Antonio Laurìa
Luigi Vessella

Small Forgotten Places in the Heart of Cities

On the residuality of public spaces in historical contexts: Florence as a case study

Foreword Giandomenico Amendola
Afterword Juhani Pallasmaa

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The *People_Places_Architecture* book series aims to provide a dialogue space for scholars mindful of social and environmental responsibility in the process of creating *spaces for interaction*.

Spaces for interaction are incubators of community, as well as ethical and human values and the places where social and everyday life happens. They are privileged scenarios where a community represents itself in cultural, economic, social, technological and ecological terms and manifests its contradictions. For those who use them, the meaning of these places goes far beyond the physical space with which they are identified.

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Credits

Antonio Laurìa (AL)	Conceptual framework and scientific supervision of the book. Author and editor (with LV) of the book. Author of the Executive Summary, Introduction and Conclusions. Supervisor of the English translation of the manuscript. Author of images and schemes included in the book.
Luigi Vessella (LV)	Author and editor (with AL) of the book. Coordinator of the working group that carried out the on-site analysis and author (together with JB and MR) of the Analysis Sheets. Author of Annex 1. Author of Annex 3 (together with JB and MR). Author of images and schemes included in the book.
Giandomenico Amendola	Author of the Foreword of the book.
Junik Balisha (JB)	Member of the working group that carried out the on-site analysis and author (with MR and LV) of the Analysis Sheets. Author of Annex 3 (together with MR and LV). Author of some of the drawings.
Cama	Cover photo.
Juhani Pallasmaa	Author of the Afterword of the book.
Mirko Romagnoli (MR)	Member of the working group that carried out the on-site analysis and author (with JB and LV) of the Analysis Sheets. Author of both Annex 2 and Annex 4. Author of Annex 3 (together with JB and LV). Author of some images and diagrams included in the book.
Rebecca Milner	Translator of the manuscript into English.

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Antonio Laurìa and Luigi Vessella
Florence, September, 2021

[a] Laurìa, A. (a cura di) 2017. *Piccoli Spazi Urbani. Valorizzazione degli spazi residuali in contesti storici e qualità sociale*. Napoli: Liguori.

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FOREWORD

Speaking about emptiness

Giandomenico Amendola

Cities contain many empty spaces, both in the centre and on the outskirts. There are many noticeable ones in historic centres or in their immediate vicinity, while they go unnoticed in areas of large-scale urbanisation. Some have a significant capacity for narration to the point of being considered unintentional monuments that have become such without any intention of doing so – as Alois Riegl would say – while others are mute and apparently meaningless. Some empty spaces are overtly temporary but nevertheless have the status and narrative capacity of monuments, revealing the meaning of what will occupy them. This is the case of the empty space left in New York by the destruction of the World Trade Center: a symbolic crater which was commemorated and visited even before it was occupied by the main skyscraper, the One World Trade Center, more commonly known as the Freedom Tower, which at 541 metres is the tallest monument in history.

At times empty space can be anxiety-inducing and terrifying as it is considered to be abandoned, a no man's land where anything can happen, crime first and foremost. And where, should danger arise, no one will rush to assist. In run-down suburbs, of little interest to the real estate capital and forgotten by public administrators, there are many empty spaces and they are multiplying. They are the very symbol of degradation, chronicling both desperation and danger.

The problem of empty space arises with the city of industrial modernity, unsurprisingly addressed by Haussmann who in his memoirs speaks explicitly about the problem, which he set himself in 1853 at the very start of his mandate, of empty and unused spaces on the edges of the city and the need to enhance their value by connecting them to the centre. In the same period that witnessed the transformation of the Paris of the Second Empire, medical journals reflected on the issue of agoraphobia, for which the Germans even coined the new term: "Platzangst".

Since the birth of the modern industrial city, the result of large-scale processes of population growth and urbanisation, empty spaces have been described – by city planners, public administrators and economic operators – as an irreplaceable resource. The

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growth of the city seems to be unstoppable thanks to immigration attracted by industry and commerce. The space – each space – is therefore essential for the modern city to be alive and develop.

Empty space is an irreplaceable resource thanks to which the city – by definition never complete – can grow. Restless because its status is uncertain yet, paradoxically, there is nothing in the city more dense and full of meanings, even conflicting ones, than empty space. The many names that have been assigned to it show how empty space can mean a wasteland or even urban dross to some, while for others it represents an area with transgressive potential. Some even consider it a *non-existent* or *zero* landscape, or even a *dead* space. For the more observant followers of the modern movement empty space is none other than an *in-between space* for Americans, or *Zwischennutzung* for Germans, made up of the words "nutzung" (use) and "zwischen" (between). *Dead lands, waste lands, terrain vague, vacant lands, derelict lands, superfluous landscapes, loose spaces, blank areas, dross, no man's lands, tiers paysage, transgressive zones* and *zero landscapes* are some of the most common labels in urban lexicon. The authors of this book add many others to these, including perhaps the most significant, *wasteland*. The anodyne *empty space* is more usual in common language, with Pink Floyd dedicating a hit song to it: Empty Spaces (which starts off «What shall we use to fill the empty spaces»).

An urban void that has risen to the rank of monument is generally a construction demoted to ruin status. Empty spaces are – as Solà Morales wrote – indeterminate spaces «internal to the city yet external to its everyday use. In apparently forgotten places, the memory of the past seems to predominate over the present.» Also indeterminate but with no memories, except personal ones, is the bare and abandoned land seen and classified as a "not yet" to be filled physically and functionally. This is the most polysemic void as these empty spaces are to be transformed and are therefore inevitably loaded with proposals and meanings, even conflicting ones. The urban void can be a space where expectations come to the full, a space to be linked to the future.

They can be indeterminate spaces to be returned to life ("How to bring life to vacant lots" is the title of many courses in US schools of architecture) or the subject of the usual urban regeneration actions or bottom-up subversive and creative practices such as temporary parks, rich in vegetables, greenery and flowers. These are not merely elements to enrich an urban landscape that is often grey and commonplace or opportunities to stand out at particular commercial and cultural events. Above all in the last two decades temporary parks have been used in the United States as an effective tool to combat the degradation of ghettos and suburbs. The orchard, created in the space freed up by car carcasses and waste, serves to engage the community – above all the elderly – in order to give the neighbourhood a new and more acceptable face, thereby interrupting the vicious circles of degradation. This is why in many large cities, from Chicago to Atlanta, temporary gardens have been financed by Philip Morris as the residents of the most difficult neighbourhoods are among the greatest consumers of these cigarettes.

Nowadays, the new widespread city, which has made its traditional boundaries permeable and often even unrecognisable, contains within it, simultaneously, empty spaces and empty belts. These latter are spaces which, at times intensely urbanized, join up the cities, villages and towns. At first sight it therefore seemed that the traditional empty lots of the city had become less important to real estate operators and urban planners. Instead they are once again in the sights of speculators and scholars with the upswing in gentrification processes through which old and neglected neighbourhoods regain life and real estate value. Properties are redeveloped, the urban furniture is made attractive, infrastructures are renewed and every free square metre is reused to increase

the project return. The empty spaces, refurnished and enhanced, become distinctive elements of the new neighbourhood and its affluent new population.

These are the topics covered in the research by Antonio Laurìa and Luigi Vessella, whose title alone – "Small Forgotten Places in the Heart of Cities. On the residuality of public spaces in historical contexts: Florence as a case study" – gives an account of the content. The three key words to understand the approach, which is both analytical and design-based, are "small," "forgotten" and "residual." The study focuses on the spaces, neglected but valuable, of which there are many and which often go unobserved in the public space of Florence. An extraordinary and fragile city, too often inattentive to how it is growing and damaging itself to meet the demands and desires of growing and large-scale mass tourism. A Florence in which the city of tourists is oppressing the city of the residents.

The authors have come up with many proposals to counteract this trend, at least in the Small Forgotten Places, making it impossible for me to examine them in a short introduction.

Particular attention should be paid to the Residuality Assessment Process (RAP) – a cognitive and emotional analysis of the residuality of the public spaces – which the authors, with an acute multidisciplinary approach, use to describe the processes which – leaving political or urban actions aside – have driven many public spaces into the world of residuality. For this reason, Laurìa and Vessella – even without explicitly referring to it – draw on experience, namely the city that is lived and experienced.

The reading of the city hangs in the balance between system and experience. On the one hand there is the idea that the city should be considered as a system equipped with boundaries and precise laws of operation and that, therefore, each action that tends to improve it must take its successful operation as an assessment parameter. Citizens are actors in a system that overlooks them and that to a large extent historically dominates them. The other prospective focuses on the analysis of the subject and their experience in which the city and its spaces are a central element. In this logic, space is reread as lived space where the inhabitants' experiences, their interactions and their representations are condensed. The city, above all the historical city of Florence, is a labyrinth unveiled as a challenge but, primarily, as a rich and limitless experience. Therefore – as de Certeau stated – «Il faut réveiller les histoires qui dorment dans les rues et qui gisent quelques fois dans un simple nom.»

With this aim in mind, the authors propose the science of the stroll, or Strollology, a slow environmental exploration – new name for the ancient *flânerie* of Baudelaire and Benjamin – capable of restoring narrative to these small and forgotten spaces. Bringing them back to life as important and stimulating pages of the extraordinary "Book of Stone" that is Florence.

Bari, 17 June 2021

Executive Summary

Antonio Laurìa

This book discusses urban public spaces and, more specifically, run-down, inactive micro-spaces that are barely used due to their location, dimensions, morphology or semantic characteristics. In literature, these spaces are often defined as "residual urban spaces." A large abandoned industrial area on the outskirts of a town or a small interstitial space in a historical centre can be residual.

With respect to such a broad subject matter, the book seeks to radically limit the field, concentrating on public residual spaces found in the oldest parts of cities.

The book reflects on this theme and introduces a method for reading small residual spaces in historical contexts (Residuality Assessment Process) in view of their 'recovery' of city life.

These issues have already been described, in a more general discussion on public spaces, in a previous book published for Italian readers (Laurìa, 2017[a]), but this new edition is structured in a very different way.

Firstly, while the Italian edition focused on residual spaces, here the attention is on the concept of residuality, aiming to demonstrate that this 'condition,' with different forms and intensities, concerns all public spaces in cities.

Moreover, the methodological design of the research and its implementation tools have been substantially reconfigured and upgraded. They are now more explicit and coherent than before, having undergone a good many thoughts, discussions, readings, and reformulations.

The contents have been rearranged with a view to appealing to international readers: new parts were written while others were significantly changed; the bibliography and images have been improved and enhanced.

Focusing on the public residual spaces found in the ancient centre of cities, this book attempts to answer the following Research Questions (RQs):

- RQ 1: What is meant by "residual urban space"?
- RQ 2: How can the concept of "residuality" be defined with reference to a public space?

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- RQ 3: What conditions make a public space residual?
- RQ 4: Can the "degree of residuality" of a public space be evaluated, albeit in qualitative terms?

After an introduction that describes the research context and represents an initial outline of what is meant by public space, the book is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter clarifies the nature and meaning of "residual space" and introduces the concept of "residuality" applied to public spaces. The topics considered reveal as many fragments of a highly multifaceted situation.

The second chapter explains the Residuality Assessment Process (RAP) of small public spaces in historical contexts. Although it does not aspire to represent a universal tool, it has general features that could usefully be applied in diversified urban contexts.

The third chapter examines the testing of the Residuality Assessment Process in a part of the historical centre of Florence and, more specifically, in an area that corresponds to the ancient *decumanus* of the *castrum* of the Roman city.

The conclusions briefly go over the work carried out and outline some design strategies to regenerate public space in historical contexts through the recovery of residual spaces.

The annexes include some considerations prepared during the experimental phase.

Lastly, it should be pointed out that the research behind this book was mostly carried out before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our lives and changed the use of public spaces in cities. Although parts have been added and comments made about the 'new' unforeseeable situation, the structure and content of the book have been affected by it. The hope is that these additions will soon be nothing but traces of a bad memory.

We could recite the ancient Yiddish proverb that Primo Levi used as the epigraph to "The Periodic Table": «Ibergekumene tsores iz gut tsu dertseyln» (It is good to talk about past troubles).

Editorial Note

The following editorial rules have been adopted in the book:

1. For direct quotations, the author-data in-text reference includes the page number of the quote (e.g. Calvino, 1983: 42)
2. When deemed useful, in author/date in-text references the publishing year of the original edition is included in square brackets between the author's name and the year of the edition consulted (e.g. Fustel de Coulanges, [1864] 1978).
3. For direct citations from publications whose original version is not in English, we have done the following:
   a. When an English language edition of the publication has been consulted, its translation is used. In this case, if deemed useful, the footnotes contain the bibliographic reference and name of the translator.
   b. Where this does not exist, it has not been consulted or no English version of the publication is known, the quote has been translated into English by the authors.
4. In the bibliography, the English language version of the books cited, if available, always precedes the original version.

INTRODUCTION

People, public space, relationships

Antonio Laurìa

> The town is perhaps even more precious than a work of art in that it stands at the meeting point of nature and artifice. Consisting, as it does, of a community of animals who enclose their biological history within its boundaries and at the same time mould it according to their every intention as thinking beings, the town, in both its development and its form, belongs simultaneously to biological procreation, organic evolution, and aesthetic creation. It is at one and the same time an object of nature and subject of culture; an individual and a group; reality and dream; the supremely human achievement.[1]
>
> Claude Lévi-Strauss (1973)

The city is the womb of our history and our civilisation. It is the largest work of art ever created by humanity.

The city is «the supremely human achievement» (Lévi-Strauss, 1973: 124) and the driving force of the development of thought, progress and social accomplishments. Over time it has become the main place of production, exchange and the consumption of goods; not only tangible goods, but also intangible ones, such as culture, beauty and social capital.

Each city appears to us as «an immense repository of human labour» (Cattaneo, 1858: 52-54). At the same time, cities «also testify to values; they constitute memory and permanence.» (Rossi, 1982: 34).

From *Etymologiae* (624-636 d.C.) by Isidoro di Siviglia,[2] the city is the synthesis of two concepts. The first – the city as *urbs* – sees the city as a physical entity, the construction of structures and infrastructures, the concrete result of human, individual and group action on the environment (first natural; then anthropic). The second – the city as *civitas* – sees the city as a symbolic, intangible entity, a network of functions and intense social, cultural and information exchanges (Fustel de Coulanges, [1864] 1978; Mumford, 1961; Deevey, 1963; Castells, 1989; 1996; Romano, 2008; Castells & Himanen, 2014), «exchanges of words, of desires, of memories» (Calvino, 1983: 42) as well as the centre of the choices and activities that govern aspects of the inhabitants' lives.

A city «is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a

[1] English trans. by John and Doreen Weightman from Lévi-Strauss (1973: 124).

[2] See Isidoro di Siviglia, *Etimologie o origini*, XV, II, 1, edited by Valastro Canale, A. (2004) vol. II, UTET: Torino, p. 253.

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product of nature, and particularly of human nature.» It is – as Robert Park continued – «a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition.» (Park, 1925: 1).

The city is a context in continuous evolution, a place where the creative processing of new ideas and concepts occurs and new opportunities arise. It is the precarious synthesis of all changes that have taken and take place there. These changes, when they cannot be understood or tackled, are referred to as "momentous."

Today, much more so than in the recent past, the changes that concern city life come in rapid succession, are interconnected and increasingly seem to raise questions more than provide answers: the profound changes to the demographic and social structure, urban drift and multiculturalism, new lifestyles and the emergence of new requirements, the environmental question, the relationship between humans and nature, health, the digital challenge, etc. (see Laurìa *et al*., 2020[a]). Moreover, the effects brought about by such changes are not always immediately clear or decipherable. Often, they emerge gradually until they become stable and long-lasting. Chasing problems each time they emerge on the basis of the available data cannot be the solution. Processes closed in on themselves, however rigorously conducted, do not seem suitable to address a situation undergoing such rapid evolution.[3] Nowadays, *managing change* in city life seems to be a challenge greater than us. First and foremost, due to the impossibility of providing effective local responses in a world structured by increasingly global processes (Castells, 1996; Bauman, 2005); then, due to our limits in anticipating how the city of the future will be (see Gregotti, 2000), as the recent pandemic crisis has dramatically confirmed.

Many urban changes come crashing down, often ruinously, onto the *open air public space*: the main catalyst of collective activities, the place where social life takes place and the incubator of community, ethical and human values (Fusco Girard, 2006); the basic communication device of our society (Castells, 2004) and the place through which a community is represented and expresses itself culturally (Costa, 2003).

A public space is first and foremost a social construction. It is characterised by gratuitousness, de-institutionalized and creative action, activities that are not always foreseeable in terms of type and duration. Its vitality depends on the use that can be made of it and on the people that can be encountered there and it is fuelled by the sharing of transitory and random words and actions. This is why the same public space can be a meeting place and a place of conflict; a vital place and an inanimate place (see Crosta, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us of this: the dramatic, ghostly and alienating beauty of deserted places, the prevalence of emptiness and silence where there was once life and people.

In public space, changes lead to new challenges and new conflicts, new methods of interaction between the inhabitants[4] and among them and the urban scenarios, requiring the definition of new cultural and social paradigms to be discussed and tested.

[3] On this matter, the "Alfa" model developed by the economist Mauro Galligani is interesting. See Galligani (2005).

[4] In this book we have chosen to use the term "inhabitant" instead of "user." A user *becomes* an inhabitant when they develop an awareness of the environment that surrounds them, take possession of it and take care of it. In doing so, they establish an emotional affinity with the environment (see Hertzberger, 1991). Often, in the book, "inhabitant" will be used as a concise notation to mean residents, city users and tourists.

Public space expresses social contradictions and antagonisms, clashes of opposing identities and an unspeakable tendency towards human segregation. Due to an increase in migration to cities[5] (UN-DESA, 2013; IOM, 2015; Duncan & Popp, 2017), public space, despite being a place of spontaneous social interaction, sharing, social life and encounters with others, is crossed by lines of symbolic borders that fragment it or territorialize it because – as Bourdieu observed (1993: 166) – «Socially distanced people find nothing more intolerable than physical proximity.» So, in the space belonging to everyone there are those who feel at home and those who feel like outsiders (Ostanel, 2013). This sense of extraneousness calls into question the very right of citizenship which is based on the idea of having something in common with people that don't know each other (Solnit, 2001) (Fig. 0.1).

For these and other reasons, the role of public space has gradually increased in the hope that cities can meet the requests and needs expressed by their new and old inhabitants and social frictions between individuals and groups (see Lerner, 2010; Stiles, 2013; Panariello, 2014).

Figure 0.1 – Florence, Piazza Indipendenza. A habitual meeting place for groups of immigrants, above all on weekends and public holidays.

In recent decades there has been a significant increase in policies of theoretical reflections and project interventions (both large and small scale) aimed at the redevelopment of public spaces. The privileged scenario of these interventions has often been the oldest areas of the city, where the priority is to reach a difficult balance between *conservation requirements* (necessary to preserve the value that these places convey and transfer over time) and *transformation requirements* (necessary to ensure the changing needs of individuals and the community are met)[6] (Choay, 1992; Debray, 1995; Magnaghi, 2000; UNESCO, 2011).

These actions, however, have not always provided an effective response to the renewed need for the sociality culture whose privileged scenario is public space; they

[5] The migratory flows affecting the city can be divided into various types: there are those within States (from the countryside to the city, which now mainly affect countries in the southern hemisphere) and international ones, that is from State to State (IOM, 2015); those affecting megalopolises and 'second level' ones affecting smaller cities, but in any case with a certain degree of wealth and attractiveness for migrants. The migratory flows that typically affect European countries are international and second level (Gil-Alonso *et al.*, 2016; Casucci & Leon, 2014).

[6] UNESCO's Historical Urban Landscape Approach fits into this perspective, which aims to improve the dialectic between conservation and transformation providing the relevant authorities with the tools to assess the landscape quality, and the aspirations and needs of the community (UNESCO, 2011). The aim is not to preserve the physical fabric of the city, but to ensure continuity of the relationship between the community and the cultural heritage expressed in the continuous action of caring for and maintaining this heritage.

have not always really been designed for the benefit of the inhabitants who, with their actions, weave together the formal structure of the city (Koenig, 1982); they have not always helped to consolidate the inhabitants' emotional link with the city.

> «Though new public spaces are built – writes Fusco Girard (2007: 318) – they are addressed mainly to a series of economic activities which make individuals stay together, of course, but only through strong consumption friendly schemes.» (Fig. 0.2).

In the ancient heart of the cities of art most attractive to tourists, public spaces are overwhelmed and altered by overbearing tourist pressure, which is feared but at the same time desired and 'necessary'[7]. In cities of art, the phenomenon of touristification is difficult to manage as it produces immediate advantages and unpleasant side effects (see Koens *et al.*, 2018; Capocchi *et al.* 2019); it is – as Becheri (2007) poignantly wrote – «a toad to be kissed». A phenomenon, abruptly interrupted by the pandemic crisis, recovery from which, in terms of impacts and extent, is still to be seen.

Within the public space there are spaces that are highly neglected but still worthy of great attention: *urban residual spaces*. These places are often run-down as not much use can be made of them due to their location, size, and morphological or semantic characteristics. Places often abandoned to their fate as they are considered to have no specific qualities or economic value. Places that are apparently incapable of expressing their vocation as a public space and that are sometimes the expression of a larger crisis affecting public space and the city in general (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1996).

Although these residual spaces are catalogued as an indistinct whole, each of them, as is so for other types of public spaces (squares, pedestrian routes, gardens and urban parks, etc.), has a story to tell, its specific characteristics and vocations. In fact, a great many urban spaces can be ascribed to the category of residual spaces and they differ in terms of size, frequency and location within the urban fabric: left-over spaces, undeveloped lots, spaces along and close to roads or waterways that cross the city, abandoned industrial areas, contaminated sites, spaces below urban viaducts, etc.

As a whole, residual spaces represent an immense potential resource. Sometimes they are interesting examples of biodiversity; in other cases, they are the 'driving' spaces of lands of conquest that the inhabitants use in the manner most suited to their needs. Above all if they are redeveloped following a systemic approach (Laurìa *et al.*, 2020[b]), residual spaces can be transformed from "discarded stones" to "corner stones," from problems to potential activators of urban and social regeneration processes, offering a useful contribution to improve city life.

Since the late 1960s, urban regeneration projects seeking to enhance residual spaces have increased and are now some of the most incentivized projects concerning public space at international level (see Laurìa, 2017[a]).

Among the pioneering experiences we should mention *Greenacre Park* in New York (by Hideo Sasaki and Harmon Goldstone, 1971) and *Philadelphia's Neighborhood Park Programme* (1961-1967) through which the redevelopment projects of around sixty small-medium spaces in Philadelphia were funded (Seymour, 1969). Some years later, the artist Gordon Matta-Clark, with the project *Reality Properties: Fake Estate* (1973-1974), took an interest in the so-called *gutter-spaces* of New York (Grazioli, 2004). The *gutter-spaces* were small, unusable fragments of land created through the expansion of

[7] In 2017, the average share of Gross Domestic Product determined by travel and tourism (direct and indirect impact and induced) was 10.3% in European countries and 13% in Italy (WTTC, 2018).

the city. They were the result of the division of the land into lots: spaces that were too small to be used but that, at the same time, were mapped and governed exactly like the other spaces in the city (Walker, 2005). The experience of Matta-Clark (even if not fully developed due to his premature death) not only shone a light on an urban phenomenon that was little analysed until that time, but it also represented a possible artistic response to a concrete issue asking questions that later became dominant issues.

Figure 0.2 – Florence, Piazza della Signoria. A "corridor" between outdoor seating areas.

Now, some of the most important and long-running projects include:

- *Project for Public Spaces* (PPS), which since 1975 promotes, finances and creates in all continents urban public spaces capable of enhancing the local heritage and stimulating responses to common needs.[8]
- *100 Pocket Parks* which, as part of the *London's Great Outdoors* programme, led to the creation of 100 pocket parks in 26 boroughs of the British capital.[9]

[8] See <http://www.pps.org>.

[9] See <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/public-space>.

- *Le 56/Eco Interstices*, within the scope of the research-action *Interstices urbains temporaires, espaces de proximité interculturels en construction* carried out in the Parisian region of St. Blaise by the firm *atelier d'architecture autogérée* (aaa) with public funding.[10]
- *San Francisco Parklet Program*, which since 2010 promotes the conversion of areas used as public car parks into *micro-public spaces* thanks to funding from entrepreneurs, community organisations or non-profit institutions.[11]
- *Lausanne Jardins*, which reached it sixth edition in 2019, promotes the accomplishment of *green-based* interventions that focus on the marginality of the disused spaces.[12]

These projects, even if differing in terms of scale and purposes, have returned excluded or abandoned places to the life of the city, promoting the development of voluntary activities and low intensity social contacts in an environment that is often transformed through regeneration measures and especially designed equipment.

Among the five typologies of residual spaces (vacant lands) identified by Northam (1971: 345-346), only the first – «remnant parcels that are typically small in size, often irregular in shape, and that have not been developed in the past» – can univocally refer to old city centres. The remaining four: «parcels with physical limitations, such as steep slopes or flood hazards, which therefore cannot be built on»; «corporate reserve parcels held for future expansion or relocation»; «parcels held for speculation, frequently found in transitional areas»; and «institutional reserve parcels set aside by public or quasi-public entities for future development, given their needs and funding» – mainly concern the outskirts of towns. Indeed, until now the outskirts have been the main focus of research on residual spaces (see, *inter alia*, Trancik, 1986, de Solà Morales, 1995; Lerner, 2003; Bowman & Pagano, 2004, Berger, 2006).

In actual fact, from a conceptual perspective, the residual spaces of a historical centre do not differ from those in a suburb: in both cases they are forgotten places, sometimes inactive, and usually degraded. This is because the *residuality* of a space – as we will attempt to demonstrate – is a "condition" that does not depend so much on its location within the urban fabric as it does on the weak or absent role that it plays in city life, and the lack of meaning that its inhabitants attribute to it.

Instead, if we reason in terms of redevelopment strategies things change considerably.

First and foremost – as Clément (2004) observed – while residual spaces in the outskirts are vast and numerous, those in the heart of cities are small and rare. The former are often the by-product of deindustrialisation or rapid urbanisation processes typical of urban sprawl; the latter are evidence of minimal transformations, small histories of friction and conflict over ownership as well as influences and tension suffered by the functions and events that characterise the buildings that define their edges.

In the heart of the city it is quite usual for the proximity of residual spaces and notable spaces with high symbolic value to generate a series of relational effects with functional consequences and perceptual and semantic conditioning. In the most famous

[10] See <http://www.urbantactics.org/projects/passage%2056/passage56html.html>. The same network of artists, architects, citizens and non-profit organizations has developed the *ECO-Urban Network/ Ecobox* project (Morrow, 2007).

[11] See <https://nacto.org/case-study/san-francisco-parklet-program/>.

[12] See <https://lausannejardins.ch/en/>.

cities of art, for example, residual spaces play a highly sensitive 'sacrificial' role to allow the 'picture-perfect city' to continue to exert its charm over the inhabitants, whether they be residents, aware tourists or hurried tourists.

While in the outskirts residual spaces are places «where the city is no longer» and «interior islands voided of activity» (de Solà Morales, 1995: 120), in historical centres it is quite common for spaces to 'become' residual due to an overabundance of lawful and unlawful functions that are uncoordinated or poorly managed.

This book stems from the wish to develop these considerations and reflect on these phenomena.

CHAPTER 1

Residual Spaces and the concept of residuality

Abstract: The following pages offer some points for consideration to help clarify the nature and meaning of "residual spaces" within urban centres and, in particular, their most ancient and consolidated areas. The preliminary hypothesis considers the term "urban residual spaces" as a complex expression with many meaning and different interpretations and nuances: from places without hope and latent opportunities to reserves of unexpressed opportunities. This is followed by an exploration of the concept of residuality to understand and define, in order to then identify, the conditions that result in a space becoming "residual." Shifting the attention from residual spaces to the concept of residuality allows us to identify a new point of view through which we can read and interpret public space.

1.1 Elements for defining urban residual spaces

Urban residual spaces have always existed as they are inherent to city transformation processes. Nevertheless, they only became a problem requiring a solution in the second half of the twentieth century when the unprecedented expansion of cities, which occurred for the most part through subdivisions that were often speculative, produced a multitude of fragmented 'smaller' spaces, often limited in size and typically having awkward shapes that were difficult to exploit for construction purposes (Fig. 1.1).

Since then, many expressions have been used to define urban residual spaces. "derelict lands", "dead zones," "wastelands," "in-between spaces," "terrain vague," "tiers-paysage," "drosscapes," "no-man's lands," "vacant lands," "shadowed spaces," "liminal spaces," etc.[1] Each of these expressions describes one or more aspects that distinguish this particular type of urban space and highlights two main questions: (1) the multiplicity of keys to understanding that these places offer, and (2) the consequent difficulty of creating definitive categories that allow us to identify them in a unambiguous way (see Gabbianelli, 2012) (Fig. 1.2).

To approach such a complex topic, to delimit its field of investigation and to highlight the multitude of meanings that the expression "residual spaces" in part expresses and in part conceals, it might be useful to start with the etymon of the term "residual."

The adjective "residual" derives from the Latin noun *resíduus*: "what remains, what is left over, the remaining part" (Devoto & Oli, 2014). It is easy to consider the meaning of "residual" as something that connotes what remains after everything that it was part of has undergone a modification or alteration process, either voluntarily or involuntarily. *Resíduus*, in turn, derives from the verb *residére* "remain behind," made up of *re* ("behind") and *sidére* ("remain seated") (IEI, 1986-1994). This last meaning gives the term "residual" a sense of suspense: "remain seated" while waiting for something to happen.

[1] For a review of the expressions that connote residual spaces see Mariani & Barron (2014).

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Figure 1.1 – New York, Paley Park (Zion Breen Richardson Associates, 1967). A residual space returned to the life of the city. [Photo: Francesco Armato]

Figure 1.2 – Some terms used in literature to define residual spaces.

The adjective "residual," however, also expresses a judgement. A negative judgement. In fact, it identifies the remaining part of a whole not only in quantitative terms, but also from a qualitative perspective, describing it as a minor fragment subordinate to what it was originally part of: a scrap, essentially. In the *Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana* we read, in fact, that residual also means "surplus" and "leftover" (Cortelazzo & Zolli, 1999). It is easy for a scrap to be abandoned to its fate: Clément (2004) reminds us that in French "residual" (*délaissé*) and "uncultivated" (*friche*) are synonyms.

By combining the term *residual* with the concept of *urban space* we obtain a compound and apparently unequivocal term that evokes the tangible and/or intangible qualities of some parts of the urban fabric. Generally speaking, they are places considered devoid of or lacking specific qualities and incapable of offering the city's inhabitants multifunctional opportunities that other urban spaces usually provide: walking, resting, meeting up, chatting, playing, etc. At the most – as described by Wood (1978: 3) – «They're the places you think about going to let your dog run, the places you stay away from if you know what's good for you, the places you have to go to roll a drunk or meet what passes in these days for hobos.» (Fig. 1.3).

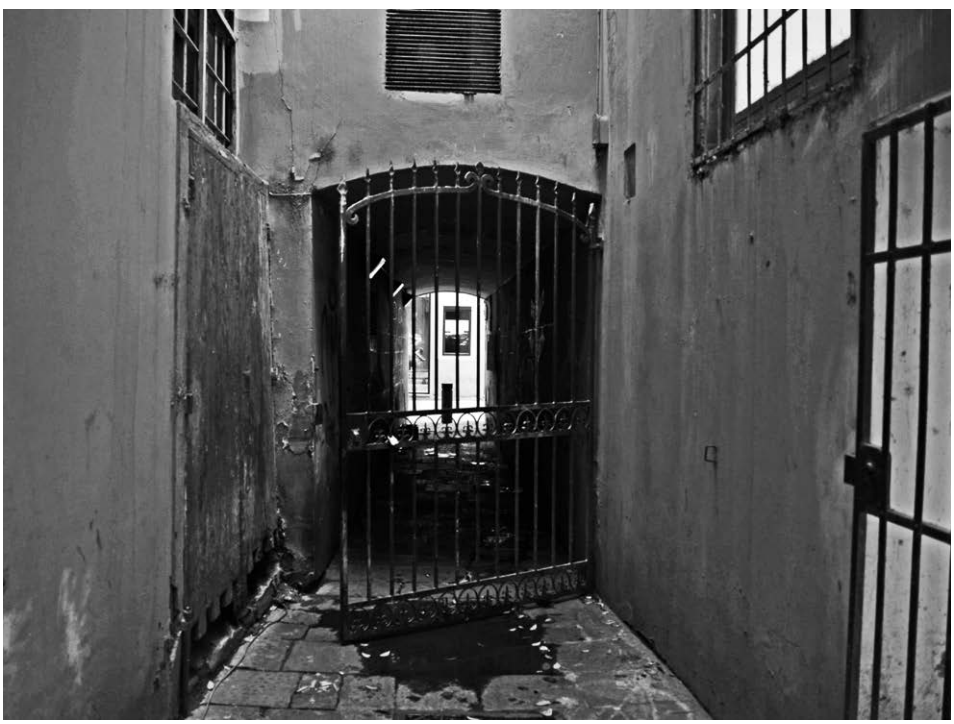

Figure 1.3 – Florence. Gate placed at the entrance to an alley to prevent access to the small and hidden Piazza del Giglio at night.

Some scholars use psycho-analytical language to describe the reserved nature of residual spaces. For Wood (1978: 9) it is «a geographical subconscious without which it's impossible to even think about non-normative behaviour»; for Mariani & Barron (2014) they allow us to explore ourselves and what surrounds us outside of the more or less frenetic circuits of work, commerce and mobility; for Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade residual spaces represent «the negative side of the built city [...] the places of removed memories and of the unconscious evolution of urban systems, the dark side of cities, the spaces of confrontation and contamination between the organic and the

inorganic, between nature and artifice».[2] According to Clément (2004: 55) they are «the part of our living space given over to the unconscious»: in the same way that there are no spirits devoid of the unconscious, devoid of demons, there are no habitats devoid of residual spaces, scraps of memory.

