Associations and Public Facilities as Infrastructures of Slowness. Proximity and Sociality at Neighbourhood Level

Giulia Pedilarco(✉), Barbara Caselli, and Michele Zazzi

Department of Engineering and Architecture, University of Parma, Parco Area delle Scienze, 181/A, 43124 Parma, Italy
giulia.pedilarco@unipr.it

Abstract. In the context of spatial, functional and relational proximity, slowness is a strategy that may enhance the neighbourhood scale. Relational proximity is investigated through social infrastructure, consisting of third sector organisations and public services, which are essential hubs of community connection. The contribution aims to understand the role of these relational actors and their impact on the consolidation of interpersonal relationships, to create a "slow" neighbourhood. The research is part of a collaboration with Cittaslow International, promoter of the slow model, and studies the experiences implemented within the project Cittaslow Metropolis to identify best practices and possible applications for the San Leonardo neighbourhood in Parma. Through spatial analyses and semi-structured interviews with local organisations, relational proximity has been assessed, highlighting how social infrastructure guides the use of public spaces, strengthens proximity networks, and promotes cohesion. In this framework, the social infrastructure emerges as a relevant pillar of slow urban regeneration at the neighbourhood level.

Keywords: Slow neighbourhood · proximity · social infrastructure · association · public facilities

1 Introduction

In an urban context dominated by speed, productivity, efficiency and global competition, adopting "slowness" as a collective vision of urban regeneration might appear to be a structural paradox or a disciplinary provocation. Traditionally associated with small villages and rural centres, slowness has sometimes been interpreted as a nostalgic desire to slow down the pace of urban life. The globalisation framework, in which people work harder, live faster, produce and consume more, allows speed to shape economic life and the social, cultural and environmental dynamics of the cities [1, 2]. In response to this situation, the concept of urban slowness is investigated.

This contribution engages with this tension through a collaboration between the University of Parma and the Cittaslow International association. Within the framework agreement, the interdisciplinary group, which includes the Urban and regional planning

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2027
O. Gervasi et al. (Eds.): ICCSA 2026 Workshops, LNCS 16764, pp. 484–500, 2027.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-30533-6_32

unit, is working on two research lines: the identification of action models and good practices at the local level for updating the accreditation criteria for cities with up to 50,000 inhabitants (the network's historical target) and the definition of criteria for the Cittaslow Metropolis project, aimed at accrediting neighbourhoods in medium and large cities. For the second line, a pilot project is underway in the San Leonardo neighbourhood of Parma.

Cittaslow International association promotes slow living as an opportunity to enjoy solutions and services that enhance quality of life. The slow city, formalised in 1999 by Cittaslow, is the "city of good living" where «the best of the past is extrapolated and enjoyed thanks to the best possibilities of the present and the future». This results in a city where «human beings are still the protagonists and enjoy the time they have rediscovered through local products, good food, traditions, landscapes and the joy of a slow and peaceful life» while at the same time leveraging «technological opportunities and modern solutions in communication, transport, incoming tourism, production and sales» [3]. The Cittaslow movement, therefore, aims to promote more liveable environments, preserving local traditions and cultures, and encouraging a slower, more human-centred urban lifestyle [4]. The movement is considered both an urban social movement and a model for local governance [5]. It involves some management goals, including increasing the quality of local life, maintaining the local distinctiveness and supporting sustainable city economies with a focus extending beyond local production and food quality [6]. «First and foremost, a Cittaslow is a community of citizens that looks after and cares for each other...and stimulates social cohesion between the citizens» [7]. The growing diffusion of the network is confirmed by the 308 member cities in 33 countries in 2025 [8–18].

Cittaslow Metropolis aims to extend slow principles to neighbourhoods within medium and large -sized cities to explore new approaches to urban regeneration [19, 20]. The programme addresses global urbanisation trends: by 2030, approximately 70% of the world's population is expected to live in urban areas with significant implications for resource consumption and infrastructural pressure. Metropolitan areas are dealing with challenging issues due to expansion to unprecedented scales and continuous in-migration [21]. In this framework, applying slow principles to metropolitan areas is proposed as a strategy to address challenges related to urban sustainability and quality of life [22]. The programme, launched 15 years ago, has encouraged pilot experiences in the cities of Antalya, Barcelona, Brussels, Busan, Izmir and Taipei [23, 24].

The small city's accreditation consists of 73 criteria based on policies: energy and environment; infrastructure; quality of life; agriculture, tourism and crafts; hospitality, awareness and training; social cohesion; partnerships [25]. The Metropolis programme, however, has no formalised guidelines or a certification system, so pilot neighbourhoods have identified some requirements based on slow principles including evidence-based civic engagement, integration and social benefit through interaction, responsible use and protection of resources and a broader slow philosophy [3, 24].

Beyond adopting the concept promoted by Cittaslow, is the idea of slowness can also be reinterpreted through the lens of proximity. This theme is particularly relevant at the neighbourhood level, since it is precisely at this spatial scale that proximity has the

greatest impact. Moreover, in recent years, the theme of proximity has been at the centre of urban debate due to its applicability within the "15-Minute City" model [26–30].

In Italian cities, the neighbourhood is already traversable within a 15-min walk or bike ride [31]. In this sense, the application of slowness is favoured at this scale by pre-existing forms of spatial, functional and relational proximity that enhance the quality of life in terms of psychological, physical, social and equitable well-being, offering more opportunities for consolidating a slow model. The discussion about proximity requires interpreting the neighbourhood as a place in which effectiveness depends on a multidimensional integration of spatial, functional and relational aspects, instead of a merely administrative unit [32].

