Article

Valorizing Community Identity and Social Places to Implement Participatory Processes in San Giovanni a Teduccio (Naples, Italy)

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Abstract: This paper addresses the implementation of an intervention aimed at promoting participatory processes in San Giovanni a Teduccio—a neighborhood on the eastern outskirts of Naples—to foster the acknowledgment and valorization of local social, cultural, and identity resources by citizens. Former industrial and marine area, today disused and run-down industrial establishments in the neighborhood and obscure and pollute the sea, weakening local identity and cultural heritages. Interviews were carried out to address citizens' and stakeholders' social identity, their civic and social engagement in the community, and the potential and critical issues they identified in it. A split community emerged from their words, with a minority civically and socially engaged in the regeneration of community places and relationships—even though through a fragmented multiplicity of projects—and a "dormant" majority, passive and anesthetized by the nostalgia of the industrial and marine past. Participants were also asked to share pictures about meaningful community places; these showed abandoned and run-down urban spaces, but also places where citizens could meet, share, and identify. An exhibition was organized to share these materials with the broader community, opening up a space for thinking about the need to involve citizens in acknowledging and valorizing local cultural, social, and identity resources through participatory processes.

Keywords: participatory processes; cultural heritage; social regeneration; community identity; community places

1. Introduction

Common, livable places are the core of the local community experience, as they are settings for the bonds among community members, as well as towards the community and its places [1,2]; they support local traditions and the sharing of meanings and experiences, and make individuals identify with that community and feel part of it [3,4] and at home in it [5]. Further, at the individual level, places where individuals locate their daily routines or exceptional circumstances and to which they feel they belong can become a symbolic extension of the self [6,7] and an integral part of their identities [8]. This stands consistent with the FARO Convention, which acknowledges and valorizes the cultural heritage meant as the meanings and uses attached to local places, objects, and landmarks by community members [9], and with the spreading approach of building on local heritages to improve the life conditions of individuals and communities through reappropriation and resignification processes [10]. That is, cultural heritage does not only have a historical, cultural and artistic value but also social, symbolic, and identity values [11]. Indeed, cultural heritage is tightly linked to community places and identity, as well as to the meanings and symbolic systems in which they are incorporated, and which compound the tie between individuals and their community meant both as a social group and as an environmental setting [12,13]. It represents both a common good and a shared resource; thus, taking care of it should be considered a shared responsibility to avoid its over-exploitation, underfunding, neglect, oblivion, and so on [13]. In this vein, studies have reckoned community engagement and

participation as critical processes for enhancing the long-term management of local physical and cultural heritages [14]. Based on this, taking care of neighborhood common places and making them livable and enjoyable for citizens through participatory regeneration processes represent significant dimensions when aiming at supporting individuals' and communities' well-being as well as community cohesion and identity [12,13].

Overall, in community members' experience, places represent compounds of cognitions, emotions, uses, and activities that revolve and are organized around them [6,15–18]; consistently, they need to be tackled as integrated systems including several domains [15–17], which all contribute to making them meaningful in community members' experiences [19–22]. Indeed, over time, places have been framed (a) as locus of attachment, since individuals develop an affective tie towards specific places, and (b) as centers of meaning, which pose possibilities and constraints to how individuals can make sense of their localized experiences and relationships and give meaning to them based on their environmental and social features as well as on individual and social activities, experiences, and expectations linked to them [23–25]. Furthermore, places have been framed as social categories with a role in defining and expressing individuals' belonging to the community living in those spaces and the characteristics of such a community [26,27]. In this vein, (a) the spatial space a given place occupies in absolute and relative terms (location), (b) the material built and natural features that exist within it (local), and (c) the affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions organized around them and the individual and social activities they host (sense of place) are all elements compounding how individuals experience their living places [28]. Thus, such heritage is associated by residents with the sense of belonging to a specific community characterized by some distinctive features and an identifiable history that provides continuity with the present and that compounds its identity [29,30].

Based on this, this paper addresses the implementation of an intervention aimed at promoting participatory processes of social regeneration in San Giovanni a Teduccio (Naples, Italy) with the goal of valorizing local places—with specific reference to the sea and the disused industrial buildings—both as physical spaces and common goods and with reference to their identity and social value.

2. The Case Study: The Urban Area of San Giovanni a Teduccio

The main aim of the present intervention was to detect feasible, shared paths aimed at promoting processes of participatory social regeneration in the urban area of San Giovanni a Teduccio, building on the valorization of the main elements—tangible and intangible ones—compounding local cultural heritage and community identity in citizens' experience, that is, the sea and the disused industrial buildings, through collaborative actions involving different local actors (e.g., citizens, local associations, Institutional referents) [31]. Indeed, on the one hand, personal and community investments allow for the identification of new spaces for thought and action, which can make citizens acknowledge and identify different possible uses, meanings, and functions of common spaces and frame them as commons [32]; on the other hand, in order to implement regeneration processes, the meanings, uses, and representations the community attributes to its life places [14] need to be understood.

2.1. The Context

San Giovanni a Teduccio is a neighborhood on the eastern outskirts of Naples, Italy. It is located a few kilometers from the central railway station in Naples and mainly develops around the very long Corso, the main street of the neighborhood, full of small shops and other economic activities. The Corso is narrow, crowded, and very chaotic; the shops and buildings that line it are uneven and often neglected. Close to the Corso, along its entire length, densely packed portions of the neighborhood stand as social housing (see Figure 1). Once, this neighborhood housed a large industrial area whose disused structures still stand there, often as neglected and forsaken spaces hindering citizens from accessing the sea. The activities of such industries are also built upon the available access to the sea, making the industrial and marine characteristics the two core dimensions of neighborhood identity.

Conversely, nowadays, disused and run-down ex-industrial establishments that obscure and pollute the sea represent some of its most known features (see Figure 1), weakening local identity and cultural heritages, on which common plans and goals could have relied.

(**a**)   (**b**)

Figure 1. Photos of San Giovanni a Teduccio at the time of neighborhood visits: (**a**) waterfront and disused ex-industrial establishment overlooking the sea; (**b**) overview of the physical structure of the neighborhood, with buildings hiding the seaside.

