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The Urban Book Series

Grazia Brunetta
Patrizia Lombardi
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# Post Un-Lock

## From Territorial Vulnerabilities to Local Resilience

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Editors

# Post Un-Lock

## From Territorial Vulnerabilities to Local Resilience

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# Preface

This book is the first result of the "Post Un-Lock" research project, funded by the Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning (DIST) of the Politecnico di Torino, a three-year work involving the collaboration of a large number of researchers belonging not only to different departments and institutions but also to diverse disciplinary areas.

The research involves teams from the Department of Environmental, Land, and Infrastructure Engineering (DIATI) of the Politecnico di Torino (such as environmental and geomatics engineers), the Department of Mathematical Sciences "Giuseppe Luigi Lagrange" (experts in mathematical statistics), and the Department of Medical Sciences of the Università di Torino (researchers in the field of medical statistics and epidemiology), committed to reflecting on the territorialization of the pandemic and the effects of pollution on health in cities.

The Post Un-Lock research took shape in the last months of 2020, triggered by the scientific impulse of the international goals of sustainability and resilience in the perspective of the post-carbon city and the overcoming of environmental, economic, social and health crises. Scholars have collaborated and tested on case studies methodologies, approaches, and tools capable of re-imagining cities and regions to overcome vulnerabilities and to innovate the socio-ecological system on the basis of the ideal-typical model of Local Resilience Unit.

With this in mind, we would like to thank, in addition to the authors of the chapters and their collaborators: the partners of the research such as the Interdepartmental Centre Responsible Risk Resilience Centre (R3C), the SDG11LAB, the S3+Lab (Urban Sustainability and Security Laboratory for Social Challenges), the CED PPN (European Documentation Center on Natural Park Planning), the Living Lab and the PIC4SER of Politecnico di Torino. We would also like to thank the external supporting institutions such as IUGA of Grenoble, University of South Denmark, CMCC (Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change), and the administrations involved in the case studies, whose suggestions provided crucial support for the outcomes of this publication. Other institutions and people we would like to thank are: Nicola Tollin, Professor with special responsibilities in Urban Resilience, UNESCO Chair at University of Southern Denmark (SDU), ITI,

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# Chapter 11
# Space for Rights. The School Between Planning Standard and Social Innovation




**Daniela Ciaffi, Carolina Giaimo, Emanuela Saporito, and Valeria Vitulano**

**Abstract** The paper straddles the boundary between urbanism and sociology, working on the common ground of rights: public services and facilities ('planning standard,' according to the Italian spatial planning legislation) on the one hand and the care of the commons on the other, in addition to attempting to grapple with a third dimension of rights that places space and society alongside law. This methodological hypothesis is practiced from the critical analysis of one of the basic public facilities: the school. In the national debate on public services and common goods, school spaces are one of the recurring examples of how they have functionality as public educational services during school time and how they can also have other functional profiles as common goods, i.e., as civic centers open to the urban community during out-of-school hours. The theme of the hybridization of spaces and functions emerges with ever-increasing theoretical and empirical force in the reflections on so-called social innovation. Even if, in several cases, many people ignored one of the most beautiful definitions of planning standards by Giovanni Astengo (1966). He stated that, besides being a minimum, standards represent a minimum of civilization. The paper intends to bring attention to the complex value of spatial and social resources related to schools.

**Keywords** Urban facilities · Educational services · Social innovation

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## 11.1 Introduction

### *11.1.1 Planning Standards, Urban Welfare, and the Spatial Structure of the City*

The responsibilities of urbanism concerning the inequalities that manifest in cities are intrinsic to the principle on which planning activity has historically been based, namely the functional division of space through zoning. The control of space organization through planning determines perimeters of distinction and exclusion that have evident and explicit effects on the control of the social organization, showing the complex relationship between space and power (Mazza 2015). The recent pandemic has highlighted the problematic condition experienced by urban society in the contemporary city where social exclusion and inequalities are growing, even though the equal social dignity of all citizens is a fundamental principle of the Italian constitutional system. For some time now a new urban issue has been emerging that underlies generalized conditions of marginality and which, also as a result of the dramatic situation of the global health emergency, calls for wide-ranging glances and new considerations and interpretations for the activation of a new urban welfare, aimed at guaranteeing all local communities the right to health, housing, education, environment, public mobility, and the city.

