Whose public spaces? Neighbourhood renewal, conviviality and place making in the Milan urban fringe

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Abstract
This paper will evaluate the *Urban Italia* regeneration programme in Cinisello Balsamo, a former industrial town in the Milan urban fringe. The programme, financed for the period 2003-2006 by the Italian government, was aimed at tackling social exclusion and urban decay, by transforming three unused areas in collective spaces for a convivial city, especially with the purpose of creating opportunities for social encounters, recreations and creativity, as complementary activities of a vital and viable city. The case-study analysis, drawing from a vast empirical material collected over ten months of full-time participatory observation, has shed light on several key issues both on the policy building and implementation phases. Framing the discussion of these three issues within the structure-agency debate, this paper will contribute to build a methodology for the policy transfer, decompounding the empirical material in its structural and conjuncture elements and identifying a number of strengths and constraints to human agency that should be taken into account and evaluated in any given contextual frame.

Key words: neighbourhood renewal programme; convivial city; public space, participation, structure-agency dynamics; policy design

1. Public space, causality and conviviality: questioning public space analysis

Looking at the many policy documents on neighbourhood regeneration growing in numbers and entity all over the Europe, the issue of public space is appearing a "must" that studs as many sections as possible, from security to quality design. Successful policy model appear to be those able to deliver "vibrant" and "safe" public spaces, whatever these words mean.

With the aim of contributing to identifying and delivering strategies for viable and vital neighbourhoods, this paper deals with the issue of how public spaces are conceived, planned and socially created in local contexts through regeneration programmes.

The focus of the discussion is on *the process* of their creation rather than on their use: in this way the paper aim at contributing both at integrating theory on the status of public spaces in contemporary European cities, and at providing tools for enhance policy delivery.

Lack of local financing, privatization, security policies, poor design, social polarisation and commodification of spare time are threatening the quality and the meaning of collective spaces that support the existence of a social life. Difficulties in sharing spaces, encountering diversity and preserving spaces for non-commodified practices, however, are not new topics in urban sociology and close disciplines, as they have been pointed out since the 60s and 70s by scholars like Henri Lefebvre (1974), Richard Sennett (1970) and Jane Jacobs (1961), who denounced planning policies aimed at shrinking urban collective places.

In order to frame the contribute of this paper in the debate, can be helpful to bring some reminds on how public spaces are threaten as object of study in the literature. In a very rough way we can draw two main groups.

A first group of scholars, mainly belonging to political science and philosophy disciplines, are considering public space mainly from a point of view of participation and democracy: public space and *public sphere* are treated as synonymous (Garcia 2003, Sebastiani 1997, Mouffe 2000). The model of public space they have in mind, or rather the

ideal type, is the ancient Greek's *agora*, the place of political debate and participation, the locus of democracy.

A second group of scholars, mainly represented by architects and planners, are more concerned with the description of public spaces' transformation in history and particularly in contemporary city (Romano 1993, Crawford 1993, Sorkin 1992, Davis 1990). The model of public space they refer to is the ancient Greek's *stoa*, the square of the open-air market, the place of informal social encounters. Generally speaking, for them, public spaces must have some physical features and degree of accessibility, in order to realize their main functions, that are supposed to be the dialog between different populations, the improvement of social inclusion, the place for the building up of a common identity.

Clearly both the approaches share a concern for the deepening of the individualisation process, as mainly addressed in the early work of Hannah Arendt (1958), Jurgen Habermas (1962), David Riesman (1958) and Jane Jacobs (1961). The transformation in the shape and in the use of public space is seen, in these works, as a lost: the lost of a common sense of belonging to a city, a fracture in the link between the city of people and the city of 'stones', between *civitas* and *urbs*, a link that, according to Max Weber, have been the *conjuratio,* the fidelity-act of a citizen to his town, the symbol itself of the city's ideal-type in the Middle Ages. A very common consequence of dealing with ideal types, or normative model of conceiving social facts, is a over production of catastrophic views of the world: let us take as an example the non-lieux concept of Marc Augè, or the keen apocalyptic descriptions of City of Quarz, by Mike Davis.

There are several critical observations to these approaches, although they do not constitute what we could properly call "debate".

Andy Merrifield (1996), for instance, observes that the transformation occurring in the American public spaces, representing the majority of literature, are not so relevant to the European context, where new-consumerist public or semi-public spaces are not substituting completely other spaces, in which conflicts and counter-cultures continue to be visible. His contribute is important to help us thinking about the specificity of the European public spaces, and to observe more deeply their contested meaning and practices.

With a very critical approach, Michael Brill, from his side, is arguing that the new American landscape is not a witness of any loss in public space…because such kind of publicness it is just an idealised vision that has never existed (Brill 1989). In arguing that, he suggests us to avoid referring to un-real spaces, and try to reflect on which degree a public space is important for a public life.

