Planning Wastescapes Through Collaborative Processes

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Chapter 14
Planning Wastescapes Through Collaborative Processes

Anna Attademo and **Gilda Berruti**

14.1 Introduction: In the Public Field

Contemporary metropolitan areas are affected by serious phenomena of urban decay and functional retraction, especially in the area in-between the city and the countryside (Piorr et al., 2011). The impacts of the current model of urban growth challenges fragile environments, where spatial fragmentation is interlinked to socio-economic inequalities, in a generalized lack of accessibility to public use and spatial capital (Secchi, 2013). In Bernardo Secchi's words, it is urgent to address "the new urban question" considering spatial injustice and unequal access to services, combining actions to address environmental, social and economic threats.

This chapter focuses on collaborative processes through which accessibility and spatial hierarchies of public use areas can be redesigned in order to address socio-spatial inequalities in sustainable development.

The field of action is twofold: on the one hand, it regards urban metabolism; on the other hand, collaborative processes. The first is used to interpret the impacts of metabolic processes (Ferrão & Fernández, 2013) and the expiration of territorial life cycles (Loiseau et al., 2018), resulting in the production of *wastescapes* (Amenta & Attademo, 2016; Amenta & Van Timmeren, 2018). The latter are aimed at defining the opportunities of co-creating place-based services (Evans et al., 2017), in order to reassess shared usage and wide access to spatial potential.

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This research moves from the analysis of places born for public use, but abandoned over time or never actually completed; places in disuse, waiting to reenter territorial life cycles (Grulois et al., 2018). Industrial ecology defines these life cycles that feed the urban-territorial environment, with incoming and outgoing flows of matter and energy, as the "urban metabolism" of a city (Allen et al., 2012).

Urban metabolism describes the deployment of processes that, on the one hand, interact with space—urban form, density, morphology, biodiversity, ecological integrity (Kennedy et al., 2011)—on the other, are influenced by intangible factors of different nature: economic and social. The metabolic processes that regulate cities, cannot be evaluated only according to linear life cycle models. Extending the ecosystem perspective, with the concept of an ecological field intertwining human, physical, cultural, biological and socio-ecological aspects (Swyngedouw, 2006), the city can be interpreted as an open and complex system of interactions between natural, artificial, socio-economic, and cultural processes (Pincetl et al., 2012).

Urbanization, particularly in metropolitan areas, has profoundly modified the landscape, alternating historical values and everyday demands, density and dispersion, natural, and rural spaces with settlements and infrastructures, that consume the integrity of agricultural landscapes. This urban blight that affects territories, buildings, parts of cities, is particularly relevant in peri-urban areas. Although peri-urban areas are crossed by large infrastructures, polarized by tertiary and large-scale distribution and low-density settlements, they still represent a resource that can be reintroduced in urban lifecycles, defining places and functions for urban, functional and social rebalancing. Here sustainable (re)development means acting directly on the metabolism, through a project capable of managing resource flows—to minimize waste, support recycling policies, and regenerate the territory, against the background of circular economy concepts (Russo, 2014).

Within the wide literature on degraded landscapes (in the different acceptations of *terrain vagues* de Solà Morales, 1996; drosscapes Berger, 2006; wasted landscapes, and then wastescapes, H2020 REPAiR project; wastelands Berruti, 2018; Berruti & Palestino, 2020a), there is always a specific look on the hybrid combination of both natural and man-made ecosystems. This is especially true in reference to damaged ecosystems, when their natural value is low and/or when the ecological balance is broken due to the contemporaneous presence of man-made components, altering the relationship with nature: as in the case of unauthorized, confiscated, neglected, vacant buildings and/or settlements.

In particular, neglected and vacant buildings and areas can be the direct consequences of urban decline. Sub-categories range from empty buildings to underutilized, abandoned or obsolete buildings, to informal and unauthorized settlements, to urban plots in transformation, never completed, to confiscated assets, but also to abandoned infrastructures and their interstitial spaces. Public equipment no longer used, or legally born with a public destination and never used, can be included in the taxonomy. Among those, there are also Italian "planning standards," publicly designed in compliance with the quantities defined by law, and often partially used or not properly managed.

