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Cultural heritage-led practices for regeneration. Public space as a common good

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Cultural Commons & Urban Dynamics

Edited by
Emanuela Macrì, Valeria Morea,
and Michele Trimarchi



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Cultural heritage-led practices for regeneration. Public space as a common good

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Abstract: This paper is focused on community engagement processes, re-use of public spaces and enhancement of Cultural Heritage (CH), recognised and fostered by European policies as drivers for cities and regions urban sustainable growth in all its social, ecological, spatial and economic dimensions. The topic of this paper is the interaction between community, space and CH, in contemporary urban regeneration practices. It describes and analyses the co-design and co-creation methodology and the impacts of incremental pilot actions implemented by the EU Horizon 2020 project ROCK – *Regeneration and Optimization of Cultural Heritage in creative and Knowledge cities* (GA 730280) in Piazza Rossini, a square in the historic university area of the city of Bologna (Italy).

Keywords: Citizen engagement, public spaces, co-design, urban regeneration, pilot actions, participatory practices, co-construction, greening, adaptive reuse.

1. The public space potential as strategic resource to foster citizens collaboration

The contemporary city – both in the suburbs and in the central areas – represents a complex context based on relationships. Public spaces, in their physical and immaterial components (Castelli, 2019), are the privileged

arena for these relationships, where interactions are most likely to happen and different people, for social and cultural characteristics, have the opportunity to meet, make activities or simply get in touch. The public urban space itself is the visible result of community interactions and socio-cultural relations, reflecting consequently both positive and negative dynamics, potentialities, values and conflicts. Historic public spaces, often places in the city centres of European cities, are fundamental assets of the Cultural Heritage (CH), defined in terms of the broad meaning of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view (Unesco, 1972).

The intense changes experienced by the EU cities over the last century due to the economic model, the market economy, the demographic dynamics, have generated wealth and opportunities in an unbalanced share for the different segments of population (European Union, 2020).¹ Thus, inequality and exclusion can be considered some of the main socio-economic challenges in the EU. The growth of population is increasing year-by-year the urban density, leading to the exacerbation of challenges related to sustainability and urban management.

Other aspect to be faced relates with the generation of urban voids and vacant spaces inside or in the outskirts of cities by unplanned urban sprawl processes, industrial area displacement and many large-scale infrastructures dismission: open spaces or dismissed buildings, large brownfields or residential settlements, such as former social housing districts. This phenomenon is not limited to suburban areas, and the historical centres are not immune to the presence of disused sites or areas where citizens live in a state of degradation and isolation.

As stressed by the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015) a sustainable environment and inclusive economic development cannot be achieved without the reintegration of these sites and their inhabitants, when present, into the social, economic and cultural dynamics of the city. Although considered anomalous, and associated with emptiness or lack of productivity, “empty lands” are often at the core of alternative uses by local communities that manage, plan for and otherwise engage with vacant spaces in a variety of both spontaneous or organized and ad-hoc ways that represent a pluralism of values. They can represent potential common pool resources, with respect to which culture and creativity enhance multidimensional and multi-scale impacts at urban, metropolitan and regional level. Value, in fact,

¹ European Union (2020) Statistics on Income and Living Conditions.

is also generated by the material and immaterial dimension of the layering heritage, related to identity and diversity that can be the base for a new value chain.

The rethinking of innovative and appropriate design approaches with the aim of optimizing use and configuration of public spaces is identified by the EU policies as a crucial ingredient for effective strategies to face contemporary urban challenges such as the enhancement of accessibility, the increase of social cohesion and the overall livability of the city. Moreover, in order to exploit public spaces to their full potential, sharing design actions and policies via participative processes and displaying all the enabler conditions, including governance and management, are considered crucial (“The Future of Cities” report, 2019). Criticalities affecting urban spaces and services of common interest – essential to the satisfaction of living needs and functional to the individual and collective well-being of communities – are partly attributable to the citizens' disaffection towards public spaces and services that are perceived as places of nobody rather than places of all. In a vision of the city that considers public spaces as urban commons, collaboration between institutions and civil society is an indispensable and required condition (Iaone and Arena, 2012).

In design practices and disciplines, how the urban environment – considering its physical and spatial conditions – works for people in terms of experience and social use, especially when public spaces are concerned, is assuming increasing relevance as an effective factor for a healthier and balanced urban community (Gehl, 1980).

In this perspective, new approaches to public spaces are emerging in terms of *commoning* practices, urban transformation design principles and methods (Babalís, 2018) and in the renewed understanding of culture and Cultural Heritage role, also very much evident in the re-shaping of urban areas in more inclusive ways (Delanty, 2018).

This view is supported by the introduction of the concept of “heritage communities” (Fairclough et al., 2014) and by the extension of fundamental rights and duties to the sphere of culture. The recognition of “individual and collective responsibility towards Cultural Heritage” and that “rights relating to Cultural Heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life,” therefore relates to the awareness of an inclusive and active engagement of “everyone” in the “construction of a peaceful and democratic society,” as well as of the CH adaptive “sustainable use” to pursue a common ideal (Faro Convention, 2005). This action of co-responsibility towards commons of collective relevance – concerning production, governance and care of public

spaces – can find effective resources in the mutual acknowledgment and involvement of the main actors of the urban ecosystem of stakeholders, to build a greater synergy of competencies among all the public, institutional and private bodies concerned.