Similarly, and more recently, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002) are evidencing that it is not clear why should we overlap public space and public sphere (and what does it mean public? Where are workers, women, Africans, gay and lesbians and all the minorities when we speak about 'publics'?)[1] and, more importantly, why should we expect that impersonal encounters in public space could enhance democracy?

Moreover, Ted Kilian (1998) and Ali Madanipour (2003) help us to make some distinctions and to recognise that people, according to their values and culture and depending on where they locate the site of personal and interpersonal relations, have different way of defining the degree of publicness of a place, and of exert power of appropriation and exclusion.

Starting to build on these critical voices, we can, for instance, break the sharp division between public and private, considering three axes along which reflect on different degree of openness and publicness. The figure 1 represent some variables that we can take in consideration when observing public spaces with ethnographical work.

The figure show three axes as three dimensions. It is argued, here, that any public space can be located in any position within the plot. It's meaning, use, appropriation and degree of openness will depend on the social processes which gave shape or reinterpreted it. Let's take as an example a little square in the middle of an estate. It's use can be very impersonal, like sitting alone reading a book, or very personal, like meeting our partner at the

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[1] Fraser and Robbins (Fraser 1993 in Robbins 1993), cited by Amin and Thrift, pp. 189-190

lunch time and talking deeply. Or can be very interpersonal, as the case when a group of elder meet regularly to play cards, or youth to skate-boarding, or when a public event is organised. All these uses can also happen at different time along the day, unless the square is heavily appropriated by a certain social group, i.e. drug-dealers, a gang, or whatever, so that it's degree of exclusivity is very high, and the modes of social encounter will refer only to this group. However, appropriated or not, the nature of the groups involved in the use of this place, and the location itself of the place, will give information about the spatial pertinence of this place. The same experiment of reading the three dimensions can be done with a park, an ignored square, a public library, or a social centre.

Figure 1 – Operational definition of public space
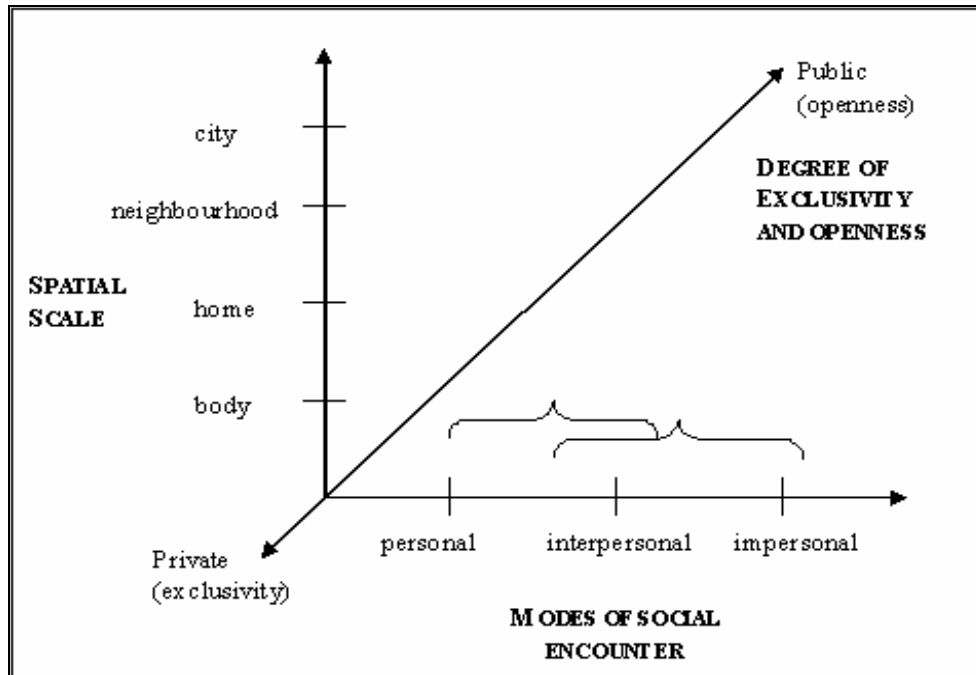
Taking this figure as a tool to think about public spaces will lead us toward a perspective in which public spaces are not normatively defined for their location, shape or ascribed functions from planning and urban design but, rather, are the outcome of negotiations, social behaviour, symbolisation and/or struggles.

Exploring the city *à la Whyte* (Whyte 1980), observing how people use facilities and spaces, is a good way to reflect on the gap between "the planned" city and "the lived", emerging, insurgent public life. We can encounter re-interpretation of spaces, re-appropriation, unpredictable uses, illegal uses, claims, demolitions. This unavoidable gap, that according to contexts can be more or less wide, lead us to questioning what kind of unsatisfied needs are these spontaneous or bottom-up experiences answering. The existing theoretical contribute on public space does not help, in these circumstances. What it is missing in most part of the literature, too much focused on the transformation of public space under the pressure of market, economic restructuring and recent cultural trends, is the role of people in defining and building the reality.

