Track 12 Healthy City Planning: Food, Physical Activity and Social Justice

(Draft)

Healthy city of tomorrow

Lucia Nucci

[1]*Departement of Architecture, University of Roma Tre, lucia.nucci@uniroma3.it*

Abstract: In London the 32+1 Boroughs are testing methods, in terms of physical environment's and urban design, to respond to Healthy City model starting from urban open space design. The investigation field is supplied by the different Open Space Strategies OSS written by each Borough giving specific solution in term of design parameters to increase physical activity, elevate air and water quality, play and sport activities, open space deficiency and accessibility. The paper will discuss all sets of innovations introduced which have the potential to reshape the lifestyle and working patterns of urban residents, and to assure sociospatial justice. In UK they start again, using urban design, to interlace open space with services and residence at the local level, as was the local planning and urban design Anglo-Saxon tradition

Keywords: Open Space strategy, London, Boroughs

Introduction

A recent study on the latest regeneration projects in London (Nucci, 2012) proposes few guidelines on planning and designing urban green networks. The hypothesis presented in this London case study states that conceived as a design characterized by integration and continuity the system of urban open spaces can be a primary component of a city with a more consolidated form. The study analyses the possibility of re-using residual or abandoned areas as part of the urban settlement process with consolidated urban open green spaces. These spaces logically form part of continual and integrated green networks, in terms of environmental quality, of creating new uses and of greater social integration. Furthermore, they provide a unified design and quality to the whole city and its parts. The actual efficiency of this hypothesis is often viewed as a principal line of criticism for urban regeneration in terms of its operative, social consensus, economic and administrative feasibility.

The example provided of Great Britain's green networks and in particular the new London Plan has the notable advantage of simultaneously proposing government objectives and strategies for a green space system as an integral part of a proposal for the regeneration of the city (urban renewal) and some operational experiments conducted at a local level1. The experience must be examined in relation to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of green

[1] In Great Britain, more specifically in London, the government (Department of Environment, Transport and Regions) has implemented a cultural and administrative reform in favour of urban transformations and green policies. In 1999 the *Urban Task Force* proposed guidelines to regenerate cities and London in particular. These

open space, the contractual and pragmatic planning system respectful of local authorities. The research has combined theoretical proposals with practical local experiences examining the feasibility of green theories, the debate between specialists, urban planners, administrators, workers and locals, highlighting both successes and failures. Documents, case studies and various positions emerged has been possible to single out and suggest several guidelines, together with significant issues still being debated. These can be used as theoretical reference and planning strategies for the debate on the regeneration of European cities.

The guidelines at a European level pertain the opportunity:

- to ensure the continuity of the green systems as a common objective for urban regeneration, whilst maintaining the diversity of solutions in relation to the character of the urban and territorial structure;
- to consider the realisation of green networks as an opportunity for the morphological reorganisation of the overall city form and the design of its parts and for the functional reorganisation to create new relations between the parties;
- to think and manage continuity by co-ordinating and moving across different levels (principal, secondary and local networks);
- to consider green network projects as a component of an integral urban project based on the standard used by the urban planners;
- to give preference, in the construction of a continuous network, to the use of residual spaces as elements which insure the capillary articulation of green space in residential zones;
- to reassess the relationship between private, semi-private and public green spaces;
- to re-evaluate and improve the collective uses, social and economic, of green spaces in relation to the new urban local and daily demands of residents;
- to adopt planning procedures which ensure through contractual and participative process the consensus of citizens and actors most directly affected by the interventions.

The objective of constructing a continuous green network within the contemporary city is to obtain multiple gains of urban, social and ecological order that are geared towards a greater integration and quality of urban life. More precisely, the green network from a planning perspective is an opportunity for the morphological reorganisation of the overall form of the city and the design of its parts. From a functional perspective it offers a new system of relations (renewed urban polycentrism, a new relationship between centre and periphery) linked to leisure time and low mobility which support largely saturated public spaces and mobility infrastructures.

At the level of local interventions, the realization of the green network is occurs under: an ecological profile, guaranteeing environmental conditions and biological diversity (drainable surfaces, green areas, tree cover, lakes, presence of water) in relation to the density of residents; a social perspective, to improve integration, security, increase collective uses; from a planning perspective, it becomes a salient element in the organisation of space between built-environment and open spaces, nature and architecture, public and private space.

Green space helps to create a more balanced functional organisation for new services and leisure activities, complement to living space, binding them together within a low mobility. Moreover, a highly organised open space which carefully considers accessibility and functionality helps to reduce the conditions for marginality, social risk and abandoned areas.