Residual spaces are often the carpets under which the city hides the physical and existential dross it produces incessantly. The waste bins of commercial businesses and the back rooms of shops are often found here (Fig. 1.4).

Figure 1.4 – Florence. Chiasso Cozza. [Photo Emanuela Morelli]

They are what remains at the edges and under the road networks. They are the *buffer strips* of the rivers that cross cities (to dissipate their energy when necessary), of ancient city walls and of buildings in which community values are identified or that represent the sensitive targets of demonstrative or violent actions.

They are those somewhat hidden shelters where informal moments of life take place: where a waiter on a break goes to smoke a cigarette or two lovers steal a kiss (Fig. 1.5).

They are places that house poverty, both suffered and exhibited, and that provide refuge to those who don't know where to go and to different forms of social hardship and phenomena of marginality, deviance and micro-criminality. As the "urban vortexes" of the city with psycho-geographical contours described by Debord ([1956] 2006: 62), they «strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.»[3]

At times, they are places that should be given a wide berth.

[2] See <http://digilander.libero.it/stalkerlab/tarkowsky/manifesto/manifest.htm>.

[3] English trans. by Ken Knabb from Knabb (2006: 62-66).

Figure 1.5 – Florence. A break from work in Piazza del Giglio.

In etiological terms, we could say that residual spaces are the undesired and collateral result of anthropic transformation processes and dynamics of use that relentlessly affect the urban space. These transformations can give rise to a broad spectrum of possibilities, each of which is capable of expressing some subtle specificities such as, for example, "leftover space," "urban void," "in-between space" (Fig. 1.6) or "abandoned space." "Leftover space" usually indicates what remains after the demolition or removal of a construction (Portoghesi, 1968-69) and that could be useful for other purposes (IEI, 1986-1994). The expression "urban void" is more generic: it describes a space that has remained unused or that has become unused again (for the most diverse reasons) within an urban fabric. When this urban fabric is densely built, we often speak about "in-between spaces" (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001; Carmona, 2010; Piccinno & Lega, 2013). Lastly, the expression "abandoned space" indicates places in a state of dereliction and neglect that is usually irreversible.

Figure 1.6 – *Left*. Pistoia. An interstitial space between two buildings used as an underpass (and, when the need arises, as a urinal). *Right*. Florence. An alley in the historical centre. [Photo: Leonardo Zaffi]

1.2 Residual spaces as places of indeterminacy

Residual spaces, as dissonant elements of urban geography, unlike other components of the urban landscape (squares, streets, avenues, gardens, etc.) are not found in dictionaries and specialist glossaries. Their multiform nature – changing, blurry, not to mention ambiguous – makes them difficult to comprehend (see Le Strat, 2007). It is probably precisely due to their uncertain nature that the expression "residual spaces" has an evocative power that goes well beyond the meaning commonly attributed to it. According to Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade, the nature of residual spaces cannot be described but only experienced, lived and perceived through the senses. Residual spaces, in other words, can only be known through direct experience.[4]

The *paradox of Perec*, namely the creation of entirely non-functional spaces, seems to be implemented in residual spaces (Perec, 1999). It would be a mistake, however, to consider them as useless or unusable places. Each residual space, as the Latin root *residére* seems to evoke, contains *in nuce* some latent resource, some potential opportunity, "marketable" to a greater or lesser degree (see, *inter alia*, Sennett, 1990; Shields, 1991; Zukin, 1991; Cupers & Miessen, 2002; Clément, 2004; Le Strat, 2007).

Ignasi de Solà Morales defined the type of space that we refer to here as "residual", as *terrain vague*, an evocative expression destined to be successful.

> «In these apparently forgotten places – he writes – the memory of the past seems to predominate over the present. These are obsolete places in which only a few residual values seem to manage to survive, despite their total disaffection from the activity of the city. They are, in short, external places, strange places left outside the city's effective circuits and productive structures. From an economic point of view, industrial areas, railway stations, ports, unsafe residential neighbourhoods, contaminated places, have become areas where it can be said that the city is no longer. They are its margins, lacking any effective incorporation; they are interior islands voided of activity; they are

[4] See <http://digilander.libero.it/stalkerlab/tarkowsky/manifesto/manifest.htm> (accessed 24.04.2021).

> forgotten, oversights and leftovers which have remained outside the urban dynamic. Converted into areas that are simply un-inhabited, un-safe, un-productive. In short, these are places that are foreign to the urban system, mentally exterior in the physical interior of the city, appearing as its negative image as much in the sense of criticism as in that of possible alternatives.» (de Solà Morales, 1995: 120).

According to de Solà Morales, the nature that characterises the *terrain vague* is «both that of the absence of use and function and that of promise and hope, which transforms them into territories of potential, ready to be altered to construct new scenarios within the city or simply read to take on other ways of being exploited, sometimes remote from consolidated urban rituality. Blurred, uncertain, terrains that contain expectations of mobility, wandering, free time and freedom.» (Gabbianelli, 2011).

It is this very capacity to summarise this ambivalence that, according to Mariani & Barron (2014: 6), makes the expression "terrain vague" capable of enclosing within it the different nuances of residual spaces. «Terrain vague, indeed – they write – contains within it a multitude of possible connotations, and is thus well suited to serve as a collective term for various subtypes of leftover land within the edges of the pale-boundaries.»

Sometimes urban transformation processes result in the residual spaces disappearing from the life and "routes" of the city, and from its maps, often becoming run-down and abandoned places (see, *inter alia*, Oxenham, 1966; Barr, 1969; Northam, 1971; Gemmell, 1977; Nabarro & Richards, 1980; Lynch, 1990; Boeri *et al.*, 1993; Pizzetti, 1993; Lerup, 1994; Leong, 1998; Kivell & Hatfield, 1998; Borret, 1999; Doron, 2000; Nielson, 2002; Bowman & Pagano, 2004; Clément, 2004; Berger, 2006), as the missing pieces of spatial and visual journeys that form the structure of the city, between routes, open spaces and built objects (Cecchini & Romano, 2014).

Other times, instead, their very indeterminate essence as 'neutral' places makes them suitable both for testing spontaneous actions to transform the urban space by the inhabitants (see Zaffi, 2017) and for projects that involve the participation of the inhabitants in the process of defining the ideas and the implementation of solutions (Fig. 1.7).

Figure 1.7 – Favara (Agrigento). Farm Cultural Park. Politecnico di Milano: "Equilatera" (2017). An installation offering new opportunities to use the urban space. [Photo: Nadia Castronovo and Fabio Di Benedetto]

Some scholars (see Sennett, 1990; Shields, 1991; Zukin, 1991) have even observed that in the residual spaces the infinite expressions of society come to life better than elsewhere and define them as *liminal spaces*, places where the most divergent activities can take shape and connect to each other (see Carmona, 2010). It could be said that precisely due to their functional indeterminacy, they «provide potential outlets for unexpected or spontaneous encounters, informal events, and alternative activities outside our increasingly commodified, controlled, and privatized "open" urban spaces.» (Mariani & Barron, 2014: 3). They represent spaces of the city which Theodor Adorno's words «Purposefulness without purpose is thus really the sublimation of purpose» (Adorno, 1971: 32) seem to describe perfectly.

According to these last interpretations, residual spaces are not the 'lost' spaces of the city but, rather, 'misplaced' spaces, spaces of uncertainty (de Solà Morales, 1995; Cupers & Miessen, 2002); they are not black holes, dead zones or derelict lands, but *places of potential*, places waiting for a destiny, an opportunity. They represent a sort of «reserve of the city's "availability"» (Le Strat, 2007), a privileged urban resource for research, experimentation and urban renewal (Burkhardt, 1992).

1.3 On the concept of the residuality of public spaces

The adjective "residual" in relation to the term "urban space" – as we have seen – can be understood in different ways. Due to such a multifaceted nature, the concept of residual space may have different connotations depending on the type of analysis and reading intended with respect to the criteria and methods of interpretation used, the cognitive structure, emotions and experience of the observer and the different objectives to be achieved.

The noun residuality derives from "residual." It is interesting to note that this term, despite being commonly used in many disciplines (archaeology, sociology, economics, agronomy, law, mathematics, etc.), is not found in dictionaries.[5]

Residuality appears to be a relative, elusive concept that can change and vary in relation to a multitude of aspects. It is:

- Multidimensional;
- Multiscalar;
- Subjective;
- Context-related;
- Interdependent;
- Reversible (Fig. 1.8).

The residuality of a public space is a *multidimensional* concept because it is not limited to a 'physical' dimension, as it might seem on first analysis. A space, in fact, may be residual due to its location, form and size, but also for semantic, functional, economic, relationship reasons, etc. For instance, a space to which the inhabitants attribute little or no meaning and that has weak relationships with the surrounding spaces can easily remain unused and slip into a condition of residuality.

[5] For Italian, the *Dizionario della Lingua Italiana Treccani* ("residualità") was consulted; for English, the *Oxford English Dictionary* ("residuality"); for French, the *Dictionnaire Française Larousse* ("résidualité"); for Spanish the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* ("residualidad"); for German, the *Wörtenbuch der Deutshen Sprache* ("residualität").

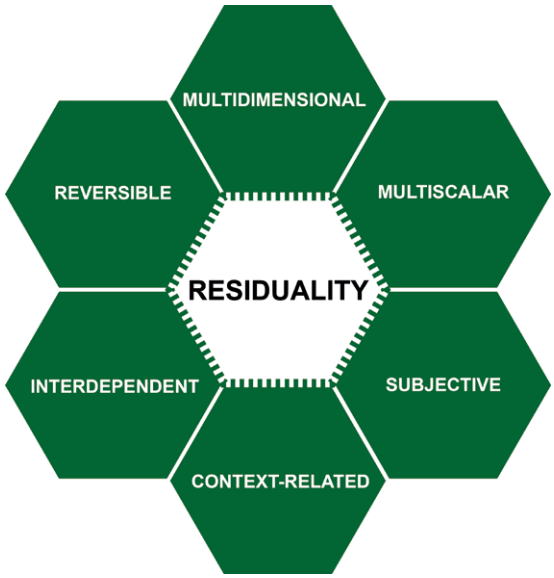

Figure 1.8 – The six aspects of the concept of residuality.

Moreover, residuality is a *multiscalar* concept because, as mentioned, a large abandoned industrial area in the suburbs and a tiny in-between space in a historical centre can both be residual.[6]

The meaning attributed to an urban residual space is, moreover, *subjective* as it can change depending on the subject or social group that speaks about it. Each person and each social group (children, young people, the elderly; residents, city users, tourists, immigrants, etc.) can understand and identify specific signs, aspects, affordances and features within an urban space. These distinctions sometimes depend on the type of relationship that links the inhabitant to the urban space in question. A certain urban space, for instance, may be considered *residual* by one person who does not use it on a regular basis and *non-residual* by those who, in any form, *inhabit* this space.

Residuality, moreover, is a *contextual* concept: that is, it is/appears to be residual in a given place but might not be in another. For example, the identification of residual spaces in the historical centre of Florence must necessarily take into consideration specific and different aspects with respect to what could happen in cities with different histories and qualities. This means that the judgement of residuality is not unambiguous but changeable and the factors that determine the residuality of a space are not valid everywhere but, on the contrary, they are strongly conditioned by the specific spatial and social context examined, the distinct features of each urban structure and the methods of using the urban space that each community expresses as the most suited to its way of being and living.

The residuality of an urban space is, moreover, an *interdependent* concept. It is influenced by the magnitude of the differences – namely by the contrast – between parts of the same spatial context (see Bateson, 1972). For instance, our emotion or wonder when we observe a space is also the result of the contrast between the sensations and

[6] See Introduction.

Figure 1.9 – Ciudad Bolivar, Bogotà, Colombia. The concept of residuality is difficult to apply to the open-air spaces of an informal settlement due to the lack of a comparison term. [Photo: Fabio Forero]

impressions we get during the lead up to it and those triggered when we get there. To better understand the interdependence concept, it is useful to focus on the ways in which people grasp differences between things and events.

Perception, as we know, is based on sensory contrasts: the more distinct the characteristics of two spaces (in terms of size, colour, form, acoustics, smell, etc.), the easier it is for the observer to identify them and the greater their degree of recognisability will be (Cullen, 1971; Ludel, 1978; Pallasmaa, 2005).

> According to Cullen (1971: 9) «The human mind reacts to a contrast, to the difference between things, and when two pictures (the street and the courtyard) are in the mind at the same time, a vivid contrast is felt and the town becomes visible in a deeper sense. It comes alive through the drama of juxtaposition.»

Just as the peacefulness of a place will be more appreciated when coming from a noisy space, the residuality of a space will be more legible/evident in relation to the non-residuality of an adjacent space. In a monotonous and repetitive space there seems to be no difference between objects, spaces, buildings and environmental conditions and everything tends to look alike.

> «In the visual field, particularly in the successive images that we perceive in our environment – writes Kepes (1961: 149-151) – the juxtaposition of images offers the most potent symbolic qualities. […] In our cities, the juxtaposition of very large with very small buildings, of busy with tranquil areas, are more than simple expressions of variety. […] Sharp accents signifying character changes between two areas give legibility and underline the structural logic of the total urban scene.»

In *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch talks about the contrast between urban views as an essential element of the urban landscape, and underlines how the recognisability and imageability of a place are determined by the existence of contrasts

between different elements and spaces. When explaining the results of the famous study conducted on the image of three US cities, he wrote: «Indeed, descriptions were often made as if they were a response to contrast in the urban scene: spatial contrast, status contrast, use contrast, relative age, or comparison of cleanliness or of landscaping. Elements and attributes became remarkable in terms of their setting in the whole.» (Lynch, 1960: 45).

Lynch's consideration can also be used in the process of identifying residual spaces within the city. In a totally degraded urban environment, for example, identifying spaces as *residual* is highly complex precisely because there is no term of comparison with *non-residuality* (Fig. 1.9). Whereas, in a looked after and attractive urban context, any neglected/abandoned spaces are easier to perceive and identify.

In some cases, the residuality that characterises a given space may arise gradually and not be inherent in its nature from the outset. A space, in other words, *can become* residual over time due to the use made of it or other causes that arise intentionally or unintentionally. Likewise, the process can be inverted so that the residuality of a space is remedied thanks to a more or less extensive redevelopment project. Residuality is therefore a *reversible* condition of spaces that make up the urban fabric, a condition that, just as it occurred, can, at least partially, be overcome.

The reversible nature of the residuality of an urban space is particularly important. While residuality is not an absolute and unalterable fact of some 'unfortunate' urban spaces, it could 'simply' be considered as one of the defining features of each urban space.

Considering the issue from this perspective, does not make much sense to compare residual spaces with non-residual spaces; it would seem to be more useful to seek to identify the *residuality degree* that each public space, even the most valuable, carries with it.

This is what we will attempt to do in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

A method for evaluating the residuality of small public spaces in historical contexts

Abstract: This chapter describes a procedure for qualitatively assessing the degree of residuality of small public spaces in historical contexts, defined as the Residuality Assessment Process (RAP). The RAP is based on the hybridisation of two techniques for understanding public space: the Expressions and Causes method and Strollology.

2.1 The Residuality Assessment Process for small public spaces

The *Residuality Assessment Process* (RAP) involves the reading, interpretation (both cognitive and emotional) and assessment of small public spaces in historical contexts. It attributes each of them a summary rating – *degree of residuality* – formulated through the application of primarily qualitative criteria.

The RAP uses observation, collects data and records phenomena, assessing them on the basis of distinctive characteristics; it seeks to recognise both the objective attributes of a space and the feelings and moods it transmits to those who experience it.

The RAP investigates the following dimensions of public spaces:

- *Physical characteristics,* in terms of size and morphology, the equipment in place, materials, 'traces' left by the inhabitants (see Zeisel, 1984), etc.;
- *Communication characteristics*, in terms of perception, ambiance and emotional sensations (see Zumthor, 2006);
- *Social characteristics*, in terms of optional activities (meeting, playing, talking, observing, resting, reading, etc.) carried out by the inhabitants and of recurring models of behaviour (staying in one place, moving around, sitting down, standing up, meeting in small groups, being solitary, etc.) (see Gehl, 1987).

The methodological design of the RAP is centred around a method of analysing and assessing the residuality of public spaces referred to as *Expressions and Causes*[1] (Laurìa 2017[a]; Laurìa & Vessella, 2019), divided into four levels of progressive analysis:

[1] This method was developed by the authors of this book as part of the research "The enhancement of abandoned residual spaces as an opportunity for the inclusive city_Pocket Parks for All" (2015-2017) and then gradually refined. With respect to what has been published in the past, this chapter offers an updated version of the method based on the results of the experiences carried out and further studies and reflections.

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1. *Expressions of residuality*;
2. *Causes of residuality*;
3. *Factors of residuality*;
4. *Spatial issues*.

Information is mainly acquired through the strolling technique.

In the RAP, the Expressions and Causes method is therefore integrated with *Strollology* or the science of strolling (Burckhardt, 2015).[2] The strolling technique is used to identify the residual spaces to be analysed and to observe the significant elements on the basis of their dynamic succession; during the work of exploring the urban landscape it performs the double function of a *case sorter* and a *producer of knowledge and suggestions*, above all regarding relationships. So the Expressions and Causes method is applied to each urban space identified as such.

The RAP uses a series of investigative tools consistent with the surrounding conditions and with the needs to be met. In particular: (1) techniques for studying the urban space, such as cartographic analysis, photographic surveys, ideograms, sketches and other graphic representations, (2) reading of the sensory landscape of the urban space analysed using video footage and sound recordings, (3) observation of the activities and behaviours of the inhabitants as well as of the "traces" they leave in the urban space (Zeisel, 1984), (4) the creation of comparison and assessment tables. Limited to "active" and frequented spaces, the inhabitants' opinions were collected through in-depth interviews (see § 3.3.2.1 and Annex 2.).

The information obtained through the strolling technique was turned into a *narrative description* (see § 3.3.2.1 and Annex 1.); the information collected through application of the Expressions and Causes method is reported in the *Analysis sheets* (one for each public space studied) (see § 3.3.2.1 and Annex 3) which then resulted in a summary description known as the *Map of residuality degrees* (see § 3.3.2.2). An attempt was made to describe not only the critical elements but also the potential of each individual space analysed within its context.

In order to efficiently manage the entire process of the acquisition, management, processing and disclosure of the information, the communicative structure of the RAP must meet the following principles:

1. *Multimediality*. In order to restore, at least partially, the physical, kinesthetic, perceptive and emotional elements of the public spaces analysed, the RAP must acquire, manage and communicate different types of information (text, numerical data, sounds, videos, photos, sketches, ideograms, etc.).
2. *Interactivity*. The possibility of making connections between the data collected allows for several levels of readings and in-depth analysis and enables us to 'interrogate' the set of data collected on the basis of specific research purposes (for instance, geolocation, the time of the survey, the type of information, etc.).
3. *Continuous updating*. As urban spaces undergo almost continuous alterations it must be possible to add to, implement, replace or delete the information collected quickly, without compromising the general structure of the data and documents obtained from the onsite analysis. Updatability is a feature of the data management system that can define dynamic evaluations capable of 'following' the changes affecting the analysed spaces.

[2] The term Strollology (or Promedanology), in German: "Spaziergangswissenschaft", was coined by the Swiss sociologist Lucius Burckhardt in the 1980s.

To achieve these principles, it is essential to use digital devices, such as tablets, smartphones, laptops, graphics tablets, etc. in the survey phase, and to use information technologies such as cloud computing and databases in the data management phase. In addition to facilitating management of the flow of typologically heterogeneous data, these tools allow us to make thematic searches through queries and to supplement the information over time so as to support the progressive in-depth analysis of topics, aspects or characteristics that might emerge after the field survey phase. They also ensure effective communication of the data collected (video footage, sound recordings, time lapses, slow motion, etc.).

Digital surveying devices can obviously be usefully integrated with traditional tools used for reading the urban space.

2.2 The strolling technique

According to Strollology, slow exploration of the environment helps to construct, in the imagination of the person walking, a landscape that is structured according to known and recognisable elements and symbolic, relational and emotional qualities (Burckhardt, 1987; 1989; 1995; 1996; 1998; Findley, 1993, Careri, 2006). For those doing the strolling, it becomes an experience of multisensory spatial perception (Briani & Radicchi, 2010) and knowledge of the world through the body (Solnit, 2001).

Those who walk freely through the streets and squares of a city not only actually experience the 'public' dimension of the places crossed, but step after step they confirm their role as a *common asset*.

The reading of urban space through walking is also the basis of *Psychogeography*, a technique of exploring urban space theorised by *Internationale Situationniste* in the late 1950s, which studied the effects of the physical environment on perceptual processes and the emotional behaviours of individuals. According to psychogeography, the process of acquiring information and sensations occurs through *dérives* (Debord, [1956] 2006), experiences of slowly and carefully exploring the urban habitat.[3]

> According to Debord ([1956] 2006: 62), the *dérive* is «a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiences. *Dérives* involve playful constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll. In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.»[4]

Strollology is based on overturning some concepts regarding the analysis of the image of the city. It actually places more importance on the "street," the path to be followed, rather than the destination.[5] It attributes meanings to the sequence of places that are crossed and seeks to describe the sensory nature of what exists in relation to the perceptual stimuli awakened in the people moving through the spaces. According

[3] Starting with Charles Baudelaire, wandering through the city streets aimlessly (*flânerie*) becomes a recurring theme in literature. From Walter Benjamin (think of *Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire* and *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*) to Rainer Maria Rilke (*Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*), from Edgar Allan Poe (*The Man of the Crowd*) to Robert Walser (*Der Spaziergang*).

[4] English trans. by Ken Knabb from Knabb (2006: 62-66).

[5] In this, it evokes *Ithaca*, the famous poem by Konstantinos Kavafis.

to Burckhardt (1996: 225), «strollology examines the sequences in which a person perceives their surroundings.» In the imagination of those who stroll «all their individual perceptions merge into one. They manage to integrate them into a single image in their mind's eye.» (Burckhardt, 1989: 271).

According to Findley (1993), walking, in addition to representing a way of exploring and discovering space, also serves to identify the elements that lead those walking along a trajectory, a route, towards a specific destination. The assessment, study and interpretation of the framing sequences, the succession of visual perspectives, the spatial rhythm of the places and the sensory components of the route (sounds, smells, temperature, textures, etc.) play the double role of elements through which to interpret the space and useful data for the redevelopment project.

Strollology has often been used to interpret linear public spaces, such as greenways (see Valente, 2016), but it also adapts well to the identification of residual spaces in a historical urban context. In particular, the relational and symbolic structures that the residual spaces establish with the surrounding context can be effectively understood through a dynamic, free and unhurried exploration of the city space. In this sense, Strollology allows us to introduce a 'time' factor and assess the residuality of the urban spaces with respect to their chronological succession. As the route is travelled, in fact, spaces can be described not only through their intrinsic characteristics but also through space-time relationships ("before…", "immediately after…", "at the same time as…").

The subjective and relative nature of the concept of residual space (see § 1.3) can in some cases result in a sort of incompatibility with the rationality that distinguishes *maps* and the methods of constructing them. The dynamic experience of the stroll and the reception of sensory stimuli in a temporal succession of events and happenings can, in our opinion, at least partly reduce the distance between the elusive nature of the concept of residuality and the 'logical' exactness required in mapping. By linking the physical and perceptual dimensions of the urban environment (measuring, travelling, seeing, hearing, etc.) to the emotional experience, the stroll can help us to better understand the nature and vocations of the residual spaces. "Travelling" and "crossing" become ways of *finding* residual spaces in a complex habitat, which the ancient centre of a city can be, and seeking to understand them in relation to their context.[6]

2.3 The Expressions and Causes Method

The variety of situations that could occur when the urban structure is analysed make it difficult to establish distinct criteria to identify the residual spaces. On the one hand, these criteria must have a sufficiently precise and defined level of specification; on the other hand, however, they must establish themselves as 'open' definitions capable of accepting different points of view and interpretative levels, so they must be highly flexible.

To attempt to overcome these difficulties we have developed the Expressions and Causes method. It has two parts: the first consists of reading the *signs*, which can be considered a tangible expression of the residuality of a space ("expressions"); the second is based on an analysis and interpretation of the possible *reasons* ("causes") capable of 'explaining' the condition of residuality a certain public space has fallen into.

[6] See chapter 3.

> In this approach it is easy to recognise an evocation and a similarity, even terminological, with what happens in medical diagnosis. Residual spaces, like unwell bodies, show signs, or external *expressions* of a phenomenon which enable us to observe the presence of a diseased state. In medical diagnosis, signs can call to mind the past existence of a disease (anamnestic signs) or lead to the identification and recognition of the disease (diagnostic signs and pathognomonic signs). With a greater margin of uncertainty, the same happens with the 'diagnosis' of residual spaces. Thanks to the interpretation of signs (semiotics) we can attempt to identify the related problem, that is one or more pathologies (*causes*) and, subsequently, indicate the correct treatment (redevelopment project).

The choice to revisit the causes by starting with the effects that they produce derives from the complex nature of the residual spaces which does not lend itself to rigid classifications and favours the possibility of accepting the different nuances and characterisations that they can present. It is an attempt to uncover the hidden features of the residual spaces, those *layers* made up of lost opportunities and phenomena experienced which, by overlapping and interacting with each other according to different logics, determine their existence (see Zaffi, 2017).

> This analysis method allows us to explore public spaces from an unusual perspective made up of a multitude of points of view: just as different phenomena can be seen when observing the stars at different wavelengths, by studying the spaces of the city from different viewpoints we will attempt to highlight the different characteristics of the residual spaces.

The Expressions and Causes method is divided into four levels of analysis. Each level assumes the theoretical elaborations of the previous levels and further explores them according to an ever more specific reading of the conditions of residuality of the urban space analysed.

The *expressions of residuality* level (1st level of knowledge) is the most general. The expressions of residuality are understood as the result and substantive expressions of specific perceptual, functional, symbolic and social conditions. In particular, we will focus our attention on the following *expressions of residuality*: (1) *degradation*, (2) *improper use*, and (3) *absence of people*.

The 2nd level of knowledge, namely *causes of residuality*, seeks to understand the reasons that led to the *expressions of residuality* and to trace them back to known elements that can be acted on. The causes that help to make an urban space "residual" are divided into three categories: (1) *intrinsic causes*, (2) *use-related causes*, and (3) *semantic causes*.

As the expression of a recursive process (Morin, 1999), each cause can be related to several distinct expressions and vice versa. For example, the *absence of people* expression of residuality can have both *intrinsic causes* and *use-related causes*, just as *intrinsic causes* can be related as much to an expression of *degradation* as an expression of *improper use*.

> In the transition from *expressions* to *causes*, it could be said that the *similarities* approach (the signs are investigated to discover the reasons for them) is linked to the *differences* approach (the concatenation of signs laws are researched forming the basis for the construction of a grammar of residual spaces) (cf. Foucault, 1970).

The 3rd level of knowledge takes another step forward. This phase identifies the *factors* inherent to the different *causes of residuality* previously identified. With reference to the *intrinsic causes*, the *topological* and *geometric factors* are analysed; with reference to the *use-related causes*, the *functional*, *environmental* and *managerial factor* are analysed; with reference to the *semantic causes*, the *symbolic* and *relational factors* are analysed.

Lastly, the 4th and final level of knowledge translates the *residuality factors* into essential, concise and more easily accessible components: *spatial issues*. For each of the spaces analysed, the *spatial issues* are described in a short text in order to provide a *qualitative narration* of the problematic or unresolved aspects. Fig. 2.1 provides a brief description of the logical steps that support the working hypothesis.

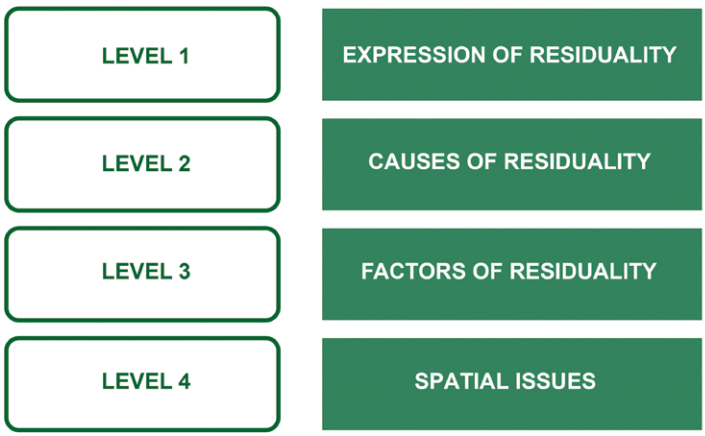


Figure 2.1 – The four levels of knowledge of the Expressions and Causes Method.

2.3.1 Expressions of residuality

As observed in the previous pages, there are many forms and reasons why an urban space 'becomes' residual. They derive from a heterogeneous set of phenomena that are not always easy to identify or interpret univocally, but that nonetheless represent clear signs of the incongruous use and/or bad management of public space.

As mentioned, among the different forms that the residuality of an urban space can take, three particularly significant ones emerge:

- *Degradation*;
- *Improper use*;
- *Absence of people*.

When these expressions occur (in isolation or, more often, together), it is easy for a space to become excluded from the main circuits of activity in the city and for it to be (or be perceived as) residual.

The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of the *expressions of residuality* of an urban space.

2.3.1.1 Degradation

Environmental degradation can be understood both in comparative terms, as a "process of transition" from a pre-existing situation of a higher-quality built environment to a situation that is gradually worsening," and as a "judgement of the situation observed as such" (Tacchi, 1996: 146).

Degradation within the public space of a city can occur in a wide variety of forms: from *physical degradation* to *social degradation*. Physical degradation may be due to the physical obsolescence of components of the urban landscape, a lack of maintenance or cleaning, as well as physical incivilities, for example, graffiti, writing on the walls, van-

dalism, etc. (Fig. 2.2) (see § 2.3.2.2). Social degradation instead pertains to violation of the standards of a civil society (social incivilities). The antisocial behaviours that typically arise in public spaces include: addressing passers-by with derogatory phrases or obscene shouting; behaving in an aggressive and disrespectful manner towards passers-by; disruptive disputes, open offers of prostitution; using or selling drugs; alcohol consumption, parking vehicles along pedestrian routes, leaving rubbish in the streets, making a noise at night, etc. (cf. Chiesi, 2004).

Incivilities, both physical and social, give rise to a broad range of behaviours and transgressions, *intentional or unintentional*, of shared standards. They are the expression of a subjective concept and, for this reason too, nuanced and complex. Roché (2002: 42) rightly observed that «the incivilities of some are the sociability of others.»

In any case, many of the different forms of degradation affecting public spaces can be traced to insufficient affection, responsibility and care towards them. Degradation makes a significant contribution to the impoverishment of the public space; the inhabitants of a city tend to put in place strategies to avoid degraded public spaces and to abandon them to their fate (see § 2.3.1.3).

Figure 2.2 – Pistoia. Vandalism in Piazza Monteoliveto.

At times, degradation occurs in forms that initially appear almost negligible and do not cause particular concern; it then progresses slowly and inexorably until it takes over a place. This is the most insidious form. When degradation becomes 'ordinary' we learn to live with it and hardly notice it any more (Corzani, 1996). The habit reduces our sensitivity to degradation. Unsurprisingly, the situations of degradation we observe when passing through the unknown areas of a city trigger a greater sense of unease and insecurity in us than what we would feel in areas we visit frequently (see Triventi, 2008).

Underestimating or ignoring the first signs of degradation that arise in a public space often implies the onset of problems that are more serious and more difficult to resolve. It often means reaching the tipping point (see Saville, 1995).

> The *Broken Windows Theory* (Kelling & Wilson, 1982) highlights the fragility of urban spaces and their vulnerability. His basic concept is that degradation, both physical and social, if not quickly and effectively addressed, gives rise to more significant property crimes.

Each piece of urban equipment (such as a bench, lamppost, waste bin, pavement) that is damaged and not quickly repaired has a twofold effect on the inhabitants. In some it generates a sense of resignation and alienation as no one wants to identify themselves with things that are broken, do not work or that are ugly; in others, it encourages them to commit other acts of vandalism as they are led to think that the inhabitants or the authorities in that particular neighbourhood are not capable of protecting the integrity and beauty of an urban space or that they are indifferent to its fate (see Carrer, 2003). The spread of these signs of neglect produces disorder that can be contagious and self-propagate, fostering the establishment of forms of deviance (see, *inter alia*, Jacobs, 1961; Wood, 1961; 1967; Jeffery, 1971; Newman, 1972; 1996; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Carrer, 2003; Bianchini e Sicurella, 2012) which then increase the sense of insecurity and real fear of the urban space (Amendola, 2003).[7]

To defend the urban space against degradation a containment strategy aimed at re-establishing coexistence and care standards is not enough; instead the causes need to be recognised and "signs of civilisation" introduced that are capable of counteracting the reproduction of aggressive behaviour towards people and objects. These "signs of civilisation" may assume the form of elements of embellishment and semantic enhancement of the space (Figs. 2.3 and 2.4) and/or environmental safeguards such as social and support networks, neighbourhood relations, entertainment activities, etc. (Martini & Sequi, 1992; Gelli, 2002; Prezza & Pacilli, 2002).

Figure 2.3 – Signs of civilisation. Favara (Agrigento). Farm Cultural Park. *Left*: a work by the street artist NemO's (2014). *Right*: a work by the street artist Roa (2017).

[7] In order to tackle crimes against property and increase the inhabitants' sense of security a multi-dimensional approach was developed called *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (CPTED). See CEN TR 14383-2:2007 ("Prevention of crime – Urban planning and building design – Part 2: Urban planning").

Figure 2.4 – *Signs of civilisation.* Pistoia. Piazzetta dell'Incontro. An attempt to 'enrich' a space at the edges of the ancient city centre through street art.