Through improved movement quality, spatial proximity can promote active mobility and improve healthy lifestyles and safe conditions for users; it can also reduce car dependency, fast mobility, traffic and environmental and noise pollution [33–37]. Functional proximity, in parallel, can enhance the quality of local spaces through accessibility to public spaces, facilities and economic activities within walking or cycling distance. As reported by literature, these aspects may contribute to reducing stress levels, improving mental and physical health, fostering feelings of happiness and satisfaction, and strengthening local economy [31, 38–42]. Relational proximity based on social infrastructure — mainly consisting of spaces that encourage social ties (e.g., gathering places, places of worship and public spaces) — may create opportunities for social interaction and enhance quality of relations. Interactions, memories and experiences, daily routines, recurring encounters, informal networks and social practices may enable cohesion, cooperation, civic engagement, identity and belonging to the neighbourhood, enhancing well-being and improving quality of life [43–54]. In this sense, the idea of slowness, articulated into three interrelated dimensions — spatial, functional and relational proximity — pursues happy, healthy and safe cities' goals.

Infrastructure and associations can contribute to the production of social capital only if communities actively engage with them; thus, social relations are fundamental to spatial development [55, 56]. From this perspective, slow model should be based on social infrastructure and everyday practice, as these foster accessibility and proximity.

This contribution focuses, in particular, on the relational dimension of proximity and on how to translate relational proximity into operational urban planning criteria based on slowness. The aim is to investigate the role of social infrastructures, such as third sector organisations and public facilities of collective interest, understood as relational anchors within a distributed neighbourhood network.

To this end, the San Leonardo neighbourhood in Parma — selected as a pilot to investigate the slow neighbourhood characteristics within the Cittaslow Metropolis project - is examined in detail. Section 2 therefore introduces the case study of San Leonardo; Sect. 3 describes the materials and methods used in the study and the corresponding results; Sect. 4 develops a discussion of the results obtained; and finally, Sect. 5 presents concluding remarks and possible future developments.

2 Case Study: San Leonardo Neighbourhood in Parma

In terms of relational proximity, the San Leonardo neighbourhood, despite its various internal contradictions and vulnerabilities, offers a rich network of third sector organisations and public facilities with significant potential to empower local communities and social interactions. Moreover, this neighbourhood occupies a central role in the urban policies promoted by the Municipality and has been identified as a priority area for research by the University of Parma in light of the neighbourhood's cultural identity, the needs expressed by the local community, social security and urban voids leaved by deindustrialisation [57, 58].

It is a residential neighbourhood of 4 km^2 with 20,000 residents and an average age lower than that of the city. It has historically been linked to the productive sector, due to the presence of the railway station, and developed as a working-class area associated with employment in the *Bormioli* glass factory and other industrial activities. In recent years, however, San Leonardo has experienced the settlement of new, younger, and multi-ethnic communities. Regarding open spaces, most parks are equipped with playgrounds, football fields and picnic areas, thus enabling outdoor events during the summer. Schools also provide afternoon and evening activities and host performances and meetings in their spaces. Churches, likewise, support community life by organising scout groups and summer camps.

Furthermore, the social infrastructure consists of organisations, associations, social cooperatives, neighbourhood committees and informal groups that are active in social, cultural, urban and environmental issues and promote initiatives including meetings, open-air cinema and community walks. Several community spaces, among which the *Officine ON/OFF*, the *Lenz* foundation, the *Casa del Quartiere* and *Al-Amal*. Neighbourhood meetings are also held, reflecting a strong propensity for active participation. The former *Bormioli Rocco* factory covers a considerable area; accordingly, the *Amici della Biblioteca San Leonardo* association has proposed transforming it into a cultural centre. In parallel, retired employees of the *Bormioli Rocco* and the *Bormioli Luigi* factories have established the *Medaglie d'Oro Bormioli Rocco* association to preserve the neighbourhood's industrial memory. Currently, the *Green in Parma* desealing project attracted citizen participation which demonstrating civic interest in improving the design [59, 60].

3 Materials and Methods

3.1 Cittaslow International and Cittaslow Metropolis' Approaches

Initially, the literature on Cittaslow International and Cittaslow Metropolis programme has been analysed to assess whether relational proximity and social policies play a relevant role in neighbourhood implementation.

The following case studies focus on local experiences in Cittaslow International. Mayer & Knox present some European case studies focusing on quality of life, by examining it through attributes of places (housing conditions, morbidity and mortality rates, educational attainment, income levels, the incidence of crime) and community-based services, amenities and opportunities [61]. In Hadong-gun and Busan (South Korea), participation in community life has been assessed through indicators such as

the quality of civil affairs administration services, satisfaction with social services, the perceptions of local politics and autonomy and the satisfaction with opportunities for civic participation [62]. The case of Grumes, Italian Alps, explores how social networks and infrastructure activate interaction. Several initiatives rely on voluntary engagement and the creation of a social centre led to the formation of a theatre association. Such developments highlight how spaces may foster relational dynamics and territorial capital formation [56]. Goolwa's communities (Australia) and the residents of Gökçeada (Turkey) reported a positive impact of Cittaslow principles on collaboration, mutual recognition among actors, active community engagement in local events, community garden projects and the promotion of local identity [63, 64]. Cittaslow towns in the Warmia–Mazury province (Poland) developed new public spaces integrating social and cultural functions into green spaces [65]. In Semarang (Indonesia), Chinatown conservation has been implemented through community events selected through a SWOT analysis. This process has led to regular scheduling, effective event management, strong branding, active community engagement and a collaborative organisational structure [66].

The following analysis examines the experiences of Cittaslow Metropolis. In Seferihisar (Turkey), local associations and the municipality promoted Cittaslow initiatives, such as awareness campaigns and assemblies open to residents, and structured welfare around facilities, number of beneficiaries and allocated staff and budget [67]. Kucukergin & Ozturk show the transformative capacity that social infrastructure possesses but this process appears to resemble gentrification [4]. Cittaslow's involvement in the Perşembe district of Ordu (Turkey) has led to a greater availability of local food, an increased promotion of cycling and a reduction in vehicle noise pollution [68]. In Izmir (Turkey), Pazaryeri and Demirköprü neighbourhoods promoted active resident involvement and rooted interventions in local needs analysis, tried to adapt slow principles to the neighbourhood and improve living conditions [69, 70]. Furthermore, narrated walks explored the sensory dimension related to safety, climatic and acoustic comfort and enhanced interaction [71, 72]. The Cittaslow Metropolis project in Rome's *rione Esquilino* seeks to reshape the neighbourhood's narrative and to improve quality of life by organising events and promoting participatory governance among public and private actors and the territorial DMO [73]. In this context, its location between the historic centre and *stazione Termini* has helped highlight places overlooked by tourist routes.