Sociological analysis of social movements, for instance, point out that urban social movements non only are place-based and territorially defined, but that also politicize the city as a question of justice on the ownership and distribution of public space and collective goods (Castells 1983, Mayer 1999, Pickvance 1995 cited in Tonkiss 2005). But, as a discipline that after the loss of popularity of the ecological Chicago School's approach has been a-spatial for a long time, as Harvey, Soja and Mela point out (Harvey 1990, Soja 2000, Mela 1996), urban sociology continue not to consider public spaces as a subject that should be analysed, except few occasional works (Tonkiss 2005, for instance), and still

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underestimate the role of space and spatiality as a causal-enabler element in social processes.

Drawing on the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre (1974), as well as on examples of the first participatory experiments in the collaborative shaping of places (Hillier 1998, Staeheli and Thompson 1997), the research on which this paper is building on has tried to shed light on the lack of voice and recognition of all those practices and clashing symbolic meanings that have been considered residual, arguing that their distance and detached from the actual environment is, often, a matter of reaching the mainstream public spheres of discourses, opinions and decisions. It will be argued, here, that an analysis to structures and agency, contexts and processes, it is necessary to understand the meaning of public spaces in a certain locality, avoiding phenomenological reading of the reality and disentangling power and lobbying relations that hidden or shed light on needs and *desiderata*.

As sharply pointed out by Nancy Fraser (1992), there is not a unique and broadly participated public sphere, realising the habermasian ideal of rational communication where all the single components of a society join the public discourse to negotiate common meanings, rules, values…and eventually shape their cities and public spaces. According to different contexts and times, reality shows processes of exclusion of minorities (for example not-land-owners, slaves and women, in the ancient greek of the *agora*, migrants, gays, old people – among others - in recent years) and self-exclusion by all those people perceiving themselves as belonging to counter-cultures.

Taking into account the existence of multiple public spheres is a first step toward the recognitions of differences and needs, and toward an attempt to opening up a dialogue aimed at filling the communication gap, notwithstanding the conscience of a irreducible difference and the impossibility to achieve consensus on all the issues may be involved (for a debate on collaboration and consensus see Healey 1997, Innes and Booher 2003, Hillier 2002).

The case study presented here - the Urban Italia programme in Cinisello Balsamo - with his participatory project focused on multiple public spaces and its participatory planning practice tradition seemed to be the ideal opportunity to analyse, in a sociological perspective, the process of *social construction of public spaces* – as produced and reproduced by the interplay between agency and structures – and listen to the multiple voices of citizens arguing for shaping their collective places. It has been expected the opportunity to collect material for amending a social theory missing of the relational and constructivist perspective. Within a context of poor environmental quality and lack of public spaces for recreation, culture and creativity, the decision of treating an issue related to a social minority (the youth population and their needs), and of focusing on a usually neglected policy theme such as that of public space, has been seen as innovative, and it was expected that the programme would provide "a vibrant agonistic debate about the shape and the future of the common life" (Mouffe 2005, p.109), a new public sphere where to experiment at the same time, new forms of empowerment and participatory democracy.

2. The case study: a brief storytelling

Before proceeding with the analysis of structures and agency dynamics that occurred during the policy delivery of the regeneration project, an introduction to the case study can be useful to frame the context. Cinisello Balsamo is a 80 thousand inhabitants town in the northern urban fringe of Milan. Until few years ago this area has been nationally labelled (and stigmatized, in a way) as "Italian Stalingrad": the high concentration of heavy industries and blue collar workers in Cinisello Balsamo and its neighbouring towns - a sub-region home of the famous Breda, Pirelli, Magneti-Marelli and Falck heavy factories, to name but a few – corresponded to a strong contractual power of worker unions and co-operative housing builders, and to a tradition of radical left-wing government.

Within this sub-area the town has especially had the role of being a sort of "dormitory" for the thousand immigrants from the south looking for new employment opportunities, during

the "glorious thirty" years of the fordist era. Massive migration flows have seriously challenged the ability of the city to host the newcomers. Emergency situations saw whole families sleeping in building's undergrounds and under-roofs, and the urgency for building new houses pushed towards new organisational answers. Between the 1951 and the 1971, through intense individual and especially co-operative self-building actions, Cinisello grew at a very fast rate without any city planning and the disregards for the minimum standard level of green, services and public spaces fixed by the law. Results are visible in a skyline with an extraordinary mix of tower blocks, cheap single family houses and industrial buildings, with a very poor environmental quality.