Here spatial degradation often coincides with socio-economic segregation. In general, wasted landscapes present high levels of unemployment and lack of public facilities, but also temporary inhabitants (Roma populations, non-permanent migrants), activators of commons (associations who manage, informal groups who occupy and revitalize abandoned spaces, etc.), together with public institutions and researchers, who can interpret and prefigure opportunities for the future of places.

These areas can become the place for innovative partnerships between public and private-social sectors, within collaborative methods that build on the fruitful participation of public–private–people, in a process of reconstruction of local identity (Amenta et al., 2019). Cities as complex socio-ecological systems, require processes of co-creation of demand to support the construction of flexible and contextual functions and services. These processes should be place-based and follow a procedural decision-making model, through forms of co-planning and co-management of discarded assets to be reactivated. These new decision-making practices imply a change of paradigm for the public actor's role in the perspective of a strategic relaunch of the discarded resources of the landscape, starting from uses and services collectively elaborated.

This contribution reflects on the new role for the public actor through the activities developed in two collaborative planning processes experimented in the city of Naples and in its Metropolitan Areas. These specific cases are relevant because they represent conditions of spatial and functional inequalities that have been overcome through a collective and strategic definition of a framework of practices and services provision, prefiguring the actual change of physical components.

The proposal of new uses and services within the investigated contexts is based on criteria of flexibility, not fixed once and for all, not predetermined in time, but in progress in order to overcome the limits of the implementation of policies and programs that often halted development and designs in the past.

The methodology used reflects a case study approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006), based on the testing of public actor's new role in two real-life environments. Thus, the chapter explores the role of the enabling State in supporting the redistribution of accessibilities and values; then investigates the two aforementioned collaborative processes, focusing specifically on how they both redesigned the concept of public facilities as co-created and place-based services. Finally, the lessons learned from both case studies on institutional and social innovation, aimed to plan wastescapes through collaborative processes, are outlined.

14.2 Method and Approach: The Enabling State—Inequalities and Roles

The research aims to face spatial inequalities in access to spaces and services, in a wider redefinition of welfare (and welfare spaces), as an effect of global economic and financial crisis. The point of departure for this in-depth exploration is given by

the renewed attention in contemporary planning literature for the issue of collective housing and services, with a different meaning compared to the past. This meaning is related to both a push towards sharing (Bauman, 2001; Sampieri, 2011) and the claim to discarded places by groups of citizens and associations (Cellamare, 2019; Paba, 2004). On the one hand, inhabitants are increasing their skills in activating forms of welfare and new welfare spaces (Munarin & Tosi, 2014); on the other, the public actor is shifting his role from "provider" of public facilities to "supporter" of design capabilities coming from local contexts, prefiguring an "enabling State" (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1989; Marchigiani, 2011).

More and more frequently, public housing and public facilities are regenerated or managed by institutions and social actors' mixed partnerships (Allen et al., 2004; Padovani, 2011). State-sponsored care is not the same as in the past, due to the economic crisis and the lack of human and technical resources in the public sector. For this reason, the delivery of public services can be partly privatized. A transformation of welfare is ongoing, that promotes work and responsibility over protection and strengthens the role of civil society by diluting the pervasive role of government (Gilbert, 2002). This role of "enabler" performed by the State (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1989) is summed up by the aim of offering "public support for private responsibility," where "private" includes individuals, the market, and voluntary organizations, thus demonstrating the shift from an emphasis on citizenship rights to communities' civic duties.

Starting from these assumptions some questions emerge, related to the ambiguity of this change and the trend referred to as "from welfare to workfare," from a passive to an active role of communities, mainly concerning work for recovering and reappropriating places. The rise of the enabling State might be interpreted as the outcome of a market-driven drift aiming at dismantling welfare policies, or, on the contrary, as the responsible for a moral obligation for local communities to exert an active role (Bifulco, 2011). In this framework, where empowerment risks to be seen as a way to charge local inhabitants with the management of public services, thus going beyond the need of active work-oriented policies, inequalities become harsher and harsher, both in peri-urban and urban areas.

