

# The variety of urban green spaces and their diverse accessibility

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The aim of this chapter is to describe the various kinds of urban green spaces and their differing levels of public accessibility, with reference in particular to continental Europe. The existing literature on urban green spaces tends to underestimate their variety and oversimplify the issues regarding their normative features (i.e. features related to the rules of access and conduct governing those spaces). On the contrary, a great variety of urban green spaces exist in Western cities, ranging from the most common urban parks to less-expected cases, such as green roofs, cemeteries, community gardens, and bio-parks. All of them contribute to the overall green infrastructure of a city. The differences among them consist not only of their material features, but also – the focus of this chapter – the nature and features of their ownership and management and, consequently, the rules on public access to them.

In this essay, we establish a typology of urban green spaces in connection with property rights and forms of management. Instead of the two main ownership models (private and public property) that are usually cited, we argue that it is more fitting to speak of a plurality of property regimes; in particular, we identify six of them. Our typology draws attention to the fact that the diversity of property regimes affects the types of limitations on (material and non-material/symbolic) access that people are willing to accept with regard to urban green spaces.

## 1. Introduction

‘Green space’ is an expression that encompasses a broad variety of open spaces, both natural and semi-natural, many of which have an increasingly hybrid nature (Beatley 2012, Waldheim 2012).<sup>1</sup> See for instance Clark (2006, p. 2): “Green space is, of course, not always perfectly green: sometimes it is a frozen grey or muddy brown or wintry white, especially in Nordic countries. But is ubiquitous even in the biggest cities. For we must remember not only the parks and squares, garden suburbs and green belts, which have attracted most attention from historians and others. But also the infinite multitude of churchyards, cemeteries, hospital grounds, sport and school grounds, riverbanks and little strips of empty land at the end of the streets, as well as fields and woodlands on the edges of the invading Metropolis”.

Despite this variety of green spaces, when dealing with issues related to public sphere, accessibility of public space, urban diversity, or social (in)justice in the city, there is still a tendency to consider them **in an ‘aggregate’ manner** and to focus almost completely on a few types of green places (in particular, on public parks). Coupled with this fact, most research tends to dismiss the importance of property when dealing with public (green) space: “While much research has centered on, and argued over, the nature of public space as space, comparatively little has focused on it as property. Yet [...] understanding public space as a set of property relationships is foundational; property is a crucial set of relationships that structure the role, function, and nature of public space as space” (Staheli and Mitchell 2008, p. xx).

In light of these two tendencies, in our opinion it is worth proposing a typological framework of analysis which can facilitate understanding of the complexity of contemporary green spaces and in particular difficult issues of accessibility. This framework is grounded primarily on property regimes, since matters of ownership mainly, though not exclusively, shape many issues concerning access to urban space.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, today the academic and policy literature prefers to speak of “green infrastructure” (see for instance: Benedict and McMahon 2012, European Commission 2011 and 2015, Green Surge 2015).

To this end, the present chapter is structured as follows. The next section introduces an existing typology of urban space and identifies the main kinds of rules which can apply to access to a place. We then develop a typology of urban *green* spaces, providing examples referring in particular to cities in continental Europe, and we analyze the different issues of accessibility which emerge in each case. The last section discusses how the typological approach proposed can be applied to analyze questions of accessibility to urban green spaces, and stresses some of its limitations.

## **2. Ownership and access to urban space: A typological framework**

### *2.1. Types of public and private spaces*

Many authors have stressed that drawing a sharp distinction between the public space and the private space is problematic, since the boundaries of these two spheres are shifting and permeable (Weintraub and Kumar 1997). However, when dealing with the accessibility of urban space, the distinction between the public and the private remains an essential starting point. This distinction between the private and the public can be drawn on the basis of several criteria – such as, to mention just some of them, use, access, management, ownership, appearance, morphology (see for instance: Carmona 2010a and 2010b for a review of public space typologies). Among them, property is a key factor, since it determines the source, the nature and the prerogatives of control over access to a space. The essence of property is the authority to exercise control on who can or cannot enter a space (and what can or cannot be done with it and within it) (Shaffer 1990).