Since the dawn of the fordist crisis the town is being experiencing a deep transformation in the economic and social spheres. The strategic location at the intersect of the main transport infrastructures and the strong working culture has been favoured a clear conversion of the city's industrial vocation towards large-scale retail services and to new technologies development sector. Contemporarily, the flows of population from the city of Milan, in search of cheaper housing estates, slowly diversified the traditional population, raised its average socio-economic status while increasing the gap between the highest and the lowest. As a consequence of its new economic role and social composition, the traditional stigma of dormitory-periphery was broadly perceived as inapt, while the existing landscape of unused industrial heritage were reminding every day "a Past" that older as well as new inhabitants wanted to forget. The recent turn to challenge the town's identity have been collectively sustained and perceived as a primary objective.

Since the middle of the 1990s, the local administration was looking for new strategies for building a new identity and finding a new role in changing mapping and hierarchy of cities in the metropolitan area.

In 2001, the Italian government approved the financing of the first Urban Italia programme. Widely considered as an example of institutional learning, Urban Italia is a neighbourhood development and regeneration scheme built on European models, especially conceived as an extension of the Communitarian Initiative "Urban Programme" 2000-2006. The initiative sought to support the first twenty Italian cities who lost the EU bid and didn't benefit from the European funding. With the purpose of acting against urban decay and social exclusion in highly deprived neighbourhoods, particularly those affected from de-industrialisation consequences (contaminated land, dismissed buildings, unemployment, low level of education, poor educational skills, etc.), the national government asked the local administrations to re-write a shorter project (due to a limited budget to be delivered), still following the European programme structure and requisites.

The whole project has been strongly built around this idea in all the axes and measures it was composed of. Education training, innovative services, regeneration actions, environment and infrastructural improvements have all been planned to put efforts on the environmental, structural and skills requirements for building innovative public spaces.

The project targeted three different areas in the city: a former bourgeois villa under decay, a former industrial firm, with the surrounding streets and a square, both in the city centre, and a very large wild area that one century ago was an "egg factory", containing also a couple of valuable ancient buildings. Approximately, as a starting point, the local administration planning team had in mind to transform the first target area into a university centre within which to realise an indoor public space to be used by both students and non-student citizens, of devoting the second target area to creativity spaces (in the form of cultural production for-profit and not-for-profit creative and socialisation spaces) and to transform the third one into a multifunctional park (with green areas, vegetable gardens, self-managed areas and sport facilities). Activities, physical forms and organisational aspects of these three spaces would have been the outcome of a participatory planning phase to be settled down in the following months. Citizens contribution would have been decisive for the final identity of these public spaces.

The *Urban Italia* regeneration programme, financed for the period 2003-2006 by the Italian government, was aimed at tackling social exclusion (especially of the Youth) and urban decay, by transforming three target areas in collective spaces for a convivial city. The

term "collective space" refers to the programme's goal of creating places, building and infrastructures for culture, education and recreation particularly targeted to non-individual use: spaces for sport teams, cultural associations, informal groups and other collective uses. The term "convivial city" – that was actually used as a slogan – refers especially to the purpose of creating opportunities for social encounters, recreations and creativity, as complementary activities of a vital and viable city.

Being completely dedicated to improvements of public spaces, with special regards to youth population needs, Cinisello Balsamo has been absolutely countertrend, at least in the construction of its aims. As we are going to show in the following pages, structures and agency dynamics have had a major impact on the implementation – and the failure – of the programme.

Before going forward with a synthesis of the methodology adopted for the research can be maybe useful bring some details about the phases of the projects and their main events.

In the period of time between the announcing of the financing and the actual confirmation of this opportunity, the local administration, and in particular its regeneration office, worked on a series of consultation with social workers, to a mapping of youth groups and to implement tools to involve them in the launch of the programme itself. This pattern of work have been challenged since the official launch of the programme itself, when the political sphere (the executive and the opposition parties), the local citizens, the cooperative builders and the city main development agency mobilised themselves and entered the process with different more or less shadowed lobbying activities. With the incumbency of a key conjuncture element – namely the electoral term within the 8 months – all the power games have been shaped by personal and collective resources, *habitus* and ability to enter the mainstream public sphere - or create counter public spheres - where to raise issues and perform discourses to shape the decision making process.

The outcome of this magmatic events is a sacrifice of the programme aims to a political continuity: none of the innovative public spaces for youth have been realised. The existing funding have been spent for more conventional measures (restoration and refurbishment of a villa for a graduate school and redesign of a square), while the most innovative (spaces for creativity and cultural production, youth park, etc.) have been moved to the un-financed measure to be realised before the end of 2010 under the condition of an eventual success in external fund-raising through private partnership.


Table 1 - Timing of the project

2000	Launch EU Urban programme
2001-2003	Announcing of the Italian extension "Urban Italia" programme: redefinition of the project and first consultations
September 2003	financing and launch of the project (public event)
October 2003	protests and start of NIMBY mobilisation
October 2003 - May2004	- public assemblies, laboratories, project meeting - Planning/design - Decision
June 2004	election and end of 1st phase (defining financed actions)
End 2006	conclusion of financed measures
End 2010	Eventual realisation of un-financed measure and programme conclusion

3. Structure and agency in the analysis of regeneration policy and place making: a methodology

In order to contribute filling the gap in the literature on public space, as we said above, the researched aimed at analysing the process of policy building and implementation in what it was presumed to be a favourable institutional environment. The research design was particularly shaped in order to consider the interplay between structure and agency, observing discourses, power and lobbying dynamics within the different public spheres and among actor networks.

