

NEAPOLITAN 'SLUMS': A NEW ERA FOR REGENERATION

To what extent can urban acupuncture offer a practical solution in city environments shaped by tradition and cultural influences?



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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

A street is more than just a street: it holds a deeper significance beyond its physical appearance. It is a tapestry of emotions, memories, and stories waiting to be unravelled with every step. Walking its familiar route can transport its wanderers back to carefree summer days, chasing shade from the sun's warmth, or evoke the relief of returning home after a long day's journey. It can awaken images of citywide festivities, with urban life spilling onto the streets in search of collective laughter and joy. Streets serve as custodians of countless lives, hidden behind every bump in the cobblestones, every mark on walls, and every scratch on lamp posts, weaving them all together into a tangible fabric of urban experiences and a community's shared claim to space.

Streets serve as vital connections between places, buzzing with movements, flows, activity and dynamism. They are where the pulse of urban existence beats the strongest, as people cross paths, activities, directions, destinations and stories. Despite being the most prevalent urban features, streets often get sidelined in discussions regarding city planning and public spaces. It is time to shed some proper light on these hidden gems of city identities and stories.

Within cities, perpetual cycles unfold as dwellers repeatedly navigate and renegotiate their shared living spaces. These ongoing processes manifest in the ever-shifting landscape of streets, where territorial boundaries are constantly being defined and challenged (Viderman et al., 2023, p.2). As streets intersect with the diverse rhythms of everyday life, their social, cultural and political landscapes undergo constant evolution, reflecting a dynamic interplay of boundaries and intersections.

The phenomenon of *temporary appropriation* of public spaces within streets emerges as pivotal within this constant push and waving of urban dynamics. Environmental psychologist Korosec-Serfaty (1976, as cited in Lara-Hernandez, 2019, p.8) first coined the term *appropriation* to describe this transitory process, wherein individuals interact actively with their surroundings. It implies an intrinsic reclamation of space, where individual or collective actions are carried out in divergence of the space's original purpose. This phenomenon manifests itself across many diverse urban landscapes: from the lively performances in Lý Thái T Square that animate the space, to the youth hangouts reimagining Iktinou Street in Thessaloniki, to the bustling commercial transformations of the Mexico City streets (Viderman et al., 2023, p.23).

As the frequency of temporary appropriation of public spaces rises, impacting the street viability and livability, it is increasingly vital to grasp the underlying factors driving its occurrence. The processes of settling and unsettling within urban environments are, in fact, not isolated 'incidents', but rather systemic phenomena stemming from disparities in territorial rights claimed within cities (Viderman et al., 2023, p.3). In essence, these processes signify a form of agency for citizens to assert their rights to space, enabling them to participate in shaping the city and challenging unequal access to space within urban environments.

The *Quartieri Spagnoli* embody the hidden struggles associated with temporary urban appropriation. This lively neighbourhood, located in the old part of Naples' central hub and characterised by a dense network of vicoli (small urban streets within the city centre), not only holds historical significance within the city's urban fabric but also reflects its enduring challenges. Here, multi-generational families inhabit crowded living spaces, compelling residents to extend their belongings and activities onto balconies, entrances and streets. Despite the evident decay of this part of the city centre, little effort has been made to improve living conditions in the Quartieri.

FIGURE 1.

Urban storage

2023

By Author



Municipal neglect, often justified by entrenched traditions and customs (Laino, 1984, p.28), exacerbates the situation. The sight of laundry-draped balconies and streets repurposed for storage evokes in passersby and tourists a sense of folkloric charm, encapsulated in the motto '*Saper campare e saper far campare*' (Knowing how to survive and how to let others live) (Coletta, 2022:87). The struggles of the Quartieri's citizens often seem to undergo a process of romanticization, represented in this motto and in many others. Tourists and the municipality almost seem to celebrate this neighbourhood's charm and embrace it as a lifestyle choice rather than a problem to be solved, not realising that the same elements they are busy celebrating and advertising are what is slowly eroding the Quartieri from within.

My research focuses on examining the complex urban dynamics of Naples, particularly in neighbourhoods like the *Quartieri Spagnoli*. I aim to assess potential solutions to enhance the living conditions within this neighbourhood. Specifically, my investigation will explore the feasibility of employing urban acupuncture and regeneration as strategies to address the challenges confronted by residents. This will involve examining two examples of regeneration strategies, analysing their respective success and failures, and extrapolating those insights to the Quartieri.

Given the renowned richness of tradition and folklore of the Neapolitan urban context, my study will also take into account the impact of culture on the implementation of any regeneration activities. I will explore concepts such as the production of space, place identity, and placemaking. To frame my research, I will draw upon the theoretical perspectives of architectural theorists, namely Lefebvre and Foucault, whose works provide valuable insights into how spaces influence their inhabitants and vice versa.

Through the analysis of the interplay between urban spaces and cultural influences, employing methods of on-the-ground photographic studies and a series of analytical illustrations, I aim to shed a light on the underlying dynamics contributing to the unique challenges faced by residents in historical neighbourhoods like the *Quartieri Spagnoli*. Central to my research is the exploration of the following question:

NEAPOLITAN 'SLUMS': A NEW ERA FOR REGENERATION

To what extent can urban acupuncture offer a practical solution in city environments shaped by tradition and cultural influences?

Through this inquiry, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of how urban interventions can be tailored to address the specific needs and contexts of historically rich but economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods like those found in Naples.

CHAPTER 2:

Quartieri Spagnoli

A visual essay of temporary appropriation

‘For me Naples is not the Vesuvius, or Forcella, or via Caracciolo, or Posillipo: the heart and womb, the top and the bottom of the city is in the Quartieri Spagnoli’ – (De Masi, 1982).

Located at the pulsating heart of Naples’ historical centre, nestled between the two central axes of Via Toledo and Corso Vittorio Emanuele, lie the iconic *Quartieri Spagnoli*. Referred to by many as the quintessential essence of Naples, this vibrant neighbourhood radiates a palpable energy, fueled by commercial activities, artisanal enterprises, and active displays of public life. Often also described as a *sponge neighbourhood* due to their immense variety of dwelling typologies (Wagenaar et al., 2015, p.561), the *Quartieri Spagnoli* have long been home to a very diverse range of residents, living on the margins of the city’s societal hierarchy. Comprising a labyrinthine network of narrow alleys, arranged in an orthogonal pattern across 170 blocks of densely packed four to five-story buildings, this working-class district accommodates approximately 15.000 Neapolitans. The area boasts a population density that surpasses the city’s average and ranks amongst the highest in Europe (Amato and Rossi, 2003, p.14).

Despite their central location, the *Quartieri Spagnoli* have persistently occupied a peripheral position within the societal and urban fabric of Naples. Throughout its history, the neighbourhood has consistently been burdened with the stigma of criminality, illicit activities and a reputation for inaccessibility and danger, contributing to its marginalised status within the city. Founded in the sixteenth century to house Spanish soldiers and protect them from external threats (Amato and Rossi, 2003, p.16), the *Quartieri Spagnoli*’s distinct urban fabric is a clear reflection of its historical roots. The deliberate design of the Quartieri, with their intricate network of hidden routes, their abundance of narrow passageways and lack of open squares and public spaces (originally conceived as a protective measure), inadvertently created the perfect conditions for illicit activities to proliferate. This design not only facilitated but also perpetuated cycles of irregularity and disorder within the vicoli. These same cycles have given rise to the practices of spatial appropriation visible in the *Quartieri Spagnoli* today.