---

guidelines provoked a serious debate and many administrative changes at all government levels. In response, the Department produced the *Urban White Paper* (2001), with the government program on urban regeneration. In London, with the Greater London Authority's restructuring in 2000 a new Plan was adopted (*The Draft London Plan* 2002-2004). At the same time Boroughs put into practice certain proposals made by the Urban Task Force in poor neighbourhoods of the city centre (Southwark, South Bank) and in a brownfield site (the Dome in Greenwich Peninsula and the Greenwich Millennium Village).

The London case demonstrated how the green network project should be built along two levels following two interrelated strands, one urban-metropolitan and the other local.

The urban-metropolitan level of the project is drawn up by the Greater London Authority, a new, unique government structure, presided by the mayor and a decision making assembly for the whole of the London metropolitan area. It has transverse authority over urban projects, transport, economic regeneration and development, environment, security and public order structures, culture and public health.

On the local level, the project is promoted by each Borough and drawn up for the most part by specialists in the administration who bear responsibility for the decisions brokered in talks with private parties to guarantee the realisation of the network.

The partnership, institution bringing together the concerned public and private parties, has an important role on both levels. She has in charge of promoting for a specific area socio-economic development programmes and other financial initiatives (administering public and private funds, managing together with borough specialists, the economic planning with the owners, social planning with residents and monitoring of projects).

In regards, to the tools and the form of the project for the urban-metropolitan scheme, the planning documents for a new development clearly propose the need for the administration to have an “overall spatial design of the city” and of green networks (refer The London Plan).

The construction of a green network is carried out with a draft local urban project (masterplan) and must first be referred back to standard procedures (general plan, unitary development plan), before verifying the feasibility of the project. This will prevent the separation of green spaces form other components of the city project. The project evaluates the specialised planning (environmental, transport, technology) in conjunction with the assessment of social, environmental and economic feasibility.

It is commonplace in the UK for the plans and the local projects to be binding in contractual terms and in terms of policy; they represent the administration’s vision and strategy. In local projects, they serve as a flexible point of reference in negotiations with private parties and can remain internal documents without being formally recognised within the Local Plan. In the case studies examined, a masterplan (1:2000) summarises the structure of the local project, the relationship between the various networks and amongst other elements. Subsequently, the agreement being concluded and the executive operations begun, this agreement will be received in the local plan. In addition to the masterplan a selection of draft-phase illustrative designs of the spatial and structural elements and database for project elements in relation to properties and zone projects allow for a direct and autonomous implementation of the individual interventions. Nevertheless, the studies examining the UK’s green network projects currently in progress have revealed an approach on several different levels and a progressive reconciliation between the strategic dimension (objectives, directives, contracts) and the design dimension and formal outcomes of the project.

The continuity of green networks is realised by putting in place traditional urban project typologies (parks, gardens, river parks, tree lined avenues) within the wide variety of residual spaces left by the sprawl of contemporary cities. It is in these spaces where the large part of city transformations are taking place today (opportunity areas, areas for regenerations, areas for intensifications). Natural (woodland, streams, lakes) and artificial (urban parks, district parks, villas, tree lined avenues, canals) elements are included in a green projects. On an metropolitan level, the London Plan indicates the types of areas which compose the green system (Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, Blue Ribbon Network, Green Corridors, Green Chain, local green spaces). The plan indicates metropolitan and urban green systems, the areas in which the main transformations will take place and require local authorities to indicate which areas are available to realise the green networks. The decision to select areas at a local level gives an understanding of local reality, which allows more insight into problems, needs and opportunities so that the construction of a continuous network may respond to two fundamental

requirements: the first of a general nature that is regarding the connection of large metropolitan residual natural areas and parks, and the other local, regarding the resolution of environmental habitat problems.

Residual spaces are fragments of urban construction which have lost their original use or never had an allocated usage. They have not been designed and are characterised by a extreme uncertainty. Furthermore, they have what could be termed as a "fragility" of use, making them key areas for the construction of continuous green space akin to "a fluidity of space" and for the recuperation of socially and environmentally sustainable urban habitat conditions.

In the UK initiatives various types of residual space have been used for the construction of green networks from the core of the city and peripheral areas. These were classified on the basis of form, dimension (punctual, linear, areal) and former use. Amongst the areal elements selected are large abandoned areas (derelict, vacant land) in proximity of urban centres often with contaminated soils (brownfields), which have direct access to transport networks (public transport and railway lines). The linear elements chosen are obsolete infrastructures (routes, electric lines) abandoned railway tracks, throughways, artificial canals once used for the transportation of merchandise, abandoned lanes, road embankments, crossroads, the stumps and roots of felled bushes and trees, the arches of viaducts, the tracks of old tram lines, the spaces around the city walls. The punctual elements used are public and semi-private condominium spaces often with tarmac surfaced courtyards and raised walls, tarmac surfaced play parks, the spaces surrounding public buildings (schools, health centres, clubs and cultural centres, religious buildings, indoor sport structures), spaces surrounding private buildings (entrance halls and exteriors of multinationals and businesses, open spaces of research institutes), squares and various other public places where people gather.