2.3.1.2 Improper use

In public spaces activities occur that are often considered incongruous with the quality of a place, the social conventions in place and the regulations in force there. Think, for example, of the forms of illegal occupation of a public space (informal settlements; illegal parking; the sale of legal or counterfeit goods on pedestrian routes; etc.); activities carried out by people perceived as hostile or as a potential threat (drug dealing and consumption, prostitution, aggressive and anti-social behaviour); activities that are incompatible with the needs of some residents (for instance wild nightlife); uses that conflict with the historical and artistic qualities of a place (e.g. heavy traffic, parking places in prestigious areas, etc.) (see § 2.3.2.2 Managerial factors).

> Although Piazza de' Davanzati, in Florence, is in the ancient heart of the city and has unique architectural features – Palazzo Davanzati is located here and considered to be one of the first examples of a Florentine palace (Fanelli, 1973) – it is one of the spaces least visited by pedestrians. The square resembles an open-air car park surrounded by the back of a post office, banks and the odd shop: such a condition is clearly incapable of encouraging outdoor optional activities to be carried out there and people to spend time there. Very few residents live in the houses overlooking the square and this reduces the presence of people even more once the shops have closed. The square, due to weak relationships with the nearby urban polarities (Santa Trinità bridge, Piazza della Repubblica, Piazza della Signoria) and the lack of perceptual stimuli for those passing through it (or those who, more commonly, skim past it), seems to have lost some of its connotations as a square (Fig. 2.5).

The presence of activities perceived by the general public as inappropriate inhibits the typical functions of a public space being carried out there (walking, strolling, meeting up, chatting, resting, playing, etc.), impoverishes its aggregation potential and creates friction and tension between social categories: tourists and residents, old and young, rich and poor, pedestrians and motorists, residents and migrants, etc.

Figure 2.5 – Florence, Piazza de' Davanzati. The only spaces left free are used as vehicle lanes. In the background, the imposing silhouette of Palazzo Davanzati.

Figure 2.6 – Florence. Graffiti that expresses a very widespread feeling among the residents of cities of art overwhelmed by mass tourism.

The "hit and run" tourism (Cocola-Gant, 2016; 2018; Sequera & Nofre, 2018) in some cities of art profoundly alters the use of public space and is sometimes such a strong critical factor that it weakens the emotional relationship between the public space and the resident community (Fig. 2.6). During the daytime, tourist-centred businesses take the place of the optional activities carried out by residents; once the shops and other businesses have closed the spaces empty and remain inactive until the next day.

In Florence, during the daytime the streets close to San Lorenzo church are literally invaded by market stalls for tourists. This may create a picturesque effect, but the Florentines tend to avoid the places most frequented by mass tourism; this is a part of the city they don't really experience and, when the market is over, it is devoid of urban vitality (Fig. 2.7).

Sometimes, improper use of the public space is the result of the inadequate organisation of the flows that affect it and/or conflicts between the different activities that take place there. Where the social fabric is dispersed, disconnected and not particularly cohesive, activities commonly understood as inappropriate can take root more easily.

Figure 2.7 – Florence, San Lorenzo market in Via dell'Ariento. These photos, taken before the pandemic, show two distinct realities. By day the street teams with tourists, but is avoided by residents. When the market closes the street almost seems to want to rest, as if it has fulfilled its duty and run out of energy.

Improper use of the space is a clear expression of residuality and easy to recognise; nevertheless, it is very difficult to define. Each space in the city, in fact, depending on its specific characteristics, its location with respect to the general context, the uses that

have become established over time and the urban vocation it expresses, can be assessed by each of its inhabitants as 'adequate' for some types of activity and 'inadequate' for others. It all depends on the point of view of the inhabitant, their contingent or structural requirements, and their wealth of experience.

A reflection on the coherent uses of a given public space is an essential prerequisite for the implementation of policies capable of containing residuality phenomena linked to activities perceived as incongruous by most of the inhabitants and to define ways of managing them that are capable of governing, with the involvement of the inhabitants, the set of functions that can help to keep it attractive and vital.

2.3.1.3 The absence of inhabitants

When does a set of buildings and spaces assume the connotation of a city? What holds together the different parts it is made of?

Giovanni Michelucci, evoking the great Greek geographer Pausanias, observed that the meaning of a city precedes the construction of buildings or public space and lies in the network of social relationships «that people or groups manage to establish between themselves» (Michelucci, 2002: 42). The human pact between inhabitants confers meaning and justification to a creation as complex and articulated as the city (Laurìa, 2003; Ndreca, 2020) and turns a physical place into a "polis," a "living community."[8] It is the people who populate it that make a public space alive and vital. (see, *inter alia*, Rudofsky, 1969; Alexander, 1977; Whyte, 1980; Gehl, 1987). The meaning that a person attributes to a place cannot be separated from the chain of events that they experience in that place and the relationships they form with others.

The absence of people in an urban space when this in itself does not represent an *expression of residuality* is its premise. An "unused" urban space within a system of "used" and frequented urban spaces is perceived by most inhabitants as a place to be avoided. When we notice an empty space free of people while walking around the city our instinct is not to go there in manner of pioneer but, on the contrary, to move further away from it search of spaces where we can meet other people and engage in relationships. Jan Gehl effectively observed that «… people and human activities attract other people.» (Gehl, 1987: 23) (Figs. 2.8-2.10).

The presence of people in an urban space not only represents an element of vivacity but it is also a useful factor in terms of social control and surveillance. The "eye on the street" is the best guarantee for safety in the city. «The first thing to understand is that public peace – the sidewalk and street peace – of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves.» (Jacobs, 1961: 40).

Public spaces that are regularly frequented, in particular by families, the elderly and children are usually the safest. The very presence of people, above all if they belong to different social categories, represents an effective deterrent for the establishment of situations of degradation, illegality or risk for the inhabitants. An unused space may attract unlawful activities that are difficult to control (see § 2.3.1.1).

[8] For the concept of *polis* as a "living community" "capable of expressing in itself a high standard of living, as a sign of sharing and solidarity," see John Paul II's address to Lodi on 20 June 1992 at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1992/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19920620_popolaz-lodi.html> (last access 8 March 2021).

Figure 2.8 – "People and human activities attract other people": Pistoia. [Photo: Beatrice Benesperi]

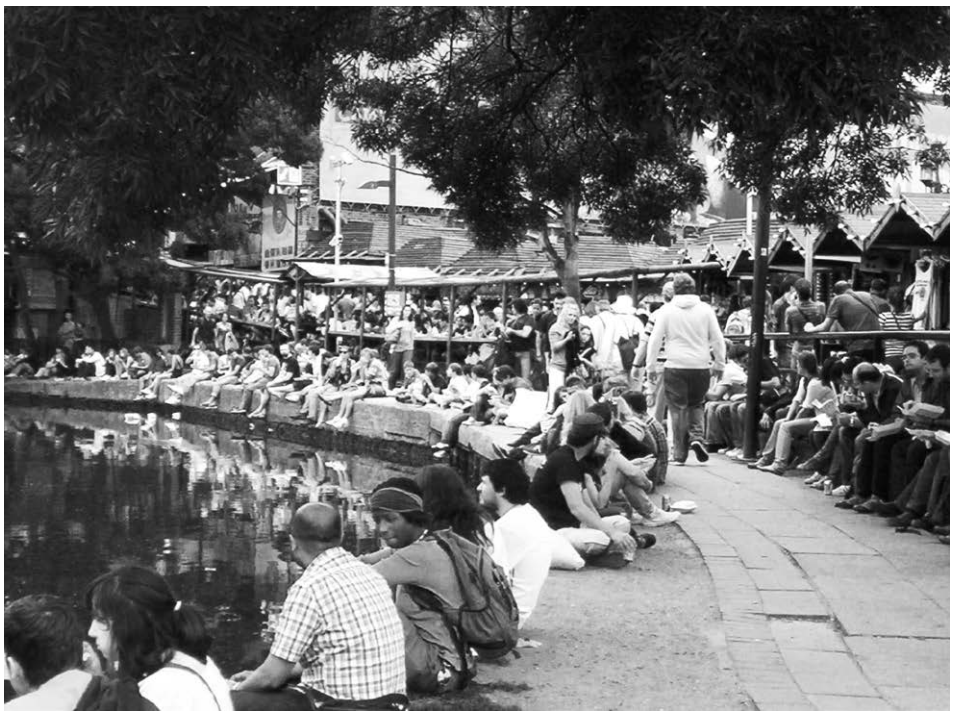


Figure 2.9 – "People and human activities attract other people": London. [Photo: Beatrice Benesperi]

Figure 2.10 – "People and human activities attract other people": Porto. [Photo: Fabio Valli]

Figure 2.11 – Venice. Campo dell'Anzolo Rafael. Even in a tourist city like Venice, one need only stray a few feet from the most trodden mass tourism routes to find places such as this.

It is also true, however, that a deserted space, above all in the cities of art most visited by mass tourism, may nonetheless play a useful role in the life of the city. For the visitor it might represent a moment to take a break from the incessant rhythm of the city of fast consumption, an opportunity to release some of the tension produced by moving through congested urban spaces overloaded with stimuli. So, spaces free of people are not necessarily meaningless. By contrast, they remind us, in Max Ehrmann's words, of «what peace there may be in silence»[9] (Fig. 2.11).

The power of this dimension, the dimension of emptiness and silence, appeared with dramatic force in the months when COVID took the place of our social lives, 'democratically' pervading all corners of the city, from the most famous squares to the most degraded nook, leaving space for unheard urban sounds, perspectives and visual details that had never been seen before to emerge (Fig. 2.12).

Figure 2.12 – Florence. A semi-deserted Piazza Santa Croce during the first lockdown in spring 2020.

[9] The phrase is a line from Max Ehrmann's famous poem "Desiderata." See Ehrmann & Ehrmann (1948).

Often the lack of people in a public space depends on the scarce presence or absence of commercial/artisan activities. «Buildings with long façades, few entrances and few visitors» – writes Gehl (1987: 93) – «mean an effective dispersal of events.» The dispersal of events may turn a space that would otherwise be interesting into a monotonous and boring space where social interactions are few and far between and short-lived. In these conditions, it is not uncommon for them to slide into a condition of residuality.

Deserted public spaces devoid of life are frequent in suburban districts,[10] but it is not unusual to see uninhabited spaces also in the oldest parts of cities. The reasons for this include the decrease in the resident population caused by uncontrolled gentrification[11]) (Glass, 1964) and the reduction of neighbourhood businesses that facilitate opportunities for social contact and encourage people, above all the elderly, to leave their houses and walk around (Glass, 1964, Glass & Balfour, 2003; Galderisi & Ceudech, 2008).

> In the most central and prestigious areas of the historical centre of Florence, most commercial spaces are dedicated to elite tourism activities or at any rate a very limited local clientele; the buildings are used almost exclusively as offices, shops and luxury hotels. Whereas numerous activities linked to mass tourism have sprung up in the areas just outside the centre: from places selling food and drink (in many cases low quality) to souvenirs and money changers. These activities, in different ways and at a different pace in the various areas, are slowly taking the place of the historical commercial and artisan activities (once run by the inhabitants of the surrounding areas) and, above all, the activities necessary for the life of the residents. In recent years vacant apartments have been transformed into houses for rent which tourists stay in for increasingly shorter periods. The actions of these tourists do not foster the social life of the city but they certainly change it.

The absence of residents is certainly the most eloquent and revealing of the *expressions of residuality* as run-down spaces that are used improperly often tend to keep people away. The absence of residents, therefore, at least in some contexts, is a step up from an *expression of residuality*: it is its immanent reason.

It should be recognised, however, that the absence of inhabitants is also the most random *expression of residuality* as it is strongly influenced by exogenous factors such as the weather and the time the observation is made: time of day, time of the week, period of the year.[12] Office hours and time off also obviously influence the number and types of people that frequent the public space. For example, the flow of people in the public gardens, squares or pedestrian routes of a city usually increases at the weekends and on public holidays so it is easy for a space that is not frequented often or mostly frequented by pensioners on weekdays to see higher numbers of people of different ages

[10] Here, the absence of inhabitants in the urban space and fewer opportunities for social exchanges can partly be ascribed to the tendency to separate the different functions of the city rather than to integrate them (Schelling, 1971; Gehl, 1987, Massey & Denton, 1988; Lerner 2010). This tendency favours the creation of public spaces between buildings that are often inadequate for the requirements of typical daily outdoor activities. The rarefaction of buildings leads to a 'dispersal' of people and optional activities and a weakening of social relations and the age-old relationship between residence and local commerce. Lastly, it leads to the separation of pedestrian traffic from vehicle traffic, (see the Ministry of Transport, 1963) dictating a whole series of interventions such as underpasses, roundabouts, pedestrian islands, barriers, etc., which reduce the degree of accessibility of places to pedestrians and discourage optional activities (Hamilton-Baillie, 2008).

[11] Ruth Glass defined "gentrification" as the process of class transformation experienced by the London borough of Islington.

[12] See § 2.3.2.2.

and with different interests at the weekends and on public holidays. This is also normal on weekdays after the schools, shops and offices have closed. If a public space is close to an office, on the other hand, an increase in the number of people may be recorded during the lunch break. The areas where street markets are held, both daily and weekly, become almost completely deserted once the market closes; they transform into car parks or remain empty waiting for the next day's market (Fig. 2.7). A similar situation also often occurs in areas close to sports facilities: on Sundays, or during matches, the streets nearby fill with people, vehicles and activities; during the rest of the week, on the other hand, they are barely used or frequented. And the examples could go on.

The absence of inhabitants is, in short, a highly complex *expression of residuality* to analyse, linked to many aspects that affect its intensity and persistence over time. In each case, the presence and permanence of different people (in terms of age, gender, social conditions, etc.) in the shared space is certainly an essential indicator of urban vitality and a strong antidote to the degradation of public space (Fig. 2.13).

Figure 2.13 – Tirana. New Bazar neighbourhood (Pazari i Ri). The area, which was once extremely run-down, was the subject of a redevelopment project which turned it into one of the liveliest and most popular places in the city.

Some urban redevelopment projects, starting with those developed from 1960-1970 by Frank van Klingeren, in Dronten and Eindhoven (Gehl, 1987), have shown how shrewdly reuniting and 'mixing' various types of activities in the same spatial context can intensify moments of relaxation outdoors and, therefore, social relations between inhabitants. «A city – observes (Lerner, 2010: 266) – must foster in its territory integration of the urban functions, of income levels, of age groups, ethnicities. The more you mix it the more human the city will be.»

2.3.2 The causes and factors of residuality

Once the *expressions of residuality* have been described, the process of coming to understand residual spaces develops by analysing the possible *causes* that can lead to their emergence. The *causes of residuality* cannot always be removed. Often, however, they can

be appropriately mitigated through a redevelopment project that pays attention to the specific vocations of the public space in its physical, cultural and social context of reference.

The *causes of residuality,* as mentioned in § 2.3, can be grouped into three categories:

- *Intrinsic causes*;
- *Use-related causes*;
- *Semantic causes*.

The *intrinsic causes* concern the physical characteristics of a space; the *use-related causes* concern how a space is used by the inhabitants and managed by the authorities; the *semantic causes* concern aspects linked to the identity features of a space and the relationships it establishes within the urban landscape.

These three categories are described, as mentioned, through a series of *factors of residuality*.

The *factors of residuality* (tangible and intangible, stable or variable over time) are objective qualities, facts, ambiances, feelings and perceptions that contribute to make a public space residual. They represent elements connoting an urban area and are linked to each other through complex and dynamic relationships; their borders are highly nuanced as the phenomena that affect the quality of urban spaces usually depend on or are influenced by several factors of residuality. For example, vehicle traffic could be read and interpreted on the basis of functional *residuality factors*, as well as environmental, sensory-perceptive or morphological-dimensional *residuality factors*.

The *residuality factors* describe the *causes of residuality* more accurately, associating them with recurrent situations. In this way they lead to the identification of *spatial issues,* which will be explained in paragraph 2.3.3. Note that the need to analytically describe the *residuality factors* has led to some inevitable, but all in all negligible, areas of overlap.

2.3.2.1 Intrinsic causes and related factors

The *intrinsic causes* concern *residuality factors* specific to the process of the historical formation, consolidation and stratification of a given urban space.

Among the *residuality factors* linked to the intrinsic causes the following will be addressed and briefly described:

- *Topological factors*;
- *Geometric factors.*

- Topological factors

When observing the structure of a city we can see how the buildings and public space give life to a more or less organic whole, governed by a series of hierarchical relations as well as relationships of *proximity, contiguity and distance*. These relations and relationships help to define the form and character of the city and to establish the fate of its parts.

We can identify some public spaces that, due to their location, have weak or no links with the places where the main functions of public interest are carried out and that act as catalysts of the flows of people and vehicles that on a daily basis plough through the access roads and urban routes. The distance from the city's main attraction hubs is in itself a factor potentially capable of preventing an urban space from defining its identity as a public place. This means it risks being excluded from the city routes and from the *cognitive map* (Lynch, 1960) of the city created by each of its inhabitants.

Sometimes, the residuality of an urban space derives from the characteristics of the routes along which it is found. Long straight and uniform routes soon become boring

and monotonous and in some cases the spaces that they connect do not arouse interest or a positive reaction in those travelling along them (see Gehl, 1987). Urban spaces that are found along routes of little importance and that lack or have few commercial activities, public functions or attractive hubs offer inhabitants fewer occasions to use them. For this reason, these spaces, more than others, risk being neglected and abandoned.

The capacity to understand the structure and organisation of the urban fabric strongly depends on the environmental stimuli that human senses are capable of collecting and the brain of interpreting (environmental cues).

> The perception of urban spaces is mainly entrusted to *distance senses* (vision and audition) according to modalities and limits that characterize them (see, *inter alia*, Gibson, 1950; Lynch, 1960; Cullen, 1971; Gehl, 1987; Gehl & Gemozoe, 2001; Pallasmaa, 2005).

Environmental cues that are lacking or confusing hinder the legibility and comprehension of a spatial context and is often enough to prevent a place from being identified or reached. For instance, if a public space is not visible while travelling down a street and the environmental information present does not facilitate its identification, it can easily be excluded from city life (Figs. 2.14 and 2.15).

> People with sensory or cognitive problems may have particular difficulty in collecting and/or interpreting environmental information (see, *inter alia*, Passini & Proulx, 1988; Hull, 1990, Laurìa, 1994; 2003; 2016; 2017[b]; Sacks, 1995; Passini *et al.*, 1998; Pallasmaa, 2005).

Conversely, the availability of appropriate environmental cues (visual distinctiveness of places, well-differentiated spaces, easily recognized landmarks, etc.), are pivotal for the creation of effective cognitive maps. Cognitive maps favour the exploration of urban space by its inhabitants, offering them greater opportunities to reveal its constituent parts, even the most hidden and secluded ones. Appropriate environmental cues, moreover, supports and enhances orientation and wayfinding (Weisman, 1981; McLendon & Blackistone, 1982; Passini, 1984; Wildbur, 1989; Arthur & Passini, 1992; Passini, 1996), visual clarity (Lynch, 1960) and legibility (Lynch, 1960; Weisman, 1981; O'Neill, 1991; Herzog & Leverich, 2003) in a spatial context.

- Geometric factors

Through the study of urban morphogenesis processes we can attempt to understand which urban spaces have assumed the value of generator elements over time and which, on the contrary, are the result of the 'waste' of the city's construction processes (Cappuccitti, 2006).[13] Once again quoting Clément (2004), urban "waste" is larger and more widespread in recently built urban areas, characterised by a more rarefied fabric than the older parts of the city where they are smaller and sporadic.

The analysis of the morphological-dimensional characteristics of public spaces can help us to understand the behaviours of the inhabitants and their habits and why some spaces remain excluded or marginal to the typical social activities of city life.

Smaller urban spaces with oblong, uncertain or irregular shapes (Fig. 2.16), irrespective of the reference context, are potential candidates to become residual as they are difficult for people to use and are not very attractive from a building or commercial perspective.

[13] On the interpretation of urban form and public space see, among others: Camillo Sitte [1889] 1965, Aldo Rossi (1982), Edmund Bacon (1974), Rob Krier (1979).

Figure 2.14 – Florence. While moving through the streets it is difficult to catch sight of the narrow alleys that lead to small public spaces.

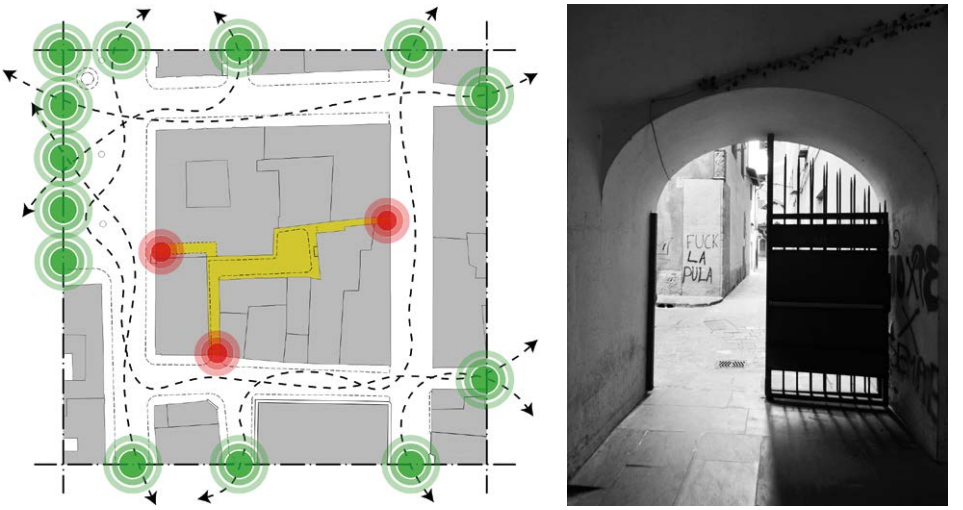


Figure 2.15 – Florence. Piazzetta dei Tre Re. The small square, despite being in the heart of the historical centre and surrounded by extremely busy roads, is almost always uninhabited, precisely because it is out of sight and has no attractions.

Figure 2.16 – Florence, Piazza degli Alberighi. The shape determines many of the possible uses of an urban space.

These spaces are often found in places where the city comes up against railway lines, roads, overpasses, military structures, waterfronts, etc. (Northam, 1971; Trancik, 1986). They are often linear left-over spaces which, precisely due to the fact that they are buffer zones, become fragments of public space that are difficult to use and not particularly attractive. Such spaces, which represent places of transition between different but adjacent parts of the city, can be linked with one of the five elements of the urban physical structure described by Lynch (1960): the *edges*. The edges are often configured as elements demarcating the urban spaces when instead they could become unifying structures even assuming the connotation of a path (Lynch, 1960; Laurìa *et al.*, 2020[b]). The condition of *edge* may lead to the abandonment of some public spaces or encourage forms of degradation to take root within them.

In the historical centre of Florence three examples of this type of space can be identified: (1) paths along some sections of the railway or tram lines crossing the urban fabric, (2) paths along the buffer areas of rivers or streams, and (3) paths along stretches of the city walls that have survived history. (Figs. 2.17 and 2.18)

Figure 2.17 – Prato. A residual space along the city walls. [Photo: Eleonora Bravi]

Figure 2.18 – Florence, Via dei Bastioni. A grassy strip along a stretch of the ancient city wall, neglected and seldom used.

One particular and highly striking case is the temporary river banks that form over time on the edges of waterways due to everything they carry downstream. These spaces undergo constant alterations which cannot be definitively marked on any cadastral maps.

> In Florence, in the Oltrarno quarter, between the Riccardo Marasco terrace (in front of Piazza Giuseppe Poggi) and Ponte alle Grazie (in front of the Biblioteca Nazionale), there is a large green area of this type which has formed over time, and over time been dynamically shaped by the debris transported by the Arno River. This space demonstrates the creative power of nature and its capacity (in this case, slow and inexorable) to impose itself always and in any case on the anthropic context. A wealth of biodiversity (tree and herbaceous species, as well as fauna typical of the Arno River environment) is found in this charming space that dialogues with the monuments of Florence and, in some way, represents their reverse.
> In 2016, this space became the subject of a redevelopment project (*Il Terzo Giardino* [The Third Garden]) by 'subtraction', which enhanced the spontaneous vegetation and made it the main focus (Fig. 2.19).

Figure 2.19 – Florence. *Il Terzo Giardino* on the banks of the Arno River (2016). [Photo: Fabio Ciaravella]

Car traffic, and the consequent pedestrian safeguards, are responsible for producing a great many left-over spaces in the heart of cities. Such spaces significantly contribute to the qualitative impoverishment of the urban public space (Lefebvre, 1991; Gehl & Gemozoe, 2001; Galderisi, 2009; Carmona, 2010). Simultaneously ensuring the fluidity of vehicle traffic and pedestrian protection often requires very expensive solutions in spatial terms that contribute to the fragmentation of public space, to «the loss of human space» (Norberg Schulz, 1985: 69) and the impoverishment of two of its distinct qualities: *accessibility* and *permeability* (Figs. 2.20 and 2.21). The inclusion in the urban fabric of equipment to protect pedestrians from vehicle traffic, such as traffic islands, bollards, chains, railings, actually hinders the use of the urban space by pedestrians (Caniglia Rispoli, 2008) and often leaves the inhabitants with a space broken up into several small fragments that are difficult to connect to one another. This equipment, when not included in an organic project concerning the design of the public space and integration between different flows (Kjemtrup & Herrstedt, 1992; Hamilton-Baillie, 2008), can also make a large space residual.

Figure 2.20 – Pistoia, Largo Barriera. The loss of human space.

Figure 2.21 – Florence, Piazza Dalmazia. Road equipment to regulate traffic flows which breaks up the public space.

Figure 2.22 – Florence, Lungarno Vespucci. Barrier to protect the US Consulate General.

Even the *buffer strips* positioned to protect the premises of some institutions, secular or religious, can at times fall into a condition of residuality. Consider how targets sensitive to terrorist attacks or, in any case, demonstrative actions and protests, such as diplomatic offices, religious buildings or sites representing political or economic power, can 'repel' the inhabitants and inhibit the use of the spaces adjacent to them.

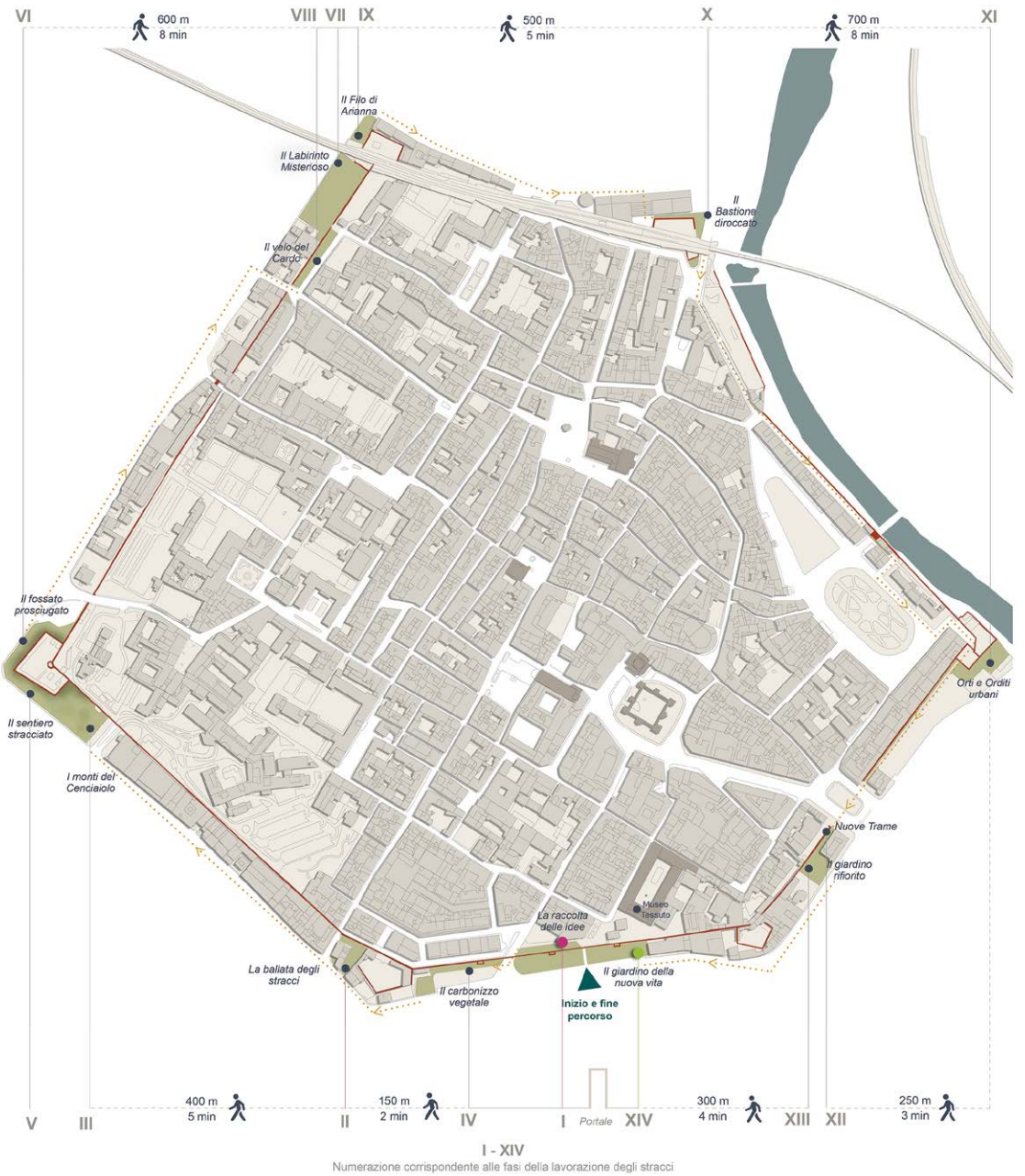
> In Florence, at the edge of the city, an interesting example of this type of space is the buffer strip created to protect the Consulate General of the United States of America. Due to the symbolic value of this building, it has become necessary to create protective and dissuasive elements that have reduced the accessibility of the surrounding area, not only to cars but also to pedestrians and cyclists (Fig. 2.22). This has resulted in the total disappearance of the few commercial activities in that area and abandonment of the surrounding public spaces by the people who live in the area.

Although the morphological-dimensional characteristics play a key role among the causes capable of bringing about the residuality of a public space, it is also true that reducing the analysis of the residuality of a space to the morphological-dimensional characteristics alone would be arbitrary, limiting and in many cases incorrect. Just as it would be wrong to think that small spaces with disharmonious and awkward shapes cannot escape their destiny of marginality.

Even if it is not always easy, in many cases, through careful design projects, these spaces can also be attributed a meaning and role among the public spaces of the city. It can often be more useful to address this challenge by thinking of small spaces with an irregular shape in relation to the adjacent spaces rather than as isolated elements released from their context (Laurìa *et al.*, 2020[b]) (Fig. 2.23).

Opposite page.

Figure 2.23 – A pocket park system for the redevelopment of under-utilised or abandoned spaces along the Walls of Prato. The sequence of pocket parks defines a thematic route introducing site-specific design solutions inspired by the textile vocation of the city. The thematic route covers the 16 stages of the recycling of textile scraps. [design by Eleonora Bravi].



2.3.2.2 Use-related causes and related factors

The use-related *causes of residuality* concern the ways in which a public space is experienced by the inhabitants and its management over time.

Among the *residuality factors* linked to the use-related causes, the following will be addressed and briefly described:

- *Functional factors;*
- *Environmental factors;*
- *Management factors.*

- Functional factors

Jan Gehl classifies human activities in public space into three categories: (1) necessary activities, (2) optional activities, and (3) social activities (Gehl, 1987).

Necessary activities are linked to meeting the requirements of daily life, such as going outside to travel to work or do the shopping, take the dog for a walk, etc.; these activities are not affected, or affected to a very small degree, by the weather. Optional activities are expressed through an extended amount of time spent outdoors and occur «only when exterior conditions are favourable, when weather and place invite them.» (Gehl, 1987: 11)[14]. Social activities depend on the previous ones and on meeting people who establish social relationships of various intensities in the public space.

At the end of the reflections on public space, optional activities (and the social activities they can generate) assume specific importance. Franck & Stevens (2007) noted that often it is the people who seek out suitable spaces where such activities can be carried out, but in other cases it is the space itself, thanks to the opportunities it offers, that suggests them to the inhabitants.[15]

> «People often seek out spaces that will support the actions they wish to pursue. They may have clear functional objectives – to play hide-and seek, to take a nap, to publicize the services they provide – and they find spaces where such actions are possible though unintended. Conversely, people's actions may be "triggered" by specific physical contexts and social situations they encounter (Lerup, 1977; Wortley, 2001), such as spontaneously starting to dance when music is heard, splashing in a fountain on a hot day, touching a sculpture or starting a conversation with a stranger about something witnessed on the street.» (Franck & Stevens, 2007: 11).

A residual space is usually not an attractive place to carry out optional activities and has mediocre ability to stimulate them (Fig. 2.24).

That said, each residual space, even the most compromised, is always a theatre for some activity. An 'inactive' space, namely one totally devoid of functions, is an oxymoron (see § 1.2). Each space, however high its degree of residuality, will always perform some function. If only even for an instant during the day it will be important to someone, perhaps someone in difficulty and in need of shelter.

It can even be observed that, at times, spaces without a specific function and that are subject to few controls can become privileged places where impromptu and often temporary activities take place, fostering opportunities for meeting, the occurrence of impromptu events, the joy of diversity and the discovery of the unexpected (Fig. 2.25). The use of a public space in alternative ways to the values and norms embodied in a place is defined by some scholars as "loosening space" (Carr *et al.*, 1992; Franck & Stevens, 2007; Tani, 2015).

[14] This observation by the great Danish scholar is supported by more recent research on the use of urban green spaces (see Thorsson *et al.*, 2004; 2007; Knez & Thorsson, 2008).

[15] This type of optional activity evokes the concept of *affordance*. See Gibson, 1966; 1979; Bloomer & Moore, 1977; Norman, 1988. «The affordances of the environment – writes Gibson (1979: 127) – are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. The verb to afford is found in the dictionary, the noun affordance is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment.»