Overall, the neighborhood is characterized by strong social hardship and economic precariousness in which many families live. There are urban spaces, such as the so-called Bronx, a district in San Giovanni a Teduccio formerly controlled by the Camorra, connoted by social decay. Several families now inhabiting the area lost their homes in the 1980 earthquake and were entitled by law to popular houses in this neighborhood, even though they found themselves living in a place connoted by a strong presence of organized crime.

However, strengths and resources are available too, e.g., some initiatives related to city regeneration and collective participation, an emerging associationism. Indeed, there is no shortage of culturally relevant episodes from an artistic point of view: a well-known example in and around the area concerns the phenomenon of street art (see Figure 2). Moreover, the presence of a venue of the University of Naples Federico II in the area once occupied by the Cirio factory—one of the two main former industrial establishments—represents a cultural and economic resource, too, as well as the local businesses that welcome the local cultural and social initiatives and activities into their spaces, such as the Nest theatre.

2.2. Methods and Procedures

Collaborative processes were implemented to detect feasible, shared paths aimed at promoting the participatory social regeneration of the common spaces in San Giovanni a Teduccio, which were identified by citizens and stakeholders as compounding local cultural heritage and community identity (see Figure 3), that is, the sea and the disused industrial buildings.

In the first preliminary phase, the researchers visited the neighborhood to get acquainted with its places and characteristics and identify and experience first contact with citizens, local associations, other socially, politically, or civically active groups, and stakeholders [33].

Then, to understand how local citizens, stakeholders, and neighborhood users represented local common spaces and neighborhood identity, open thematic interviews were carried out in order to deepen the role of places in the symbolic system built and shared over time as to neighborhood identity, how to live together in the neighborhood, and the social, cultural, and symbolic opportunities and meanings available there. The following main areas were explored: (a) the relationship with the local community and the active participation within it, (b) the relationship with the associations that were active in the community, (c) the relationship with local institutions, (d) the perception of local urban spaces and meeting places, and (e) the perception of community resources and constraints.

Indeed, all these aspects compound what has been defined as local cultural heritage, which can represent a flywheel for community cohesion as well as economic development [12,13]. Consistently with the topics of the interviews and inspired by the photodialogue methodology [34], which holds the potential to promote critical thinking and dialogue about issues that are felt as relevant by the participants with reference to their community [35]; all the interviewees were also asked to send researchers one or more photos of the places in their neighborhood to which they attributed socialization and aggregative functions for the community and which were significant to community identity in their opinion. Using photography as a tool for representing the community and its dimensions was aimed at activating a reflexive process and critical dialogue among community members.

Figure 2. An example of the street art in San Giovanni.
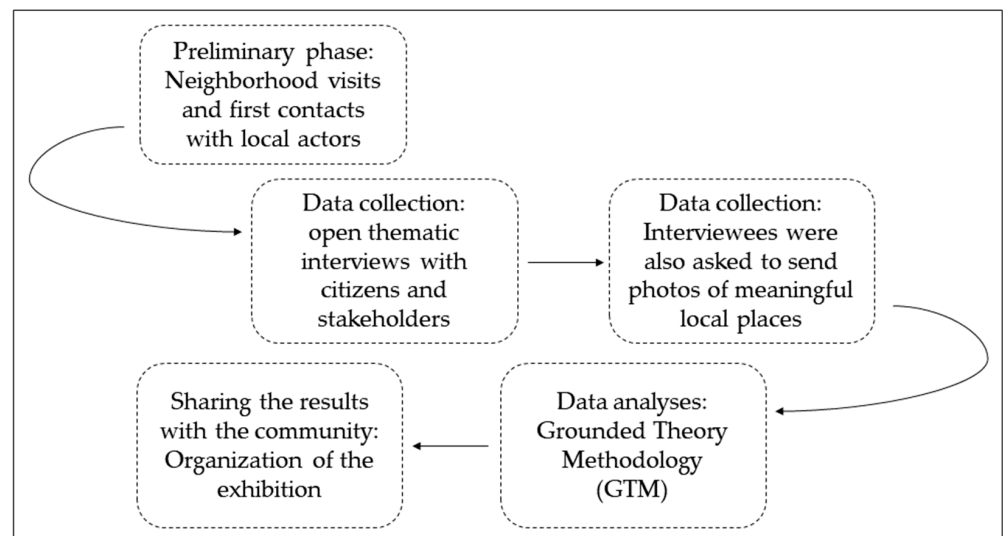

Figure 3. Diagram of the implemented processes and activities.

