A Shared Wellbeing _
A Path Toward More Resilient Communities and Sustainable Spaces

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ABSTRACT   **Today, the concept of sustainability is directly connected to quality of life and the perception of it. It is an issue that refers to the individual sphere and is directly related to living habits. The *aporia* of the traditional welfare system, as well as the growing complexity of social needs, has moved people toward new research strategies and ways to create an increase in wellbeing. New ideas about the creation and placement of residential dwellings in communities have emerged through the recognition that group community spaces can be used to strengthen relationships between citizens and their environment. On one hand, it means recognising the value of *living close* as a basis for sharing needs and resources. On the other, it offers the possibility of a rearticulated urban geography of local 'lumps' partially autonomous and partially connected. That is to say that it envisions new ways for people to be connected and autonomous at the same time, to enjoy the green space that private housing allows, while simultaneously enjoying the enriched community advantages that accompany dense urban living.**

KEYWORDS   wellbeing, sharing practices, neighbourhood, proximity

1   Introduction

The concept of sustainability, as suggested by the Brundtland report (Brundtland commission, 1987), refers to an attempt to balance the satisfying of present needs and the ability of future generations to satisfy their own. This definition puts the emphasis on the responsibility of the current generation to ensure the perpetuation of individual and collective wellbeing. In this sense, the environment plays a key role in qualifying the spatial quality as well as in finding resources.

This means, on the one hand, working on technological innovations to optimise the economical availabilities, while on the other hand, working on living habits to improve lifestyle, and direct it toward more conscious and resilient forms. Indeed, collective behaviours have had the power to modify individual needs and, above all, to influence the production and promotion of strategies of wellbeing. A change based on new connections among citizens, and between citizens and space. Such a *thickening of relationships* (Bianchetti & Sampieri, 2014), built on local resources and communities, also changes the spaces in which they occur to become more resilient places: spatial forms hardly inscribed into traditional polarised categories (private – public, indoor – outdoor), mutable and easily characterisable, able to promote innovative practices. Here the term 'community' is used to refer to social groups that are not related to the familial, cultural, or religious relationship; they are rather small and *simple societies* (Durkheim, 1893) sometimes without close adhesion or participation rules, rather than linked by affinities and proximity. They are not, indeed, polyfunctional buildings, typical of a previous and public welfare system, but rather 'adaptive' structures that are constantly evolving.

Furthermore, they rarely refer to traditional top-down or bottom-up policies, nor to conventional subsidiary strategies: indeed, in some nations, the autonomous initiative of citizens in support of the common interest is also recognised and regulated by law (Arena, 2007), for example in Art. 118 of the Italian Constitution. This means not just involving people in participation processes, but also an acknowledging the value of individual or associate actions to the collective wellbeing.

This phenomenon has been observed in several European cities and finds its justification in a widespread and overall change of individual and collective needs, and is related to wellbeing research strategies. Indeed, there are many experiences that move, in some way, to balance the weakening of social ties, the economic crisis, and the loss of value and meaning attributed to space. As Abraham Maslow (1954) would observe, the satisfaction of people's own needs, and the willingness to apply their resources in the field, is an important 'engine', capable of moving the social, cultural, and economic system of society.

To sum up, the shared production of wellbeing can be seen as a starting point to observe the change in building urban forms of resilience through the rooting of cooperative practices. This claim, however, must first explain what it means today to talk about wellbeing and

what its articulations are. The first part of this paper moves inside this question. The second focuses attention on spatial fallouts of the change of living habits toward such cooperative forms. Each section starts with a definition of the topic and continues with an articulation of it in three different, but strongly linked, aspects. Increasing our understanding and appreciation of the complexity of these issues is the main objective of this paper.