In the face of such evidence, while it is true that town planning cannot be blamed for eliminating social inequalities, there is also no doubt that it can be entrusted with the task of defining settlement scenarios that can offer tendentially equipotential access to welfare spaces, to those essential public services, of collective interest, that represent the structuring and vital element of the urban system. Moreover, the 'trauma' generated by the pandemic and how it has called into question the space–time relationship in human relations, in the forms of production and living, and the spatial rules of the city's composition asks urban planning to question the ways and forms of innovation of its action, returning to investigate the spatial structure of the city starting from public space, as a space of guarantee of citizens' fundamental rights (Giaimo 2021). Urban planning must therefore question itself on the ways and forms of innovation of its action, returning to investigate the spatial structure of the city starting from public space as a space to guarantee the fundamental rights of citizens.

For this reason, urban regeneration policies of many cities are moving toward the multifunctional enhancement of the school facilities network that represents the main proximity structures that can perform strategic welfare functions (Giaimo 2022).

### *11.1.2 Common Goods and Social Innovation*

We know that when we talk about urban regeneration we mean both physical and social transformations. But much less widespread is the awareness that talking about urban regeneration means talking about the right to take care for common resources

that we all should have: really being able to—and not having to—take care of both spaces and services, people and even animal populations and plants that inhabit and live in cities and territories. It is important to note that Italy is an exceptional laboratory concerning this new 'right to care' (Ciaffi 2019) at the international level, thanks to a series of real revolutions in administrative, public, and private law which started from the beginning of the present century have made our jurisprudence at the forefront (Arena and Bombardelli 2022). In 2001, the *Principle of Horizontal Subsidiarity* was introduced in our Constitution stating that everyone can cooperate with public institutions to carry out actions of general interest (art. 118 last paragraph). Under this constitutional umbrella, from 2014 to today, about three hundred Italian municipalities have adopted the *Regulation for the shared administration of common goods* which allows the stipulation of collaboration agreements between active citizens and local public administrators. The national *Subsidiarity Laboratory* (Labsus) periodically draws up its Reports to photograph the progress of the thousands of *Pacts of collaboration* through which different subjects come together in smart alliances for purposes of general interest. There are tens of thousands of Italians who, more or less consciously, have become aware of their right to take care of common goods together, in the last decade, starting very different and creative spatial and immaterial actions. In the majority of cases, these are actions for the regeneration of the city and the territory: national data on 2021 tell us that the commons goods focused by the communities in action are the environment and urban greenery (in 48% of cases), urban furniture (19%), cultural heritage and initiatives (7%), schools and educational initiatives (7%), social inclusion (7%), co-planning of a series of interventions (4%), sports (3%), intangible common goods (2.5%), animation of the territory (1.7%), and other (Labsu 2022).

What happens in the meantime at a disciplinary level? Urban planning is obviously a discipline known for its at least partly law-related nature: Every planner or architect is confronted with laws and regulations. On the contrary, environmental and social psychology experts, city and territory sociologists, anthropologists, and ethnographers, who also often embrace participatory approaches, rarely start from the right to the city (Lefebvre 1970) also understood as knowledge of the relative jurisprudence and of administrative devices useful to the inhabitants both to participate in decisions on urban regeneration and to contribute from the bottom up with shared care actions. This chapter straddles the boundary between urban planning and sociology instead, working on the common ground of rights: the traditional right to public services on the one hand and the more recent right to care for the commons on the other. The attempt here consists in the critical analysis of one of the fundamental public services: the school. We start from a territory that we have studied, analyzed, and practiced both as scholars and as practitioners.

## 11.2 The Case Study of Settimo Torinese

### *11.2.1 Schools and Proximity Areas. Creating Settlement Conditions for an Innovative School-City-Territory Project*

Settimo T.se is a municipality of the metropolitan city of Turin located in the capital's first belt, whose territory is divided almost equally between anthropic (49%) and agricultural (47%) land uses and land cover. In comparison, the presence of natural systems (2%) and water bodies (2%) is minimal (LCP 2021).

The settlement system has developed according to a radio-centric expansion model with few widespread features and a robust system of mobility infrastructures of varying functional rank. To sum up, it can be traced back to two main macro-environments: the compact central urban area with concentric development (17% of the municipal territory) and the suburban territory, arranged almost as a crown around the concentric area.

The endowment of existing planning standards in Settimo (2018) covers about 10% of the municipal area (3.1 million sq.m.), distributed as follows (Table 11.1): almost 60% for social services at the municipal level (Art. 21, Law 56/1977) and the remainder for general interest services (Art. 22, Law 56). These endowments guarantee, concerning the resident population in 2021 (47,006 inhabitants), far more than the minimum quantity provided by the Piedmont spatial planning law.

