

PRESERVING, RECONSTRUCTING AND ENHANCING THE PLACE IDENTITY: IDENTIFYING PRINCIPLES OF URBAN SUSTAINABILITY WITH PLACEMAKER METHOD

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ABSTRACT

The changes that are occurring as a result of mutations in interpersonal and intergenerational relationships, globalisation and new technologies have led to phenomena of homogenisation of territorial specificities, but by the same token have also prompted further discussion concerning the importance of identity of place. Present-day urban conditions appear rich in differentiation with regard to the times and ways in which the city is used, for the new typologies of spaces and the change in the modalities of use of those already existing. In order to identify, represent and design the complex transformations in the contemporary city transversal and multi-level methods of analysis and design are being elaborated and experimented capable of representing and making legible the urban complexity that confronts us today.

Starting from these premises, the aim of this paper is to illustrate PlaceMaker method of urban analysis and design, whose flexibility, as is apparent in the three emblematic case studies which will be illustrated, enables it to be used in widely varying contexts and for a range of objectives.

In particular, the experiments were carried out in order to identify the current place identity to be preserved, reconstructed and enhanced. The investigation protocol serves as a guide to be adapted and reinforced at some points, according to the characteristics of the place and the intended purposes. The case studies gave rise to 12 principles for place identity enhancement, created from a reasoned set of blueprints for the various experiments carried out using the original PlaceMaker method which conclude the paper.

Keywords: Contemporary city, place identity, PlaceMaker, urban design, urban planning, urban sustainability principles.

1 INTRODUCTION

The urban condition we experience today shows many changes in terms of the rhythms and exploitation of the city, the modalities of living, working, moving around, and the opportunities for enjoying leisure. The emergence of new typologies of place and changes in the patterns of usage for the existing typologies have given rise to whole new cityscapes: striking juxtapositions and fragmentariness seem to predominate in the wholesale dispersion with which subjects, things and habits coexist, characterised by boundaries which are transparent and yet at times unbreachable.

The contemporary city is the place not only of complexity but also of simultaneity and instability, which give rise to situations of mutation and transitoriness. These are often predominantly motivated by economic gain, to the detriment of place identity which becomes increasingly hybrid, compromised or unrecognisable.

The lengthy periods of time required for the perception of the city Kevin Lynch talks about having been altered by the acceleration of the new urban rhythms. Nonetheless it still seems true that: ‘City design is therefore a temporal art, but it can rarely use the controlled and limited sequences of other temporal arts like music. On different occasions and for different people, the sequences are reversed, interrupted, abandoned, cut across. It is seen in all lights and all weathers. At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experience by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences’ [1].

Undoubtedly the people and their activities are as important as the ‘stationary physical parts’, and we are part of the scenario together with the other protagonists. ‘We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants. Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all’ [1].

Placemaking, in the sense of ‘the art of making places for people’ – to paraphrase the definition given by the Cabe and Detr Ministerial Guide ‘By design: urban design in the planning system’ – ‘includes the way places work and such matters as community safety, as well as how they look. It concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful villages, towns and cities’.

The city thus becomes the outcome of complex intersections created by a number of operators who modify the system for different reasons. It becomes necessary to identify a microsystem within the macrosystem of the city able to make the urban variants intelligible: place is at once porous and resistant, a receptor for complex interactions.

Accordingly, places are termed ‘places’ and not just ‘spaces’ when they are endowed with identity [2]. Such identity is related to the urban fabric and a series of morphological, natural, historical and cultural invariants. These invariants are closely interrelated to the life of the city and its inhabitants, and also to the perception the latter have of that place. At the same time, colours, materials, smells and sounds become an inseparable part of any one spot in the city, and thus emotional components of the urban image.

The identity of a place expresses a harmonious balance between variant and invariant components, people and urban events, which are intrinsically linked by a reciprocal relationship that makes a specific place unique and recognisable [1]. At the same time, globalisation and technological development have contributed to accelerating the rates of change and transforming spaces in the contemporary city. The end result is that cities, places, itineraries, customs and behavioural patterns have all come to resemble one another, contributing to an increasing urban identity crisis.

The sustainability of any place depends on a number of factors which contribute to its liveability, quality and identity [2–6]. Urban, cultural and historical poles of attraction, increasingly bear the imprint of globalisation, conveying messages which have developed in an uncontrolled manner and are aimed at conveying their users’ patterns of thought and action. The presence of a dense mixture of contrasting elements and perceptions can detract from the image of a city [7–13]. Furthermore, especially in pedestrian-intensive areas, it can contribute to creating urban decline and a chaotic atmosphere, including increased episodes of street crime. In order to draft an urban project focusing on the conservation, reconstruction and enhancement of place identity in such areas, which are often especially representative of their respective cities, we need methods of analysis and design able to identify, represent and design the urban elements that make up contemporary cities [14–17].

Based on these considerations, this work aims to illustrate the use of the PlaceMaker method [18] created in the context of a broader research project under an agreement between the Italian National Research Council (CNR) and the Urban Design and Planning Department of the University of Naples Federico II and for specific IRAT-CNR projects.

PlaceMaker comprises eight phases – five of analysis and three of design – and a Phase 0 that consists in constructing the grid required for the operations which are to be implemented later. This method assembles, elaborates and reconstructs the data derived from surveys based on physical reconnaissance, sensory perceptions, graphical elaboration, photographic and video records, and sets this data against that provided by an overview of expectations, an analysis based on traditional cartography and two questionnaires administered to local inhabitants. The main products are two final complex maps: one first of analysis and one of design, which represent the place identity and

project interventions in order both to establish a dialogue with local people and support planners and administrators in the sustainable urban construction and transformation.

Furthermore, the aim of this paper is to show the summary of emblematic experiments which were carried out in the framework of Italian and European research projects. The case studies spawned the '12 principles for place identity enhancement', which were created from a reasoned set of blueprints for the various experiments. The paper concludes with proposal of those principles, designed as checklists for urban projects with place identity at the core.

2 THE PLACEMAKER METHOD

The PlaceMaker method comprises eight phases (Table 1). The **first phase** of PlaceMaker is devoted to anticipatory analysis aimed at primary investigation of places; after the preliminary choice of the city and of the part(s) to be analysed, the ideas about that particular area can be described using any type of instrument or tool of expression, using the information known prior to the first inspection. These notes can be represented in different ways and the result of this phase will be a map of the emerging ideas.

The **second phase** is that of the five surveys. The first, the *denominative* one (Table 2), consists in collecting data regarding constructed elements (presence of monuments, buildings, etc.), natural elements (presence of urban green areas, trees, animals, etc.), transportation mode (presence or transit of cars, buses, etc.), people (presence of tourists, residents, etc.). The localisation of all these elements and the kind and amount, expressed as a low, medium or high percentage, are indicated. Likewise, there is a cognitive denominative data base which constitutes a kind of flexible input, where it is possible to insert elements which are not decided previously, but deduced during inspection.

The second survey is *perceptive* (Table 3); a survey is carried out of the smell, sound, taste, touch and visual sensations, and of the global perception, focusing on the localisation, type, amount (present in low, medium, high percentage) and quality (non-influential, pleasant, annoying). The survey of the amount and quality of the data, the three options regarding, respectively, the percentage of presence and the feelings induced, are intended to summarise the processing of data that can however be extended during collection.