2 Welfare and Wellbeing

Today, wellbeing is a broad concept that easily weaves individual actions and perceptions with collective ones. However, for several decades the idea, and the production, of initiatives to improve quality of life have been delegated to the public welfare state. Especially in the last century, it has played a central role in improving living conditions, even if it has now lost much of its relevance (Munarin & Tosi, 2014). In Europe, the concept has been subject to critical examination for decades, sometimes in relation to its costs, and occasionally concerning its opportunities and objectives. It is not within the ambition of this work to resume a story of the welfare state, nor the arguments that it has crossed, but it is important to remember that over the years there have been alternations and sometimes the coexistence of different models and strategies. For a more detailed reconstruction of the historical evolution of the welfare state, Rimlinger (1971) or Ferrera (1993) are suggested sources, while Esping Andersen (1990-1999) provides an analysis of different welfare regimes. For example, in the United States, the model is predominantly liberal (Esping Andersen, 1990) and is based on a limited public involvement that has often been seen as an improper, or even disempowering interference, on citizens; it is admitted just to help the groups who are not able to access private forms of welfare.

Today, the consolidation of past requirements (safety, privacy, self-representation) and the rising of new concerns (ecology, sustainability) have made public intervention more complex and difficult. Several scholars, from different points of view, have recently observed the emerging variety of new fleeting urban needs related to the evolution of the social and cultural system (Sennett 1970; Bauman 2000; Amin & Thrift N. 2002). This condition has moved toward more autonomous and self-made actions at the individual dimension as well as at the collective one. The availability and access to each of these assets determine the level of each individual's wellbeing and that of the community as a whole. Therefore, it is hard to define the boundaries of the public welfare state, but it is also very complicated to understand who can play the promoter or producer role of wellbeing. Certainly, wellbeing is also related to access to several goods that are sometimes public, and other times are not. To understand this point better, it is important to clarify the difference between private goods, club goods, commons, and public goods (Mas-Colell, Whinston & Green, 1995). Private goods are characterised by rivalry and excludability, in other words, they are goods that cannot be used simultaneously by different people and can

only be used those who have paid for them. Club goods are excludable and are somewhat related to rivalry, while the commons are rival goods that are not excludable i.e. they are exhaustible or alterable: air, water. As far as public goods are concerned, they are neither excludable nor rival. It should also be noted that the concept of property needs some further specifications (O'Sullivan, 2007) to understand whether the owner has the capability to access or to restrict access (exclusivity), or whether he or she can manage it (management), or modify and sell it (alienation). To sum up, wellbeing, in both its research and its production, is something that relates to individual needs and resources, as well as to the mutual influences among people. Furthermore, the advantages of aggregation have moved humans to cooperate in order to improve their conditions.

2.1   Individual Utilities

To understand the complexity of aspects concerning wellbeing, it is important to begin taking care of the density of features that it brings with it, while also referring to individual aspects. Though it may seem far from the sharing and collective forms previously introduced, it is the fundamental point for our discussion. Indeed, individuals are direct cultural and social contributors to their personal quality of life because they are bearers of needs, preferences, and resources. As suggested by the first economic theorem of wellbeing, every individual, according to their own needs, assigns a value to the good such that the consumption of it, and the expense of accessing it, make him happier, or at worst make him no less happy, than he was before its use (Milgrom & Roberts, 1992; Mas-Colell, Whinston & Green, 1995). According to this theory, the individual quality of life depends directly on the use of goods, and could be measured on the basis of the cost of accessing each of them. Indeed, the market regulates itself - the 'invisible hand' of Adam Smith (1995) - the free interaction among different individuals to access to a specific good defines the price of it, according to the availability of people to pay to use it, realising an equilibrium where the overall satisfaction of persons is better than it was previously; it means that at least for one person the situation is improved.

The fragmentation of the urban tissue, the large diffusion of private transport modes and the individual use of collective spaces are just some implications of the particularistic needs on the territory and on its use.