School facilities below compulsory education constitute an infrastructure with a high capillarity and diffusion, covering about 11% of the total surface area at municipal level standards, to which two higher-level schools are added. This condition enhances their possible role in rethinking the spatial relations between school and city, with a view to openness, inclusiveness, and multifunctionality of the school infrastructure. Recognizing that school takes on a civic role by continuously interacting with its social and territorial context (Ministry of Education 2022), the spatialization of the school heritage and the knowledge of the conditions of the settlement context in which it is inserted are indispensable for recognizing its actual potential.

**Table 11.1** Existing planning standards in Settimo T.se

| Existing planning standards (Law 56/77) | Surface area ($m^2$) | Incidence on municipal territory (%) | Endowment per inhabitant (sq.m./inhab.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Municipal level services (art. 21) | 1.803.166 | 59 | 38 |
| General interest services (art. 22) | 1.278.486 | 41 | 27 |
| Total (artt. 21 and 22) | 3.081.653 | 100 | 65 |

*Source* elaboration of V. Vitulano based on Città di Settimo T.se (2018)

The construction of a census of planning standard endowments (of which schools are part) constitutes the first fundamental step in undertaking decision-making processes based on reading and interpreting the site-specific characteristics of the territory and the community. Furthermore, as the presence and distribution of school differ, it is possible to assume that the radii of action and the possible influences they can generate are equally different. For these reasons, the concept of proximity has been assumed as a spatial paradigm with which to address topical urban, social, and civic issues such as rethinking the virtuous interaction 'school-city' and the relations between different types of urban public spaces, caring for the wellbeing and health of citizens and protecting the urban environment through the enhancement of public green areas in school lots and their proximity.

Therefore, 'proximity areas' have been operationally defined through the generation of a buffer zone of 300 linear meters from the boundaries of the school lot; this distance identifies a walking distance of approximately 5 min and is considered the ideal distance to allow independent mobility for children between 6 and 12 years of age (UNICEF 2018; Barò et al. 2021).

The definition of school proximity areas is functional to the analysis of the characteristics of this urban area, i.e., the conditions of the space outside the school fences, especially in relation to the presence or absence of other public services. For example, data on the incidence of existing planning standard areas within the proximity areas show that, out of a total of 27 school buildings, in about 3/4 of the situations, the incidence of other services is less than 21%; the rest of the cases show values between 21 and 30%. Among the latter, the schools in the Borgo Nuovo District stand out, confirming the presence of more significant endowments in the parts of the territory that are the result of the most recent growth processes; on the contrary, most of the lowest incidence values refer to the schools located in the portion of municipal territory between the Turin–Milan railway and provincial road n. 11.

Since the 0–6 age group is of particular importance for public education policies, let us focus specifically on the proximity areas of kindergartens (Fig. 11.1). In this case, the situation is in line with what was stated before most of them remain under 21% of areas for services of both municipal and general interest.

Green public services are particularly scarce in most proximity areas (24 cases out of 27), where the incidence is less than 8%; this evidence is also confirmed for kindergartens. The most 'virtuous' cases are, again, located in Borgo Nuovo, where, moreover, the administration is concentrating its planning efforts to launch a qualified transformation in terms of functions and new opportunities for its inhabitants, completing the regeneration process begun in the late 1990s (Città di Settimo T.se 2018).

It is, therefore, possible to note that in Settimo the strong point of a network of public services around schools in most cases is not given by the presence of green standards—especially green with high ecological qualities, given the high presence of sports facilities, this due to the typical morphology of a monocentric municipality strongly urbanized in the central part compared to the rest of the territory (Fig. 11.1).

The data also reveal a series of typical situations where the low incidence of permeable green spaces occurs, especially near those polarities of services 'built'

