

Atti della XXIII Conferenza Nazionale SIU - Società Italiana degli Urbanisti
DOWNSCALING, RIGHTSIZING. Contrazione demografica e riorganizzazione spaziale
Torino, 17-18 giugno 2021

PIANI E POLITICHE PER UNA NUOVA ACCESSIBILITÀ

A cura di
Paolo La Greca, Luca Staricco, Elisabetta Vitale Brovarone

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Accessibility and Mobility in Public Spaces: a sustainable challenge

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Abstract

Mobility and accessibility are - in different forms and meanings - strictly connected to achieve sustainability of new project interventions. At neighborhood scale, the design of public space can contribute to the sustainable mobility, creating places of quality in which slow mobility is favored. Accordingly, the research titled “Public spaces. From principles to good practice” was carried out by the author in the framework of both “Urban Maestro. New Governance Strategies for Urban Design” Horizon 2020 research project and the INU Community “Public Space”, the latter coordinated by the author. 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*. Among the objectives, this project has the comparison of the experiences in Europe to international practices. 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. To these ends, 30 Italian case studies were collected to identify best practices and verify the validity of the Charter. Starting from these premises, the methodology and main results of this research will be illustrated. To collect the data of the case studies the QPS-D@taC - Quality Public Space D@ta Collection - method was created. The illustration of Piazza Goldoni in Trieste, the Bike path along the Nera river in Narni, and the Railway Station square in Padova, which resolve in different way the topics of both sustainable mobility and accessibility, will complete the paper.

Keywords: accessibility, public space, sustainability

1 | Introduction

Nowadays, mobility and accessibility are - in different forms and meanings - strictly connected to achieve sustainability of new project interventions (Moriarty, Honnery, 2008; Ravazzoli, Torricelli, 2017). At neighborhood scale, the design of public space can contribute to the sustainable mobility, creating places of quality in which the slow mobility is favored (Appleyard, 1981; Appleyard, Lynch, Myer, 1964; Carmona, Heath, Oc, Tiesdell, 2010; Francis, Giles-Corti, Wood, Knuiiman, 2012; Friedmann, 2010; Fyfe, 1998; Gehl, 2010; Jacobs, 1961; Jones, Marshall, Boujenko, 2008; Kent, 2008; Madanipour, Knierbein, Degros, 2014; Mehta, 2013; Sepe, 2013, 2017; Zelinka, Brennan, 2001). Accordingly, the research titled “Public spaces. From principles to good practice” was carried out by the author in the framework of both “Urban Maestro. New Governance Strategies for Urban Design” Horizon 2020 research project and the INU Community “Public Space”, the latter coordinated by the author.

The Urban Maestro Project – coordinated by the UCL - “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. The Community Public Space of the INU Italian National Institute of Urban Planning 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 (Garau, Lancerin, Sepe, 2015). Among the 50 Principles, many of these are referred to both mobility and accessibility in a wider meaning, including: 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, social and economic features; 8. Public spaces consist of open environments (e.g. streets, sidewalks, squares, gardens, parks) and in sheltered spaces created without a profit motive and for everyone’s enjoyment (e.g. public libraries, museums). Both when they possess a clear identity, can be defined as “places”. The objective is that all public spaces should become “places”. 10. Public spaces, whenever safeguards of natural or historical value allow, must be made accessible without barriers to the motorial, sensorially and intellectually handicapped; 11. Analogously, all areas even if publicly owned or unfenced, which by their characteristics are substantially unusable by the public inaccessible slopes,

abandoned areas, or cut-outs, cannot be considered a public space and cannot be counted as a service or public infrastructure; 12. Conversely, public spaces which are not yet accessible and/or usable must be considered as “potential public spaces”, and therefore as a precious resource for the strengthening and renovation of the existing system of public space, and thus of urban quality as a whole; 22. Within public-space networks it is also advisable to identify polarities and aggregative phenomena, with a view to prevent psychological obstacles from reinforcing physical ones. The interconnection and improvement of public space as a strategy for upgrading peripheries and suburban areas should include improving connections, the enhancement of multifunctionality and access and the reduction of phenomena of privatization and exclusion; 23. Eliminating and/or overcoming the physical barriers that impede or limit access to certain categories of users is therefore a priority goal to pursue both in the design of new public spaces and in the adaptation of existing ones; 39. In terms of the area they cover, streets, squares and sidewalks constitute the overwhelming portion of the urban space used by the public. It is therefore important for their use to be disciplined to reconcile the different functions they are to perform, granting priority to pedestrian and non-motorized mobility; 50. The good use of public spaces is closely linked to their mutability and adaptability in relation to the changing needs of citizens. The Charter is a sort of guidelines for livable and sustainable public spaces. In order to comprehend the relationship between theory and practice and verify the validity of the Charter after 10 years of its creation, about 30 emblematic case studies were collected (Sepe, 2020).

