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Pocket Park

Product Urban design

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Abstract: Pocket Park, small areas that can make up for the emptiness, abandonment and no function of many spaces that are located within our cities, triggering processes of urban regeneration through the discovery of a new "life" and a new potentiality to accommodate. This must be rediscovered and brought to light so as to realize and perceive a different urban imaginary.

A product of urban interior design that is confronted with large courtyards: rooms without roof, this product can improve the quality of everyday life, designed to be together and to know the other's culture, where the confrontation between people is based on the sharing of the common space, living outdoors to accommodate people and make them feel like "home", and together with the people ... with all the other.

Keywords: Product For The City, Urban Design, Urban Space, Sharing, Know Other People, Small Space, Social Service.

Pocket Park: a product for the people

Harlem, New York

According to Lefebvre Change and social transformations can take place in space, as it is an active form and is seen as a tool that produces connection and things that arise with the use of space itself by the same people who practice it, "the [social space] is a [social] product"¹.

For their size the small urban spaces can be compared to a product, which is intended as a physicality that has the ability to contain and produce daily actions and practices, a urban design product that performs an important social function, a place where people can relate to each other, dating and innovate themselves over time.

In urban areas "The Pocket Parks can be an "oasis" for wildlife. They can be used as an area of support for birds, a reference point for their movements, at the same time people can have the chance to enjoy the view of birds and their sounds, to feel in close contact with nature with the others although this nature is limited by the built volumes (Harlem, New York, 1965)"². We can find

¹ Lefebvre, H. (1974). *La production de l'espace*, Antropos, Paris. Trad. It. Moizzi, G. (1976). *La produzione dello spazio*, Milano.

² Whyte, W. H. (2001). *The Social life of Small the Urban, Project for Public Spaces*, New York.

these small oasis (Seymour 2001), located inside our cities, from the suburbs to city centres, it is a type of space that doesn't "prefer" a location over another.



Figure 1. The first - The Vest Pocket Park - 128th Street Harlem New York. Author Francesco Armato

The birth of Pocket Parks in Harlem wasn't included in the urban planning programs of New York city, but it was a product for the city people wanted to satisfy the necessity to have a space for everybody where people can meet during the day.

Small spaces, designed and built by ordinary people with a very strong social vocation, have an outdoor space of aggregation to enjoy moments of daily life with the others in order to know each other to exchange ideas and things. A space where people could exchange the knowledge of the habits and customs of the others, not be afraid of being influenced by other cultures to the point of suffering the loss of their own identity (Taylor 1993).

In Harlem, two associations which worked for the social believed strongly in the realization of Vest-Pocket Parks (Figure 1), as they were called at the beginning, one association was the religious one of the Rev. Linnette Williamson, The Community Church of Christ in Harlem and the other was the Park Association.

In 1964 they pledged to help morally and economically several communities who lived in the neighborhoods devastated by Moses³ (Moses's policy didn't support the realization of the small park, especially when he had the role of the Highway responsible manufacturer. William Seymour⁴ writes, about Robert Moses that modest-sized parks were considered by Moses "primarily as the appendices of Highway or as landscaping of residential projects), and it was during those years that the two associations decided to make some areas of aggregation for the free time, as they were convinced that isolation couldn't improve the condition of unease that had arisen within neighborhoods; so in an urban abandoned lot between two buildings, owned by the church, with a

³ Moses, R. Entrepreneur, the main protagonist of the New York modernization. The city of New York in 900, studies on a hundred years of history, Università di Reggio Calabria, Facoltà di Architettura, professor Paolino Francesca, student Perri Margherita, a.a. 2010-2011

⁴ Whyte, W. H. (2001). The social life of small the urban, Project for Public Spaces, New York.

long narrow shape and with only one open side, the first pocket park was born, its shape looks like a jacket pocket, West 128th Street, Harlem. We can infer that pocket parks aren't meant as small gardens to make more beautiful urban spaces through complex and expensive designs, the beauty of the space wasn't the main purpose, indeed the spaces shouldn't "intimidate" with their decorum and with their refinement of materials which were used, but they should only be welcoming places where everyone could live the experience of being and living at home (La Pietra 2011).