However, as suggested by the economist Amartya Sen (1983), the quality of wellbeing cannot just be a matter of goods, income, and utilities but is also related to the constituent elements of life: the material goods, intended not only as objects of consumption but rather as tools that the subject is able to use, become instruments to achieve 'capabilities'. In other words, the ownership of a specific good does not automatically imply the ability of each subject to obtain an advantage. It means recognising the complexity of the individuals and the different results that everyone can get according to their abilities (Sen, 1983). Indeed, this theory measures happiness on the basis of the pursuit of

functionings and *capability,* where the former relates to the results acquired at a physical and intellectual level (health, nutrition, longevity), and the latter "*reflects the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve*" (Sen, 1993, p.31). Furthermore, he suggested not only a multi-dimensionality and a more structured concept of 'quality of life' that relates to the multiplicity of levels of individual wellbeing, but also the relevance of the context in which the subject lives and acts. He recognised several levels of interaction among individuals, each offering different concepts: 'standard of living', 'wellbeing', and 'agency'. The first relates mainly to "*personal wellbeing related to one's own life*" (Sen, 1987, p. 29) and weaves the idea of 'freedom' - intended not only as objects of consumption but rather as tools that the subject is able to use - with the capability aspect. The *wellbeing* concept adds the concept of *sympathy* (Sen, 1982) or the inevitable interdependence between individuals (Sen, 1983). In other words, it identifies the presence of strategic interactions that influence everybody's quality of life and its perception. Wellbeing, in this sense, gains value from the relationships with others or from the participation "*in other people's emotions that alters our perception*" (Smith, 1995, p. 84). Further adding to the *commitments,* the focus shifts toward 'agency'. This concept relates to individual actions that are not directly connected to a specific benefit for those acts. It means identifying the presence of influences that are significant enough to move people to separate personal choices and their own wellbeing. The direct consequence of this approach is to think less of individual socioeconomic conditions, and more of collective aggregates.

2.2   Collective Interactions and 'Commonality' Forms

A second aspect to keep in mind when thinking about wellbeing is how the closeness among individuals could influence the satisfaction of everybody's needs. Sometimes the proximity of people promotes forms of interaction not directly connected to conscious collective practices, but which are able to influence the collective perception and the quality of life. Indeed, there are many reasons that move people to aggregate themselves: 'staying close' provides mutual benefits to individuals. Usually, we refer to pooling, matching, and learning advantages (Duranton & Puga, 2004). The first benefit describes the result of the sharing of *indivisible goods* or resources whose division among the members of a given group would not provide the same advantage (for example, the presence of a big sports structure offers many more options in comparison to several small private facilities). The second benefit refers to the advantage offered by a broader market, with more alternatives, that increases the chances of each person satisfying his needs. Proximity also facilitates communication and dissemination of culture, as well as the exchange of ideas. These benefits influence not only the single person but also the whole community and under aggregates of space in *resonance*. For example, one of the values of the agglomeration is making easier access to resources whose ownership is not alienable or excluded.

Proximity, connected to individual affinities, is sometimes able to achieve a tight connection between inhabitants and space through its modification in response to shared needs. It is not always a matter of collectively approved transformations as much as a progressive and repeated sedimentation of small additions, removals, and alterations that only in some cases are able to produce forms of identification between citizens and territory.

The repetition of daily actions on shared spaces gives rise to *commonality* (Todros, 2014) forms that retrieve the concept of *ideoritmia* (Barthes, 2004). The similitude of life's rhythms and spatial proximity sometimes builds 'light' sharing forms, not connected by formal joining but nonetheless able to change the space and the way of using it. These are flexible and intermittent connections that on one hand confirm the contemporary difficulty of weaving durable bonds (Sennett, 1970; Bauman, 2001) but, on the other hand, describe the birth of heterogeneous and temporary ties, linked by 'elective' or 'postmodern' affinities (Ambrosini, 2005). In these experiences, the *extimité* (Bianchetti, 2015; Lacan, 1986) becomes not only an expression of individual freedom in public space (Beck, 1998) but also a more comprehensive search for a balance between collective security and protection of individual autonomy: a free association that connects people without forcing them to sacrifice their singularities. In other words, in these situations, people can negotiate their desire to expose themselves, constrained not by strict membership rules but rather by informal conviviality guidelines (Laurent, 1993) realised within an *open* social organisation.

A significant case may be the neighbourhood of Les Grottes in Geneva, which, today, has rich cultural associations and cyclo workshops, but was originally a place of squatters and informal transformations (Bianchetti, 2012).