Figure 2 show the research model that has been applied: squared boxes show the structural/contextual elements that have been observed, while the curved boxes show the agency/processual elements. Arrows means mutual or one-way causal effects. Let's explain it.

Figure 2 – The research model
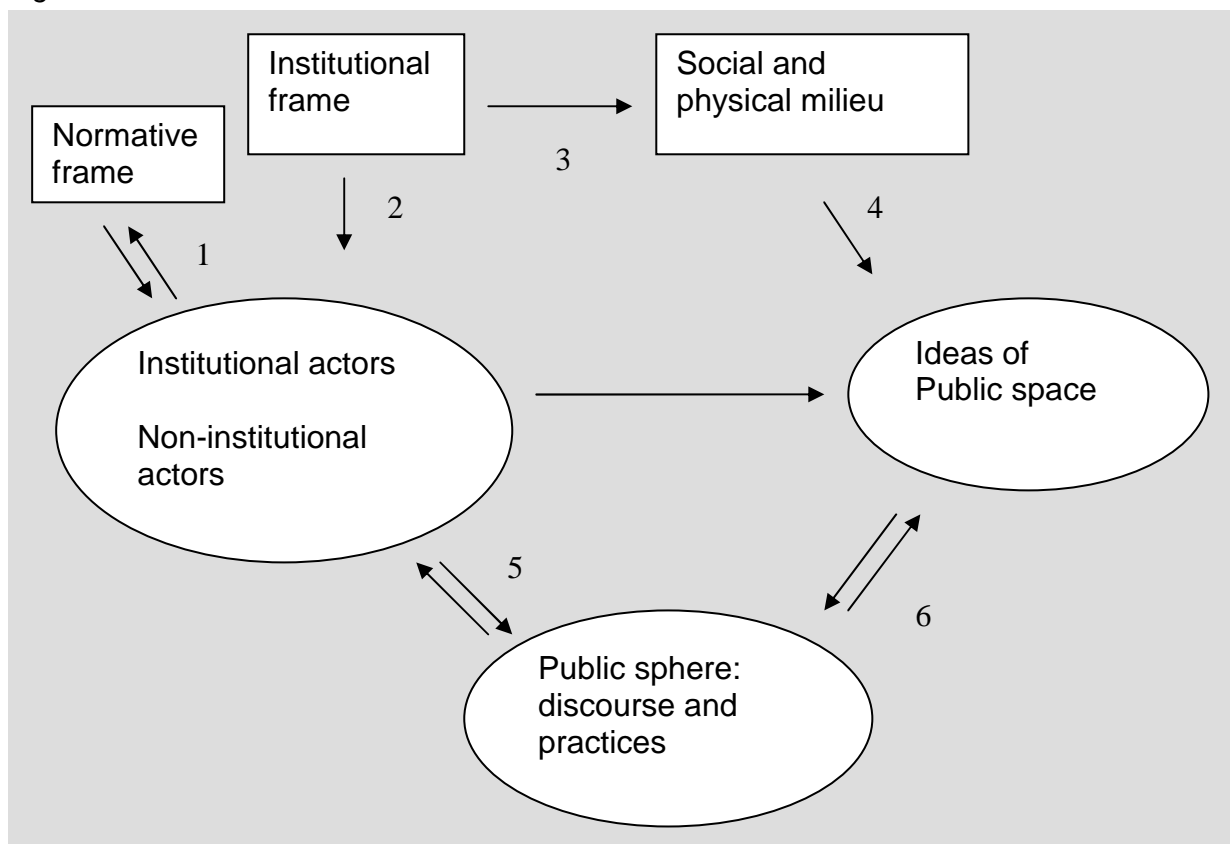
With **normative frame** it was intended the structure of the Urban Italia programme itself, with its steering role in terms of eligibility, timing, financing and aims. If, initially, this frame has been chosen by the team applying for funding, then it will be the programme itself that will, at least partially, influence the range of actor involved, for example financial partners and targeted population, and this is the reason we have the mutual arrows connecting this box with the actors' one.

The **institutional frame** is the range of political parties and their elected members composing the political arena. An important structural element included in this frame is what we could call "political culture": the traditional strength of unions, left-wing political parties and co-operative housing builders. In Italy, since the beginning of the XX century, citizens were associating in order to buy land and build up cheap housing estates. In the city of Cinisello Balsamo, quickly grown during the period 1950s -1970s as a consequence of strong south-north migration flows, this phenomenon has been of major importance and still today co-

operative housing builders have the control of the main processes of physical transformation of the town. The powerful position of lobbying actors in the field of the Urban Italia programme, as we will see below, depends exactly on this systems, regulating politics, housing and labour, and shaping alliances. The actors embeddedness in this political culture explain a lot of their position and the priority that have been pursued along the programme implementation.