Based on the results that emerged from the phase of data collection and analysis, an exhibition was organized to share the most significant results with community members and local stakeholders, to let commonalities among their viewpoints emerge, allow to consider them as a basis for critical dialogue aimed at producing different narratives about their community and its places and identifying shared goals and plans to improve them, up to fostering the definition and implementation of collective actions to this aim. That is, common visions were identified by promoting critical thinking and dialogue about issues that were felt as relevant by the participants with reference to their community [35] as well as individual and collective empowerment with reference to the opportunities to support changes in one's community [36], up to detecting the feasible strategies to involve the community in reckoning common goods and defining paths to their valorization and regeneration. The exhibition was organized in the Antonio Labriola Library in San Giovanni a Teduccio, which had also been identified by the participants as one of the main meeting spots in the neighborhood. During this initiative, the main findings were shared with the broader community by showing them some panels with the most meaningful quotations and photos received by the participants in the interviews (see Figure 4 for an example of the shown panels).
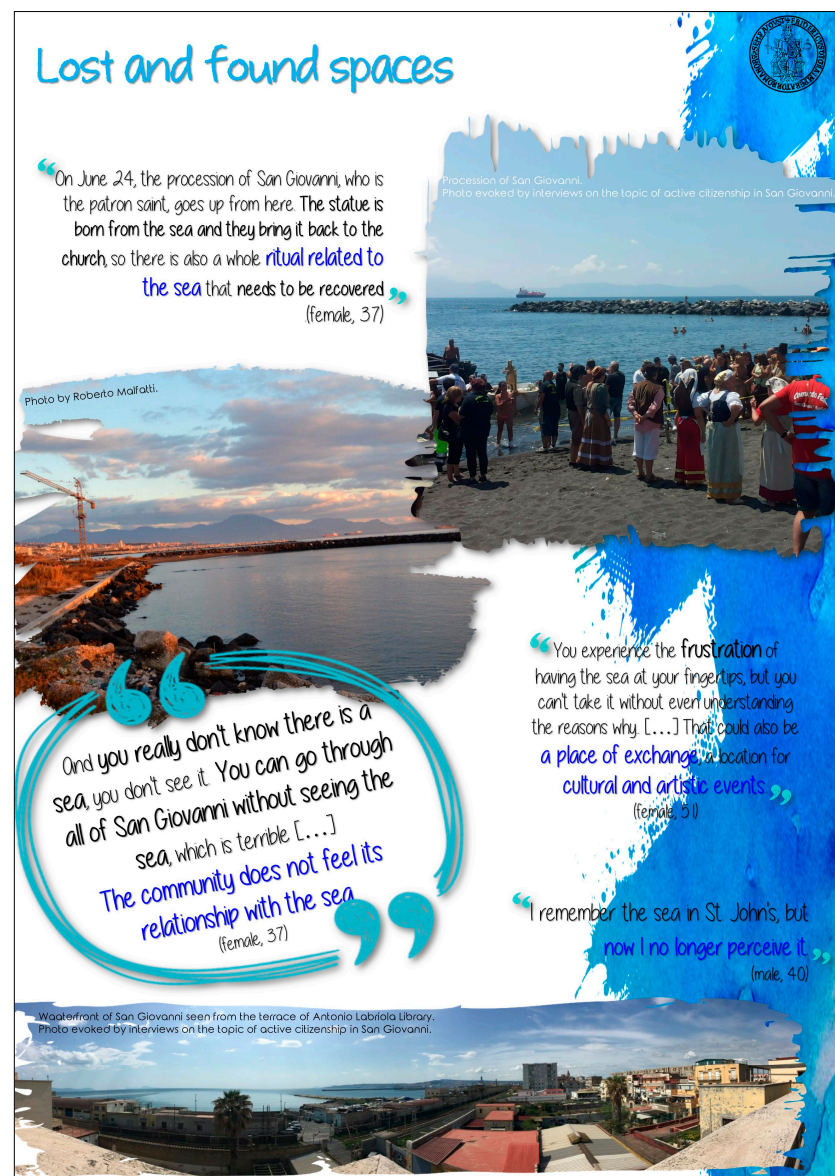

Figure 4. Sample panel (the original one was in Italian; this version was translated to improve its readability).

All the materials had been previously anonymized so that the authors could reckon their contributions, but other community members were only able to find out that some others in their community had the same experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Through this, working with the active and resilient part of the community of San Giovanni a Teduccio in order to further involve the *dormant*, stuck part of the community up to rethinking their role within the community could become feasible.

2.3. Participants

The participants (55.2% female) were 29 citizens and local stakeholders (referents of local cultural associations, social and political groups, schools, and civic committees) aged between 18 and 76 (*M* = 40.91; *SD* = 18.01). All of the participants were Italian; most of them lived in San Giovanni a Teduccio (55.2%) or in the nearby neighborhoods and were frequent attenders of San Giovanni a Teduccio (17.1%); eight interviewees chose not to disclose where they lived. Most of the participants were unmarried (34.4%) or married (27.6%), while 10.3% lived with their partner but were unmarried; eight participants chose not to disclose this information. Most of the respondents held a High School Diploma (37.9%), while 17.2% a degree, 10.3% a post-graduate title, and one participant a Secondary School Diploma; nine participants chose not to disclose this information.

2.4. Data Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The overall corpus was analyzed using the Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM), which was run following different phases as defined by Strauss and Corbin [37]. Indeed, through an interpretative–constructivist approach [38], the GTM allows the researcher to move from a research question to explore a phenomenon that has not been comprehensively deepened in the established literature and to build a new theory based on the gathered data [37].

In the first phase, open coding is run by identifying quotations expressing the main topics and themes emerging from the corpus and labeling them with codes. Then, in the axial coding phase, the codes are gathered into categories, that is, at a higher level of abstraction. In this phase, the relationships between the identified categories are deepened too, indicating the causal conditions, the phenomenon, the context, the intervention conditions, the strategies of action/interaction, and consequences; macro-categories were identified when appropriate. Last, in the phase of selective coding, the researchers identify the core category, that is, a new conceptual category that represents the fulcrum around which the defined connections develop. Overall, this process requires an inference that identifies meanings in the data that were not readable through the already available categorizations. ATLAS.ti 8 was the software used for data analyses. The two authors independently worked on the corpus and then compared their work at the end of each phase to achieve agreement. When this was not possible, an external researcher who was not involved in the study but was familiar with the GTM intervened for it.

3. Results

Overall, 158 codes were extracted from the corpus. They were grouped into 16 categories comprising six macro-categories (see Table 1): *disempowered community*, referring to (a) nostalgia and resignation, (b) lack of values and awareness about the current circumstances, (c) low rates of participation; *threats and weaknesses of San Giovanni*, which includes (a) presence of organized crime activities and (b) abandoned community spaces; *community relationships*, including (a) the relationships within the community, (b) the relationships with the outgroup, (c) the role of local associations, and (d) the relationships with institutional referents; *the use of local places*, which refers to their (a) different uses depending on the time of the day and (b) social and aggregative functions; *the sea in San Giovanni*, which is felt as (a) invisible, (b) a common good, and (c) an identity element; *resilient community*, which includes (a) an active citizenship and (d) the role of some stakeholders as flywheels

for participatory processes. The core category was labeled *the community as an archipelago: fragmentation of resources.*

Table 1. Overview of the categories and macro-categories.

Macro-Categories	Categories
1. Disempowered community	(a) Nostalgia and resignation (b) Lack of values and awareness about the current circumstances (c) Low rates of participation
2. Threats and weaknesses of San Giovanni	(a) Presence of organized crime activities (b) Abandoned community spaces
3. Community relationships	(a) Relationships within the community (b) Relationships with the outgroup (c) The role of local associations (d) Relationships with Institutional referents
4. The use of local places	(a) Different uses depending on the time of the day (b) Social and aggregative functions
5. The sea in San Giovanni	(a) The invisible sea (b) The sea as a common good (c) The sea as an identity element
6. Resilient community	(a) Active citizenship (b) Flywheels for participatory processes

3.1. Disempowered Community

The first macro-category describes the community of San Giovanni a Teduccio as a disempowered one, mainly referring to the low rates of participation and awareness, which characterize its citizens' attitude along with a strong feeling of nostalgia.