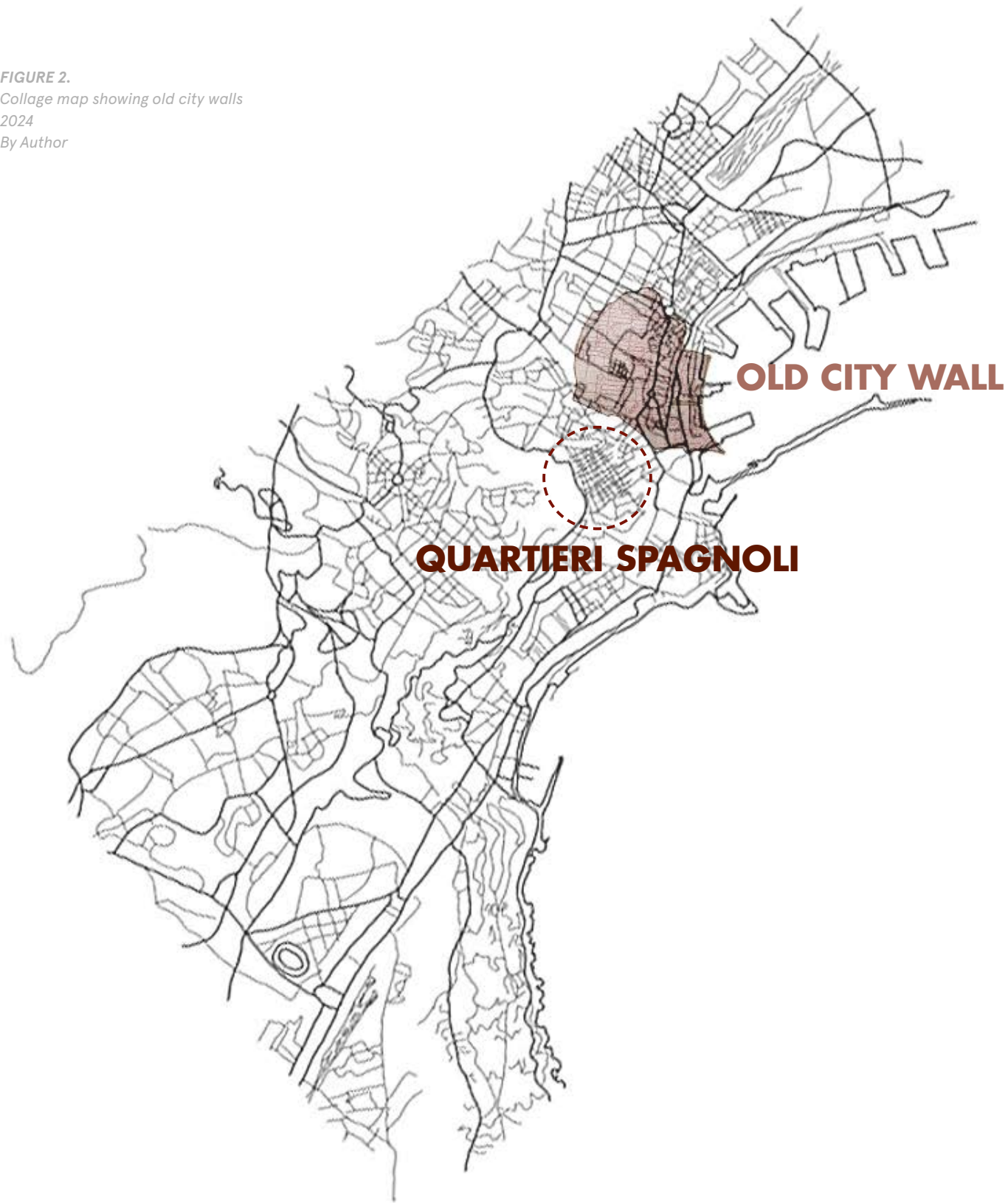
‘To the hellhole of the Quartieri one does not climb to visit the monuments or the churches but to see in action, twenty- four seven, the most complex urban machine existing in Europe ’ – (De Masi, 1982).

Amidst their perceived inaccessibility and isolation, the *Quartieri Spagnoli* also possess another dual identity: they simultaneously serve as a shelter for complex social dynamics and as a genuine representation of Naples’ spirit. In fact, they stand as a testament to the raw essence of Neapolitan life, offering an unfiltered glimpse into the city’s middle-class culture. However, this outward facade of authenticity and openness is no more than just a show: the only way to truly comprehend the *Quartieri Spagnoli* and their tangible realities is to live within them and experience the ramifications of the dominant communities that shape their landscape and living conditions.

While the following chapters will delve further into the concepts of spatial appropriation and the various attempts at regeneration within the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, this chapter seeks to provide an authentic portrayal of the neighbourhood’s charms and challenges. Through a visual exploration divided into three sections, readers will embark on a virtual journey through the Quartieri’s streets, gaining insight into their spatial qualities and experiential dimensions. Finally, this section will also consist of a photographic examination of different instances of spatial appropriation within the vicoli, shedding a tangible light on the dynamic interplay between this neighbourhood’s residents and their urban environment.

This chapter is intended to serve as an important tool for understanding the *Quartieri Spagnoli* not only as a theoretical construct, but as a lived experience as well. Through the use of visual media, readers are transported to the heart of the Quartieri, they are connected with the residents and their surroundings and can truly discern the qualities of the neighbourhood as an experience rather than a space.

FIGURE 2.
Collage map showing old city walls
2024
By Author



2.1 Naples and the historical squatting framework behind the Quartieri

'A majestic building, reddish, pompous, flaunts its hundreds of windows: and, next to it, one discovers a void, and a low barricading wall extends, and extends'... 'and behind this wall, far beyond it, rise masses of filthy, crumbling, miserable houses, of all sizes, stained with all of the stigmas of poverty and sins' - (Serao, 1906:36).

Transitioning from the bustling commercial boulevard of Via Toledo into the old-fashioned and folkloric *Quartieri Spagnoli* feels like crossing an invisible boundary and stepping into another dimension. The transition is not only physical but also sensorial, as the sights, sounds and atmosphere undergo a noticeable shift. The meticulously adorned shop fronts of the mainstream avenue quickly give way to a realm of colourful disorder, spontaneous vitality, and unvarnished authenticity. The narrow alleys teem with life, with vendors loudly marketing their goods, youths rushing through the streets on scooters, and residents going about their daily routines. Here, amidst the maze-like vicoli, beyond the fluttering flags and the makeshift selling points, the true essence of Neapolitan life reveals itself in all its rawness and vitality. Every corner tells an open, unfiltered and unapologetic story of the neighbourhood's past, present and future. However, to fully grasp the essence of the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, one must also delve into its rich history, which informs its character and identity today.

The current state of the Quartieri, both spatially and socially, is deeply intertwined with its historical evolution and the broader narrative of the city of Naples. The city's origins date back to the 14th and 12th centuries BCE and were marked by the arrival of the Greeks into its territory (Coletta, 2022, p.13). Their presence left an indelible imprint on Naples' development, shaping its urban landscape and influencing various aspects of its society, politics, culture, and arts, although their main contribution to the city's physical layout included the erection of protective walls. The protective barricades delineated the central and peripheral areas of the city, thereby defining Naples into *inner* and *outer zones* (Coletta, 2022).

Over time, the inner core of the city, enclosed within its fortified walls, flourished into a hub of cultural activity, boasting magnificent churches, monasteries, and cultural centres. However, this prosperity came at the expense of neglecting other elements of the city, particularly its lower-class citizens. These institutions gradually saturated the available space within the inner city walls, leaving little room for residential housing, especially for the city's proletarians (Coletta, 2022, p.18). This neglect of the lower-class citizens within Naples had profound social implications. As the city's elite focused their attention and resources on cultural and economic development within the inner core, the lower classes were left to fend for themselves in increasingly dire conditions. With limited access to adequate housing and basic services, residents of these areas, including what would later become known as the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, faced numerous challenges, including overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions, and inadequate healthcare. This neglect perpetuated cycles of poverty and marginalisation, exacerbating social inequalities within the city.

By the latter half of the 8th century, Naples found itself in a state of extreme distress, dealing with over 40.000 residents, rampant pestilences, and pervasive urban decay. At this point, many citizens had already begun seeking refuge in precarious dwellings erected beyond the confines of the city walls. These spontaneous settings, free from urban regulations and flexible in their architectural configurations, came to be known as the *open city*, providing a makeshift haven for those marginalised and neglected by city authorities (Coletta, 2022, p. 20).



FIGURE 3. Via Toledo e Quartieri Spagnoli. From "ACCADEANAPOLI," 2020 (<https://www.accadeanapoli.com/via-toledo-e-quartieri-spagnoli/#prettyPhoto>).

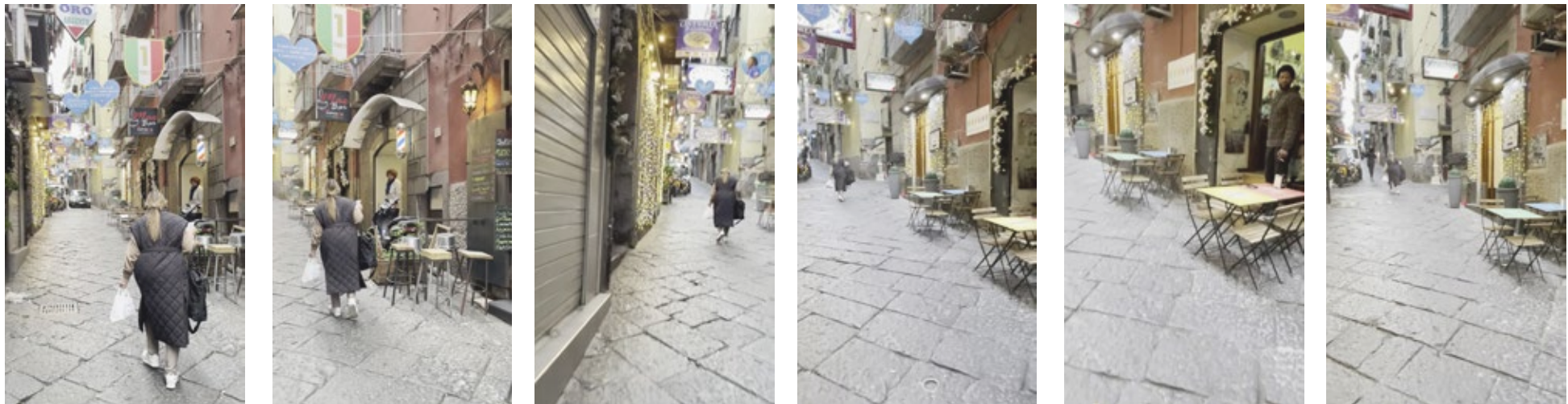
While the true origins of the *Quartieri Spagnoli* can be traced back to the foundation of the open city and the *outer city*, their official establishment is recognised much later, at the end of the 15th century, during the invasion and appropriation of Naples by Spanish troops under the guidance of Don Pedro. The influx of Spanish forces had devastating consequences for the proletarian population, who were already marginalised and living in precarious settlements within Naples' *open city*. The Spanish invasion further marginalised these residents, forcing them into basement dwellings and even more unsettled squatting infrastructures that spread across the neighbourhood like fungi (Coletta, 2022, p.23). Additionally, the presence of the Spanish colonisers significantly increased the city's population, exacerbating even further the urban dynamics of Naples and of the Quartieri: population rates surged from 50.000 residents to a total of 200.000 residents, making Naples the most populated city in Europe and the most densely populated by that time (Coletta, 2022, p.33).

