# THE POTENTIAL OF NEGLECTED PLACES. IN LOCO: THE WIDESPREAD MUSEUM OF ABANDONMENT

*Stefania Proli\*, Francesco Tortori\*\**

*\*Department of Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna - Bologna, Italy.*
*\*\*Spazi Indecisi – Forlì, Italy.*

**Abstract**

The case-study analysed and discussed in this paper, *IN LOCO – The Widespread Museum of Abandonment*, offers an example of urban and cultural regeneration project as driver for economic, environmental and social development. The project has been designed as a process of permanent urban and cultural regeneration of abandoned places with the aim to raise an awareness and cultural knowledge on these forgotten places, and to connect them through a series of itineraries that testify the social, cultural and economic evolutions of a territory and a society in a permanent state of transition. Furthermore, the paper presents how, with the support of the EU research project *gE.CO*, the contents and tools of *IN LOCO* have the ambition to build a platform capable to trigger effective processes of place-making, participation and finally regeneration for city-makers, local communities and public administrations.

**Keywords**

Urban regeneration, temporary use, adaptive reuse, cultural heritage, generative commons

## 1. Introduction

Since 2010, the collective *Spazi Indecisi* [Undecided Spaces] has been exploring the neglected places of the Romagna area (Italy) by crossing gates, taking photographs, interviewing people, sifting archives, organizing events, collecting memories and data of an immense cultural heritage that is in danger of being lost.

Only in the Romagna region, an area that covers around 22.000 sq. km, have been identified several hundred of "places on the margins": some deserve to be abandoned or demolished, others to have a second life, others still of becoming a cultural heritage.

Many of these places today are part of a database map which is hosted in the web site *www.spaziindecisi.it*, and some of them, due to their history, the storytelling behind them, their historical and cultural values, have become part of *IN LOCO, the Widespread Museum of Abandonment*.

The locution *IN LOCO* has been choosen to name the project for its three different meanings:
- on site, at the location itself;
- in a determined moment, in a certain circumstance;
- (in medicine) sick spot in which one acts therapeutically.

As its etymology suggests, *IN LOCO* is a research and urban regeneration project in a permanent state of transition: rather than being fixed and immutable like "traditional" museums, its first attempt is to picture the potential of "contemporary ruins" (Camoncini & Nosova, 2017) and to stimulate a dialogue between them and the imagination of the viewer by exposing the stories and the events that they represent, their cultural and social values, the memories to which they relate with and then to encourage a new relationship between past and future by fostering a temporary change of use or a conversion process.

The general aim of *IN LOCO* is in fact to foster urban regeneration by experimenting "adaptive reuse" processes, where the word "adaptive" is used to explain the multiple meanings of this approach: at first the focus on the change of use by adapting the content to the container with minimal transformations; secondly, relating to the field of biology, it refers to the capacity of a living being to adapt to change; thirdly, it introduces the temporal component of reuse, which is not permanent and fixed-term but is experimented with diverse gradients of change or with a renewed dynamism

over time aimed at activating processes and testing new urban assets rather than proposing definitive solutions (Camoncini & Nosova, 2017).

In adaptive reuse projects, in fact, the regeneration of the heritage and the environment, including its tangible and intangible components (e.g. social, cultural and economic values), provides the basis for an integrated approach where the emphasis on the physical rehabilitation of the architectural monument leaves space to the social, cultural and economic processes, by means of new policies and tools that can help to include the conservation and integration of the new urban values into a sustainable shared vision that works primarily in the short term (Unesco, 2011; Günçe & D. Mısırlısoy, 2019).

A common denominator of these practices is the arising of new actors (community of inhabitants, associations, cooperatives, small owners, artists, designers, activists): self-organized local groups that, by investing their time and creativity not for the purpose of short-term profit expectations, strongly contribute in building a new policy discourse about the qualities of places. By developing collaboration among stakeholders in urban development as well as creating new public resources through a collaborative approach, this method allows the implementation of effective urban regeneration and place making projects based on strong social network and temporary reuse ideas. Following a period when the potential of local groups and initiatives has been underestimated and ignored, these new group of "city-makers" have shown that urban regeneration goals can be also addressed through creative solutions that not only better include emerging themes such as social and technological innovation, sharing economy etc., but also foster a new mode of interaction between citizens and local administrations (Certomà, 2016). This form of civic engagement, that have been identified under the idea of urban commons, can generate a new range of opportunities: from the active preservation of urban and cultural heritage, to sustainable and innovation-driven urban development processes based on shared-based economies; from a reconfiguration in the usage and ownership to new forms of work and welfare and a diverse set of tools that enable and chart new connections between space, urban

objects, data and human behavior (Senior, Florian & Szabo, 2013; Mattei & Quarta, 2018).

