

# TeMA

Journal of  
Land Use, Mobility and Environment

Cities need to modify and/or adapt their urban form, the distribution and location of services and learn how to handle the increasing complexity to face the most pressing challenges of this century. The scientific community is working in order to minimise negative effects on the environment, social and economic issues and people's health. The three issues of the 14th volume will collect articles concerning the topics addressed in 2020 and also the effects on the urban areas related to the spread Covid-19 pandemic.

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THE CITY CHALLENGES AND EXTERNAL AGENTS.  
METHODS, TOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES

## THE CITY CHALLENGES AND EXTERNAL AGENTS. METHODS, TOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES

3 (2021)

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The cover image is Rue de Rivoli - an emblematic street of Paris connecting Bastille to Concorde – that since May 2020 has been reserved for bicycles and pedestrians, Paris, France, Saturday, Nov. 6, 2021.

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## Public space and 15-minute city. A conceptual exploration for the functional reconfiguration of proximity city

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### Abstract

The global Covid-19 pandemic has changed individuals, uses and perceptions of spaces and cities. The current debate in Urban Planning is animated by the themes of proximity, public space and accessibility to essential urban functions. The functioning of the contemporary city has definitely exploded, showing its shortcomings and underlining the need to interpret it as a fragmentable and self-sufficient entity in case of emergency. The new urban models and approaches adopted seek to respond to this by reallocating essential urban functions and eco-systemic connections so that the urban and peri-urban cooperate to initiate a process of socio-economic development. The idea of a multi-polar system marked by the metric of time of use is pursued. The centrality evolves from the geographical concept to the directional one, becoming infrastructural and cognitive to increase the liveability of the urban space. The aim of the paper is to evaluate how urban transformations, through the analysis of best practices and scientific literature, can be elements in support of the proximity city and how transformative placemaking can be part of the strategy.

### Keywords

Post-pandemic city; Centralities; 15-minute city; Placemaking transformative; Public space.

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## 1. Introduction

Today it is no longer the twentieth-century Master Plan of the Territory – the one that defined the space of a city and its functions – that must interest us, but a Master Plan of Urban Time (Biondillo, 2021).

The modern and contemporary city has its main characteristic discontinuity and parcelling. Everything is separated and syncopated: the various areas with different functions, the buildings detached from each other, the streets more like conveyor belts that transfer cars from one place to another (Pagliardini, 2009).

This urban situation has accelerated processes that were already underway, with the realisation that neighbourhoods are not monofunctional entities and that moving within the city has become difficult due to severe health restrictions. In response to this, Covid-19 rediscovered architecture's ability to create hybrids, from nature-architecture juxtaposition to the recent physical-digital life mix, with urban spaces reconfigured in uncertainty.

This situation has prompted large cities – Paris, Melbourne, Portland, Milan, etc. – to work on sustainability and the possible transposition of time into the use of urban space, especially in the vision of the 15-minute city (Moreno et al., 2021) interpreted as a solution to the pandemic, the economy and the environment.

The 15-minute city is a combination of different projects on the territory that consider education and healthcare. It is also clear that the reshaping of the world of work, today predominantly remote, offers the possibility of regenerating parts of the city in difficulty, favouring the improvement of accessibility and the development of existing and emerging businesses.

The urban interventions and strategies implemented are in line with the principles of the Green Deal and are based on the need to make cities increasingly green, safe and inclusive. This reflects the to the guidelines of the New European Bauhaus, the New Leipzig Charter and the Sustainable Goals Developments, in particular Good health and well-being (Goal 3) and Sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).

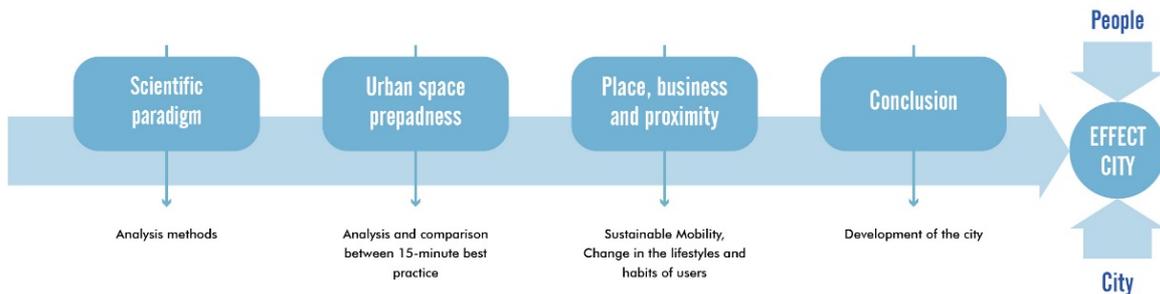
It is not easy to define univocally what the 15-minute city is because of the multiple overlaps and juxtapositions between built space (squares, architectural quality) and perceived space (safety), between accessibility and quality of living. The urban system, thus interpreted, shows that there is the possibility of creating an elastic city, as defined by Ware (2020): an urban system that can be easily fragmented and self-dependent in case of emergency situations. In fact, it is about the possibility that each urban fragment carries a centrality and a defined and identifiable spatial quality. This concept reflects on the concentration/expansion of space and 'distributed' urbanisation in spatio-temporal terms.

An inclusive and fractal metropolis will also have on a larger scale fast routes, large-scale retail areas, hospitals of excellence and business centres. But it will not focus its development on these alone (Biondillo, 2021). The city of 15 minute or the city of proximity, in addition the nearness of essential services and facilities, thinks about a different use of space, in particular the characteristics of pedestrian connections, or rather walkability as a result of density, urban mix and the pleasantness of the environment. All these characteristics represent the heart of a community as they respond to an essential need for society and the individuals that compose it (Oldenburg, 1999).