It seems to be entangled in a nostalgic perception of the industrial past of the neighborhood and in a strong resignation, both not favoring adherence to the possible actions that could be carried out in the local context. Indeed, having foreclosed or neglected common spaces in one's own community can prompt citizens' emotional and affective disinvestment and disengagement as an attempt to put a distance between them and the city decay they reckon in their community.

"The closed factory is closed for me; its condition does not affect me. A bit of an indolence. Broadly speaking, this can mean constant whining because you have a problem, and you keep it on you" (male, 40, referent of a cultural association)

In this vein, participants talk about low rates of participation and civic engagement, followed by a shift to everyone addressing their own problems as they were solely private and trying to solve them by relying on their own resources [39,40]. Indeed, despite being aware of the potential of local resources and having ideas about how to reassess and better exploit them, the community struggles with the difficulties of carrying out planning and implementing actions in the neighborhood, particularly due to the low participation of the inhabitants.

"The community is not used to participating; it is a dormant community" (female, 37, referent of a local association)

"However, the park in Pazzigno [a district in San Giovanni a Teduccio] is completely abandoned, it has become a garbage dump. Closed! You could hire gardeners; you could hire guardians" (female, 58, citizen)

"For a while they tried to keep a listening center open. The first year there were more people who came... eventually, as time went on, no one came, since we were giving neither money nor concrete help... we just wanted to listen to them, help them, and accompany them in what we were doing by volunteering" (female, 57, citizen)

Indeed, when a community lacks the ability to project itself into the future of its places due to the loss of social and aggregative functions, the sense of the common good gets lost too, on the one hand delegating the care of places to third parties, and on the other assuming an attitude of resignation in the face of the living conditions of the neighborhood and its places [39,40]. Based on this, San Giovanni a Teduccio is experienced as a neighborhood *plagued by static* in which no changes happen since no one engages in prompting them—not improving nor worsening its own conditions.

"That's the biggest problem, it's a place plagued by static, it's not subject to change, maybe it gets worse it would be something new, but it stays there, still, motionless, it always pulls the same air, there are always the same winds, it doesn't change" (male, 24, citizen)

Differently, its community is depicted as always getting worse, characterized by low awareness and a lack of values and intentions to behave so as to implement changes in their community and improve it.

"You would have to change all the people who live in San Giovanni a Teduccio. If you change the people, it becomes a good place to live. That is, it is not that they have gone to improve, they are just making it worse" (female, 68, citizen)

3.2. Threats and Weaknesses of San Giovanni

The second macro-category refers to the downside participants reckon as to their local community experience in San Giovanni a Teduccio.

When addressing the weaknesses of the neighborhood in its inhabitants' opinion, the urban configuration of the neighborhood and the history of industrial failures clearly emerge as linked to unemployment, which in turn has offered a fertile soil for the spread of organized crime activities.

"Slowly, with the dismantling of all the industry that employed two thousand people. . . when these realities disappeared everything decayed, a complete decay that leads you to no livability and phenomena that we know of Camorra, of occupation of the territory of these organizations" (male, 76, citizen)

"I think there are high rates of crime, a lot of it. The operational side is right here, and I'm not just talking about San Giovanni, but also about Barra and Ponticelli [two neighborhoods adjacent]. It's kind of ruining the area. The young people either do drugs, are camorrists, or shoot" (female, 58, citizen)

Furthermore, participants describe the neighborhood as fragmented and characterized by decay and dilapidation; that is, it lacks aggregation and socialization spaces so that citizens are not able to use them to improve their neighborhood experiences. This is attributed to the geographical organization of the neighborhood but also to the few common places that exist being left to neglect. There are some private places that could serve these social functions, yet participants also report the lack of a strong social network connecting them.

"There are small islands that are not always communicating. [...] As a neighborhood, San Giovanni is not aggregated; this is no longer a fact of will, it is rather because of the geographical arrangement of the neighborhood" (male, 76, citizen)

Taken together, the lack of socialization spaces offering youths opportunities to get in touch with peers and get involved in shared activities, along with the strong presence of organized crime activities, create the circumstances for an increased risk of youths getting caught in such activities both as a sort of job and as a path to socialization.

3.3. Community Relationships

This macro-category mainly refers to two relational dimensions that emerged from participants' viewpoints: the relationships within the community—that is, among citizens, with local associations, with institutional referents—and those with the outgroup, that is, those of the community as a whole with other neighborhood communities in Naples. In

both cases, social relationships are characterized by a strong ambivalence, as they are seen as resources but also as connoted by several weaknesses.

As to the relationships within the community, the neighborhood is described as connoted by a strong sense of belonging, which stems from community members acknowledging it as the place in which they and their community sink their roots.

"I feel quite involved because being a small neighborhood all the people know each other, and there is room for sharing. Going down the street, meeting people who know each other, talking—even for two minutes. . . I think for a person who has always lived here it is also quite easy in some ways to feel integrated" (female, 25, citizen)

However, despite this strong belongingness, participants also reckon the spatial organization of the neighborhood as supporting only fragmented relationships; they report that they often choose not to spend their daily time in San Giovanni a Teduccio and that they would rather like moving to other neighborhoods due to the lack of services, links to the rest of the city, and social opportunities within it. In this vein, the affective and emotional ties to their neighborhood is sometimes rather felt as a *conviction*, a constraint refraining them from moving somewhere else.

"I see moving from San Giovanni as difficult precisely because there are these roots that tie you to the neighborhood, that condemn you in a way—kind of like a drug addiction, like any substance" (male, 24, citizen)

In this vein, a sort of negative Sense of Community (SoC) [41,42] emerges from participants' words since they express a centripetal force pushing them apart and making them feel the need and desire to escape San Giovanni a Teduccio and move to another neighborhood yet also the feeling of affective, emotional, and relational bonds and roots which rather tie them to this neighborhood. Indeed, this kind of SoC is characterized by individuals feeling distinguished, separate, and alienated from their community and its members, endeavoring not to be influenced by them as they feel the community is a constraint hindering them from meeting their needs [41,42].