As well known, we can recognize two main models with reference to land ownership (at least if we consider Western countries): first, public property, where, generally speaking, the owner is the State, at various levels, or a public body; second, private property, where the owner is a private legal entity. To be stressed is that, in the latter case, we do not refer only to *individual* owners. There are several different forms of private ownership, some of which are *collective*.

Consider for instance a plot owned by a private company, the possession of which is formally shared among many stockholders. But consider also the less obvious case of cohousing complexes, which is often associated not with private property, but with urban commons and collective property (Chatterton 2016; Ruiu 2013): the area of the cohousing settlement is owned by a community of the residents, and some of its portions may be open to access by non-residents; however, this does not change the fact that the entire area is legally owned by a private entity, which has exactly the same prerogatives in terms of control and exclusion of access as enjoyed by an individual owner of a plot (Chiodelli 2015; Chiodelli and Baglione 2013). This implies that the various forms of non-individual private property, which are sometimes referred to as ‘urban commons’ and viewed as an alternative to the private-public binomial (see for instance: Borch and Kornberger 2015; Colding and Barthel, 2013; Foster 2011), are, from this viewpoint, only ‘complex’ forms of private property.

This issue leads us to a central point: even if it is essential to consider ownership when reasoning on accessibility to urban space, the public-private binomial is insufficient for describing in detail the variety of spaces in current urban reality – and the diverse kinds of accessibility that characterize them. Against this backdrop, Chiodelli and Moroni (2014) suggest breaking the public-private binomial down into six property regimes which take into account also the specific form of control and management of the space in question. Three of these property regimes refer to public property, and three to private property. Together, these categories compose a general typology of spaces in light of which the urban spaces most common in Western countries can be read and classified (ibid.).

The three categories related to public property are the following. First, *stricto sensu public spaces*, that is, spaces owned by a public entity and intended for general use, mainly linked to connectivity functions. Consider, for instance, streets or public squares. In spaces of this kind, minimal restrictions on fruition are usually applied, and their purpose is only to preserve the public character of the space in question. Access is usually unrestricted. Second, *special public spaces*, that is, public spaces assigned to a specific (public) function. Consider, for instance, a school or a place of worship. Such places are characterized by more restrictions on the fruition

than the previous category, and they are mainly connected to the function assigned to the space in question. This also concerns access: only specific categories of people are generally admitted, such as students and teachers to a school. Third, *privately run public spaces*, that is, spaces which, despite being owned by a public subject, are temporarily managed (on leasehold) by a private entity. Consider, for instance, beach resorts: the beach is publicly owned, but it is leased to a private manager. As in the previous case, restrictions are linked to the specific function performed, but access is sometimes more limited because of the private management of the space: for instance, an admission fee must be paid to access the beach resort.

The three categories related to private property are the following. First, *simple private spaces*, that is, private spaces mainly for individual uses. The paradigmatic case is a private residential flat. In this case, many restrictions (almost every restriction) can be applied by the owner on access to the space. Second, *complex private spaces*, that is, spaces owned and enjoyed by a specific group of people. Consider a sport club: access is limited on the basis of private rules and restricted to the members of the club. A similar case is that of homeowners associations, such as the cohousing complexes mentioned above (Atkinson and Blandy 2013; Brunetta and Moroni 2012; Glasze, Webster and Frantz 2006). Third, *privately owned collective spaces*, that is, private spaces which are open to a 'public' fruition. This is the case of a shopping mall, a restaurant, or a theme park, for instance. The owner of such a place can enforce various rules limiting the access to the space. The majority of them relate to the activity carried out in the space; in several cases, there is also a charge for the service offered. Note that, despite these rules, in practice the majority of privately owned collective spaces are 'open-access' places which apply no explicit restrictions on access by specific groups. In fact, given their commercial purpose, they try to attract as many people as possible (Chiodelli and Moroni, 2015).