The main objective was to live the space with a spirit of sharing, in a dynamic place, where people can organize events, but they can also read a book in complete serenity ... "It is fundamental "to animate" the place where we live, it is necessary to think of the open space as a large room, where the arrangement of the elements which define, characterize and determine the space, must be made in such a way as not to give a complex physicality, but a simple physicality both in the communication and function. Places designed to accommodate people and things from different cultures, so that this mixture can generate innovation for the "urban welfare, attentive to the transformations of the lives of women and men of all ages"⁵.

Pocket Parks have been for many years, from 1964 to 2010, spaces scattered over the urban fabric without any relation with the context, came out as "mushrooms", certainly very important places for residents and for those who had the luck to have them close to home, especially in cities where you feel the lack of green outdoor spaces.

Europe: the First Transformations

The first changes of the pocket gardens were seen in the early nineties, when the urban planner architect Jean Pierre Charbonneau⁶ was commissioned by the city of Lyon as a consultant for the design program called Grand Lyon. After a careful and accurate analysis of the urban structure of Lyon, Charbonneau drew up an inventory of open space: streets, squares, plazas ... which carried out very important functions, but other areas were part of another category, as less important and small size, they were defined as abandoned and "dormant spaces", for the latter an intervention philosophy was adopted and it was similar to that of Pocket Park.

The "dormant" spaces, areas with a physical identity, but without any function, left to themselves, after a thorough urban microsurgery intervention, took the name of jardin de poche. The action plan included 25 jardin de poche and they were placed through a program that provided a different way of getting around the city, was made aware that you could think of the project of mobility of the city by entering another ingredient in urban design: man, a man who moves from one side to the other of the city, using his own body, on foot or by bicycle: learning to walk ...

Pocket parks become happy islands where people, all the people can stop and take a break during the day or just a stopover, a place to catch your breath before shooting and continue their path.

Pocket parks are small spaces, they transmit intimacy to share with the social, the social aspect is the basis of the project of the "living-room" (figure 2) in the open air. Jean Tricart⁷ highlights the importance of "social content", through social content we can understand and have a clear reading

⁵ Secchi, S. (2002). Prima lezione di urbanistica, Laterza, Bari

⁶ Charbonneau J. P., architect, urban planner, consultant to several European cities, Lyon, St. Etienne, Grenoble Copenhagen.

⁷ Tricart, J., Killian J. (1985). L'ecogeografia e la pianificazione dell'ambiente naturale, Franco Angeli, Milano.

of the true meaning of urban evolution in a concrete way. Spaces that are caught between the buildings and in the interstices of the volumes that make up the city, make a buffer to the large urban structures. When they are left to their fate and nobody take care of them , they are emptied by the presence of those who use the space to carry out their social practices, they may seem insignificant.

it is interesting to have a picture of the city starting from small entities, it is a more attentive picture and on a human scale, the control between the parties that make up the urban fabric, can be more truthful when it is designed for contained quantities , it's like having a magnifying glass , getting off the scale to study all those elements the viewers can actually see for themselves: the objects which are in the urban space, measurable distances and highly visible spaces, an easily controllable urban dimension will be the sum of these small portions, through an analysis performed with method and knowledge of the relationships that exist among the people and the space around them, will give the shape of the whole building: the city.

It's significant the research work about the analysis of the city by Pierre Lavedan, who makes a clear distinction between the building (visible and impermeable physicalities), and free space, the emptiness around him and that puts him in connection (visible and permeable physicalities), "... the city isn't just a set of public and private buildings. These are connected by free spaces: streets, squares, public gardens. Splitting and sorting of these free spaces is the object of what we call urban art "⁸.