The next survey is *graphical*: it consists in sketching the places; the sketches will represent the area in question according to a visual-perceptive standpoint and will be supported by annotations where necessary. This operation constitutes a preliminary study for the construction of the graphical symbols for the complex map. *Photographic* and *video* surveys of the whole study area are carried out, taking care to record facts rather than an interpretation of the places. The product of the five surveys is a map visualising the results obtained from the different surveys.

The **third phase** involves the analysis of traditional cartography of the selected sites in the city. The types of maps used in this phase derive from different disciplines and depend on the nature of the place; the study is carried out at the urban scale, in order to identify the characteristic elements and their relationships with that particular area, and at the areal scale, in order to identify the relationships between the site and the whole city. The result of this phase is a map identifying the components required for the site description that can be found only through a traditional planimetric reading.

The **fourth phase** is that of the questionnaire administered to visitors to the area in order to gain an idea of the place as perceived by those who are not involved in the study and are not specialists in related fields, but only perceive the site as users, at various levels: the inhabitant, the passer-by, the tourist. The questionnaire consists of questions asked on the basis of images of the area or an inspection visit with the interviewee. The information deduced from the questionnaire is transferred onto a map that, like the previous ones, will constitute the basis for the construction of the complex map.

Table 1: PlaceMaker scheme.

Phase	Objectives	Actions	Products
1	Anticipatory analysis	Preliminary observations made prior to the first inspection of the place	Map of the preliminary ideas of the place
2	Perceptive and denominative description of the elements	Denominative survey	Map visualising the results obtained from the survey
3	Identification with traditional cartography of the elements required for area description	Perceptive survey Graphical survey Photographic survey Video survey Analysis of traditional planimetry at urban scale	Map with the components of the site deduced from analysis of traditional maps
4	Identification of place elements perceived by users of places	Analysis of traditional planimetry at territorial scale Questionnaire for visitors to the place	Map visualising the results of the questionnaire
5	Processing the collected information	Overlay of the maps with the different elements observed from the anticipatory and effective analysis Check of the different elements observed from different analysis tools	Graphic system construction
6	Identification of identity resources	Identification of identity potential Identification of identity problems Identification of identity qualities	Complex map of analysis Map of identity resources
7	Identification of identity resources by users of places	Questionnaire for visitors to the place	Map visualising the results of the questionnaire
8	Identification of the project proposal	Overlay and elaboration of data collected Definition and localisation of design intervention	Graphic system construction Complex map of identity project

Table 2: The denominative relief.

City	Place	Date	Time	TYPE	Constructed elements	Natural elements	Transportation mode	People
				low, medium, high amount percentage				

Table 3: The perceptive relief.

City	Place	Date	Time	TYPE	Smell P.	Taste P.	Sound P.	Touch P.	Visual P.
				Low, medium, high amount percentage non-influential, pleasant, annoying perceived feeling					

The **fifth phase** is that of assembling the collected information. In this phase, we test the maps produced, the congruence of the various collected data, and choose the useful elements to construct the final map. The recorded data represent the basis for the construction of the graphical system of symbols to represent the elements of the urban landscape and the elaboration of the complex map of analysis [18].

We then have three design phases. The **sixth phase** is devoted to surveying identity resources in the study area. During this phase, the complex map of analysis drawn up with the PlaceMaker method is used as a basis to detect the resources available for the project.

The sixth phase is realised through three measures. The first is the identification of the identity potential, namely of the elements of the complex map which characterise the area in question in order to recognise those which may assume a focal role in the project. In this respect, both the comprehensive presence of a specific type of element (e.g. how many points of visual perceptions are present) and the quantity is measured for each of them (e.g. such an element is assigned a certain size of symbol depending on its visual importance: namely medium size = presence of a given element in a medium percentage). Then there is the second action where the identity problems are highlighted. The activities are devoted to observing places in the complex map with the presence of unsustainable elements and annoying points of perception. With the aim of identifying these places the relationship among the different elements in the map need to be observed. An element may be sustainable in itself, for example a shop which sells typical products; but the presence of several of them may create a site with a concentration of businesses which is unsustainable with respect to place identity. The goal is to understand the impact of people, things and activities and relative issues. The third action is the survey of identity qualities.

The actions to be performed here involve noting places within the complex map of analysis with the presence of sustainable elements and points of pleasant perception. The elements which contribute to defining that sustainable place or perception will need to be analysed. In this case the aim is

again to detect the impact of people, things and activities and relative relationships which are sustainable for identity of places. The product is a synthesis derived from interpreting the complex map of analysis where the identity resources available for the project are represented: a sort of map of intents, the first step for the construction of the complex map for the identity project in question.

The **seventh phase** is the survey of the identity resources by users of places, locals, passers-by and tourists. A questionnaire designed to elicit information emerged from the previous phase will be administered. The questions aim to ascertain whether the data observed until now are consistent with aspirations, desires and thoughts of the users of the area in question and to collect further suggestions and proposals. The product of this phase is the fourth partial map which will represent the identity resources from the perspective of users of places and/or privileged actors.

The **eighth** and last phase consists in the overlay of data collected during the previous four phases and identification of the project proposals. In this phase we identify the places around which the project hypothesis to be conducted to enhance the identity resources are focused and the relative interventions. The products of this phase are a suitable system of symbols which represent the project activities and the construction of the complex map for the identity project. This map is the last step in the planning process, where the information contained in the complex map of analysis, after being filtered and transformed into resources, gives rise to proposals for the construction and enhancement of a sustainable place identity [19].

3 EXPERIMENTS

The PlaceMaker method was conceived in 2001 and has been regularly updated since its pilot case studies started in 2002 in urban sites in Europe, Japan and USA [19]. The main users targeted by the method are urban designers and planners, and administrators, while a simplified form of the complex maps is designed for local, citizens, place users and visitors.

As regards administrators and city planners, PlaceMaker enables them to understand the potentials and problems relating to any given place, and how the place itself is perceived by its users and residents. This flexible method may be used for different analysis and design purposes, such as: to redefine the identity and image of a place (e.g. historical identity, commercial identity, identity following post-seismic reconstruction, etc.), to assess – and then design – the compatibility of any activity with its identity or again, if the aim is to restore traditional businesses, to gauge whether such recovery is still in line with current demands (e.g. in case of urban regeneration process). Thus, the data contained in the complex maps may be used to create active indices and reference parameters for gauging project sustainability, such as quality of life or pollution thresholds, or sustainability of identity, through assessment of the elements making up urban identity from the viewpoint of sustainability.

As to the citizens, PlaceMaker will enable them to garner a deeper understanding of their city's identity, feel stronger ties to it, hence protect and safeguard it or play a proactive role by proposing improvements to administrators or participating in planning choices.

Lastly, tourists and place users will find the map a tool providing an insight into the city that goes beyond mere identification of major landmarks and captures the complexity of a place identity, including its tangible and intangible elements, both permanent and temporary.

In order to study the urban identity of sites and identify new elements and places, the areas selected for the experiments are mostly of historical importance and at all events highly representative of the city and of its transformations, alterations and redesign themes.