The project presented and discussed in this paper, *IN LOCO: the Widespread Museum of Abandonment*, is an example of how temporary adaptive reuse practices can be proposed as effective urban regeneration tools and processes at the territorial scale, for the preservation and valorization of neglected urban and cultural heritage. In particular, the following paragraphs will examine the approach promoted and progressively tested in the Romagna area by *IN LOCO*: in fact the steps of the project have started with an open source and interactive mapping action (aimed at recording and cataloguing the abandoned spaces through field research, direct exploration and involvement of citizenship), have developed by experimenting temporary events (with the aim of fostering a new awareness and culture about these forgotten places), and have tested new relations and connections through alternative travel itineraries that testify the social, cultural and economic development of a territory and a society in a permanent state of transition.

Furthermore, the paper presents how, with the support of the EU research funded project *gE.CO*[1], the contents and tools of *IN LOCO*, in addition to being an instrument of knowledge, conservation and enhancement of urban and cultural heritage, have the ambition to build a platform capable to trigger effective processes of place-making, participation and finally regeneration, aggregating around a network of contemporary ruins and neglected heritage a heterogeneous community of groups, with the main aim to translate the "case by case" solution into more structured and lasting regeneration and reuse strategies both for commoners and public administrations.

## 2. IN LOCO: a four-step path for cultural and urban regeneration of abandoned places

The traditional mission of a museum is essentially cultural. According to the ICOM (International Council of Museums) Statute, "a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study

and enjoyment" (ICOM, 2017, p.3). In this respect, main purpose of the _Widespread Museum of Abandonment, IN LOCO,_ is the scouting and the enhancement of the most significant derelict places of the Romagna area. For this scope, the first important activity has been the creation of an online catalogue of the abandoned places and the collection of memories, documents, images that can represent their identity.

The catalogue thus provides not only a description of each neglected heritage in both its material and intangible forms but also an useful documentation that can help to have a complete overview for future choices of regeneration and reuse.

In line with the "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape" adopted by UNESCO (2011), where the idea of "heritage safeguarding" is strictly combined with that of "liveability of urban areas" and "economic development and social cohesion", main aims of _IN LOCO_ are to integrate and frame temporary adaptive reuse strategies for historic and contemporary ruins within the larger goals of overall sustainable development, by:

▪ Experimenting new forms of territorial enhancement and valorisation of abandoned cultural heritage, with special regards to the so-called "minor" heritage that has meaning for local communities but which may not be formally recognized by protection in law for its economic/touristic or artistic value (Tapini & Gomez-Robles, 2017);

▪ Contributing to the improvement of a sustainable, slow and creative form of tourism, which can stimulate innovative urban regeneration projects, strengthen place-based identities and engage people in the connection with unique local pasts moving towards "secondary" routes and stimulating innovative projects;

▪ Fostering the development of cultural and social cohesion through collaborative and participative approaches for the promotion, valorization and regeneration of abandoned places;

▪ Triggering a network of local stakeholders through the active involvement and engagement of diverse groups or communities such as students and scholars, citizens, associations, artists, tourists in the enjoyment of the itineraries.

The development of replicable tools plays a key-role for the benefit of the communities and of their cultural heritage because allows each territory and city to offer sufficient room for experimenting "light" urban regeneration practices (De Smet, 2013).

Based on the above assumptions, through the project _IN LOCO, Spazi Indecisi_ has tested a four-step path (from exploration to patrimonialization, temporary reuse or re-activation) to meet the challenges of a comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainable urban regeneration of disused or unfinished spaces that can be replicated and assessed in other sites and cultural environments.

### 2.1 Mapping

The founding moment of each project of _Spazi Indecisi_ is urban exploration, a practice that opens up new spaces for a reflection on the processes of deep transformation occurring in our contemporary territories and cities (Pisano, 2015).