The Spanish occupation also marked the birth of the Quartieri's iconic vicoli network, a lasting architectural legacy for the neighbourhood. The physical appearance of the vicoli and the Quartieri itself was originally conceived as a protective measure for the troops' families residing in the neighbourhood at the time. The masterplan of the area, both then and now, was characterised by an intricate network of hidden routes, narrow passageways, and a lack of open squares and public spaces (Amato and Rossi, 2003, p.16). Since their inception, this design has acted as a catalyst for irregularity and disorder, perpetuating cycles that are still visible to this day.

Today, the *Quartieri Spagnoli* neighbourhood is home to circa 75.000 residents, occupying a territory spanning 2.89 km² with a population density of approximately 26.000 residents per km² (Istat, 2011). While the neighbourhood is no longer plagued by epidemics as it was in previous historical periods, many legacies in terms of living conditions, hygiene, and spatial organisation still persist. The presence of makeshift structures, illegal use of spaces, and openly discarded trash contribute to unsustainable hygiene and living standards, suggesting minimal progress over time. Historically, the neighbourhood has developed resilience and a sense of community in response to the marginalisation and social inequality it has endured over the years, so much so that it has become ingrained in its identity. One can therefore only wonder if something so deeply entrenched in history can truly be changed by urban regeneration practices or whether it is a lost cause.

2.2 The vicoli as a circulation sequence

FIGURES 4.
Meandering the vicoli part 1
2023
By Author



FIGURES 5.
Meandering the vicoli part 2
2023
By Author



FIGURES 6.
Meandering the vicoli part 3
 2023
 By Author



FIGURES 7.
Meandering the vicoli part 4
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 8.
From a balcony to a balcony
2023
By Author

2.3 The Quartieri Spagnoli : a visual representation





FIGURE 9.
Behind the railing
2023
By Author



FIGURE 10.
A view under the balcony
2023
By Author



FIGURE 11.
Exposed laundry 1
2023
By Author



FIGURE 12.
Exposed laundry 2
2023
By Author

FIGURE 13.
Welcome to the Quartieri
2023
By Author



FIGURE 15.
Folkloric semiotics 2
2023
By Author



FIGURE 14.
Folkloric semiotics 1
2023
By Author





FIGURE 16.
Folkloric semiotics 3
2023
By Author



FIGURE 17.
The street is the new trash 1
2023
By Author



FIGURE 18.
The street is the new trash 2
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 19.
The street is the new trash 3
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 20.
The street is the new trash 4
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 21.
The street is the new trash 5
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 22.
The Pandora box
2023
By Author



FIGURE 23.
Storage and transition
2023
By Author



FIGURE 24.
Quartieri's chairs
2023
By Author



FIGURE 25.
Urban storage
2023
By Author



FIGURE 26.
Piles of public waste
2023
By Author



FIGURE 27.
Tombola and socks
2023
By Author



FIGURE 28.
Improvised sales
2023
By Author

FIGURE 29.
Fruit sales
2023
By Author





FIGURE 30.
Street transactions
2023
By Author



FIGURE 31.
Street mannequins
2023
By Author



FIGURE 32.
Quartieri's commerce 1
2023
By Author



FIGURE 33.
Viability vs. food
2023
By Author



FIGURE 34.
Quartieri's commerce 2
2023
By Author



FIGURE 35.
Between commerce and semiotics
2023
By Author



FIGURE 36.
The vicolo's labyrinth 1
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 37.
The vicolo's labyrinth 2
 2023
 By Author



FIGURE 38.
The vicolo's labyrinth 3
2023
By Author



FIGURE 39.
The vicolo's labyrinth 4
2023
By Author



FIGURE 40.
The vicolo's labyrinth 5
2023
By Author



FIGURE 41.
Secret doors
2023
By Author

FIGURE 42.
Secret passageways
2023
By Author





FIGURE 43.
Infinite corners
2023
By Author



FIGURE 44.
This is the Quartieri Spagnoli
2023
By Author

CHAPTER 3:

Theoretical Framework

A study of production of space, placemaking and users

A city and its urban spaces are never static entities. Despite continual efforts by authorities to establish stable and secure environments, resilient to the passage of time and challenges, urban spaces inherently remain in a perpetual state of transition and unsettlement (Viderman et al., 2023, p.1). Within cities lies a delicate equilibrium between spatial production, destruction, identity formation and space appropriation. This delicate balance is constantly subject to pressures, arising from the citizens' agency to claim their space and assert their *right to the city*. While architects and urbanists often prioritise the settling process of cities, striving for the creation of precise and stable *conceptualised spaces* (Lefebvre, 1974, p.33), this thesis is more focused on exploring urban spaces and streets from the viewpoint of unsettlement, temporary appropriation and destruction of predefined spaces.

From my personal standpoint, examining spaces through the lens of their unsettlement offers valuable insights into their socio-spatial dynamics and potentials. Unsettlement often stems from disparities and social exigencies within cities (Viderman et al., 2023, p.2) and therefore studying the process of unsettling inevitably entails understanding the agencies at play, shedding light on dysfunctional dynamics and citizens' responses. However, understanding the process of unsettlement and its root causes first requires an understanding of its counterpart: the settling process and its production. The concept of space production and placemaking is multifaceted and greatly contested within architectural theory. According to Montgomery (1998, as cited in Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, p.710), place production encompasses both physical and psychological dimensions, merging elements of physical form, activity and meaning into the singular dimension of what is referred to as *sense of place* or *place identity*. *Place identity* often serves as the ultimate goal behind space production, as it renders spaces recognizable by defining their underlying characteristics. Therefore, when studying space production, one cannot overlook the concept of place identity, as doing so would neglect a fundamental element of it.

This chapter aims to delve into the architectural theory surrounding spatial production, placemaking, and place identity, drawing from the works of theorists such as Lefebvre and Foucault. Spanning different timeframes, architectural movements and opposite schools of thought, these theorists provide two contrasting perspectives of the spatial production discourse. They provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for analysing the *Quartieri Spagnoli* in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. The intention of this chapter is to extract insights from the architectural theory underpinning spatial production in order to provide a clear explanation to certain social and spatial behavioural patterns within cities, and the *Quartieri Spagnoli* specifically, which might otherwise appear as arbitrary and unregulated.