PlaceMaker was designed to identify element and places able to solicit cultural transformations and of use in constructing an urban sustainable project where place identity constitutes the principal resource to be taken into consideration. In particular, the experiments were carried out in order to

identify the current place identity to be preserved, reconstructed and enhanced. Accordingly, a summary of the main outputs – specifically related to the Phase 6, identification of the identity resources, and Phase 8, identification of the project interventions – of three emblematic case studies are illustrated. These case studies were chosen in order to better explain the principles which will be presented in the last section of the study.

3.1 Preserving place identity

The topic of the place identity preservation was investigated through two emblematic case studies: the Trevi-Pantheon area in Rome [20] – which will be illustrated later – and the South Broadway thoroughfare in Los Angeles (CA) [19].

In the Trevi-Pantheon area in Rome the study focused on questions related to anthropic risk and mass tourism in historic centres. This was developed in the framework of the research project ‘Sustainable enhancement and fruition of Cultural Heritage: incidence and monitoring of anthropic factors’ of the National Research Council Institute for Cultural Heritage Conservation and Promotion – Rome, and the European Project Culture 2007–2013 ‘Preserving places. Managing mass tourism, urban conservation and quality of life in historic centres’ (Coordinator: ICVBC CNR Rome Division) (Figs 1 and 2). The Trevi-Pantheon route, due to its recent pedestrianisation – which is leading to uncontrolled commercialisation to satisfy the needs of mass tourism – has decreased in quality and perception of place identity. The case study detected the identity of the places in question as well as their characteristics and potential, and identified cultural sites and appropriate activities in order to mitigate the impact of mass tourism and provide sustainable and integrated fruition and enhancement of the site.



Figure 1: Rome, the Trevi Fountain.



Figure 2: Rome, Piazza della Rotonda.

Identity resources were identified through observation of identity potential, problems and quality. Looking at the complex map of analysis (Fig. 3), with respect to the potential, various interesting features of the whole route are not immediately apparent.

The streets linking the three monuments are regarded merely as thoroughfares in spite of the presence of historic buildings. Some monuments, such as the church of Sant'Atanasio in Piazza Trevi and the nearby churches of Santa Maria in Trevi and Sant'Ignazio, and the Galleria in Santa Maria in Via do not seem to be given enough attention.

Then again, nobody seems to notice the remarkable religious icons scattered along the route. The lack of vegetation, remarked by some of the respondents, is another element to be evaluated. In spite of the creation of a route for the blind, it does not seem to be used.

The main problems are due to the increasing use of this area by mass tourism rather than residents and locals. This has led to the concentration of various kinds of trading activities – sometimes of low quality – that is slowly diminishing the perception of the identity of place and the cultural enjoyment of the area.

Indeed, this trend is triggering a series of events where, paradoxically, the culture is becoming a cause of impoverishment of the quality of places rather than the engine of sustainable urban development: from the increase in fast-food outlets, street vendors and non-local souvenir shops, to the wearing out of the historical pavement and monuments; from an inappropriate use of colour in facades to frame ground floor shops, to the spread of the open-air tables of cafes and restaurants.

With respect to the identity qualities, due to the great historical, architectural and urban interest of this place, such qualities are various and clearly deducible from the complex map of analysis: namely not only the squares and historical monuments, buildings and urban fabric, but also the pleasing and sometimes surprising visual, acoustic and tactile perceptions and the slow pace which pervades this route.

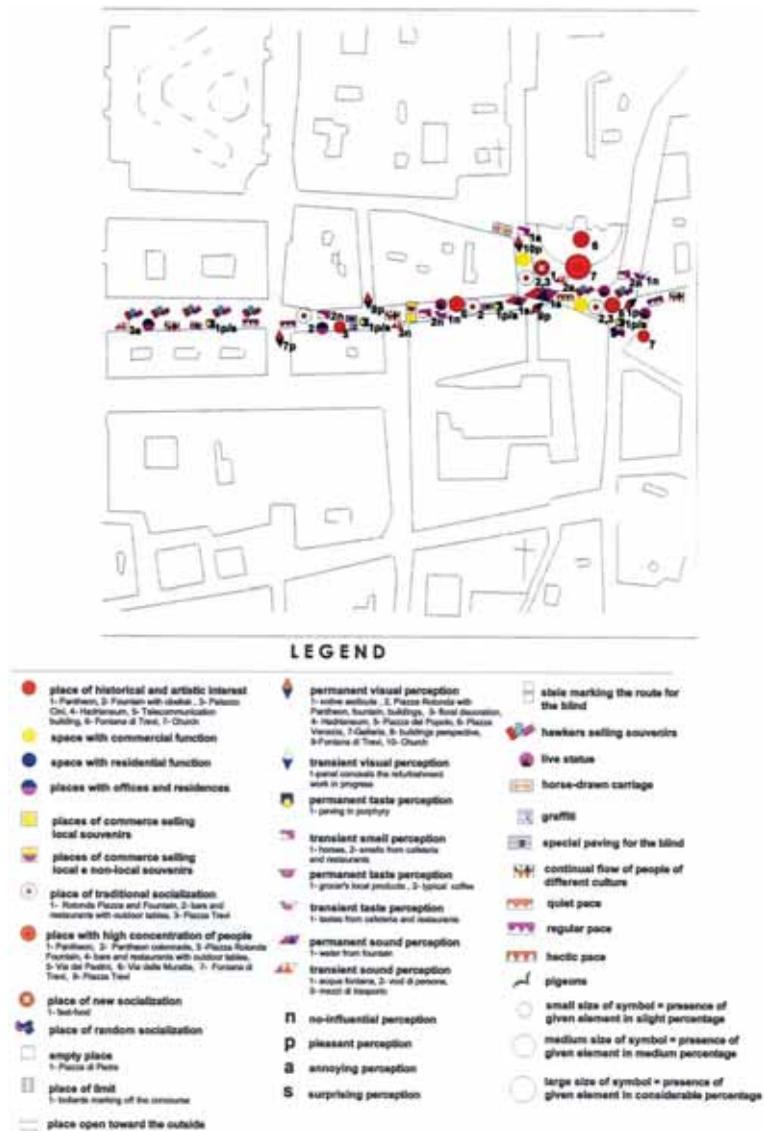


Figure 3: Trevi-Pantheon route, Rome: detail of the complex map of analysis.

The project interventions which were identified allow for sustainable enhancement and fruition of this place and mitigate anthropic risk (eighth phase, Fig. 4).

One might well start from the differentiation of routes. This might involve: creating different linking routes between the monuments of the Pantheon and the Trevi fountain – a short route (Hadrianum) and a longer one featuring the stratification of the urban fabric as well as the monuments; creating alternative routes focusing on the elements of perception – this solution may well prove both educational and sustainable: it would show visitors how pleasing perceptions can be easily blotted out by unpleasant ones; restoring the route for the blind – perhaps adding other perceptions; and creating integrated historical-cultural-perception routes meeting specific requisites – by introducing routes



Figure 4: Trevi-Pantheon route, Rome: complex map of project.

featuring the sound of water playing in the fountains, the ancient materials found along the route, admiring religious icons, buildings, churches, architectural features which pass unobserved in a hasty visit, sampling local produce, breathing in the scent of Rome.