Only through the experience of discovery, in fact, it is possible to empathize with the spirit and the history of a place; furthermore, the exploration of the urban landscape is the first opportunity to get to know and discover the "undecided" spaces of a territory: neglected architectures or in-between-spaces that occupy the ambiguous territories between the boundaries of other apparently well defined spaces and places, while they are waiting for new uses and functions.

This research phase is two-folded: to produce an open-source database of abandoned places, with the possibility to offer information and knowledge about these neglected heritage to city actors at all levels (from citizens to city planners); and to create a first opportunity for raising awareness and commitment to urban regeneration issues among the local community, through diverse forms of engagement such as guided walks or open photography calls (Fig.1).

Thanks to the open-source mapping, local communities have, on the one hand, the opportunity to report the abandoned places who belong to their local identity and, on the other hand, _Spazi Indecisi_ has the chance to collect the first important indications for understanding which of them can be assumed as cultural heritage to protect and value.

**Fig. 1:** A guided walk of IN LOCO sites in Cesenatico (FC)



**Fig. 2:** Photo and urban exploration of IN LOCO sites in Ravenna

## 2.2 Patrimonialization

The success of regeneration practices depends at first on the capacity of understanding the potential of abandoned places. This relies upon different factors: from the characteristics of the location (accessibility, services, connections, etc.) to the qualities of the architecture and the landscape.

However, the approach proposed by *Spazi Indecisi* is based on the assumption that all these aspects, although important, are subordinated to the need of linking derelict places to a powerful memory. As witnesses of the social, cultural and economic aspects that are connected to the rising and decline of the process of industrialization over the years, most of the abandoned spaces of today have shaped the civic identity of local communities and are thus pieces of a cultural legacy that needs to be evaluated by new narratives and expressions.

This analytical phase requires in-depth work, which aims to get the necessary insights to a better understanding of the places, like their history, their historical and cultural context and the testimonies of the people who lived or worked in them.

The collection of this material aims to produce and preserve a memory that risks disappearing without anyone noticing: on the contrary, by researching documents and gathering personal stories, it is possible to preserve and perpetuate their memory, to give an identity and a status and thus to collectively recognize a cultural heritage to protect and evaluate. Raising awareness, exposure and valorization initiatives are part of

the process of patrimonialization, which allows not only to give to the elected abandoned places the status of cultural heritage through its legal recognition and to acknowledge certain values in these objects, but also to contribute to the social and cultural shaping of these values (Diez de Pablo, 2015).

## 2.3 Reactivation

One of the main objectives of urban regeneration projects is to re-introduce abandoned spaces into the urban and economic cycle. For achieving this objective, *IN LOCO* has been conceived as a participatory reactivation process where the abandoned spaces become at first a field of research for architects, artists, urban explorers, photographers etc. to produce a reflection that only art can generate (Fig.2).

In this respect *Spazi Indecisi* has engaged through the years a diversified group of creative professionals for producing, at first, a series of events and performances with the ambition of showing the abandoned places from different perspectives and uses possibilities; secondly an array of site-specific multimedia contents with the aim of opening new points of view and thoughts on the past, present and future of abandoned places. These resources, which have a different nature (short documentaries, video art, site-specific artistic creations, interviews and sound projects), have become special content packages for the Museum plan through the digital app *In Loco*. Besides offering an overview of the abandoned places and of the itineraries of the widespread museum, giving details and information on places, providing historical images and drawings,

allowing visitors to easily reach the places through the link to Google Map, the app is the tool that allows visitors to enjoy these special contents on their device, once on site (Fig.3).

The overall objective is to create a different sense of place that has more to do with experience for turning these sites, although initially in a conceptual way, from derelict areas to desirable environment to preserve, live and regenerate.
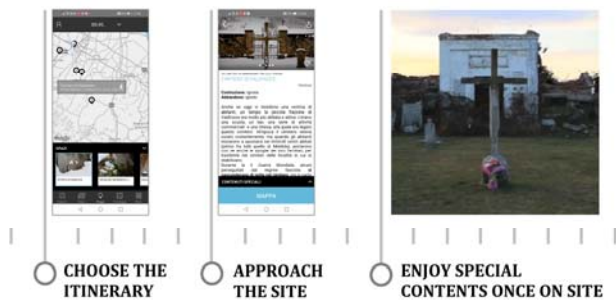


**Fig. 3:** Main features of the App IN LOCO.

*2.4 Networking*

The involvement of partners at all scales (from citizens to government) is crucial for regeneration projects that are rooted in existing urban or rural areas. Even when a place is abandoned it does not mean that there is not a community around it. Networking is thus a crucial step that allows attracting forces and gaining new resources and strategic partnerships which can guarantee the sustainability of the project over the years. Networking facilitates the organization of citizens, the creation of new communities and the simplification of their decision-making procedures in order to develop innovative reactivation or reuse solutions that can be immediately compatible with the existing legal framework.