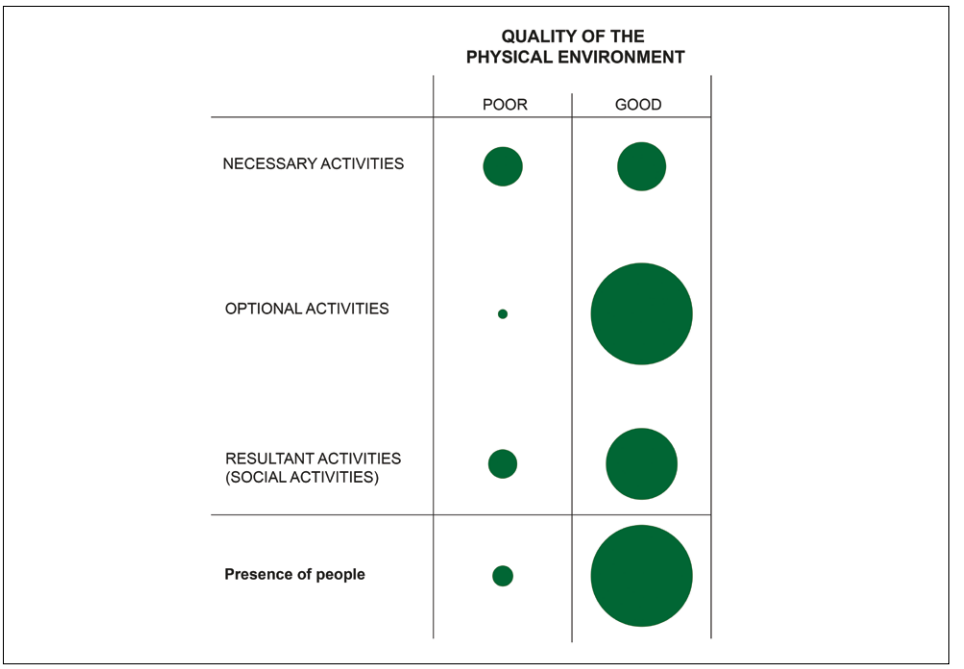


Figure 2.24 – Relationship between the quality of the urban space, the frequency of the activities carried out there and the presence of people (with amendments by Gehl, 1987).

Public spaces are often affected by functions that inhibit the typical optional and social activities that could develop in their absence (see Carmona, 2010). Think, for example, of those spaces assaulted by vehicle traffic, the merchandise and equipment of commercial activities, and forms (more or less legal and tolerated to different degrees) of itinerant trade aimed at satisfying the desire for fast consumption of mass tourism (Yatmo, 2008) (Figs. 2.26 and 2.27).

These functions (in particular those that aim to appropriate the public space for economic reasons) are not only found in socially disqualified places that are of little interest and aesthetically insignificant, but they often occur in spaces full of tradition, history and beauty.

Figure 2.25 – Palermo, Cortile Sant'Andrea. An example of "loose space." An above-ground pool placed by the inhabitants in a public space can relieve the summer heat and represents an element of urban vitality. [Photo: Gloria Calderone]

Figure 2.26 – Florence, Via dell'Oriuolo. Public space as an uncontrolled synthesis of functions and equipment.

Figure 2.27 – Florence, Via Sant'Egidio. Public space as an uncontrolled synthesis of functions and equipment.

In Florence, a significant example in this sense is Piazza San Firenze, in the historical centre of the city. Although the square is a single place in architectural and spatial terms thanks to the presence of historical buildings, churches, monuments and glimpses of enticing views, it is characterised by the invasive presence of elements (road equipment, outdoor seating of restaurants, road signs, store signs, etc.) and chaotic and disorganised activities (such as souvenir stalls and vehicle hire services aimed at tourists (bicycles, people movers, electric scooters, etc.) which compromise the overall setting, beauty and its use by pedestrians (Fig. 2.28).

The uncontrolled overlapping of symbolic and identify functions with economic and institutional functions can at times unravel the delicate relationship between public space and the community. In these cases, even a potentially interesting and highly frequented place can lose the qualities capable of giving it vitality and making it socially significant and instead become confused and anonymous. In these cases, there is a high risk of it becoming a place to be crossed quickly, where physical proximity between people does not imply the start of social relations.

To regenerate spaces such as these, often it is enough to proceed "by dint of taking out,"[16] that is, with actions that aim to identify and remove everything that, hindering the optional and social activities, prevent the inhabitants from sharing their time and experiences, talking and spending time with each other.

Figure 2.28 – Florence, Piazza San Firenze. The overlapping of functions that are not coordinated with each other creates a chaotic and disorganised atmosphere that undermines a otherwise extremely high qualities of the place.

- Environmental factors

Environmental factors represent an extremely vast field of study and research which over time has developed and been broken down into highly distinct themes. The different points of view and broad scientific literature on the subject analyse the disparate aspects of the anthropic activities in relation to the effects they have on the environment, but also how natural phenomena can influence human activities. There are also multiple and different

[16] The phrase in quotation marks ("per forza di levare" in Italian) is taken from a famous letter from Michelangelo to Benedetto Varchi (1549) and refers to his way of conceiving sculpture: by dint of taking out, not putting in. (See Cambon, G. 1985, *Michelangelo's Poetry: Fury of Form*, Princeton: Princeton University Press).

approaches used to address issues linked to environmental factors. What is interesting to highlight here is, more simply, the relationship between environmental factors and the residuality of the urban space. The intention is to identify the environmental factors that most influence the behaviour of the inhabitants and that can determine the residuality of a space.

Although people normally have a great capacity for adaptation, environmental factors, such as air quality, acoustic quality, and visual and light quality, play a significant role in encouraging or discouraging inhabitants from remaining in a certain place, the performance of some activities and the creation of centres for spontaneous gatherings that promote social cohesion and mutual understanding between people.

Noise and air pollution produced by vehicle traffic, abandoned waste, careless, confused and disorderly road signs, inadequate protection from the weather (for example, green areas with no shade), poor lighting in underpasses or tunnels, etc. can make an urban space that would otherwise be attractive unpleasant and inhospitable.

Green spaces that are virtually interesting, when placed in close proximity to roads with high volumes of traffic, are often not used as no one wants to spend time or play there, chatting with others in the open air in a noisy place saturated with smog.

> On the edge of the historical centre of Florence, close to the Cimitero degli Inglesi, there is a small garden beside a very busy road and adjacent to two petrol stations. This space is almost always deserted (at the most it is used by people living in the area to exercise their dogs), mainly due to the loud noise and smog caused by the moving cars and emissions from petrol stations. In this case, adverse environmental factors are the main cause of the under-utilisation of a space that would otherwise be interesting and the downgrading of its public role within the urban area it belongs to (Fig. 2.29).

Figure 2.29 – Florence, Piazzale Donatello. The part of the small square turned into a garden is seldom used, probably due to the noisy, heavy traffic on the road.

In general, the pedestrianisation of some strategically chosen roads encourages use of the public space by the inhabitants, even when activities or behaviours occur that were not foreseen *a priori* by the designers. The provision of adequate pedestrian zones or areas with slow moving vehicle traffic where the vehicles have to adapt to the pedestrians and not vice versa (see the *Woonerf* experience in the Netherlands, the *Zones de rencontre* in France and *Home Zones*, *Living Streets* or *Shared Spaces* in the United Kingdom), drastically reducing the pollution produced by vehicles, has effectively helped to create

attractive urban spaces and to improve the living conditions in many cities (see, *inter alia*, Appleyard, 1981; Kjemtrup & Herrstedt, 1992; Biddulph, 2001; Appleyard & Cox, 2006; Department for Transport, 2011; Peschardt, 2014)[17].

- Management factors

Public space, contrary to how it might appear, is a fragile and delicate ecosystem, in particular when assets of historical-artistic value are present. It can easily fall into a condition of residuality due to lack of maintenance and inadequate cleaning, that is, due to an inability to take care of and conserve its beauty and functionality over time (Fig. 2.30).

Figure 2.30 – Florence, Via Solferino. A neglected space which is no longer part of city life.

The ongoing effective maintenance of public spaces demands integrated action that can be implemented on different project categories and scales (see Ferracuti, 1990; Caterina & Fiore, 2005). In other words, it does not have to take place in separate parts (an urban service, a square, a pavement, some urban equipment, etc.) but it should be the expression of an overall strategic vision capable of optimising the resources and outcomes. In fact, the public space must be related to the building façades, plant infrastructures and the road network in order to consider, lastly, the set of urban equipment (seating, bins, road signs, shop signs, advertising, fountains, sculptures, flower beds, etc.) that ensures

[17] There are many initiatives aimed at controlling the environmental factors and mitigating the bothersome effects they produce, promoted by the European Union, State Members or at local level. One of them is the *European Green Capital Award* which each year, since 2006, rewards a city that, through development programmes and actions to protect and safeguard traditions, promotes environmental improvement and sustainable development. The award partly reflects the objectives set in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007). Among these projects at local level it is interesting to point out, among others, the work done by the Agència d'Ecologia Urbana de Barcelona which develops sustainability plans and indicators to reduce energy consumption and emissions, improve the environmental conditions and liveability of the city, taking into consideration, among other aspects, mobility, energy, waste, water, biodiversity and social cohesion.

its correct function and distinguishes its appearance. Incoherent and inappropriate situations with respect to the rational use of public space and careless and disorderly configurations can often be attributed specifically to the lack of coordination between the different subjects that play a part in the management of urban space (Fig. 2.31).

Figure 2.31 – Florence. Piazza Duomo. Road signs positioned haphazardly over time without an ordering principle. [Photo: Leonardo Zaffi]

To achieve the quality objectives, maintenance of the public space must not be restorative in nature, i.e. consist of «carrying out repairs after any damage has occurred» (Attaianese, 2008: 1), rather it must be based on scheduled works.

> The events concerning the Mercatino delle Pulci (Flea Market) in Piazza dei Ciompi in Florence are an emblematic case in this sense (Fig. 2.32). The removal of the corrugated asbestos cement sheet roofing on the second-hand dealers' "huts" had been postponed for years. Petitions, solicitations and demonstrations promoted by the residents failed to find solutions that could combine the health requirements, the desire to leave the market in the original place and the need to develop the potential use of the square. Procrastination of the necessary remediation actions led to an emergency situation and degradation that compromised the charm and interest that this small corner of the historical centre aroused in the inhabitants. After a long debate, the stalls were demolished and the commercial activities moved to the nearby Largo Annigoni, a place that had none of the characteristics or atmo-

sphere required to accommodate a flea market. The situation that arose produced two negative effects: on the one hand the market, a historical and folkloric element of the Santa Croce quarter, was downgraded and impoverished of its minute characteristics and domestic nature; on the other hand, Piazza dei Ciompi remained in a degraded condition for two years. In 2018, a redevelopment project transformed the square into a rather anonymous and poorly equipped space which was disconnected from the adjoining "del Gratta" garden (Fig. 2.33).

To act consciously, an adequate cognitive framework is necessary. In fact, it is necessary to know the history and characteristics of the spaces to be looked after (emphasising their strengths and weaknesses), understand how it works (avoiding maintenance turning into a 'traumatic event') and the potential features to be highlighted, consolidated and preserved (cf. Caterina & Fiore, 2005).

Maintenance work is often geared towards remedying physical incivilities, such as writing on walls, graffiti (Fig. 2.34) and various acts of vandalism. (see § 2.3.1.1)

Writing on walls strongly contributes to the degradation of the urban environment and its removal represents a cost for the community. Although writing on the wall some-

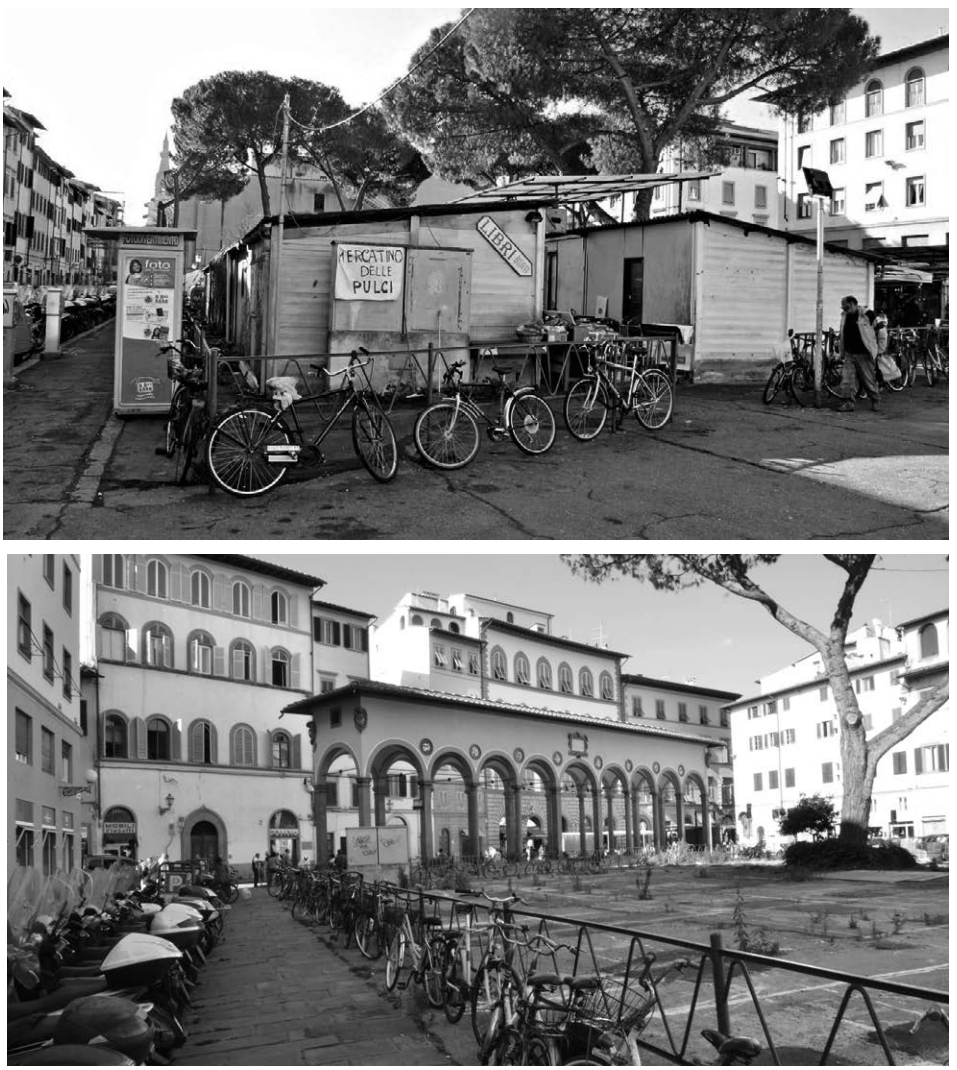


Figure 2.32 – Florence, Piazza dei Ciompi. The square when it was occupied by the Flea Market huts (*above*) and after their demolition (*below*).

times assumes the dignity of a creative work with cultural value and anti-system criticism (see Zaffi, 2017), in most cases it is a mere expression of existential and social unease and has no artistic value, an infantile claim to mark the territory and a demonstration of poor civic sense which becomes criminal when it is monuments and works of historical-artistic value that are damaged.

The maintenance of urban space is the responsibility of the town or city councils, but to a large extent it depends on the commitment of the residents who in their daily behaviour choose not only not to damage the public space, but to take care of it, respect it and use it with the same attention that they would reserve for a precious item that had been loaned to them.

Figure 2.33 – Florence, Piazza dei Ciompi after the redevelopment project.

Figure 2.34 – A plaque bearing an invocation («Non imbrattate. Siate gentili, se potete» [Do not deface. Be kind, if you can]) which goes unheard and seems to be inspired by «State buoni… se potete» [Be good… If you can] which San Filippo Neri used to say to the young people who attended his oratory.

Figure 2.35 – Florence. Piazzetta dei Tre Re.

From top to bottom: images of the small square before [Photo: Chiara Fanigliulo] and after renovation (2016) [Photo: Giulia Bordini], and in spring 2021. Each summer, since 2016, the small square undergoes temporary maintenance work (the removal of writing on the walls) and the inhabitants reappropriate the space (staging designed by Chiara Fanigliulo).

The "Neighbourhood workshops," «a socio-technical maintenance tool that can be used in any circumstance» (Dioguardi, 1990: 11), represent a possibility to channel the energy of those who wish to help to improve their urban environment. Together with other forms of active social participation by the inhabitants, they can produce "signs of civilisation" and allow effective strategies for managing, taking care of and maintenance of the public space to develop (see § 2.3.1.1).

In Florence, the non-profit association "Angeli del Bello" has operated since 2010 in the field of urban care and decoration. The association was promoted by the Municipality of Florence and can count on the work of over 3,500 people among those who are registered and volunteers. The activities they carry out include: the removal of writing from buildings in the historical centre or periphery; maintenance of green areas, parks and gardens; cleaning of playgrounds, parks and gardens, roadsides, riverbeds; awareness-raising campaigns to increase civic sense, for instance against discarded cigarette butts, up to the urban regeneration of residual spaces (such as, for example, Piazzetta dei Tre Re)[18] (Fig. 2.35).

2.3.3.3 Semantic causes and related factors

The inhabitants of a city attribute value to the public spaces they visit also in relation to the symbolic-relational meanings that these places convey.

The symbolic-relational meanings help to define the image, atmosphere and emotions that a space is capable of transmitting to those that live there. They refer to consolidated values in long-lasting processes (Braudel, 1958) such as the relationships and ties that exist between a space and its physical and social context of reference, that is, the relationships that it establishes with the surrounding environment, the routes that lead to it, and the image of the buildings that define its edges (see Sternberg, 2000). The symbolic-relational meanings, therefore, normally pertain to a broader dimension than that of a single space.

There are cases in which the residuality of a space can only be brought about by semantic causes.

Among the *residuality factors* linked to the semantic causes the following will be addressed and briefly described:

- *Symbolic factors;*
- *Relational factors*.

- Symbolic factors

In addition to the life that goes on there, what defines the image of a place are its edges, structure, the hierarchy of its different parts, the relationships between the elements present and, lastly, the abstract content that it conveys, namely its *symbolic weight* (Marson, 2008). Speaking about the symbolic weight of a public space means considering its evocative potential and understanding how it is recognised and identified by the community that lives there. The symbolic weight of an urban space can be traced in the figurations of the inhabitants and the mental images they have formed and can be interpreted by observing how life unfolds there.

The very form of the city can be read not only by studying its physical characteristics, but also by reading the symbolic interrelations that exist between the different elements they are formed of (see Teti, 2014). Such links, studied and discussed by many authors with a variety of focuses and purposes (see, *inter alia*, Jacobs, 1961; Lynch, 1981; Rudofsky, 1969; Gehl, 1987; Lerner, 2003, Franck & Stevens, 2007), exist between elements that remain stable over time (buildings, public spaces and routes, trees, etc.) and among these and other elements

[18] See <http://www.angelidelbello.org> (in Italian).

that are instead variable and intangible (light and shade, weather conditions, space-time relationships, social relationships, etc.). The set of these interrelations gives the city and its spaces a symbolic meaning of which the inhabitants are simultaneously the recipients and creators.

There are urban contexts in which specific spaces manage to express such a strong symbolic weight that the entire community recognises them as the visual construction of its identity. When this happens, a space assumes a value that goes beyond the physical image that it transmits and that the inhabitants can observe (Fig. 2.36).

Identity and symbolic weight are closed linked to each other. In fact, the symbolic weight of a city represents the sum of all the specific values and meanings that the inhabitants attribute to its parts. These, in turn, help to define the recognisable identity of that city (see Lynch, 1960; 1981, Norberg Schulz, 1984; 1985).

> An exercise to try to understand the symbolic weight of a specific public space is to consider it as a fragment of city detached from the urban fabric. This may make it easier to try and understand its essence in relation to its history, the events to which it has played the backdrop, the type of social group that has inhabited it and the specific factors connected to it (see Norberg Schulz, 1984).

The symbolic significance that people or social groups attribute to a certain public space can vary significantly. Strong misalignments in the interpretation of the symbolic weight of a space can generate conflicts and tension between social groups and be reflected in the cognitive maps of the inhabitants and likewise in the complex image of a city.

The study of symbolic factors when analysing the residuality of a place can, perhaps, start with the concept of symbolic weight. A public space that has no or little symbolic weight can appear to be residual precisely because it does not manage to stand out against the reference context and is therefore anonymous and difficult for the inhabitants to recognize. It 'becomes' residual precisely because it is incapable of becoming a distinct and representative sign of the life of a community.

- Relational factors

It is almost obvious to observe that the elements of the urban fabric (the buildings, squares, routes, monuments, parks, etc.) owe their urban role not only to their physical essence but also to the set of sensory and emotional relationships that characterise them.

> When walking in the historical centre of a city it is not only the beauty and aesthetic quality of the individual buildings that attracts and enchants us, but also the type and nature of the visual relationships that are established between them. In Florence, for example, the Baptistery of San Giovanni, in relation to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore and Giotto's Bell Tower, assumes a greater value and amplifies its power as an iconic object, the generator of strong spatiality and dimensional tensions that are unique in the panorama of the city (Fanelli, 1973; Manganelli, 2005).
>
> The sight is the most powerful tool of spatial awareness, but it is not the only one. Cities are enveloped by sound relationships – sounds, noises, voices, rhythms, events – that connect and distinguish its spaces. Although 'passive' and 'active' sound signals are more random than visual ones, they also make an important contribution to the formation of the urban identity (Southworth, 1969; Schafer, 1977; Semidor, 2006; Battesti, 2013). It can be said that as social practices are not 'silent' practices (Cattedra, Tanca & Gaias, 2017), the more lived in the public spaces are the richer their soundscape will be.[19]

[19] For a collection of descriptions of the soundscape of Paris and London by famous writers, it is interesting to read Amendola (2019: 155-157).

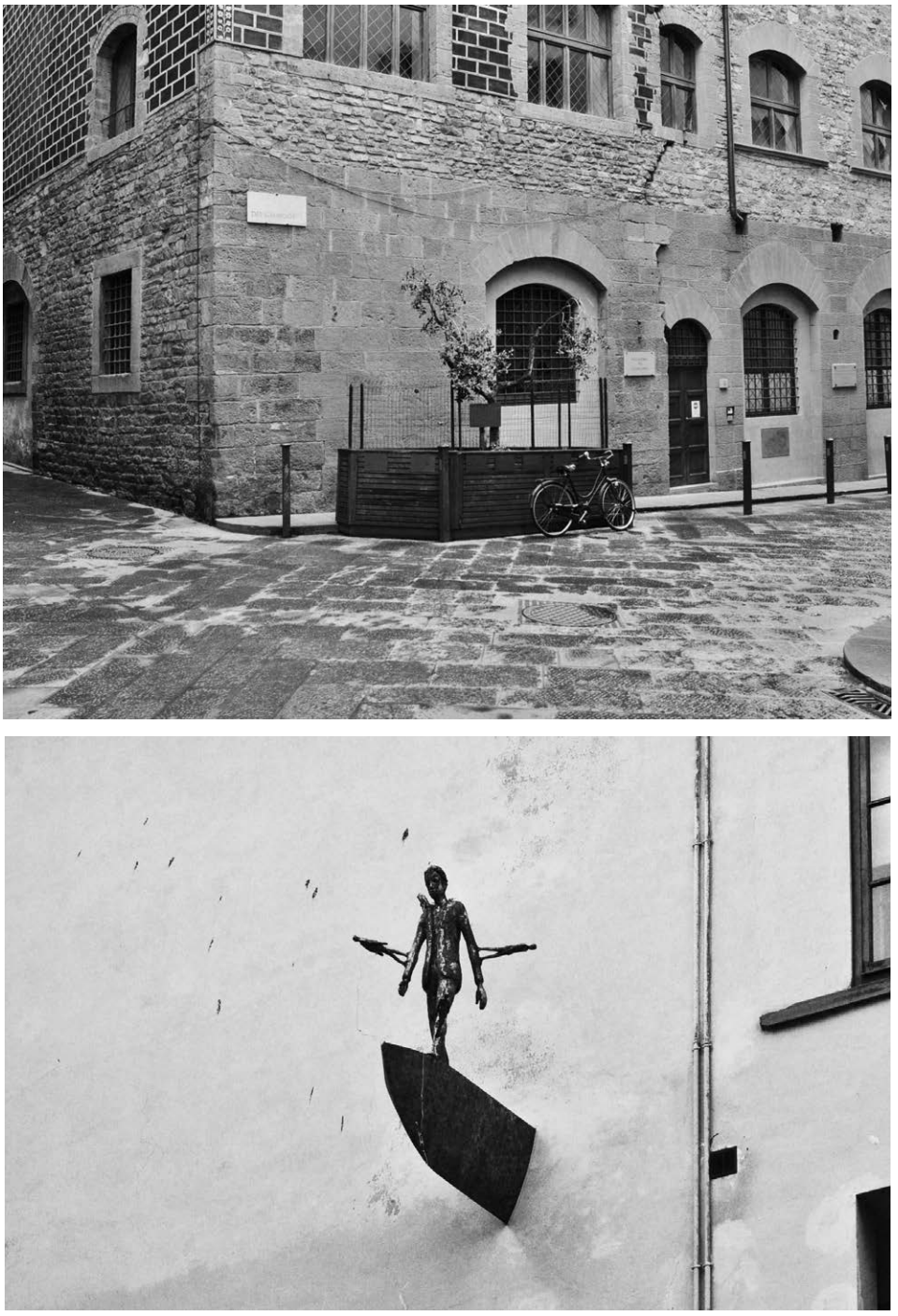


Figure 2.36 – Florence, Via dei Georgofili. On the night between 26 and 27 May 1993 there was a terrorist attack in Via dei Georgofili by the Mafia which killed 5 people and left 48 wounded. In memory of the attack, an olive tree (top photo) and a sculpture were placed there. The "Georgofili Massacre" will forever mark the history of this street, close to the Galleria degli Uffizi.

Figure 2.37 – Florence. A glimpse of Brunelleschi's Dome, taken from Via Pietrapiana. Walking through the city, the dome appears suddenly with its imposing pure mass, «it is an architectural personality […] as a balloon which has made a forced landing in somebody's back yard.» (Cullen, 1971: 192).

An effective system of relationships can give the city's image a more defined and recognisable character and, at the same time, emphasise the qualities that each space possesses (see Appleyard, 1979). A great many relationships interweave in a city, and it is also thanks to them that we are able to describe, imagine and compare the different spaces they are made up of. We often associate adjectives with the spaces of a city that we know and frequent and they help us in the process of identifying places and at the same time allow us to compare our opinions with those of others, sharing their pre-eminent elements, major problems and relationship characteristics. This allows us to adopt a common language to describe a city. The set of sensations built up over time in the mind of the inhabitants represents a distinctive *collective urban sensation*. This represents the structure of the city, the form of its space and its routes, the activities carried out, the natural elements present, its monuments … and it is the conceptual result of the relationships that the inhabitants are able to perceive when they live in or pass through the urban spaces.

The interweaving of sensory relationships 'at a distance' (based on sight or hearing) strongly contributes to the legibility of an urban context. Landmarks and soundmarks, architectural and natural – for example the bell tower of a church for sight, or the voices coming from a local market or the sound or a running river for hearing – not only facilitate orientation and wayfinding, but in a sensory and emotional way they link the space crossed to its surroundings. These types of relationships, even when we are in a small marginal space, allow us to always remain in contact with the rest of the city, reassuring us and making us feel less alone (Fig. 2.37). The sensory relationship established between two public spaces determines a relationship as a result of which one 'appropriates' the strength as well as the weakness of the other. Especially in compact contexts like historical centres, the relationships between the different public spaces are an essential reference for the inhabitants in that their perception associates certain spaces with specific activities, atmospheres, feelings and emotions that help to construct a sense of belonging and the identity of a place.

When these relationships are not established or are too weak, a space remains closed in on itself and does not dialogue with the surroundings. The absence or lack of relationships with the other parts of the city plays a big part in the marginalisation of some urban spaces: they create a feeling of indifference that tends to make them 'invisible', to hide them between the folds of the urban fabric, and to camouflage them against the background of an indistinguishable, monotonous and flat context where social ties come undone and urban degradation starts its slow and inexorable work.

> Piazza Gaetano Salvemini, in Florence, despite being on one of the oldest routes in the city (see Caniggia & Maffei, 1983) does not have strong relationships with the nearby hub points of Piazza del Duomo, Piazza Santa Croce and Piazza San Lorenzo. Piazza Salvemini seems to turn its back on the ancient heart of the city; it seems to have stronger relationships with the area of nineteenth-century expansion. This characteristic, together with the presence of more recently constructed buildings (the premises of a bank and a post office) and heavy traffic on two sides of it, release the square from the network of public spaces dotted about the historic centre. The square appears to be a marginal transition place, and not well cared for. In other words: a residual space (Fig. 2.38).

Figure 2.38 – Florence, Piazza Gaetano Salvemini.

At times relationships between the spaces exist, but they are made ineffective and weak by the presence of sound and visual barriers, for example the traffic noise, parked cars, billboards, shop signs, etc. In these cases, the redevelopment process should aim to mitigate the negative effects produced by the disturbing elements present, proceeding with their reconfiguration (see § 2.3.2.2).

2.3.3 From residuality factors to spatial issues

In the moment of transition from the theoretical elaboration of the reading and interpretation of residual spaces to the application phase, it is quite complex to start with the factors to assess the degree of residuality of an urban space. A further step is therefore necessary, which consists of explaining the *spatial issues* that better describe the *factors* associated with the different causes of residuality.

The *spatial issues* are those conditions that prevent or hinder the correct performance of the typical behaviours that occur in a public space: meeting up, talking, reading, resting, socialising, playing, listening, watching or being watched, etc. They have been identified by imagining that we are observing the urban space from the viewpoint of the inhabitant, therefore seeking to identify with their needs as much as possible. In this sense, they aspire to transpose the difficulties faced by a hypothetical inhabitant in the use of the space analysed.

The *spatial issues* derive directly from the factors chosen to describe the causes of residuality identified.

In particular, the following *spatial issue*s were analysed:

- *Lack of visual access* and *distance from the main urban pathways* with reference to Topological Factors;
- *Geometrical irregularity* and *spatial fragmentation* with reference to Geometrical Factors;
- *Incompatibility between simultaneous activities, accessibility issues, low usage,* and *low quality of street furniture design* with reference to Functional Factors
- *Acoustic discomfort, air pollution and light discomfort* with reference to Environmental Factors
- *Poor maintenance* and *poor cleanliness* with reference to Management Factors;
- *Lack of identity related elements* and *poor quality of margins*, with reference to Symbolic Factors;
- *Lack of visual and sound references to the context* and *poor interaction with the surrounding context*, with reference to Relational Factors (see Fig. 2.39).

The *spatial issues* clearly do not represent all the aspects that can be taken into consideration to assess the quality of a public space, but they express the most easily identifiable and most significant characteristics to reveal its degree of residuality.

A summary description of them is provided below, related to the different causes of residuality and the relative factors. The *spatial issues*, like the *residuality factors* they derive from, do not always have clear boundaries.

Intrinsic Causes

- Spatial issues related to Topological Factors

- *Lack of visual access*. Indicates the difficulty pedestrians have in catching a glimpse of the public space from the main route along which it is found or from the routes from which it is most commonly reached. A space can be "highly visible" or "barely visible" depending on the urban layout at that point or the presence of visual obstacles (Cullen, 1971; Bacon, 1974; Weisman, 1981).

- *Distance from the main urban pathways*. Concerns the distance of the public space from the main urban routes and its weak or absent connection with the places where functions of public interest are carried out.

- Spatial issues related to Geometrical Factors

- *Geometrical irregularity*. This can prevent/hinder the use of a public space and its internal organisation due to the difficulty of accommodating functions suited to its form (cf. Krier, 1979).
- *Spatial fragmentation*. It can weaken relationships between the parts and compromise social relationships (see Norberg-Schulz, 1985). The presence of fragmented spaces characterised by disconnected episodes can seriously limit the use of the public space by inhabitants.

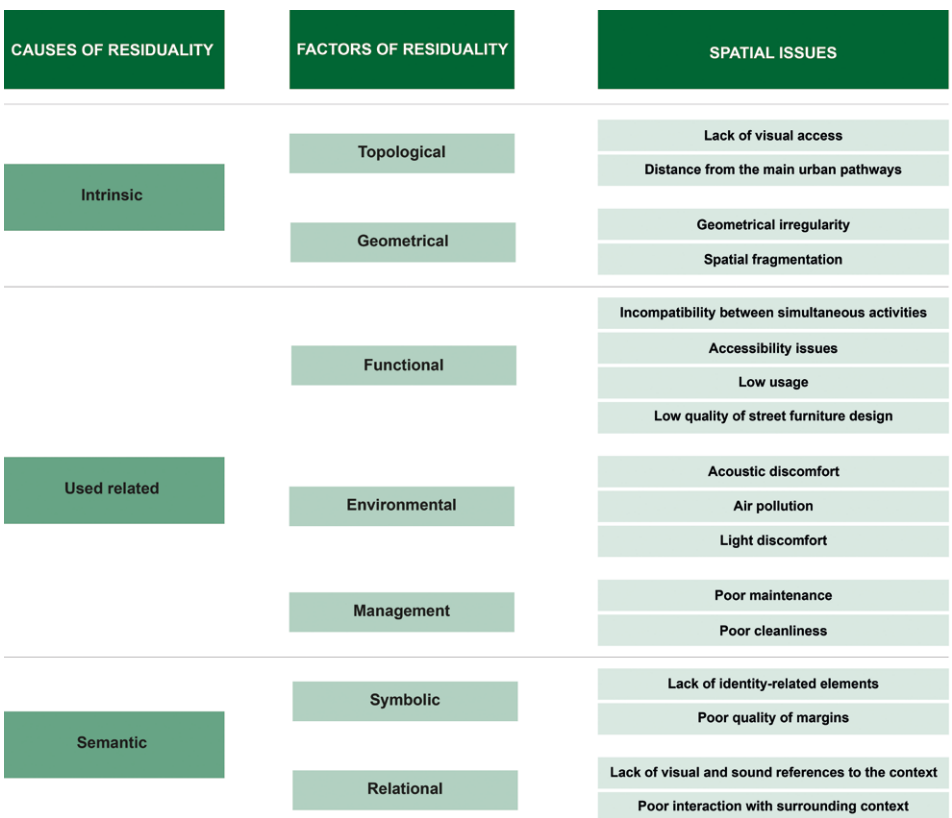


Figure 2.39 – From residuality factors to spatial issues.