The aim of this work is to evaluate how urban transformations of the city and public space, i.e. the system of networks and places, can be elements supporting the city 15 minute and proximity. The work includes two ways of obtaining information. Firstly, international scientific research using bibliographic databases, as well as press articles and urban and spatial planning documents. The second includes evaluation by analysing the functions of the selected projects. The rest of the article is organised as explained below (Fig.1):

- *The scientific paradigm*, the identification of scientific-disciplinary paradigms that can be linked to the definition of the 15-minute city;
- *Urban space preparedness: different names, same goals*, analysis of case studies, with a focus on the theme of urban spaces;

- *Place, business and proximity*, promoting urban well-being through transformative placemaking and reconfiguring the role of local plans;
- *Conclusion*, research perspectives resulting from the analyses carried out.



**Fig.1 Elaboration of author**

## 2. The scientific paradigm

Tomorrow's urban planning is expressed on the territory as an 'archipelago of self-sufficient neighbourhoods', enriched by 'neighbourhood activity centres'<sup>1</sup>, connected by green structures, i.e. neighbourhoods of exchange and urban regeneration. In short, we need to think of these territories as places of experimentation to be integrated and not set against the rest (Biondillo, 2021).

The city has always been a machine for regulating idiorhythms<sup>2</sup>: through physical and spatial, legal and institutional devices, it has constantly transformed the various idiorhythms into articulated and often highly complex spatial, economic and social relations (Secchi, 2013).

If the city 15 minutes intends to work on the whole settlement system, without giving a clear spatial and applicative reference, it becomes a simple slogan with which to relaunch the strategy in the media. On the other hand, talking about a city or a neighbourhood directs reflection towards a dimension of vast area, metropolis or district.

The study by Dauny and Steuteville (2020) shows how, depending on the mode of travel (on foot, by bicycle, by car), the 15-minute city's area of influence changes in size and shape. Based on the study of displacement, with a time frame between 5 and 15 minutes, Dauny and Stauteville identify the housing units and population in the areas of interest. This research shows how the city:

- a 5-minute walk away, the radius of influence is about a quarter of a mile. The area has mixed-use public spaces and the presence of small businesses, with a population of about 2,600;
- a 15-minute walk away, the radius of influence is about three-quarters of a mile. The area has the main essential services, with larger parks serving the urban 'archipelago', with a population of approximately 23,000;
- 15 minutes by bicycle the radius of influence is about three miles. The affected area gives access to higher ranking services and could involve interurban displacement, with a population of about 350,000.

In reality, the 15-minute city is an 'ideal geography', which varies according to the means of transport used and the consequent implications of different shed levels.

<sup>1</sup> 'Neighbourhood activity centres' is the land-use planning term used to describe these local shopping centres. Community services and infrastructure are generally co-located with these places, planned and managed by local government. Source: 20-minute neighbourhoods, Plan Melbourne 2017-2050

<sup>2</sup> The term 'idiorhythmic' was coined by Roland Barthes and described in 'Commentre ensemble vivre?-Sur l'idiorrythmie', Cours au Collège de France – janvier-mai, 1977. The term, as interpreted by the French semiologist, indicated the relationship between the individual rhythm and that of collective life, that is the 'way of living together'. Secchi introduced the concept of 'idiorhythm' into the discipline of urbanism to study the relationships between individuals and spatial aspects.

In fact, the 15-minute city (e.g. Paris, Milan) and the 20-minute districts (Melbourne) work on increasing the accessibility of essential services, encouraging slow mobility and – in particular Melbourne – creating a system of 'neighbourhood activity centres'.

Moreover, the city, even if interpreted through the new 15/20-minute paradigm, will inevitably continue to present urban problems and dynamics that develop and persist over longer time distances. It cannot represent an adequate institutional geography and administrative boundary, but a subset in the articulated governance that considers the multiple socio-economic and demographic components present. This situation is emphasised in the Italian context where there is still a substantial confusion of competences due to non-compliance with Law no. 56 of 7 April 2014 (known as the Delrio Law)<sup>3</sup>.

However, approaching an organic development of the neighbourhood city has a lot of implications: on one side an equitable socio-economic environment, on the other hand the proximity of services, with consequent encouragement of public transport and less pollution.

Simultaneously, in terms of physical planning, 15-minute cities are heavily based on attributes that have been used as design flagships in the past, namely accessibility, walkability, density, land use mix and design diversity (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaki, 2021).

Indeed, in addition to accessibility, a further strength of the 15-minute city is the pedestrian experience, defined by architect Steve Mouzon (2012) as WalkAppeal. The latter concept is based on perceptual criteria, such as rapid changes of view, rest areas, large pedestrian and bicycle zones, a high sense of security provided by shop windows and elements (targets) in the medium distance (1 block to 2 miles) that are identified as areas where it is possible to do, for example, outdoor activities. The higher the WalkAppeal value, the more likely it is that people will not use a car to get around.

If we superimpose Walkability and the concept of the Pedestrian Shed on the model of the 15-minute city, life is marked by the metric of time. The preparation of our cities for possible extraordinary events begins with actions in the present capable of responding in different forms to the uncertainty that dominates the future (Lakoff, 2007), 15-minute cities become immediate responses and test benches for tomorrow.

### 3. Urban space preparedness: different names, same goals

The immobility of space has allowed us to reflect on living and on the city, which is now dilated and fragmented, where people live in a frenzy of change without feeling like actors in urban spaces. The loss of value and culture of urban space is evident in our reading of today's cities, where places and spaces are now incapable of creating synergies in the urban fabric: 'non-lieux' (Augé), 'junkspace' (Koolhaas), interstitial and green spaces without any functional connotation generate copy-paste cities.