But for forgotten and abandoned places, networking means also to explore new connections which are able to interpret the social, cultural and economic metamorphosis of the contemporary landscape. This is why *IN LOCO* has been structured on a series of travel itineraries, continuously evolving, which aspire to reveal a new layer of meaning to the current "landscape palimpsest" and to stimulate the exploration of

new territories and spaces through alternative forms of tourism.

*3. IN LOCO's museum manual: seven itineraries, a visitor center and a platform as driver for urban reuse and regeneration*

A museum is not a "container" of a mere miscellaneous group of objects, but is at first an institution that symbolizes fundamental values for the contemporary society. The foundation of a museum has in fact a symbolic meaning for the community that hosts it, since it expresses the collective ideals of the culture, the knowledge and the education of a society[2]. In the case of *IN LOCO*, the ideals are: inclusion, sharing, participation, dialogue, and sustainability: besides the need to protect and conserve this abandoned cultural heritage, in a widespread perspective its characteristics are plotted for enhancing connections between local communities and for promoting strategies for the sustainable and integrated development of the identities and the resources of the territory (Riva, 2017; Magliacani, 2015; Davis, 1999) [3].

Its final objective is to generate temporary reactivation projects of the selected abandoned spaces, by experimenting their potential, and by adapting and transforming them to new uses according to their morphology, structure and characteristics.

For the reasons mentioned above, the abandoned places that become part of the museum must meet the following criteria:

- Ability of the place to testify the social, cultural and economic aspects of the territory;
- Aesthetics of the place;
- Accessibility of the place;
- Quality and quantity of historical information;
- Witnesses who can contribute to the storytelling and the narrative process of the place;
- Conditions of the building;
- State of the structure.

Whether the decision to include an abandoned place is driven by economic, social or governmental benefits, criteria specific to each

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[2] On this regards, we recall the XXIV General Conference of the International council of museums, ICOM (Milan,3-9 July 2016) on 'Museums and cultural landscapes', which paid particular attention on the social responsibilities of museums towards cultural and natural heritage, e.g. through territorial safeguards and active protection.

[3] The concept of widespread museum is internationally interpreted as ecomuseum, for which there are various scientific publications and articles (see references).

driver are crucial to determine the feasibility of the decision. Evaluation based on the mentioned criteria ensures the choice to include an abandoned place in one of the musum itinerary, to consider it as major destination or to credit it as a complementary target of the museum.

Decisions are taken by the member of the association *Spazi Indecisi* with the support of activists, scholars, students and communities who collaborates with the association for their research on the field and/or their engagement in collective reflections on the abandoned places. Furthermore, periodically public photographic calls allows to monitor building deterioration and to scout, among the abandoned cultural landscape, new buildings that deserve attention through new meanings and contents.

*3.1 Itineraries and visitor center contents and organization*

The abandoned landscape crossed by *IN LOCO* is connected through a plurality of thematic travel itineraries that intersect unusual places for discovering the social, cultural and economic evolutions of the Romagna area (Fig.4). These itineraries touch the most varied spaces: from the workplaces of the '900s, which have transformed the growth and the form of the cities, to the symbols of Romagna summer entertainment (the *Riviera*), up to the holiday camps of the Adriatic coast of the Fascist regime:

1. *LAVORI IN TRAS(CORSO)* [Work in progress(ed)] is a tribute to some of the most significant workplaces of the twentieth century in Forlì, revived through the testimonies of former workers and employees, gathered in a documentary visible on site. An itinerary to discover the city of Forlì through ancient and lost crafts.
2. *DO.VE* [Where] is an itinerary that allows to discover how a group of contemporary artists have investigated the aesthetic and narrative potential of eight abandoned places, to give them a new life by fostering the collective imagination.
3. *TOTALLY RIVIERA* is a journey along the Romagna coast to discover the holiday camps built during the fascist regime, among modernism and neoclassicism: impressive

architectures facing the beach, in contrast with the dense urbanization of the coast that has encompassed and, at the same time, isolated them.