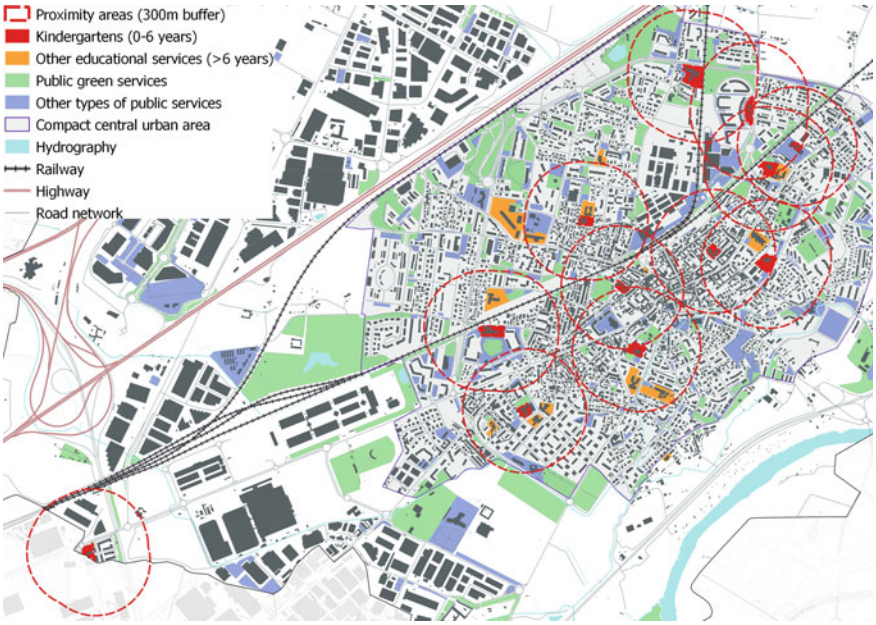


**Fig. 11.1** Proximity areas of kindergartens in Settimo Torinese. *Source* elaboration of V. Vitulano based on Città di Settimo T.se (2018)

within the concentric area, where clusters of schools and other services (such as car parks and facilities of common interest) have been created. Here the medium–high incidences are mainly explained by a concentration of schools (of different grades) that could give rise to the hypothesis of establishing specific school zones within the meaning of the Italian Road Code.

In many cases, public interventions on school buildings that have been put in place seem to be mainly oriented toward safety and efficiency enhancement, also using funds from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). However, in order to compensate for the low presence of public green areas within a now densely urbanized fabric, where it is difficult and costly to envisage the creation of new porosity, an element on which to pay more attention may be precisely the adjacent lot of school buildings, verifying the presence of adequate open spaces with quality characteristics, also in terms of existing vegetation and trees.

### *11.2.2 An Established Participatory Tradition and a Future for the Community in Action*

From the point of view of participatory urban planning, the context of Settimo T.se is prototypical of a style of government that spanned the 1990s and 2000s in the

name of political-party continuity based on pluralistic and inclusive urban regeneration process. These were conceived by the local public administrators, also driven by similar supra-local policies such as regional, national, and European ones for the regeneration of the city and the territory (Ciaffi and Mela 2011). In the Turin metropolitan area, there are also other municipalities known and studied for this participatory approach, which have expressed different social vocations from time to time, for example centered on participatory youth policies or on the co-management of green areas based on the informal groups of older people or, again, on the involvement of groups of parents in school policies as protagonists. When the local government style is based on a consolidated participatory matrix, social innovation based on the new right to care for common goods faces a challenge on several fronts. The main one concerns the transition from a bipolar paradigm to a collaborative one: from the administrator-administered relationship, which can also be characterized by a cooperative spirit but the helm is always substantially held by the elected politicians, to an active community that includes both administrators and those administered. In the latter subsidiary perspective, not only are decisions taken through horizontal governance but urban regeneration is done by co-managing common goods together. These are processes that basically arise from the autonomous initiative of individuals who want to contribute by carrying out actions of general interest, and want to be favored in this purpose by the public administration: This dynamic is very different from accepting an invitation to participate in an urban regeneration process designed by public officials.

Attracted by this new horizontal style of government, the municipality of Settimo T.se adopted the Regulation for the shared administration of common goods in 2021, dedicating a section of its website and identifying human resources and a reference office. However, the signing of collaboration agreements requires a certain amount of time to mature. The recent pandemic crisis certainly does not help, but we would like to reflect here on a historical turning point in progress, which consists in the transition from services traditionally intended to 'hybrid and shared services' (Ciaffi 2020). There are many points of contact with the recent debate on proximity services, starting with not believing in a future society that can give up public spaces and services in the name of 'completely to/from home': a feasible undertaking on the one hand by designing the conditions for a suitable environment from an urban and social point of view, on the other hand by producing events and initiatives that lead to the generation of new communities (Manzini 2021).