3.1 Understanding the dynamics of spatial production and placemaking

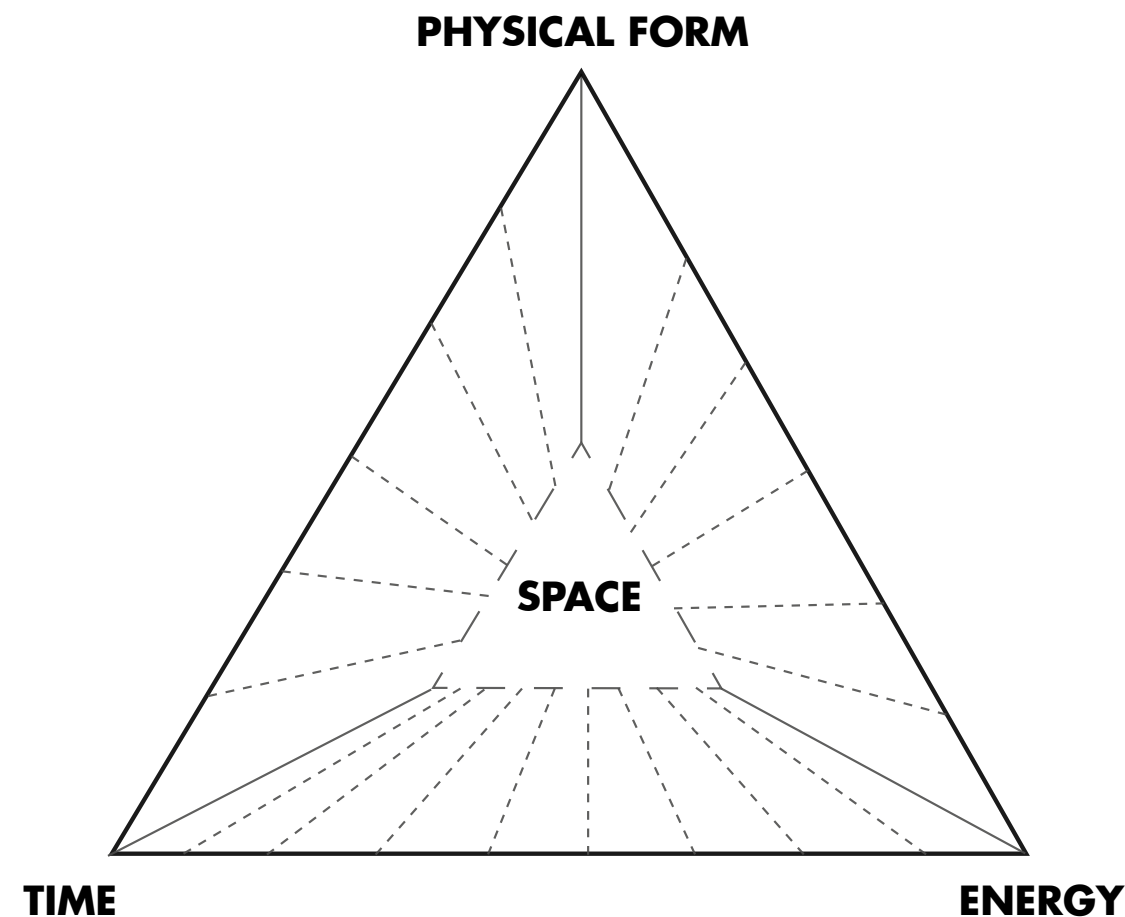


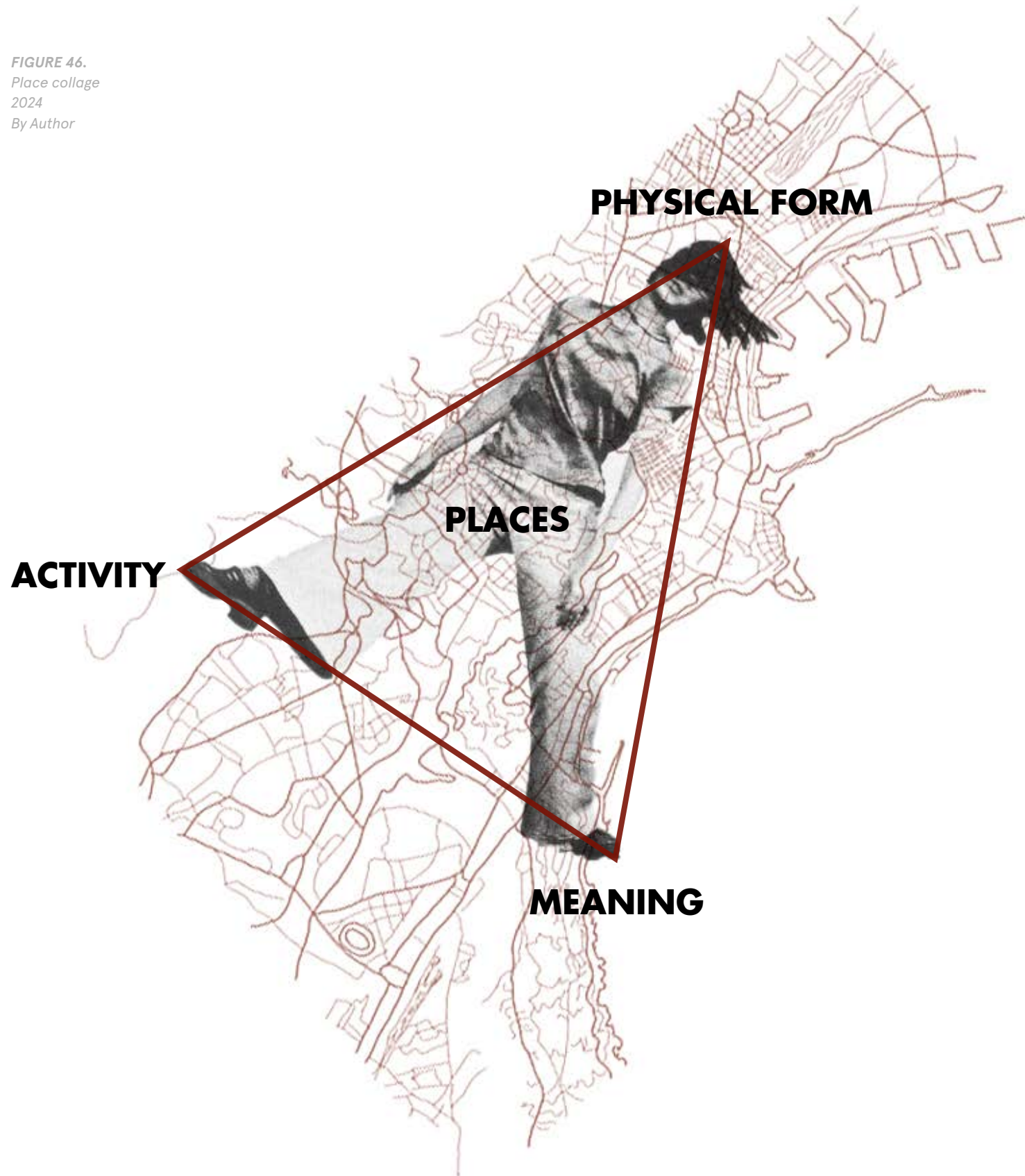
FIGURE 45.
Space diagram
2024
By Author

The discourse surrounding production of space is one that is deeply contested in architectural theory and requires a nuanced understanding, beginning with the differentiation between space and place, as well as a precise definition of production. *Space* is often perceived as a framework of geometries encompassing distances, directions, sizes, shapes and volumes, delineated by boundaries and thresholds, thus constituting physical entities (Gieryn, 2000, as cited in Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, p.709). Consequently, the term production of space denotes the crafting of physical constructs over time, through a series of repetitive actions and gestures (Lefebvre, 1974, p.70). Conceptually, this term implies the creation of a product, which, by definition, is something constructed and replicated by various actors (Lefebvre, 1974, p.37). According to this definition, space as an object lacks intrinsic meaning until charged with interpretation, narration, perceptions, emotions, and significance; collectively, these actions transform a space into a place. This pivotal transformation marks the beginning of the process of *placemaking* (Relph, 1976, as cited in Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, p.709). In everyday language, there is a crucial distinction between the meanings and connotations associated with the terms *space* and *place*. A significant aspect distinguishing the two words is their associated intensity: while space may possess physical dimensions and properties, it is the inherent intensity associated with the concept of place that gives it potency and primacy (Dovey, 2010, p.2). *Places* intertwine social dynamics and temporality with spatial dimensions in daily life (Dovey, 2010, p.2).

Places are typically distinguished from one another by the elements within them that remain constant and define their unique characteristics, or in other words, their identity. A place's identity is closely linked with the spatial practices that occur within it and the identities of the individuals who inhabit it. Human identity is, in fact, inherently reflected in architecture and in urban spaces, as the concept of place encompasses not only physical attributes but also psychological elements (Montgomery, 1998, as cited in Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, p.710). This human factor complicates discussions about places and placemaking, contrasting with the relative simplicity of analysing production of space as a purely abstract physical entity within architectural discourse. It is easier to separate the human element from the construction of environments, viewing the process solely in terms of physical form, time, and energy (Lefebvre, 1974). However, *placemaking* is a much more intricate process, involving the additional layers of meaning and activity atop the previously mentioned elements (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015, p.711). Ignoring the human component means neglecting a fundamental aspect crucial for understanding *placemaking*.

The *Quartieri Spagnoli* is a particularly inviting case study to understand how placemaking processes feature in the fabric of its streets. While it might seem beneficial for the discussion to regard streets and the *Quartieri Spagnoli* as mere physical entities, detached from human influence, such an approach would oversimplify the complexity of urban environments and particularly the intricate complexity of the Quartieri. This reductionist view would make the study more manageable from an empirical standpoint, allowing for standardised conclusions and model conceptualizations (Lefebvre, 1974, p.40). However, we know by now that urban spaces are not simply products of architectural design: they are interlinked with spatial practices and symbolic representations shaped by human interactions (Lefebvre, 1974, p.33). Streets, in particular, serve as dynamic channels connecting various places, teeming with life, movement and narratives. Hence, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of spatial and representational practices within them, recognizing streets not only as physical entities but also as vital representations of urban life. Thus within this thesis study, streets and the *Quartieri Spagnoli* will be identified as places rather than spaces, therefore referring to their formation and shaping as placemaking instead of production of space.