Starting from these premises, the methodology and results of this research will be illustrated. To collect the data concerning the case studies a specific data base was created. The original method created by the author is called QPS-D@taC - Quality Public Space D@ta Collection. The elements to collect were chosen in order to have information concerning tangible and intangible elements of a public space, believing that in the right balance among these factors quality and sustainability can both be achieved.

The tangible elements concern the date of realization of the project, the institutions which were involved, the funds – for the project and its management -, the urban planning tool or the project idea and relative policies, the mobility and accessibility. The intangible elements concern the kind of uses – not only those which are designed, but the real ones – the elements that testify the success of the space, the livability, the presence of the space and the satisfaction of the visitors on the social media. Planimetry, images and main references complete the database.

Three emblematic case studies with particular attention to both the sustainable mobility and accessibility, and the activated policies will be showed. Each of these public spaces resolve in a different way the themes of mobility and accessibility but have in common a sustainable approach. Section 2 will report the QPS-D@taC method, section 3 will show the three case studies. Finally, section 4 draws the conclusion.

2 | Quality Public Space D@ta Collection method

The best practices of public spaces which were chosen are based on seven categories, including waterfronts, squares, gardens, parks, transportation open-air hubs, nature paths and projects on large scale. The description of the chosen spaces - carried out using the QPS-D@taC - Quality Public Space D@ta Collection method - is realized through a database, constructed collecting 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 – where there is – on the social networks are also inserted.

The element 1 to collect is the year of realization. The element 2 is the planimetry or a drawn of the project that make understandable the shape and/or the position of the public space with respect to the surrounding territory.

The element 3 is the city where the space is located and its address. The element 4 is the measure of the surface that covers the area. This data has the function to make understandable, together with its localization, the “urban weight” of that specific space in the context. It is a physical data but allows to comprehend the wideness of the project intervention.

The element 5 consists in the institutions which are involved. This data is useful to comprehend if and what public entities are involved in the process of realization of the space and if the private sector is involved. The presence of public entities makes clearer the will of the administrations to realize a space that is public and is for the public and, in that case, in what phase of the construction the private sector contributes (namely, in the executive project or in its management). The funds (element 6) is another useful data and is connected to the previous one because it needs to indicate the whole amount, both the public and private ones – where used – of them used to realize the public space. The presence of an urban or urban planning project (element 7) which is the general framework for the realization of the public space makes understandable both the used planning tool and the wideness of the operation,

namely if the public space is part of a greater project of regeneration, or if it is a project which only concerns the public space in object.

The element 8 consists in the policies which are carried out for the specific public space, but, as the previous data, in the case in which the space has been realized in the framework of a wider project of regeneration, may concern a wider area.

The element 9 concerns both the kind of uses and fruition. This is an information that serves to frame what are the potential activities that are thought for the specific public space and what are those that have been really carried out, the kind of accesses and fruition. These data give the information also as regards to the success of the project (element 10). The presence of many activities - and their easy access and fruition - allows the use by people of different ages and then a greater possibility of attendance and satisfaction. The images (element 11) that are collected give the visual illustration of what is described in the database, while the data concerning the factors (element 12) which testify the success of the case study offer a diversified frame of the modality of use, attendance, cultural events and presence on the social networks. In particular, the data concerning the presence on the social networks, although not exhaustive, because the presence of that public space as a background of a photo does not guarantee that the space is agreeable and of success, offers in any case - within a wider framework of information -, an information on the typology and quantity of users and on their perception (through the kind of hastags, number of followers and likes, or numbers and kinds of comments).

Finally, the database contains the main bibliographical and website references (elements 13-14) and constitute the sources from which information on the public space were collected. This information is collected together with those provided by the technicians and professionals who worked in different way in the realization of the cases in object.

The research identified emblematic public spaces including waterfronts (such as Matteotti waterfront in Pescara, the Old Port in Genova, the Natural Park on the waterfront in San Benedetto del Tronto, the Foro Italico in Palermo), squares (such as Piazza Matteotti in Catanzaro, Piazza Goldoni in Trieste, Piazza dei Libri in Catania, Piazzetta Mediterraneo in Palermo, Piazza del Campo in Siena, Piazza Chanoux in Aosta, Nuova Monteluce in Perugia, and Corso Nazionale and Piazza Monumento in Termoli), gardens (such as Sensory garden in Rupicole park in Rome and the Public Garden in San Donà di Piave), parks (such as Parco Portello in Milano, Cavalieri di Vittorio Veneto in Torino, Children Park in Lecce, Music Park in Cagliari), transportation open-air hubs (such as New Civic Centre in Scandicci, Enrico Berlinguer Square-Toledo Station in Napoli and Railway Station square in Padova), nature paths (such as RespiArt, Pampeago, in Val di Fiemme, Dosso di San Rocco in Trento, Art-nature path in Val di Sella and Bicycle Lane along the Nera river in Narni) and two projects on larger scale (Gardentopia Gardens in Matera and Open Lab Project in Bologna). Of these, the public spaces that are chosen as case studies include: Piazza Goldoni in Trieste, the Bike path along the Nera river and the greenways of the Nera gorges in Narni, and the Railway Station square in Padova (Sepe, 2020).

