity and participation where there is exchange, creation and mixing.

Accordingly, the way of living and staying in the city changes thanks to the "multifunctional features" that allow to reduce the travel to reach theme, making proximity accessible even to the most fragile (Moreno, 2020).

The principles of proximity city therefore include: residents must have ease of access to goods and services, each neighbourhood must have a variety of housing types in terms of size and accessibility levels, including economic ones, and be close to the workplace of the people, the residents they have to breathe clean air and more people can work close to home or remotely thanks to the diversity of work spaces available (smaller offices, co-working spaces, etc.).

To achieve proximity, city plans, regulations and zoning need to be updated to ensure public services, infrastructures and public spaces accessible to all, as well as schools, small health facilities and retail including fresh product shops and pharmacies. This could be achieved with: the opening of shops on the ground floor of the main streets; the expansion of school courtyards, the transformation of abandoned lots and street spaces into small gardens or pocket parks; the construction of small-scale offices; and light industry spaces.

Flexible use can concern buildings and public spaces, and, in the longer term, cities can encourage the design of reversible buildings that are designed to be easily converted for different uses by decreasing demolitions and reconstructions with economic benefits and in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. (Bergevoet, Van Tuijl, 2016; C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, C40 Knowledge Hub, 2020).

It is therefore necessary to territorialize the short distance multicentralities by creating urban commons where to live, work, have fun and educate itself and where elements such as water, air, time, space are at the centre of new urban issues.

In the proximity city, the way of experiencing the city also changes: we move from suffering mobility to chosen mobility, hyper-proximity leads to new socio-economic models, plants and biodiversity become an integral part of this approach. Density must in fact be understood in a reasoned way with green connectors to be made with living materials present throughout the life cycle to be combined with internal green spaces, roofs, squares and streets that foster social bond. Green spaces in the compact city are an attractive factor as they are places where people can take a break near their home by reducing forced mobility.

For Moreno, the services available must then be optimized with the use of digital technologies and collaborative models, transforming digitization into an inclusion factor and creating new generation multimodal public services.

Technological innovation can contribute profoundly to the improvement of services for citizens: the multitude of data available can become social objects and be designed for new uses in which new technologies and social inclusion are linked: from personalized public health to open spaces for culture, from open collaborative systems to the best quality of life for the third and fourth age.

Accordingly with the concepts illustrated above, the emblematic case of the former fair of Rome, interested by dismission and then isolation from the rest of the neighbourhood, will be illustrated.

The case study: methodology and results

The methodology used for the case study of the former fair of Rome is constituted by the collection and overlapping of both primary and secondary data. The primary data are constituted by the site visits (with photos, perceptive surveys, analysis of the built environment, mobility system, green system, and main users and uses), the study of the planimetries of the place and its surroundings (related to the built environment, mobility system, green system) and the proposed project interventions. The secondary data are constituted by the bibliographical research of the history of the former fair, the general regulatory plan variant, and the process of participation.

Accordingly, the case study will be illustrated in relation to: a brief history of the place; the 2011 variant of the 2008 general plan of Rome (Italian acronym P.R.G.); the results of the 2015 process of participation carried out by the Rome municipality and the 2020 agreement for the redevelopment of the former fair approved by the Municipal Assembly; the outcomes of the analysis of place and the proposed project interventions carried out in the framework of the Urban Planning Course at DICEA Sapienza University of Rome by the author of this study and her students according to the achievements of both the analysis and the 2015 process of participation also in relation to the questions related to proximity.

Fig. 1: Rome, the study area with, starting from the right side, the former fair pavilions, the sport centre, the parking, the market, the second parking, the Mario Picchi park.

The project of the former fair of Rome is linked to the Universal Exhibition of Rome, scheduled for 1942, which was then blocked by the war, and until 1959 the Roman trade fairs took place in different areas from year to year.

In 1959 the Rome fair was completed, on the great urban artery of Via Cristoforo Colombo which connects Rome with Ostia. This is a temporary headquarters, which will remain in service for almost half a century. Over time, conferences, business tourism and large public administration competitions were added to the traditional trade fair activities. In 2006, a new headquarters was built, which takes the name of "New Fair of Rome", on Via Portuense close to the freeway to Fiumicino.