3.2 Social Infrastructure in the San Leonardo Neighbourhood

In a second phase, the methodology (Fig. 1) combines expert and situated knowledge to develop a comprehensive understanding of the neighbourhood. Institutional sources were first consulted, including the Geoportale Emilia-Romagna, the Comune di Parma (SIT Parma) and the RUNTS (Registro Unico Nazionale del Terzo Settore), which provided data forming the technical basis of the analysis [74–76]. These data were integrated with prior knowledge of use, function, mobility and accessibility of San Leonardo and organised within a GIS database. RUNTS data were also cross-checked through site visits, semi-structured interviews with local actors, associations, social cooperatives

and informal groups, as well as a review of their websites and social media. To understand how social infrastructure influences neighbourhood-scale proximity in slow neighbourhoods, a GIS database with georeferenced data was developed. The public facility shapefile includes attributes such as typology, use, accessibility while the shapefile of third-sector organisations includes attributes such as organisational typology, location, opening hours, activities, services, projects and events. This dataset enabled the mapping of social infrastructure and the analysis of relational proximity among services, actors and the community. The approach supports the identification of strategies and best practices for defining a slow neighbourhood model aimed at enhancing social cohesion and local resources.

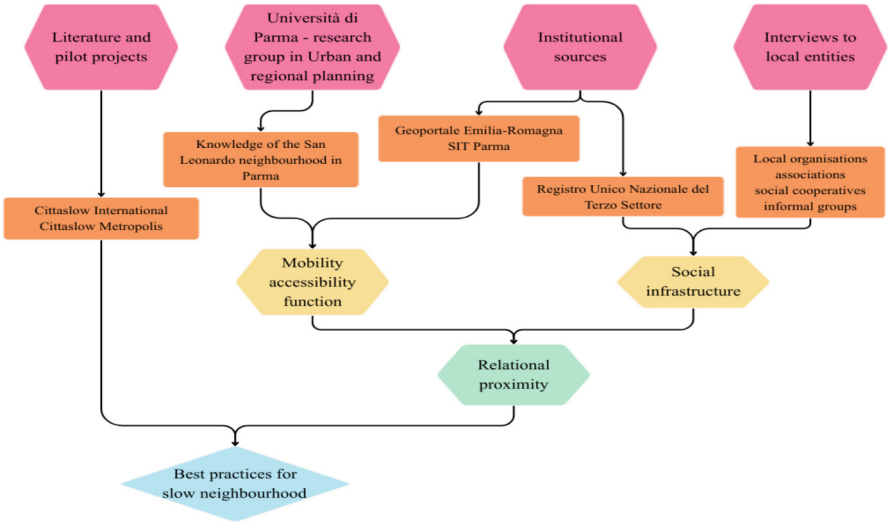

Fig. 1. Methodological process (authors' elaboration).

Semi-structured interviews with local actors were conducted following qualitative research practices commonly used in urban regeneration and community-based studies [77–79]. Among the local organisations interviewed were associations, social cooperatives, neighbourhood committees and informal groups, from which qualitative data were collected. The interview protocol included 22 questions organised into 7 thematic areas that enabled an understanding of the opportunities offered by social infrastructure — such as care, educational activities, environmental initiatives and community-building programmes — and their contribution to the San Leonardo neighbourhood (Table 1).

The interviews carried out have enabled a deeper understanding of the social infrastructure. The *ANCeSCAO* association focuses on active ageing and support for the elderly and other vulnerable groups, providing digital helpdesk, free transport, social tourism and prevention initiatives. The *Amici della Biblioteca San Leonardo* association aims to create a cultural centre, with the aim of promoting cultural and historical promotion, science initiatives and collaborations with schools. The *Fiorente* social cooperative provides services for people with disabilities and promotes social inclusion through

Table 1. Structure of the interview (authors' elaboration).

Sections	Questions
Role in the neighbourhood	1. What is the history of your association? 2. How many members do you have and what is your organisational structure? 3. What is your main mission in relation to the neighbourhood? 4. What are the main activities you carry out in the neighbourhood? 5. Where do these activities take place? 6. What are the main issues you have noticed in the neighbourhood and how can you contribute to resolve them?
Citizen participation	7. How many residents ad citizens participate in the activities? a. How easy or difficult is it to involve the residents of San Leonardo? b. Did participation in the activities meet or fall short of your expectations? c. Were the activities successful? d. What is the impact of your activities on citizens? 8. When you involve the local community, what obstacles do you encounter and how do you try to overcome them? a. How do you encourage citizens to participate in your activities? b. How do you deal with the lack of participation or citizens' indifference? c. How do you reach who do not participate in community life?
Collab. with organisations	9. Do you work with other neighbourhood's associations/groups? If so, how? 10. Are there any projects underway/planned with other local organisations?
Collab. with institutions	11. What is your relationship with local institutions? a. Have you ever collaborated with them on specific projects? 12. Do you receive institutional support for your activities or projects? 13. How do participation processes with the institutions take place?
Future of the neighbourhood	14. How do you see the neighbourhood evolving in the coming years? 15. What are your hopes or fears regarding future changes? 16. What role your organisation will play and what opportunities may arise for it in the future of the neighbourhood?