3 | Three case studies

The first case that has been selected for the present study is Piazza Goldoni in Trieste that was realized in 2005 and has a surface of 8115 sqm. The Institution which was involved in the realization of the space is public, namely the Municipality of Trieste, while a private office of architects - Stefano Santabrogio - has participated to its design and artistic direction. The funds are public, and the work is part of the three-year program of works aimed at the redevelopment of Piazza Goldoni, in implementation of the provisions of the current General Regulatory Plan. The Urban planning tool is the Recovery intervention plan of the City Council. The policies which were activated, and the uses are many. The project takes into account the difficulty of construction in relation to the impossibility of total closure of the square and the contemporary maintenance of the road traffic and public transport. The unity of the square, made fragmented by the presence of the crossing roads, is sought through the design of the pavements to integrate the square into the urban context, enhancing the connections with the *scala dei Giganti* - Giganti stairs - and with the axis of Via Mazzini that connects to the sea (Fig. 1).

The choice of enhancing the central pedestrian part and the sidewalks at the border, not only avoids the interruption of traffic but also makes possible to concentrate the construction costs. In this way, if on the one hand the functional efficiency of the space is not reduced, and maintains the current potential of access and use, on the other hand the architectural solutions will not lead to negative repercussions on the management cost of the artifacts. As regards the elements that testify the success, the project is part of the particularity of the context where the different historical fabrics of the city meet without binding and generate a plurality of orientations and directions, and it is characterized by constant use of the place for moments of pause and socialization.



Figure 1 | Trieste, Piazza Goldoni. Source: Archivio Santambrogio



Figure 2 | Narni, Bike path along the Nera river. Source: photo by Riccardo Guarnello



Figure 3 | Padova, Railway station square. Source: 01 Foto © CZstudio

The presence on social media includes Instagram with the #piazzagoldoni hashtag with more than 500 posts and #piazzagoldonitrieste with about 100 posts.

The second case study of public space is the Bike path along the Nera river and the greenways of the Nera gorges which was realized in 2016 in Narni, in a surface of 11 km.

The Institution which was involved is the Municipality of Narni and the funds come from the “Cycle path along the Nera river” (Narni - Nera Montoro - Oasis of San Liberato) - Por Fesr 2007-2013 - Axis II - Activity b2, and the Project for the enhancement of the banks of the Nera and the greenways of the Nera gorges - Por Fesr 2007-2013 - Axis II - Activity b1.

As regards the urban project, Narni municipal administration implemented the program. The interventions that led to the creation of the Greenways along the Gorges of the Black River were designed by a team of various professionals.

The policies which were carried out are many. The intervention is configured within a complex program of enhancement of the gorges of the Nera river, aimed at: activating an economic process of sustainable development and requalification of the environmental landscape heritage; consolidating a territorial offer qualified in cultural and environmental terms; and stimulating local development and its insertion in the large regional tourist circuits. The goal was to develop a strategic line for the creation of greenways routes and demonstrate how these can be a tool for enhancing the territory and its resources and representing a potential means for alternative mobility for daily movements, recreational activities and tourism (Fig. 2).

With respect to the type of use and fruition, the project is based on the environmental redevelopment of the area of the Nera River, where the infrastructures and services are concentrated, and runs longitudinally, taking advantage of the waterway and the complex system of paths that develop along the two sides. Furthermore, along the slopes, a series of specific elements of attraction lead the visitor to areas and artefacts of historical, archaeological and landscape interest. The park consists of an integrated system of spaces, places of community life and its collective memory and paths for cycle and pedestrian mobility capable of responding to the growing demand of meeting and non-systematic mobility, including tourism and hospitality. Among the elements that testify the success of the path, in 2017 there was a presence of up to 500-600 people passing through. Furthermore, a Temporary Purpose Association to manage the area was created for animation, provision of services, ordinary maintenance and promotion of the tourist itineraries of the Gorges with the spirit of enhancing the cultural, food and wine, music and sports activities of the area. With respect to the social network, Gole Del Nera is on Facebook with 3071 followers and on Instagram with 1001 followers.