FIGURE 46.
Place collage
2024
By Author



Urban regeneration involves the revitalization of urban spaces, often praised as a promising solution to issues of decay, inequality, and sustainability within cities. However, implementing successful urban regeneration projects presents significant challenges, particularly in historically significant urban areas where a rich tapestry of memories and identities is interwoven with the environment. Attempting to regenerate such places without due consideration of the cultural production and inherent identity risks creating what can be defined as Augé's *non-places*, spaces devoid of identity and meaning to the point where they do not hold enough significance to be regarded as places (Ujang & Zakaria, 2015, p.711). Those tasked with urban regeneration must therefore first grasp the essence and identity of the place they are improving in order to authentically replicate its qualities and enhance its features.

This underscores the importance of understanding placemaking and place identity, particularly in the context of the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, a historically significant district of Naples. Regeneration efforts must take into account various factors, but particularly the unique sense of place and identity inherent to the place. Culture plays a pivotal role in shaping urban environments, serving as a reflection of the values and practices of the community it serves. The spatial behaviours and norms observed within the Quartieri are a direct manifestation of cultural influences and tradition, whether conveyed through behavioural norms (or *non-norms*), or through symbolic features (Ettehad et al., 2014, p.413).

Despite the Quartieri's dilapidated state and challenging living conditions, it remains a deeply cherished and culturally rich neighbourhood among its residents. Hence, culture emerges as a critical factor in discussions surrounding its placemaking and regenerating within this unique urban environment.

3.2 The relationship between users and places: Lefebvre vs. Foucault

In exploring the interaction between users and places, Lefebvre and Foucault's views on the topic are useful to further unpack the relationship between users and place. In his seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre presents a comprehensive theory of space and social space. He defines social space as the realm of society and social life, shaped by the actions of both individuals and collectives (Lefebvre, 1974, p.31). According to Lefebvre, all spaces inevitably become social spaces once inhabited by people, making them social products created over various timeframes. He further delineates spaces into three fundamental components: representations of space, representational space and spatial practices. *Representations of space* refer to the conceptualization and production of spaces according to their designers, architects, planners and urbanists. *Representational space*, on the other hand, refers to space as perceived through images and symbols, reflecting visually and iconographically the experiences and identities of its inhabitants and users. Lastly, *spatial practices* encompass the societal activities and behaviours that occur within a space, shaping and defining its usage within the broader social context.

FIGURES 47.
Different elements of space by Lefebvre
2024
By Author

REPRESENTATION OF
SPACE



REPRESENTATIONAL
SPACE



SPATIAL
PRACTICES



When applying Lefebvre’s three concepts to the context of the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, we can unveil layers of understanding of the place that would otherwise be hidden amidst the apparent chaos of the vicoli’s appearance. *Representation of space* within the vicoli is embodied in the streets themselves: their cobblestone materiality, narrow clearance and intricate connections; it is the actual physicality of the Quartieri. Secondly, we encounter the notion of *representational space*, manifested in the Quartieri’s folkloric expressions: the red chilly amulets (*corni*) adorning the streets, graffiti, flags and the Maradona iconography. The representational side of the Quartieri is what they are mostly renowned for, what makes them stand out amongst other Neapolitan streets and what contributes to creating most of their unique identity. Lastly, we observe the *spatial practices* of the Quartieri, including the storing of personal belongings on the streets, the public commerce and the display of laundry on balconies. These spatial practices, though also visually symbolic and intrinsic to the image of the Quartieri, are fundamentally necessary to the functioning of the Quartieri, as they are driven by the necessity of space and the overflow of residents into public areas.

In light of Lefebvre’s theory on social space and its application to the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, we could claim the placemaking within this neighbourhood as intimately intertwined with its inhabitants and their social norms and behaviours. The identity of the Quartieri is, in fact, defined by its social practices, setting its streets apart from others in the city. The Quartieri are the expression of the myriad of lives that they enclose and their strong imagery and visual impact tend to provoke a profound sense of attachment both from citizens and visitors. The vicoli are perceived by locals and visitors as the spontaneous and authentic representation of the city, making them a cherished item by many amongst the city centre (Coletta, 2022, p.70). They are, therefore, not merely influenced by their residents; they serve as a reflection of their users’ interaction and life experiences.

Viewing the vicoli as a reflection of their users establishes an unbalanced relationship between the two, with the users exerting a dominant influence over the spaces. This naturally prompts the question: is there any merit in attempting urban regeneration schemes within the Quartieri when they are evidently under the control and influence of their users? Most likely, the answer to such a question lies in the concept of power and discipline. Currently, the Quartieri are victims of an uneven power dynamic, within which spaces are being overshadowed by the dominance of the users, who not only claim ownership but also assert complete control. These unruly dynamics cause the deterioration of the Quartieri and their streets, rendering vain any pursuit of change. A telling example is the failed attempt to construct a new metro station in Via Toledo in 2000, aimed at improving public transport and viability, but instead strongly opposed and ultimately overthrown by the residents of the vicoli (Laino, 1984, p.28).

In contrast with the previously explained theories on social space by Lefebvre, Foucault’s theories offer a diverging perspective on space, users and power dynamics. According to his ideas, power not only shapes reality but can also be guided through specific schemes and techniques of discipline to create certain settings and societal conditions (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). He asserts that discipline creates the framework within which individuals can be bound and guided. In the context of space, placemaking and spatial production, Foucault’s theories suggest that spaces regulated through controlling mechanisms possess the ability to influence people’s behaviours within them, by establishing a collective system of surveillance and adherence to such discipline (Foucault, 1977, p.201).

Within his work, *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault illustrates his theories on spatial control and discipline through the precedent of the *Panopticon*, Betham’s prison design characterised by a clever technique of surveillance. The fundamental principle of the *Panopticon* involved a central tower, encircled by a ring-shaped arrangement of cells. Located within the central tower could be found the guard, who was provided with a constant visibility over the inmates without being seen by them. This design shows a power mechanism wherein visibility serves as a central element for power and behavioural control. The *Panopticon*’s arrangement instilled in the inmates a perpetual sense of awareness of potential observation, thereby ensuring the automatic operation of discipline within the prison, even in the absence of the guard; the potential of surveillance at any time was sufficient to maintain order among the establishment (Foucault, 1977, p.202).