Cities are composed of the time of the encounter and the time that precedes it (Nunes, 2010), within the street, where space is placed and branches out. The culture of being in urban space (public/private) was affected, limited, in some cases ceased, triggering a new way of use and ideas about the next evolution.

The urban space, symbol of relationship, shows its fragility under the incessant changes and uses dictated by time, regressing to a place of passage or parking. At the same time, it – the result of urban backdrop – loses its current limited vitality, defining the role of the house as 'place', a limited environment identified by specific characters (Strappa, 2020). If so far no attention has been to the conformation of urban spaces – an effect of the destructuring of the settlement – today it takes on a primary character, considering the relational-fruitive interactions between public space and city users as fundamental.

Will green space planning need new designs, uses and practices? What is the future of large public spaces? Will the temporary transformations seen during the crisis inspire more permanent changes? Will we observe

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<sup>3</sup> Law no. 56 of 7 April 2014 dictated a wide-ranging reform of local authorities, providing for the establishment and regulation of metropolitan cities, the redefinition of the provincial system and new rules on unions and mergers of municipalities.

fewer people in public? Will we change what we do in public? (Honey-Rosés, 2020). With these words Honey-Rosés questions the future of public spaces as urban elements necessary to keep activities alive around built forms.

Furthermore, interrogating the city implies understanding the 'grana spaziale' and 'nicchie territoriali' (Pasqui, 2020)<sup>4</sup> that have been incorporated into the city over time. Public space, both in the historical and contemporary city and in the periphery has a political and symbolic value but, for those involved in planning, it has a functional and morphological relevance: it satisfies material needs, provides services to the community, expresses a public utility and can be defined as a set of 'precisely' placed, characterised and non-interchangeable areas that endow the city with a structure of collective places (Bianchi, 2018), determining a taxonomy of sociality.

Given the semantic and operational scarceness of public spaces in responding to the increasingly urgent need to provide different spaces for a changing society, the aim is no longer merely to build an effective urban form, but to investigate the relationships between mobility, collective spaces and private spaces (Aymonino, 2008). The pandemic thus highlighted the failure of planning to ensure accessibility to public services, and made visible the indifference to the location of facilities. It is clear that facilities have been placed in suburban locations, diminishing the quality and attractiveness of places previously defined as central. Therefore, the 15-minute city strategy is in line with the necessary rebalancing of the multipolar system, restoring dignity to urban parts that have become anonymous or disconnected from the polycentric system. This would make it possible to increase the space available to families forced to share crowded environments, reducing the psychological burden of isolation and the anxieties caused by the crisis (Ware et al., 2020).

Moreover, the transformations of 'urban forestation' and the recent ecological turn have underlined the need for the green component in the concrete landscape of the contemporary city. Green spaces play a crucial role during pandemic lockdowns, providing ecosystem services related to health, well-being, recreation and (temporarily constrained) social life (Krzysztof & Drozda, 2021).

The dimension of the limit, the domestic environment and proximity become essential elements of the '1/4H city' or '15 minutes'. It is a polycentric settlement system able to offer essential and primary services in a few minutes. This strategy, devised in Paris and called 'Ville de quart d'heure' (Moreno), was then adopted by Milan with its 'Strade aperte' and 'Piazze Aperte' projects, by Melbourne, and by many others, which have placed quality of living at the heart of their strategic and operational proposals. These principles are in line with the 'Epidemic Prevention Area (EPA)' manual (Icomos China, 2020), which interprets the city as an integrated urban cluster, promoting spaces, functions and communities.

### 3.1 New scientific paradigm

The overlapping of the 15-minute city concept implies a reflection on accessibility and functions that can be reached in a few minutes. This leads to systematic changes in the patterns of spatial allocation of services and the use of public space. The scale of application, therefore, is that of the neighbourhood. However, each is linked to the other through networks of connections.

The issues on which the new urban strategies act, subsequently analysed through good practices, are: (i) urban well-being, (ii) socio-environmental sustainability and (iii) promotion of the local economy. These themes are expressed through the macro-themes identified by the proximity approach.

Capillarity, flexibility, variety and availability are therefore strategic requirements to identify, in the system of public spaces, the favourite place in which to experiment with adaptive solutions that mediate between the

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<sup>4</sup> With the term 'grana spaziale' Pasqui indicates the conditions of hardship and the consequent inequalities of neighbourhoods or portions of the city that have lost satisfactory levels of social cohesion and quality of living. The same places, moreover, present 'nicchie territoriali', i.e. a building, an old settlement, an area close to railway stations, etc., often concentrated within the city centre, but difficult to identify.

adoption of risk containment measures and the indirect effects on the physical health and psychological well-being of individuals linked to them (di Martino et al., 2020). Today, the urban space, after undergoing sensory deprivation seeks again its performance and functional characteristics.

#### 4. Example of new successful interventions

##### Paris

Paris, one of the first to have focused on a strategic vision based on accessibility within a time frame of between 15 and 20 minutes, declining it in the topics of social innovation, climate neutrality, decentralisation of functions and quality of life to activate sustainable economic models and revitalise the territory. The concept of the 15-minute city, as understood by Moreno, can be summarised in four main pillars:

- density: the ability of a given area to support, in terms of service delivery, an optimal number of people;
- proximity: radial nodes that provide access to essential services, both in spatial and temporal terms;
- diversity: the need to consider both urban mixité (residential, commercial and entertainment components) and cultural and gender diversity;
- digitalization: the implementation of inclusive and participative processes, as well as offering real-time delivery of services, increasing employment opportunities and promoting sustainable mobility.