For several reasons, many larger areas are not used to their full potential: large agricultural land owners obstruct possible intervention; areas with contaminated soils and serious environmental problems caused by industrial misuse remain too costly to repair; and unofficial political will to let land lie barren for speculation purposes. As for areas of smaller dimensions, their abandon is often due to technical design errors (irregular agricultural fragmentation, vacant expropriation areas). They are real problems but entirely solvable with government acquisition policies, attaching remunerative uses for fractions of these spaces or by providing exchanges or re-localisation of building rights.

T. Turner created an innovative way of designing green networks with the concept of green chains (Turner, 1991). They are a continuous system of public spaces set within and merging with the built-up area (parks, offices, shopping centres, town squares) to create a circuit of "environmentally pleasant" pedestrian paths and cycling lanes (drainable soil, vegetation, sustainable microclimate) to be used by citizens on a daily basis. It is innovative in that, unlike other green networks, it makes use of abandoned spaces within the built-up area. These additions aim to improve the environmental quality within the city, provide new functional uses and encourage social integration. It will also ultimately provide for a more unified urban design within the city and the component parts.

Green chains are a circuit of "environmentally pleasant" interconnecting footpaths and bicycle lanes to facilitate movement between various destinations (origin-destination survey): from one's residence to the park, from the office to the park, from a station to the park, from one's residence to the office. They must incorporate the existing parks, river banks, canals, shopping centres, footpaths, playgrounds and abandoned spaces. The land can be public or private, open or closed to the public, hard or soft, single or multiuse. The green chain is also a support system for transport, creating a secondary network between longer travel distances, helping to create a more effective network between various destinations (city centre, train station, underground, shopping centres, schools).

…Railway networks and abandoned areas inaccessible to the public can become part of the construction of an ecological network within green chains. In the city centre the green of the Green Chain is made up of elements that are environmentally pleasant (permeable soils, vegetation, sustainable microclimate)2…

In spite of the diverse character of residual spaces it is easy to conceive how this kind of space can be regenerated in all European cities. The space chosen to build a green chain within the typically dispersed European model needs to be carefully considered, taking into consideration sprawl or coastal settlements of Mediterranean countries, where there is an overabundance of vacant space in the absence of systems which provide structure, with the exception of basic infrastructure systems.

Continuity and integration models progressively linking minor residual spaces, private and semi-private spaces in private properties and urban public parks and natural green spaces (parks along waterway) are most frequently cited in plans and design models.

The most frequently used reference models are: a grid pattern: an interwoven green space, which guarantees the continuity and a relative homogeneity without excessive diversity in dimension or specificity of use; a tree model: the continuity of green, through the hierarchical organization of spaces, built with a gradual transition between the smallest to larger urban and regional parks; consolidated island model: built using the densification of existing residential areas to provide smaller green spaces secure, easily equipped and well delimited.

The grid pattern and tree models have the quality of combining the concepts of continuity and system, allowing for creation in phases. They are also geared towards low mobility and the creation of pedestrian walkways and cycling lanes for a better integration between spaces for social and public service uses.

Functional use and green element design are two other criteria proposed for the planning of green networks in an attempt to give a sense of identity to the various components of the green network. The reorganisation of these spaces changes their nature, image and function. They are reconsidered with a design that integrates the various demands expressed by residents and other users who make use of these spaces on a daily basis. The design is modified to suit various lifestyles with greater flexibility in use by offering a variety of green spaces, including natural open fields (crop land, pasture), Italian style gardens, local parks.

In addition to naturalistic and ecological functions provided by large parks and corridors with direct access to the countryside there are another set of functions included for social usage, such as leisure activities, sport and other events, which are compatible and in different ways characterize each green node. On a local level, every element and minor green space, often related to residential areas, presents supplementary integrated uses (recreational, sports, cultural) to render spaces more occupied, attractive and secure in the 24 hours.

Landscape, water, vegetation, morphology and historical aspects are all essential to design the city's identity. Local authorities in London conducted a green heritage census to get a better understanding of the historical significance, the singularity, the design and the state of green areas (urban parks, small local gardens, private gardens, tree lined streets etc.) in terms of dimension, range of influence, characteristics, functions. The end objective being to recuperate the historical typology of green spaces in future projects.