As part of the research group of the project 'The city goes to school. School squares as spaces of quality and environmental sociability' (Pileri et al. 2022), we investigated the relational and social dimension of the school as a common good, or as a product of the interaction. School has been considered as an institution and public service, but also as a common space of a multiplicity of territorial subjects that in various capacities participate in the educational experience of minors, contributing skills, resources, and energies. This process co-produce, in fact, training opportunities and educational spaces, complementary to the traditional ones. Listening through in-depth interviews allows us to observe, in the perspective of horizontal subsidiarity, some dynamics underway also in Settimo T.se. We leave the floor to three qualified witnesses because we believe that their voice well describes the process of hybridization underway in

the educational sphere together with the need to share responsibilities between public subjects such as the head teacher of a local comprehensive school, private subjects such as the president of a community foundation, and third sector subjects such as the president of the oratorie's social promotion association:

> In the meantime, I think that the educating community is something that has really begun to be built in recent years. But this in general, not just in Settimo, because the concept of school has changed a bit. Thinking only of school management, first there was the apical role of the principal, who was far and away, who organized everything and there was the school, there were the teachers, grades and stop. In primary school […] the children, spending more time at school, also did things, activities […] opening up to experience in the area. But this did not happen in schools, for example middle and lower secondary schools. And instead, slowly over the years, where there are slightly more enlightened schools, and certainly also starting from the experiences of southern Italy, of schools that really tried to prevent juvenile delinquency in difficult neighborhoods, an attempt was made to start creating the school as a place of reference, and consequently with reference adults, who may not necessarily be just the teachers […] so we really started to think about what an educating community is and what does it mean. Because the border lies precisely in the inside of the school and outside the school: it is on that border point that the game is played.
>
> (Maria Zindato, Headmaster I.C. Settimo T.se).
>
> In Settimo, we have enough squares: some historic, others created during urban redevelopment in the city […] In this period the squares, even during the lockdown period, were populated by kids who, as soon as they could, reappropriated them in a more or less, shall we say, correct. Here, if we read it as a problem there, we are lost. […] If we read it from an educational perspective, it becomes a potential. Difficult, very hard, whatever we want, but it's the only perspective, as far as I'm concerned, that's it.
>
> (Tiziana Tiziano, President of the Solidarity Community Foundation, Settimo Torinese).
>
> It's not easy, but all in all we have more than 250 members, we already have about sixty educators in the field, more responsible and adults who are helping out. So, I would say that the speakers are still there in the city of Settimo and they are still active. Then we have some initiatives in addition to what is the classical oratory […] I believe that in all of Italy the oratory is not absolutely dead […] Because if we reduce the oratory to just the opening of the courtyard, that's a long time; if you experience the oratory as a training ground for life, which looks on many fronts, it is certainly an enriching experience.
>
> (Luca Spiga, President of the Aps Oratories of Settimo Torinese).

## 11.3 Conclusion

There is a strong awareness that the project of a new urbanity, capable of interpreting a more performance-based declination of urban quality, cannot be satisfied within the perimeter of some quantitatively measurable parameter (to which, moreover, we recognize a certain precondition), and that it is necessary to return to giving urban spaces a more significant and widespread porosity, permeability and accessibility. Furthermore, it is necessary to promote an updating of the cultural and disciplinary sense of the public (and common) heritage constituted by standards, indicating possible adjustments of specific contents and directions for the new needs and demands expressed by cities, communities, and activities.

Acting on the heritage of public endowments requires parallel work on three fronts of action:

- the definition of needs and their localization and spatialization;
- the design and implementation of spaces and equipment to meet needs;
- the management of spaces and equipment.

This leads to several operational proposals. In particular, the realization, as a compulsory content of urban planning to guarantee the basic levels of services, reconnaissance, and verification, through public participation processes, of the state of affairs regarding urban planning standards (levels of services offered and expected performance objectives). A participation process aimed at contributing to the better quality and effective localization of public spaces, the correct sizing of urban allocations, the enhancement of the potential present in the reference territory, and the establishment of reference and governance frameworks for urban regeneration processes.

So why talk about hybrid and shared services? On the one hand, sharing is motivated by the fact that it is now even more evident to us that many services, which more and more people perceive as common goods of general interest, have found themselves facing challenges that we cannot continue to think are faced only by public managers. It is the society of care, which not only uses and consumes spaces and services, but which wants to deal with them beyond the twentieth-century model, but in the conviction of a State that must not retreat, on the contrary, is increasingly called to be a true ally. On the other hand, we talked about hybridization because the desire to contribute together to solve problems, each with their own know-how, is growing when it is possible to channel it into legal devices, such as pacts and alliances between public managers with technical and political roles, private subjects, associations, and informal groups, but also single individuals.

Obviously, there are many cross-disciplinary issues that remain open. For example, to remain in the school field, how to define the so-called educating community? What are the actors that compose it, the roles, skills, and relationships that bind them and how do they use and modify the urban space? How is the educational service reconfigured and what characteristics does it assume, including spatial ones, if one reads the collaborative practices of construction of the educational offer? What is the perimeter of the school, in terms of use of space and construction of the service, if one observes the action of the educating communities in the survey areas?

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