Thus, the vision of 'Paris En Commun' aims at a carbon-free economy and healthy living for its citizens (Euklidiadas, 2020). Paris, where a radical transformation of the capital is planned by 2024, will focus on the use of bicycles with the goal of a carbon neutral city by 2050. The French capital aims to refound the use and performance function of its public space, through a shift to sustainable mobility, with a simultaneous increase in green areas serving the city and the design of social, cultural and co-working spaces.

By virtue of its already well-developed transport system, Paris seeks to implement the central neighbourhoods by bringing services and green spaces at the service of the community. The risk of this operation is the creation of a hyper-centre, i.e. an excessive polarisation of the wealthy area of Paris, creating a lack of access for low-income groups.

**Paris en Commun**

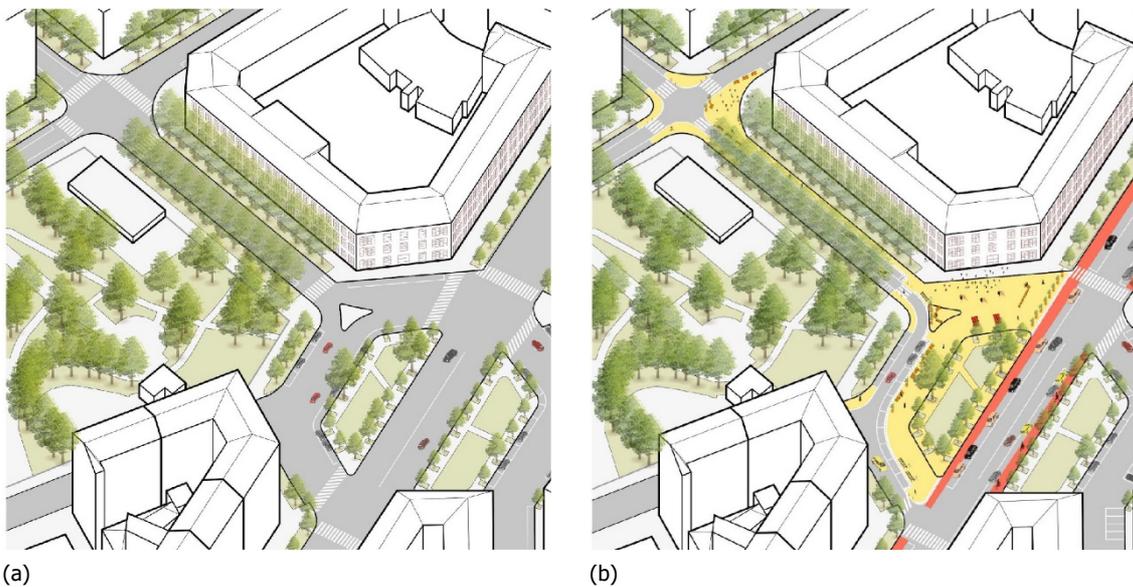
Metrics	15-minute
Urban well-being	Open air, schools, culture
Social and environmental sustainability	Care, sport and leisure
Promotion of the local economy	Work, healthy eating, shops

**Tab.1 Evaluation of the 'Paris en Commun' plan**

##### Milan

Following the path traced by the Parisian administration, Milan has launched strategies to convert current mobility into sustainable mobility, working on reducing urban traffic and identifying rapid and reversible adaptation solutions dictated by the current state of emergency. Among these strategies, the 'open squares' programme has experimented with applications of tactical urbanism, as in the case of Piazza Sicilia in the NoLo district (Fig. 2). This experience, although predating the pandemic, proved to be an excellent test case for the application of the Milan 2020 adaptation strategy and for encouraging the extraordinary use and occupation of public land. In fact, the Administration of Milan has set itself the objective of identifying a series of places for the construction of a network with a pedestrian vocation, in which to choose traffic calming and urban care interventions. These actions will have to bring new qualitative values, in coordination with the planning of public works and maintenance interventions (Municipality of Milan).

At the same time, Milan's main objective is to create a resilient city. To do so, it has worked on mobility and equipped the territory with new cycle routes, not only to cope with emergencies, but also to significantly increase the network. In addition, Milan has implemented Zone 30 zones, connected to the cycle network, in order to reduce atmospheric emissions caused by traffic and increase urban safety. This is in line with the idea of Jane Jacobs (1961), there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. These actions aim at reorganising the space for road traffic, redesigning public space and encouraging pedestrian movements. These actions take the form of temporary pedestrianisation to allow motor activity, outdoor games – with a focus on the children’s city – and the expansion of public space available to residents and businesses. A strategy that seeks redefines urban space as a place of excellence for the social and economic sphere, evolving towards the configuration of places permeated by physical and psychological well-being, at the service of citizens and urban practices.



**Fig.2 (a) Piazza Sicilia, Milan - before and (b) Piazza Sicilia, Milan - after**

**Adaptation strategy**

Metrics	Neighbourhood (15-minute city)
Urban well-being	Management of health containment measures, sustainable mobility, children's city
Social and environmental sustainability	Urban neighbourhood spaces, air quality, renaturation
Promotion of the local economy	Collaborative economies, short supply chains

**Tab.2 Evaluation of the "Milan 2020" Adaptation strategy. Open document to the city's contribution**

**Melbourne**

The Melbourne 2017-2050 plan aligns with the 15-minute city concept by emphasising that planning emphasis need to focus on ensuring streets in urban areas are organised in such a way that they promote accessibility to different parts of the city within 20 Minute walking radii, and such planning would sometimes require restricting or reorientation existing infrastructures (Moreno et al., 2021).The main pillars on which the strategy is built are: (i) density, (ii) diversity of land use, (iii) design, (iv) accessibility, and (v) distance to transit (Stanley, 2015). The expected catchment area is about 800 metres covered in 20 minutes and the strategy is divided into 7 strategies, 90 policies and 23 directions. The main elements of this approach are the 'neighbourhood activity centres', which are part of the 'activity centres' strategy (Tab. 3).