The **social and physical milieu** refer to the particular context of the three target areas, sited in one of the five neighbourhoods of the town, characterised by some elements that can be treated as "structures": social morphology - the highest density of elder population – and physical morphology - a particular deprivation of public spaces for creative and culture activities and opportunities for younger people to meet and socialise, a high availability of dismissed building, firms and villas, a good connection with neighbouring towns and Milan. This system of constraints and opportunities shaped the goals of the projects as well as the reaction of the long-term residents, who showed strong opposition to change.

Within this frame can be consider as contextual, or structural, variables also those cultural and experiential resources that Bourdieu would have called *habitus:* the specific resources in terms of knowledge and cultural capital of individuals explaining a large part of their behaviour (Bourdieu 2000). In the case study under analysis, important *habitus* that shaped the action of citizens – particularly the movement grown against an issue of the Urban Italia programme that embodied all the typical features of a NIMBY (Not-in-my-back-yards) group – depended on the cultural capital deriving from previous policies and participatory experiences, that gave them important skills to behave in the field of the programme. As a matter of fact, one of the two leaders of the NIMBY movement did her master thesis in planning on the "Neighbourhood contract programme", an innovative regeneration participatory programme experimented in Cinisello Balsamo two years before. During her research she worked daily in the "Special office for participatory regeneration" for several months, acquiring a common language and skills in dealing with citizens and involving them in the planning actions. Others residents of the neighbourhood have been involved in previous participatory actions, so that they were particularly sensitive to participation and open to mobilization. On the opposing end, an *habitus* contrary to mobilization was formed out of the frustrating experience of the Youth Forum, the participatory project for youth empowerment, that was brutally ended when the group reached the consciousness of claiming precise spatial resources in order to continue to work autonomously. A final, but not less important element we have to mention is the lack of tradition and skills in the inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination among sectors of the local administration. Although it is not a peculiar element of this context – being quite common in many local administrations in Italy – it has been important in this case study.

Processual variables, otherwise called agency dynamics, are those regarding the range of the actors actually mobilised, the quality and number of public arenas in which the contents of the project has been discussed, the actions, lobbying and public discourses that took place, and the ideas of public spaces, with their related justifications. It's from the interplay between agency and structures that we can observe the way the Urban policy model is delivered, the actors interact and the policy aims are achieved.

For what concerns the **actors** mobilised, the research analysed the type of actors (institutional and non institutional), their resources, their clustering in network, the type of actions and the timing of their activation.[2]

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[2] To main actors involved, shown in figure 3, are: 1) the Mayor; 2) the regeneration office, a "special office" under the direct control of the Mayor, with greater autonomy; 3) the development agency, who shared with the latter the coordination of the programme; 4) other "ordinary" departments of the public administration, i.e. the culture and education sectors under the control of other councillor belonging to the executive; 5) three group of consultants, some sympathetic to the regeneration office, some to the development agency; 6) a "NIMBY group" formed by local residents, newcomers, a member of the executive and co-operative builders representatives; 7) members of the wide range of left wing political parties, competing for the new elections.

This part is strictly related with the analysis of the different **public spheres**, in which discourses and practices (i.e. ideas, justifications, rhetoric and lobbying) took place. I attended this multitude of spheres, like round tables, public assemblies, protest info-kiosk, local newspapers, project workshops, etc,. along more than ten months of participatory observations, and an analysis of who have been involved and who excluded, as well as an analysis of each individual participation has been conducted. The recursive arrows here (number 6), point out the generative process of communication in public spheres, when debate and practices generate new **ideas of public spaces**, and through this process new actors can decide to mobilise themselves entering the arena of public discourses and practices.

Anyone experts of integrated regeneration policies will not be surprise of the amount of information that has been collected along the research and of the complexity of their outcomes. A brief overview of a *map of actors* involved, their networks and their lobbying activities has been described in the figure 3.