Especially in Southern Europe, spaces designed as public facilities or services (the so-called "planning standards"[1]) are often abandoned or never used, for different reasons, going from the lack of flexibility, or fixed uses, to the power of inaction by institutions. These wastescapes seem to be almost waiting to be part of urban metabolism again. In addition, especially in peri-urban areas around the most important cities, the provision of public facilities and services is inadequate and scant (Colavitti et al., 2020; Urbani, 2011), enhancing inequalities among citizens.

Inequalities need to be balanced through non-sectoral responses, which take into account environmental, social and spatial issues in an integrated way. Fair and

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[1] Planning standards are threshold values of areas per inhabitants assigned to public facilities or services, based on a quantitative approach, that 'the public' had to ensure by means of planning instruments. In Italy, they are regulated according to the Ministerial Decree n.1444 issued in 1968. See Renzoni (2018); Laboratorio Standard (2021).

adequate public services can be realized by recapitalizing discarded wastescapes, working on networks of spaces and services, through the recovery of degraded local contexts, pointing to their "looseness" (Franck & Stevens, 2007). Such an approach requires triggering integrated processes involving a profitable dialogue among public institutions, private actors, social private actors, social organizations and local groups. In these processes, public institutions give up part of their predictive role and knowledge, working as mediators among different actors, and coming up with new formulas of management, although they are often not completely prepared for ongoing innovations.

14.3 Experiments

The chapter is focused on two experiments of wastescape regeneration in the Metropolitan Area of Naples, dealing with urban and peri-urban areas. The first case is the former NATO area in Naples (in Bagnoli neighborhood) which is the subject of a Plan for urban renewal, recently adopted by the Municipality of Naples. The area, actually owned by a public company whose purpose is the assistance of disadvantaged children (Fondazione Campania Welfare), has been redesigned as a public facility at a metropolitan scale within a public consultation process between owners, the Municipality of Naples and local stakeholders. The second case is related to peri-urban wastelands in the Metropolitan area of Naples, investigated in the Horizon2020 research "REPAiR", where public abandoned areas have been redesigned through collaborative laboratories, aimed at their recovery and reappropriation, also through the rationalization of resource and waste flows.

14.3.1 Wastescape #1: The Collaborative Definition of Uses of a Public Facility on a Metropolitan Scale

The case of the Urban Plan of the former NATO area in Naples represents—by size, location and nature—an example of "research by design" (Roggema, 2017) through the project of public facilities within dense urban settlements.

The area is owned by a Foundation (Fondazione Campania Welfare): a sort of "social enterprise," a non-profit company aimed at providing childcare in the disadvantaged bracket. The Foundation has carried out its mission for decades thanks to the generous rent paid by the NATO forces.

Historically designed and built as a college for disadvantaged children, the area has always been functionally self-sufficient, equipped with sports and education facilities, ateliers, a church and a theater, two gyms, as well as large open spaces, also for production purposes (cultivated terraces on the Hill of San Laise).

Since 1941, the "Collegio" was confiscated by military authorities and the International Refugee Organization. But its real story begins in 1952, with the assignment for "higher political and military needs" and lease to the NATO Command—Headquarters of the Allied Forces of Southern Europe. Up to 2013, the Foundation used this lease to perform its main scope and finance social welfare activities all over the city, but outside the area and its facilities.

Thus, for almost 60 years the city has been *dispossessed* of the place, due to its role of extraterritorial national security, losing its public usability, and its role in urban life. But when the NATO Command left the place, the entire area stood neglected and abandoned, with big buildings and open spaces in need of further uses and meanings, beyond actual care and maintenance. Therefore, the municipal administration signed a Protocol with the ownership, aimed at defining the area as a public use facility and gathered citizens' demands to reuse it through a collaborative process (Piscopo, 2019).

During 2016, in compliance with the Western Variant of the Municipal Urban Plan (1998), the Municipality of Naples promoted and approved in consultation with the ownership, a preliminary Development Plan ("Masterplan") which allocates half of the cubic capacity of the area to public use, even beyond the quantity of planning standards defined by law (public spaces and park, education, and sports facilities, etc.). The collaborative process involved several categories of stakeholders, under the leadership of a group of local urban planners: third sector organizations, cultural associations, local institutions, and citizens. Together they achieved the scope of identifying planning standards tailored to the context, overcoming the quantitative perspective defined by law and eventually opening the chance to co-management opportunities of social and cultural activities.