2.3   Sharing Forms

Beyond these informal and frequently unstructured practices, wellbeing is pursued through more conscious cooperative forms. Furthermore, some of these suggest considering not only the satisfaction of individual needs but also a collective idea of welfare (Evert, 2001). Accepting this point of view means recognising the overcoming of utilitarianism in the assessment of welfare – which has further references in the thoughts of John Rawls (1971), Robert Nozick (1974), Ronald M. Dworkin (2000) and Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) - and to focus the attention on processes rather than outcomes. Recognising the value of cooperative incomes means assigning to the individual not only the role of 'bearer of needs and requirements' within a collective aggregation, but also that of bringing skills and resources to be made available for his own and for common fulfilment.

The reasons for this transformation refer to both changing needs and availabilities and an overall weakening of the traditional pillars on

which the European civil society had founded the care of individual and collective welfare - the public intervention, the private initiative into the free market, and the nuclear family (Esping Andersen, 2002). This change in condition relates to circumstances both exogenous (de-collectivisation of work, job insecurity, social atomisation, financialisation, and offshoring of markets) and endogenous (change of balance between taxpayers and users), and has given rise to the *third-sector* initiative and to self-organisation. This situation pushes an alternative to modern market logic and to the usual state redistribution, offering cooperation forms, sharing actions, and 'reciprocity' practices (Polanyi, 1944). This phenomenon can now be seen within a broader scenario where shared actions are an expression of different strategies of welfare production, which are rarely an application of pre-built templates and more often describe an 'incremental nature' (Cottino, 2009) or the result of *cross-interaction* dynamics (Crosta, 2007). These are places where reference to the community persists thanks to the production - very often self-organised - of services. As collected in research such as 'shared territories' (coordinated by Cristina Bianchetti) or We Trades (promoted by the Goethe Institut), the European context is rich with such experiences that power up the urban tissue, encouraging the relationship between the people and their space. A flurry of activities and concerns that are sometimes triggered as an evolution of the old welfare state structures (e.g. public baths, libraries), while other times were born from unpublished local associations gathered around practices or specific interests (e.g. the self-made, culture, art). Some of these activities have realised an unusual use of space through the re-appropriation of outdated places: the porosity of the spaces combined with original collaborations between associations, informal groups, and local inhabitants have promoted flexible and temporary, social and spatial, structures. Indeed, the plurality and intermittence in participation as well as the alternation of roles (user, promoter, and organiser) have furthered their ability to adapt themselves and last over time (Devoti, 2016). The presence of *ungoverned* spaces, as well as the location in marginal areas of urban centres, seem relevant aspects of their birth (Devoti, 2016). Sometimes these experiences have born to prevent distress, or to solve specific social or political or spatial problems: i.e. the lack of services or the decay of public spaces. This emerging 'dynamism' is not unique, triggered by heterogeneous interests and intentions and *"crossed by inconsistencies and instabilities"* (De Leonardis, 1998, p.8), made up of socialisation spaces and collective habits. From the social point of view, the recognition of the value of local communities, in search of wellbeing, allows supply and demand to be brought, but at the same time opens up more chances of discrepancy at the urban scale. This claim finds confirmation in the variety of organisational and spatial structures, as well as in the different relationship that links these experiences to the history of the territory. On the other hand, the roots in the background and the reliance on local resources warrant the sharing of values and the resilience of such practices.

Within these experiences, the *individual identity* (Munarin & Tosi, 2010) is being redefined through the interaction between individuals. Here,

the processes of welfare research and production simultaneously contribute to maintain a social cohesion (Bauman, 2001) and to review the values attributed to the *quality of life*. Although the need for a revision of the welfare system in favour of a new 'wide approach' (Esping Andersen G., 2002) was recognised by the European Council in March 2000, the ability to propose and tackle the change of these experiences suggests a more comprehensive review of the state-citizen relationship (Bianchetti, 2011). In fact, it seems to reformulate the social contract within a new relationship of autonomy or addiction no longer uniquely describable in the private-public dualism, but connected to a broader conception of the *common* (Lefebvre, 1968) that more freely intertwines the collective sphere with the individual one. In his work, the sharing in everyday life is the basis on which to define the citizenship and consequently to qualify the space. Indeed, the *urban space nature* essentially rotates around the relationship between *use value* and *exchange value*. In other words, it is related to both: the repeating of collective practices and the rational production process.