Figure 3 – actor networks
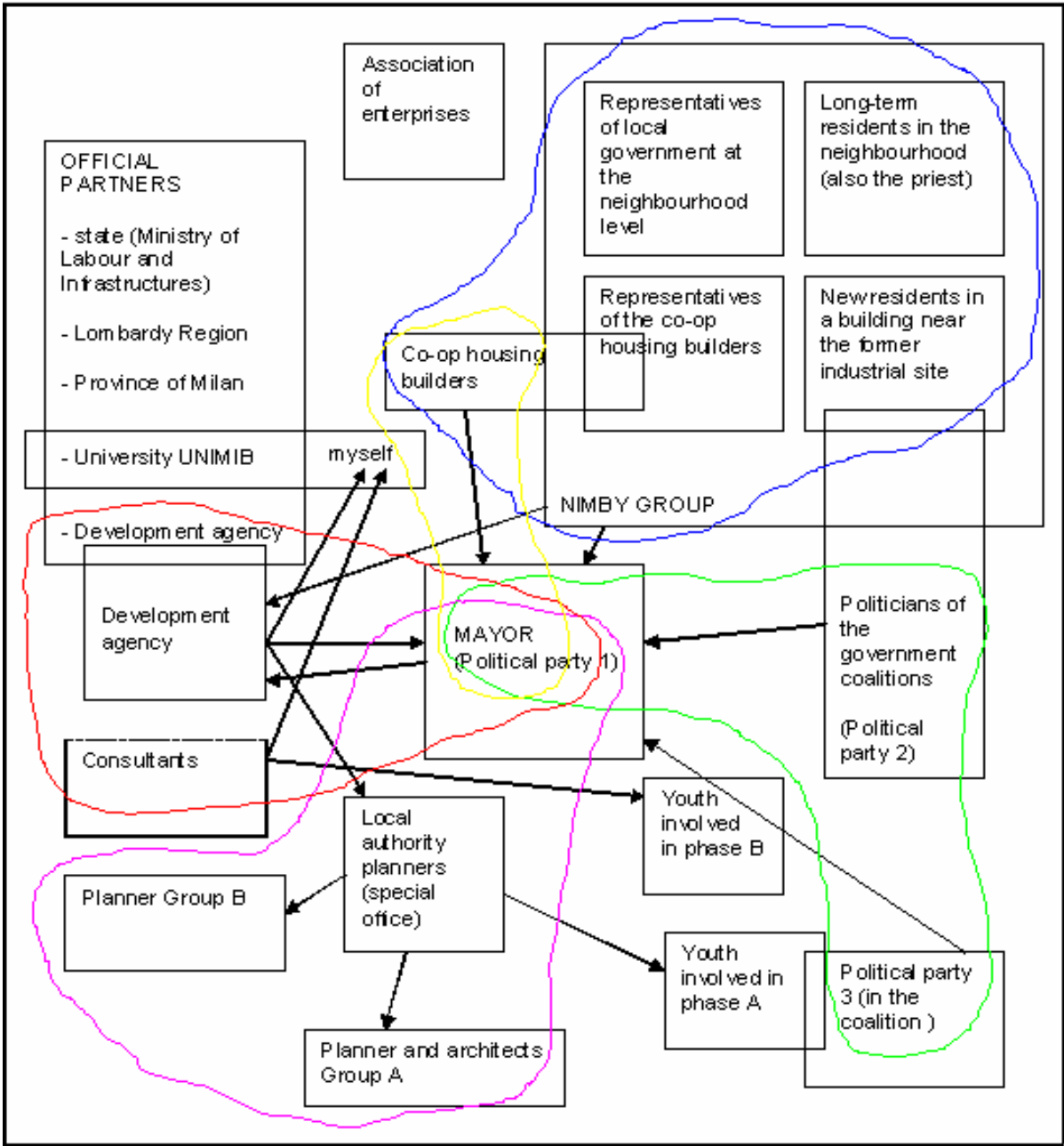
Boxes represent actors involved in the programme and overlapping boxes show multiple belonging, sometimes expected, some other startling (such as one of the two leaders of the NIMBY movement that is also a politician of the governing coalition and a member of a cooperative building society). An extended analysis of these networks, their typologies and quality of lobbying dynamics have already been conducted elsewhere (Tornaghi 2007). What is worth to be mentioned here is the centrality and power of the Mayor and the "special" statute of the regeneration office – leading it to be directly controlled by the Mayor and sottracted to the democratic control of the executive – who gave space to political opportunism and power games during the implementation phase.

3. Negotiating the convivial city: whose public spaces?

Among the different questions that would be worth to discuss, due to length reasons we will focus on three main key issues related to the effectiveness of the project in delivering public spaces for a more convivial city: in their treatment we will seek to distinguish structure and agency dynamics and how their understanding and appropriate handling could improve policy design and delivery.

The first one relate to the very primary topic of ***conviviality and conceptualisation of public spaces.*** The problem here is to understand who participated to the debate and why (have they been empowered by the programme or did they use already existing mobilising resources?), which ideas and needs have been brought into the debate, in which public arenas, and which one have been selected, recognised and incorporated through the filter of the decision making?

As expected, representations, *desiderata* and symbolic meaning of the public spaces to be realised were different, sometimes conflicting. In an overall view we can compare them and their rationalities, through justification discourses that have been expressed in the public arenas. I would like to highlight here that different representations took place mainly in different public spheres so that they were not compared and discussed together between the same group: despite its announcement, a physical space functional to managing participation and debate during the implementation of the programme – a physical substrate for the public sphere – has never been settled. This mean that all the different vision and desiderata of public space must be found, ones again, listening what emerged in formal and informal meeting (what I call "public arenas"), belonging to public and counter-public spheres (Fraser 1992).