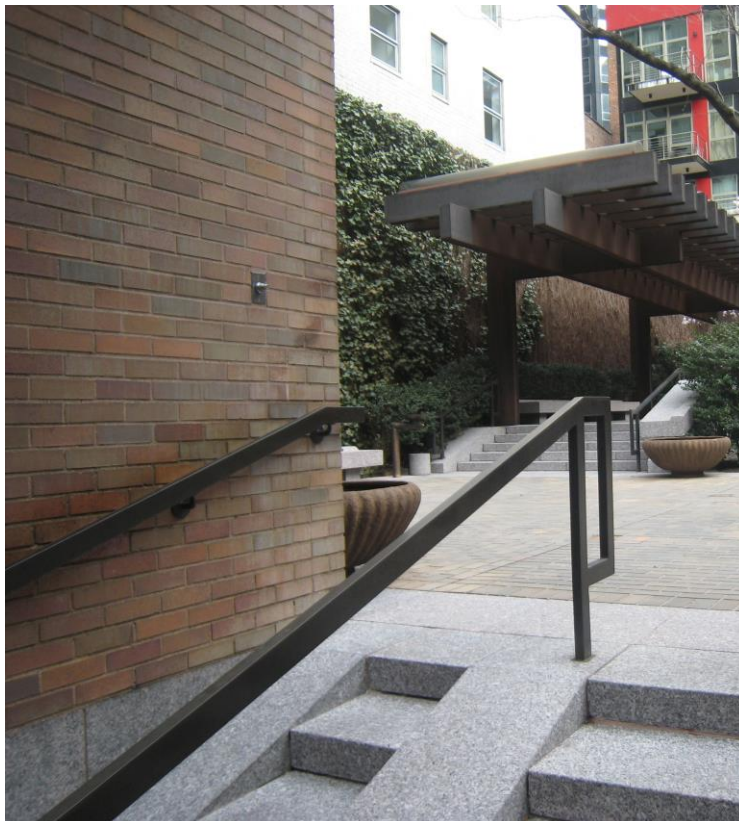


Figure 2. Grenacre Park, Manhattan New York. Author Francesco Armato

⁸ Lavedan, P. (1926). *Que'est-ce que c'est l'urbanisme*, Henri Laurens, Parigi.

A Project on a Small Scale For the Urban Space

Pocket parks, often comparable in size to large courtyards, can improve the quality of everyday life. They are places designed to be together and to know the other's culture, where the confrontation between people is based on the common space sharing.

Pocket Parks can make up for the emptiness, abandonment and no function of many spaces that are located within our cities, triggering processes of urban regeneration through the discovery of a new "life" and a new potentiality to accommodate. This must be rediscovered and brought to light so as to realize and perceive a different urban imaginary.

It's interesting what Georg Perec writes about the species of spaces and in particular on open spaces; he states that in the contemporary city the different way of living outdoor spaces can proliferate as there are species of roads, species of pedestrian areas and species of abandoned spaces or widenings. The diversity, the different types of spaces will facilitate the reception and at the same time, they will give rise to more vital relationships. Not all the places have the ability to transmit serenity and accommodate the practices and human relationships that develop every day, in order to make this happen, it is necessary that the layout is designed with those who live or who gravitate in that portion of the territory. An arduous and difficult goal to achieve, but surely to deal with, researches leading to awareness and listening to the physicality of the elements that make up a given space and those who daily benefits (Armato 2007).

The research work must have an aim, that is to find solutions and new answers about good living in the city through the use of open spaces that stimulate the desire to leave the house: cross the threshold, crossing the line that divides the space between the walls of the house and the street, reach the space among the buildings, the great collective backyard: that is the place meeting place and the place of being together.

The first step in the planning stage is the analysis, the study and the listening to identify areas that lend themselves to develop functions and social practices, the context and the areas that gravitate around are important for the success of the project: to learn about the users and their needs. The approach to identify and design spaces that in the future will be defined pocket parks must be diverse and plural, the choices skills for urban regeneration will be multiplied, to give an appropriate answer to the complexity which an urban space presents: the physical volumetric aspect, the socio-economic aspect, the perceptual psycho aspect, the bio nature aspect ... several will be the "listening" and several will be the professionals who will take care of the public open space (designers, architects, landscape architects, agronomists, sociologists, anthropologists ...).

The *mélanger*, which can co-exist with the other subjects, is very interesting a sit can obtain a very noble objective: living all together, without any exclusion, in the open air. Even if the Pocket Park is a small space, it is a complex one, as the ingredients which form it are a lot and they have a different origin: the choice of the sitting place, the type of vegetation, the control and the knowledge of atmospheric conditions.....and, at last to give a shape to a space in order to create a comfortable and pleasant place.

Providing analytical tools and multiline, comparing different subjects, reading will surely lead to a more complete view of the things around us and the aspects that are peculiar to each space that we analyze.

Micro Interventions on the Urban Structure: Lerner e Ryan

In recent decades there have been many projects and interventions to redevelop and revitalize the spaces within the urban fabric, the most significant examples that can be mentioned as an

innovation in environmental, cultural and social, are: Acupuncture Urbana, Jaime Lerner, a method invented by the same Lerner and applied to the city of Curitiba in Brazil and "Eco-acupuncture, Chris Ryan"⁹.