Then the 2011 variant of the 2008 general regulatory plan of Rome was carried out. It reports that the area of the former Rome fair is located in a consolidated city context, made up of: twentieth-century expansion fabrics of medium and high density, free construction and public greenery in close proximity to the Tor Marancia estate and the Appia Antica ancient park; a primary component of the network characterized by highly natural areas with the ditch system and the hydrographic network; and a component of completion of the system of connections with the ecological network, identified by areas with a strong anthropization character, for

which regulatory guidelines are envisaged aimed at redevelopment through specific environmental projects.
The objective is to activate the regeneration process which involves the location of a new settlement integrated with the context and with the ongoing transformations, based on innovation and quality, from a settlement, morphological and environmental point of view, with uses that are both integrative and complementary to existing ones.
The connoting character of the intervention takes the form of the structuring of a new residential settlement, equipped with commercial, office and public services facilities that integrate the existing or planned facilities within the neighbourhood.
The area is here conceived as a space that can be enjoyed mainly on foot, reducing incoming traffic to a minimum and isolating the routes in order to guarantee safety and tranquillity. Surfaces intended for non-residential activities must contain functions that are compatible and sustainable by the fabric within which these will be inserted.
With respect to the quantity, 67000 sm are for the built environment, of which 65% is intended for residential construction (and social housing), 20% destined for non-residential and 15% for flexible uses, a 28 m buffer zone (2011, Roma Capitale).
Then, a wide process of participation was carried out by the Municipality of Rome (2015). The listening process took place through participatory planning workshops between citizens, neighbourhood associations and the municipal administration, the results of which will be illustrated below in relation to three systems: built environment, green and mobility. With respect to the built environment, the first request was to think about the new interventions with a view to integrating them with the neighbourhood outside the former fair conceiving this as a continuum. It was also requested that the new neighbourhood be permeable and permeated with the rest, open and welcoming and that it becomes an opportunity to create the missing services. To this end, among the decisions, it was asked to review the surface area intended for residential use in favour of non-residential uses considered more urgent for this area, without prejudice to the economic-financial balance of the intervention. As regards residences, the laboratory requested to have buildings with the ground floor used for services, commerce, and other non-residential neighbourhood functions to create a living urban fabric even in the evening. The share of residential construction at controlled prices will also have to be distributed rather than concentrated in a single building.

Fig. 2: Rome, the wall of the former fair pavilions,
from the Via Cristoforo Colombo axis

Fig. 2: Rome, the former fair pavilions,
from the main entrance

In this regard, the possibility of creating individual large buildings which could constitute a visual and physical barrier to the internal spaces was excluded.
The creation of a multifunctional hub is also required with services distributed according to the rule of permeability with the other functions; and beyond realize retails and services within the ground floors of the residential buildings, it was required that these are designed in continuity with the rest of the new built system.
The activities proposed for the multifunctional hub should include: craftsmanship, business creation (start-up), spaces of intersection and cross fertilization between professions and trades, artistic and cultural activities, scientific, technological and environmental activities, educational activities.
With respect to the local services level, it was required to create a nursery and children's school, a comprehensive school, a health centre, and student accommodations. Particular attention is also required for the integration of disabled people into the social fabric they belong to, which could be realized through laboratory of art in its various forms.
Regarding the green system, the laboratory of participation expressed the desire to use part of the standard green areas as a garden with particular attention to biodiversity. In this regard, it was proposed to create compatible, functional and capacious community composting plants with respect to the settlement and surrounding areas.
The residents of the area could bring the wet waste and in exchange obtain useful fertilizer for the gardens, terraces and greenery of the area. Furthermore, the design of the new green system must be integrated with a system of internal squares, with green areas and pedestrian and cycle paths which will form public spaces that relates the buildings and connects the area with the surrounding neighbourhood.
This natural barrier will be open in some points – such as the urban gardens - with a path that will create a large green surface meant as a meeting place for the new neighbourhood and where the multidisciplinary hub will be located.
As regards to the mobility system, the new residential buildings should occupy the site of the former fair area according to a fabric system permeated with cycle and pedestrian paths, greenery and small squares that connect the area to the rest of the neighbourhood. The main connections must ensure sustainable and innovative mobility with privilege for public transport.
To protect against noise and air pollution generated by the heavy traffic on Via Cristoforo Colombo, the 28 m buffer zone envisaged by the variant will have to become a green area and public car parks acting as a natural filter through modelling of the terrain and the planting of various tree species useful for this purpose. The road surface of the Colombo section in front of the former Fair must be made with sound-absorbing materials as a further measure to reduce noise pollution.
The laboratory finally requested that the new buildings and streets be realized with simple and effective maintenance to prevent the new project interventions from degradation. To guarantee maintenance, it was required the greatest use of materials and methods that achieve the highest possible degree of maintainability of the materials and new artefacts, with characteristics of the materials and of the design definition suitable for defence against vandalism. It is also required to build buildings that are totally self-sufficient from an energy point of view as a model of the new housing culture.
As a result of this participation process, on 15 December 2020, the agreement for the redevelopment of the former fair of Rome area was approved by the Municipal Assembly; this reduces the amount of building construction available to 44 thousand sm, instead of the 67 thousand sm previously envisaged, of which 80% for residential construction (of which 20% social housing) and the remaining 20% destined for services. The agreement also provides for the complete transformation of the site in via Cristoforo Colombo with the demolition of the buildings and their replacement with new public and private functions.