"There is an unhealthy air for me in this neighborhood, despite I was born here, and I feel close to certain people who live here, it is not an advisable place for me, but rather a place to flee. . ." (male, 24, citizen)

"Few people fall into the ranks of close ties, the rest. . . you can say I know everyone in San Giovanni, maybe the rotten part and the healthy one, and in these two parts are few people I care about, the rest are relationships characterized by convention and formality" (female, 68, citizen)

Similarly, participants also report troubles in the relationships with Institutional referents, who, according to them, implement actions in the neighborhood without achieving citizens' consensus and agreement. Due to this, institutions are felt as absent and neglecting the interests and needs of the neighborhood community and its inhabitants.

"Because it's useless for us to do these things and then 100 m away the institutions create the economic port by lowering it from the top—because, again, it was lowered to us from the top, there was no interaction with the community, if it wasn't for some community members who were a little more careful, we wouldn't even have known about it" (male, 24, citizen)

Under these circumstances, the mediating role of local associations is reckoned by both citizens and referents of associations as they endeavor to promote shared decision-making processes and to involve citizens and institutions in defining common goals and plans to achieve them. In this vein, some associations and citizens gathered in a local committee—Napoli ZETA (Zona Est Tavolo Aperto)—to make their voices more relevant in the interlocution with the municipality and the region based on the joint power; this committee—which some of the participants in this research are active members—is specifically careful in monitoring the plans and projects institutions are *lowering from the top* without involving citizens with

reference to three main themes (environment, urban regeneration, and social emergencies), so that the community can still express its views on them.

> *"As Napoli ZETA, we are mainly addressing the ecodistrict, because it is a project that has already placed stakes dropped from above, without interaction and confrontation with the community"* (female, 37, referent of a local association)

As far as it concerns the relationships with other Neapolitan neighborhoods and their inhabitants, participants talk about more constructive and fruitful relationships, which are felt as resources potentially enriching their daily lives. Overall, the potential of the links and relationships with the outgroups are linked to the use of some services located in San Giovanni a Teduccio, such as the new venue of the University of Naples Federico II, which also hosts the Apple Academy and the theater Nest, which attract people from other neighborhoods.

> *"However, there is a university of excellence here, there is the Apple Academy, they bring a flood of youths coming here, swarms of students. To go to work, my mom takes the 7 o'clock Vesuviana [a local public transport] and she sees all these youths coming to San Giovanni that she had never seen before"* (female, 37, referent of a local association)

However, from their words, it clearly stems that these relationships are felt as a resource from an economic point of view, yet the perception changes when it comes to the social and relational aspects. Indeed, respondents also state that they feel a difference in how their neighborhood and other ones are perceived by Neapolitan citizens at large, as if their neighborhood was somehow considered a second-class one.

3.4. The Use of Local Places

As to the role of local places in San Giovanni a Teduccio inhabitants' experiences, which is the fourth macro-category stemming from participants' statements, two main aspects emerge referring to their different uses depending on the time of the day and to their social and aggregative functions.

As was already mentioned when presenting the contents of the second macro-category, participants report that there are only a few common places available in San Giovanni a Teduccio for citizens' local social experiences; these are mainly private and not linked to a local network. Indeed, shared community places are neglected and abandoned in most cases, yet some members of the community recently endeavored to reclaim public spaces that could serve as aggregative and social spaces, engaging with a different approach to caring for such spaces. Within this process of reappropriation, they also identified some other places that are not originally conceived with the intention of fulfilling a social function, but which end up doing so, such as the library.

> *"After dropping off the children, the mothers stop in the so-called square—but it is not a square. There is a little more space, a little wider sidewalk, but we call it a square [laughs] precisely because there is an absence of a square"* (female, 57, citizen)

> *"Children still play in the street this is nice, this is good, because anyway you grow, you socialize, you still play with creativity..."* (female, 57, citizen)

Furthermore, it seems like the ways for community members to experience neighborhood places take on different connotations depending on the time of the day, so that the latter examined citizens' routines and habits concerning the local places used during the day. Specifically, during the morning, places are described as vibrant and full of citizens going out for groceries and accompanying children to school, while in the afternoon, they are full of children playing outside and elderly people walking the streets of the neighborhood. However, the most significant change happens when it comes to evening and night hours since the citizens perceive an unofficial *curfew*, which is needed due to the activities taking place in the area during these hours, described as a time of motorcycle raids and ill-intentioned encounters.

> *"You see it vibrant in the morning, then you see it a bit bustling in the afternoon because there is a passing of cars of people crossing the course. Then, it ends, there is nothing. You can see*

a little bit of people on the street in the morning, going to the grocery store, a few retirees at some bars in the afternoon, after that nobody goes out anymore" (male, 76, citizen)

"In the evening, on the other hand, it is frequented more by young adults who, however, have not so much of good intentions" (female, 58, citizen)

In a similar vein, the social climate perceived in community places seems to change depending on the season. For example, participants state that during Spring and Summer, the presence of the waterfront inspires a peaceful atmosphere, while during Winter and Autumn, the same place is experienced as desolate and overlooked.

3.5. The Sea in San Giovanni

The fifth macro-category refers to the role of the sea in the experience of San Giovanni a Teduccio community members. As was mentioned in the introduction, the sea has always represented an element of strong relevance to community identity in this neighborhood; in this vein, nowadays, they still feel that it represents a resource both tangible, that is, a common good to be enjoyed, and intangible, that is, an identity element to be defended, even though they also feel the need to make it more available and livable since it is experienced as invisible [43–45].

Indeed, participants report that in modern times, citizens who have always lived in San Giovanni a Teduccio can remember times when they could experience the sea locally, yet are used not to do doing so anymore, since on the one hand, it is hidden by residential and disused industrial buildings while on the other hand it is polluted and thus not usable for bathing and swimming.

"They are used to smelling the stench of the refineries as the first thing when they arrive in San Giovanni; then, as the second thing, there is the Corso, and between this and the sea there are buildings, so you don't see the sea, you have to look for it" (female, 37, referent of a local association)

"I remember the sea in San Giovanni, but now I don't perceive it anymore. This is the big problem here, that you don't even perceive it" (male, 40, referent of a cultural association)

However, they also reckon that it still has a strong significance for citizens both as an identity element and as a common good to be defended and further developed. Despite the pollution and the lack of maintenance of local beaches and sea, local inhabitants are careful about dastardly and polluting actions that could worsen its condition, which they promptly report to the appropriate authorities.