4. *TOTALLY TERRAE* is a journey through the Romagna hinterland to discover the architectures built between the two World Wars. An itinerary that questions the possibilities, for this dissonant heritage, to become a container for new ideas and projects in the future.
dive into the past, to reflect upon the way
5. *UN'ESTATE AL MARE* [A summer at the sea] is an itinerary to discover the spaces that have helped to create the "Riviera holiday myth" during the 60s and the 70s.
A dive into the past, to reflect upon the way vacation has changed and to explore the future of tourism for a territory that has made hospitality its trademark (Fig.5).
6. *DARSENA 3.0* [City Dock 3.0] is a tour through the Ravenna city dock, the old port district located between the Adriatic Sea and the historical centre: the former industrial district of the city is an example of industrial archaeology that now host several temporary urban regeneration projects (Fig.6).
7. *SENTI IERI* [Paths of Yesterday] is a hiking route dedicated to the old vernacular stone houses of the Romagna Apennines: under the guide and the memories of its inhabitants, who are witnesses of a passed slow living, visitors can discover a rich heritage of art and crafts that began to disappear from the post-war reconstruction onwards.

Through the itineraries, *IN LOCO* aims to foster a diverse form of tourism, proposing sustainable activities that allow the knowledge of a particular and unique heritage thanks to unknown but creative routes, or that simply encourage the autonomous creation of *ad hoc* itineraries using the resources on the website of *Spazi Indecisi*.

The purpose of the seven itineraries of *IN LOCO* is to push the exploration of such marginal places of the Romagna area. The former bus depot in Forlì *EXATR*[4], an example of adaptive temporary reuse project promoted by *Spazi Indecisi* and headquarters of the association, host the visitor center of the widespread museum, with maps and

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[4] EXATR is co-managed with the association *Città di Ebla*, in partnership with the Municipality of Forlì and the property.
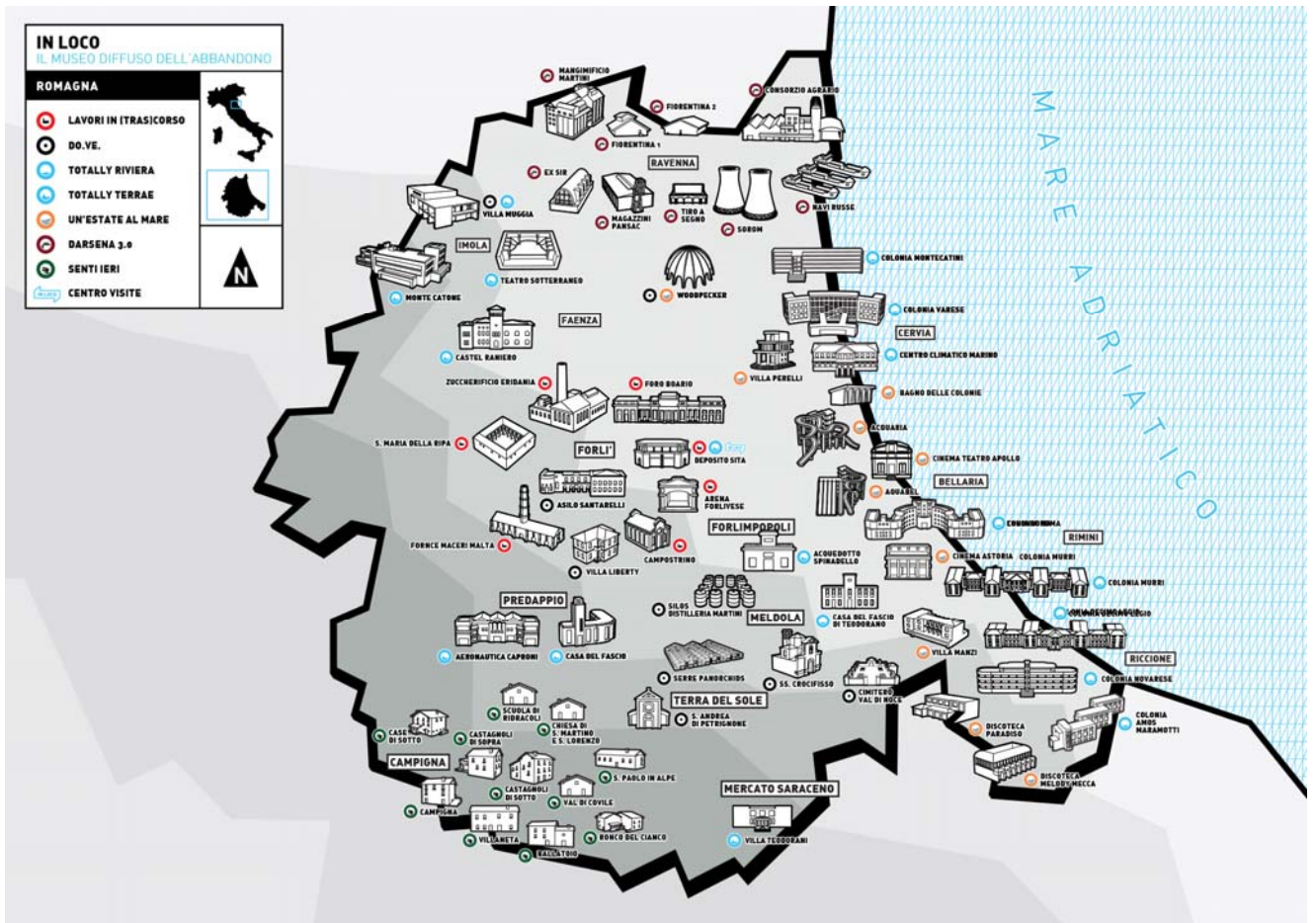
**Fig. 4:** IN LOCO Itineraries and main sites