**Types of Activity centres**

Central activities districts	Centre of activity with the greatest variety of uses and the most intense concentration of development
Principal Activity Centres	Large centres with a mix of activities that are well served by public transport
Major Activity Centres	Centres with a mix of activities serving smaller catchment areas
Specialised Activity Centres	Centres with a mix of economic activities that generate high numbers of work and visitor trips
Neighbourhood Activity Centres	Centres with a limited mix of uses meeting local needs and are dominated by small businesses and shops and limited community services

**Tab.3 Type of activity centres. Elaboration of author on information Activity centres toolkit (2010)**

Planning Melbourne introduces ‘neighbourhood activity centres’, i.e. retail services and goods (newsagent, bakery, supermarket), local entertainment facilities (bars and restaurants), health services and local facilities, to meet daily needs (Plan Melbourne 2017-2050) at the neighbourhood level and across the city, with their contextual and necessary systemisation. At the same time, they are places for social interaction and community participation, but can also play the role of ‘pedestrian places’ within the city.

Analyses show that not all neighbourhood activity centres are equally served or accessible by the public transport network, especially the outer suburbs. The challenge for Melbourne, which has relied on car use, is to complement and promote mixed mobility, both pedestrian and public transport, as a driver of a different ‘lifestyle’. Indeed, the strategy, through the creation of a network of neighbourhoods, aims to reducing urban sprawl and provide employment and investment opportunities by giving each individual neighbourhood with a level of self-sufficiency.

The 20-minute city project started in January 2018 with the establishment of the first pilot project, which emphasised the importance of integrating bottom-up approaches in planning, as well as physical projects. The goal is sustainable development, placing itself in line with the goals of the UN Agenda 2030 (Goal 3: Good Health and well-bing; Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities), creating mixed-use environments and dynamic communities. Thus, the place-based approach underlying the 20-minute city focuses on ‘place’ as the result of different disciplines. The limitation of the 20-Minute City is not to identify a metric for reference and functions to develop the network of self-sufficient neighbourhoods.

**Plan Melbourne 2017-2050**

Metrics	Neighbourhood - 20 minutes
Urban well-being	Walkability, safe street and space, local health facilities and services
Social and environmental sustainability	Community gardens, Local playground, ability to age in place, housing diversity
Promotion of the local economy	Activity centres, Local shopping centres, local employment opportunities,

**Tab.4 Evaluation of the “Plan Melbourne 2017-2050”**

**4.1 New concept**

These best practices are strategies that focus on the quality of urban life and public space, not only as a space between buildings, but as an active component. It is embedded in an urban environment, innervated by a multi-polar system and connected by eco-systemic infrastructures, implementing the concept of 15-Minute City. This transformation would give rise to constellations of eco-neighbourhoods with a high functional mix, giving a new centrality to places that have lost their identity and urban appeal. The strategies aim, through macro-thematic actions, at the constitution of a preparation of the urban space in which the functional mix generates and develops multipolar centralities, capable of creating a city effect (Fig.3).

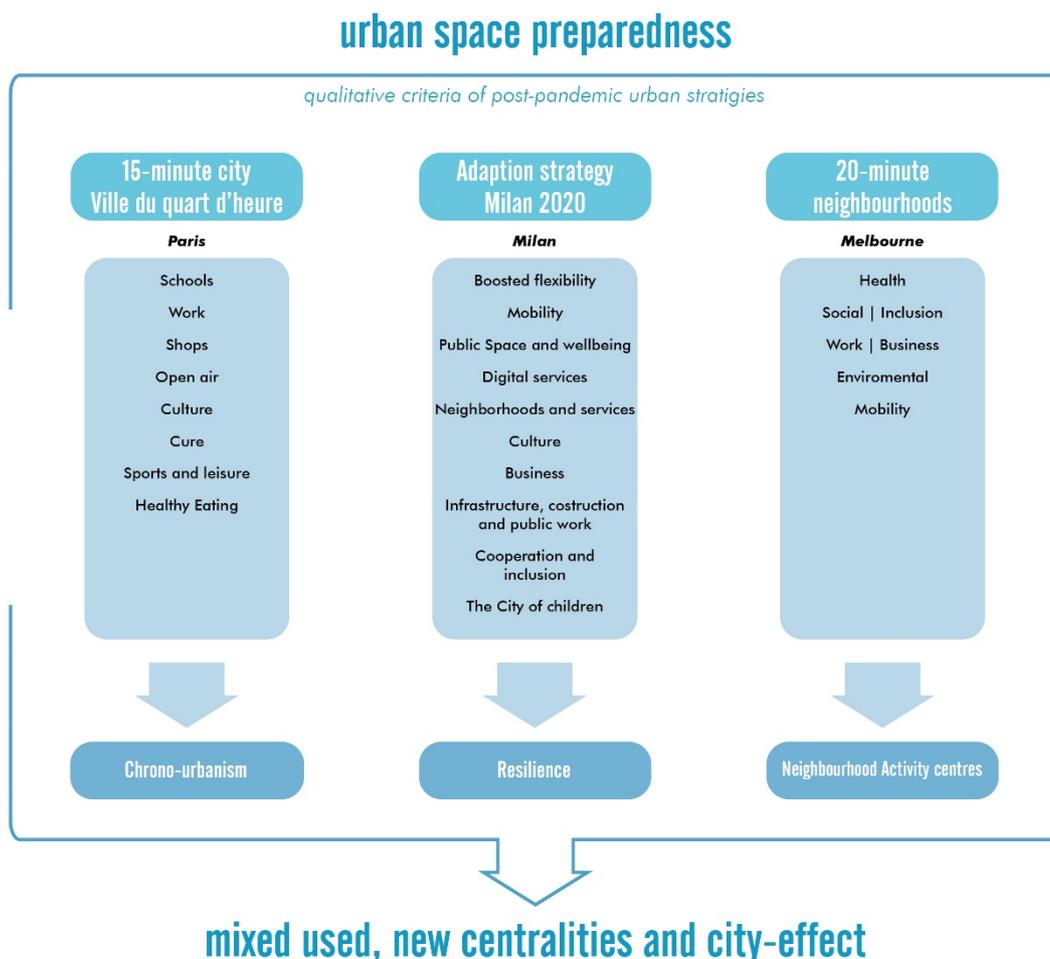
The reconfiguration of public space has stimulated a great debate on whether public space can be flexible and guarantee people's urban safety. As well as making the difference between public and private space almost