The ideas of public space that emerged refer to two main families of justification discourses: technocratic rationality versus life-long-experience rationality – the power of knowledge versus the power of practical deprivation experience. Both referred to the need for a better, liveable and sustainable environment, freely accessible, containing the market pressure to build consuming-led spaces. None of them, actually, expressed the need for a "safe", controlled, gated space. However, what is remarkable here, is the relative absence of the young participant, especially in the implementation phase of the programme. Reflecting on the structural and agency dynamics that affected this issue – the conceptualisation of public spaces – we have to underline a lack in the coordination of the project and in the ability to set up public arena apt to empower weak social group. In a social milieu characterised by very different level of mobilising resources, networking and lobbying abilities, and by a conception of Youth as a social problem – rather than as a capital to be valorised and nourished – the institutional actor should have worked as steering and enabling element.

A second key issue to be discussed is related to a classic dilemma in area based regeneration programme: ***the scale issue,*** that in this case lead to different ***definitions of public space as public good.*** The clashing element in the conceptualisation of public spaces, actually, were mainly related to the scale to which the symbolic and practical meaning of public spaces should have referred to: the neighbourhood level - public space belong to close residents -, the city level - public spaces are required for the youth living in

the city -, and the metropolitan level - better public spaces, cultural, educational and sporting activities will change the identity, the image and the attractiveness of the city at a metropolitan level. Here again, the history of the neighbourhood, its long-lasting bad quality in term of physical environment, have led local residents to claim for a pay back, expecting the local administration to realise, as soon as the factories have moved elsewhere, public spaces targeted for them, rather than again asking for a compromise with collective needs.

A treatment of this structural feature would have been done through the ability of regulating and framing the participation of social groups within the programme, clarifying the un-negotiable goals of the programme: create collective spaces for a wide community, especially for the youth population, rather than neighbourhood gardens for local residents – as it was basically claimed by the Nimby group. It was this capacity of setting boundaries to citizens participation that was missing in the institutional action.

Finally, some agency-structure remarks must be made regarding the ***intersectoral collaboration.*** Notwithstanding the fact that this is generally conceived as a non-path dependent element, being widely considered a problem in many public administrations, it is worth to underline some particular structural elements characterising this particular case. In addition to the lack of skills, technical and practical knowledge in dealing with complex area based regeneration initiatives, the context suffered of a lack of an opportune treatment of the connection between the political and the technical sphere. The direct control of the Mayor on the regeneration office bypassed the political debate about the priorities the programme would have targeted, while a parallel multiple identity and belonging of many actors involved lead to a confusion between personal will and collective/public goals.

4. Conclusions. Rethinking policy design and policy delivery. What can we learn from "bad practices"?

The analysis of the implementation of the Urban Italia regeneration programme suggest that we can hardly expect a linear process of policy transfer from the EU experience to the local context. Nonetheless, we believe that path-dependency can be successfully tackled. Decompounding the empirical material in its structural and conjunctural elements and identifying a number of strengths and constraints to human agency that should be taken into account and evaluated can help, it is argued here, to rethink policy design and policy delivery.

In particular, it is suggested here a first step towards a methodology for policy transfer through a two-step method:
1) integrating policy design,
2) supporting policy delivery.

The **integration of policy design** can occur via an evaluation of *structural* elements and constraints, as suggested in table 2, rather than a usual simple evaluation of deprivation and requisites aimed at justify the policy building. A deep analysis of the institutional and normative frames, as well as of the social and physical milieu, in the early stage of policy design can build the acknowledge of limits and constraints to be tackled along the implementation.

Only as a second step, usually several month, sometimes year later on, can be applied measures for **supporting the policy delivery**. As this stage is usually closer, in time, to the actual implementation of the policy itself, it is useful to take in account especially the agency variables (see table 2, part 2). In addition to the need for setting boundaries to participation and clarifying the "scale" and the problem, as already mentioned above, it is suggested to put efforts on clarifying connections and responsibilities of – respectively – the political, the technical and the social realms within the policy delivery.

Table 2 – Structural and agency variables

Structural variables	
Normative frame	• participatory opportunity (EU Urban programme) • time constraints (dead-line to enact the project) • financial constraints (need for additional funds/partnership)
Institutional frame	• Enlightened/experimental administration/team (resource) • Skills for intersectoral work and participation • Political culture and actor embeddedness (constraint) • political conjuncture (constraint)
Social and physical milieu	• physical resources • socio-demographical composition
Agency variables	
Actors and actor networks	• Conflicts/agreement between coordinators (in the definition of 'public goods') • Relationship between political and technical realm • Position of key players and lobbying activities
Access to public arenas	• Existence, typology and openness of public arenas • Empowerment/mobilising resources in different social group
Conceptualisation of ideas and problems	• Ideas of public spaces • Justification discourses • Definition of scale

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