"Last Summer we saw asbestos dumped on the waterfront and called those in charge, the municipal police offices, to remove it. So, the attention must always be high. However, it is still a lived-in waterfront, thanks in part to the community of fishermen who established there" (female, 37, referent of a local association)

Further, some of them still go sunbathing and bathing in San Giovanni a Teduccio, and they have fond of memories of past times when this was possible. This clearly suggests citizens' frustration due to the formal inability to enjoy the sea as a common good as well as their desire for the reappropriation of the beaches and sea in San Giovanni a Teduccio as usable and livable spaces, which also emerges from the participants' words.

"Some just don't care and go to the beach anyway; they say, "This I can have, and I live it despite everything". It's kind of like when in the cabinet you have the jar of Nutella, but you can't eat it; it would be better not to have it. You live the frustration of having something at your fingertips, but you can't take it without even understanding the reasons for it. [. . .] My great desire would be to resume the possibility of sea enjoyment. There is great potential there" (female, 50, referent of a cultural association)

The presence of the pollution and degradation that are described as characteristic of both the beach and the sea in the neighborhood opens a discussion on the community's need for coastal redevelopment. Indeed, the presence of the waterfront in San Giovanni a

Teduccio emerged as having great potential. To this aim, participants talk about several initiatives citizens and local associations are promoting, e.g., by further stressing and valorizing its beauty, by making it possible again to bathe and sunbathe with no risks to one's health, by regenerating the disused buildings that are close to the seaside (e.g., the former industrial buildings), and, broadly speaking, by putting the sea again in the core of San Giovanni a Teduccio identity as a strength.

> *"Areas should be created where the citizens can reappropriate the sea, e.g., in the former Corradini [a disused industrial building nearby the seaside] a sea museum, or a marine research center, could be made"* (female, 37, referent of a local association)

3.6. Resilient Community

The last macro-category refers to San Giovanni a Teduccio as a resilient community in which some of the citizens still actively promote the improvement of its environmental and social conditions, and several local actors are considered flywheels for the promotion of bottom-up participatory processes with this aim.

Indeed, part of the community actively participates in the life of the neighborhood through some local initiatives that make the two-way interdependence between subject and context fruitful. This is the part that stands as being resilient despite—and against—the above-mentioned weaknesses of the neighborhood and is reckoned as such also by the remaining community members, who appreciate their efforts and beliefs even though they feel unable to fully understand them.

> *"I call them crazy but look at how much they believe. . . a strength is the stubbornness in not giving up. Even though they may break out into madness, it is a belief that is passed on, although there is no change and although people continue to die day after day, they continue to believe, which I would not do, it is something that I lack"* (male, 24, citizen)

In this vein, a part of the community is not set apart from this context, e.g., barricaded within a private dimension, nor do they depend on the context, but rather build upon the weaknesses and critical issues of the neighborhood to produce changes that can impact both the shared, social dimensions of community life and the physical and environmental common context where the community lives and moves [46].

> *"We take the positive elements of the "bombs" and try to reconnect the social fabric moving from that"* (female, 37, referent of a local association)

This actively engaged part of the community is supported by several local associations as well as by other stakeholders who endeavor to glue the local social fabric and offer several social and cultural activities to local citizens, such as the parish and the Nest theater. These actors attempt to serve as a link between citizens and institutional referents in order to connect community needs and produce top-down interventions. Furthermore, they also promote several local events, which are mainly tied to the cultural and historic identity of the neighborhood, e.g., to its religious traditions and to the sea.

> *"At the feast of San Giovanni, with the church we organize the procession of San Giovanni a Mare, [...] and I have to tell the truth it's a week of celebration for the neighborhood, they do the festival on the course, they do the theater in the street, the procession"* (female, 58, citizen)

This resilient part of the community also endeavors to act as a good example for other citizens so that they can imagine that a change is feasible with the efforts and engagement of all community members; their aim is to show others that better life conditions could stem from improving the social and environmental community conditions, prompting their motivation to engage with collective actions.

> *"If people see you doing, they are also willing to do. You show that it can be done"* (female, 51, referent of a local association)

> *"And above all, in my opinion, highlighting what are the benefits that come from these kinds of actions and then trying to stimulate a strong motivation in making these spaces*

more aesthetically beautiful, more usable and so in some respects there is also a return of a better living condition" (female, 51, referent of a local association)

3.7. The Core Category: The Community as an Archipelago: Fragmentation of Resources

The Core Category (see Figure 5) was labeled *The community as an archipelago: fragmentation of resources*. The interviewees express the narrative of a community that perceives itself as a minority with respect to the city of Naples, even though it is not geographically distant. The community appears anchored to previous industrial vocations, which have not found innovative developments, fostering a perception of the negation of the natural, cultural, and economic resources of the area. The degradation of neighborhood places, which limits their use and functions, constitutes an element of the restitution of community identity, which seems now based on the negative elements rather than reinforcing the positive identification with the natural and cultural places of San Giovanni a Teduccio. Internal ties are defined as complex and divergent, with apparently contradictory characteristics given by the presence of activists, citizens who are nostalgic but not active and do not participate in change initiatives, and groups that carry out criminal acts. Indeed, what emerged from the interviews shows a divided community, in which a part is actively engaged in the improvement of the social and environmental community conditions while the other is discouraged, *dormant*, and stuck in a state of nostalgia for the industrial and maritime past, which still represents a significant dimension of community identity as well as a landmark for a community living in a condition of constant insecurity due to the lack of citizens' engagement and effective intervention by institutions and local administration.
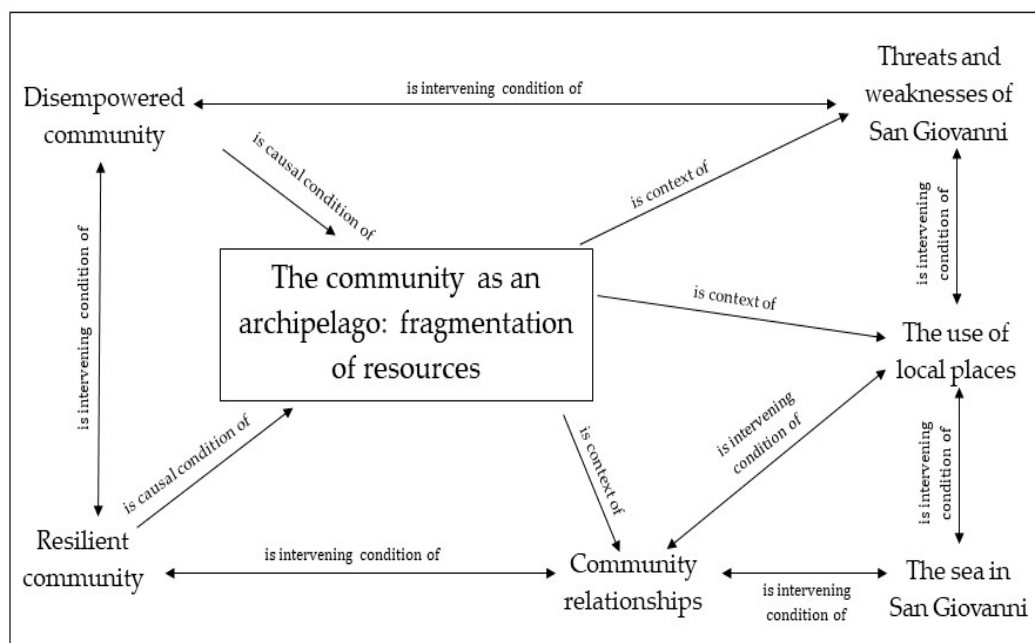