non-existent, the emergency has highlighted the need to extend services outside for the benefit of citizens, resulting in adjustments to the road system and the removal of space for cars. Thus, the design experiments 'Open Squares', 'Open Streets', the 15-minute city and the 20-minute city have not only promoted cycling and walking, but also facilitated the occupation of public space.

It is therefore clear that tactical urbanism projects have entered the urban discipline as effective temporary practices for rethinking public spaces and managing emergencies. It is evident that temporary transformations had different responses depending on the context in which they were applied. On the one hand, they could stimulate bottom-up practices and networking; on the other hand, when included in urban regeneration projects, they could favour their application in areas that are more profitable for real estate purposes.

The aim is to rethink urban spaces (and disused buildings) by giving them back their centrality, according to function, necessity and – if foreseen – temporariness of interventions, reshaping the network of movements. At the basis of this, the interaction between architecture, infrastructural planning and town planning represents the central strategy to create catalysing public spaces, usable and close to citizens, in order to achieve the highest level of quality of the habitat we live in (Faroldi, 2015).

The boundary dimension (expressed by facades and the spaces between buildings), the proximity dimension (accessibility, business, services, polycentric system) and the domestic dimension (the home as a city) become strategic and complementary in rethinking the urban system, with each element having a renewed urban and functional value.



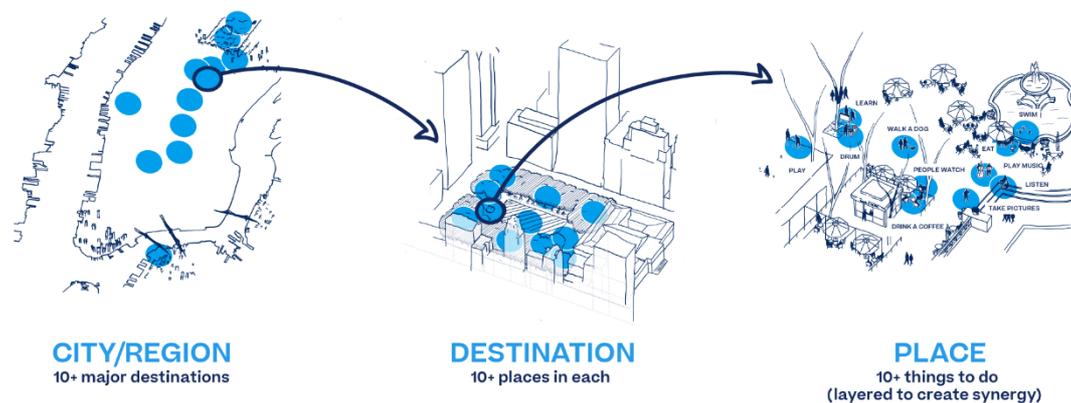
**Fig.3 Urban strategies, new centralities and city-effect**

## 5. Place, business and proximity

Reasoning on the theme of territorial revitalisation and simultaneously counteracting disinvestment, gentrification and displacement, possible 'activity centres' (e.g. Melbourne) in the city assume the role of structural elements for the construction of inclusive economies. Recent research by Bartik shows that moving activities from distressed locations to more attractive and dynamic environments is wrong. The abandonment of such areas causes a loss of local economic demand and the ability of the neighbourhood or piece of town to provide essential public services. On the contrary, it is necessary to help revitalise the economy of such areas by suggesting a reorganisation of the policies for locating businesses and companies. This will trigger processes of regeneration and revitalisation of places in difficulty, working on local skills. The additional jobs created in distressed places draw people into productive employment, raising the overall effective national labour supply and economic output (Bartik, 2019).

It's not enough to have just one great place in a neighbourhood – you need a number of them to create a truly lively community. It's not enough to have one great neighbourhood in a city – you need to provide people all over town with close-to-home opportunities to take pleasure in public life. And it's not enough to have one liveable city or town in a region — you need a collection of interesting communities (PPS, 2009).

The idea behind dynamic environments and communities is that the urban place has a power of attraction through functions and uses. The idea is the enhancement and development of placemaking at different scales (Fig. 4). The concept also gives people incremental and tangible goals, and it helps them to visualize, and collectively work towards, a truly great end result (PPS)<sup>5</sup>.



**Fig.4 PPS. How Cities Transform Through Placemaking**

The focus is therefore on cities on a human scale, i.e. flexible places and entities able to offer and enable adequate urban experiences, both social and economic. Also, 15-minute cities are partial answers to today's problems. They seek to create a polycentric network of eco-sustainable and self-sufficient neighbourhoods, thinking above all about urban amenities. At the same time, such an approach combined with the strategy of transformative placemaking can reshape the contours of the economy, flows and space that exist in cities. Transformative placemaking can be integrated into the 15-minute city if it is used appropriately. Such as the 15-minute city, transformative placemaking works to achieve inclusion within the city. Transformative placemaking does not identify a geographical dimension, but seeks to enhance the specificities of a place and its latent possibilities.