Use related Causes

- Spatial issues related to Functional Factors

- *Incompatibility between simultaneous activities*. Concerns the presence, in a particular space, of activities that cannot harmoniously co-exist (cf. Rudofsky, 1969). This spatial issue, more than others, cannot be assessed in the abstract, but it must nec-

essarily be contextualised. An activity can be compatible with a multitude of different activities, much depends on how it is practiced and the other activities usually carried out by the inhabitants in the same spatial context.

- *Accessibility issues*. Express two converging questions that concern, to different decrees, the various user groups (children, the elderly, disabled people, etc.). First and foremost, they indicate the difficulty of independently reaching a given space from the routes that connect it to other areas of the city (accessibility *towards* a place or approachability). The scarcity of access limits the permeability of a public space. Moreover, it indicates the difficulty of entering a space and using it in conditions of comfort and security (accessibility *of* a place or usability) (Laurìa, 2012; 2014). Accessibility pertains to both the 'physical' dimension of the spaces and their communicative capacity. A space that is not accessible or that has a low *degree of accessibility* (Laurìa, 2012; 2014), even if it has elements of interest to the inhabitants, risks being excluded from the circuit of the most frequented and dynamic public spaces.
- *Low usage*. Expresses the low intensity with which the main activities are carried out in the public space. The conditions and intensity of use usually vary throughout the day and at different times of the year. The lack of a rational organisation of the activities carried out can result in the marginalisation of a public space. Assessing the frequency of use level of a public space allows us to acquire elements that are useful to understand whether, where and how to intervene to encourage better use of it.
- *Low quality of street furniture design*. Refers to the intrinsic characteristics and arrangement of the components (furniture and equipment) of the urban landscape that connote a public space and support the inhabitants in the performance of certain activities. For example, green areas, seating, plays areas for children, drinking fountains, etc. The poor quality of these components (materials, assembly, colours, etc.) and their unfortunate arrangement (for example, seating not facing the points of interest or not protected from the sun-) significantly contribute to reducing the attractiveness of a space and how often it is visited.

- Spatial issues related to Environmental Factors

- *Acoustic discomfort*. Depends on the activities that take place in the context where the public space is located. The presence of bothersome and continuous noise can create great distress to the point where it prevents optional activities from being carried out (Franck & Stevens, 2007). In cities, vehicle traffic is usually the main source of noise pollution, but business or artisan activities carried out at night can often generate bothersome noises that cause annoyance and even malaise in the inhabitants.
- *Air pollution*. Depends on various factors, including the quantity of pollution produced by the various human activities carried out in the context in which the space in question is located. When the air is clean people enjoy being outside and engaging in optional and social activities (Gehl, 1987). In addition to danger to people's health, air pollution makes it unpleasant to stay in a public space, and sometimes even marginalises it from the circuits of the urban activities.
- *Light discomfort*. Its importance differs depending on the social, geographic and climatic intervention context. In general terms, the lighting of a space strongly determines the kind of activity that can take place there. Poor lighting conditions can make the space unsafe and compromise its use by the inhabitants. Dark, hidden spaces that are barely visible can attract suspicious, unlawful and dangerous activities that often represent elements that signal degradation. Proper artificial lighting is

certainly indispensable at night, however, even in the afternoon in the winter months it can be an important aid in using the space in conditions of comfort and safety.

- Spatial issues related to Management Factors

- *Poor maintenance.* Pertains to the inadequate maintenance of the efficiency conditions of horizontal surfaces, curtain walls, green areas, the equipment present, and plays a part in compromising how the quality of a public space is perceived (Caterina & Fiore, 2005), the atmosphere it transmits, and its respectability (La Cecla, 2015). If a space is not looked after and the elements in it are neglected, it can easily slide into a condition of degradation and, at times, marginalisation.
- *Poor cleanliness.* Depends not only on how often and how a space is cleaned by authorised personnel, but also the care with which the inhabitants use and preserve it. Inadequate cleaning generates perceptual (visual and olfactory) and health problems with direct consequences for the quality of life of the inhabitants and the attractiveness of the places.

Semantic causes

- Spatial issues related to Symbolic Factors

- *Lack of identity-related elements.* Refers to the lack of elements of symbolic value within a public space. These identity elements often represent the real psychological connections of city life; often, they are capable of evoking a feeling of care in the inhabitants, and they sometimes make a space attractive (Lynch, 1960; Gehl, 1987). Elements capable of capturing the interest of visitors, onlookers or mere passers-by can encourage the performance of optional activities within an urban space (Gehl, 1987; Franck & Stevens, 2007).
- *Poor quality of margins*. Concerns the characteristics of the walls that shape and delimit the public space. This spatial issue has an incisive influence on the atmosphere of a space (Krier, 1979; Norberg Schulz, 1984, Zumthor, 2006) and its identity. The presence of impersonal, repetitive or completely blind façades can create a feeling of monotony and unease in the inhabitant and make the space seem anonymous. It is no coincidence that urban redevelopment projects increasingly often turn to *street artists*, some famous, some less so, to create artworks on entire façades of buildings.

- Spatial issues related to Relational Factors

- *Lack of visual and sound references to the context*. Pertains to the difficulty of using the visual or acoustic landmarks (architectural or natural) of the city when one is within a specific public space. Each city 'spontaneously' offers the inhabitants reference or orientation points – *natural guidings* (Parkin & Smithies, 2012; Laurìa, 2017[b]). If a space has no or few visual or sound references with the surrounding context and does not offer adequate possibilities for orientation with respect to the routes and surrounding spaces it may risk being excluded from city life.
- *Poor interaction with surrounding context.* Concerns the low intensity of dialogue between the public space and the activities carried out in buildings positioned along its perimeter. Think, for example, of buildings used as banks, offices, cinemas or supermarkets, where apart from one, all the other entrances facing onto the street are not usable (see Gehl, 1987) (see Fig. 2.40).

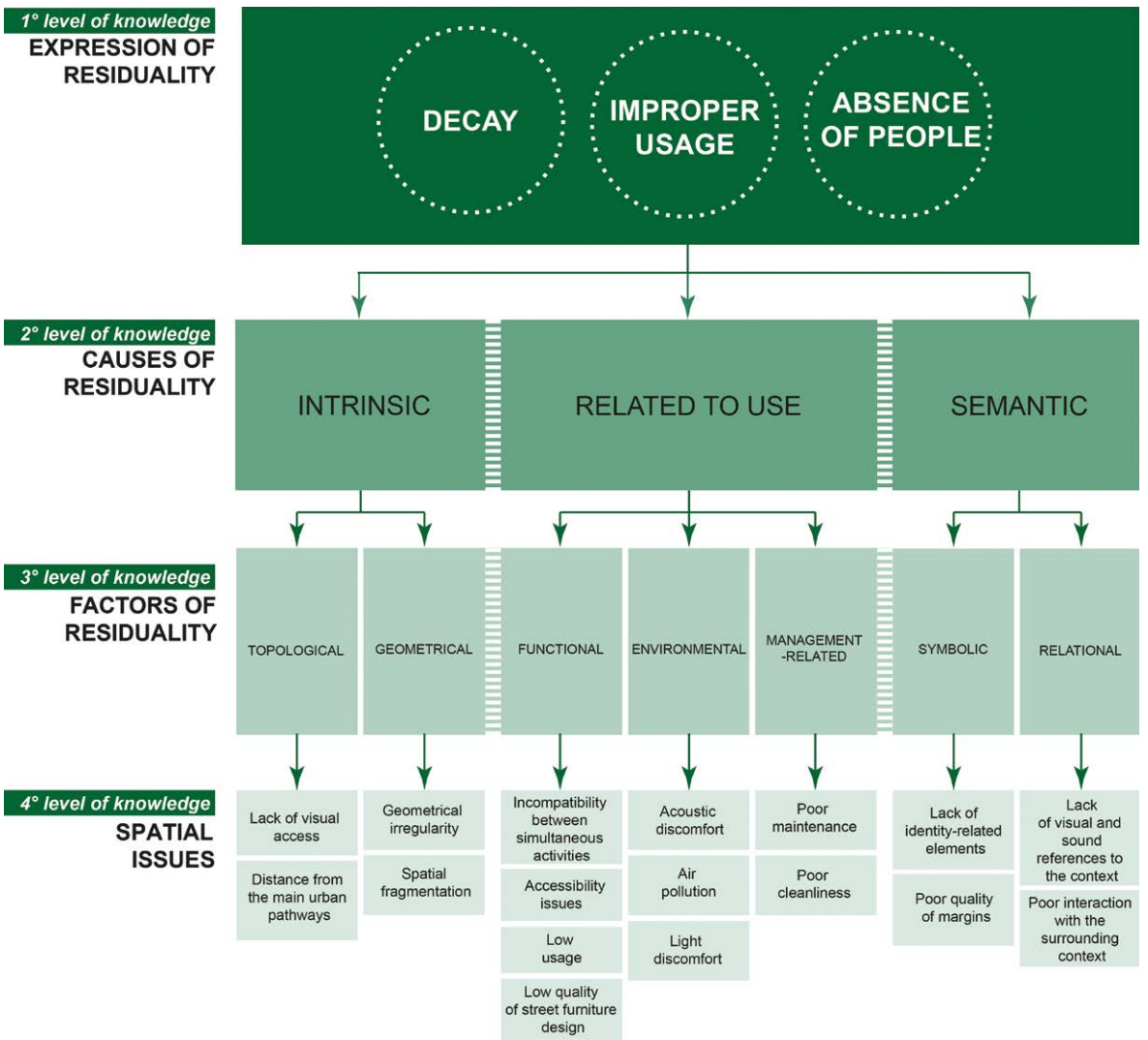


Figure 2.40 – Expressions and Causes method. Synoptic framework.

2.3.4.4 On determining the degree of residuality

The *degree of residuality* of a public space expresses a summary judgement of the residuality of a public space based on the recurrence of essentially qualitative assessment criteria (See § 1.3).

It is affected not only by the magnitude of each individual *expression of residuality* – degradation, improper use and absence of people – the subjectivity of the judgement and the time when the analysis is conducted, but also the ways in which the distinct *expressions of residuality* interact with each other. This highlights the difficulties of determining it.

It is reasonable, however, to think that the *degree of residuality* of a public space increases when it is affected at the same time by several *expressions of residuality*. Following this working hypothesis, it is possible, in the first instance, to divide the *degree of residuality* of a public space into three levels:

- *Low*, when a public space is only affected by one *expression of residuality* out of three;
- *Average*, when a public space is affected by two *expressions of residuality* out of three;
- *High*, when a public space is affected by all three *expressions of residuality*.

Admittedly, this assessment significantly simplifies the actual situation. The *expressions of residuality*, in fact, can have different significance. The absence of people, as highlighted in § 2.3.1.3, often represents a more substantial *expression of residuality* than the other two, but at the same time it is also more random as it is strongly influenced by the moment in which the survey is carried out and weather conditions. It can experience even sensitive fluctuations at different times of the day or year. We should also note that the meaning associated with a certain *expression of residuality* can change depending on the characteristics of the context.

To reduce, at least in part, the margin of uncertainty when assessing the degree of residuality of a public space, we can refer to the number of spatial issues detected there. Overlooking more complex qualitative considerations, we can bear in mind that the more spatial issues there are, the more the space analysed will demonstrate problems and shortcomings and the more care and attention it will require.[20]

[20] See § 3.3.2.2, in particular: "Map of residuality degrees."

CHAPTER 3

Testing the Residuality Assessment Process in the historical centre of Florence

Abstract: The evaluation process for detecting and describing the residuality of public spaces in the historical contexts illustrated in the previous chapter was tested on a pilot route in the historical centre of Florence. This chapter describes the different phases of the work carried out, from the identification of the pilot route to the tools for reading and assessing the residuality of the spaces found along it.

3.1 Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, the Residuality Assessment Process involves the following steps: (1) identification, using the strolling technique, of the public spaces to be examined (only spaces that have at least one *expression of residuality* are selected), (2) reading and interpretation of each of the public spaces identified using the Expressions and Causes method, and (3) determination of the degree of residuality.

In testing the Residuality Assessment Process in the historical centre of Florence three main objectives were set:

1. Identify public spaces in conditions of abandonment and neglect despite being in a highly prestigious area of the city;
2. Highlight the critical issues of the different spaces identified in view of their enhancement through urban regeneration projects;
3. Contribute to a broader reflection on the state of public space in the heart of the city.

This experiment was carried out in five phases: three *preparatory* phases – identification of the study context; definition of the procedures for the exploratory work; choice of field survey tools – and two *application* phases – performance of the exploratory work; rendering of the information acquired.

In the following paragraphs these phases will be duly described, focusing on the methodological aspects.[1]

[1] For the reports produced during the testing refer to the Annexes.

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3.2 Preparatory phases

3.2.1 Identification of the study context

The historical centre of Florence has been on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1982.[2] The portion of urban fabric on which the Residuality Assessment Process (RAP) was tested is located within it.

The distinct morphological characteristics of the city and the presence of some significant axes guided the choice of the urban setting to be analysed towards a *route* rather than an *area*. This choice was due to the highly recognisable and permanent nature of some historical routes of the city, the so-called "matrix routes" (see Caniggia & Maffei, 1987) on the one hand, and on the other the wide variety of typological (residential areas, commercial, tourist, monumental, etc.), spatial and social contexts that these routes cross.

In particular, the route chosen – defined as the *pilot route* – traces the ancient *decumanus* of the Roman *castrum* from which the present-day historical centre of Florence originated.

The pilot route, running in an East-West direction, starts at Piazza Cesare Beccaria and crosses the first portion of the historical centre (Piazza Sant'Ambrogio, Piazza dei Ciompi and Piazza Gaetano Salvemini) to subsequently enter the 'Roman quadrilateral' – the oldest part of the city – until reaching Piazza Carlo Goldoni, where it ends and meets the River Arno (Fig. 3.1). The urban fabric has consolidated along this route and developed slowly over the centuries, giving rise to a dense, articulated and complex urban structure. Due to the historical and enduring nature of the route described and its rather contained length (around 2,000 m), it is suitable for the testing to be carried out.

The point of working on a limited but representative portion of the Florentine historical centre was to allow us, in a relatively short time, to check the strengths and weaknesses of the RAP and to determine the type and quality of resources necessary to carry out a more extensive study in the future.

3.2.2 Definition of the procedures for the exploratory work

The exploratory work was carried out by walking the described route and analysing the public spaces crossed, both those along it and those in its immediate vicinity. During the stroll, the pilot route represented a mere trajectory, a direction of travel to proceed along the path. Like a score sheet on which the variations of a musical improvisation are set, the pilot route defines a pattern with a certain degree of determination that is enriched by extemporaneous variations.

Those who carried out the exploratory work (see § 3.2.2.2) and described it (see Annexes) were guided by anything that sparked their curiosity and interest in relation to the subject of inquiry. Their task was to identify and analyse all the potentially interesting spaces for the research purposes, namely those that have at least one *expression of residuality*.

The pilot route was travelled in both directions (there and back) during two different inspections at two different times of the year (see § 3.2.2.1). The direction of travel for the first inspection was East to West (from Piazza Cesare Beccaria to Piazza Carlo Goldoni and back); the second, instead, was in the opposite direction.

[2] See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/174> (last access 18.04.2021).

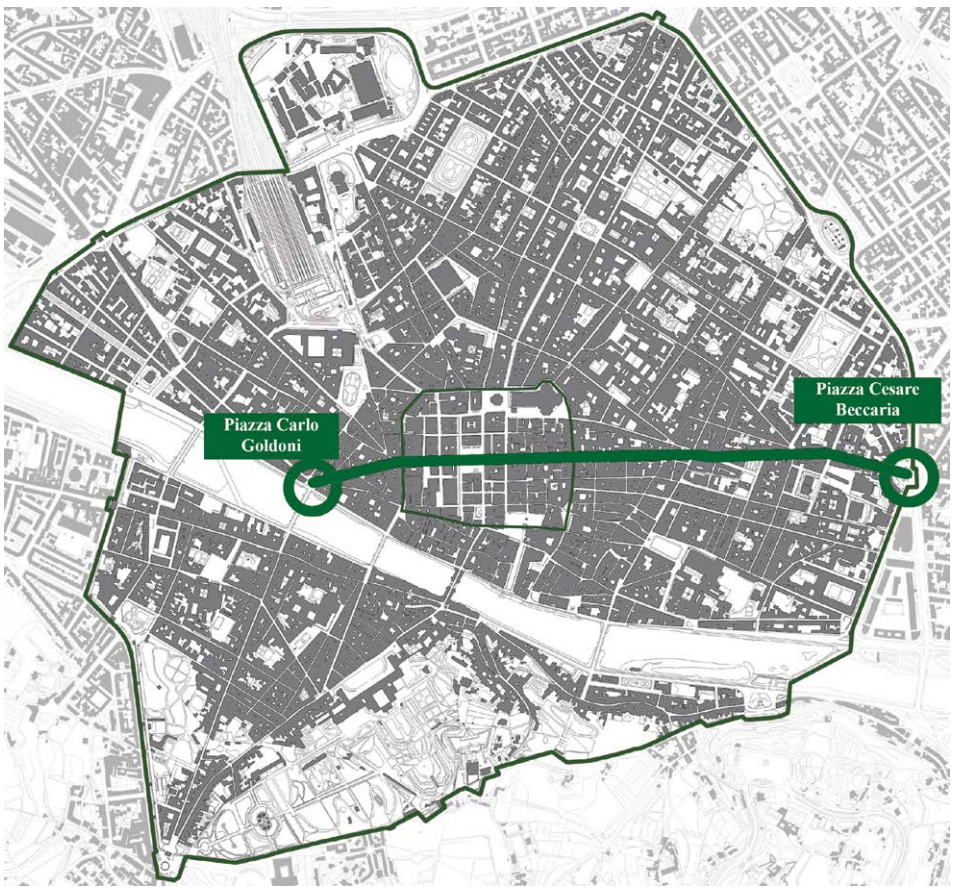


Figure 3.1 – The historical centre of Florence, highlighting the perimeter of the UNESCO area, the 'Roman quadrilateral' and the start and end points of the *pilot route*.

Clearly, the second inspection was strongly influenced by the information and sensations already acquired and filtered from a critical perspective during the first one. It was useful, however, to consolidate what had already been learned in order to introduce considerations and additional data thanks to the different weather and environmental conditions in which it took place. Lastly, it ensured that any new residual spaces that had 'escaped' notice were detected.

3.2.2.1 Influence of the moment in which the exploratory work is carried out

The moment in which the inspection (daytime-nighttime, weekdays-weekends and public holidays, period of the year, etc.) can significantly affect much of the information that can be obtained (see Appleyard & Lintell, 1972; Gehl, 1987; Laurìa, 2000). For instance, in a public garden on a warm spring day it is easy to observe a higher number of people and voluntary activities (people relaxing on grassy areas to sunbathe, read a book or chat with friends; children playing with a ball, etc.) compared to a cold winter's day.

The same *expression of residuality* "absence of people" – as seen in § 2.3.1.3 – is strongly linked to weather factors and to the moment in which the exploratory activity takes place, and the same can be said for some *spatial issues* such as, for instance, "acoustic discomfort" or "incompatibility between simultaneous activities."

To observe the spaces and behaviours of the inhabitants in two situations and in two different environmental conditions, two survey sessions were planned (the first in autumn; the second in late spring), both on weekdays.

3.2.2.2 Composition of the working group

The exploratory activity was assigned to a working group made up of three people.

The decision to conduct the exploration in a group rather than individually was due to the wish to have a broader spectrum of information, nuances and feelings regarding the spaces analysed.[3] A multitude of views can enrich both the understanding and interpretation of a place. The *differences* – explained Bateson (1972) – represent an extraordinary opportunity for knowledge. Working in a small group also means excessive personalisation of the experience can be limited. It should in fact be considered that separate observers, however experienced and motivated, may (on the basis of their personal sensitivities to certain aspects, their emotional state at the time, specific attitudes that distinguish them and their background) notice very different aspects in a given situation. This applies above all to the most subjective information, such as intangible information.

In keeping with this decision, a working group was formed of three architects with different backgrounds: one was born in Florence where he has always lived in the historical centre of the city; the other two have lived in Florence since they were at university but come from different places: one from a city in Marche (a region in central Italy) and the other from Tirana, Albania[4]. In this way, wonder at the discovery of the details of highly familiar places was combined with the differences that "the domesticated eye does not see because it is too internal, too used to an excess of familiarity.» (Canevacci, 1993: 16).

3.2.3 Choice of field survey tools

To obtain data on the physical, communicative and social features of the pilot route and each space analysed, different investigation tools can be used depending on the surrounding conditions and the dimensions of the urban fabric to be investigated. In the case in question, once the basic maps were prepared, the information was acquired through: drawings, sketches, photographs, aerial photos, GIS, short videos, audio recordings, written notes, observations of the traces and behavioural patterns of the inhabitants.

Given the nature of the experience to be carried out and the rather contained dimensions of the urban fabric to be analysed, it was not deemed necessary to set up an IT tool for data management (see § 2.1).

In relation to the spaces characterised by the non-episodic presence of people it was decided to hold *in-depth interviews* (Patton, 1987; Fideli & Marradi, 1996; Montesperelli, 1998) with both mere users and people who live or work in the space analysed or nearby[5]. The questions varied slightly depending on the person interviewed, with the aim of understanding their opinions on the situation analysed and the reasons for their activities (see § 3.1.5.2 and Annex 2).

[3] «One can derive alone – writes Debord [1956] 2006: 63 – but all indications are that the most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness, since cross-checking these different groups' impressions makes it possible to arrive at more objective conclusions. It is preferable for the composition of these groups to change from one derive to another.» (English trans. by Ken Knabb from Knabb, 2006: 62-66).

[4] The working group that tested the investigation method described in this chapter was made up of Junik Balisha, Mirko Romagnoli and Luigi Vessella (coordinator).

[5] According to Patton (1987:108), «depth interviewing involves asking open-ended questions» that probe «beneath the surface, soliciting detail and providing a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view.»

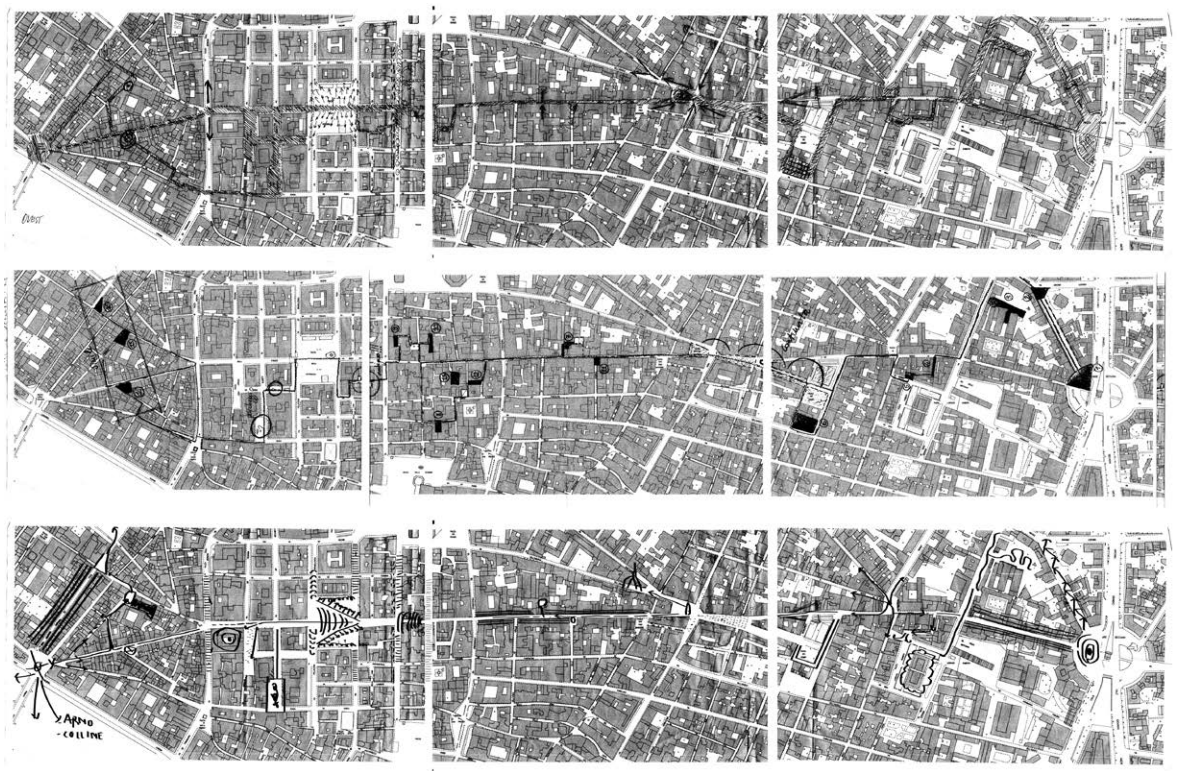


Figure 3.2 – The three maps used during the inspection with the comments and notes of the three researchers who took part in the exploratory work.

3.3 Application phases

3.3.1 Performance of the exploratory work

Having established the pilot route and the field investigation methods and tools, the exploratory work shifted from theory to application.

The exploration started with the public spaces found along the pilot route. This, as mentioned, represented the 'basic route' from which to stray for brief explorations of adjacent roads and squares. Essentially, the members of the working group indulged their curiosity and the stimuli that attracted their attention from time to time (Fig. 3.2).

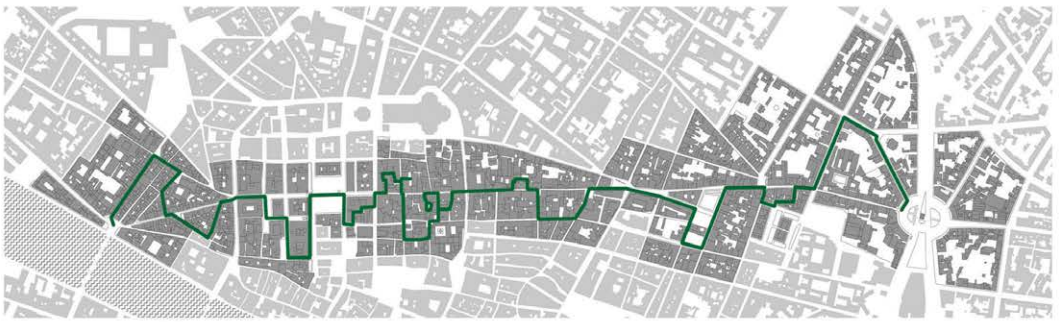
This work method is consistent with the principle according to which the 'drivers' of the exploratory activities are the atmospheres and feelings transmitted to the observer by the urban context. Strolling, a slow movement to cross the streets, alleys and squares, allowed the members of the working group to perceive the stimuli received from the form and life of the city. This meant that the trajectory followed during the exploratory activity was not linear, as the pilot route would suggest, but instead was sinusoidal, wavy, and supported the search for significant episodes close to the pilot route but often hidden. Objective and emotional factors were also part of the experience. This was an informed, expert exploration, but also free and spontaneous as it also followed the mental traces, curiosities and personal memories of each member of the working group (Fig. 3.3).

Each person documented the entire route travelled with photos, short videos and comments, stopping to analyse the situations that they considered most relevant.

The experience allowed them to identify, along the pilot route or adjacent to it, a series of spaces that attracted the attention of the observers due to some particular aspects. Of these spaces, only those that had at least one *expression of residuality* (degradation, improper use or the absence of people) were selected for subsequent analysis using the Expressions and Causes method.

Opposite page.

Figure 3.3 – *Above*. Representation of the route actually followed during the first inspection. *Below*. Part of the photo story of the spaces crossed.




Ciabatti

During the two inspections,[6] a total of 17 public spaces were identified for subsequent analysis: 12 during the first inspection (Via Alessandro Manzoni, the part of Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti between Via dell'Ortone and Via Andrea del Verrocchio, Giardino Alessandro Chelazzi, Piazza Gaetano Salvemini, Piazzetta Piero Calamandrei, Piazza dei Giuochi, Piazza de' Donati, Piazza de' Cerchi, Piazza del Giglio, Piazzetta dei Tre Re, Piazza de' Davanzati Piazza di San Pancrazio) and the remaining 5 during the second inspection (Piazza de' Pazzi, Piazza degli Alberighi, Via degli Anselmi, Piazza de' Rucellai, Piazza degli Ottaviani).

The spaces identified were very different from each other in typological terms or due to their urban function.

Thereafter, for each of these spaces, a study and interpretation of the possible *causes of residuality* (intrinsic, use-related and semantic) began, highlighting the *spatial issues* present.

As the residuality of a space manifests on different scales and is also influenced by exogenous factors,[7] the reading of the residual spaces found was conducted on two levels simultaneously: (1) *specific* (the space analysed), and (2) *as a whole* (the space in relation to the surrounding urban context). This double vision was also linked to the wish to guide hypotheses for the regeneration of the residual spaces towards urban acupuncture or systemic projects (see Laurìa *et al.*, 2020[b]).

3.3.2 Rendering of the information

To best represent the features and atmosphere of each public space in the reference context, the knowledge gradually acquired during the exploratory work resulted in the production of five reports illustrated below (three analysis reports and two summary reports) (Fig. 3.9). The aim was to come up with a qualitative description of the residuality of the public space analysed each time and to produce its physical, perceptive and emotional x-ray of it.

3.3.2.2 The analysis documents

Description of the pilot route using the strolling technique

In order to produce an overall picture of the experience, a narrative text describes the pilot route explored using the strolling technique. The narrative loosely describes the route taken and the spaces crossed in their sequence, conveys the sensory perceptions and emotions felt, reveals the discoveries made, and places the spaces in relation to each other with remote sensory references. Visual descriptions alternate with immersive descriptions (based on auditory, tactile, olfactory and kinesthetic experiences). Aspects of the urban landscape and spatial occurrences emerge, as well as the behaviours and social practices that bring the space of the city to life and are characteristic of it.

For the description of the stroll along the pilot route, see Annex 1. "The stroll".

Interview reports

After the exploratory phase, the inhabitants were asked for their opinions limited to spaces regularly visited by people.

[6] The first inspection took place on Friday 27 October 2016; the second on Tuesday 15 May 2017.

[7] See § 1.3.

In the case in question, of the 17 residual spaces selected during the exploratory work only 3 met this requirement:
1. Giardino Alessandro Chelazzi;
2. Piazza Gaetano Salvemini;
3. Piazza di S. Pancrazio.

A total of 18 *in-depth interviews* were carried out here, 6 for each space, for a total of around 400 minutes of conversation.

In each space analysed, for each of the 3 age groups considered (< 30 years, from 31 to 60 years, and > 60 years), 1 man and 1 woman were interviewed. Of these 6 people, 3 live or work close to the space and 3 visit it on a regular basis.

The questions revolved around the following domains: (1) opinion of the space analysed, (2) main problems presented by the space, and (3) proposals to make the space more lively and attractive.

The interviews were recorded and the texts were transcribed and processed, linking the interviewees' remarks with short comments. Annex 2 – "The inhabitants' opinions" – contains the interview reports for the three spaces mentioned above.

Analysis sheets

The information relating to the reading of the individual spaces is presented in the *Analysis sheets* in the form of drawings, photographs, textual descriptions, and audio and video content.

Each analysis sheet has been given an alphanumeric code (PS = "Public Space", followed by a progressive number starting from the departure point corresponding to Piazza Beccaria); it is made up of the following fields:

Sheet 1:
- *Name of the public space and geographic coordinates*, which allow us to identify the space analysed;
- *General plan of the area*, on which the pilot trace is marked, reporting all the residual spaces identified during the exploration and highlighting the space analysed on the sheet in question;
- *Text describing the public space*, which summarises essential information on the space under analysis, such as, for example, the main access routes, the characteristics of the life that takes place there, the sensations it produces, the presence of significant elements, visual and acoustic landmarks, etc.

Sheet 2:
- *Plan of the public space*, setting out the morphological and geometric characteristics of the space and its boundaries with respect to the surrounding context;
- *Description of the typological and technological characteristics,* setting out data pertaining to the form and size, paving, type of traffic (pedestrian, cycle path, vehicular limited to residents, vehicular), the presence of urban furniture, vegetation, etc. in the analysed space;
- *Expressions of residuality* detected, using a horizontal bar to summarily report the *expressions of residuality* found and describing them in a short text.

Sheet 3:
- *Ideogram of the features of the public space,* which, in an abstract way, represents the most significant features found during the inspection;

- *Photographs and graphic representations,* which describe the state of the places (atmospheres, social relationships, contrasts of light and shade, etc.) through the use of images;
- *Integrative multimedia resources,* providing additional images, short video clips and, when useful, sound recordings (ambient sounds and interview extracts). These contents can be accessed through the icons on the bottom right[8].

Sheet 4.

- *Table of the spatial issues*, where each *cause of residuality* is associated with the various factors described in § 2.3.2.1; each factor has been broken down into a series of *spatial issues* (see § 2.3.2.2). Each *spatial issue* is briefly described. This description aims to highlight problems and aspects where it would be appropriate to intervene through a redevelopment project;
- *Diagram of the spatial issues detected*, which shows the number of spatial issues found in the analysed space on a graduated horizontal bar.

All the information contained in the sheets helps us to understand the tangible and intangible qualities of the spaces analysed with a view to a desirable redevelopment proposal.

Fig. 3.4 shows the layout of the analysis sheet; to view one of the 17 analysis sheets completed refer to Annex 3.