## 2.2. Types of regulations

As said, the typology of urban spaces proposed by Chiodelli and Moroni (2014) is grounded not only on the ownership of the space but also on its management; **ownership and management, together, define the kinds of limitation which apply to the accessibility of a space.**<sup>2</sup>

With reference to limitations on access, two points should be highlighted. The first is that they can refer to different features of individuals: to **who** they are, that is, their personal features (for instance, restrictions may be based on age, as in some bars or children's playgrounds); to **how** they are, that is, their clothing (examples are restrictions based on dress codes in some discotheques, or the banning of the complete Islamic veil [the *Niqab*] in public offices in some European cities); to **what** people bring into the space, that is, their equipment (for instance, rules that forbid entering a park with a bicycle).

The second point is that there are different **levels of rules** and of rulers which apply simultaneously to each space (ibid.). There are at least two of these levels. The first one, usually more explicit, is the level of rules introduced by the direct owner or manager of the space in question. Consider, for instance, the rules introduced by the owner of a cinema on access to the premises; or the rules introduced by a local authority on access to a public park. However, this **first-level ruler** is not omnipotent: there are always **higher-level public** rules which define its prerogatives to introduce norms limiting access to its space. Such **meta-rules** are diverse, and their sources are different. Some of them, for instance, are of a constitutional nature, like those related to the protection of individuals against race-based discrimination. Such constitutional rules against discrimination bind almost all kinds of space. For instance, in the United States homeowners associations cannot apply explicit and direct limitations on access by residents and visitors on the basis of race, colour or religion, as ruled by the Supreme Court (Siegel 1998). Likewise, restrictions of this kind are forbidden in all public spaces, in privately-owned collective spaces such as shopping malls and bars.<sup>3</sup> Only simple private spaces, such as

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<sup>2</sup> Although we focus especially on access in this chapter, it is worth mentioning that these limitations also refer to the conduct in which one can engage after entering a space.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to explicit and patent limitations. However, the case of limitation of access in private spaces such as homeowners associations is far more complex. For instance, there are cases in which limitation of access based on,

individual houses, are excluded from these obligations, and their owner can enjoy the greatest freedom of discretionary regulation. However, even if these anti-discrimination rules do not apply to simple private spaces, the property in question is not fee simple, that is, a place where the owner can exercise an *unlimited* right of exclusion, a sort of “sole and despotic dominion” (Blackstone, 1766). Also in this case there are public rules that prevent the owner from blocking access to, for instance, the police under certain circumstances. Note that, in the cases of certain property regimes, there can also be other intermediate levels of rules of access in-between the two levels mentioned. Consider for instance complex private spaces such as homeowner associations (e.g. a cohousing complex): in this case, below the public meta-ruler (the State), but above the individual ruler (the owner of a house), there are rules set by the homeowner association, limiting for instance the right of individual owners to regulate access to their property and governing the access and use of collective spaces and services (Moroni and Chiodelli 2016).

### **3. Towards a grounded construction of green space types**

The typology analyzed in the previous section was developed by Chiodelli and Moroni (2014) with reference to the urban space in general. It is worth considering if it can apply also to spaces of a specific kind, that is, green spaces in the city. This is what we do in the present section by building a typology of urban green spaces. Note that, obviously, this typology of green spaces cannot be exhaustive: our review does not cover the entire range of green space types to be found in cities around the world. Moreover, some green places do not fit well with the rigidity that characterizes every typology; they would more properly lie in-between two types. Nonetheless, the typological approach is very useful for conceptualizing the variety of green

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say, religion, is indirect, linked for instance to the kind of services offered by the community (Strahilevitz 2006). This is the case, for instance, of the ultra-catholic settlement of Ave Maria Town, Florida (Bollinger 2009).

Note also that there are controversial limitations of access (such as limitations based on age in retirement communities) which are usually not banned by public meta-rules of access. For a discussion on the topic, see Moroni and Chiodelli (2016).

space and its complexity, with the stress in particular on the prominence of property relations, and the constraints which these impose on access to green places.