The Masterplan was the first step in a strategy that is becoming increasingly more adaptive in recent years, aimed at the long-term recovery of the site, but in search of possible triggers in the short time (Fig. 14.1), through the search for temporary uses of public space and buildings. Thus, the majority of social uses (childcare activities, cultural, and sports events, etc.) started immediately after the closure of the collaborative process, partially managed by the Foundation itself, even before the final adoption of the Urban Plan that occurred in December 2020.

The mix of the technicality of the blueprint of the Urban Plan together with the disruptive anticipation of immediate changes, through access and use of public spaces, created hybrid and original "alliances," between actors interested in the site use and enhancement (Attademo & Formato, 2019).

Therefore, the "strange case" of the former NATO military area (Attademo et al., 2017) is a story in which the allocation of spaces for public functions becomes a complex process of co-creation of public services, where public, private and mixed public–private actors reactivate a wastescape for public purposes.

It is also relevant to state that the process of public use prefiguration has been generally accelerated by a political phase in the history of the city of Naples in which other places of civic significance have been legally identified as "commons" (Rodotà, 2018). The Municipality of Naples guaranteed the restitution of neglected and degraded urban areas to the collectivity, in the full recognition of uses and

Fig. 14.1 Vision (on the top) for the recovery of the area from the Municipal Urban Plan (*Source* https://www.comune.napoli.it) and temporary uses in former NATO area (in the bottom-Ph. Marilù Vaccaro/2019)

functions that communities were already expressing in them (Piscopo, 2019) with two Regulations (in 2015 and 2016, matured over a long period of time). Eventually, in 2017, the Municipality regulated the temporary use of discarded public equipment, without modifying the urban destination, aimed at the enhancement of the unused or abandoned public assets.

14.3.2 Wastescape #2: Co-Creating Public Services in Peri-Urban Areas

In the framework of the EU H2020 research "REPAiR: REsource Management in Peri-urban AReas: Going Beyond Urban Metabolism," interpreting waste and wastescapes as resources for sustainable regeneration, a co-creation process was carried out based on the methodological approach of Living Lab (ENoLL & ENoLL Members, 2016; Evans et al., 2017). From April 2017 to May 2018 in the Metropolitan area of Naples, Federico II University of Naples scholars and local stakeholders took part in peri-urban living labs (PULLs, Amenta et al., 2019) on the critical issues of the waste management cycle and wastescapes regeneration. In particular, five municipalities (Acerra, Casoria, Casalnuovo, Afragola, and Caivano) have been involved, belonging to the same rule for waste management.

Living Lab participants worked in three groups, each one focused on a project to carry out together, responding to wastescape regeneration. Each group consisted of a mixed environment, involving the research team and students, Campania Region and municipal officials, associations, groups, practitioners, and entrepreneurs.

One of the groups focused on the design of a "Homogeneous Recycling Centre" (REPAiR, 2018), responding to the primary objective of solving the issue of abandonment and illegal dumping of waste along peri-urban roads. Both agricultural and construction and demolition waste, in fact, are abandoned in disused areas along infrastructures (Fig. 14.2).

In addition, overcoming the suspicion on the correct reuse of construction and demolition waste was also considered a challenge, due to the frequent involvement of criminal organizations in Southern Italy waste management (Berruti & Palestino, 2020b; Palestino, 2015).

Stemming from this original idea, the Homogeneous Recycling Centre has been conceived as a hybrid place, where the free disposal of durable goods and inert waste is allowed, and a warehouse to keep them is provided together with a selling place. A fab lab focused on the arrangement of open upcycle workshops, spreading circular economy principles, is also part of the project.