(*continued*)

Table 1. (*continued*)

Sections	Questions
Urban regeneration	17. How important physical transformations and social/cultural activities are for the neighbourhood? 18. What regeneration strategies are most urgent for the neighbourhood? 19. Have you had any direct experience with urban regeneration projects? If so, what were the main challenges and results? 20. How do you see your role in urban regeneration processes? 21. How might your role evolve in a participatory regeneration process?
Conclusion	22. Is there anything we haven't covered that you think is important to share?

work, interaction and training activities. It works with associations, schools, businesses and institutions. The *Lenz* foundation is active in contemporary experimental theatre and organises theatre productions, artist residencies, workshops and social inclusion projects. The *Manifesto per San Leonardo* group, although not formally registered, was formed to oppose the opening of *via Ravenna.* The group highlights issues in the neighbourhood and proposes solutions on topics including safety, transport, environment and urban planning. Some group members founded *Urban Trail Parma*, an urban walking initiative to discover the neighbourhood. *Officine ON/OFF* is a space dedicated to social innovation and youth entrepreneurship that hosts co-working spaces, a *Fablab*, courses, workshops, events and activities with educational facilities. The interviews highlighted an active network of organisations promoting social, cultural and community support initiatives. They also reported concerns regarding perceived safety, urban decay, loss of local businesses and social changes due to deindustrialisation. Many interviewees believe that the neighbourhood's future should be built on both spatial transformations, including the regeneration of derelict industrial spaces and the realisation of meeting places, and initiatives to foster citizens' participation and reinforce relationships between associations and institutions. In particular, the former *Bormioli* site could become a new urban node.

To identify the formal and informal meeting places where people may socialise or engage in other activities, spatial data relating to green open spaces and public facilities – such as schools, places of worship, sports facilities, cultural venues and healthcare facilities – have been cross-referenced (Fig. 2).

In the neighbourhood, social infrastructure is well-developed and it consists of organisations, associations, social cooperatives, schools, churches, neighbourhood committees and informal groups. The majority of these actors have their headquarters in *Casa del Quartiere*, located in the north-west of the neighbourhood, but *Officine ON/OFF* also hosts many associations and initiatives (Fig. 3).

Figure 4 shows the opportunities offered by social infrastructure: assistance, consultancy, culture, education, game and sport, identity, neighbourhood projects, politics, religion, safeguarding and sociality. The circles on the map represent the concentration

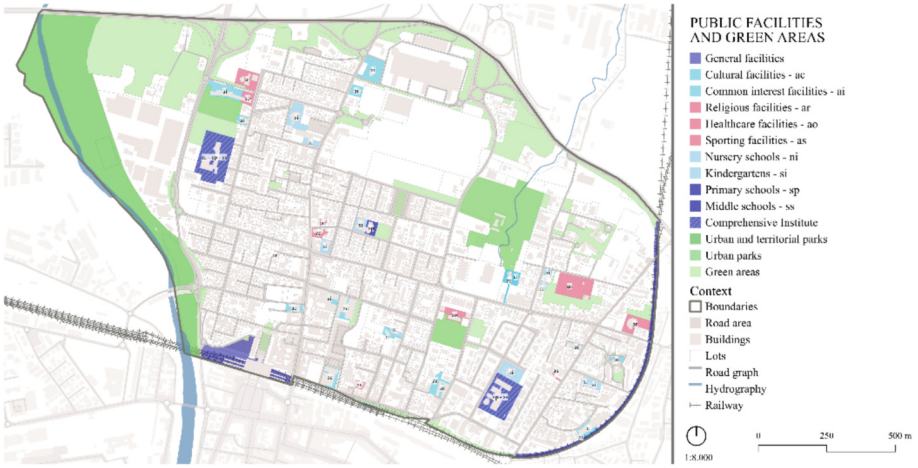

Fig. 2. Public facilities and green areas (authors' elaboration).

of activities available at each headquarter without distinguishing between the organisations that provide them. The north-west area is the most well-served area and sociality, culture and assistance are the most common opportunities.

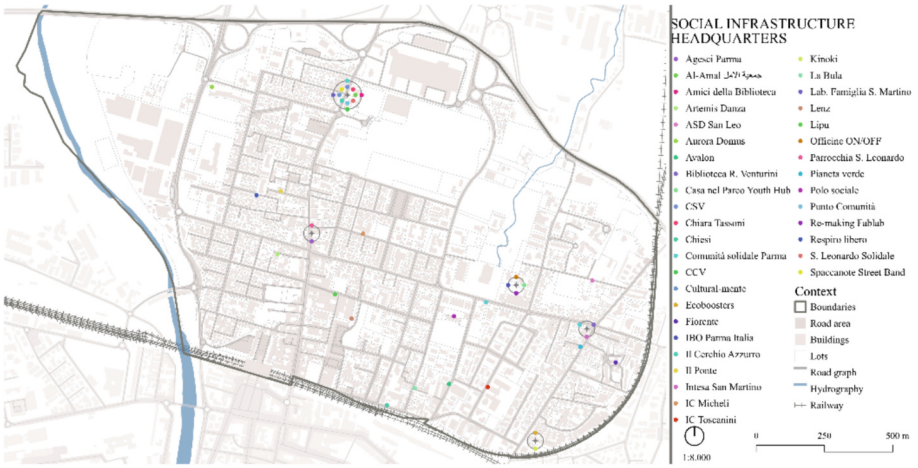

Fig. 3. Assessment by location of opportunities offered by social infrastructure (authors' elaboration).

In terms of initiative diversity, Fig. 5 highlights numerous activities targeting different age groups: up to 15 years old, 16–30, 31–50, 51–75 and over 76. Opportunities for users aged 16 to 50 are the most prevalent but, overall, the offering is varied across all age groups and the highest concentration of opportunities is found at *Casa del Quartiere*, *Officine ON/OFF* and *Biblioteca sociale Roberta Venturini.*

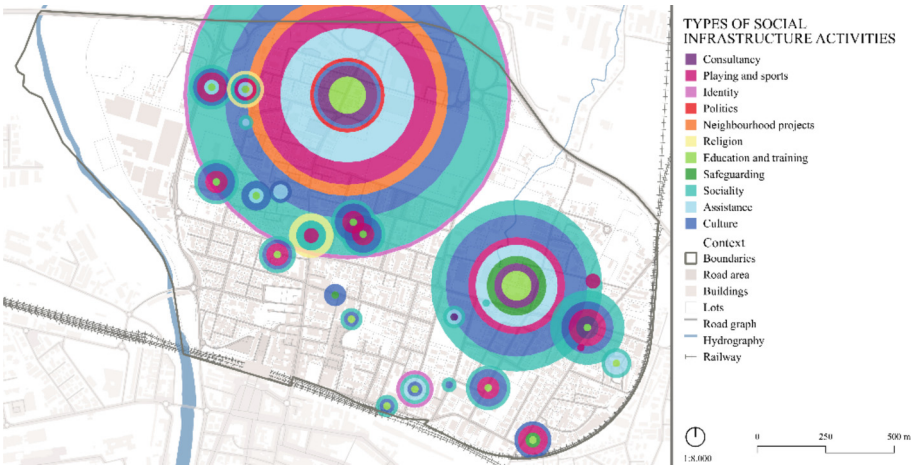

Fig. 4. Assessment by type of opportunity offered by social infrastructure (authors' elaboration).