### *3.1 Stricto sensu public green spaces*

*Stricto sensu* public green spaces are green open areas, mainly for recreational uses, owned by a public authority. Here, accessibility is – or should be – at the highest level.

Usually, *stricto sensu* public green spaces have no material barriers obstructing access to them (such as a fence or a wall). As a consequence, accessibility is usually unrestricted in physical terms. This relates directly to the fact that also normative restrictions on the fruition of space (i.e. rules of access and rules of conduct) are minimal, and refer solely to protection of the environmental quality and public character of the space in question. Note that there are instances in which stricter rules apply to specific sections of these spaces, in particular multi-functional ones. For instance, the Parco Nord ([www.parconord.milano.it](http://www.parconord.milano.it)) in the city of Milan devotes specific rules to protection of sections of the park with distinctive features (e.g. historical monuments, landscaped and ornamental gardens) or uses (e.g. children's playgrounds, bowls greens, sports pitches).<sup>4</sup> Stricter rules of access (and behaviour) can be applied also temporarily within the context of public events (e.g. a music festival) that take place in the park (on this see Smith 2016).

Large public parks and urban forests are exemplary cases of *stricto sensu* public green spaces. In Switzerland, for example, Zurich's urban forests are places that allow easy access to all and where a wide range of activities can take place, from outdoor environmental education to a wide range of sports activities (Seeland et al. 2009). Also components of the green infrastructure of a city, such as grass verges, tree alleys and tree pits, can be included in this type of space. Here, restrictions are more behaviour-related (there is no proper access to some of these elements), and are associated with the protection of the ecological and decorative function of these spaces

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<sup>4</sup> We can consider these areas as special public green spaces (see next sub-section) located within a *stricto sensu* public green space.

and elements. Another example of *stricto sensu* public green spaces is represented by urban greenways: these are linear open spaces for recreational use and environmental protection, usually located along natural corridors (e.g. canals and riverbanks), railroads or other routes, mainly for pedestrian passage and bicycle commuting. Restrictions of access are minimal and concern preservation of the space's publicness and vegetation (e.g. no access and parking for cars and motorcycles). A well-known case of an urban greenway is the Coulée Verte René-Dumont in southern Paris, a 4.5 km linear park built on the location of a former railway infrastructure, intended as part of touristic or scenic routes.

### 3.2 *Special public green spaces*

Children's playgrounds, sports fields, cemeteries, botanical gardens, and historical parks are notable examples of special public green spaces. In this case, access (and behaviour) regulations are associated with the distinctive function of the place. Generally speaking, these limitations of access are as minimal as they are in the case of *stricto sensu* public green spaces (only rules of conduct are stricter than in the previous case). In some instances, stricter limitations of access can apply to what a person can bring into the space.

For instance, children's playgrounds are often subject to particular rules of conduct, which strongly influence the fruition of the space (such as smoking bans). Many twentieth-century parks in cities, which are now recognized as memorial parks due to their aesthetic, historical and ecological value (as in the case of the Tête d'Or Park, Lyon), are subject to stricter rules compared with other parks (such as specific opening times, or bans on barbeques or soccer games).<sup>5</sup> Also cemeteries are cases of special public green spaces. A notable example is Père-Lachaise in Paris, one of the largest historic cemeteries of the city. In general, they are publicly owned and managed. Access has time-based restrictions, and rules of conduct usually relate to the characteristic of the space (that is, the historical and architectural value, but also the very limited recreational functions available). Contemporary botanic gardens are further examples of

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<sup>5</sup> Similar bans can be imposed in pocket parks, which constitute neighbourhood-based recreation facilities.

special public green spaces. They are protected natural areas, usually owned by public institutions or affiliated with public colleges and universities; restriction of access (and conduct) concerns the specific purposes of the space in question, such as scientific research and education. As a consequence, admission varies according to those persons who go to perform the pre-set functions.