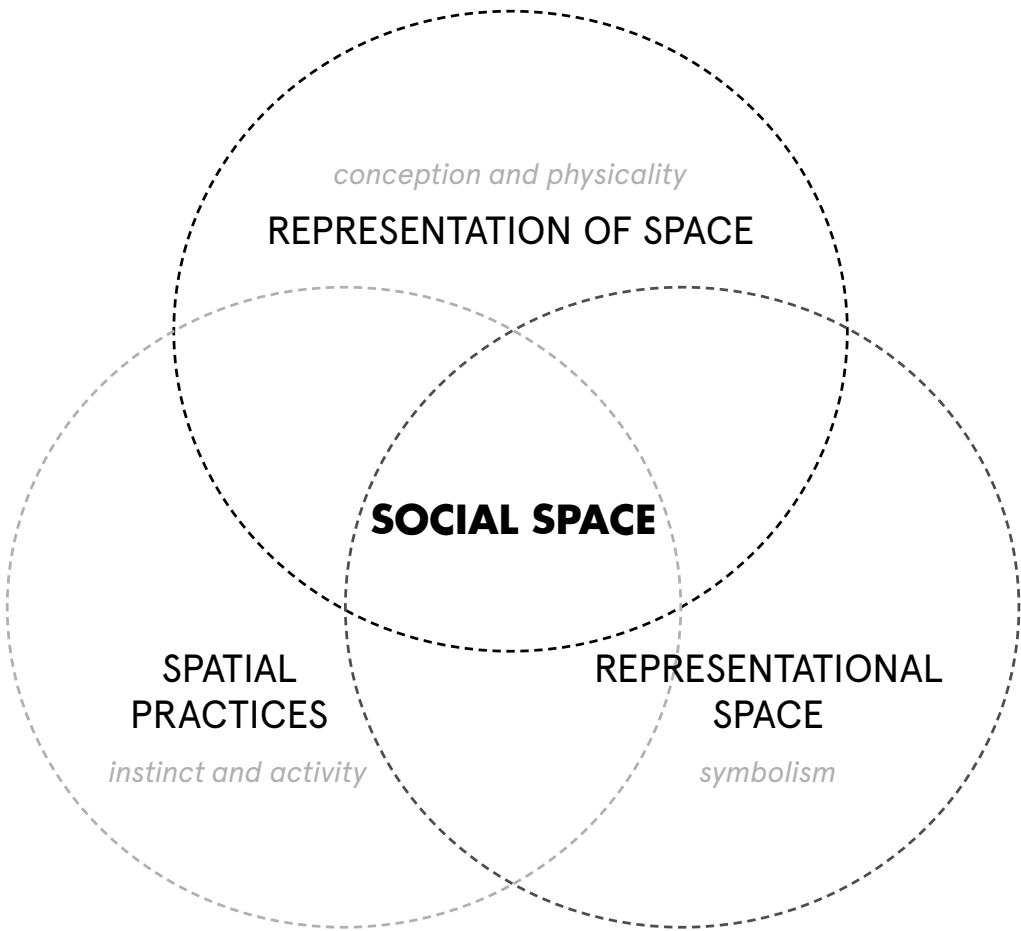
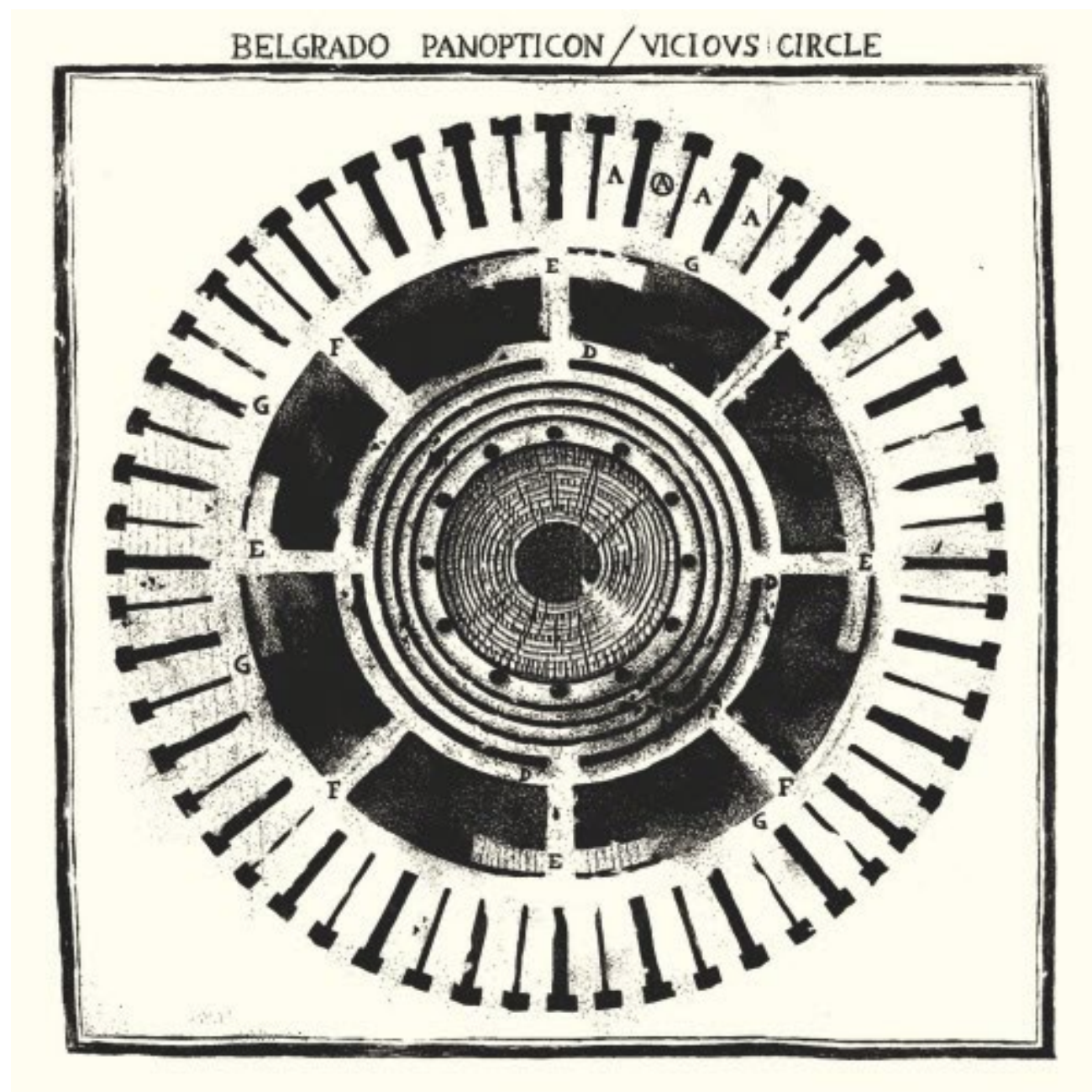


FIGURE 48.
Social space diagram
2024
By Author

FIGURE 49. Panopticon/ Vicious Circle. From "bandcamp," by Belgrado, 2012 (<https://belgrado.bandcamp.com/album/panopticon-vicious-circle>). Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 DEED



The *Panopticon*, with its utilisation of visibility and architectural configurations to regulate prisoners' behaviour, serves as a compelling example of the influence that spaces can exert over individuals and their actions. Undoubtedly, the *Panopticon* represents an extreme case, shedding light on the potentially negative implementation of spatial power dynamics. While the *Panopticon* employs power to modify behaviour, it does so through the imposition of fear rather than through the creation of a common sense of responsibility towards discipline; the significance and relevance of the *Panopticon* concept are not necessarily limited to a negative connotation. When considering the underlying principles behind Betham's establishment and their translation for shaping spatial behaviours within the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, the precedent gains a further layer of understanding and validity.

The primary issue undermining the *Quartieri Spagnoli* is the absence of the disciplinary mechanisms inherent to the *Panopticon*. The Quartieri are characterised by a permanent state of chaos, driven by the forced appropriation of spaces by users and a mindset of '*taking what is rightfully mine*' due to perceived inequalities. This behaviour stems from necessity but also represents the subversion of an already unbalance power dynamic, where the marginalised population, neglected by authorities, rebels against their circumstances by seizing control.

The solution to urban problems of the Quartieri, therefore, lies in rectifying this unbalance. By implementing urban planning schemes that address the spatial needs of citizens and incorporate their voices and the neighbourhood's identity, a transformative change can be initiated. This approach involves harnessing the community's pride and participation, creating a sense of ownership and responsibility. Similar to the *Panopticon*, once such a system is established, it becomes self-sustaining. If urban regeneration efforts are embraced by the community and integrated into the Quartieri's identity, they can serve as a mechanism for establishing and maintaining a power relationship that operates independently, ensuring the preservation of newfound balance.

CHAPTER 4:

The Urban Regeneration Wave

The potential of urban regeneration initiatives: successes and failures

The global population is steadily rising, with urban areas experiencing exponential growth. Europe, in particular, has witnessed a silent expansion of what is defined as an *occupational crisis*, disproportionately affecting urban youth alongside other segments of the population (Russo, 2014, p.IX). Such occupational crisis and the lack of available living spaces within cities has led to significant conflicts between city residents and what can be termed as *city users*, particularly evident in public spaces where simultaneous and incompatible functions often meet and clash. Inequality within urban landscapes has indeed become increasingly evident due to the distinct differences in living conditions among the various city's population groups: many conflicts surrounding public space, in fact, stem from its appropriation by lower-income communities. Whilst some city residents benefit from spacious homes and extensive backyards, others are confined to cramped apartments and inhabitable living conditions, spilling out onto the streets in search of even the smallest spaces (Russo, 2014, p.XI–XII).

Social inequality, though mostly subtle, pervades most cities and is often overlooked, particularly in architectural academia and in Western contexts (Hassan, 2018). Some cities exhibit more *controlled* forms of social disparity, resulting almost harmlessly in the correct functioning of the urban environments. This is the case of Thessaloniki and its street Iktinou where, following the 2010 Greek financial crisis, unequal access to space manifested through migration of young citizens from bars and spaces of consumption into streets and public squares (Viderman et al., 2023, p.23). However, some other urban settings are more intensely affected by the consequences of social inequality, resulting in severe disruptions and urban uninhabitability. An example of this trend is evident in the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, as shown in the previous chapters. Whilst the Quartieri's irregular appropriations have become increasingly detrimental to the city's urban well-being, Naples' municipality seems to constantly turn a blind eye to the disparities between the neighbourhood and the rest of the city, failing to uphold the fundamental rights and equal access to urban resources for all citizens.

In the explorations included in the previous sections, I have dissected the Quartieri's current squatting crisis and urban appropriation from various angles: starting from tracing the historical roots of the area's social disparities and poor reputation, to the actual physical manifestation of inequality in the form of temporary urban appropriation analysed through the architectural theories on space usage and production. This section will now shift the focus to investigating potential solutions rather than pondering solely on problems.

Explorations of neighbourhoods like the *Quartieri Spagnoli* highlight the urgent need to revitalise and celebrate existing spaces, preserving their identity while promoting healthy and renewable use of their urban settings. Urban regeneration, an emerging and widely adopted strategy within recent years, aims to address urban instability by revitalising decayed spaces, fostering economic growth, and enhancing environmental sustainability (Russo, 2014, p.59). As urban theorists emphasise, democracy relies on the availability of contemporary and functioning public spaces, and true equality necessitates fair and equitable access to them.