The second intervention is differentiating and restoring traditional activities. This intervention might include restoring handicrafts producing local products, including high-quality goods, so as to reduce the commercial confusion in these streets and rescue vanishing skills. Furthermore, we suggest the design of a coordinated project for shop signs and windows, above all as regards the streets which connect the squares, eliminating graffiti on the facades and respecting their traditional colour. In this way, re-designing the critical points would ensure greater balance in the set-up of spaces and organisation of the various activities, it would act as a dissuader to additional fast food outlets and would pressurise those already in place to conform.

The third intervention designed to reduce the excessive physical and emotional load is the creation of breaks, to be introduced in: Piazza di Pietra, the only true moment of relaxation, where one might build – for example – a little conceptual garden, also serving an educational function, where people can pause and indulge their perceptions and then proceed, in the central space of the Hadrianum; the Galleria in Santa Maria in Via, currently under-used, not strictly on the route but close by, could serve as a break with the inclusion of exhibitions, featuring the route of Hadrian for example, and other functions.

The fourth intervention involves the introduction of vegetation, currently lacking in the area: in a small garden in Piazza di Pietra; in small well-defined spaces, for example at the start of Via delle Muratte, and also close by the study area such as at the end of Via del Seminario (parallel to Via di Pietra) in Piazza Sant'Ignazio.

The fifth intervention consists in giving identity to what is transitory by: creating lightweight multifunctional structures to be introduced at the focal points of monuments and street commerce, variable in extension and dimension, opening and closing, where artistes, hawkers, living statues and others can create their own fluid spaces within a dynamic, light grid which nonetheless constitutes a framework. This form of urban décor can be equipped for various functions including multimedia.

The sixth intervention involves virtualising the graffiti and the path. In the first case at some points, where there are more graffiti and the historical pavement has been replaced by a recent one, a special pavement could be inserted which allows the creation of virtual graphic signs which may visualise the steps of visitors.

In the second case it involves going on line with the creation of multimedia guides. The various routes can be presented and made more user friendly by means of multimedia guides via satellites accessible for example from cell phones. In this way visitors can be oriented towards alternative personalised routes which they can follow with the help of multimedia texts and maps.

3.2 Reconstructing place identity

As regards reconstructing place identity two representative case studies were carried out, which, although different in typology and dimension, share issues related to post-seismic reconstruction: namely Kitanocho in Kobe – which will be described below – and Market Street in San Francisco [19].

In Kitano-cho, which was studied in the context of the Progetto Dimostratore Irpinia promoted by the Regional Centre for Environmental Risk Analysis and Monitoring (AMRA), as will be illustrated later we examined an unusual area, a historic district in Kobe which, like the whole city, was struck by a violent earthquake in 1995 and subsequently reconstructed (Figs 5 and 6) [20].



Figure 5: Kitano-cho, Rheinen House.



Figure 6: Kitano-cho, empty place and buildings in reconstruction.

Analysis of this case study involved recognition of the complex identity that has followed reconstruction, assessing the extent to which the earthquake still affects current reality, and reviewing the actions required for harmonising sustainable rebuilding with the protection of place identity.

The observation of complex map of analysis (Fig. 7) carried out with PlaceMaker has singled out the following problems, potentialities and qualities concerning place identity.

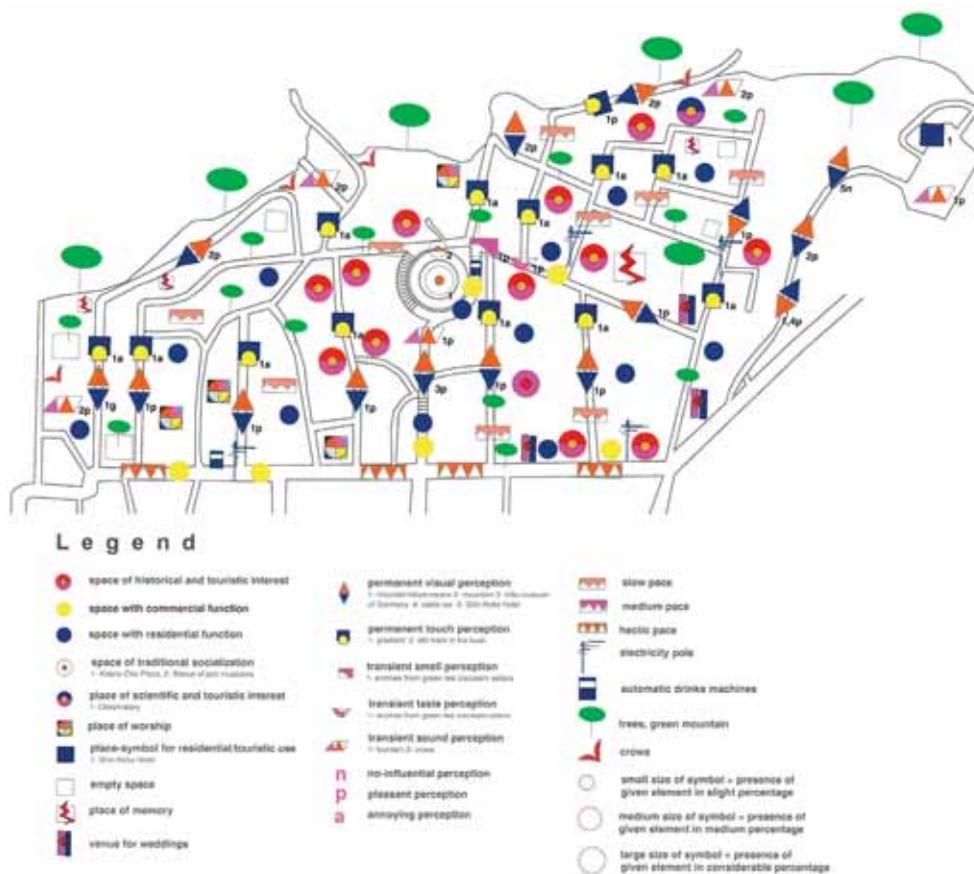


Figure 7: Kitano-Cho, Kobe: complex map of analysis.

As regards problematic aspects, Kitano-cho, like the whole city of Kobe, was impacted by the violent earthquake that destroyed whole parts of the city. The reconstruction of the foreign residences – the *ijinkan* – in the eastern part of the area damaged or destroyed by the earthquake was carried out rapidly, since the livelihood of the Kitano-cho district is essentially based on tourism. The western part of the area and some places in the eastern part – such as the destroyed house below the park of the Dutch House – still show signs of earthquake damage.

One thus observes a lack of continuity between the western and the eastern part. Indeed, Kitano-cho appears to be divided into two parts. One, although pleasant, is built only for the tourists and comes across as somewhat phony, as if crystallised in time. The western part of the district, instead, is mainly used for dwellings, but appears extraneous to the rest of the area and almost, as it were, ‘on hold’, due to the presence of several empty lots overgrown with weeds and buildings under construction. Furthermore, this part lacks public spaces. The discontinuity of the neighbourhood’s urban fabric, due to the gaps in it, is matched by a discontinuity in the architectural style and quality of its buildings.