Such project has the added value of contrasting the informal disposal of construction and demolition waste and durable goods by privates and small companies in unauthorized landfills and at the same time putting aside a reserve of materials, to be reused in the future. Confiscated properties, formerly belonging to organized crime, waiting for a new destination by municipalities, or disused areas have been selected
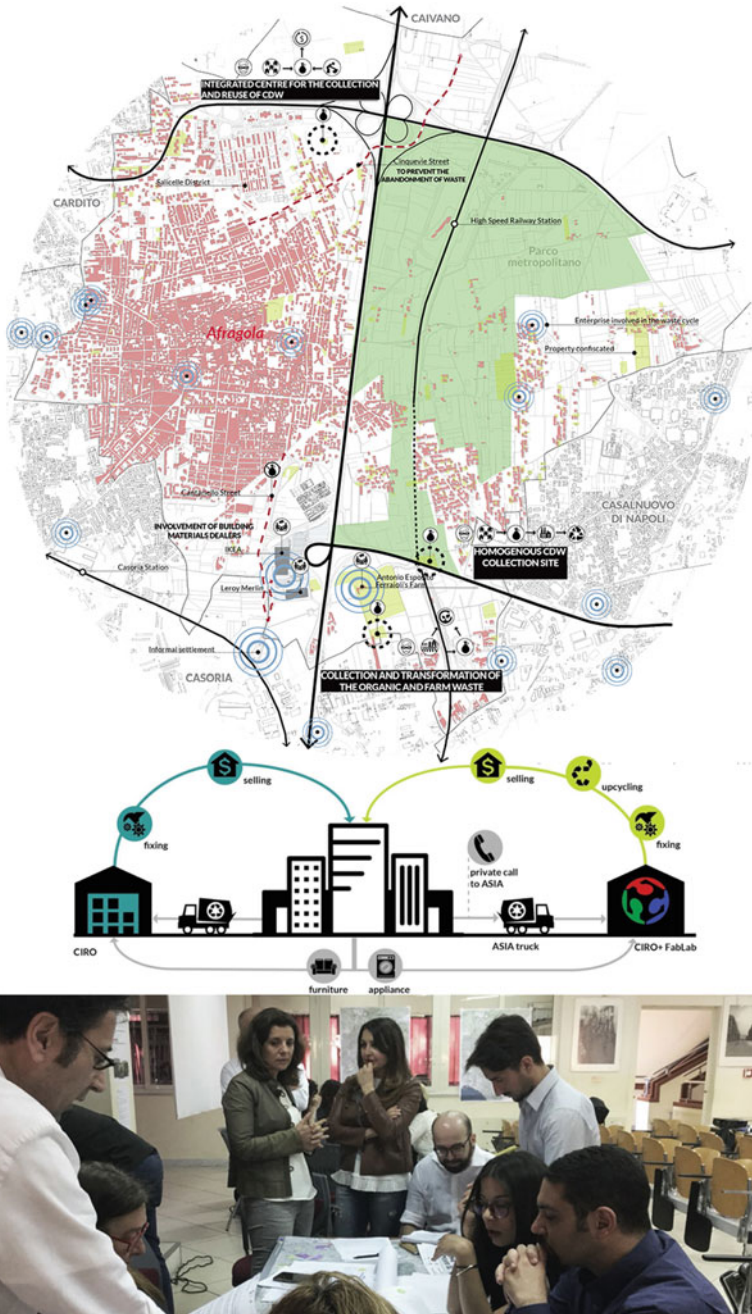
Fig. 14.2 Masterplan and systemic section of CIRO eco-innovative solution (REPAiR, 2018) and photo of the co-creation process in the living lab (Ph. University of Naples team)

as proper places for Homogeneous Recycling Centers, changing their nature from discarded to reclaimed places.

By reducing illegal dumping and decreasing wastescapes production, recycling centers should affect the health of the urban region of Naples, also impacting citizens' awareness of environmental issues. These plots of land, from 2000 to 5000 square meters, are figured out as planted with trees and surrounded by green infrastructures, so as to increase the natural surveillance of places.

Debate in the group opened on the opportunity of allowing to drop off materials without requiring legal recognition, at the beginning of the project, also with the objective to raise the question on the territorial impacts of unauthorized building. Managing knowledge disparity among participants was also an issue at stake. Supporting stakeholders' proposals, their creative process of design, eventually avoiding the rise of conflicts or helping to treat conflicts were tasks of the research team.