In Europe, there are several examples of co-workings, co-housings, or purchasing groups, but there are also less elitist forms that are more relevant to the social and spatial net. For example, the Case di Quartiere in Turin are relevant experiences able to promote and receive welfare practices, and to change the space toward more controllable and customisable forms. Here, the social cohesion, as the result of a collective path, often started by the public initiative, has made available local resources and has seemed able to produce commons (Ostrom, 1990). In other parts of Europe, similar experiences work as autonomous poles, only occasionally connected with the municipality, while in Turin they have recently created an urban network to coordinate activities. This choice certainly does not want to reduce the differences between them, but rather emphasise local specificities and encourage interactions. In other words, this context does not offer particular safeguards on the prevention of risks of a majority tyranny (De Tocqueville, 1992) nor on a dissimilarity at the urban scale (Saraceno, 1998). The close connection to local capital establishes a greater closeness to the inhabitants' needs but limits the potential of replicability and homogeneity.

The community, populating and experiencing these realities, is certainly tied together by the sharing of space and proximity, so much to suggest a re-framing of the neighbourhood concept around an idea of coexistence *lumps*.

3   Communal Lumps

As we have just said, the self-made welfare system seems to rebuild the relationship between territory and people, sometimes just as an auto representation form of group of individuals. By the early 20th century, the Chicago school had already given a significant contribution to the study of the relationship between space and community (e.g. Wirth, 1939; Harvey, 1929; Anderson, 1928). In the elaborate studies produced in those years, the city was seen as an organism in which the *natural areas* were characterised by portions of the population that were socially and culturally homogeneous. The studies conducted by Wirth on ghettos (1928), by Harvey on the slums (1929), and on loitering zones (Anderson, 1928), suggested the presence of several factors that were not inducted or planned (e.g. the migratory processes characterised by social groups, professions, and jobs affinities), and which contributed to the organicity of specific areas. This approach, not underestimating the role of the conflict, was related to the spatial organisation of social life, laying the theoretical basis for the identification of homogeneous partitions within the urban tissue: a matter that summons the concept of neighbourhood. However, defining these partitions requires a special discernment, especially in terms of the specific forms and issues to which they refer. Indeed, traditionally they could be defined according to the historical patterns or the original settlements, or by topographical, historical, economic, functional, or socio-cultural aspects. The meaning of neighbourhood itself has been repeatedly reinterpreted, both conceptually and at the project level, sometimes emphasising the housing component, while at other times the cultural or functional features. Moreover, the idea of homogeneous social groupings is now no longer considered adequate to describe a morphology of space (Cremaschi, 2008). Even from an administrative point of view, the tendency seems to unify local partitions, a policy that somehow delegates to local groups the taking care of their own specifics.

It should be added that the local communities are now expressions of *cross-conditions* and *particularistic behaviours* that are universalised into large social and *liquid* (Bauman, 2000) networks: they are built on *organic* forms rather than *mechanical* solidarity (Durkheim, 1893). In any case, it is already hard to understand how extensive such *lumps* are and what shapes they take. We could see several distinctive strategies: one strategy relates to what divides them, a second focuses attention on the differences between homogenous parts, and a final one refers to agglomeration strategies.

3.1   Boundaries

The study of social fragmentation in the existing urban fabric was often approached within a heterogeneous literature aimed at identifying the reasons for separation. According to the *ecological perspective* of Massey and Denton (1988), there are exogenous causes (separation as a result of an attitude of rejection) and endogenous causes (spatial division as an expression of an attempt to preserve cultural identity).