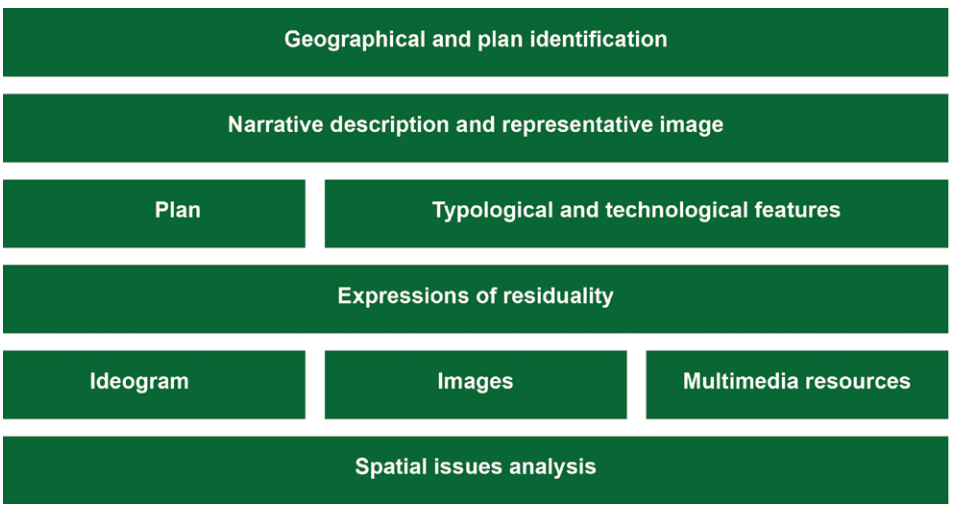


Figure 3.4 – Analysis sheet layout.

3.3.2.3 The summary reports

Map of the residuality degree

As noted in § 1.3 and § 2.3.3, first and foremost it can be supposed that the residuality of a space can take on different degrees of 'intensity' based on the *expressions of residuality* that can be found. To restore this gradualness, § 2.3.3 proposed a scale broken down into three levels. Each level is associated with the number of *expressions of residuality* identified. It can be said that a space has *low* residuality when only one of the three *expressions of residuality* is found, *medium* when there are two and, finally, *high* when there are three.

[8] The multimedia content was collected in folders (images, video, sounds) associated with the individual analysis sheets so that the connection links between the individual sheet and the multimedia files could be maintained.

Each residuality degree thus determined can be given a different colour. For example, green for *low* residuality, yellow for a *medium* degree of residuality and red for a *high* degree of residuality (Fig. 3.5).

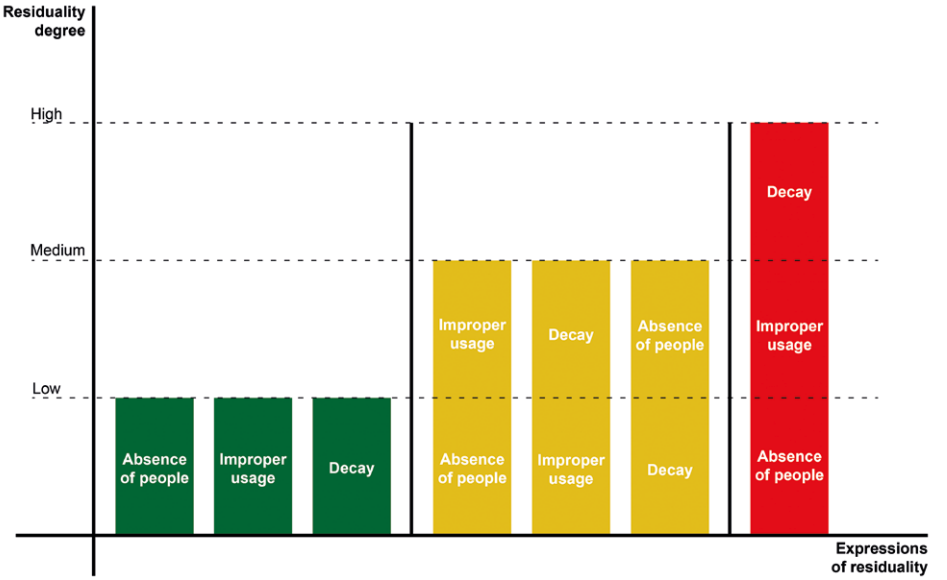


Figure 3.5 – Possible combinations of the expressions of residuality and consequent first attribution of the degree of residuality of a public space.

As observed in § 2.3.3, this evaluation has a broad margin of uncertainty. In an attempt to reduce this limit, it might also be useful to consider the number of *spatial issues* detected in each of the spaces analysed.

So next to the colour code referring to the number of *expressions of residuality* ascertained, an additional code was introduced referring to size, representing the number of *spatial issues* detected in the public space under examination: the higher the number of issues, the larger the icon (in our case a circle) which describes the degree of residuality of the space analysed. Specifically: a small circle indicates a number of issues between 1 and 5; an average circle indicates a number of issues between 6 and 10; a large circle indicates a number of issues over 11. This allows us, for each degree of residuality determined using the number of *expressions of residuality*, to identify 3 severity levels, as shown in fig. 3.6.

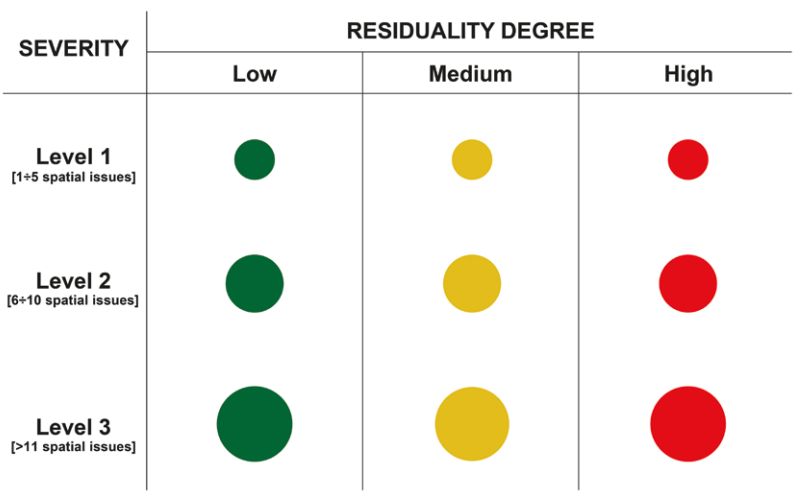


Figure 3.6 – Severity level of the *residuality degree* of a public space in relation to the number of *expressions of residuality* and the number of *spatial issues* detected.

The *Map of residuality degrees* is not designed to be rigorous but, more simply, to offer a set of information on the residuality conditions of a certain urban area. Fig. 3.7 shows the map of residuality degrees of the public spaces analysed during the testing.

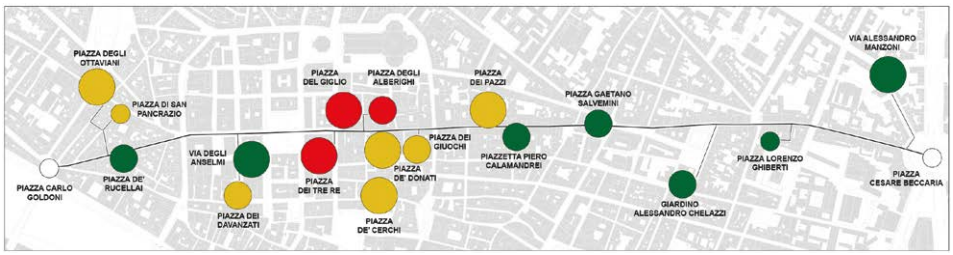


Figure 3.7 – Map of residuality degrees of the spaces found along the pilot route.

Summary report

Once the collecting and structuring of the information gathered in the field was complete, it was necessary to produce an overall picture that could represent both a knowledge base and a metaphorical bridge to the redevelopment project. The aim was to sum up the dense network of facts, relationships and emotions that connects the diversified spaces, distinguished by their aesthetics, the use that can be made of them, their symbolic value and their identity and ambiances.

The spaces analysed were grouped into homogeneous categories and some comparative observations were made relating to aspects deemed as important.

For each of the spaces analysed, the main physical, social and semantic characteristics were described. Alongside the spatial issues, the potential qualities of the space are highlighted, namely its potential (currently hidden, removed or repressed) to play a role in city life. When possible, some strategy ideas for its redevelopment were put forward.

This report, with reference to the spaces analysed in the testing phase, is found in Annex 4 "Thoughts and initial hypotheses on the regeneration of the urban spaces analysed".

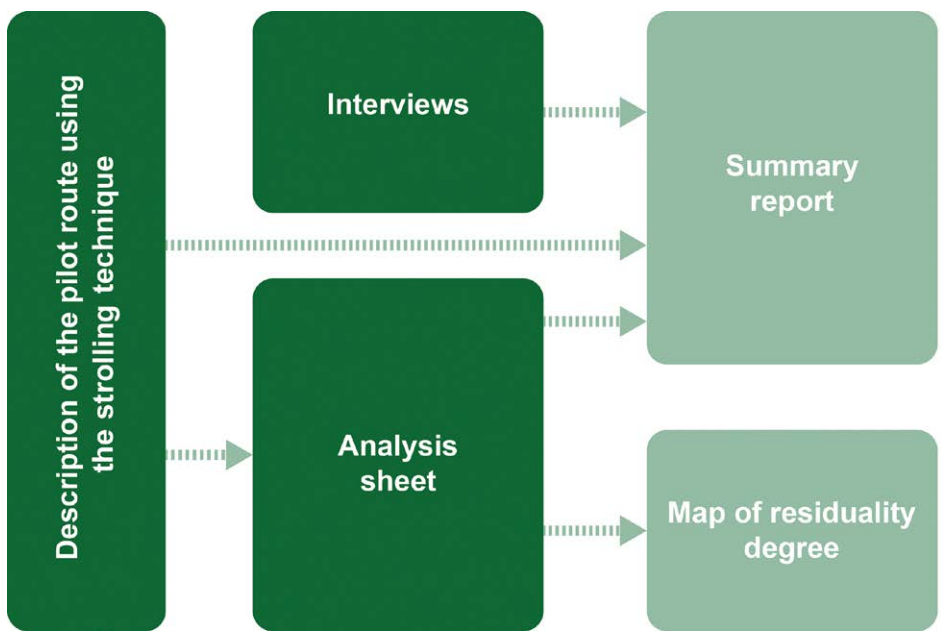


Figure 3.8 – Analysis reports, summary reports and their relationships.

3.4 Some final observations on testing

Like all experimental testing methods, the RAP has its limits which should be pointed out.

The exploration and subsequent rendering of the considerations set out in the analysis sheets confirmed the difficulty of describing the characteristics that contribute to define the residuality of a public space to those who have no direct experience of it[9].

A first limit of the RAP is the very means that it uses. These mainly visual means do not allow us to fully and vividly restore the multisensory nature of the public space. Also because the sensory qualities (visual, haptic, sound, olfactory, thermohygrometric, kinesthetic…) that a public space possess and transmits are acquired by those who *live* there in integrated terms (synaesthesia).

An additional limit that emerged during the testing was the difficulty of analysing some spatial characteristics. While some of them can be assessed with a certain level of objectivity, others are more difficult to abstract and generalise. Spatial characteristics pertaining to symbolic and relational factors are frequently the focus of conflicting views. Likewise, compatibility between the simultaneous activities carried out in a certain space was also difficult to estimate. It is likely that some spatial characteristic should be defined and oriented better also with the support of other expertise and awareness (city historians, artists, environmental psychologists, urban sociologists, technical physicists, etc.).

> However, it should be noted that 'controversial' spatial characteristics, precisely due to the difficulty of interpreting them, represent a valuable opportunity, for inhabitants and public administrators, to ask questions about public spaces, their issues and their fate. In this sense, each new interpretation and each new point of view represents a valuable enrichment.

As mentioned, given that some spatial characteristics are strongly influenced by the moment in which they are detected, a greater number of surveys at different times of the year and day (daytime, evening and nighttime on weekdays, at weekends and on public holidays) would allow for more refined knowledge of the spaces analysed.

Perhaps it would be helpful to clarify the level of satisfaction with the spaces analysed in relation to the typical activities that can be observed in an open-air public space: meeting up, resting, chatting, playing, etc. (currently this description is found in the text fields on the first page of the survey sheet).

That said, in our view the ways in which the exploration was carried out (definition of the pilot route, composition of the working group, inspection times, etc.) and the investigative tools used (exploratory strolls, photos, videos, ambient recordings, drawings and interviews) have greatly expanded our expertise and sensitivity to the topic of the residuality of public spaces and have generated analysis reports (the *Description of the pilot route using the strolling technique*, *Interview reports* and *Analysis sheets*), thereby enhancing the wealth of heterogeneous information acquired, and summary reports (*Map of residuality degrees* and *Summary report*) which move with greater awareness towards the idea of the regeneration of the public spaces analysed.

In view of a possible shift in scale, given the desire to apply the RAP to a significantly larger area of the historical centre of Florence than that analysed during this testing, the investigation and communication structure must obviously be adequate.

[9] This confirms the observation made by Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade with regard to the need to experience the residual spaces firsthand in order to understand them. See § 1.2, note 4.

First and foremost, the data collection and management systems referred to in § 2.1 must be used. For example, the large amount of information to be collected should be put into a computer database.

The urban area to be analysed must be divided into sections that can cover it entirely (*tiling*). Each part must be of a suitable size and configuration to encourage small working groups to carry out the exploratory work. Aiming to operate in terms of routes, as in the testing, ring circuits that branch out from a fulcrum could even be envisaged.

Finally, in order to obtain consistent results, the different working groups, before embarking on the field analysis, must undergo training and be guided by a common vision and shared assessment parameters.

Conclusions

Antonio Laurìa

In the heart of cities, open-air public spaces come in many forms: the streets with their pavements, alleyways, squares, open spaces, gardens, parks… These spaces can all be of different size and play a different role in the life of the city and in the experience of each of its inhabitants.

These spaces include some that, for different reasons, are at the edges of the urban activities and do not manage to fully express their potential. These spaces are often defined as "residual."

Residual spaces appear as forgotten, neglected, run-down spaces, spaces cast adrift in search of an author.

In an attempt to define the typical characteristics of urban residual spaces we have understood that each public space can present a certain *degree of residuality* so we shifted our attention from the object – the residual space – to the concept of residuality.

The study of the concept of the residuality of public spaces and the definition of a method to qualitatively assess the degree of residuality of public spaces represent the theoretical contribution of this book.

These conclusions briefly go over the stages of the knowledge path through which we sought to answer the Research Questions (RQs) that gave rise to this book; thereafter, some design strategies are indicated for the regeneration of the public spaces that have residual spaces as their fulcrum.

A knowledge path

If we consider the city as a complex set of environments (open and closed) that produce spatial experiences in the inhabitants in relation to past and future experiences, we also need to consider that residual spaces will, sooner or later, play a role in each of our lives. It is difficult to fully escape from them by evading or dodging them: living in the city we will inevitably, consciously or unconsciously, experience a residual space and its atmosphere, and judge it.

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It is problematic to label residual space through a comprehensive definition; at the same time, it is not always easy to determine the reasons why the residuality of a space becomes apparent, when, in what forms and how it is perceived by the inhabitants.

In § 1.1 and 1.2 we sought to answer RQ 1 (What is meant by "residual urban space").

While it is true that residuality is a relative concept, it is also necessary to clarify that the hypotheses and thoughts expressed in this book do not aspire to be universal. Rather, they tend to define the thematic scope within which to further explore the concept of residuality with particular reference to public spaces located in historical contexts. What emerges quite clearly is the impossibility of identifying, in objective terms, a space as "residual" or, on the contrary, as "non-residual." As a result, this seems to consolidate the idea that residuality is not an *absolute* value of an inhabited space, but rather a *spectrum of possibilities*. If each urban space, in every context, lies somewhere between the two limited conditions of "residuality" and "non-residuality," then it can be said that each urban space has a certain *degree of residuality*, that is, a changing assessment and feeling of its inadequacy, inscribed in its intrinsic characteristics and meaning and in the personal experience of each inhabitant.

§ 1.3 introduces the concept of "residuality" and "degree of residuality" and seeks to answer RQ 2 (How can the concept of "residuality" be defined with reference to a public space?).

In an attempt to provide elements of knowledge for a critical reading of the degree of residuality of public spaces in historical contexts we developed a qualitative assessment method defined as the Residuality Assessment Process (RAP).

This method – which arises from the hybridisation of two techniques of knowledge of public spaces: the Expressions and Causes method and Strollology – aims to highlight the critical issues that these spaces express and the potential they conceal. This is based on two convictions:

1. Residuality is a 'condition' that concerns all urban spaces to a different degree of intensity;
2. The residuality of an urban space before being seen as a 'problem to solve' must be studied as a 'phenomenon to be understood'.

The RAP was tested in a section of the historical centre of Florence corresponding to the route of the *decumanus* of the Roman *castrum*. This testing was a necessary step to check its validity also from the perspective of its possible extension to the entire perimeter of the UNESCO area of the city.

The information was collected using a variety of investigative tools (drawings, photos, observation of the traces and behavioural models, interviews, etc.). This was followed by a qualitative description of the spaces analysed, the expression of a critical operation that materialised through the processing of various documents. The result was three distinct products – (1) a narrative description of the route followed during the exploratory work, (2) analysis sheets for the individual spaces, and (3) a map of the degrees of residuality of the residual spaces identified – conceived as flexible tools capable of adapting to the qualities as well as the representation and communication needs of each individual urban space.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 offer responses to RQ3 (What conditions make a public space residual?) and RQ4 (Can the "degree of residuality" of a public space be evaluated, albeit in qualitative terms?).

Although the RAP includes many elements that could be usefully applied in other urban contexts, it does not aspire to be a tool of general validity. The exploratory phase methods (working in small groups and walking the route identified, programming two inspections at different times of the year, etc.), just like the methods for choosing the pilot route and the very tools for collecting and processing the information, clearly represent just some operational possibilities. Other scholars may concentrate on the contexts characterised by particular uses, inhabited by specific social groups, or even further explore specific functional, perceptive, environmental and cultural aspects. The choice, on the other hand, must necessarily be consistent with the qualities (physical, cultural and social) of the place, with the type of analyses to be carried out and with the expected objectives and available resources.

On the design strategies

The projects aimed at re-imagining a residual space to return it to the life of the city can be of different types and various scopes: from small 'local' maintenance work to public space redevelopment projects up to the most challenging urban regeneration projects in which the residual spaces become the hubs of thematic circuits (Laurìa *et al.*, 2020[b]).

In general, these projects, beyond their scale and how they are carried out, should not be limited to a simple makeover (see Maldonado, 1987). This would be like confusing the causes with the effects, with the risk that the 'reclaimed' space once again and quickly falls into a condition of residuality. In an attempt to give (or once again give) the residual spaces an enduring role in the life of the city, it is first necessary to admit to their multifaceted nature. Then, for each of them, the reasons that led to their sudden or gradual marginalisation within the public spaces of the city must be analysed. Lastly, their level of affliction must be assessed and an attempt be made to understand the role, however modest, they play in the urban fabric.

In other words, the residual spaces should be studied with the same attention and the same rigour that a conscientious botanist would study a still unexplored green area rich in biodiversity (cf. Benjamin, [1971] 2006). Only then can the possible redevelopment projects be imagined, in any case taking into account – as Clément (2004) keenly observed – that returning non-assimilated places to public use always represents a loss of diversity, an extension of uniformity and the cultural levelling of places and human behaviour.

The work carried out during the research described in this book provided a wealth of information and suggestions which, in our opinion, can represent a useful knowledge base for planning urban regeneration actions focused on the recovery of residual spaces. The empirical awareness gradually acquired first confirmed the ambivalence of the residual spaces as places hovering between a *present* made up of marginality, lost or wasted opportunities, friction and unresolved conflicts and a *possible future* still to be imagined.

Without claiming to put forward conclusive hypotheses, it is appropriate to ask what the theoretical guidelines could be to guide redevelopment projects for the residual spaces of a historical centre.

First of all, we need to be aware that the residual spaces of a historical centre, however compromised, belong to an extremely delicate context. Considering the nature of the places and the restrictions placed upon them, it is inevitable that actions connoted by *reversibility*, *adaptability*, and *minimum environmental impact* would be favoured.

The contextualisation, however, should not be understood as mere tension in harmonising the solutions to be experienced in the scenario that hosts them, but also as

a need to understand and interpret the requirements, expectations and desires of the inhabitants. This comprehensive attitude requires transformation processes (from the analysis of critical issues to the assessment of the design hypotheses; from the implementation of the projects to their management over time) that are *socially shared*, and therefore capable of guiding the choices towards a real expansion of the opportunities for life in the city and to avert the risk of projects aimed at mere decorum (cf. La Cecla, 2015).

In particular, residual spaces that are not perceived by a city council as a potential community resource are unlikely to be the focus of regeneration processes without the active participation of the inhabitants. This opens up the possibility of releasing energy and skills available locally, even promoting new forms of social entrepreneurship (see Mori & Sforzi, 2018).

The need to think about the recovery of residual spaces as a *process* rather than product suggests that the search for design solutions should derive from an accurate exploration and sharing of alternative hypotheses. Testing ephemeral solutions, observing and assessing their impact on the inhabitants and then taking action with more permanent solutions may represent a practice consistent with the complexity, fragility and cultural and social values that the public spaces of a historical centre express (see Capestro, 2017).

Having understood that the residuality of an urban space is often the direct and elementary consequence of its weak connections with the rest of the city and with the life that fills the common spaces each day leads to an analysis of the redevelopment of residual spaces in a broad, relational perspective, thus overcoming the limits of isolated and targeted projects. The redevelopment of the public spaces, if considered according to the principles of *urban acupuncture* (Lerner, 2003), can build, mend or strengthen relationships between the parts, create synergies, and give rise to a network of social and environmental opportunities undergoing continuous transformation. To identify possible themes capable of combining the individual spaces in imaginative terms rather than functional terms, we must start with the qualities and vocations of the places and the typical activities that can be observed in an open-air public space (meeting up, resting, relaxing, playing, holding events, etc.), which can realistically be envisaged there (Laurìa *et al*., 2020[b]).

Among the *intervention strategies* in the search for new urban value site specific art and green installations can be assumed to play a central role.

Artistic installations rooted in local contexts, starting with those expressions of the material culture,[1] can act as a stimulus for creative experimentation and represent a fitting tool for the creation of *new symbolic centrality*. Public art can transform into a shock, a beacon, a catalyst for attention capable of raising the *symbolic weight* of the residual spaces.

Green areas, due to the innate capacity for attraction that they exercise over human beings and the beneficial effects they produce on people's mental and physical health (see *inter alia* Maas *et al*. 2009; Baur & Tynon, 2010; Kardan *et al*., 2015; Kuo, 2015) – and also due to the meaning that subtly plays out in the construction of the urban landscape (see Morelli, 2017) – can play a privileged role in the creation of *new social*

[1] On this issue, there is an interesting article by Gianni Biagi "Ma in piazza della Signoria mettiamo una turbina" in *Corriere Fiorentino* of 14 June 2016. Available on <https://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/editoriali_e_opinioni/16_giugno_14/ma-piazza-signoria-mettiamo-turbina-a9224e6c-3241-11e6-b851-897aa1514f17.shtml> (last access 01.03.2021).

centralities. The redevelopment of the residual spaces should in fact be considered a valuable opportunity to enliven the intangible resources of living in the city: the authenticity of human relationships, the sense of belonging, the community aspect, and the joy of sharing.

So, with this wealth of experience, knowledge and emotions, but also with many doubts still unresolved, this work draws to a close. The hope is that it may lead to further opportunities to continue the research and testing in greater depth, aware of what this experience has taught us.

AFTERWORD

Hidden dimension. Garrets and drawers of the mind

Juhani Pallasmaa

In his inspired book on the experiential and mental imagery in architecture, *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard, philosopher of science and poetic imagery, discusses the usually unnoticed and neglected aspects of dwelling, such as cellars and garrets, corners, drawers, chests and wardrobes (Bachelard, 1969). Still in our adulthood, we may recall the pleasure of hiding in a wardrobe or under a table or stair leading to the attic, or imagining the secrets of a locked drawer. Instead of the normally conscious, assertive, imposing and externalizing imageries of architecture, Bachelard draws our attention to the meanings of intimacy and secrecy, hiding and shadow. The poetic thinker points out intimate and poetic experiences at the borderline of memorizing and forgetting, between perceiving and dreaming, the self and the world.

Today's prevailing architectural language is oriented towards conscious attention, revealing and making visible, but both in our dwellings and urban domiciles we also need privacy and intimacy. We need dreams and secrets as much as facts. «[...] If I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace», Bachelard confesses (Bachelard, 1969: 6). The experience of home is fundamentally the tactile sensation of naked skin. However, also outside the private domain of home, we long for spaces and settings that permit us to feel protective solitude and entice us to dream. Yet, today's architecture usually aims at a penetrating order, but we desire arbitrariness and disorder as a relaxation from the straight-jacket of forced order and control. Architecture is usually associated with predictability, safety and comfort, but – as psychoanalytical literature informs us – our mental worlds have also their naturally disorderly, shadowy and spontaneous dimensions. Also our dreaming, absent-minded and wandering minds need to be housed.

The obsessive aim in the (quasi-)rationalized architecture of the Consumerist world is to impress, entice, manipulate and reveal, and place everything in sharp focus without cover, depth and shadow. This obsession with clarity is exemplified by the sharp-

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ness of imagery, excessive transparency and the disappearance of *poché*, the hidden and unused realm between spatial, structural and geometric systems. Pleasurable cities and towns provide a multitude of pochés, unspecified and useless no-man's pockets. In the architecture of the modern era, the *poché* has been regarded as something unresolved, unwanted and disturbing – the acceptance of *poché* is seen as unprofessional and unmoral similar to the making of a fake column, strictly condemned by Auguste Perret: «The builder who hides any part of the building's frame abandons the only permissible, and at the same time, the most beautiful embellishment of architecture. The one who hides a load-bearing column makes a mistake. The one who builds a fake column commits a crime» (Perret, 1949: 129). Yet, some of the most impressive spaces of modernity, such as Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House and Alvar Aalto's Church of the Three Crosses, are the result of creating *poché* spaces, "wasted" interstitial in-between spaces, which permit the adjacency and fusion of conflicting geometries. Louis Kahn and the Dutch Structuralists created a similar sense of spatial layeredness and thickness without the use of *poché* through their juxtaposed and interlocking geometries.

Our experiential and mental reality relies crucially on unfocused and peripheral perceptions and a drifting and scattered consciousness, as only four per cent of our visual field is in focus at any given time. "It is, in short, the reinstatement of the vague to its proper place in mental life which I am so anxious to press on the attention," the pioneering American psychologist and philosopher William James revealed.[1] Italo Calvino, the master writer, gives a provoking literary depiction of the human mind, its instabilities, hazy contents and mental *pochés*: «Who are we, who is each one of us, if not a combinatoria of experience, information, books we have read, things imagined? Each life is an encyclopaedia, a library, an inventory of objects, a series of styles, and everything can be constantly shuffled and reordered in every way conceivable» (Calvino, 1993: 124).

Sigmund Freud describes the images and associations arising from our dreams as «archaic remnants of the mind». Later, Carl Gustav Jung named them "archetypes" (Jung *et al*., 1968: 57). These archaic and mostly pre-conscious associations and emotions operate as links between the world of the intellect and the world of instincts. «They are pieces of life itself – images that are integrally connected to the individual by the bridge of emotions», Jung remarks (Jung *et al*., 1968: 87).

Colin St John Wilson, the architect of the British Library in London, writes perceptively of the hidden ways in which spaces, places and buildings secretly affect us: «It is as if I am being manipulated by some subliminal code, not to be translated into words, which acts directly on the nervous system and imagination, at the same time stirring intimations of meaning with vivid spatial experience as though they were one thing. It is my belief that the code acts so directly and vividly upon us because it is strangely familiar; it is in fact the first language we ever learned, long before words, and which is now recalled to us through art, which alone holds the key to revive it [...]» (St John Wilson, 1979: 107-115).

The often un-planned, bypassed, unrecognized and nameless urban micro-environments and in-between spaces provide social and psychic refuge for the city-dweller. We naturally seek places which permit us to exist outside of collective attention, and to feel protected by the mere anonymity, spontaneity and social uselessness of the place. We are not forced to behave and feel in a specific and expected manner, and nothing is demanded from us. In a restaurant, most of us prefer to sit at a side table with our backs against a wall and watch the spontaneous theatre of life.

[1] William James, as quoted in Ehrenzweig, 1973: 59.

The study of Antonio Laurìa and Luigi Vessella exposes the usually unrecognized and unnamed residual spaces in the urban textures of Florence. These miniaturized places appear as unintentional or accidental consequences of construction, but they possess an inviting and holding relaxedness and intimate placeness. They are deviations, pauses and poetic secrets in today's obsessively utilitarian urban space. Don't we like to visit old towns and cities, because they provide enriching and invigorating discontinuities, disharmonies and unexpected surprises?

Helsinki, 17 August 2021

A tale of analysed spaces

ANNEX 1

The stroll

Luigi Vessella

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From Piazza Cesare Beccaria to Piazza Carlo Goldoni

The stroll starts in Piazza Cesare Beccaria, a small nineteenth-century *étoile* designed by Giuseppe Poggi and modelled on the more majestic one in Paris. [1] Leaving the ancient gate behind us, we start to walk towards the ancient city centre. We slowly leave behind the noise of the square created by the heavy traffic on the avenues and enter the heart of the ancient city centre. The streets we go down, with a few exceptions, are pedestrianised, narrow and lined with four- or five-storey buildings. [2]

The layout of the city and the pilot route suggest a straight line, which follows the ancient and still discernible Roman *decumanus*. But our survey, and the desire to discover places that we often pass by absent-mindedly in everyday life, push us towards the 'side' rooms, into small streets and squares, and into the open spaces that this part of the city offers the curious wayfarer. [3]

The spatial sensations perceived when we walk this stretch of the historical cen-

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tre running from Piazza Cesare Beccaria to Piazza della Repubblica provide alternating moments of compression and decompression. All it takes is a small open space, a recessed building (for example, Giardino Chelazzi) or a square that is a little wider than usual (like Piazza Gaetano Salvemini) to trigger the perception of a large space, a rare feeling in the ancient centre of Florence. At the end of the street that skirts Piazza Salvemini on the west side we catch a glimpse of the majestic dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, the physical and psychological hinge of the city. [4]

From Piazza Salvemini – a noisy and confusing space, but certainly not without interest – [5-6] the route continues in a straight line following the prospective direction that the compact rhythm of the building façades, combined with the narrow width of Borgo degli Albizi, almost forces us to take. [7-8] Here too we seek out hidden spaces among the openings in the façades, those unexplored spaces, so to speak, that shore up the historic centre (such as Piazzetta Piero Calamandrei, Piazza dei Giuochi and Piazza de' Donati), but which many inhabitants of the city are completely unaware of as they are almost unconsciously dragged down the most popular routes.

All of a sudden, we reach Piazza della Repubblica, the site of the ancient centre, the Jewish ghetto, now gone and of which no trace remains. [9-10] Everything changes. Here the blocks thin out with respect to the previous section, they are regular and 'massive', the façades on the streets have lost some of that unique charm of the dense repetition of windows and openings typical of the historical stratification of the oldest part of the city. [11] New sensations are felt here. The noises change. The calls of artisans greeting each other across the street and the cries of the fruit and vegetable market traders of Sant'Ambrogio are replaced by foreign languages and expressions.

At a certain point, unexpectedly, we hear the hooves of a horse cutting across the road without looking to see if anyone

is in the way, almost as if it were a crazy locomotive. We are in the heart of the tourists' city. The Florence that tourists know from guide books and postcards.

Continuing towards the final part of our itinerary, we once again feel the sensations that we had left behind us. Tall buildings, narrow streets, the compact rhythms of the façades and long perspectives (at least for the Florentine context) return and inform us that we are once again in one of the oldest parts of the city. We are in Via della Vigna Nuova. [12] Here, even without knowing it, we perceive that everything is similar to the initial stretch of the route, but at the same time different. The shop windows and building façades are more elegant, we are in a tourist spot with luxury boutiques.

Continuing on, we come upon a small space, Piazza di San Pancrazio, where one of the most interesting and least visited museums in the city is located, the Museo Marino Marini, a small gem in the ancient centre. [13]

We move on, called by the noise of traffic towards Piazza degli Ottaviani, which unfortunately is not much of a square. Its triangular form, the numerous vehicles appearing from Via dei Fossi, parked scooters and the chaos that reigns here make it nothing more than a transition place among the various streets that converge here and lead to more attractive spots, such as Piazza di Santa Maria Novella, immediately beyond.

At this point, the route is almost complete and we head towards the end point: Piazza Carlo Goldoni. Continuing along Via de' Fossi, we head towards the Arno River, which we can only see when we reach the square. [14] Here, finally, the view opens up for the first time along our route and we can discover the city's relationship with the river. Just a few steps earlier the river seemed to be nothing more than a mirage, hidden by the buildings and impossible to perceive. Now, instead, its full charm and beauty is unveiled. A beauty fostered by the unusual, and also in this case close, relationship between the open

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space, the buildings and the hills encircling the city. [15]

From Piazza Carlo Goldoni to Piazza Cesare Beccaria

This time the itinerary goes in the opposite direction, East-West; in a certain sense we are retracing our footsteps.

Leaving from Piazza Carlo Goldoni, we continue straight down Via della Vigna Nuova, [16] but once we start to approach Piazza della Repubblica, attracted by a stretch of parked cars, we move off the straight trajectory and turn right into Piazza dei Davanzati. [17] This space is almost entirely taken up by parked cars; they represent the undesired subjects of any photograph one would want to take. Palazzo Davanzati itself, beautiful and austere, is partly hidden by the mass of cars.