According with the aforementioned information and the three systems – built environment, green and mobility - the analysis of the area concerning the sites bordered by Via Cristoforo Colombo and Via dell'Arcadia, Via di Grotta Perfetta and Viale di Tor Marancia, carried out in the framework of the Urban Planning Course, results as follows.

As regards the built environment, the analysed shapes a rectangle that in sequence presents: a park; a sport centre in use; an asphalt open space used for parking; an asphalt open space for market that is an important point of socialization; another asphalt open space used for parking; a non-completed sport centre in a state of abandonment; a little sport centre in use; the former fair pavilions bordered by a wall with many graffities that are not used and in a state of abandonment and totally asphalted. Close to the study area there are: a residential area of good quality, the Lazio Region building, a Roma Tre University building, a church, and an ambulatory.

As regards the green system, within the area there was observed the Don Mario Picchi park characterized by a not used playground, some benches, a path for pedestrian, lawn and trees with lack of care and suitable lighting. In the surrondings there are many little green spaces, and the Tor Marancia and Appia antica ancient park.

As regards the mobility system, the big axis which characterizes the margin of the area is the Cristoforo Colombo with 9 car lanes for a 25 metres section, a long lane of trees in the centre and a cycle lane with a lack of furniture reserved for cyclists: few meeting and stopping points (the only one is inside the Don Mario Picchi Park), E-Bike charging points, bike parking racks. It was also noticed an interruption in the cycle path in the intersection with Via dei Georgofili. Furthermore, despite the dense presence of shelters along via C. Colombo, the other streets, parallel and transversal to it, have no spaces dedicated to the bus stop, creating a congestion of the urban traffic. More in general, there are few connections for pedestrian, cycle or bus routes, which enhance the different parts of the study area, resulting disconnected and isolated.

From the perceptive analysis it was observed that: the visual perception of the wall that perimeters the area of the former Rome fair appears as a very strong delimitation which both does not allow for integrity with the urban context and constitutes a closure of the view with the surroundings; there is a strong and not agreeable sounds coming from the means of transport in Via Colombo; there is poor quality of the pavements in several streets and uncultivated and neglected flowerbeds; there is a sustained pace in via C. Colombo, via Tor Marancia and in some neighbourhood streets such as via Mario Musco.

Finally, as regards users, despite the proximity to the university, the residents are predominantly elderly, and there are also few families and children.

As results of those analyses and process of participation, the project interventions identified include the following.

First of all, it was decided to consider the 2020 municipality agreement that considers 44000 sm as a built area instead of the previous 67000 sm deliberated by the 2011 regulatory plan variant. The general idea was creating a place of identity continuity, a sort of sequence of wholly accessible open-air spaces – the sum of these shapes a rectangle – crossed by a long path that from Via di Tor Marancia to Via di Grotta Perfetta connects all the sequence of spaces.

As regards the built environment system, it will contain all the necessary services to be reached in no more than 15-20 minutes by foot or bike, namely: already existing functions for the inhabitants – the market and the sport -; some new ones according with the desires of locals, namely social housing with commercial ground floor; residences for students; a multifunctional centre and an open-air amphitheatre for different kinds of performances; art and music laboratories for people with disabilities and the elderly; shops, restaurants and bar open also in the evening.