### *3.3 Privately run public green spaces*

Privately run public green spaces are open spaces that are owned by a public authority but which are temporarily managed by private actors – which can vary from loosely organised non-profit associations to formal organisations and companies. Community gardens, for instance, fit into this category. ‘Community gardening’ is a label which applies to a broad set of phenomena, which vary widely around the world according to the purpose of gardening and to the design and use of space (for an overview, see Turner et al. 2011). In general, they are established on land owned by a public authority; they are collectively worked by a specific group of people, or gardened through individual allotments systems. Sometimes, membership fees or individual contributions are required of the people involved in the gardening activities.

In many cases, community gardens are rather open access spaces: they are devoted both to gardening and socialising activities of the neighbourhood where they are located (such as youth projects, harvest festivals, cultural and political events). In some other cases, communal gardens can be used only by the members of the association which manages the garden. Generally speaking, different levels of accessibility characterize different communal gardens. They relate to the features of the governance of these places (they can be run by diverse actors – non-governmental organisations, housing associations, grassroots movements, informal groups – in various forms of partnership with the local administration) and to the system of self-imposed rules established by the managing bodies (Eizenberg 2011).

Lichtenrader Volkspark in Berlin is a paradigmatic example of a public access community garden (see Rosol 2010 and Bendt et al. 2013). The Jardins Partagés network in France is

another relevant case ([www.jardins-partages.org](http://www.jardins-partages.org)); it includes, among many others, also two community gardens in the Guillotière area of Lyon (the Jardin D'Amarenthes and Mazagrín), run by the association Brin d'Guill, and which function as neighbourhood open spaces.

The Freie Stunde Colony in Neukölln in Berlin (<http://freiestunde.de>), by contrast, is a case in which the space can be enjoyed also by the members of a specific group. The Colony is a distinctive example of the modern small gardening culture in Germany, whose origin dates back to the world wars, when these gardens provided food for residents. This type of green space is located on public land and leased to registered associations of residents. Today, the Freie Stunde Colony comprises 38 individual gardens and other common areas. The membership and the annual fee establish who is allowed to enter. Except for small festivals and social projects, the area has no public access. Moreover, behaviour-related rules, which are democratically agreed during a general assembly, apply to the entire area (both collective and private plots).<sup>6</sup>

Intercultural gardens in Germany are another interesting example: they share many features with communal gardens, but their peculiarity consists in the fact that, here, multicultural cohesion through the practice of gardening is one of the principle aims of the initiative (Moulin-Doos 2013; Müller 2007)

### *3.4 Simple Private Green Spaces*

Domestic gardens (for both productive and decorative purposes) are typical examples of simple private green spaces. Here, the private owner can apply almost every kind of restriction on access to the space.

Despite their long-term neglect in academic research, today the importance of domestic gardens in terms of urban quality, aesthetics, climate mitigation, and development of urban biodiversity

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, these rules concern the use of space (e.g. barbeques, growing food, children's game, no building materials in the common area) and the collective work (e.g. painting fences, fixing broken things)

is increasingly recognized. This is the case of Rennes (France), where the local government is focusing on private gardens for their support to native biodiversity (Riboulot-Chetrit 2015). Note that such initiatives can translate into attempts to establish particular landscape aesthetics and spatial configurations (Marco, Barthelemy, Dutoit, and Bertaudière-Montes, 2010), and result in meta-rules concerning the legitimate space of private rules. However, even in these cases, the possibility of private owners to exercise the maximum of discretionality in selecting access to their spaces remains untouched.

More sophisticated cases of simple private green spaces are green roofs and walls (Mees, Driessen, Runhaar, & Stamatelos, 2013), when they are installed on private buildings. Although, in many cases, public agencies support or finance (partially) the costs of their implementation, in this instance, too, private owners maintain their full prerogatives of use and exclusion.