In addition, this project partly resumed a strategy foreseen in 2013 by the Campania Region in the Plan of waste prevention, responding to the waste management hierarchy defined by the Directive 2008/98/EC. The strategy concerned the implementation of Integrated Centres for the optimal reuse of durable goods (in Italian, *Centri integrati per il riutilizzo ottimale dei beni durevoli*, acronym CIRO) in order to intercept some objects or products in good conditions before they become waste, thus allowing to sell them as second-hand goods, after small repairs. This strategy was originally excluded by the Regional Waste Law (n. 14/2016), but, thanks to the current process, in 2018 was regained and defined by the Regional Law n. 29/18.

In the perspective of REPAiR research, these Centres for the optimal reuse of durable goods should be conceived not as waste plants but as public services, contemporary "planning standards," strongly affecting environmental perceptions and inhabitants' quality of life. Designing a public service, instead of building a waste plant, has the added value of simplifying the bureaucracy in the selection and availability of areas. This option is available only because the treated objects have not become waste yet, otherwise strict rules and authorization should be adopted.

The described co-creation process worked as a driver for ongoing environmental policies, allowing a fruitful alignment of the outputs of living labs with public measures. An in-depth exploration of the possible forms of management and a call for private or social subjects available to be in charge of recycling centers is needed.

On the other hand, as for the reserve of inert waste, a separate further study will be useful in order to define the role of the centers for the reuse, because inerts are included in special waste.

14.4   Discussion and Conclusions

This research applies the metabolic perspective to the reconstruction of identity and public use in neglected areas. Through a case study approach, social and spatial inequalities associated with current urbanization phenomena are investigated,

against a wider reflection on the changing role of public actors in urban regeneration processes.

In both cases, among the most interesting issues characterizing the co-creation process, there is the fertile interaction among different actors, with their competences and knowledge, that came to reinforce the value of social issues in the spatial analysis and to test what research team learned on impacts of inclusive decision-making on urban changes.

In the first case, local practices and uses of the former NATO area acted as a catalyst, going beyond the Urban Plan itself, and restituting a horizon of *efficacy* of changes through temporary uses and prefigurative actions (Tutino, 1986 in Russo, 2020), in anticipation of longer term designs.

In the case of REPAiR Homogeneous Recycling Centre, the process was effective also in triggering a collaboration among separate regional departments, in order to plan integrated measures and promoting inter-institutional work, especially thanks to the suggestions by regional representatives to municipalities about funding or programs concerning wastescape regeneration. This was an experiment of multilevel governance that is necessary for effective planning, but is out of the ordinary in actual processes (Obersteg et al., 2019).

Planning in itself can still be strictly anchored to obsolete legal devices and over-regulations, while rapid urbanization phenomena leave behind a landscape of neglect and vacant spaces. Efficient urban planning must work in the space between long-term regulations and tactical interventions, exploiting strategies of reactivation of places as catalysts to improve the social-economic attractiveness of places, while physical transformations are still on the way. The traditional model of planning has to be redefined in consideration of the redefinition of welfare policies as effects of the global crisis. As discussed before, taking inspiration from the studies on American welfare, "social welfare arrangements are increasingly designed to enable people to work and to enable the market and the voluntary sector to assume an expanded role in providing social protection" (Gilbert, 2002, p. 16).

All social welfare policies must address the questions of *who* gets *what* social benefits, *how* these benefits are delivered, and *how* they are financed. This also includes a wider understanding of the role of public and private actors, their weakness and loopholes, their strength, and potential.

This implies an increasing relevance of the ability to activate a dialogue between institutions, citizens, and stakeholders, in order to build effective paths of participation and inclusion, combining policies and planning, in a committed process open to adaptive uses and temporariness.

Stakeholders should be actively involved in the development of services and strategies, promoting actions also in the implementation process and co-management of activities. Thus, contemporary "planning standards" should not be based on quantitative demands, but should build an operative response-able to stimulate social awareness and common responsibility in the use and care of public, and open services.

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