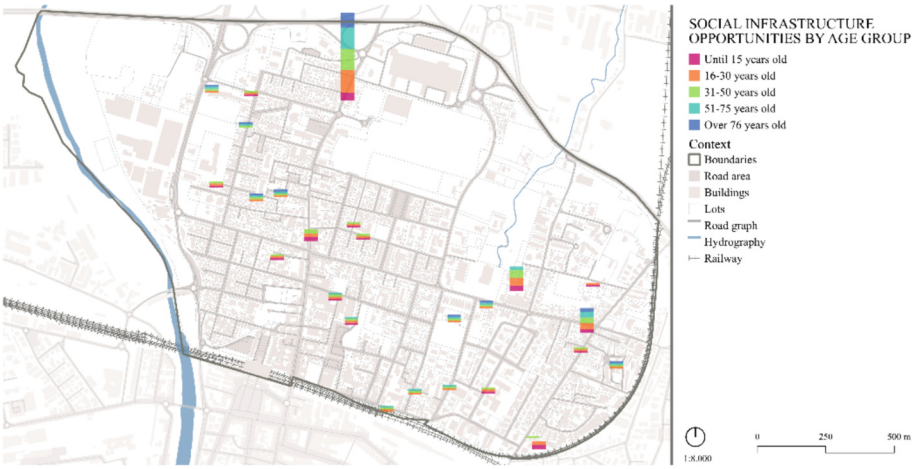

Fig. 5. Assessment by age group of the opportunities offered by social infrastructure (authors' elaboration).

4 Discussion of the Results

According to the maps, there is a dense network of social infrastructure that is essential for fostering relational proximity and enabling people to spend quality leisure time. The north-western area of San Leonardo is the most accessible due to the concentration of social infrastructure at *Casa del Quartiere* however, interviews revealed that spaces are inadequate to host activities. For this reason, many initiatives have been relocated to school facilities and *Officine ON/OFF*. In this sense, the effectiveness of social infrastructure is constrained when relational demand exceeds the availability of space. This configuration reveals a differentiated geography of relational proximity, characterised

by hybrid spaces where activities converge and urban areas that are less frequented and fewer opportunities for encounter. Regarding inclusion, it is noted a good variety of opportunities aimed at different age groups; however, their higher concentration for people aged 16 to 50 years old highlights the importance of a balanced provision.

It also has been noticed that social infrastructure affects neighbourhood life differently: open public spaces foster informal ways of social interaction, whilst public facilities and local organisations activate more structured forms of participation, gathering citizens together around specific needs or interests. This distinction suggests that relational proximity, rather than as a homogeneous effect of spatial presence, is the result of different forms of social activation. Moreover, social infrastructure is not sufficient to guarantee improvements in quality of life as it depends on both spatial distribution and the capacity of actors to sustain relationships.

The results also suggest that social infrastructure supports participatory processes and helps communities to adapt to changes. In fact, urban transformation processes may lead to exclusion or gentrification rather than regeneration. Moreover, social infrastructure and citizens may help inform planners about neighbourhood needs and propose opportunities [80].

The criticalities highlighted by local stakeholders, including perceived social security, urban decay, loss of commercial activities and socio-economic changes, underscore the limits of an approach based only on physical infrastructure. The case of San Leonardo therefore suggests that relational proximity is a dynamic process and as it depends on interactions between local actors, spatial distribution of opportunities, policy integration and continuity over time. In this context, social infrastructures may foster the consolidation of interpersonal relationships during leisure time, which represents the main sphere in which slow ways of living may be experienced. In fact, from an urban planning perspective, leisure time constitutes the primary field of intervention for promoting slowness, as working time largely falls within the domain of the employer and therefore lies beyond the direct influence of urban planning. In this sense, social infrastructures contribute to the construction of a slow neighbourhood.

In this sense, the neighbourhood confirms that slow should not be reduced to a mere decrease in speed but should be interpreted as a relational and organisational quality of urban life. From this perspective, the neighbourhood provides a fertile context for experimenting with the slow neighbourhood model, which requires the integration of spatial interventions on social infrastructure and intangible measures to foster inclusive and proactive relationships. Within this vision, the former *Bormioli* site emerges as an opportunity to develop a new urban node for connecting social, cultural and territorial dimensions, potentially acting as a new relational centrality. At the same time, the results also call for a more critical reflection on the role of governance. A strong presence of the third sector may lead to fragmentation or overlap with the public agenda. For Cittaslow, delegating or supporting certain initiatives through associations may be productive, since they possess knowledge of the area and may foster initiatives. However, institutional coordination and support are fundamental to avoiding fragmented initiatives or competing priorities. This highlights that, to be effective, a slow strategy depends on governance arrangements that foster connections among local actors.

5 Conclusions

The paper explores the role of relational proximity — that supports happy, healthy and safe cities — in shaping a slow neighbourhood. To prove this point, San Leonardo in Parma was selected as a case study for the Cittaslow Metropolis programme. At the neighbourhood level, walkability and accessibility create the conditions for a slow neighbourhood. Moreover, social infrastructure can be leveraged to initiate or support regeneration practices and initiatives that transform spaces into places of interaction and enhance the quality of life [81]. Within this framework, social opportunities embed slowness into daily life, not as a reduction in speed but as a way of experiencing the quality of neighbourhood life. Although relational proximity is not only generated by the social infrastructure, it may also promote active engagement and relationships in slow urban regeneration processes [82, 83].