**Fig. 5:** Magazzini Granai Silos (Ravenna)– Itinerary n. 6 (*DARSENA 3.0*)

**Fig. 6:** Discoteca Woodpecker (Cervia, Ravenna) – Itinerary n. 5 (*UN'ESTATE AL MARE*)

| ITINERARY | SPECIAL CONTENT | BRIEF DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|
| LAVORI IN TRAS(CORSO) | video-documentaries | video-documentaries where former workers come back to theri work places and recall their lives and memories |
| DO.VE | video art | seven abandoned places through the lens of seven artists |
| TOTALLY RIVIERA | aerial footage | drone footages show the relationship between the Adriatic sea coast environment and the abandoned totalitarian architectures |
| TOTALLY TERRAE | 360 ° video | immersive videos that shows unique internal and external perspectives of the places on the itinerary |
| UN'ESTATE AL MARE | video-documentaries | soundtracks that reproduce sounds, musics, memories, voices of day and nightlife past entertainment of the Riviera vacations |
| DARSENA 3.0 | comics | expressive cartoon drawings that allow visitors to overcome the physical bounderies of the abandoned places through the power of imagination |
| SENTI IERI | audio stories | original storytelling on the past of these rural inner areas, to enjoyed while trekking from one place to another |

**Fig. 7:** Types of special contents through the App IN LOCO

headquarters of the association, host the visitor center of the widespread museum, with maps and technological devices to give useful directions and information to the visitors.

Unlike traditional visitor centers, the aim here is only to suggest themes and give a brief background for pushing the widespread museum explorers to lose themselves in the urban and rural landscape in search of abandoned places (Fig.8).

Once in the vicinity of the places, they will be able to enjoy site-specific multimedia contents (Fig.7).



**Fig. 8:** An Image of the interior of IN LOCO Visitor Center, in the former bus depot (EXATR)

These instruments (itineraries and visitor center) are means for developing a regeneration platform for the adaptive, inclusive, sustainable and innovation-driven re-use of abandoned buildings. *IN LOCO* acts in fact not only as a strategy for knowledge, conservation and enhancement of the traces and memories of derelict urban and rural environment, but it is above all a tool capable of triggering processes of active reading, participation and finally regeneration of abandoned places by involving heterogeneous communities (artists, associations, local administrations, groups of active citizens etc.) for the care, share management and reactivation actions.

By acting as a platform, *IN LOCO* aims to foster and facilitate the generation of temporary reactivation projects and paths that can experiment new uses and functions to spontaneously reintroduce the rehabilitated places into the urban cycle.