### *3.5 Complex private green spaces*

Green spaces within private residential communities, such as homeowner associations, proprietary communities, and residential cooperatives, are clear cases of complex private green spaces. Consider for instance the case of San Felice, close to Milan (Beretta and Chiodelli 2011). San Felice is a large private neighbourhood, with around 4,500 inhabitants, and composed of a mix of residential, commercial and recreational spaces. Residents own single living units, but they also own common areas and facilities. Among these common facilities, there are several large green areas. Access to them is restricted to residents (or to people invited by a resident to enjoy the space on particular occasions). Rules of access to these collective spaces are established collectively by the residents of San Felice (ibid.)

Urban gardens in Via Chiodi are another notable example of complex private green spaces in Milan (Falletti 2011). This is a peculiar case of urban gardens privately owned and leased to

individuals, who are entitled to use and enjoy only their own plot.<sup>7</sup> A handbook states general rules concerning the management and possible use of the space by the tenants – even if, in practice, restrictions on the design and use of individual plots are very limited. Additionally, there exists an informal agreement which establishes the rules of cohabitation among gardeners. Kids’ Garden in Neukölln, Berlin, is a further case of a community garden located on private land. It was established and is currently run (i.e. financed and managed) by a parent’s association. Admittance is regulated through membership of the (informal) group of parents running private childcare facilities in the neighbourhood. Except for public events, access to the garden is only available for the children, their educators, parents and parents’ friends.

### *3.6 Privately owned collective green spaces*

Privately owned collective green spaces consist of private spaces that provide an acknowledged service to a large number of people, usually on a commercial basis. Examples are bio parks, golf courses, and urban teaching farms.<sup>8</sup> Usually, privately owned collective spaces have no clear limitations of access to specific groups, apart from the charge sometimes applied for the services that they offer. In some cases, the admission fee becomes a way to select access on the basis of status, as in certain exclusive golf courses. In many other cases, however, there is no significant selection of access linked to the admission fee, and anyone willing to purchase the (low-priced) entrance ticket is entitled to enter and enjoy the space. Note that there are also privately owned collective green spaces which do not charge any admission fee, such as green spaces within certain shopping malls, where, as a consequence, accessibility is very high – almost unrestricted (Chiodelli and Moroni 2015). In other instances, access is free, but it is

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<sup>7</sup> Note that the owner of the area, the architect Claudio Cristofani, drew inspiration also from the above-mentioned French and German community gardening schemes when he founded the garden.

<sup>8</sup> Teaching farms provide planned activities whereby children learn how to produce food and breed animals.

associated with the use of some facilities provided (e.g. the restaurant): this is the case of several urban teaching farms and gardens in Italy.<sup>9</sup>

Table.1 Property regimes and green space types

Property model	Property regime	Examples	Accessibility
Public property	<i>Stricto sensu</i> public green spaces	Urban parks and forests; green ways; grass verges; tree pits; tree alleys	Very high - restrictions refer to the protection of the environmental quality and the public character of the space
	Special public green spaces	Children's playgrounds; sports fields; pocket parks; historical parks; cemeteries; botanical gardens	Rather high - limitations can apply to what a person can bring into the space.
	Privately run public green spaces	Community gardens and intercultural gardens	Diverse - from high (rather unrestricted) to very low (access restricted to the members of an association)
Private property	Simple private green spaces	Domestic gardens; green roofs; green walls	Minimal, at the almost complete discretion of the owner
	Complex private green spaces	Green spaces within private residential communities; urban gardens	Restricted to the members of the club or association
	Privately owned private green spaces	Urban teaching farms; bio-parks; golf courses	High – sometimes related to payment of an admission fee

#### 4. Discussion and concluding remarks

The typological framework proposed in the previous sections offers a sound basis for exploring contemporary forms of urban nature, stressing in particular their institutional variety (that is, their variety in terms of property regimes, forms of management, rules of access and conduct) and the fundamental role of ownership regimes in influencing their accessibility.

At the same time, however, **this typological approach is not all-encompassing**, and it has several intrinsic limitations. We mention two main limitations here.