The third case is the Railway Station square of Padova. The year of realization is 2012 and the surface is 29.500 sqm. The Institution which was involved is the Municipality of Padova, Infrastructure and Sports Facilities Sector and the funds are public. The urban project is part of a wider development program for the Padova railway station, within the European policies for the expansion of transport networks of EU interest, and the regional metropolitan transport system (SFMR): to this project the Padova Municipality, private offices of architects - CZstudio associati, Paolo Ceccon Laura Zampieri architects - and a private company have participated. The space was conceived as a multimodal hub, which connects all transport scales, both European and national, regional and local. The realization of the square is intended as a unitary urban space available and accessible to everyone for the different uses of the city, not only related to mobility. The square has multiple functions (Fig. 3): the versatility of use of the spaces and the control of the different mobility flows that pass through them offers the possibility of creating cultural and social events, small stalls, small fairs, events and temporary markets. The mobility is vehicular, pedestrian and cycling, with spaces for breaks of people (squares and gardens) and parking of vehicles. A structure for the parking of 800 bicycles and an electric car sharing point were also created. With the reduction of the public transport lanes from three to two, the pedestrian area has been expanded in its east-west and south extension. The elements that testify the success are many: the square is widely used in all the different functions for which it was designed and in all the periods of the year. Furthermore, the square obtained several awards in 2013, 2014 and in 2015.

4 | Conclusion

The paper has illustrated a study carried out in the framework of the Urban Maestro Horizon 2020 project and the INU Community Public Space. The main goal of the whole research is to collect best practices of public spaces 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.

The collect the data of the public spaces an original method was carried out by the authoe, namely the QPS-D@taC - Quality Public Space D@ta Collection one. The cases which were chosen as emblematic

include waterfronts (in Pescara, Genova, San Benedetto del Tronto and Palermo), squares (in Catanzaro, Trieste, Catania, Palermo, Siena, Aosta, Perugia, and Termoli), gardens (in Rome and San Donà di Piave), parks (in Milano, Torino, Lecce, Cagliari, transportation open-air hubs (in Scandicci, Napoli and Padova), nature paths (in Trento, Val di Sella and Nera river) and projects on larger scale (in Matera and in Bologna). According with the accessibility and mobility topics of the paper, the public spaces that are chosen as case studies are constituted by the Piazza Goldoni in Trieste, the Bike path along the Nera river and the greenways of the Nera gorges in Narni, and the Railway Station square in Padova.

These cases verified the validity of the Charter of Public Spaces, the sustainability of the project interventions, the virtuous relationship between public and private in the realization and management of the spaces, and the important role of both mobility and accessibility as occasions to enhance the socialization and the urban and environmental heritage.

In the Piazza Goldoni, the unity of the square is sought through the design of the pavements in order to integrate the square into the urban context, enhancing the different connections with the crossing streets. The choice of enhancing the central pedestrian part and the sidewalks at the border avoids the interruption of traffic and not reduce the functional efficiency of the space which maintains its potential of access and use.

The goal of the Bike path along the Nera river and the greenways of the Nera gorges was to develop a strategic line for the creation of greenways routes and demonstrate how these can be a tool for enhancing the territory and its resources and representing – thank to the complex system of paths that develop along the two sides - a potential means for alternative mobility for daily movements, recreational activities and tourism. The park consists of an integrated system of spaces, that, promoting the meeting and conviviality as well as offering opportunities for recreation and exercise, has an important role in the social aggregation.

The Railway Station square of Padova was conceived as a multimodal hub, which connects all transport scales, European and national, regional and local. The mobility is vehicular, pedestrian and cycling, with spaces for breaks of people (squares and gardens) and parking of vehicles. Furthermore, a structure for the parking of bicycles and electric car sharing point was also created. The versatility of use of the spaces and the control of the different mobility flows that pass through them offers the possibility of creating cultural and social events, small stalls, small fairs, events and temporary markets.

Future steps of this research concern both the methodology and the case studies. Due to the current pandemic event (Opdam, 2020), public spaces were not used for months. The redesign of the mobility and accesses to public spaces, and in general, to all the services of the city is in some cases changed to respect the social distancing. The flexibility of the QPS-D@taC method which was used for the collection of the data allows that some factors can be added to the database aimed at verifying how the social and physical distance has been carried out in the public spaces and how, for effect of this distance, the use of the places is changed and the new mobility achieved. New lanes for micromobility will be carried out and new accesses will be realized to better use spaces, means of transport and services. Finally, new data to collect could arise from the updated onsite inspections, including new ways to use the spaces and new equipment and urban furniture which will probably change movements, paces and fruitions. What will be important is to redesign both mobility, accesses and movements of people in the framework of integrated health plans which will take into account all the elements which compose the city.

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