## 3.2 Towards a regeneration platform

Although to a minor extent, another mission of museums is the re-activation (and/or diversification) of the economy of the cities that host them (Plaza and Haarich, 2009). In the case of *IN LOCO*, this task is pivotal, since it is linked to the objective of involving local communities, artists, city-makers, local governments and other important actors for generating temporary reactivation projects and paths that can experiment prototype of effective cultural and economic re-activators. In this respect, *IN LOCO* works as a regeneration platform that can help citizens in defining temporary uses of abandoned spaces, organizing self-building activities and collaborating with public institutions for legally carrying out these activities. Through the museum, local communities are thus activly involved not only in raising awarness of the potential of their local heritage but also in taking care of them by driving them to become active member of their preservation.



**Fig. 9:** The former Spinadello Acqueduct and its reuse as information center

The adaptive temporary reuse of former Spinadello Aqueduct, which is part of *Itinerary 4 TOTALLY TERRAE*, is a first output of the platform. After being closed and abandoned for years, this place is now re-opened as information center and starting point to visit and explore the ecological conservation area around it (Fig. 9). This important achievement is the result of a process that has started from the events and activities which were part of the participatory museum development plan for this specific site: through the involvement of the local community, it has been gradually raised awareness on the importance to

take actions to protect the whole area and to recognize the value of this neglected heritage (the Aqueduct stopped functioning in 1986). Furthermore, thanks to the support of the public realm, it has been possible to create a strategic shared vision for integrating forms of protection, enhancement and development of the abandoned place with the improvement of the cultural, environmental, social and economic resources of the area.

At present the project, that involve partners at all scales (from the Cultural Heritage Institute of the Region Emilia-Romagna, to the Local Municipality, to associations like *Spazi Indecisi*) propose a 12-months calendar of events – including exhibitions, workshops, guided tour and trekking, birdwatching, concerts and other cultural activities. The most ambitious goal is to experiment a bottom-up participatory management system that involve local associations and active citizens with professionals (photographers, hiking guides etc.) in order to protect the park and its wildlife, to create work opportunities and thus to contribute to the economic development of the area and its neighbourhood.

## 4. *Through gE.CO, towards a Museum of Generative Commons*

Generative commons represent the places where a new generation of social innovators and makers is inventing new jobs and an alternative economic circuits, inspired by an innovative set of values (ecological sustainability, solidarity and connection with the territory). Collaboration, co-production and co-creation are thus becoming the keywords for supporting cities' capacity for transition and structural change to ensure urban economies and a socially, environmentally and territorially sustainable development of urban areas (European Commission, 2016); this is why public institutions are signing a new social pact with their citizens, asking them to become active and aware players in the regeneration of derelict urban space (Iaione, 2016, Patti & Polyak, 2017).

Thanks to the commons, public institutions can assess experimental, adaptive, iterative governance and legal tools for including citizens-led actions among the 'official' urban regeneration strategies, by testing diverse types of collaboration

agreements which range from very simple forms (e.g. taking care of a small public area); to more complex and generative commons, like the re-functionalization of disused or unfinished spaces through a change of use, or a conversion process. In the best cases, these forms of civic engagement can also generate new opportunities for work and welfare, achieving an inclusive effect and pattern of redistribution in favor of economically weaker sectors of the population (Mattei & Quarta, 2018).

With the belief that the organization of generative commons must be supported and promoted as one of the best strategies to face the future challenges, due to their capacity to create local economic growth throughout solidarity, proximity and the social valorisation of existing asset, among its various objectives the EU research funded project *gE.CO*[5] has been designed with the aim of bringing together generative commons using a digital platform for collaboration. Started in 2019, the project is developing a platform for mapping citizens' initiatives as well as those public institutions engaged in new forms of partnership with local communities and is promoting the exchange of good practices and legal solutions. Furthermore, *gE.CO* is evaluating a group of pilot cases composed by generative commons and municipalities in order to understand which socio-economic, cultural and legal factors make self-organized experiences sustainable and public institutions helpful for their development. The results of the evaluation will be used for scaling up sustainable generative commons and innovative local policies: best practices, recommendations for scaling experiences of generative commons as well as legal solutions will be developed for supporting the emergence of new generative commons through shared, public and open access contents.

With regard to this objective, one of the main output of the project will be the *Widespread Museum of Generative Commons* (*WMGC*). The *WMGC* will be used to communicate the stories of generative commons and the possibilities that they are able to create for the community engaged in their management as well as for the whole urban environment.