Lerner radically changes the thought and method of how to intervene on the city and on the portions of "deteriorated" areas, he defines a new way of life, an economic development with environmental impact closer to zero.

"In some cases, the actions happen more by chance than by design, to heal wounds that man himself inflicted in nature, such as quarries. Little by little these wounds will create another landscape. Knowing how to take profit from these landscapes and from the corrections of human errors is acupuncture that has excellent results "(Lerner 2007).

Lerner adopts a different approach when the issues of public open space are faced, it's not important the type of financing or the amount of works that are performed in a neighborhood or in a city, it is the social action that you can put in place, as the participation and interest of the community, transmitting and perceiving that the public space is an integral part of private space, the difference between private and public is only in the concept of privacy, but the sense of belonging to a place is the same, it is the same thing.

The same Leon Kaye¹⁰, interviewing Southern, said the urban acupuncture approach considers cities as living organisms. "It's a micro low-cost target tactic and it is very democratic, because in addition to strengthen and to provide urban residents their very coveted green space they desire since long time, without preferring one location to another. Even if the politicians of the big cities prefer to mark precise locations with the creation of large parks or even complex of large buildings, because they get more support, projects often <upset> the budget and take away space that could be used by local communities in other ways. In addition, Southern found that only a limited number of profit could be obtained on large-scale projects, while the micro-iniziativa improve both economic and real conditions of life for residents"¹¹.

Lerner has a full awareness of what the Chinese traditional oriental medicine is, his is a direct comparison between the human body and cities, he operates on small surfaces to "break out" a propulsive and positive energy, it is necessary to take care of all the people and the whole city space and for that you have to "seed" projects, small projects, on the whole urban structure, to let those who live a place perceive that all the spaces are important and must be vital and welcoming, for what a given space can offer.

Ryan, unlike Lerner, analyzes the urban fabric and chooses the areas, critical issues to try to realign the essential flows: energy, food and water, essential elements for the social, cultural and commercial life, these "energy flows" influence the neighboring areas, as if it were a "virus". The Goal is to reduce CO2 and to make sure that all people can take back the open-air space.

To Identify physical locations, urban nodes to work on, "focal points", portions of spaces (streets, plazas, squares, sidewalks) corners of the city to be given very specific tasks: to animate the city.

⁹ Perec, G. (1989). *Specie di spazi*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino

¹⁰ Kaye, L. (2011). Journalist and environmentally sustainable business expert, he works with the most important sustainable IT companies such as Silicon Valley, For the guardian professional Network.

¹¹ Southern, J., he is the director di Urban Operations, un LA-based, study specializing in architecture and urban research projects, 2011, from <http://urbanops.org/index.php?/project/solar-pavilion/>

"Little by little , "The urban nodes are loaded by missions made by their users, and then gradually they become saturated. The game takes place in teams and we imagine that a node remains "captured" by the team on that node has played the best mission.

In a sort of Risiko where you recapture the territories of the city. As the nodes are saturated, they define the new ones, extending more and more the game range and its actual impact on the ground"¹².

Pocket parks today can give a very detailed and cured response to the new urban design of the city, and no matter if the cities are overcrowded, dense or small urban centers, they have the ability to be able to enter into the life of all days independently from placement, for the users it is like a breath of fresh air immersed in an intimate space chatting with the neighbor or with the passer.

Pocket parks by type of intervention are in line with the weighted choices of great scholars of the structure and urban innovation as the above examples and research programs that are currently in place in most of the universities in the world.

Product Design - Communication - Services - Planning

Recent studies demonstrated that the research is no longer addressed to the great planning, because a good part of the large interventions didn't give positive feedback either to the spaces or to people and in some cases they were a clear failure for the city demonstrating a detachment, a deep laceration between the individual and the urban structure.

Nowadays design, through the measured project in a small scale, can fill the gap which has been created in the last years between the urban space and the people , a planning system which balances physical , material and dimensional relations with the space, considering man as a fundamental entity among things (Heidegger, 1927). The Pocket Park is a urban product which gives concrete answers to the structure of the city thanks to the interventions of urban microsurgery.