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<sup>9</sup> Another example of a privately owned collective green space is the Battersea playground in London. Situated on the south bank of the River Thames, the playground is run and managed by the private company Go Ape (<https://goape.co.uk/days-out/battersea>) that provides tree top adventures for children and adults. In addition to the entrance fee, restrictions on accessibility also relate to age and physique (e.g. height, weight).

First, since this approach focuses on the interaction between space and institutions, it should be precisely contextualized: different countries have different institutional features, which must be carefully considered when trying to apply this interpretative framework to a specific **geographical environment**. The reasoning of this chapter refers mainly to Italy and other countries of continental Western Europe, which share some institutional similarities, but it should probably be adapted when considering, say, Canada or United States.

Second, **the normative set of restrictions of access to, and conduct in, a space does not fully shape its 'publicness'**. For instance, **the spatial configuration of the space is equally fundamental**. In fact, **accessibility is closely related to what physicality allows or pushes to do – reinforcing or, on the contrary, contradicting the normative framework**. For instance, the location of a space can restrict its actual accessibility by discouraging access by certain categories of people: according to Goss (1993) this is precisely the case of several suburban malls in the USA, access to which requires the use of a car. But also consider certain exclusive residential areas, where the introverted design and the presence of private uniformed guards and CCTV systems can dissuade entrance by non-residents, even if there are no explicit rules obstructing their access. Or consider the simple fact that the conformation of the ground of a space can impede the access of disabled people, for instance because there are too many architectural barriers. **All these kinds of physical devices of (intentional or unintentional) deterrence can apply also to urban green spaces**. At the same time, contrary to the previous cases, **the physicality of a space can increase its accessibility**. For instance, despite rules restricting access during certain hours of the day, La Villette Park in Paris (France) has no kind of enclosure, so that it can be easily accessed also in 'forbidden hours' (<https://lavillette.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Version-finale-du-reglement-de-visite.pdf>). Besides the spatial configuration of a space, when analyzing questions of accessibility, one should consider also the role of the **everyday practices of users: day-to-day praxis and interactions with nature uncouple a space from its narrow legal definition, shrinking or widening its *de facto* accessibility**. For instance, the appropriation of a place (e.g. a park or a square) by a certain group of people (e.g. youngsters or homeless people) can discourage other

people from accessing and using that space, even if *de jure* it is accessible to everyone, hence reducing its ‘publicness’ (Ellickson 1996). By contrast, the everyday practice of a space can also widen its accessibility: consider, for instance, the Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street protest, which, even if temporarily, transformed a privately owned collective green space into a *stricto sensu* public space (Marcuse 2014). Therefore, in order fully to grasp the *de facto* access to a green space, it is essential to consider how local people understand and respond to property regimes and formal rules and, accordingly, how they actually use the space in question, also taking the bonds drawn by its physicality into account.

What emerges from these notes is that there is a difference (and a complex relationship) between *de jure* accessibility and *de facto* accessibility. By ‘accessibility’ we mean the condition of being accessible; this condition is profoundly shaped by both the formal rules on access to a space (*de jure* accessibility) and several ‘informal regulatory devices’ (*de facto* accessibility). As said, these devices are represented by the physicality of the space and the social practices in action in a place (together, for instance, with the level of implementation of the formal rules). In some cases, these informal regulatory devices reinforce the formal rules, while, in other cases, they challenge and subvert them. The complex and continuously shifting negotiation between *de jure* accessibility and *de facto* accessibility determines the actual access to a space.

In any case, despite the complex character of accessibility to urban green spaces, the role of formal institutions emerges as fundamental. In particular, there exist different dimensions of property to take into account if we want to understand not only how green spaces manifest the increasing complexity of urban systems, but also how the multiplicity of property regimes affects the variety of urban green space’s spatial configurations and daily uses. From this perspective, the typological framework furnishes guidance in investigating how the variety of ownership regimes, management forms, and rules in action bounds different interactions with the green space. It also makes it possible to problematize the notions of public accessibility, calling into question the simplistic idea that there is a univocal connection between ownership

models and accessibility; or in other words, that public ownership of a green space necessarily translates into wide and unconstrained accessibility.

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