The difference between transformative placemaking and the 15-minute city is that the first approach seeks to reactivate urban environments plagued by neglect and does not focus exclusively on the city centre as the

<sup>5</sup> The idea of identifying what determines the attractiveness of a place was addressed by PSS. The research work led to the concept "Power of 10+". The research, through placemaking, seeks to focus on the human experience in defining functions.

second strategy does (e.g. Paris). Thus, it aims to counter territorial inequalities and support the creation of local and inclusive networks. It could be said that the 15-minute city, on the basis of the analyses presented so far, can also be declined as a placemaking strategy. *Transformative placemaking*, therefore, are functional entities working on three main qualities:

- scope, the reconstruction of the relationship between place and economy;
- scale, the spatial dimension defined by opportunities and market realities;
- integration, a 'place-based' and multidisciplinary view.

Transformative placemaking seeks to initiate the emergence of an ecosystem an *economic ecosystem* that is regionally connected, innovative, and rooted in the assets of its local residents and businesses; a *built environment* that is accessible, flexible, and advances community health and resiliency; a vibrant, cohesive *social environment* that is reflective of community history and identity; *civic structures* that are locally organized, inclusive, and support network building (Vey & Love, 2019).

In the classical configuration, placemaking it helps them to re-imagine everyday spaces, and to see anew the potential of parks, downtowns, waterfronts, plazas, neighborhoods, streets, markets, campuses and public buildings. On the other hand, transformative placemaking, as conceived by the Bass Center of the Brookings Institution, extends the classic concept of placemaking coined by the Project for Public Space – understood as the set of operations aimed at improving social well-being – to integrate the idea of clusters capable of creating a critical mass of economic resources. The objective pursued is the creation of dynamic and lively realities and communities capable of counteracting the incessant change and implementing innovative land management policies in favour of a socio-economic prosperity at local level (Tab.5).

<b>Trasformative placemaking aims to</b>			
<b>Economic ecosystem</b>	<b>Built environment</b>	<b>Civic structures</b>	<b>Cohesive social environment</b>
Regionally connected	Accessible	Locally organized	Vibrant
Locally empowering	Flexible	Inclusive	Cohesive
Innovative	Healthy and sustainable	Networked	Reflective

**Tab.5 Transformative placemaking framework. Elaboration of author on information Bass Center for transformative placemaking (2019)**

The 15-minute city policy, the identification of the city effect instances and the outcomes produced by activity centres, lead to a reduction in the socio-economic and qualitative inequalities inherent in the contemporary city. The theme of centrality evolves from a geographical to a directional concept, becoming infrastructural and cognitive. It distances itself from the pole, to become multiple and diffuse over the territory, composed of innovative elements in social, economic and spatial terms. In this way, urban trends and transformations activate development dynamics in which neighbourhoods are part of a system rather than simple hierarchies or single entities (Pozoukidou & Chatziyiannaky, 2021). Therefore, we try to avoid strictly homogeneous social islands, which cause marginalisation, in favour of a culturally complex system (Fasolino et al., 2020).

The city of greater proximity is made up of living spaces amplified by a sort of osmotic belt that enriches living spaces through a true polycentric city project, providing neighbourhoods with places for care and culture, gardens and playgrounds, productive and commercial activities and spaces for a relational life that is safer because it is distributed and not assembled (Carta, 2021). Designing proximity implies strengthening bicycle and pedestrian mobility networks. It is not a question of redefining city boundaries, but of promoting settlement systems on a human scale without sacrificing the city effect.

However, if micro-mobility and walking are desired, then major rethinking of street infrastructure, and of the way the space is shared (Lai et al., 2020: 237). These latter considerations have an impact on changing the lifestyle and habits of users, leading to the use of sustainable mobility. It is clear that it is difficult to define the topic of mobility in a univocal way, because of the variables involved (urban morphology, accessibility,

intermodal offer, etc.). It must be seen as an integration of the available solutions, both as a physical issue and as a driver of urban development. The idea of the street as an incubator of health and well-being means a space in which the noise, air quality, and other environmental risks are kept below a healthy maximum, in which streets become places to live rather than merely spaces to move through (Lindelöw et al., 2021). Sustainable mobility is therefore enriched with different intensities and speeds according to travel needs. The theory of the 'Walkable City' is in fact based on the concepts of sustainable mobility such as coherence, continuity, balance, safety, comfort, accessibility, efficiency and attractiveness of places, as key characteristics to promote transport choices capable of promoting correct styles of life (Balletto et al., 2020). The improvement of public space, supported by the creation of inclusive environments, will allow sustainable mobility, both walking and cycling, to establish itself as one of the main pillars of urban development. Moreover, safer streets and attractive sightings also have an effect on psychology, fostering mental health beyond an augmented sense of community (Núñez-González et al., 2020).

The challenge to take up, in order to take full advantage of changing user lifestyles, is to keep the focus on the importance of green infrastructure for outdoor activities and cycling, counteracting a return to car-only use. The goal is a multi-scalar infrastructure, which functions both local and regional level, a sort of hybrid infrastructure that brings together functions which are not in direct related to one another, taking advantage of their proximity to the mobility network, sharing mobility networks, [...] an opportunity for redemption for the neglected places of the city in the twentieth century (Daprà, 2016).

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1 Discussion

Until now the city effect has been an expression of the capacity to offer services, often assimilated to a pole; today we are going in a different direction: there is no longer an exclusive centre, but multiple inclusive and sustainable centres at different urban scales. The distinction of the space for centrality from the generic potentially transformable space derives from the reading and interpretation of the morphological characteristics and relational behaviour between the various structural components of the field of centrality (Strina, 2013).