The case study of San Leonardo allows for the spatial and social definition and evaluation of slow neighbourhoods by combining GIS-based mapping of the opportunities offered by social infrastructure and local actors' insights. This methodology allows to connect spatial analysis with qualitative and situated knowledge. In this case, the effectiveness of social infrastructure depends on its integration with public policies and on its ability to foster collaborative networks. Without institutional support and coordination between stakeholders, may lead to fragmented initiatives or overburden the third sector. Developing governance models to support and systematise these practices may avoid both marginalisation and the substitution of public responsibilities. At the same time, the results highlight an ambivalent condition: a strong associative fabric enhances relational density and compensates for institutional gaps but may also reveal the partial inability of public policies to fully address citizens' needs. The research suggests that the implementation of a slow neighbourhood model should be based on a combination of spatial, social and governance-oriented strategies such as the development of distributed and accessible social infrastructures, the enhancement of hybrid spaces and the collaboration between institutions, associations and local communities.

In conclusion, applying slow principles at the neighbourhood scale is a promising strategy to address contemporary urban challenges as it offers a vision based on proximity, care and everyday lived experience, repositioning the neighbourhood as a key scale for sustainable and inclusive urban transformation. However, this research also presents some limitations, as it presents a single qualitative case study and for the difficulty of measuring relational proximity. Moreover, the empirical analysis focuses exclusively on the San Leonardo neighbourhood, as defined by the framework agreement, which limit the result assessment through comparison. Future research should develop KPIs to assess relational proximity and support the Cittaslow Metropolis programme. Furthermore, in this case the slow strategies for San Leonardo are built on a dense network of social infrastructure, but, following Cittaslow principles, local traditions, heritage, productive identity or place-based products could also be interesting fields of investigation. These elements may be interpreted within the framework of relational proximity, insofar as they generate occasions for sociality and shared belonging. This consideration broadens the goal of the slow neighbourhood model, suggesting that its relational dimension may be supported by different place-based resources depending on the local context. Finally, to verify transferability and scalability of the methodology, it should be tested across

different urban contexts, varying in spatial scale, demographic density and urban morphology. Monitoring tools could also assess how relational proximity evolves over time and how it influences urban regeneration processes.

Author Contributions. The authors jointly designed and contributed to the paper. Conceptualisation, B.C., G.P. and M.Z.; methodology, B.C., G.P. and M.Z.; software, G.P.; validation, B.C. and M.Z.; formal analysis, G.P.; investigation, G.P.; data curation, G.P.; writing—original draft preparation, G.P.; writing—review and editing, B.C. and M.Z.; supervision, M.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.
This manuscript reflects only the authors' views and opinions, neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be considered responsible for them.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

References

1. Su, W.S., Huang, C.H., Hsu, C.C., Chang, L.F.: Cıttaslow: a new pattern of sustaınable tourısm development in Taıwan. Int. J. Organ. Innov. **9**(4) (2017)
2. Oztürk, S.: Small Towns Reshaping Their Urban Planning Policies Joining in the Cittaslow International Network: The Case of Seferihisar in Turkey. Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, Ankara (2012)
3. Cittaslow International.: https://www.cittaslow.org/. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
4. Kucukergin, F.N., Oxturk, Y.: Does slowness bring social change through Cittaslow?. Int. J. Tourism. Cities **6**(4) (2020). https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-06-2019-0093
5. Pink, S.: Sense and sustainability: the case of the slow city movement. Local Environ. **13**(2) (2008). https://doi.org/10.1080/13549830701581895
6. Pink, S.: Urban social movements and small places- slow cities as sites of activism. City **13**(4) (2009). https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810903298557
7. Cittaslow International: 2011 - Cittaslow International Network: National Website. http://www.cittaslow.org/. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
8. Cittaslow International: All the Slow Cities https://www.cittaslow.org/citta-slow. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
9. Miele, M.: Città slow: producing slowness against the fast life. Space Polity **12**(1) (2008)
10. Mayer, H., Knox, P.: Small-town sustainability: prospects in the second modernity. Eur. Plan. Stud. **18**(10) (2010). https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2010.504336
11. Radstrom, S.: A place sustaining framework for local urban identity: an introduction and history of Cittaslow. Ital. J. Plann. Pract. **1**(1) (2011)
12. Presenza, A., Abbate, T., Micera, R.: The Cittaslow movement: opportunities and challenges for the governance of tourism destinations. Tour. Plan. Dev. **12**(4) (2015). https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1037929
13. Zawadzka, A.K.: Making small towns visible in Europe: the case of cittaslow network–the strategy based on sustainable development, Transylvanian review of administrative sciences, 13. Spec. Issue (2017). https://doi.org/10.24193/tras.SI2017.6
14. Clancy, M.: Slow Tourism. Food and Cities. Routledge, New York (2018)
15. Donaldson, R.: Cittaslow: Going Nowhere Slowly, Small Town Tourism in South Africa. Springer International Publishing, Cham (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68088-0_5