Figure 5. Core Category. The community as an archipelago: fragmentation of resources.

On the one hand, the presence of a disengaged part of the community tells of a citizenry that, at times, sinks into a condition of entrenched passivity. The process of disempowerment that has affected part of the community has rendered it incapable of being active in addressing problems, producing ideas, and engaging in knowledge processes, and thus contributing to the transformation of its context. These conditions determine the state of learned helplessness [47] that seems to be reinforced by the uncommon city voice and institutional interventions that are ineffective in strengthening the identity and meeting the real needs of the local community. This situation also exacerbates the perception of distance from the political objectives of the metropolitan city of Naples, which governs, together with the institutions and port authority, territorial and commercial development in a form

that is not participatory and not close to the locally desired development. In this vein, San Giovanni a Teduccio suffers and is a favored prey to top-down, unilateral planning by institutions, which do not involve the community in decision-making processes since they do not recognize the power of the interlocutor. Projects such as the container port and ecodistrict are examples of a lack of synergy between institutional actors and the community since the former reckon their economic value and the latter frame them as threats to the social, cultural, and environmental balance of the neighborhood. Furthermore, such social immobility predisposes to passive endurance of criminal actions and organizations, with their works of symbolic appropriation of public spaces, which takes place through vandalism, raids, and smuggling.

On the other hand, participants also reckon the strong resilience of their neighborhood community. It is expressed by political youth groups, as well as by associations that are very active in promoting social and cultural actions in the area, which continue with their commitment to raising awareness among citizens and institutions [48]. This active part of the community of San Giovanni a Teduccio paints the walls of dilapidated buildings, cleans the beach and flowerbed with improvised with makeshift means, and participates in events for greater legality. The main theme that runs through all the initiatives in the area—from proposals aimed at recovering the relationship with the sea to cultural activities and engagement in voluntary associations linked to the parish—is the desire to make community spaces more livable and enjoyable since they are considered to be common goods whose conditions can improve or impair both individual and community conditions. The dimension of doing becomes a psychosocial process that redefines relational spaces, making their social value visible. However, the latter is not only the outcome of the implemented actions but also redefines the field in which future actions will be thought and implemented by modifying the social, cultural, and environmental characteristics of the context [49–51].

> *"To be a bit metaphorical, I can say that San Giovanni is like the mural that was made. It first was a bare wall; then with care, commitment, and will, it became a great work. In the sense that a lot more can be done for the area to really make it a great mural with collective efforts"* (male, 62, citizen)

Indeed, citizens' experiences and actions can only be thought of as oriented by the evaluations of the effects of one's own contributions and acknowledgment of individual and shared responsibilities for the outcomes and solutions to be achieved [32], which is in a state of dialogic interdependence with the contingency wherein they are generated [6,46,49–52].

3.8. Photos of Significant Identity, Social, and Aggregative Places

The collected photos of the places in the neighborhood participants attributed identity, social, and aggregative functions highlighted several different places: some described as livable and enjoyable, some as needing regeneration:

- Troisi Park was pointed out as being an aggregative place for youths at present by three participants and as a potential meeting spot if regenerated by three other participants. It is a park characterized by the presence of a small lake, which was currently partly abandoned due to neglect;
- The mural depicting Maradona was pointed out as an aggregative place at present by one participant and as a potential meeting spot if differently valorized by another participant. It is a famous mural by the street artist Jorit, which was painted on the façade of one of the buildings in the so-called Bronx;
- The terrace of Antonio Labriola Library was pointed out being as an aggregative place at present by two participants and as a potential meeting spot if properly valorized by two more participants. It is said to offer one of the most beautiful views of the district, overlooking the Gulf of Naples and its waterfront;

- The waterfront was pointed out as being an aggregative place at present by three participants. They described it as particularly vibrant, especially during Summer, and as one of the favorite meeting spots for the inhabitants of San Giovanni a Teduccio;
- Local beaches were pointed out as aggregative places at present by one participant despite their current conditions. Indeed, they were reckoned as ideal places to organize concerts and parties in the evening. Furthermore, as a place particularly dear to the community of residents, the latter take advantage of it for swimming during the hottest hours of Summer despite the polluted state of the sea, which makes beaches aggregative places during daytime too in summertime;
- The Figli in Famiglia ONLUS was pointed out as an aggregative place at present by two participants. It is a meeting point for children and is considered a safe place for youths at risk, where after-school and recreational activities take place;
- The small squares of the Corso were pointed out as aggregative places at present by two participants despite their current conditions of partial degradation;
- The Pietrarsa Museum was pointed out as an aggregative place at present by one participant despite it being at the edge of the neighborhood;
- Pazzigno district was pointed out as a potential meeting spot if properly regenerated by three participants. Indeed, it hosts a multi-sports center, which had been a meeting place for the youths and whose great social potential is still recognized. Building on this, participants mentioned that it would deserve to be revitalized as a common for the whole community;
- The Town Hall square, in front of Antonio Labriola Library, was pointed out as a potential meeting spot if properly regenerated by two participants, despite the type of people who currently attended the square.
- Overall, what emerged from the photos suggested that the maritime and industrial identity was still felt as a critical part of community identity by local citizens, who showed ambivalent feelings towards the places characterizing such identity dimensions, that is, the sea, the waterfront, and the ex-industrial establishments. Indeed, on the one hand, they associated these elements to the main elements of their community identity and felt tied to them, wishing to be able to enjoy such spaces again, while on the other hand, they also felt that due to their current status, such places were no more able to hold their identity function and rather were run-down, neglected, and unlivable.