Various approaches to urban regeneration are being implemented across cities today, ranging from top-down initiatives led by architects and municipal authorities to more participatory models that involve citizen engagement in design and construction. Among these approaches, urban acupuncture, conceived by Finnish architect Marco Casagrande, offers an insightful perspective on revitalising urban areas in what he refers to as *Third Generation City*. This section will delve into the principles underlying urban acupuncture and assess their potential applicability, particularly in historical contexts like those of the Quartieri.

While the outcomes of this study will be speculative, this section will draw insights from real-life case studies of urban regeneration projects implemented in diverse cultural settings. Two main projects will be examined: the Largo Baracche regeneration project in the Quartieri Spagnoli and the design of the Parque Comunitario La Pantalla in Cumana, Venezuela. By analysing the factors contributing respectively to the failure and success of these projects, this study aims to provide a better understanding of the future of urban regeneration efforts in historical contexts and ultimately address the research question regarding their feasibility.

4.1 Temporary appropriation and the theories of urban acupuncture

People possess an inherent inclination to interact with and shape their urban environment, often expressed through *temporary appropriation*. This phenomenon, far from chaotic and aimless, underscores a profound need for affirmation and permanence. However, there is a common tendency to confuse *temporary appropriation* with *informality*, even within urban studies. While *temporary appropriation* arises from a sense of identity and belonging, predominantly informal in nature, *informality* involves processes and activities that challenge established formal systems, such as the illegal occupation of land for housing by impoverished and marginalised communities (Lutzoni, 2016, as cited in Lara-Hernandez, 2019, p.25). In the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, both temporary appropriation and informality are evident in the use of the streets.

Devlin (2017, as cited in Lara-Hernandez, 2019, p.24) identifies two distinct drivers behind informal practices: firstly, the urgency to meet basic human needs and to survive, typically observed among the urban poor segment; and secondly the pursuit of convenience, efficiency, or creative expression, exhibited by more affluent residents. The former driver is referred to as *informality of need*, while the latter is termed *informality of desire*. By distinguishing between these two types of informality, urban planners and policymakers can develop targeted interventions to address the underlying issues and improve the overall quality of life in the neighbourhood. While the concept of *informality of need* is commonly associated with contexts in the Global South, settings like the *Quartieri Spagnoli* emphasise its relevance in more Western contexts as well.

In the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, the *informality of desire* initially appears to be predominant. This is evident through the iconographic and semiotic characteristics of the vicoli, which feature folkloric symbols like the corni, banners displaying typical expressions, and widespread tokens of support for the local football team such as t-shirts and flags. This form of informality is typically benign in nature and even captivating for tourists and visitors. It contributes to defining the Quartieri's identity and culture, arising from a need for expression rather than a manifestation of inequality. However, it also serves as a distraction, masking the more critical and extreme forms of appropriation behind its colourful facade.

Informality of need within the Quartieri poses significant challenges for the city at an urban level, yet it is consistently overlooked by the municipality of Naples. This form of informality manifests in various ways within the area, notably in the street's utilisation as public storage, the disruptive presence of trash and debris on the ground, and the display of laundry hangings from windows, balconies or directly onto the street. However, *informality of need* extends beyond the residents' activities; it permeates the neighbourhood like a virus, drawing in illegal and informal sellers. These last exploit the area, seeing it as a suitable setting for their makeshift stalls and migratory selling due to the lack of alternative options. This underlines how, both historically and today, the Quartieri continues to serve as a safe haven for marginalised citizens, despite the challenges it presents.

In response to the complex issues of informality and temporary appropriation, contemporary architects and urban planners are increasingly embracing the principles of social architecture. Rooted in the conviction that architecture can serve as a tool for social change, social architecture prioritises the needs of diverse communities over purely economic or political concerns (Gribat and Meireis, 2017, p.780). By actively involving local residents in the design process and focusing on inclusivity, social architecture seeks to empower marginalised groups, a goal particularly relevant in neighbourhoods like the *Quartieri Spagnoli*. The integration of social architecture principles within the Quartieri presents a promising opportunity to address longstanding challenges such as squatting in innovative and sustainable ways.

According to Nina Gribat and Sandra Meireis (2017, p.780), the fundamentals of social sustainability encompass four main factors: small interventions, local participation in construction and design process, neo-vernacularism, and sensible and aesthetic design. The two researchers argue that for social architecture to be effective and successful, it must prioritise participatory approaches from locals and users during both the design process and material construction. This aims to create sustainable citizen involvement that provides them with direct ownership of projects, along with training and tangible skills. This sense of ownership, as explored within the analytical framework, can foster a collective sense of guidance and surveillance over the shared spaces within the neighbourhood. Much like the concept of the Panopticon, this ownership could offer a viable solution for influencing behavioural practices within the Quartieri, bringing about authentic and resident-generated regularisation to their informality and temporary appropriation.

Amidst the emergence of social architecture and a growing inclination towards urban regeneration rather than complete reconstruction, one theorist stands out in the discourse: Marco Casagrande, who encapsulates both concepts in what he terms as the *Third Generation City*. According to Casagrande, the *Third Generation City is an organic ruin of the industrial city* (2013:1), representing a reactive response to the urban problems and nonfunctional dynamics engendered by industrialization. This approach to city management is anchored in the principles of nature, and, crucially, in the valorization of local knowledge, positioning it not merely as an informant but as a primary shaper of urban spaces. Casagrande's theories of the *Third Generation City*, much like those of social architecture, revolve around four core pillars: urban acupuncture, illegal architecture, urban nomadism, and local knowledge. Most relevant to the study of the *Quartieri Spagnoli* are the ideas of urban acupuncture and local knowledge, as the other two are already encompassed in the neighbourhood's current behaviours.

The concept of urban acupuncture presents an intriguing approach on an urban scale, especially in contexts like the *Quartieri Spagnoli*. Urban acupuncture emphasises the implementation of small, targeted interventions to address specific issues within a city, rather than relying on large-scale, comprehensive schemes aimed at fixing the city as a whole. This approach advocates for achievable and participatory goals, which can weaken the challenges faced by cities and pave the way for broader transformation (Casagrande, 2013, p.2). Urban acupuncture offers a highly practical solution for settings where funding for large-scale urban projects may be limited, such as the southern regions of Italy. Moreover, in places like the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, where residents and visitors have a strong attachment to the existing conditions, grand schemes may be met with resistance. For instance, the proposal for a metro station in Via Toledo in 2000 was met with hostility from citizens. In such contexts, urban acupuncture provides a more welcomed and community-centric approach to urban revitalization.

Urban acupuncture holds significant potential as a remedy for urban stress, but it also requires treating cities and neighbourhoods as living, breathing organisms rather than a mere set of spaces. If urban acupuncture teaches us that cities are living entities, then the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, when considered for regeneration projects, must also be regarded as a unified living entity rather than mere area in need of repair. The intricate dynamics within the Quartieri mean that streets are more than just passages; everything is interconnected in a self-supporting relationship and changes to one element within their urban landscape implicates a ripple effect into the rest of the area and the entire community. This means the practices of urban acupuncture have the potential to be viable, but only through the active incorporation of local wisdom and the empowerment of residents through training initiatives.

While urban acupuncture offers potential solutions, it is essential to acknowledge that it cannot be considered a miraculous fix. As illustrated in the analytical framework on the reciprocal relationship between spaces and people, implementing urban acupuncture requires a conscientious approach. It involves developing projects that the community can embrace as their own, recognizing their responsibility and connection to their culture and identity. Achieving success in such endeavours is challenging, as will be evidenced by the two examples explored in the subsequent subchapter.

4.2 Urban regeneration as a potential for change: the successes and failures

Having explored the theoretical underpinnings of social architecture and urban acupuncture in the previous chapter, this section of the work now aims to substantiate these concepts with real-world examples. By examining concrete cases, in this section I aim to strengthen the foundation for responding to the central research question: *To what extent can urban acupuncture offer a practical solution in city environments shaped by tradition and cultural influences?*

When examining urban regeneration initiatives, there are numerous factors that come into play. It is not simply a matter of replicating successful models in different contexts, but rather a practice of understanding the nuances contributing to the success or failure of the project and how those can be translated into historical settings such as the *Quartieri Spagnoli*. In order to do that, the following subchapter will make use of two precedents: the Largo Baracche regeneration project in the Quartieri and the design of the Parque Comunitario La Pantalla in Cumana, Venezuela. These two projects were undertaken in quite different conditions: the former was part of a larger European Government initiative (URBAN), while the latter was a community-led intervention guided by the local architecture firm AGA Estudio. Examining these projects provides valuable insights and methodologies for understanding the implications of regeneration projects in squatting settings, especially within the wider framework of social architecture and the *Third Generation City*.