Nowadays the answer for the city is in the interventions of urban microsurgery, an extremely precise work on very restricted surfaces, so pocket parks become urban planning instruments where the small-scale, custom-made, project can find suitable solutions to re-activate portions of large urban structures and heal the exact spot.

Pocket parks over the years, from Harlem to today, have changed "dress", more refined in the use and in the research of the materials used for their realization, projects more and more comfortable have been adapted to the needs of society, such as the Paley Pocket Park in Manhattan (figure 3), a true urban living room, in their constant changes they have preserved the great social spirit, today we can compare them to atolls located on different parts of the urbanized area, relaxing areas in the urban chaos, the great transformation in recent years is the connection of these areas with walking and cycling routes in order to create a genuine communication network for the citizen movement. Studying and planning urban structure is an important factor, it is limited to identify the possible link routes. In this type of project, the city planning is posthumous, as the choice of the areas which need to be revitalized doesn't depend on a drawing or on a large scale programme. The Pocket Park is a urban interior design product in favour of society , a platform, a real social network where people can meet, touch and communicate looking each other in their eyes. London has already mapped

¹² Pirovano, A. Diari di Progetto, Kublai, 2013, from <http://progettokublai.net/diari/tag/agopuntura-urbana/>

100 Pocket Parks and it has also created an app. To give its citizens a better computerized service in order to know the collocation, the distance and the travelling time.



Figure 3. Paley Park, Manhattan New York. Author Francesco Armato

In Europe the green outdoors are increasing and local administrators believe that the quality of life in the city is linked to have more open spaces dedicated to the people and possibly within walking distance, small green living urban places pertaining to their homes.

Research and Method, London and Copenhagen

Copenhagen and London are the first cities that have won the "title" of eco-sustainable cities with structured programs for the enhancement of green and meeting spaces in their urban areas, Klaus Bondam defines pocket parks as "urban green drops".

The intervention formulas between the two cities are different but they share the research, philosophy and design method: accurate analysis to determine the location, the urban node of maximum energy flow Ryan would say, we proceed in identifying the needs and requirements of the people who gravitate around the future pocket park and with the compilation of information sheets, by associations and volunteers, they define all the services, distribution and furnishings of the interior space, a real participatory planning of urban interior design.

The two cities share some key points for the definition of the project, key elements to define a quality aggregational space: small size, deciduous diversified and well oriented vegetation, visibility from the outside for safety reasons, noise and wind protection, connecting the micro parks with protected paths, collecting rainwater for domestic needs of the vegetation, local identity to strengthen the sense of belonging. In 2015 The city of London, through a green program, created 100 pocket parks in 26 districts from the City to the far periphery, large open rooms were generated almost entirely by the residents in the form of associations and are totally self-managed (Figure 4).

Conclusions

In recent years this reality has got to the world of the *virtual sistem*, becoming a social service, has also become virtual, being disseminated as widely used by the people through the applications that can be installed on devices, smartphone, tablet, to be able to identify their location, the services that are available are connected among them, as to know the travel time to reach a desired place or walking or biking, also some cities with the help of signposting tell you the nearest pocket park.

Structured spaces and conceived

such as the living-room out door, designed to accommodate and arouse the desire to feel "at home" together with the people ... together with the others.

"The small urban parks should be more than just places to sit or play. They should also be scenes to watch from afar; walking along a street, looking out of a window, or capturing the fleeting image with the corner of our eye. So, small urban areas could contribute to the interest, the variety, and the attractiveness of neighborhoods.



Figure 4. Eliot Row Pocket Park, London. Author <http://www.mobilegardeners>

They could be a decisive force to counter the formation of degraded areas and dirty and dense neighborhoods ... The vest-pocket parks, in short, not only can answer a practical function of recreation but they could also contribute to the preservation of the city as a place to live as well as work"¹³. Today this phenomenon isn't only a physical space, but a very interesting cultural reality, a lot of cities have activated and others are going to do it in order to create and plan a urban service to put in the so-called sleeping spaces which are less used areas that don't have any specific function: to transform these spaces into places which must have a fundamental role in living the city..... The Pocket Park , a room under the open sky (Armato, 2016).

¹³ Pirovano, A. Diari di Progetto, Kublai, 2013, from <http://progettokublai.net/diari/tag/agopuntura-urbana/>

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