Conceived as an instrument of knowledge, conservation, communication and enhancement of the territory, capable of triggering processes of active reading, of participation and, finally, of

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[5] *gE.CO Living Lab* aims at creating an exchange platform for formal groups or informal communities of citizens who

manage fab-lab, hubs, incubators, co-creation spaces, social centres created in regenerated urban voids.

regeneration, the *WMGC* is currently under development starting from *Spazi Indecisi*'s project *IN LOCO* and its *Widespread Museum of the Abandonment.* Similarly to the approach tested by IN LOCO, the WMGC will be structured on the following phases:

1. *Mapping.* The first phase is to collect and catalogue as much information about these sites as possible (geolocation and its urban connection to the building and spaces around; photographs collected by public calls; property; historical information; witnesses), and to communicate it, as a museum does with its heritage;

2. *Itineraries definition*. Generative commons have something to say about the social, cultural and economic aspects of the local territory in which they are based and they can reflect its changes in time. When a generative commons shares one or more specific features with some others, this place becomes part of the museum itinerary;

3. *An alternative guide to generative commons*. Itineraries will be collected in an alternative and constantly evolving guide that walks along with a series of multimedia contents specifically created for *WMGC*, in collaboration with artists, photographers, musicians, actors and cultural local realities. Moreover, close to the generative commons, a geolocalization system based on QR code tags will unlock special contents that the visitor can only access on-site, by using a smartphone.

Incremental, small-scale urban regeneration practices in the form of urban commoning complements traditional planning processes to create a more sustainable city by challenging 'one-size-fits-all' solutions in favour of tailored regulatory responses to specific needs (Smorto 2016). However, even if the topic of urban regeneration through adaptive and temporary uses is gaining high interest in urban planning theory and practice, it is still rather new if compared to other planning approaches: many municipalities are thus still not familiar with temporariness in urban redevelopment because more used to 'implementing' rather than to 'testing' (Silva, 2016). In this respect, the *WMGC* is expected to give a significative contribution in building a unique platform in which citizens and public institution can find concentrated all the

expertises and the tools necessary, at first, to gather useful information on commoning practices and projects, secondly to start commoning or promoting new public-civic partnerships.

## 5. *Conclusion*

Urban heritage, including its tangible and intangible components, constitutes a key resource in enhancing the liveability of urban areas and in fostering economic development and social cohesion in a changing global environment (Unesco, 2011). As the future of humanity hinges on the effective planning and management of resources, the regeneration and reuse of abandoned places has become a key-strategy to achieve a balance between urban growth and sustainable development goals.

The case-study presented and discussed in the article, *IN LOCO*, suggests that the regeneration for cultural purpose of unused or abandoned places allows to achieve a double objective: on the one hand the collective conservation and preservation of urban values under risk and, on the other hand, the inclusive, sustainable and innovation-driven development of urban and rural areas.

Furthermore, the case-study indicates that the regeneration of abandoned places has to be understood as a collective and participatory process, with diverse and temporary steps towards potential final solutions. In this process the "generative common model", based on horizontal forms of cooperation between public institutions and formal groups or informal communities of citizen, quest for new standards of cultural heritage regeneration through multi-level governance and tools of collaboration, both vertical and horizontal, with governmental and non-governmental actors. A hybrid approach of different actors involvement (public, private and civil), and of different innovation tools (adaptive temporary reuse, cultural valorization) seems to offer a concrete solution for the regeneration of the cultural heritage and, more generally, of the urban and rural environment.

However, as EU funding research projects *gE.CO* points out, to guarantee that our cities continue to offer sufficient room for experiments, the challenge is, for governments, to give the right legal and political support to temporary reuse experiences and, for commoners, to find a much more cohesive language for defining their way of working, the value it creates and the

organisational systems they use (Bingham-Hall, 2016).

During the last years, public Institutions have started to recognized the value of these experiments in creating new knowledge and ideas and transforming them into social and economic development, by promoting and supporting citizens' initiatives with new regulatory instruments and new forms of public-civic partnerships (Foster and Iaione, 2016). Nevertheless, the risk is that by co-opting citizens' initiatives, their transformative potentiality decreases. In this respect, the value of projects like *IN LOCO* is the possibility to test innovative legal tools and institutional structures in order to better link the phenomena of urban commons and communities-driven initiatives to the planning and administrative routine of our cities.

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