The same discontinuity can be observed in urban furniture and street paving. The electric pylons found in the whole area – as in the rest of the city – have a strong visual impact on the natural and urban landscape.

Finally, the steepness of the streets, especially in the upper part of the district, and the lack of benches make the visit of the *ijinkan* strenuous in some stretches.

As regards the area's potential, its atmosphere is agreeable and it is much visited by tourists. The tourists, however, are mainly Japanese. Besides, the district has many cult places, and is hence also visited for reasons connected to people's religion.

The buildings under construction and the gaps in the urban fabric are as much an opportunity as they are a problem, as they could be used to restore the continuity of the two parts of Kitano-cho and, at the same time, create public spaces and interesting buildings for both the locals and foreign tourists.

Kitano also has a cableway station. Its narrow boundary with the Rokko mountain is an interesting factor, both from a natural and a perceptual standpoint. Its connection to the routes used to visit the foreigners' residences could be improved.

Kitano's connection with other places of interest, such as China Town and the port – the latter, while not actually near, is visible from many spots in the neighbourhood – is another element to be taken into account in a broad project for the improvement and thematisation of Kitano.

As to quality, the museum houses are one-of-a-kind attractions. They are complemented by several museums. The presence of worship places for many religions makes the area interesting for different kinds of visitors.

Kitano-cho square is a place for socialisation for many tourists, who come to watch the performances staged there or have their picture taken next to the statue of the jazz musician.

Because of the narrowness of many streets and the small size of houses, the scale of the place is very human. The peculiar qualities of Kitano-cho are also appreciated by the people who choose to get married here. Thus, the neighbourhood has several wedding dress boutiques and places for the celebration of marriages. In the district one observes many trees and green spaces, as well as perceiving the strong presence of the adjoining Mount Rokko. There is also a playground. Several spots in Kitano offer views of the whole city all the way to the sea, including some especially interesting ones. The pace as a rule is calm. The eastern part, in particular, provides an agreeable atmosphere for a stroll.

The recommendations for the completion of the reconstruction of Kitano-cho take into account the different requirements of users and the specific characteristics of the place (Fig. 8).

The first action to be undertaken is to realise urban continuity through a general improvement plan for the whole district of Kitano-cho.

One of the first things one notices about the neighbourhood of Kitano is that it is divided into two parts, a mainly residential one to the west and a mainly touristic one to the east, although the latter part does have some residential buildings. The two parts do not seem to interact. There is thus a discontinuity both in the use of the place and in its quality, which is inferior in the residential part. This results in a trend towards the creation of a crystallised place, as in the case of the zone where the museum houses are, which is mainly used by Japanese tourists.

The first step to be taken is to introduce cultural activities in the buildings under reconstruction that will draw tourists or non-resident locals to the western part of the neighbourhood. Some of the most interesting uses for these buildings would be as museums, university buildings, and libraries. Furthermore traditional street entertainments could be organised not only in the Kitano-cho Plaza but also in other less utilised places of the district.

The second step is to introduce a single street paving design for all of Kitano, and provide urban furniture and benches along the routes through the neighbourhood, especially in the western area. This would make the continuity of the place more visible to its users and would allow opportunities for stopping, resting – an important consideration when we think of the steepness of the north-south streets – and admiring the houses and the landscape.

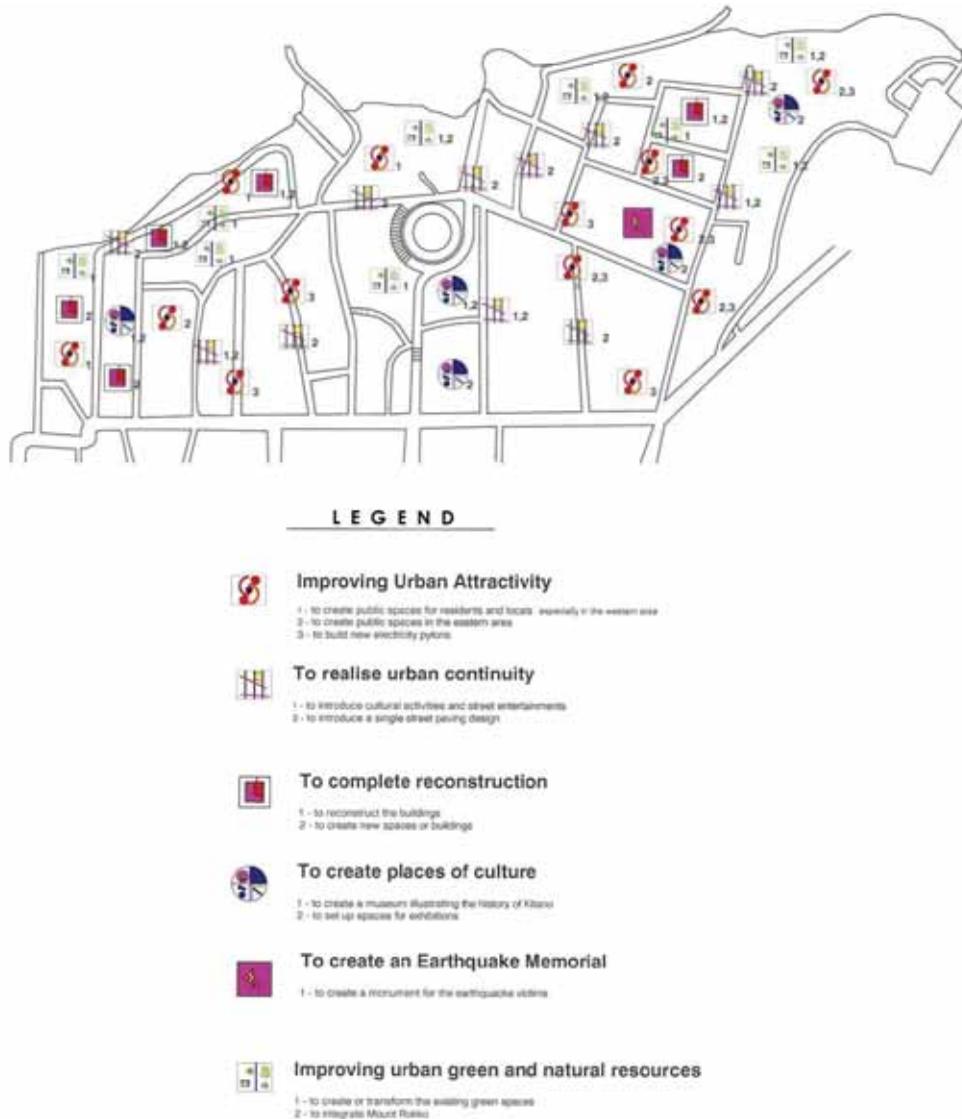


Figure 8: Kitano-Cho, Kobe: complex map of project.

The second action is to complete reconstruction, especially in the western zone. This action should go hand in hand with the first. The reconstruction should be carried out according to a master plan aimed at improving the whole district of Kitano-cho. The post-earthquake reconstruction completed the museum houses and other buildings of cultural and touristic interest. In the study area one can still observe traces of earthquake damage. One of the most emblematic damages lies below the Dutch House in the eastern part. There are several buildings under reconstruction and empty lots overgrown with weeds, especially in the western part.