Using residual spaces (frequently of unusual shapes and dimensions) has allowed to experiment with new designs, open system typologies, and services, to distinguish temporary places of transience and others to hang around. The results of the most significant experiences are gathered in brief manuals.

---

[2] Turner, T., 1991, Op. cit., Green open space strategy for London, pag. 12-13.

The results achieved in England demonstrate that even small changes in residual spaces with the use of few trees, to provide a place for people to stop and talk, can greatly enhance the quality of settlements (re-appropriation of these spaces by citizens, new perception of lifestyle with alternative means of transport, innovative way of experiencing daily life in a green surrounding. Space is also dedicated to hydraulic and technological efforts, to prevent energy and water waste and to restore polluted land.

Finally, the necessary measures and requisites for the operation to be a success, based on UK experiences: appropriate top-down strategies, vision and political incentives for the regeneration of the entire city and the metropolitan context; a bottom-up approach to planning, in order to increase social consensus, consent amongst actors, and resources in relation to shared local objectives; a communicative and open approach to objectives strategies and planning indications which is developed progressively in the course of the design of green spaces and through the representation of plausible end scenarios; an exhaustive analysis of the environmental, economic and social aspects in the drafting of a final proposal; a contractual and participatory method, with private parties and local authorities to define by means of consensus, a system and courses of action to carry out implementation and management.

Open Space Strategy (Oss)

The Open Space Strategy (Oss) is the document that the Government and the New Plan of London have asked all the adminis-tractions premises, Boroughs, to achieve the continuity of the green. To make this document both the government and the GLA have provided guidelines. The Open Space Strategies ... help all those responsible of open space to provide parks and open space well-designed and well gestiti61. The Strategy proposes a shared vision for improve the open space that meets the needs of the community and become a reference point for utilizing resources and detailed plan azione62. Through ... a creative and collaborative approach, the Strategies may be the way to equip cities with safe and attractive public spaces as proposed from urban renaissance: - By involving the community to create a shared vision;- Protecting the future of green spaces;- Improving the quality of Neighbourhoods;- Promoting the well-being of the residents; - Attracting resources for management.These objectives promote an integrated approach to green space that supports the guidelines of the borough to increase the value of areas and buildings and to attract external funds. In the construction process of the Strategy must be actively involved key users and stakeholders to meet the needs and the desired community. To integrate the open space in the local plan and to find safe funds, it is critical support Interdepartmental involving the offices of the Borough that involved in urban design, environment, transport and residence, both for the preparation that for the implementation of this. The Strategy must give real benefits and improve green space and must contribute directly to propose the local community strategy through:- The creation of a vision for the future of parks and green spaces; - A precise knowledge of the typological and the status of existing green space; The definition of compatible uses in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the community; The promotion of local qualitative and quantitative standards; The choice of actions and timescales to achieve these standard; The creation of a system of monitoring and updating the action plan. Each strategy should have a thorough evaluation of existing spaces and their use actual or potential, in line with the demands of government policy Government's Planning Policy 17 Guidance PPG 17, including parks, play areas, allotments, community gardens and other green spaces. In the propositional must choose their own goals, balancing the different functions of green space, integrating into a "green network" functions sports, educational, recreational and ecological preference, define actions and targets for improvement, sources of financing that need to be mobilized to achieve this vision. Finally, the strategy needs to be regularly assessed and appropriate to be sure that it can meet the needs of the community. For the part of investigation and evaluation of the paper considers the other: the structural aspects (demographic, socio-economic, ...); environmental and landscape aspects (characters idrogeomorfologici, parks, For the part of investigation and evaluation of the paper considers the other: the structural aspects (demographic, socio-economic, ...); environmental and landscape aspects (characters idrogeomorfologici, parks, gardens, areas of flooding, environmental goods protected, strategy for biodiversity, historic and protected landscapes, ...); aspects urban, families eligible for types of uses of space; investigations seeking to ascertain the demand of the

residents. In the proactive response to the issues raised in the evaluation, the issues of greatest attention include: the types of open space, the integration between different uses; Facilities of open space per resident and pedestrian accessibility; models the network. The indications of the strategy proposals have no value prescriptive, to exemplify the will of the administration, initially evaluate the consent and feasibility of the proposals and then, once implemented in the instrument of plan UDP, express the aims and directives that intends to pursue the administration in the implementation phase, particularly in the negotiations with individuals.

Acknowledgements

References

Turner, T., 1991, Green open space strategy for London.

Nucci, L., 2012, Verde di prossimità e disegno urbano, Gangemi editore.