Parkin, in 1979, observed the way in which like-minded people maximise the gains and opportunities narrowing the group - social closure - and produce economies that are spatially recognisable within urban enclaves. Similarly, Coleman's theory of 'rational choice' (1979) showed how segregation is the result of the choice of different groups to live with similar people according to ethnicity and social class. In other words, the collective identification is linked to culture and income. Moreover, Boal, Murray, and Poole (1976) showed how the separation within the urban fabric was the index level of the conflict within a society. More recently Mike Davis (1998), observing urban segregation in American cities at the end of last century, proposed the scheme called *ecology of fear* where fear is a basic element of distinction. In the most segregating forms, the boundaries are determined by the presence of a *militarized* and *dichotomized* space (Davis, 1998), where the contrast is between the slum and the fortress city (Caldeira, 2000): a double distinction between the suffering subjects and the acting ones (Bauman, 2001). Today these division strategies seem to coexist with new ones. The different physical (proximity to specific services) and economical (cost of housing, for example) features of the space favour the establishment of different groups in areas suited to their needs. Furthermore, the contemporary processes of social identification seem to be less radical when compared to the last century, open to greater flexibility and welcoming. The reasons for that change are attributable to a growing complexity in society (Bauman, 2000) and to a rising 'centrality of practical dimension' that weaves *formal rules and exceptions* (Cremaschi, 2008).

The idea of pursuing a spatial separation of forms, functions, and social groups appeared between the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, as a *viable solution* to control the development of settlements (Calabi, 2013). Today, however, it seems necessary to think of a different logic, not only of separation, but also maybe not exclusively of *mixité* or *compactnes*s (Barattucci, 2013). These are, together with the *citizenship*, the main keywords used to perceive a 'sustainable development', according to the Italian urbanist review of the main documents produced by international organisations during the 20th century (the Aalborg Chart of 1994, the Lipsia Chart of 2007, the Kyoto protocol, or the strategy Europe 2020).

3.2 'Bubbles' and 'Globes'

As suggested by Sloterdijk (1998, 1999, 2004), *live* means building *spheres*, whether they are unitary structures within which individuals can shape a sense of *intimacy*, the *bubbles*, or places where collective groups defend themselves from the insensitivity of the external world: the *globes*. What is really interesting about the historical and philosophical reconstruction of the human culture, proposed by Sloterdijk, is the idea of bringing it back to an inclusive figure: the *sphere*. This approach suggests thinking about 'what unites' and not just about *what divides*. It does not mean evading forms of separation: sections, socially or culturally homogeneous, are in any case able to

create value scraps in the urban fabric. In other words, the presence of relationships among people, at least as forms of self-representation, can reconstruct recognisable spatial and social structures. Today, territorially homogeneous social organisations seem at best attributable to the *communities of practice* mentioned by Marco Cremaschi (2008). These groupings are held together by *common* and occasional practices that are seldom able to shape common values and identities. A network of rules, *arts of doing*, as well as of conflicts, hard to describe in the abstract, sometimes encourage a sense of belonging (Cremaschi, 2008). Here, the coexistence is built on people's ability to establish forms of mutual and continuous acknowledgment.

The presence of cooperative practices within shared spaces reconstructs new spatial configurations starting from the possibility to build new *localities* (Appadurai, 1996): spaces in which the density is not (only) a demographic issue but a social and relational one.

However, apart from their influence on the spaces, it is quite difficult to recognise these practices. It is for this reason that several scholars have observed the concentration or the occurrence of certain places, functions, activities, and exceptions. Some approaches (Bianchetti & Sampieri, 2014) have focused their attention on explorations, visits, investigations, while others (Hidalgo & Castañer, 2015) have used open data (e.g., POI or photos on search engines) and have applied clustering models to recognise the extent of these poles. However, many of these studies rarely wonder about how the conformation of the space affects the observed phenomena, more often they are limited to establishing their shape and location.

3.3   ## Proximity

The idea of proximity, referring to wellbeing issues, leads to focussing the attention on the way in which the space incites new synergies among inhabitants. The concept allows a clear reference to a local dimension without, however, a direct reference to territorial boundaries.

In other words, the density the forms of interaction between people and space have the power to enrich the urban tissue, realising *lumps* (Devoti, 2015) characterised by blurred, sometimes straddled, boundaries. Furthermore, the concept of proximity allows the assumption of a geography made of nodes that are often complementary and seldom coincident with the partitions - functional, administrative - of the urban fabric. The meaning of this remains to be seen.