Once we are past Piazza della Repubblica, we decide to suddenly change direction. We turn towards a labyrinth of small streets and alleys found in some blocks that survived the urban redevelopment process, masterfully described by Vasco Pratolini, which affected this part of the city during the time Florence was the capital of Italy. In the heart of some of these blocks, we discover tiny squares that have conserved their original configuration. [18] They are Piazzetta dei Tre Re, Piazza del Giglio and Piazza dei Cerchi, small and almost invisible public spaces, essentially frequented by those who live or work in the buildings that mark their edges. As we visit these small squares we get the feeling that we are intruders, as if we were in a private space. In actual fact, they were simple spaces belonging to the buildings of the families after which they are now named, and this aura of a private place still remains today. The very presence of gates that are closed at night, preventing anyone from entering, heightens this feeling.

After this short detour, we decide to return to the main route and resume the stroll. Once again, we hear the chatter of people walking by and, from time to

time, the noise of cars or scooters whizzing through the streets of this part of the old town.

Back in Piazza Salvemini, the urban fabric begins to thin out again, and from this perspective it is clearer how much this part of the Santa Croce quarter was affected by a very energetic attempt at urban regeneration, carried out during the Fascist period. The blocks between Via Pietrapiana and Via dell'Agnolo are more spread out. Some buildings (the Post Office, the Urban Cadastre and some particularly imposing residential buildings) seem to belong to another city. [19] They give these streets, which for the most part are mostly of medieval origin, an alienating feel.

Continuing in a straight line once again brings us to Piazza dei Ciompi, which also underwent demolitions in the early twentieth century, were we come upon a block of very dense terraced houses. [20] This is one of the largest blocks in the Santa Croce district, delimited by Piazza dei Ciompi to the west, Via Pietrapiana to the north, Via dell'Agnolo to the south and Via dei Macci to the east. A group of houses that seem to be stacked on top of each other. An arrangement that could not have been planned but that only came to be due to the layering power of history.

We discover a passageway in the thick curtain wall: Via dell'Ortone (the name clearly alludes to the country air that was breathed in this area until about a century ago). This passageway brings us, again almost unexpectedly, to Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti, [21] dominated by the mass of iron and stone of Sant'Ambrogio market. [22] Here the voices of the people, the noises of carts and a few trucks from which goods are unloaded replace all other sounds of the city.

It is almost lunchtime and the smells of cooking are strong. This area is dominated by restaurants, sandwich shops, delicatessens… Despite being very tempted to take a break, we decide to continue towards the end of our route.

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We head north down Via della Mattonaia, used by numerous cars that can enter the city centre from this point, and return to the route of the ancient *decumanus* towards Piazza Beccaria which now appears to us as majestic, wide and airy. [23] The medieval gate dominates the visual centre of the space and, almost like the pylon of a bridge over the Arno, sorts the flow of cars as if they were flowing water. The last glance is drawn towards the south by something that we know but cannot see from here, yet we perceive it almost inexplicably. It is the Arno.

This is the end of our exploration along the pilot route which, crossing the heart of Florence from east to west, has revealed to us unexplored and marginal, problematic and inconclusive places that are nonetheless capable of conveying sensations and suggestions and causing us to reflect on public space in the heart of the city.

ANNEX 2

Opinions of the inhabitants[1]

Mirko Romagnoli

Giardino Chelazzi

Giardino Chelazzi is one of the few green areas in the historical city centre. It is bordered by a tall fence that blocks the view of it from the pedestrian routes. It can be entered through a gate, which is almost always closed.

The community that spends time in Giardino Chelazzi has a positive attachment to the place. Francesco, 48, pointed out that it is the social exchanges that encourage people to visit the garden:

> *We are all characters. There are so many strange people: there are good and bad ones. That's why I come here.*

Susanna, 24, pointed out that the morning is the best time to be in the garden; while Matias, 36, remarked:

> *There's neighbourhood life, communication takes place, there's networking and also solidarity between the people of the neighbourhood. More importantly I see pensioners who come here in the morning and afternoon and they help each other out, they even hold small events in the square.*

Roberta, 66, pensioner, stated:

> *People come here mainly to walk their dog; some come to eat something and others to get water.*

Roberta was referring to the presence of a public drinking water dispenser ("fontanello"), particularly appreciated by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. It brings a continuous flow of people and has also transformed over time into a 'social facilitator' thanks to the virtuous mechanisms of familiarization that it triggers.

[1] All the interviews were carried out in the autumn of 2019, before the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The names in the text have been made up.

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The general appreciation for the dynamics of community life, the atmosphere, as well as the maintenance and cleaning of the place is counterbalanced by great frustration with problems linked to coexistence alongside people from different cultures and between customs deemed difficult to reconcile.

Thanks to the fence that encloses it, the garden has in fact become an area reserved for dogs. Francesco, a dog owner, said:

> *The municipality and the residents tolerate each other only because we monitor and manage the garden's problems.*

Francesco was referring to the foreign drug dealers who frequent the neighbourhood. Annamaria, 58, also mentioned this:

> *There are men who come to our garden, bathe and wash their feet in the dog bowls. From time to time they sleep there. Some use the flowerbeds as a toilet… all in all, there is a lot to say about it!*

Matias, who defines himself as a socialist, also confirms that it is difficult to coexist alongside some foreigners:

> *Every now and then there are some people, I'm going to say mainly illegal immigrants, due to their skin colour and not because I know for sure, who actually use drugs. In these cases the atmosphere quickly changes and I've heard arguments and personal attacks, clearly always towards women and never men.*

Mario, pensioner, 71, pointed out that it was difficult to coexist with the Muslim community, which is particularly large due to the nearby mosque in Piazza dei Ciompi:

> *The illegal immigrants come to sleep here, I feel bad for them; some, however, are argumentative at times. On a few occasions they have even threatened us with a glass bottle! We have to find a solution because some of them don't want to be touched by a dog as they consider them impure. When a dog touches them, they have to wash themselves seven times. It might be strange, but that's what they do.*

The presence of dogs on the one hand is what has brought together a small and cohesive community that ensures continuous control of the place; on the other hand, it constitutes an element of friction with other groups of users. Some dog owners admit that the need to keep the gate closed for the safety of the dogs discourages passers-by from entering the garden.

What's more, the presence of dogs deters parents with small children from using the space.

Annamaria said [while others listening to our conversation nodded in agreement]:

> *Children don't come here because there are dogs. In any case, in Borgo Allegri, nearby, there's a really nice garden where you can't take dogs. There's no point in parents with children or people who don't like dogs coming here to bother us, and vice versa, when there's a lovely garden a short distance away with plants and grass to play on.*

Matias, a dog owner, told us that conflicts between dog owners and parents of small children is a widespread problem in Florence and have been the cause of much tension in other gardens. In other places, such as the nearby Piazza d'Azeglio, the city police keep up an almost continuous watch to check that dogs are on kept on leash.

Matias admits that dogs are also a problem for the upkeep of the green areas:

There was a time when the flowerbeds were not protected, the dogs would walk on them and destroy them, the plants stopped growing. I don't know what can be done because a few more green areas would be nice, but they can't be maintained due to the presence of dogs. In general, there is a lack of green spaces in the city; but it's also true that the city is small, so all you have to do is walk 15 minutes and you're at the river.

Matias is young and it's no problem for him to get to the Arno River from Giardino Chelazzi. His words highlight a problem deeply felt by the inhabitants of the historical centre: the lack of green spaces.

Piazza Salvemini

Piazza Salvemini represents a sort of gateway to the oldest part of the historic city. A busy road skirts it on two sides; various businesses look out onto it. Carla, 68, pointed out the strategic position of the square:

For us Florentines, Piazza Salvemini is a transition place, but also a gateway to enter the city centre. It's a good reference point for meeting up, given how close it is to the Post Office and Teatro Verdi.

The intensity of the vehicle and pedestrian flows gives the square vitality, but unfortunately perceptual chaos too. The square is a noisy, confused and shabby place, a space to move through quickly or stay only briefly. In Piazza Salvemini people pass each other but never really meet.

This is confirmed by Robert, a New Yorker, 55, who has lived in Florence for three years:

I'm usually just passing through, just to withdraw money from the ATM. It's perfect for bikes, there's lots of space to park. I usually pass by here after I've been to my Italian school which is nearby, or after I've been to the Marucelliana Library.

Anna, 58, enjoys the historical centre on foot, taking advantage of it to run some errands given that «it's impossible to get around and find parking if you go by car.» She complained about the presence of tourists, cars and bikes:

Whether I'm in the car or on foot I feel this danger of bicycles which go in any direction they please with no regard for the rules.

Anna complained about the lack of shady and covered areas to stop and have a quick chat with friends:

I rarely stop here, every now and then I go and get a kebab but I eat it on the street. I wouldn't even know where to sit down, the only two benches are always occupied or in the baking sun.

Giovan Battista, a trader in Piazza Salvemini, told us that the square is better than it was in the past:

At one time the benches represented an element of decay. They were taken over by junkies at all hours of the day and night. They slept on them, took drugs on them and used them as a toilet; essentially, they couldn't be used by anyone else. I knew many of them, poor things, but they would drive people away from the square. All it took was some minor restoration work to improve people's behaviour. That's not to say that those people are no longer around, but they behave better. It's a good thing.

The problem of vehicle traffic was pointed out by all six people interviewed. Chiara, 29, who had just left work in a shop close to the square, told us:

Why would I stop here? All I can see is traffic and I'd be surrounded by chaos. There's too much noise. What's more, have you seen the state of that building?

Chiara pointed to the Post Office building designed by Giovanni Michelucci.

Everyone agrees that the architectural façades overlooking the square are neglected. Robert does not consider them fit for a historical centre like that of Florence. The sandwich kiosk in the middle of the square was also run-down.

Once again Robert offered some suggestions for the urban furniture:

This traffic divider is ugly, it should be replaced. It would also be important to improve the bike racks.

The side along the square bordering with the road only has a low protective barrier which sometimes serves as makeshift seating. Alongside it is a long row of poorly maintained bike racks which people tie their bikes to in a disorderly way. Although the space for parking bikes is one of the features the interviewees most appreciated, it is also one of the most run-down elements of the square.

As for the acoustic and visual separation from vehicular traffic, the interviewees had some practical suggestions. One of the most common was the reference to urban green areas associated with parking furniture.

A bit of greenery would be nice, at least a tree, so you feel like you're out of the traffic. (Anna).

Trees would be nice. Yes, I think I would add tables and trees. In general, the centre of Florence is really grey, there are no green spaces. (Robert)

Trees are always a good thing. In general, there's a lack of trees in the city. They would create more shade and benches could be added so people can sit down. (Giuseppe).

Piazza di San Pancrazio

Piazza di San Pancrazio is an attractive open space positioned along an important artery of the historical centre of Florence, close to two prestigious buildings: Palazzo Rucellai, by Leon Battista Alberti, and Museo Marino Marini, the result of the creative restoration of the former church of San Pancrazio in 1982. Inside the museum a side chapel houses another architectural gem by Leon Battista Alberti: the Sacellum of the Holy Sepulcher, famous as the Rucellai Chapel. Despite the 'wonders' found in this small and irregular square, it has several problems.

The square is seen as a mere place of transition. Martina, 38, shop assistant, said:

I pass by here but that's it. The only social life is at the bar, you can stop and get something there but once you've had your coffee you leave, you certainly don't stick around. I don't pass by here at night.

Martina points to a problem also raised by the other interviewees: a sense of insecurity at night when the businesses have closed and there are few passers-by. This aspect was in fact pointed out by Francesca, 27, who often walks her dog in the square:

There's a quiet wine shop which is quite busy in the evening. Given that there are no cars passing by, the outdoor area with tables could be made larger because it would be nice here in the evening. I would put another bar here that would also be open in the evening. I don't mean a bar with loud music and 'blazing' lights, but a relaxed place with a nice atmosphere. The square is empty in the evening. This makes it scary. Not to mention that it's dark and hidden. At night there are homeless people who generally don't cause a nuisance. I helped

one of them once by bringing him some blankets. On the other hand, at other times you meet the guy who takes drugs, drinks and is troublesome. One time I called the police. I don't pass by here at night any more, but I would if there was a bar with people. What's more, the square is not lit, especially over there, there's a scary corner [points to the blind corner between the Museo Marino Marini and the adjacent building]. *Sometimes there's a homeless person there who only wants to shelter from the cold, but if I pass by alone in the dark it scares me.*

The feeling of insecurity at night is felt by different categories of people. Leonardo, a long-term trader in the square, 48, said:

At night the square has a dark side. Criminals look for spaces where they can traffic. This square is perfect for them because all you have to do is place a lookout at the top, a lookout in the corner and a lookout at the bottom and they do what they want. They have killed the centre [probably referring to the local authorities]: *if you take the bees out of a honeycomb and put flies in, how long will it last? Not very long! It really wouldn't take much.*

Gabriella, 73, one of Leonardo's customers, inserted herself into the conversation and remarked:

I live in Piazza Santa Maria Novella and you can't sleep at night because of the partying and people who shout until four in the morning. All you need to do is go out one evening with your phone in hand and you don't need to ask anyone for anything, you'll see for yourself, it's one big camp [said in an argumentative tone]. Ours has never been a big metropolis, but it's dealing with the flaws of one without having the necessary space of a big metropolis.

The interviewees appreciated the absence of cars. According to Paolo, 26:

This small square is also nice because if I sit down to have a chat with you, like we're doing now, we don't have to worry about cars passing by. In general, the annoyance of cars is felt a great deal in the centre. [A noisy workman's truck passes by] What are you supposed to do if it's like that all the time? You can't even stop to talk for a minute.

Leonardo, despite being a business owner, also sees cars as a problem. For him, a hybrid space where vehicles can pass by but not park and a low quality pedestrian area doesn't work. He would be happy to stop cars passing through in exchange for a beautiful completely pedestrianised and well maintained square:

As I see it, given that it's like this, I would fully pedestrianize the square turning it into a nice place: clean streets and well equipped. I'd get rid of all the cars.

He then continued with some remarks on the transformations the square has undergone in the last twenty years:

From what I see and hear the women who come into my shop say, there are no truly public spaces in the historical centre. Even when there's a public square, like this one here, in the end it turns into a camp for tourists and that's it. There are no residents who say: "You know what? I'm going outside to read a paper in the square." Finding a free bench or somewhere to sit is impossible as the square is invaded by tourists. I mean, mothers who take their children out to play have to go to the riverside because where can they let them play here? I remember that 22 years ago, when I started working in my shop, there were still some kids who played with a ball in the square. But we're talking about 22 years ago, since then I haven't seen any children playing around here.

Leonardo complained about the absence of seating. This is no trivial matter. Old people, parents with children, but also groups of young friends, need spaces where they can hang out and bring the squares to life.

Aurelio, 81, the oldest of our interviewees, freezes the conversation by saying:

> *The social fabric is no longer there, it degenerated some time ago. There are no more workshops. Where are the artisans? If you don't speak two languages what do you do when you go out at night?*

Unlike the two previous case studies, Piazza di San Pancrazio is in the part of the historical centre more affected by tourist flows. As a result, the residents are only a small slice of the people who use it. This is why Aurelio complained that the social fabric is weaker, and for a business like Leonardo's the absence of residents and a hit and run tourist flow create an economic sustainability problem.

Some of the interviewees tried to suggest minor solutions to attract residents, young and old. Providing comfortable seating and introducing commercial activities that are also open in the evening are among the most common suggestions. Another aspect pointed out above all by the women concerns lighting in the darkest corners of the square.

Concluding remarks

This phase of the analysis of residual spaces was developed in the conviction that the reconstruction of a system of shared images could stimulate a direct comparison between the potential capacity for transformation of each place and the dynamic reality of the daily life of the inhabitants (cf. Chiesi & Costa, 2017).

The investigation helps to define a "social representation" of the places analysed, or a reconstruction, albeit partial and incomplete, of the organisation of the symbolic relations, values, ideas and practices shared by those who use them (Moscovici & Farr, 1989).

The interviewees' observations have been used to gain a more in-depth understanding of the critical issues and potential of each space, but also to describe the general conditions prevailing in public spaces in the historical centre of Florence. In fact, the subjective point of view of those who move through and experience these places on a daily basis often goes beyond the identification of specific problems relating to the space analysed, offering more general thoughts. Overall, the dialogues revealed such strong disaffection for the public spaces of the historical centre that often the residents could not even imagine changes nor wish for something new that might improve their use.

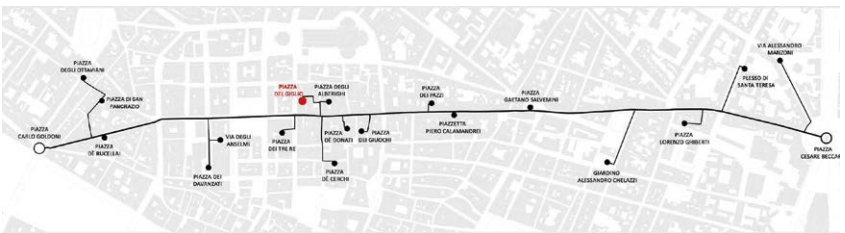
ANNEX 3

Example of a completed analysis sheet

Junik Balisha, Mirko Romagnoli and Luigi Vessella

Piazza del Giglio_ 43°46'19"N; 11°15'20"E **PS11**/1

General plan of the pilot route identifying the public spaces analysed



PS11
Piazza del Giglio

Piazza del Giglio is a rectangular space, rather regular and small in size. The space is bordered on all sides by five-storey buildings. The square is hidden in the compact medieval fabric of the city and can be reached from three dark, narrow and poorly maintained alleyways. Each of these accesses connects the square to the main streets that surround it through short, barely visible pathways. Entrance gates, closed at night and recessed from the street's edge, are elements that separate it from very busy streets: Via del Corso, Via delle Oche and Piazza Sant'Elisabetta. This strongly limits people's access and as a result they interpret the square as a private space. One of these accesses, the one in Piazza Sant'Elisabetta, is completely hidden by the large umbrellas and tables of a hotel making it even more difficult to glimpse and walk through. The stone paving, façades covered with light shades of plaster and twentieth-century decorative elements that alternate in the windows of the hotel rooms, are in good condition. Piazza del Giglio is an unusual place in the historical centre. A calm and silent place that the typical confusion of the Florentine centre cannot penetrate. Walking through the labyrinthine alleyways providing access to it is like taking a step back in time, away from the shop windows and illuminated signs that mark the main streets of the centre, but at the same time walking down the alleyways can generate a sense of concern, almost a state of suspense, because you do not know what to expect at the end of the path, and it seems like you are entering "someone else's home". The square, even if small and currently devoid of functions, could become a spot for a pause, resting, a place where you can take a break from the hectic movements in the surrounding streets. The small rectangle of sky, defined by the tall buildings delimiting the square, is the only way daylight gets in; it creates a particular atmosphere that sparks the imagination and aids contemplation.

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Piazza del Giglio **PS11**/2

Plan

Typological and technological features

Total surface area: 136 m^2
Size: 6.50 x 19.00 m
Morphology: rectangular
Type of traffic: pedestrian
Vegetation: no
Urban equipment: no
Paving: stone crazy paving
Distinctive elements: in the past this square was used as a shelter for animals, its hidden and sheltered position made it suitable for this activity. Within the square there are some decorative elements, in particular: two bronze bas-reliefs (representing John F. Kennedy and Pope John XXIII), a wooden cross and some commemorative plaques.

Expression of residuality

ABSENCE OF PEOPLE	IMPROPER USAGE	DECAY

Absence of people: People's entry into Piazza del Giglio is severely limited by the characteristics of the access streets: three small tunnel passageways which are barely visible from the main routes as they are hidden between the buildings. Due to the illegal activities that went on in the square at night, the Municipality of Florence has given the hotel looking onto it permission to manage access to the square at nighttime. As a result, access to the square is fully blocked by tall gates from 7.00 pm to 6.00 am. During the day the gates are often left half closed giving the impression to the few passers-by who venture into the alleyways that the square is a private space. By day the square is used exclusively by hotel staff as a place to take a break from work. In the absence of benches, staff use empty cases of water bottles and fruit as makeshift seating.

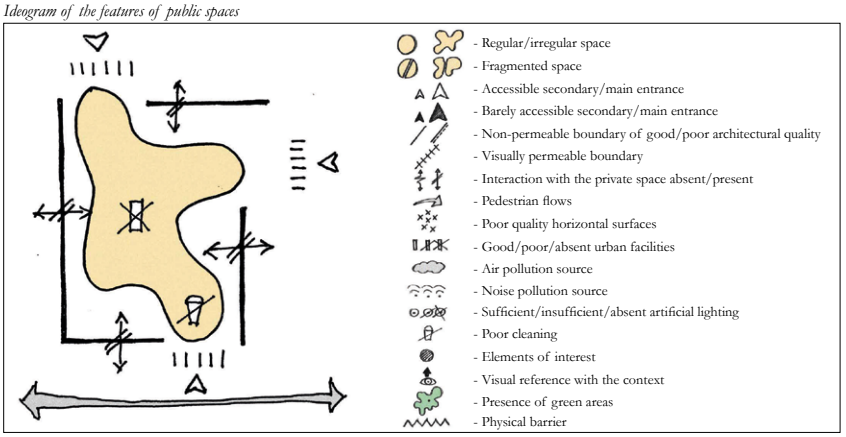
Improper usage: Private management of the accesses is incompatible with a public space. The conformation of the space (narrow and delimited by tall buildings) is not conducive to carrying out optional activities. In the current situation, even those who are able to get to the square would not find any reason to remain there.

Decay: In the street leading to it from Via del Corso there are a fair number of bins and mobile trolleys for transporting waste that obstruct the passageway, which is already dark and narrow in itself. The presence of waste means that this access route has an unpleasant smell which discourages anyone from going down it.



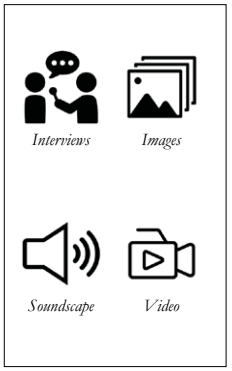
Piazza del Giglio_ 43°46'19"N; 11°15'20"E **PS11**/3

Ideogram of the features of public spaces



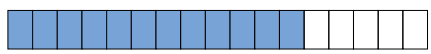
Piazza del Giglio is a space almost entirely unknown even to Florentines. The streets providing access to it are perfectly camouflaged among the succession of openings in the continuous façades. The labyrinth formed of access alleyways affects the accessibility of the square.

Multimedia resources



Piazza del Giglio **PS11**/4

CAUSES OF RESIDUALITY	FACTORS OF RESIDUALITY	SPATIAL ISSUES	DESCRIPTION
Intrinsic	Topological	Lack of visual access	- The square is essentially invisible from the busy surrounding streets (Via del Corso, Via dell'Oca and Piazza Sant'Elisabetta); the access alleyways are scarcely perceptible by those passing through the nearby streets; - The narrow passageways have low vaults overhead and blend into the buildings of the medieval fabric.
		Distance from the main urban pathways	- Despite the proximity of the routes that surround the space the three particularly narrow entry points do not invite exploration of the space.
	Topological	Geometrical irregularity	
		Spatial fragmentation	
Used-related	Functional	Incompatibility between simultaneous activities*	- For security reasons, the square has lost two typical connotations of the public space: permeability and unlimited use. Essentially, it has been privatised.
		Accessibility issues*	- The gates used to close off the space at night are placed at the entrance to each alley and are managed by the hotel located at the opening of one of the entrances. They are open from 6.00 am to 7.00 pm; - Almost to discourage entry, the gates are often left ajar even during the day.
		Low usage*	- Leaving aside the hotel employees who take their work breaks there, the space is unused throughout the day.
		Low quality of street furniture design	- There is no furniture or equipment; - The employees of the nearby hotel sit on water or fruit cases during their work breaks.
	Environmental	Acoustic discomfort*	- While the sounds of the city are muffled, those produced inside the square seem to create annoying reverberations for the people living in the buildings overlooking the square.
		Air pollution*	
		Light discomfort*	- The entrances, narrow and covered by vaults, are dark and not particularly inviting even in broad daylight; the height of the buildings surrounding the square hinders direct sunlight.
	Management	Poor maintenance	
		Poor cleanliness	- The space is looked after and clean except for the entrance on Via del Corso, the busiest of the connecting streets leading to the square. Here, just after the entrance gate, a considerable number of bins and trolleys for transporting goods and waste obstruct the passageway, making it seem like a private back room to a public space potentially accessible to all.
Semantic	Symbolic	Lack of identity-related elements*	- There are some elements (plaques and bas-reliefs) but they don't generate any feelings of affection towards the space in the inhabitants.
		Poor quality of margins	
	Relational	Lack of visual and sound references to the context	- There are no elements of reference with the context, from inside the square none of the streets that the access routes connect to can be seen, and this creates a very strong feeling of isolation.
		Poor interaction with surrounding context*	- The square is detached from the network of surrounding spaces, the flows of the city don't seem able to 'contaminate it'. - The absence of activities open to the public on the ground floors of the buildings delimiting the space rules out any interaction between public space and private space.

Level indicator of the spatial issues detected  **12/17**

** Spatial issues that are particularly influenced by the moment of observation.*

ANNEX 4

Thoughts and initial hypotheses on the regeneration of the urban spaces analysed

Mirko Romagnoli

The residual spaces analysed, although they are arranged along a rather coherent urban fabric, have significant differences. In the first instance, they can be divided into two main categories: (1) *open and visible spaces*, found along or close to crossings that intercept continuous flows of people, and (2) *closed and hidden spaces*, which instead have more intimate dimensions typical of the dense medieval Florentine urban fabric. Specific considerations then concern the furniture and equipment present.

On the basis of this classification, we will attempt to briefly describe the characteristic elements as well as the atmospheres these spaces evoke and, when possible, guidance for their regeneration will be suggested.

Open and visible public spaces

This group is comprised of Piazza Gaetano Salvemini (Fig. A.1), Piazzetta Piero Calamandrei (Fig. A.2), Via degli Anselmi (Fig. A.3), Piazza de' Davanzati, Piazza de' Rucellai, Piazza di San Pancrazio and Piazza degli Ottaviani (Fig. A.4) and the portion of Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti between Via dell'Ortone and Via Andrea del Verrocchio (Fig. A.5).

With different intensities, these places are incubators of human energy; some are marked by the frequency of social exchanges. Despite this, they are often neglected and this generates unease, confusion and emotional disaffection in the inhabitants.

In Piazza Salvemini, inadequate management of the flows that cross it, accompanied by the presence of uncoordinated functions (commercial activities, appurtenances of bars, parking for bikes) and urban equipment devoid of design logic, produces a chaotic atmosphere. This condition is exacerbated by noise and smog from the intense vehicle traffic that skirts the square on two sides.

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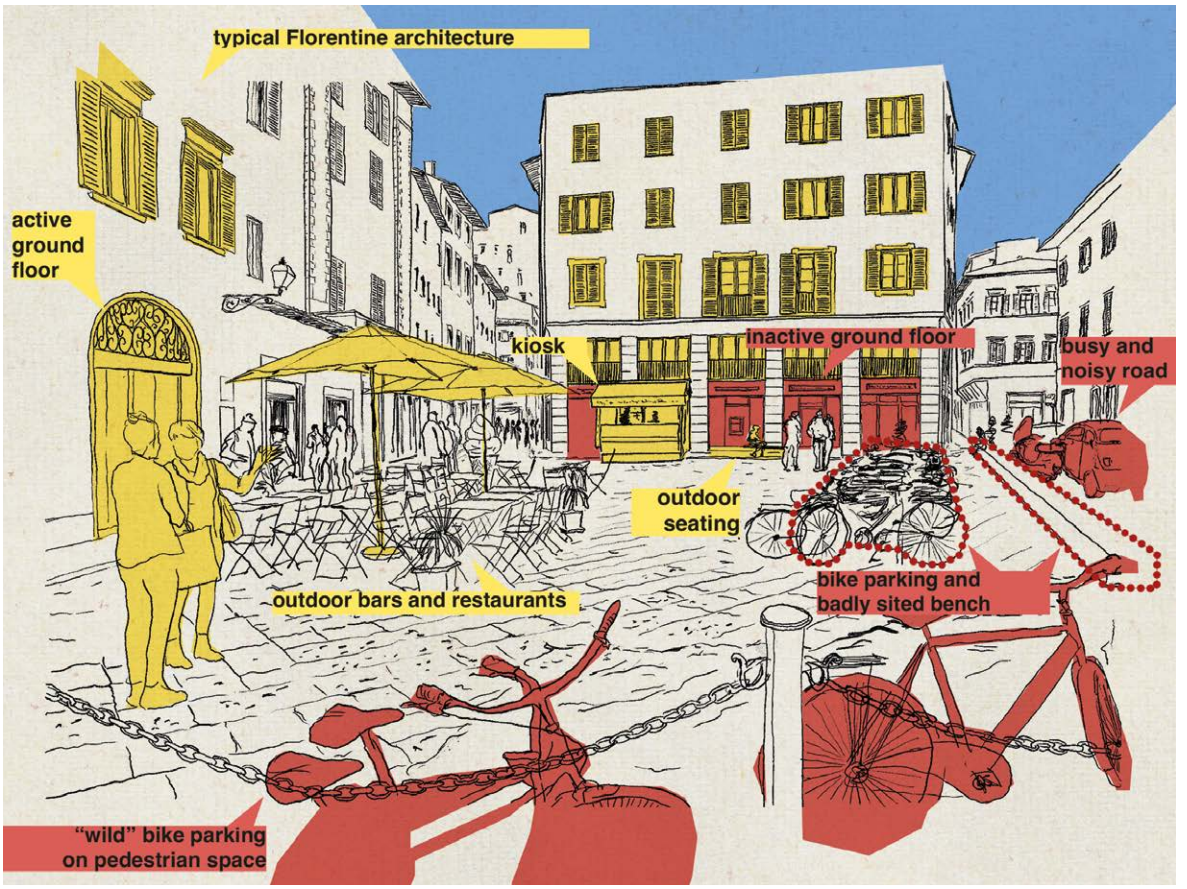

Figure A.1 – Florence, Piazza Gaetano Salvemini.

A different spatial organisation, a 'green' filter positioned near the road, and coordinated urban furniture could restore a more marked civic value and a functional and aesthetic dignity to this square teeming with social interactions. Here, moreover, unlike most public spaces in the historical centre of Florence which are too small or too distinguished by historical-architectural features, it might be reasonable to envisage the inclusion of green installations.

As revealed in the in-depth interviews (see Annex 3), the difficult co-existence between vehicles and pedestrians raises the frustration levels of the inhabitants of the historical centre. In the spaces skirted by vehicle traffic, the acoustic and air quality are rather compromised. Inside the Roman quadrilateral, given that there is less traffic, the smog is considerably reduced.

In general, the quality of the edges considerably reflects on the qualities of the enclosed space and assumes central importance in the attractiveness of the places. In Piazza Salvemini, the redesign of the boundary line between the pedestrian space and the road could play an important role in the redevelopment project. The same occurs in Piazza degli Ottaviani where the presence of the nearby Piazza Santa Maria Novella, an important tourist hub in the historical centre of Florence, makes this residual space the site of intense traffic. Pedestrians, bicycles and cars share a small area coplanar with the paving itself, the triangular shape of the space, with one side open to the road, does not facilitate flow management.

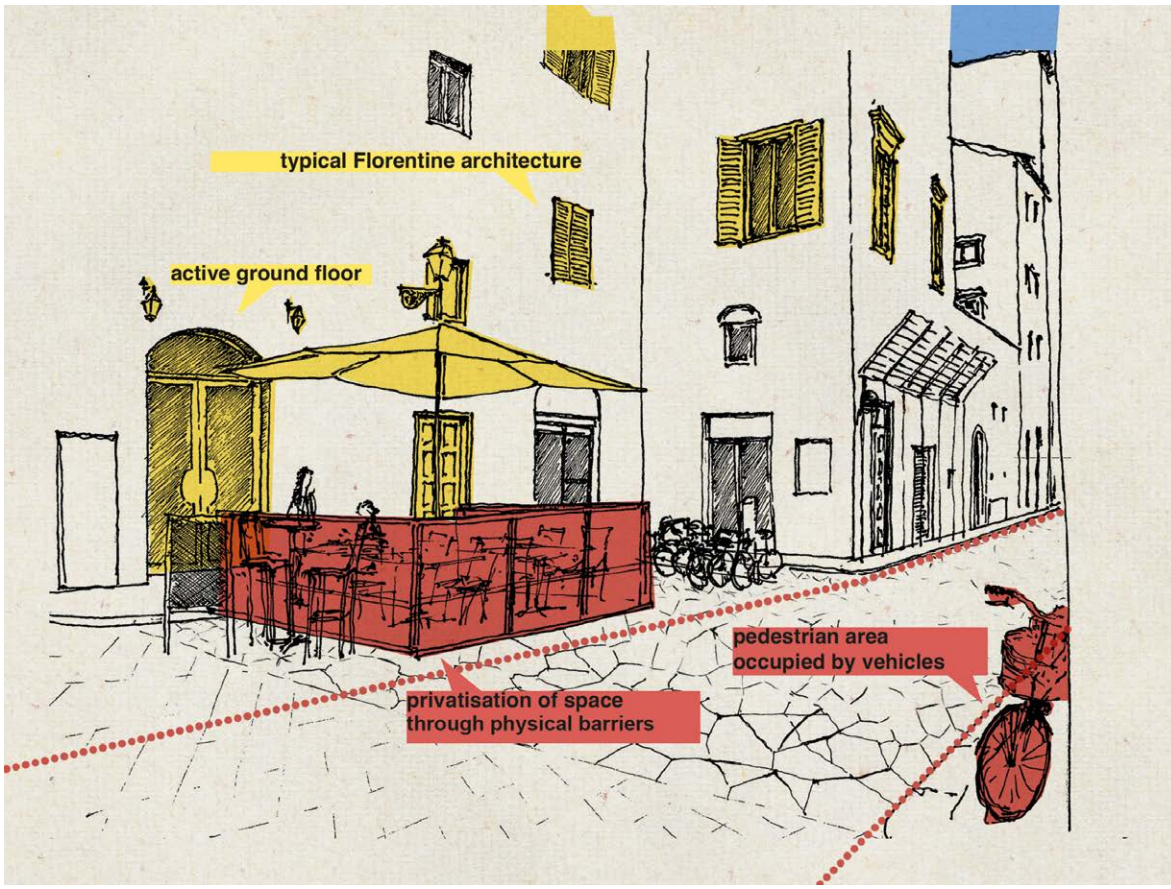

Figure A.2 – Florence, Piazzetta Pietro Calamandrei.