The city has reached a crossroads in which it is necessary to take note of what it is – an urban simulacrum – and what it could be – a multiform soul, the sum of creativity, innovation and sustainability – in order to enter a new era with unprecedented characteristics, not only in form, but above all in the declination of use. The city requires action to remedy its shortcomings: we need to rethink its use and role, new forms of tourism in coexistence with the residential aspect, reduce inequalities and calibrate the supply of services. It is unthinkable to think of abandoning the city, but the reconversion of the office towers and the many offices within them is not entirely unthinkable. So, if these are the premises, the challenge is to understand which elements qualify the city as such: it aims at spaces 'between things' that are significant because they are equally used by those who live there, whether they are places and provide opportunities for meeting, attendance and 'aggregation' (Secchi, 1993).

Urban awareness, understood as a 'sustainable habitat', will prove to be strategic in a period of transition and change in which the 'city space' is called upon to change: the first difficulty in thinking about the future is to think about the present (Morin, 2001). We are not faced with a single way of conceiving space, time, and architecture; rather, the terms require their evident terminological pluralization. The built space, its form, the language undoubtedly represents the barometer of an era, the result of economic, social, technical, and cultural variables that come together synergistically to define the architectural meaning (Faroldi, 2020).

There is a need for conformity between the different layers that make up the city system. Conformity is more than 'transcalar'; that the strategic approach to urban planning should consider different scales

simultaneously is a fundamental and accepted concept. That the design of networks and places should look for bi-unique relationships and possible synergies is an innovation yet to experiment with (Mascarucci, 2020). It is clear that the lack of interest in past and current urban issues, now amplified by the pandemic and climate conditions, makes it evident how 'building' has prevailed over 'living', derogating the design of planning interventions from the obsolete regulations in force. The natural consequentiality between building and living is overturned in order to restore well-being and create 'urban artefacts' (Rossi, 1982). The result is areas devoid of identity and city effect, and unable to play the role of centrality. The debate on the loss of the center has been fuelling urban planning and urban composition for years: there are those who accept it as modern form that supports the expansion of the *forma Urbis* towards the shapeless suburbs, and those who counteract this trend by means of redevelopment and reconversion actions aimed at reshaping space according to contemporary ways of living (Faroldi, 2020). Thus, the 15-minute city is a partial answer to redesigning urban welfare and restoring the role of centrality. The functioning of the contemporary city has definitely exploded, laying bare the shortcomings of land management: if the periphery is to become central, it is necessary to relate centralities and the city effect with settlement models, commensurate and calibrated with the sustainable design paradigms of the future.

## 6.2 Prospective of research

Urban planning must reassert its role, rediscover the intrinsic value of forms and spatial management, and embrace real and virtual nuances. All too often the creation of squares, streets and voids has generated an 'urban space' that is already obsolete before it is finished, responding to urban planning standards that have been circumvented. In the current context, financial resources are scarce: with the Next Generation (Recovery Plan) in the background – and the need to contain land consumption by recovering underused buildings and empty space – it becomes a priority to innovate and enhance urban appeal, to innervate the territory with an integrated system. The aim of urban interventions is not only to solve the problem of abandoned buildings, but also that of large working spaces that are currently underused. This inversion can be achieved by transforming these spaces into places where co-working and remote working can be promoted to attract businesses and young people, in order to address 'the structural weaknesses of the Italian economy' and 'repair the economic and social damage of the pandemic crisis' (PNRR Italy). Specifically, we must design the regeneration of our cities so that they are antifragile, capable of using crises to innovate, shape-shifting places able to adapt to the different needs of anti-union cities (Carta, 2021).

Despite initial results, the 15-minute city vision is characterised as an extremely versatile and useful strategy. The concept of the 15-minute city is a 'cosmopolitan localism' where the network of small distances is in synergy with the network of long distances. It is clear that the network of short distances cannot replace long-distance relations in the area, but it can guarantee a sense of community, identity and belonging to the neighbourhood. In fact, the city of proximity has always existed within the urban hyper-center; today it is a question of expanding the positive effects of proximity in marginal areas.

The 15-minute city, green and 'on a human scale' offers the possibility of giving a new definition to the city according to parameters of functional reconfiguration parameters, based on the existence of a network of spaces between the socio-economic dimension and the quality of living. Redesigning and reconfiguring a post-pandemic city, stripped of rhetoric and 'false' sustainable strategies, would redefine the role of Urban Planning and Architecture, rebalancing the urban quality and the speed of development between city and periphery. This approach should aim at the creation of hybrid places capable of innovating the urban structure in socio-economic and environmental terms.

The future will be marked by a growing awareness of our responsibilities towards the environment, both in its more general and pervasive aspects, usually referred to as global change, and in its more specific and local aspects, such as protection against hydrogeological risk or defence against all forms of pollution. [...] This will

introduce new materials into the dilated space of the contemporary city and change its image (Secchi, 2000). The Covid-19, therefore, must be declined as an opportunity to rethink places and spaces. Rebalancing of inequalities inherent in settlement systems could initiate a development process for the city of tomorrow in an increasingly healthy and liveable way, with effective, transcalar and multidisciplinary urban planning.

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## Image Sources

Fig.1: Elaboration of author;

Fig.2: Piazza Sicilia (Milan, Italy) Pedestrianisation project. Source: Comune di Milano. Retrieved from: [https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/992518/Strade+Aperte\\_IT\\_200430\\_rev.pdf/a100d04c-6b55-ae74-e0f8-b52563e07822?t=1589460655416](https://www.comune.milano.it/documents/20126/992518/Strade+Aperte_IT_200430_rev.pdf/a100d04c-6b55-ae74-e0f8-b52563e07822?t=1589460655416) ;

Fig.3: Elaboration of author on urban strategies of Paris, Milan, Melbourne;

Fig.4: Project for public spaces. Retrieved from: <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>.

## Author's profile

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