4. Discussion

This paper addresses the implementation of collaborative processes aimed at detecting feasible, shared paths for participatory social regeneration activities for the common spaces in San Giovanni a Teduccio, which were identified by citizens and stakeholders as compounding local cultural heritage and community identity.

What emerges from the first phase of knowledge of the community is that the latter is perceived by its members as a fragmented one, whose identity is tightly related to the sea- and industry-related past. These identity elements are one of the reasons for the fragmentation of the present community, which is expressed in several ways, e.g., (a) the community is split into parts aiming to progress and improve its living conditions and a part stuck in the nostalgia of the past; (b) local places related to these two main identity pillars are neglected, forsaken, or run-down, making it hard for citizens to identify with such places as commons and as places where social interactions among community members can happen and where joint plans can be developed. The ambivalence related to these identity dimensions also finds expression in the tie local citizens express towards their neighborhood, which assumes the characteristics of a negative SoC [41,42], which makes them perceive their belonging to such community as a constraint rather than as a resource. However, despite this, a part of the community still shows to be resilient and actively engaged in promoting bottom-up participatory processes aimed at improving the environmental and social conditions of the neighborhood [46]. Moving from this and from the active involvement of this part of the community in the first phases of the described intervention, the exhibition organized by

the researchers along with the participants aims to help the resilient part of the community to involve the dormant part by highlighting the identity-related resources that could be differently exploited in the neighborhood. By doing so, it also offers a shared space where to meet and discuss community- and neighborhood-related issues in order to develop joint goals, plans, and activities. In this vein, the exhibition represents a first step of a broader participatory process that stems from the active involvement and engagement of different actors from the community [31,53,54].

The described process of research allowed us to study and address the needs of the community, acknowledge the fragmentation of local participatory experiences, to valorize the local resources linked to the ties, such as the sea and the industrial past, opening significant challenges for the citizens living in San Giovanni a Teduccio. Through the acknowledgment of the social and civic actions promoted by local groups and associations, it was possible to detect the complexities of local events, social dynamics, and neighborhood systems while looking at the opportunities for changes based on the regeneration of local places as well as on the strengthening of local social networks. Indeed, it takes the ability to see a future perspective for one's community and its places to make individuals consider the available common goods and resources and engage in efforts to take care of them [39,40].

Furthermore, the active involvement of different local actors allows for the detection and prompting of socially, politically, and culturally sustainable answers to the psychosocial problems that emerge [31]. Indeed, listening to citizens' needs during the interviews and providing them with visibility and opportunities to be shared during the exhibition welcomed and supported ideas for new possible actions of social, territorial, and political regeneration, favoring the meetings among local associations and between them and local citizens, giving strength to the already active projects, and reducing the potential conflicts stemming from different and non-communicating viewpoints [54,55]. Indeed, from the community development perspective, a significant aspect is the process of citizens' identification with places by holding together the cultural and historical memory and the natural and functional aspects of aggregative processes as motivations for participation in a common purpose; such processes need to be addressed with continuous and synergistic planning within the local network and with local institutions and research bodies [53] to prompt social and territorial regeneration actions consistent with the needs and vocations of the city.

The resulting reflective gaze at the neighborhood's living places constitutes a significant element of identification, a process that supports the citizenry in observing and hoping for possible changes in enhancement. The discussion with them reinforces this vision, turning the gaze to the potential, and indicating lines of intervention and social action aimed at enhancing the urban area and at the synergistic civic engagement of citizens and associations [56,57]. In this vein, interventions aimed at giving the social functions back to shared spaces acquire critical meanings and require actions like modifying the environmental characteristics of local places, detecting new functions for them, and imagining new dimensions and meanings for local social and physical environments [1,58]. These dimensions are situated in a state of interdependence between political and cultural elements of which the state of places, the negative sense of community, historical aspects and economic and cultural vocations are strongly identified. Such dynamics of interdependence create the possible social functions of places and constitute forms of social ties with the relational and territorial community as characterizing elements of the relationship between individuals, groups, entities and the territory and an engine for potential local and cultural development. In this vein, such interdependency shapes and gives meaning to the local heritage, which can become the driver for sustainable plans and actions, which is consistent with the FARO Convention [9,10].

Limitations

The results of this study provide insights into how participatory processes can allow citizens to reckon the cultural heritage available in their community and detect feasible paths to valorize it again, building on common social places, shared identity dimensions,

common habits and uses, meanings and representations. It should be mentioned that the citizens involved in the described first phases of this process were only a small, non-representative group and that the process and the results are to be understood with reference to the specific context where they happened and to its characteristics. However, despite these limitations, the present research meets transferability criteria [59] and provides meaningful insights.

5. Conclusions

Building on these results, it seems evident that high-quality, available, enjoyable, and livable spaces, which can serve as public landmarks and are able to host local traditions and social gatherings, are linked to the development of citizens' bond to their community places [2,60] and hold the needed attributes to become meaningful to their daily life and social identities [5,12,13,61–63]. That is, when dealing with people's experience, community places should be taken into account not only as spatial settings with their environmental qualities but also as social venues where interactions and relationships happen and to which individual and shared representations and meanings are attached [64–67]; this allows us to consider the affective, conative, and sense-making dimensions about places, such as emotions, individual and shared representations, the derived meanings about what a place is like, what are its functions, which images it conveys, which activities it hosts, and so on [68,69].

Overall, consistent with the FARO Convention, all these elements compound the local cultural heritage [9,12,13] and are critical to individuals' and communities' well-being as well as community cohesion and identity [12,13]. In this vein, by relying on the relevant identity-related dimensions individuals have, promoting interventions aimed at involving local actors through collaborative and participatory processes represents a strategy to make them more aware of the shared responsibility and care they ought to have towards such common spaces and resources.

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