As suggested by Sloterdijk (1999), it comes down to describing the shape and the extension of a narrow space around the house. Perry, in 1923, suggested a city made up of small agglomerations designed in order to make collective spaces accessible on foot. The design structure had clear distribution rules and an endowment of services that made local communities independent: each portion had a surface of 160 acres and a radius no longer than a quarter of a mile. However, with the

spread of private transport and the consequent reduction of distances, interest in the issue seemed to have been lost until the economic crisis changed things. New attention on ecological matters and emerging wellness needs have now given rise to new strategies to promote a quality of life that is more connected to neighbourhood matters: social networks, soft mobility, new economy, and so on.

Recently, the research on the quality of urban space and landscape, coordinated by Christophe Girot and Elena Cogato Lanza (2014), have proposed proximity as a social, physiological, aesthetic, and functional tool to improve wellbeing at a local level. According to their work, it refers not only to mobility aspects but also to perceptual features. In particular, they have highlighted the importance of synesthetic aspects in qualifying the urban environment. The atmosphere indeed, in their research, defines comfort as an "*immersive practice in which urban landscape is explored as an envelope endowed with intrinsic environmental and climatic qualities*" (Girot, n.d.). Moreover, they underlined the value of *dwelling* as the opportunity to use and consider the space as an interior. This condition helps subjects to attribute an intimacy feature to some places. Experiencing this concept of proximity is something beyond the measurable: it is barely represented by traditional tools. However, the proposed spatial model, a square with a side of 1.5 kilometres, is certainly not exhaustive, when trying to understand the complexity of the aspects described. It is clearly a simplification, useful to understand some of the proximity features but leaving behind others, such as the influence of the morphology of spaces or the presence or absence of some facilities in the definition of these *lumps*.

4   Conclusions: a Wellbeing Soft Machine

To sum up the idea of sustainability weaves perceptive and shared aspects. The wellbeing research processes play a significant role in defining the quality of life and in promoting resilient practices and spaces. Indeed, the local activation promotes common life habits changes and ascribes new, shared values to the space. As stated, it means considering a plurality of factors contributing to individual and collective wellbeing: some depend on individual preferences, others on the interaction between them. When the collaboration acquires a greater level of awareness, it creates new temporary communities. This thickening of relationship concerns the sense of belonging to a group, as well as to a specific space. The environment becomes not only the background of the shared practices, but it acquires a key role to observe and promote the quality of the life.

Today, the complexity of wellbeing processes has moved towards a set of small, flexible, and adaptive places, moreover self-organised and based on local capital. The trend would seem to create secure, controllable, customisable spaces and devoid of multifunctional places deprived of any connotations. Within these experiences, both temporary and changing communities are gathering. The realised social and spatial

structures are indeed resistant to forms of institutionalisation and hardly explainable in the abstract. However, they are places able to justify a constellation of aggregations that are probably not enough well connected to describe a polycentric system, nor so strong and structured as to realise independent districts, but able to realise a fragmented urban system of nodes partially autonomous and partially connected. In fact, it is impossible to ignore that the heterogeneity of these experiences in Europe, but also within the same urban setting (the main case study is again the previously described *Case di Quartiere* in Turin), is the expression of cultural and social differences, as well as of their rooting in a specific area. In other words, the strong connection between these experiences and their background (i.e. the demography of the district, the local recent history, the current public welfare system) on one hand determines their effectiveness, but on the other, it limits the chance to replicate them elsewhere.

This 'soft machine' (Burroughs, 1961) is the answer to the need of a new economic and spatial structure that helps the individual in thinking, producing, and expanding wellbeing. It could be considered as an *apparatus* that is able to recognise the changes over time and to receive unexpected and incremental results.

This system is certainly evidence of the individual need to express the *instrumental freedoms* (Sen, 1999) within shared spaces and small aggregations. This is not only a return to the territory as an opportunity for enhancement of local specificities, but a push toward an improvement of tools to describe, design, and take care of the collective space.

This context, however, does not avoid some of the typical phenomena of exclusion and inclusion of contemporary urban centres and does not exclude the fragmentation between the city of the rich and of the poor (Secchi, 2013).

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