The boundary line between the pedestrian area and the roadside could be redesigned with a new spatial and architectural configuration, introducing well-integrated urban equipment capable of providing protection from the traffic and distinguishing the pedestrian space. For example, the repositioning of the bike racks and kiosk, currently alongside a narrow pavement, could create a protected enclosure suitable for the movement of pedestrians.

Some of the spaces of this group are overlooked by architecture of great historical-artistic value. Think of Piazza de' Davanzati, Piazza de' Rucellai and Piazza di San Pancrazio. These three squares provide an example of how some places located in a highly prestigious context and along very busy routes can become nothing more than crossing places. Places in which the potential relationship with the architectural elements present is overlooked and the spatial, social and semantic qualities overshadowed. This inevitably results in their underutilization.

In Piazza de' Davanzati the area used as a car park almost entirely saturates the surface area hindering any voluntary activities being carried out. The lack of space for pedestrians, the absence of seating and the difficulty in crossing the area result in this square being used almost exclusively by residents in the historical centre looking for a place to park. Pedestrians are forced to move in single file along the narrow pavements at the edge of the square, alongside the parked vehicles (Fig. A.6). From the pavements the presence of cars blocks the perspective view of the rest of the square, compromising any relationship between it and Palazzo Davanzati.

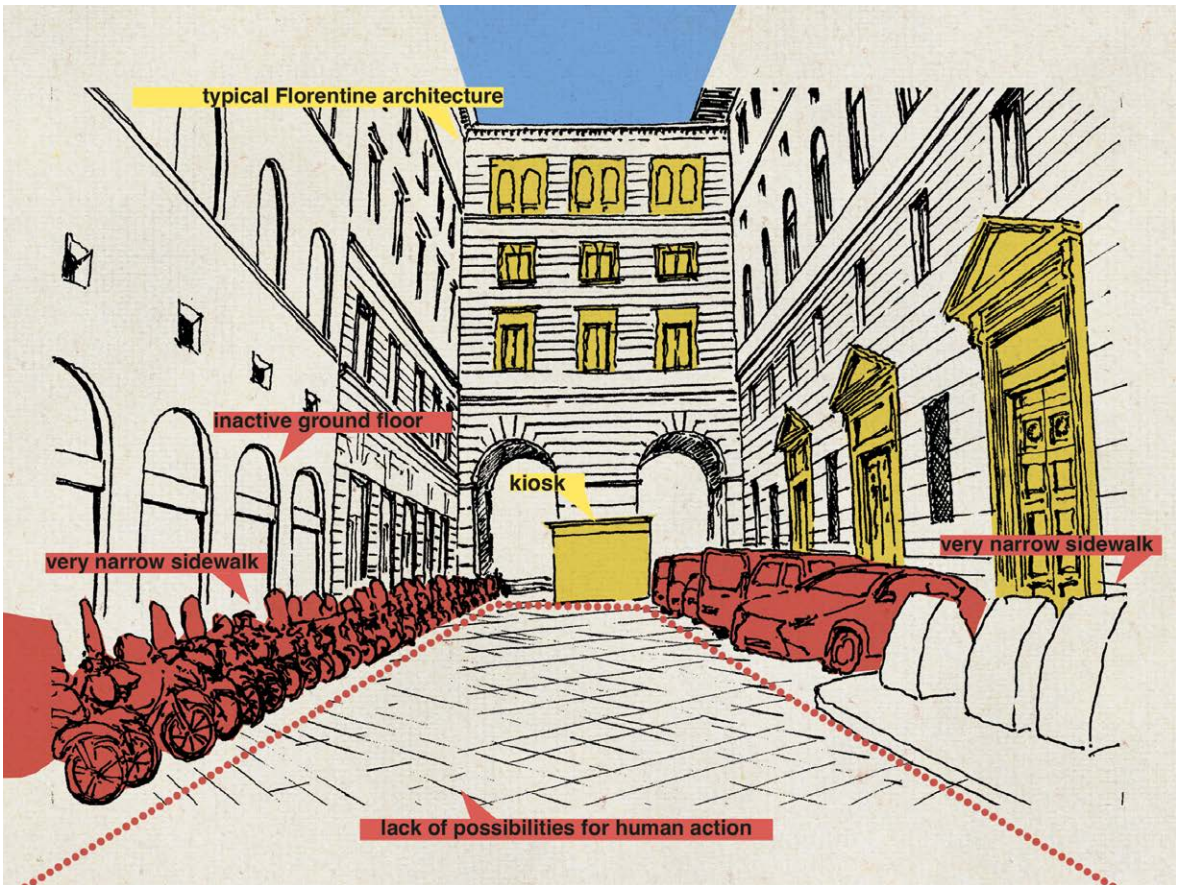

Figure A.3 – Florence, Via degli Anselmi.

Eliminating or, at the very least, limiting the car parking area is a first inevitable step towards the redevelopment of this square.

In Via degli Anselmi, a space far from intense vehicle traffic, strategically positioned between Piazza Strozzi and Piazza della Repubblica, the situation is similar. Here a busy kiosk is positioned close to Piazza della Repubblica, turning its back on the space behind it. A parking area for cars and scooters occupies the entire area at the back, making this space devoid of interest.

> Small adjustments, such as a kiosk with openings on several sides, together with the elimination of a few parking spaces, would probably be enough to revitalise this road.

Piazza de' Rucellai is empty for most of the day. The loggia positioned in front of Palazzo Rucellai houses a commercial establishment delimited by fixed windows that only allow visual interaction with passers-by; the latter tend to gather on the *panca di via*[1] which acts as a connector between the building and the road. This means that those who visit the square cannot enjoy the beautiful façade by Alberti (Fig. A.7). The pedestrian island in the middle of the square is a well-defined area and protected from vehicle traffic, which in any case is light in this area.

[1] A "panca di via" (or "sossello") is a typical element of Florentine renaissance palaces. It is a bench projecting from the bottom of the façade at street level.

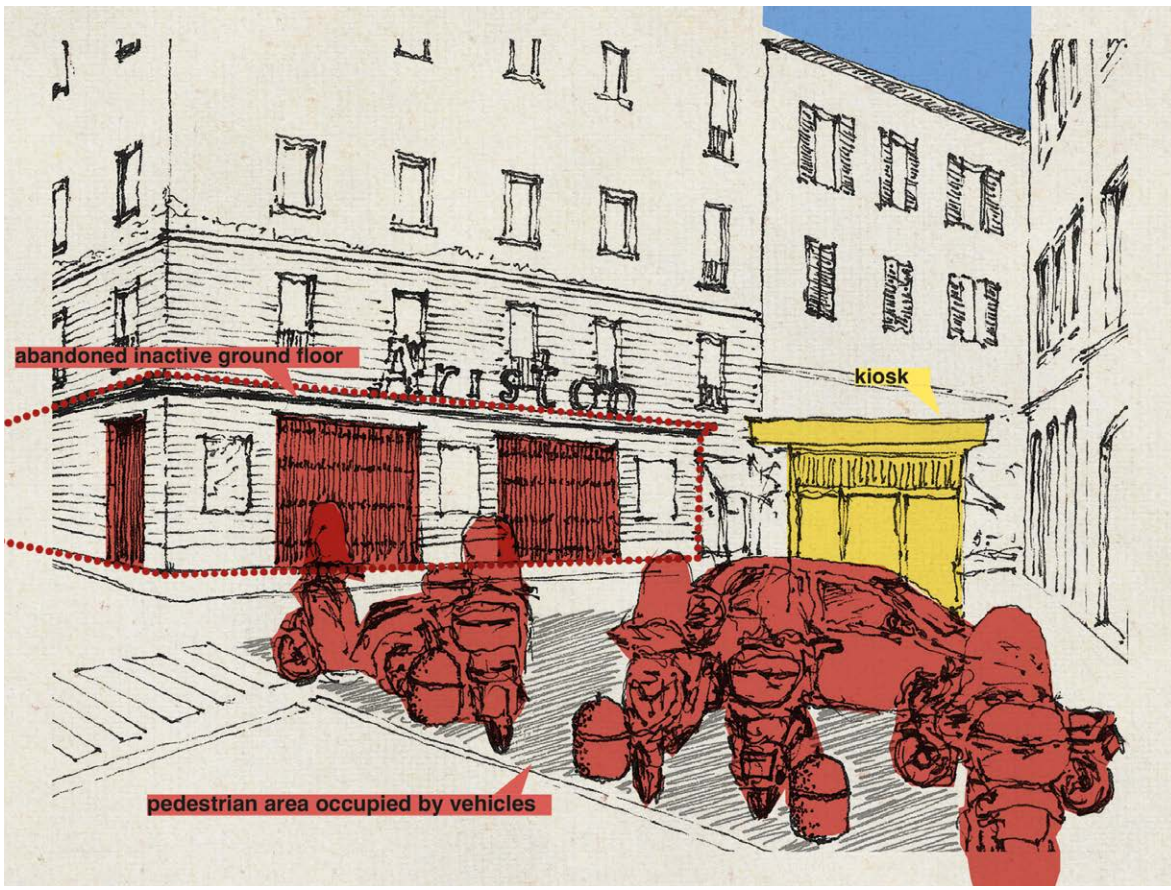

Figure A.4 – Piazza degli Ottaviani.

Here, a space could be created for taking a break, with benches well integrated into the context, allowing more dynamic use of the space and an appropriate view of Palazzo Rucellai.

Piazza di San Pancrazio is also positioned along the major road. In this space the atmosphere is calm and peaceful, ideal for relaxing outside. Due to the lack of seating, the few passers-by who stop there use the steps of the Marino Marini Museum (at one time San Pancrazio church) positioned in a blind and hidden corner of the square (Fig. A.8).

> Well positioned and designed facilities for taking a break could offer passers-by new opportunities for using the square in different seasons of the year and at different times of the day, above all enhancing the museum's façade[2].

Spaces of this type demonstrate the need to enhance their connection with the architectural splendours that delimit them. In general, the urban nodes critical for the dense tourist flows reveal understandable difficulty in managing the two conflictual aspects in the use of public space: "staying" *versus* "crossing". Places of contemplation or relationships must find dialogue with the places of the 'liquid' space of crossing. And this, perhaps, is the biggest challenge: harmonize life opportunities and management of flows.

[2] During the COVID emergency, the need to consume food and drink outside transformed the usually neglected small spaces adjacent to businesses, such as Piazza di San Pancrazio, into a precious a resource for business owners and customers.

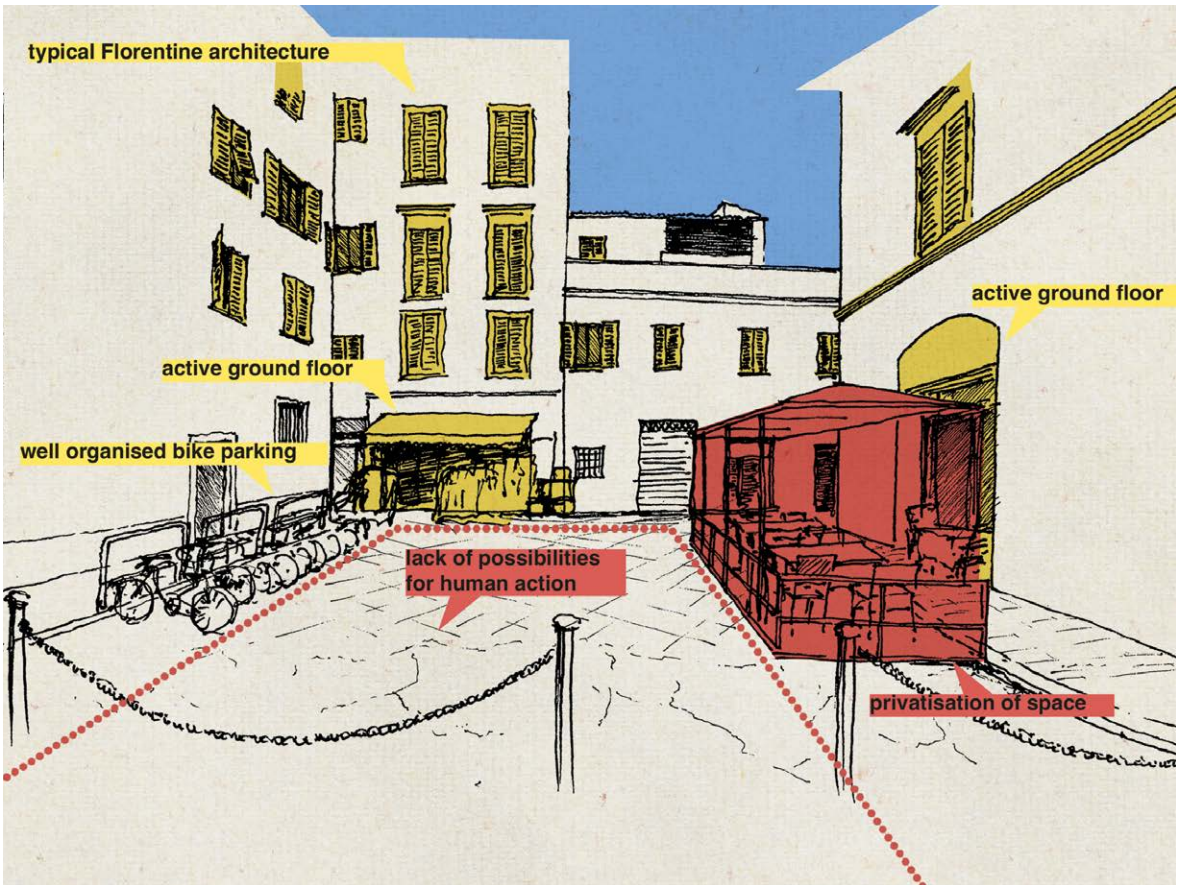

Figure A.5 – Florence, portion of Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti.

Closed and hidden spaces

This second group of residual spaces is comprised of: Via Alessandro Manzoni, Piazza de' Donati, Piazza de' Pazzi (Fig. A.9), Piazza de' Cerchi (Fig. A.10), Piazza degli Alberighi, Piazza del Giglio and Piazzetta dei Tre Re. In this group, Giardino Chelazzi, the only green space among those analysed during the testing, is a separate case.

Via Manzoni and the other squares are small places spread out within the historical centre and often united by the fact that they are cul-de-sacs to which only one street provides access. Hidden within the network of the urban fabric, these spaces are characterised by the absence of people and activities, ultimately becoming *urban voids*. High walls often border small areas (Fig. A.9). This creates an intimate and cosy atmosphere and a particular acoustic. Here sounds linked to human activity and city life prevail, such as domestic noises, market chatter, and the sound of bells.

In general terms, there is a strong correlation between residuality and geometric aspects (see § 2.3.2.1). In actual fact, the marginalisation of these spaces of city life seem to depend more on the poor interaction that they establish with the surrounding urban context than problems linked to shape or size. In some of these spaces (like Piazza del Giglio, Piazza de' Donati or Piazza degli Alberighi) access is problematic due to the small and often dark alleys that lead to them and distance them from the most well-trodden paths. At times, as in the case of Piazza del Giglio and Piazzetta dei Tre

Figure A.6 – Florence, Piazza de' Davanzati.

Re, in the evening the entrance to these spaces is even denied by gates that, for safety reasons, privatise their use.

The spaces in this category, while not home to architectural wonders, nonetheless retain undoubtedly charming elements in the architectural homogeneity, historical characterization and in their authenticity. Moreover, due to their intrinsic characteristics, they are places where the needs of the inhabitants can hardly be crushed by tourist pressure. They could, therefore, become tiny 'urban living rooms', opportunities to experience a richer and more productive neighbourhood life or places for tourists to rest.

> In the absence of architectural discoveries or centres of interest, the symbolic weight of the closed and hidden residual spaces could be raised through artistic installations[3]. Temporary projects could be carried out, even through the use of green installations. In this regard, it might be useful to recall the experience of Piazzetta dei Tre Re. Here, since 2016, thanks to collaboration between the city council, the voluntary sector and

[3] In Florence, a tangible example of this type of approach is the small and hidden open space at the crossing between Vicolo dell'Oro and Chiasso dei Del Bene, a short hop from the Ponte Vecchio. Here, the façade of a hotel and an art gallery periodically transform into a site for the installation of open-air works of art. Although they are private initiatives, these events create unexpected flows of people for a space hidden from the main road network and often tourists and inhabitants alike, upon seeing them, stop for some time in this quiet and secluded place.

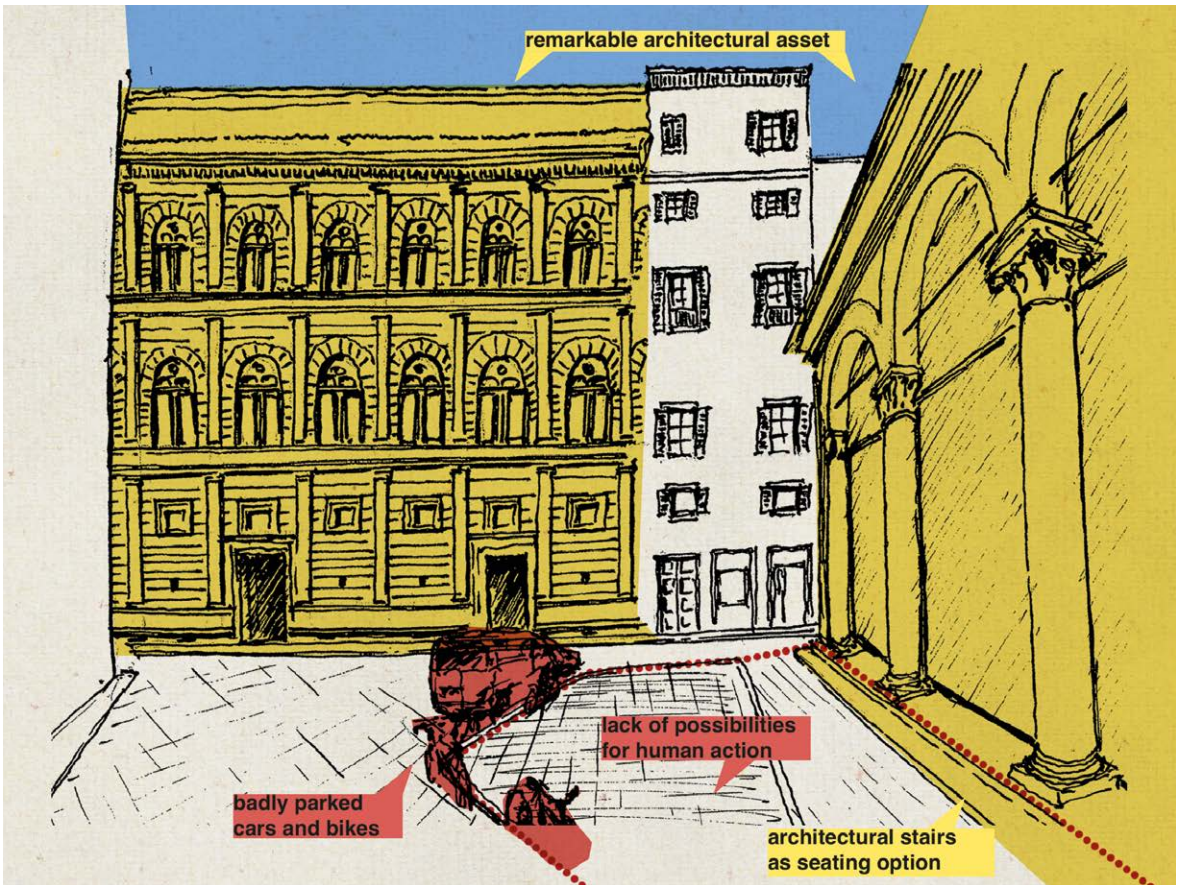

Figure A.7 – Florence, Piazza de' Rucellai.

local businesses (for the supply of plants and nighttime lighting) in the summer months degradation and abandonment become a thing of the past. The small square transforms each time, into a small inhabited garden, a space for the sale and tasting of typical regional products, a space for cultural activities, a space for resting and relaxing (Fig. 2.35).

The residual space of Via Alessandro Manzoni is created by the intersection of this street with Via Giacomo Leopardi. At the junction of the two streets there is an unusual widening where an uncommon traffic divider regulates the flow of vehicles. The chaotic use of the widening of the road by cars and parked scooters (together with the disorderly placement of the road equipment and signs) creates confusion and poor spatial clarity.

> This widening could be more usefully deployed for pedestrians by creating a small equipped area capable of at least partly revitalising this short stretch of road halfway between Piazza Cesare Beccaria and Piazza Massimo d'Azeglio.

In general, public green areas are rare in the historical centre of In Florence; one of them is Giardino Chelazzi. The garden is used as an area for dogs to play and, as emerged from the interviews (see Annex 3.), this generates conflict between dog owners and other users, in addition to damaging the flower beds. The garden area is enclosed by iron fencing and a dense hedge of the same height. Although the hedge is bare and withered, it is difficult for those walking along the adjacent streets to catch a glimpse of the garden. Its entrance gate is often closed to prevent dogs from getting out. As a result,

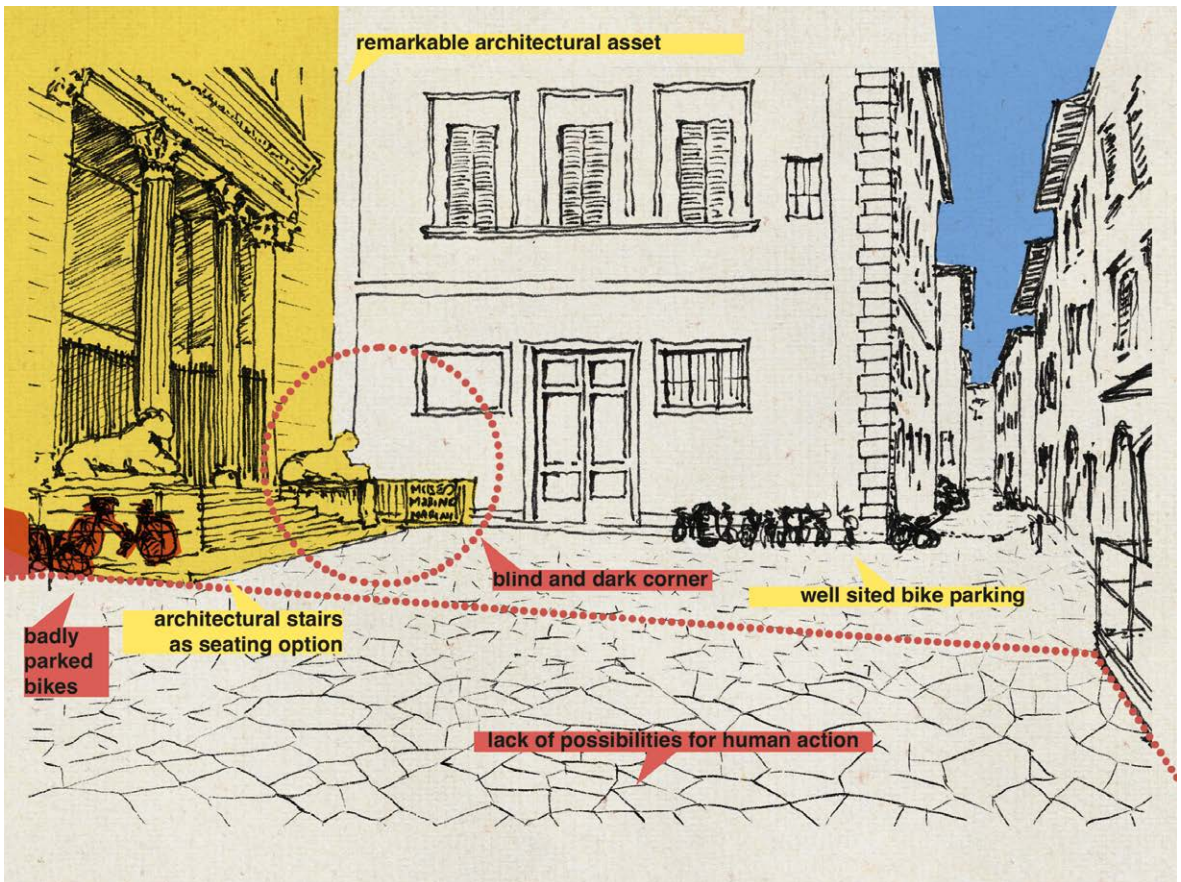

Figure A.8 – Florence, Piazza di San Pancrazio.

the garden does not guarantee permeability and unrestricted use, two characteristics that distinguish public spaces. However, this very physical barrier, an element providing visual and acoustic protection from the busy Via dell'Agnolo, represents one of the strengths of the garden for the neighbourhood's residents. In fact, it creates a perceptual distance between an internal space (all in all, well-finished and pleasant) and the external space. It appears to be neglected, dirty and foul smelling (with rubbish bins right next to the garden entrance); it is often visited by drug dealers and their customers.

> The buffer zone of Giardino Chelazzi has particularly interesting project potential. It could be leveraged to create permeability in the garden, which it currently lacks, and also to redevelop the adjacent pedestrian spaces.

Equipment and furniture

Social exchanges inside the public space are often assisted by the presence of quality equipment and furniture. In the spaces analysed, an example of urban furniture that attracts users by providing a highly appreciated service is the drinking water distributor ('fontanello') in Giardino Chelazzi.

That aside, the poor quality and poor maintenance of the urban equipment prevails. The problem afflicts the closed spaces as much as the open spaces, although the former are more affected by vandalism and general neglect. In these spaces, in fact, the

Figure A.9 – Florence, Piazza de' Pazzi.

absence of people and poor visibility of the most well-trodden streets translates into the absence of control and maintenance.

Often, as in Piazza Salvemini and Piazza degli Ottaviani, the configuration and arrangement of the equipment does not seem supported by real design logic. (Fig. A.1 and A.4). The equipment creates interference and even dangerous situations.

In residual spaces where the traffic flow skirts or intercepts the flow of pedestrians (for example, Piazza Salvemini, Piazza Ottaviani, Via Manzoni), it is necessary to assess the installation of appropriate protection devices. The quality of the interventions lies in their capacity to make these devices effective and visible without compromising the aesthetics of the places. Where possible, pedestrian and vehicle areas can also be separated through the use of different pavings or slight height differences, paying attention however not to compromise the accessibility of the areas to all types of users.

Order and clarity in the arrangement of the road signs, both horizontal and vertical, is not of secondary importance to aesthetics and wayfinding.

In almost all the spaces analysed, the bicycle racks were broken or damaged. Often remnants of bicycle frames are seen chained up to the racks. This is one example of the inhabitants' lack of attachment to public facilities, but also inadequate maintenance of the urban spaces. Due to the lack of places to park, cyclists are forced to chain up their bikes to makeshift supports (posts, lampposts, etc.) making pedestrian mobility more difficult and creating obstacles for disabled people to get around (Fig. A.2, A.7 and A.8.

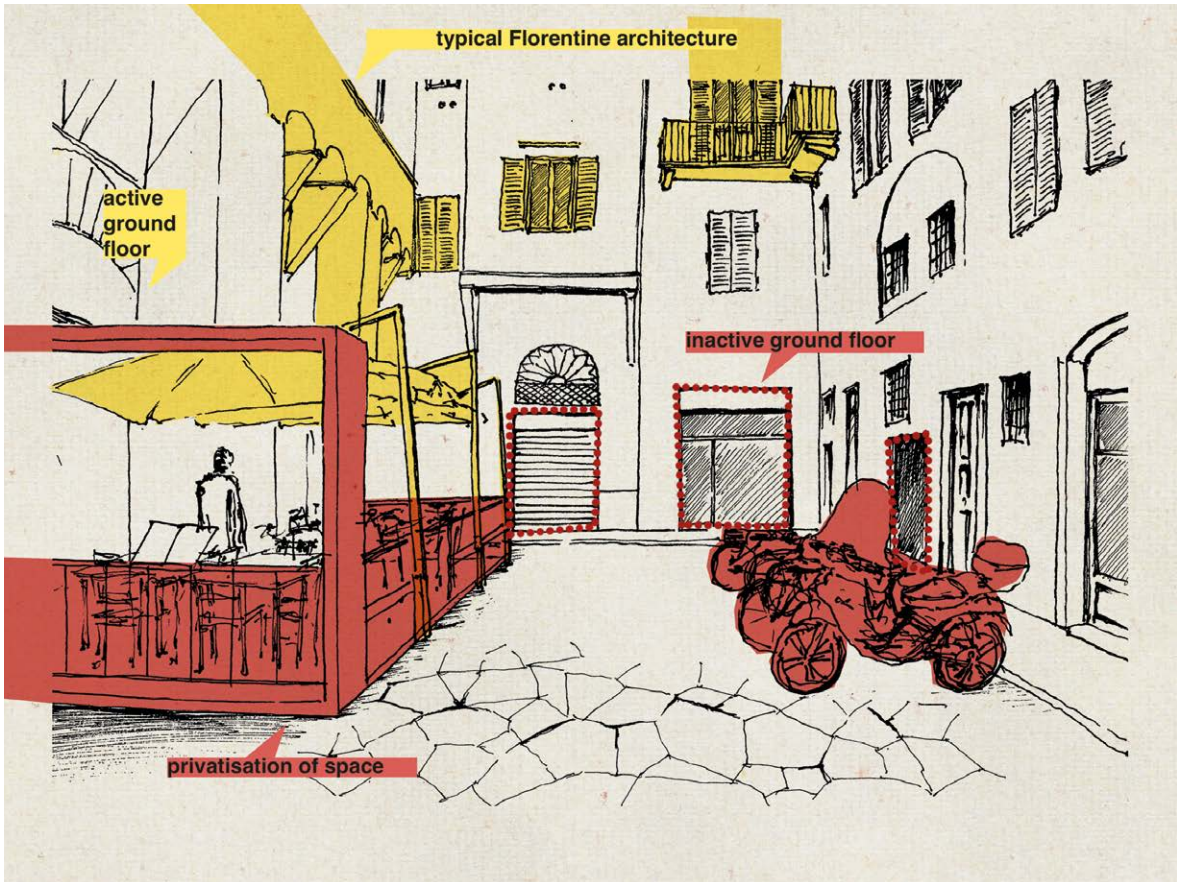

Figure A.10 – Florence, Piazza de' Cerchi.

There are other spaces, like Piazzetta Calamandrei and the part of Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti which, instead, are occupied by the outdoor seating areas of the commercial activities that privatise the space thereby preventing optional activities from taking place. (Fig. A.2 and A.5)

Concluding remarks

The weak attractiveness in both symbolic and functional terms, the low quality and poor maintenance of the equipment installed and the conflict between traffic flows represent recurring critical issues common to many of the spaces analysed.

When a public space does not have its own character, vocation, or an identity recognised by the inhabitants it should be no surprise to witness its transformation into a mere transition place, car park or, more simply, an empty and abandoned space; it is not uncommon for disaffection mechanisms to be triggered which in some cases lead to negligent behaviour and, in the most serious situations, forms of vandalism.

The interviews often confirmed this situation.

Direct observation and the interviews themselves revealed, however, that many of these spaces have a positive web of social interactions and exchanges. This hidden potential needs to be leveraged to ensure that the residual spaces analysed can awaken interest and an attitude of care in the inhabitants, develop their own qualities and play a role in city life.

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The Florence Accessibility Lab

The Florence Accessibility Lab (FAL) is an Interdepartmental Research Unit created in 2013 following more than two decades of research into environmental accessibility and social inclusion. The main goals of the Florence Accessibility Lab are to define, consolidate and promote a new design culture that considers environmental accessibility a great collective resource for human autonomy and well-being in order to make local communities more dynamic, safe and cohesive, exploiting architectural and landscape heritage, as well as for the development of advanced technologies for people. In short, for "human development", as intended by the United Nation Development Programme. The cultural framework of the Florence Accessibility Lab is based on the central role of the human being in habitat transformation processes and on the need for those processes to be guided by in-depth knowledge of socio-economic dynamics and a caring attitude to commons.

The Research Unit adopts an interdisciplinary approach and works in a wide range of applied fields, at various levels, from cultural heritage to tourism, urban security and quality to urban mobility, objects to street furniture, housing adaptation to public buildings. The Florence Accessibility Lab also promotes and organises several kinds of advanced education projects (training and refresher courses, workshops, seminars, summer schools, Master's courses, etc.).

Since its creation, the Florence Accessibility Lab has hosted Italian and foreign scholars, PhD candidates and graduate students, all sharing a research interest in accessibility and disability. At present, the Research Unit is composed of about thirty professors from the University of Florence, belonging to the departments of Architecture (DIDA), Industrial Engineering (DIEF), Economics and Management (DISEI), Political and Social Sciences (DSPS), and Education and Psychology (SCIFOPSI), and various other research fellows, contributors and consultants from both Italy and abroad.

The Florence Accessibility Lab was the defining model for other accessibility labs created in several Italian universities.

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1. Antonio Laurìa, Luigi Vessella, *Small Forgotten Places in the Heart of Cities. On the residuality of public spaces in historical contexts: Florence as a case study*, 2021

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This book is the result of a research project designed and carried out at the Department of Architecture, University of Florence. This book discusses urban public spaces and, more specifically, run-down, inactive micro-spaces that are barely used due to their location, dimensions, morphology or semantic characteristics. In literature, these spaces are often defined as “residual urban spaces.” A large abandoned industrial area on the outskirts of a town or a small interstitial space in a historical centre can be residual. With respect to such a broad subject matter, the book seeks to radically limit the field, concentrating on public residual spaces found in the oldest parts of cities. The book reflects on this theme and introduces a method for reading and assessment of the *residuality* of public spaces in historical contexts (Residuality Assessment Process) which was tested in the historical centre of Florence. It is the authors’ view that residual spaces, above all if designed according to a system logic, can go from being *problems* to *potential activators of urban and social regeneration processes*, offering a useful contribution to improve city life.

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