16. Holland, T.: Navigating slow, 'fast' and crafted knowledges: knowing through Cittaslow, Newcastle University, School of Geography, PhD. Thesis (2018)
17. Özmen, A., Can, M.C.: The urban conservation approach of Cittaslow Yalvaç. Megaron. **13**(1) (2018). https://doi.org/10.5505/megaron.2017.67689
18. Shrivastava, A.R., Ohri, L.: Slow tourısm–an approach, an umbrella or a niche? Universal Review. **7**(11) (2018). https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-06-2019-0093
19. Cittaslow International: presentazione in anteprima mondiale del progetto "Cittaslow Metropolis" https://www.cittaslow.it/notizia/it-orvieto-presentazione-anteprima-mondiale-del-progetto-cittaslow-metropolis. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
20. Cittaslow International: Big cities learn something new from small towns. Cittaslow neighbourhoods launched https://www.cittaslow.it/news/orvieto-big-cities-learn-something-new-small-towns-cittaslow-neighbourhoods-launched. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
21. Glaeser, E.: Triumph of the City. Penguin Press HC, MA (2011)
22. Cittaslow International: Cittaslow Brochure https://www.cittaslow.org/_files/ugd/c3e050_a3f866d8d40744aa8d77e7c77f1d5cd2.pdf. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
23. Cittaslow International: Izmir is candidate to become the first Cittaslow Metropolis https://www.cittaslow.it/news/turkish-national-network-izmir-candidate-become-first-cittaslow-metropolis. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
24. Comune di Roma Capitale: Cittaslow Metropolis, Esquilino rione pilota https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/notizia.page?contentId=NWS1074079. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
25. Cittaslow International: Charter https://www.cittaslow.org/_files/ugd/c3e050_beef918cb3284a6e9fa8f64a6ca31a02.pdf. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
26. Galster, G.: On the nature of neighbourhood. Urban Stud. **38**(12) (2001). https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120087072
27. Lupton, R.: 'Neighbourhood Effects': Can we measure them and does it matter? Centre for Analysis of social exclusion. In: Neighbourhood Rffects Research: New perspectives, Springer Netherlands, Dordrecht (2003). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2309-2_1
28. Schultheiss, M.E., Pattaroni, L., Kaufmann, V.: Planning urban proximities: an empirical analysis of how residential preferences conflict with the urban morphologies and residential practices. Cities. **152**, 105215 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.105215
29. Alberti, F., Radicchi, A.: From the neighbourhood unit to the 15-minute city. Past and recent urban models for post-COVID cities. In: Urban and Transit Planning: City Planning: Urbanization and Circular Development. Springer International Publishing, Cham (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20995-6_15
30. Moreno, C.: The 15-Minute city: a solution to saving our time and our planet. John Wiley & Sons (2024)
31. Olivari, B., Cipriano, P., Napolitano, M., Giovannini, L.: Are Italian cities already 15-minute? Presenting the next proximity index: a novel and scalable way to measure it, based on open data. J. Urban Mobility **4**, 100057 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.urbmob.2023.100057
32. Brennan, J., Martin, E.: Spatial proximity is more than just a distance measure. Int. J. Hum. Comput. Stud. **70**(1) (2012). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2011.08.006
33. Busi, R.: For a Safer City. A Friendlier City. And a more Beautiful City. TeMA-J. Land Use, Mobility Environ. **2** (2009). https://doi.org/10.6092/1970-9870/121
34. Pajares, E., Büttner, B., Jehle, U., Nichols, A., Wulfhorst, G.: Accessibility by proximity: addressing the lack of interactive accessibility instruments for active mobility. J. Transp. Geogr. **93**, 103080 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2021.103080
35. Lanza, G., Pucci, P., Carboni, L.: Measuring accessibility by proximity for an inclusive city. Cities **143**, 104581 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104581
36. Rashed, R.: From concept to action: active mobility cards for collective spaces in block-system urban neighborhoods. Ain Shams Eng. J. **16**(12), 103771 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asej.2025.103771

37. Suslowicz, J., Hillnhütter, H.: From temporariness to mobility futures: a review of progress in tactical urbanism as an active travel planning tool. Transp. Res. Interdisciplinary Perspect. **32**, 101510 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trip.2025.101510
38. Ashton, J., Grey, P., Barnard, K.: Healthy cities—WHO's new public health initiative. Health Promot. Int. **1**(3) (1986). https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/1.3.319
39. Hancock, T.: The evolution, impact and significance of the health cities/healthy communities movement. J. Public Health Policy. **14**(1) (1993). https://doi.org/10.2307/3342823
40. Norris, T., Pittman, M.: The healthy communities movement and the coalition for healthier cities and communities. Public Health Rep. **115**(2–3) (2000). https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10968742/
41. Leyden, K.M., Goldberg, A., Michelbach, P.: Understanding the pursuit of happiness in ten major cities. Urban Aff. Rev. **47**(6) (2011). https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087411403120
42. Florida, R., Mellander, C., Rentfrow, P.J.: The happiness of cities. Reg. Stud. **47**, 4 (2013). https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2011.589830
43. Kearns, A., Parkinson, M.: The significance of Neighbourhood. Urban Stud. **38**, 12 (2001). https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120087063
44. Borlini, B.: Il quartiere nella città contemporanea. Come e perché occuparsene. Quad. Sociol. **52** (2010). https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.717
45. O'Sullivan, T.L., Kuziemsky, C.E., Toal-Sullivan, D., Corneil, W.: Unraveling the complexities of disaster management: a framework for critical social infrastructure to promote population health and resilience. Soc. Sci. Med. **93** (2013). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.07.040
46. Lo, L., Preston, V., Anisef, P., Basu, R., Shuguang, W.: Social Infrastructure and Vulnerability in the Suburbs. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, CA (2015)
47. Aldrich, D.P., Kiyota, E.: Creating community resilience through elder-led physical and social infrastructure. Disaster Med. Public Health Prep. **11**(1) (2017). https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2016.206
48. Davern, M., Gunn, L., Whitzman, C., Higgs, C., Giles-Corti, B., Simons, K., et al.: Using spatial measures to test a conceptual model of social infrastructure that supports health and wellbeing. Cities Health **1**(2) (2017). https://doi.org/10.1080/23748834.2018.1443620
49. Klinenberg, E.: Palaces for the People: how Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life. Crown Publishing, New York (2018)
50. Latham, A., Layton, J.: Social infrastructure and the public life of cities: studying urban sociality and public spaces. Geogr. Compass. **13**(7), e12444 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12444
51. Pérez, E., et al.: Neighbourhood community life and health: a systematic review of reviews. Health Place. **61**, 102238 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2019.102238
52. Manzini, E.: Abitare la prossimità: Idee per la città dei 15 minuti. EGEA spa. (2021)
53. Ruonavaara, H.: The anatomy of neighbour relations. Sociol. Res. Online **27**(2) (2022). https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211012708
54. Fraser, T., et al.: How far I'll go: social infrastructure accessibility and proximity in urban neighborhoods. Landsc. Urban Plan. **241**, 104922 (2024)
55. Blokland, T., Savage, M.: Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City. Ashgate, Burlington (2008)
56. Zanon, B.: Local development in fragile areas: re-territorialization processes in an alpine community. Int. Plan. Stud. **19**(3–4) (2014). https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2014.965247
57. PR2050: Piano Urbanistico Generale PUG Parma https://www.parma2050.eu. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
58. Caselli, B., Pedilarco, G., Pellicelli, G., Rossetti, S., Zazzi, M.: Enhancing public space accessibility and inclusivity in residential Neighbourhoods: a methodological framework and pilot application. Sustainability **16**(4), 1435 (2024). https://doi.org/10.3390/su16041435

