

Chapter 6

Sustainable Urban Development: From Theory to Concrete Practice

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ABSTRACT

The concept of participation in sustainable urban development practices is actually more and more popular in Europe and all over the world. In parallel, there is a rapid growth of urban design and planning projects including local communities in urban development planning activities. According to such concepts, this chapter, starting from the description of the results of field and desk researches carried out by 'La Sapienza' University of Rome and related to communities involvement strategies currently available in Europe, describes and analyses a case study based on a concrete application of theoretical and methodological approaches, and two more cases of possible application of an integrated methodology. All the projects described concern the city of Rome.

INTRODUCTION

Across Europe, urban planning is actually facing a transformation process, with special regard on increased urban competition, national deregulation and greater private sector influence (Paba, 1998).

Several scholars, among which Newman and Thornley (1996), focus on the increasing importance of involving local communities on planning designs and projects, even if the concept itself of community planning and participatory approaches is not recent:

While it is possible to state that the concept of Community Planning is not new, planning with communities and certainly community-led planning is relatively recent. All over the world, there is increasing demand from all sides for more local involvement in the planning and management of the environment.

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It is widely recognised that this is the only way that people will get the surroundings they want. And it appears as the best way of ensuring that communities become safer, stronger, wealthier and more sustainable (Paba, 1998, p. 3).

This chapter will draw a clear and updated picture about the most popular and relevant community led approaches and community consultation practices currently available in Europe. In respect to this objective, we will first describe three case studies based on the idea of integrating and applying such methods, in the city of Rome. Afterwards, we will focus on the European scenario, analysing the most innovative and promising techniques

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT FROM THEORY TO CONCRETE APPLICATIONS. AN INTEGRATED METHODOLOGY

The Planning for Real Method: A Long Lasting Method to Involve Communities in Urban Development

The so-called Planning for Real method was born in the UK in the 70s (Caperna *et al*, 2013); since that time, it has been widely exploited in numerous countries, both European and non-European.

Its focus was on the construction of a model of a chosen urban area that needs to be renewed and developed with the participation of its inhabitants. This is why the method needs the involvement of local people to build a sense of ownership and to ensure engagement from the outset.

Cards with ideas or proposals are made available. People can select or write their own cards, which reflect their interests and place them on the model where they think the idea should be implemented. Planners, designers and officials can answer questions but only if asked. During the event, a picture emerges of the changes the participants would like to see.

The cards are counted and their locations on the model noted. These details are then fed back to people, discussed further and prioritised at public meetings or small group discussions. After prioritisation, additional technical information (on feasibility, cost, policies etc.) can be provided and used to develop an *action plan*.

The exploratory survey carried out by the University La Sapienza was aimed at the development of a participatory planning methodology, to be applied in two different contexts, both in the city of Rome; we will describe in the following pages the results of such researches, in terms of:

- Analysis of a real life case study, that is currently being carried out in the city of Rome (case-study 1);
- The planning of two possible interventions, again in the territory of Rome (case study 1 and 2).

Case-Study 1: The Renewing of a Public Space

The first case-study on which we want to draw attention is being implemented by the Municipality of Rome - 5th District. It is a participatory urban planning project carried out through the Planning for Real methodology, aimed at renewing a popular square located in the middle of a peculiar district, named “Pigneto”.

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