Accordingly, the idea was to create an only one area as a sort of multifunctional and multigenerational place, - which takes into account both the urban identity, flexibility and

liveability - and that can change uses in different hours (e.g. a school can became a gym in the afternoon or shops can become laboratories of art in the evening). For this reason, it was decided to recover one of the existing warehouses of the former fair – the most identitarian one -, transforming it into a cultural hub, where various types of cultural activities can be carried out inside, creating a community centre of reference for residents.
Furthermore, it was decided to realize the new residential buildings with "pilotis" on the ground floor where various commercial environments are located and public activities can be included, such as libraries, study spaces, recreational spaces to offer services for every age group.
To make the area accessible to the various inhabitants of the neighbourhood, it was decided to insert a car park under the buildings.
As regards the green system, it was decided to reduce the waterproofed ground - improving the permeability of the soils - and the ground occupied by cars, and to separate the whole area from Via Cristoforo Colombo with a green filter that protects the area from both air and noise pollution. To enhance the greenery, it was decided to plant various trees on the paths and include pocket parks and parklets for the new residences and along the new and existing buildings that can create occasions for sports and physical activities, breaks, conviviality and socialization for all and with games for disabled and elderly people.
As regards the system of mobility to improve the proximity: the new path which connect the new area should include a pedestrian and bike lanes; Via Cristoforo Colombo should be decreased in terms of car lanes substituting these with trees and green spaces; all the existing transversal streets should be improved as regards the quality of the materials and furniture; new or recovered path should be designed to both connect the built environment with the different services and the green spaces of the study area with those of the surrounding and to realize a real continuity between new and old; and billboards and signs should be inserted for a suitable orientation. Finally, artistic elements during the path which connects the sequence of spaces of the area should be realized in the framework of laboratory of community with materials coming from dismissed pavilions of the former fairs and graffiti parts of the wall with borders the former fair, creating a further element of identity connection with the place and attachment from the inhabitants.

The proximity Charter

As a results of the process of participation and of both the analysis and proposed design interventions, the Charter of proximity was carried out by the author. This was presented at the 6° Biennial of Public Space titled Proximity and public spaces, that was held in Rome in May 2023. Objectives of the following Charter are to constitute a flexible, inclusive and updatable tool and become a sort of guideline for all interested to verify or realize proximity in public space. These objectives are important as cities change always more rapidly, and the 25 principles Charter has to be updatable accordingly. Also, the flexibility is important because not all places are the same and the principles must be adaptable to different peculiarities in an optic of inclusion.
The proximity city is a city where the main services can be reached in no more than 20 minutes on foot or by bicycle.
1) In order to create the city of proximity, places of identity continuity into which to divide it must be identified, depending on the size and organization of the territory.
Urban identity, understood as a set of characteristics that makes a place unique and recognisable, is in fact an important element so that proximity is not only related to functions but also to identity. All in reference to the size of the area it is intended to connect.
2) Urban continuity must be identified through a participatory process involving the main stakeholders of that specific place.

The participation process, as in any transformation activity, must be activated by identifying the main interested actors involved or to be involved in order that all the people who in different ways will be the users of the places and connected services can not only accept the changes but actively support these in their success.
3) The organization of proximity places must be entrusted to an organization that is the contact person for management and monitoring.
To ensure that the subjects involved in the proximity process are adequately connected to each other, it is useful constitute an organization capable of dealing with the management and maintenance of proximity spaces.
4) To facilitate the achievement of services in no more than 20 minutes, it is necessary to create or improve pleasant, attractive, healthy and liveable pedestrian and cycle paths.
To facilitate the reaching of proximity, it is not only necessary to create pedestrian and cycle connections, but to create pleasant and attractive routes connected to open spaces, squares with designs, quality furnishings artworks and equipment.
5) To allow everyone - the elderly, children, people with disabilities - to reach the services in no more than 20 minutes, the use of electric public transport must be encouraged.
In addition to creating pleasant routes, it is necessary to think about their use being as inclusive as possible, also providing routes for small electric minibuses for fragile people and children. Cycle-pedestrian connections and those for electric minibuses must be designed considering suitable separation.
6) To create proximity, it is necessary to create communities, i.e. actions, policies, projects that favour the aggregation of people.
It is also necessary to encourage the creation of actions capable of bringing people together by supporting communities of citizens who can decide together to transform small parts of territories or buildings to create reinvented aggregations.
7) Proximity must be understood from a perspective of temporal and spatial flexibility, i.e. adaptability to the peculiarities of places and changing needs and users. Proximity services concern:
8) commercial services: food shops with all categories of food, retail shops with all the main goods needed for daily living, local markets, repair and cleaning shops (laundries, tire changes, etc.)
9) health services: clinics, polyclinics, clinics, for blood tests, blood pressure measurement, medications, vaccinations, sociological consultation, and everything needed for prevention and satisfaction of the main social and health needs
10) educational services: nursery schools and schools of all levels
11) cultural services: neighbourhood libraries, pop-up reading points, small theatres, exhibition galleries
12) leisure services: attractive, liveable public spaces, with activities for all age groups and abilities
13) sports services: gyms, outdoor sports equipment, playgrounds, spaces for inclusive physical activity
14) catering services: restaurants, bars, catering places
15) leisure services for pets: off-leash and/or play spaces dedicated to dogs
16) care and well-being services: shops and/or centres for beauty and personal care
17) digital services: digital coverage of the area
18) work services: co-working spaces
19) separate waste collection services: dedicated areas that are liveable and accessible
20) worship and religion services: churches, oratories, places of worship.
Principle 7 to principle 20 concern the services to be included to create proximity. These services can be expanded or reduced, but also modified with a view to a flexible proximity over