The first step is thus to reconstruct the buildings to restore their original functions or create new ones. The second step is to create new spaces or buildings in the empty lots to make the western part of the Kitano district more attractive.

The third action is to improve Urban Attractivity. The square in Kitano that is best known to tourists is the Kitano-cho Plaza. There are few public spaces in the neighbourhood. Besides Kitano-cho plaza, there is a playground near the Dutch House. The first step is to create public spaces for residents, especially in the western part. Residents do not use Kitano much, since the place is mainly designed for tourism. The second step is to create public spaces in the eastern area, especially around the earthquake memorial – to be created as our fourth action – so as to obtain a space that is not only pleasing to the eye but also usable.

The third step is to build new electricity pylons with less visual impact on the landscape than the current ones. In consideration of the fact that this is a historic neighbourhood, a plan for electricity pylons and street lighting harmonising with the prevalent style of the museum houses would improve the appearance of the whole district.

The fourth action is to create an Earthquake Memorial in Kitano-cho. There are other memorials elsewhere in Kobe, but a new one here would be something the neighbourhood residents could share with the rest of Kobe, improving their sense of belonging. The museum-house area, and especially its eastern limit, where one sees an empty lot and further on the collapsed house, could be a suitable place for this memorial, which would help to make the eastern area less 'crystallised'.

The fifth action is to create places of culture capable of attracting visitors from other countries as well as Japanese ones. As we have repeatedly observed, not only is Kitano-cho only visited by tourists, but these tourists are mainly Japanese, with the exception of visitors to the worship places. To make this special place also attractive to tourists from other nations, the first step is to create a museum illustrating the history of Kitano and its principal attractions, such as the museum houses and Mount Rokko.

The second step is to set up spaces for exhibitions, readings, and showing images and films about or by contemporary or past artists from the nations of the museum houses.

The sixth action to be undertaken is to improve urban green and natural resources. Although there is no scarcity of urban green in this district, several spots are overgrown with weeds. As we have observed above, these are found especially in the western part of the area. The first step is therefore to create or transform the existing green spaces into play parks, panoramic gardens, or gardens for meditation. The second step is to integrate Mount Rokko in the Kitano-cho itineraries. The Japanese see Mount Rokko as a symbolic place but, in spite of Kitano's nearness to the mountain, on which it borders, the neighbourhood is not regarded as being one with it. An improvement plan for Kitano taking account of its natural assets could establish a connection between the local mountain paths and the streets of Kitano through the setting up of panoramic points, spaces and urban furniture in a perspective of mutual enhancement.

3.3 Enhancing place identity

Concerning *enhancing place identity*, three case studies were carried out in pedestrian or semi-pedestrian thoroughfares in some major European cities [21] - such as the Oxford Street in London, Ramblas in Barcelona – which will be showed below (Figs 9 and 10) [22] – and the Esplanade area in Helsinki which are dimensionally and geographically quite different, but share a central position and proximity to the core of the city and represent symbolic places for citizens, tourists and users in general. The aim of the experiments was to ascertain whether the current identity of the places is



Figure 9: Rambla dels Estudis, stall selling small animals.



Figure 10: Rambla de Sant Josep, Mirò's painting on the pavement.

compatible with their walkability and liveability and whether there are critical points where a sustainable urban design process may be developed to conserve and enhance their identity, and improve their image together with walkability and safety.

As regards the Ramblas, the detection of the identity resources resulting from the complex map of analysis (Fig. 11) emerged to the greatest extent in the central pedestrian avenue rather than in the side streets.

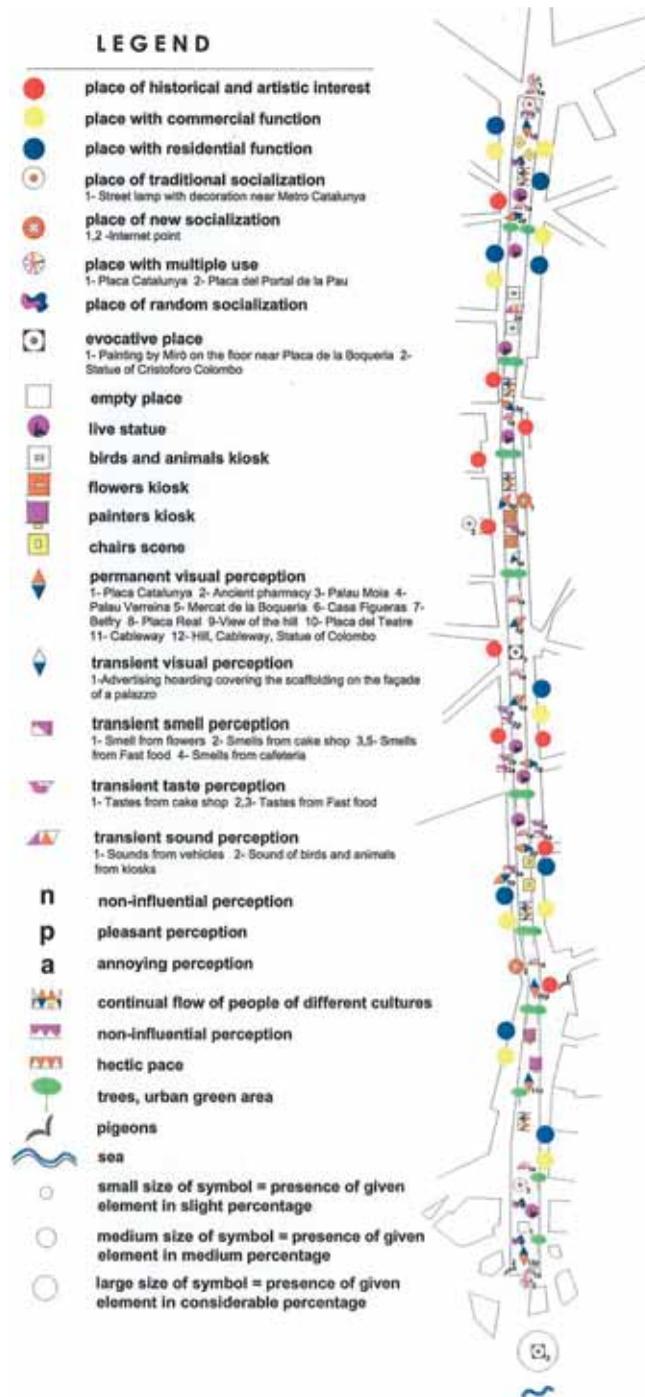


Figure 11: Ramblas, Barcelona, complex map of analysis.

The main critical points, as was observed in the previous paragraph, are found in the mix of hybrid elements coming from some stretches of the side streets and from some areas of the central avenue which make identity not entirely sustainable, creating, as shown in Phase 2 description and questionnaire responses, and in the complex map of analysis, perceptions of unease and the sensation of a lack of safety amongst passers-by.