59. Caselli, B., Ceci, M., De Noia, I., Tedeschi, G., Zazzi, M.: La desigillazione del suolo nelle azioni partecipate di resilienza urbana: Il caso “Green in Parma”. URBANISTICA INFORMAZIONI. **306** (2022)
60. Ceci, M., Caselli, B., Zazzi, M.: Soil de-sealing for cities’ adaptation to climate change. Planning of priority interventions in urban public space. TeMA. **16**(1) (2023). https://doi.org/10.6093/1970-9870/9395
61. Mayer, H., Knox, P.L.: Pace of Life and Quality of Life: the Slow City Charter. Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases III, 21–40. Springer Netherlands, Dordrecht (2009). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2257-8_2
62. Cho, S.-H.: A comparative study of a slow city and an urban region: a deeper look into the quality of life in Hadong-gun and Busan. Korea J. **51**(4) (2011)
63. Park, E., Kim, S.: Enhancing local community’s involvement and empowerment through practicing Cittaslow: experiences from Goolwa, South Australia. In: SHS Web of Conferences, vol. 12, p. 01044. EDP Sciences (2014). https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20141201044
64. Erdogan, M.: Local community perception towards slow city: Gokceada sample. Asian. Soc. Sci. **12**(5) (2016). https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n5p241
65. Jaszczak, A., Kristianova, K.: Social and cultural role of greenery in development of cittaslow towns. In: IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, **603**(3), 032028. IOP Publishing (2019). https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/603/3/032028
66. Kurniati, R., Sophianingrum, M., Khadiyanto, P. & Nugraha, M. F.: A model of community events as a cultural heritage conservation effort in Semarang Chinatown. In: IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, **409**(1), 012019. IOP Publishing (2020). https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/409/1/012019
67. Salieva, G. R.: Cittàslow: fluctuating between improvement and commodification of quality of life. Two case studies: Abbiategrasso and Seferihisar. Master’s thesis, Scuola di Architettura Urbanistica Ingegneria delle Costruzioni, Politecnico di Milano (2016)
68. Özdemir, H.: Investigation of social change in cities after participation in cittaslow union in Ordu-Perşembe district. J. Des. Resilience Archit. Plann. **5**(1) (2024). https://doi.org/10.47818/DRArch.2024.v5i1121
69. Cittaslow Turkiye - Cittaslow Metropolis Checklist: Slow neighbourhood https://cittaslowturkiye.org/en/csm/checklist/slow-neighborhood/. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
70. Cittaslow International – Cittaslow Metropolis can save the planet https://www.cittaslow.it/news/orvieto-cittaslow-metropolis-can-save-planet. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
71. Sanul, G., Doğu, T.: Towards a sensorial approach to inclusive urban policy making: narrated walks in Izmir’s cittaslow neighbourhood program. Geoforum. **165**, 104388 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2025.104388
72. Kaynarkaya, S., Cekmis, A., Çetin, İ., Şahin, Y.H., Unal, G.: Assessing walkability with deep Cnns by integrating objective and subjective urban qualities: the case of ‘Cittaslow’ Neighbourhoods. Sustain. Cities Soc. **106863** (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2025.106863
73. Destination Management Organization quartiere Esquilino DMO ES.CO. https://www.esquilinocomunita.it/it/evento/esquilino-slow/. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
74. Geoportale Emilia-Romagna RER. https://geoportale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
75. SIT Comune di Parma.: https://sit.comune.parma.it/it-IT/home-sit.aspx. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
76. Registro Unico Nazionale del Terzo Settore RUNTS.: https://servizi.lavoro.gov.it/runts/it-it/. Accessed 28 Apr 2026
77. Bianchi, M.: Renewing the city through public participation and cultural activities. The case study of Gillet square, a community-led urban regeneration project. J. Entrepreneurial Organ. Diversity. (2023). https://doi.org/10.5947/jeod.2019.001

78. Heath, S.C., Rabinovich, A., Barreto, M.: Exploring the social dynamics of urban regeneration: a qualitative analysis of community members' experiences. Br. J. Soc. Psychol. **62**(1) (2023). https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12578
79. Piperno, A., Iaione, C., Kappler, L.: Institutional collective actions for culture and heritage-led urban regeneration: a qualitative comparative analysis. Sustainability. **15**(11), 8521 (2023). https://doi.org/10.3390/su15118521
80. Méndez, M.L., Otero, G., Link, F., López Morales, E., Gayo, M.: Neighbourhood cohesion as a form of privilege. Urban Stud. **58**(8) (2021). https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098020914549
81. D'Onofrio, R., Trusiani, E.: The future of the City in the name of proximity: a new perspective for the urban regeneration of council housing suburbs in Italy after the pandemic. Sustainability **14**(3), 1252 (2022). https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031252
82. Sepe, M.: Measuring the impact of slow regeneration process: the HLH Pl@ce index. UPLAND **4**(2) (2019a)
83. Sepe, M.: Slow regeneration: liveable places for all. In: Gospodini, A. (ed.) Proceedings of the International Conference on Changing Cities IV: Spatial, Design, Landscape & Socio-Economic Dimensions Chania, Crete Island, Greece, June 24–29, 2019. University of Thessaly, Department of Planning and Regional Development, Laboratory of Urban Morphology & Design (2019b)