time and adaptable to different or sudden needs. No place is the same as another, as different are populations and their needs, which are combined with those of city users, visitors and users of various types.

21) The services should be located in existing buildings with a view to regeneration and multipurpose use of the spaces.

In order to avoid land consumption, physical services must be placed in existing buildings with a view to multi-use at different times, so that a building can be used at different times of the day for different purposes.

22) The proximity of services must be combined with the proximity of greenery and open spaces

Green spaces are another important element to consider in the construction of proximity in a vision of a network between existing green spaces and the naturalization of mineral spaces to create paths attentive to the healthiness of people.

In continuity, the creation of local urban gardens should also be taken into consideration.

23) Places of identity continuity should have signs and billboards, including digital ones, indicating services, activities and points of interest to be reached within 15-20 minutes.

To facilitate orientation and offer a coordinated visual identity in the nearby city, adequate billboards and signs must be created that make the places and services to be reached in a short time immediately understandable. Digital systems such as QR codes can be integrated into the signage which provide further information on proximity services.

24) Proximity is an important factor for the valorisation of places and cultural resources from an inter-scalar and multi-scalar network perspective.

Proximity can be an opportunity to enhance little-known cultural resources, murals, small sculptures, landscapes which, crossed or flanked by pedestrian and cycle paths, could be revealed or observed with greater attention.

25) The new polarities created by proximity constitute new territorial models that will contribute at creating new urban identities capable of adequately comparing with pre-existing ones.

The paths to obtain proximity will finally create new polarities and with them new movements of people and ideas but also new identities not overlapping with the previous ones but intersecting.

Conclusions

The study - carried out in the framework of the 2020 SUMMA PRIN research project that has among the objects to create guide lines for resilient, healthy and flexible places - has illustrated the questions related to proximity regeneration both in theoretical and empirical terms. The city of proximity can be defined as a city able to offer to all its inhabitants everything they need to live, work and have fun to be reached on foot or bike in no more than 20 minutes. Strongly connected to these concepts are the flexibility, important to obtain change uses of places and buildings, inclusion, to assure that proximity is for all and in particular for fragile people and accessibility, to create a network of public spaces open and well connected.

The empirical parts were related to the study case of the former fair of Rome dismissed in 2006 and then in state of abandonment, waiting to be regenerated. The case study was illustrated in relation to: a brief history of the place, the 2011 variant of the 2008 general plan of Rome, the results of the 2015 process of participation carried out by the Rome municipality, and the 2020 agreement for the redevelopment of the former fair approved by the Municipal Assembly; and the outcomes of the analysis of place and the proposed project interventions carried out in the framework of the Urban Planning Course at DICEA Sapienza University of Rome, according to the achievements of both the analysis and the 2015 process of participation also in relation to the questions related to proximity.

In the proposed design of project interventions, it was decided to consider the 2020 municipality agreement that considers 44000 sm as a built area instead of the previous 67000 sm deliberated by the 2011 regulatory plan variant. The general idea was creating a place of identity continuity, a sort of sequence of wholly accessible open-air spaces crossed by a path that from Via di Tor Marancia to Via di Grotta Perfetta connects all the sequence of spaces. Accordingly, the idea was to create an only one area as a sort of multifunctional, inclusive and multigenerational place, - which takes into account both the urban identity, flexibility and liveability - that can change uses in different hours and in which all the necessary services can be reached in no more than 15-20 minutes by foot or bike.

As a final result, the 25 principles Charter of Proximity was illustrated, which consists in a holistic tool for design or verify proximity in an area and assure equitable accessibility.

Objectives of the following Charter are to constitute a flexible, inclusive and updatable tool and become a sort of guideline for all interested to verify or realize proximity in public space. These objectives are important as cities change always more rapidly and not all places are the same, and the 25 principles should be updatable accordingly in an optic of inclusion.

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