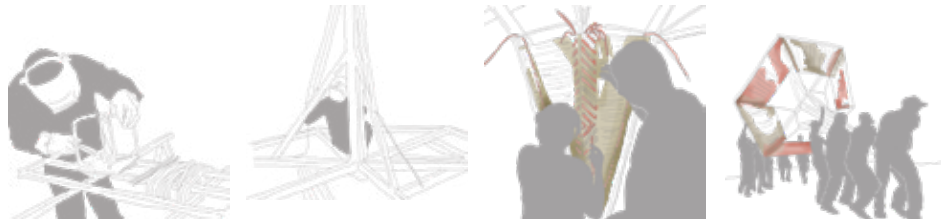
The examination begins with the case of Largo Baracche, situated at the heart of the *Quartieri Spagnoli*. This central area has long been troubled with illegal drug trafficking and various other illicit activities within the neighbourhood, prompting it to be one of the initial focuses of the URBAN initiatives in 2015. The project URBAN, originating in the first half of the 1990s, was established by the European Union to promote community-driven initiatives aimed at alleviating urban disadvantage across European territories (Laino, 1984, p.28). Given the *Quartieri Spagnoli*'s extreme existing challenges with urban disorder and squatting, it is no surprise it was selected as one of the target areas for the reform implementation in Italy.

In the case of Largo Baracche, the regeneration project initially aimed to revitalise the square itself. Despite the program's emphasis on citizen inclusion, community involvement in the project's realisation fell short, ultimately leading to its failure. Initially, URBAN delegates attempted participatory design strategies by involving residents in the project's initial stages. The committee, in fact, originally proposed a soccer field as the outcome of the regeneration, which was later changed into a playground area for children following further consultation with users (De Vidovich, 2017, p.568). While efforts were made to engage residents in the regeneration, scepticism and distrust towards institutional administration also prevented progress. The assistance and mediation of the local organisation Associazione Quartieri Spagnoli alleviated some of the initial obstacles posed by residents about the intervention; however, the lack of consistency in their involvement throughout the project eventually led to its downfall. Within a year of completion, Largo Baracche's playground was damaged, benches were vandalised, and the planned community centre in the square's basement never materialised due to the failure of the first phase of installation (De Vidovich, 2017, p.568).

Today, Largo Baracche remains an empty square without any services, facilities or community centres, where illegal activities persist. The remains of the playground, never fully renovated, are now simply a reminder of a failed regeneration attempt, a ghost of disillusionment for residents who had hoped for better outcomes from the project. The case of Largo Baracche serves as a compelling example of how participatory practices, when implemented without follow-through or thoughtful execution, are insufficient for the success of urban regeneration projects. Merely installing a new playground square in a challenging area is not enough to affect significant change: this project's failure underscores the fact that spaces, in isolation, lack the power to induce behavioural change unless they are embraced and recognised as beneficial by the community they serve. Residents were consulted in a top-down manner, but this approach failed to instil a sense of ownership or investment in the square and its development.



FIGURE 50. Le Piazze/ Largo Baracche. From *Dentro i "Quartieri Spagnoli": L'inizio e le trasformazioni* (p.13), by Asl Pasini, 2019, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II.



FIGURES 51.
Parque La Pantalla
Construction
Sequence
2024
By Author



FIGURE 52. La Pantalla, Parque Comunitario (20). From "AGA Estudio," by J. A. Bastidas, & Rodriguez, C., 2015 (<https://www.aga-estudio.com/la-pantalla>).

On the other end of this examination spectrum, lies the Parque Comunitario La Pantalla, located in Cumana, Venezuela, and representing one of the many urban regeneration efforts currently undertaken in squatter settlements across the Global South. Led by the local architectural firm AGA Estudio, this project forms part of a broader series of initiatives aimed at addressing the pervasive slum conditions prevalent in Venezuela; the country counts over 26% of its population residing in unfit makeshift settlements (ECLAC, no date). The studio's intervention was conceived as a tactical urban solution to improve living conditions in Cumana through the provision of not only essential infrastructures, but also the establishment of a community-identified safe haven within the area.

The site prior to intervention lay abandoned within the squatter settlement, primarily serving as a brownfield frequented by youths engaging in drug trafficking and other illicit activities. Following an extensive cleanup effort to clear the area of garbage and rubble, the studio was able to proceed with the project, aided by local citizens during both the planning and construction phases (ArchDaily Team, 2015). The project itself was relatively straightforward in its execution, comprising a series of steel-frame laced pavilions, *techados a cielo abierto* (open-air huts), a wooden stage structure, and some sport fields. While these changes may appear minor, they were successful in converting the brownfield into a family-friendly recreational space and central gathering point for the entire community, an outcome that the failed Largo Baracche had aimed for but did not achieve.

'After this space, we are very enthusiastic to keep working as a community, growing and becoming a community council. And the space isn't going to stay like this, it's going to be even bigger' (Grey Guilarte, ArchDaily Team, 2015)

The success of this intervention can be attributed to both the simplicity and effectiveness of the installation, which utilised local techniques, materials, and craftsmanship, as well as the inclusive involvement of residents throughout the entirety of the project. By actively participating in the construction of the pavilions and witnessing tangible outcomes of their efforts, residents developed a deep sense of pride and ownership in both the neighbourhood and the park. This sense of ownership not only motivated residents to maintain the safe haven they had helped to create, but also inspired them to expand upon it with the new skills and training they acquired. Not only was the physical space of the park revitalised, but the behavioural dynamics within it were also positively influenced (ArchDaily Team, 2015). This project demonstrates the power of attachment, pride and affirmation in shaping communities and improving urban spaces.

These two case studies serve as significant illustrations of both successful and unsuccessful implementations of urban acupuncture in underprivileged areas. When executed effectively, urban acupuncture projects have the capacity to catalyse substantial improvements in the areas they are set into, as showcased by the Parque Comunitario case. However, in the event of failure, they not only pose a financial and administrative loss on the municipality enacting them, but also diminish residents' confidence in the viability of any future projects, thereby preventing progress. While the failure of the Largo Baracche project, set precisely in the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, may suggest a negative answer to the posed research question, I argue that the factors leading to its failure were specific to its execution rather than the historical context itself. Although there was initial resistance, this last was partially overcome, indicating a potential for community acceptance and ownership of installations, given the appropriate approach and methodology.

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

The previous examination of urban acupuncture as a viable solution in culturally influenced environments unveils both promising opportunities and significant challenges. Reflecting on the findings from the chapters, I identify within these last several key conclusions.

Firstly, the theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, providing valuable frameworks for understanding the intricate relationship between spaces and users within urban environments. Applying these concepts to the *Quartieri Spagnoli* highlights the complex interplay between physical structures, symbolic representations, and everyday practices, highlighting the importance of considering the socio-cultural context in urban interventions. Foucault's theories on power dynamics and spatial control shed light on the mechanisms through which spaces influence individual behaviours and societal norms, through the concept of the Panopticon illustrating the potential for disciplinary mechanisms within community settings. While the *Quartieri Spagnoli* lack such disciplinary mechanisms, Foucault's insights suggest that empowering communities through participatory approaches and fostering a sense of ownership can establish self-regulating systems within neighbourhoods, leading to more sustainable urban transformations.

Secondly, the analysis of urban regeneration projects, further emphasising the importance of community involvement and inclusivity in shaping successful interventions. While projects like the Parque Comunitario La Pantalla demonstrate the transformative potential of participatory design and local empowerment, failures such as the Largo Baracche regeneration project underline the pitfalls of top-down approaches and shallow community engagement. These examples highlight the need for urban acupuncture initiatives to prioritise meaningful collaboration with residents, integrate local knowledge and resources, and foster a sense of ownership and pride in communal spaces.

The previously introduced frameworks, therefore, with the tools to offer a potential response to the research question. While urban acupuncture shows promise as a pragmatic approach to tackling urban issues in culturally rich environments like the *Quartieri Spagnoli*, its effectiveness relies heavily on careful attention to socio-cultural dynamics, community involvement, participatory design principles, and respect of local conditions, as well as the adaptation of traditions and norms (non-norms) into any proposed project.

With additional time, I would have liked to delve further into exploring the potential of urban acupuncture in culturally rich environments, expanding upon my personal interest and academic background in urban studies. One avenue I would have pursued is extensive on-the-ground comparative analysis. As an advocate for inclusive and sustainable urban development, I recognize the importance of anthropological and interdisciplinary research in designing innovative strategies that nurture vibrant and resilient communities. Specifically, I would have conducted further ethnographic studies, as the current research primarily focuses on my phenomenological perspective rather than a collective one. By directly engaging with the residents of the *Quartieri Spagnoli* and potentially immersing myself into their daily lives, I believe I could have gained deeper insights into the physical attributes of the neighbourhood as well. The *Quartieri Spagnoli* serve as a powerful reminder that architecture should always prioritise the needs and aspirations of its inhabitants, an invaluable lesson that should guide architects into their endeavours more often.

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- FIGURE 51.** Author. (2024). Parque La Pantalla Construction Sequence. [Illustration].
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