In contrast, dynamicity, agreeable atmosphere, variety of functions and uses along the route and presence of historical buildings are the fundamental qualities. Indeed, along the central area, the visitor finds more characteristic urban scenes and it is here that strollers congregate in a continuous, sustained flow, often becoming an active part of the urban scene itself.

However, the potential of the Ramblas derives above all from the mix of user needs and the places themselves.

Tourists are on the lookout for entertainment, the possibility of taking time-out on public benches; they do not want to be harassed by traffic noise nor live in fear of snatched handbags or wallets. The locals want to use the area without having to cleave their way through the crowd, they do not want to see litter on the ground, they want to be able to use their bikes and cars to move around, and, just like the tourists, they too want to be able to sit down occasionally and feel safe. The street artists need free spaces to improvise, where they can exhibit their skills freely in mimed scenes and games, but also in paintings, caricatures and other things of this kind.

The itinerant sellers need room for their stalls, where they can sell small pets, flowers, souvenirs, newspapers, postcards and posters. The buildings flanking the Ramblas also deserve a prominent role due to their artistic merit and their function as a testimony of times gone by, but they also need ongoing maintenance and appropriate use. The historic shops and emporiums look to their own survival and the continued sale of their typical products, but they too have architectural worth and attract with their window displays. The fast food outlets seek to meet the rapid feeding requirements of the enormous crowds of passers-by, at times also utilising sidewalk space with tables and large trash receptacles. The publicity blurbs, shop signs and various types of lighting seek to enhance products and outcompete their rivals. The harbour, with its statue of Christopher Columbus set in the midst of all this, claims a role of its own. Finally, the trees clamour for their own Lebensraum and constant nurturing.

As regards the elements noted for re-design of the Ramblas, these take into account the different requirements both of the users and place elements (Fig. 12).

Interventions which were designed are based on the construction of the places according to their tangible and intangible characteristics. All the factors noted during the different phases were put into play in order to ensure that the complexity of this place is not reduced: spaces, architecture, people, transient perceptions, permanent perceptions, urban events, relationships and rhythms. The symbols were created using simple geometric shapes related to the idea of the proposed interventions.

De-congesting the routes, restoring old activities, enhancing elements of historical, cultural and identity value, harmonising urban furniture, giving identity to what is transitory, respecting the nature, and virtualising the path are some of the interventions which, if duly integrated, should prove beneficial.

The principal need is to de-congest the central pedestrian avenue by means of a series of micro-interventions which could include the following interventions: enhancing the cultural resources of lateral carriageways; creating suitable urban furniture; designating the side streets as limited traffic areas; creating a cycle track; and applying traffic calming measures at the intersections and points of major traffic convergence.

The second action for the Ramblas is restoring traditional activities, enhancing and/or recovering typical historic shops, some of which could link up with the specialities of the goods on sale on the

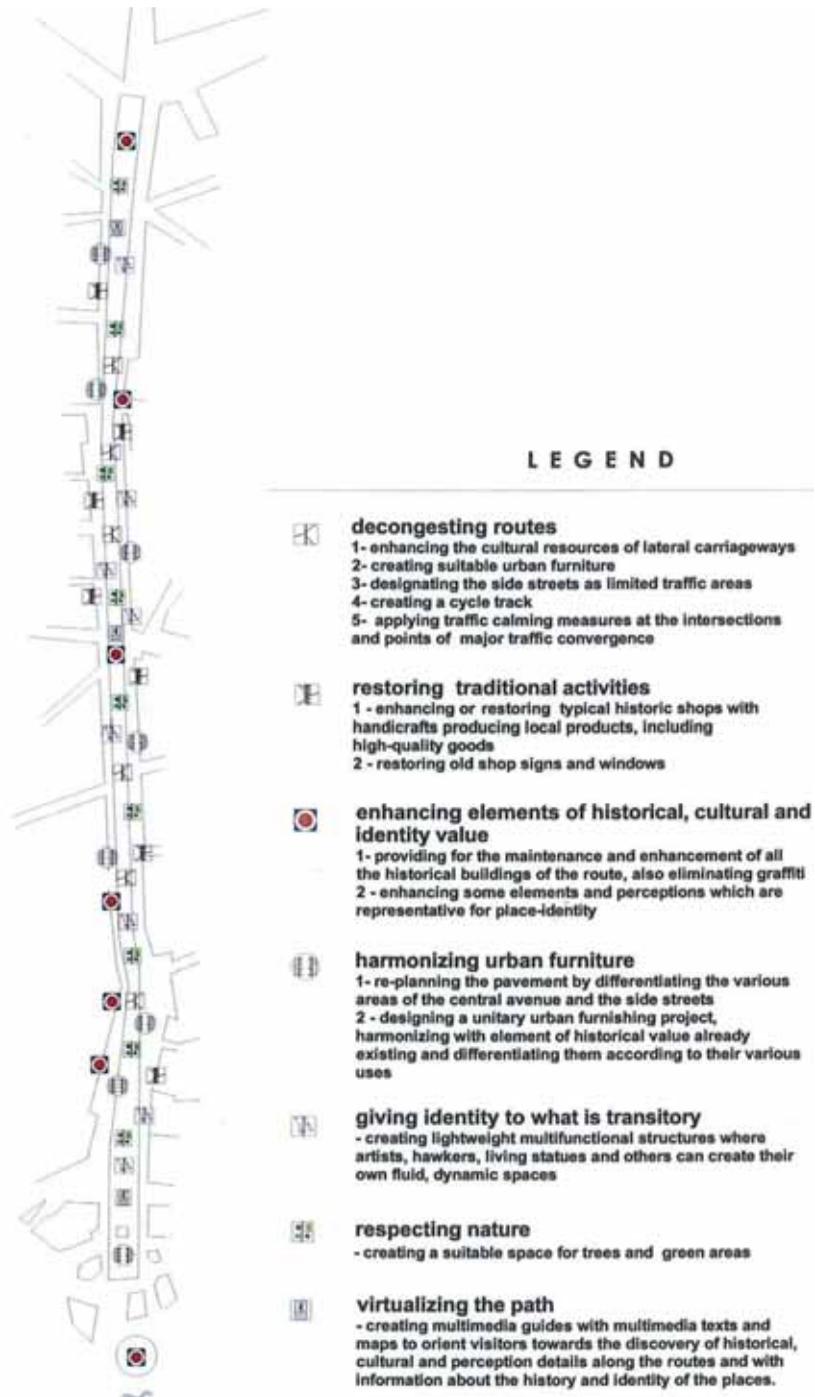


Figure 12: Ramblas, Barcelona, complex map of project.

stalls: for example the shops in the part of the Ramblas where painters work could sell canvases, brushes, paints and books on painting; the shops in the area where small pets are on sale could sell cages, special pet beds and other gadgets; the area with flowers could sell gardening tools, books on gardening, etc. Another possibility is the insertion of quality souvenir shops referring to these speciality goods.

We then propose to enhance elements of historical, cultural and identity value. This means providing for the maintenance and enhancement of the historical buildings – which e.g. in the last stretch of the Ramblas has been less thorough – also eliminating graffiti. Furthermore we suggest enhancing some elements and perceptions which are representative of its identity, including, e.g. the azulejo of Carrer de la Portaferrissa, the Mirò painting on the pavement, the statue of Christopher Columbus, some decorated elements of old urban furniture and visual perception of the Guell Palace.

Another need is to harmonise urban furniture. We first suggest the re-planning of the pavement by differentiating the various areas of the central avenue and the side streets, enhancing the area with the painting by Mirò in the central point of the Ramblas, the terminal stretch with the statue of Columbus and the landmarks in the area. Furthermore, we propose designing a unitary urban furniture project, which is both harmonic with already existing furniture of historical value and useful for the various functions. This should include: benches for a brief rest; trash receptacles also in the vicinity of the fast food outlets; coordinated shop signs, lights, and publicity panels and advertisements, above all as regards the side streets.

Continuing in this sense it is important to give identity to what is transitory, creating small mobile platforms for street artists and vendors. In this way, anyone could have their own recognisable space, harmonic with the place, and chaos could be eliminated from the urban scene.

Another fundamental action is to respect nature. The trees of the Ramblas are necessary for their quality image and for the balance of its urban and environmental ecosystem. The trees are now increasingly used as objects to put or support tools useful for artists, street vendors, etc. It is important to create a suitable space for such articles and that trees and their ecosystem are duly respected.

A last intervention involves to virtualise the path going on line with the creation of multimedia guides. The various peculiarities of the Ramblas can be presented and made more user-friendly by means of multimedia guides via satellites accessible for example from cell phones. In this way visitors can be steered towards alternative personalised and less crowded routes which they can follow with the help of multimedia texts and maps.

4 TWELVE PRINCIPLES FOR PLACE IDENTITY ENHANCEMENT

The case studies gave rise to 12 principles for place identity enhancement, created from a reasoned set of blueprints for the various experiments carried out using the PlaceMaker method [23–25].

1. *Identity resources of a place have to be protected and enhanced so as to give the place in question a distinctive character.*

In order to counter the standardisation of places which tends to make sites increasingly similar to one another, it becomes ever more necessary to protect identity resources. A site should have elements which make it unique and recognisable. In order to be sustainable, an urban project must be integrated with the identity of places.

2. *Place identity has to be determined with ad hoc methods.*

Place identity is a complex concept that requires identification of the various factors and elements which make up a place. There are many such elements forming place identity, increasingly compromised by the acceleration of urban change and globalisation. In order to make

identification as thorough as possible, *ad hoc* methods have to be used both to detect such complexity and specify guidelines for design.

3. *Attention to context is to be understood from a social, environmental and urban perspective.*
The context of a place has characteristics not only related to its architecture, urban form and culture, but also to the people who live there, and its environment, understood as natural resources. For sustainability in its broadest sense, respect of all these components is required.
4. *The maintenance of buildings, roads and public spaces should be programmed.*
Roads and public spaces have to be maintained in the same way as buildings. Programmed maintenance should be performed periodically in order to ensure constant quality of public spaces as well as buildings within.
5. *Places should perform functions which do not cause intensive use that can damage site quality.*
Monofunctional uses can cause damage to place identity. An example of this is the case of pedestrian thoroughfares of historical importance, used only for business. Combined uses of places should be aimed for, provided they do not compromise place identity.
6. *Local businesses should be enhanced.*
The intensive use of sites by mass tourism leads to businesses that result in rapid consumption of places at the expense of their culture. It is instead necessary to promote local businesses to ensure residents put down roots where they live.
7. *Users of a site should be questioned about place identity during both the survey and design phases, taking different needs into account.*
Site users, the prime recipients of urban transformation projects, should be interviewed at various stages in the transformation process of an area, with particular attention to the identity of the place in question. The project will thus be more likely to succeed since various needs will have been taken into consideration.
8. *Place identity should be monitored periodically.*
Given the great acceleration of the rate of urban change, it is important that place identity be periodically monitored in order to understand evolution and change in time and prevent identity being compromised.
9. *Vehicle use in areas with heavy pedestrian throughput should be avoided or slowed down.*
In emblematic thoroughfares and historical centres the use of private vehicles is an annoyance factor. In this respect, in such places vehicle speed should be slowed down with appropriate traffic calming measures, or private vehicles should be banned altogether. The use of bicycles and dedicated lanes should where possible be encouraged.
10. *The safety of users is paramount.*
The users of streets and public spaces in general need to be protected. In this respect, projects should ensure safety both as regards possible collisions with vehicles, with appropriate separation between the different types of flows, and as regards possible criminal acts, encouraging mixed uses of the places in question during the different times of the day.
11. *Proper enjoyment of the physical characteristics and natural beauty of the place should be considered a priority.*
We need to create places which foster the enjoyment of the elements that make up the history and culture of the place through projects which stimulate knowledge and sustainable use. By the same token, it is necessary to promote the enjoyment of all natural resources which are part of that place.
12. *Respect for place identity should be considered a sine qua non within the framework of a project's quality requirements.*

Respect for place identity lends quality to a project. Place identity should thus become an essential aspect of urban planning tools so that it becomes a fundamental requisite for project sustainability.

5 CONCLUSION

The paper presented the PlaceMaker method and the main results of three emblematic case studies. Furthermore it presents 12 principles for place identity enhancement, which were created from a reasoned set of blueprints for the various experiments carried out using this method for the analysis and design of the contemporary urban landscape.

The PlaceMaker method derived from the need to identify the elements and places that are the components of contemporary identity, many of which do not figure in traditional cartography, and to identify principles for their planning and enhancement.

The flexibility of the PlaceMaker method, as is apparent in the various case studies we have illustrated, enables it to be used in widely varying contexts and for a range of objectives. The investigation protocol can serve as a guide to be adapted and reinforced at some points, according to the characteristics of the place and the intended purposes.

The innovative aspect of this method consists, on one hand, in the integration of different modalities and instruments for obtaining the information required to render objective and measurable even those elements which are subjective and ephemeral, and in the construction of the complex map which sums up, by means of a graphic system of symbols and the relevant key, the data obtained; and on the other hand in exploiting the complexity of the data obtained to construct the planning guidelines.

Accordingly, the purpose of the 12 principles is to provide urban planning guidelines for the construction and enhancement of sustainable place identity. The concept of identity is interpreted in line with the definition of Kevin Lynch who refers this concept to the set of characteristics which make a place unique and recognisable.

Although the concept is intended as a set of characteristics in a positive sense, it is also possible that these features are not sustainable or are not consonant with the history and culture of the place itself. Indeed, the set of characteristics may consist, for example, of the shops whose furniture disfigures the ground floors of buildings and prevents appreciation of an urban thoroughfare, but which make that location recognisable. A further example might be the set of elements in a public space which makes that place distinctive but which people in that neighbourhood do not use since it fails to give them a sense of belonging.

The 12 principles aim to provide a check list which a project has to satisfy in order to enhance the identity of the place in question, making sure, however, that place identity is sustainable and is not used for the sole purpose of rapid consumption of intangible heritage. The principles should not be considered static, but dynamic, in keeping with the increasingly rapid rates of change in a place that continually leads to expanding the scope of the concept. These principles in their present form may thus be constantly updated to allow not only for changes in the contemporary city but also for new procedures and requirements in site design.

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