2. The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage

The shared responsibility towards CH contributes also providing useful inputs for establishing the forthcoming to the values that underpin the EU Urban Agenda. The common political design for Europe is foreseen by the Pact of Amsterdam, which identify in the partnership model the way to collaborate on an equal footing in the implementation of shared solutions to improve the future development of urban areas in the European Union (Urban Agenda for the EU Pact of Amsterdam, 2016). The role of CH is also acknowledged as a crucial enabler in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), in particular for Goal number 11 “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (United Nations, 2015). The full understanding of CH potential as an engine for sustainable development, promotion of social cohesion, inclusion and equity, relates with the interpretation of the idea of “heritage” in its broader and more extensive meaning, particularly in urban areas. The CH, inherited from the past in all its tangible and intangible forms and originated from the interaction between people and places through time, is the expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values (International Council on Monuments and Sites, 2002).

In this perspective, the Council of the European Union adopted on 20th May 2014 the fundamental document “Conclusions on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe” which recognized CH of a “great value to European society from a cultural, environmental, social and economic point of view” (European Commission, Council of 17 May 2017). Culture and CH have to be intended as a starting point to make full use of the social, ecological and economic resources as well as urban areas. In order to exploit this great value potential for European societies and economies, the safeguarding, enhancement and management of CH require effective participatory (i.e., multi-level and multi-stakeholder) governance and enhanced cross-sectoral cooperation.

The CH capability in creating social resources – recalling the Council Conclusions of 2014 – is strengthened by its role in inspiring and fostering

citizens' participation in public life, enhancing well-being at individual and community level, promoting diversity and intercultural dialogue by contributing to a stronger sense of 'belonging' to a wider community, and being an effective educational tool for formal, non-formal and informal education, life-long learning and training (Council of the European Union, 2014).

The European Commission has defined the political and policy agenda priorities for 2019–2024, considered highly relevant for policy making in the field of culture at EU level and for the key themes of European cultural cooperation. In particular, the six political priorities of the European Commission are: a European Green Deal; a Europe fit for the digital age; an economy that works for people; a stronger Europe in the world; promoting our European way of life; and a new push for European democracy.² More people-centred, inclusive, forward-looking, integrated, sustainable and cross-sectoral approaches to CH have to be promoted and foreseen following participatory governance models, cooperation and engagement forms of citizens and all stakeholders – including public authorities, the cultural heritage sector, private actors and civil society organisations (European Commission, Council of 17 May 2017). So, cultural and creative sectors represent strategic components for all the above-mentioned priorities, due to their important role for EU economies and societies.

To comply with such objectives, the European Commission established the first European Year of CH in 2018, aimed at encouraging people to discover and engage with European CH and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space: a pivotal opportunity to increase running long-term projects concerning themes grouped under four pillars which define what Europe's CH stand for – engagement, sustainability, protection and innovation – to be implemented through a series of initiatives. In particular, the aims of the European Year were “to integrate cultural heritage into environmental, architectural and planning policies” and “promote a wider understanding of heritage, placing people and communities at the centre, engaging and empowering many actors to care and make decisions about heritage.” Such objectives must also be implemented through the transformation of existing heritage for new uses –

² Strategic framework for the EU's cultural policy, <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework-eus-cultural-policy>, accessed on January 26, 2021.

with smart restoration and adaptive reuse – and the testing of new models of CH participatory governance, aimed at social innovation and linked with cross-border and cross-sectoral collaboration (European Commission, 2018). In this way, rehabilitation and re-appropriation of abandoned, underused or misused urban sites, recognized as common goods, represent an opportunity to develop the city's CH potential, including a means for inhabitants to foster a sense of belonging (and taking care of it).

The European commitment on CH, to sustain the legacy, capture and scale-up the success of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, has found formal recognition establishing “The European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage,” announced in the new European Agenda for Culture in 2018 and published in May 2019. It reflects the common set-up for heritage-related activities and cluster of actions to be implemented at European level in cooperation with relevant institutions, organisations and partners (European Commission, 2019). The *Framework for Actions* fosters and puts into practice an integrated and participatory approach to CH and contributes to its integration in EU policies. It also wants to serve as an inspiration and guide for regions and cities in Europe, as well as for CH organisations and networks, in setting a common direction for heritage-related activities.

The *Framework* was prepared through regular exchanges with EU Member States, EU Council Presidencies, the European Parliament, civil society organisations, cultural operators, and international organisations such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO. It also builds on lessons learned from ten long-term projects entitled ‘European Initiatives’ 20 carried out by the European Commission as part of the policy input to the European Year of Cultural Heritage. It is based on five pillars: Cultural heritage for an inclusive Europe: participation and access for all; Cultural heritage for a sustainable Europe: smart solutions for a cohesive and sustainable future; Cultural heritage for a resilient Europe: safeguarding endangered heritage; Cultural heritage for an innovative Europe: mobilising knowledge and research; Cultural heritage for stronger global partnerships: reinforcing international cooperation. In this context – as part of the second pillar – a dynamic peer-learning programme for local, regional and national policy makers was implemented, to stimulate interaction, collaborative learning and solution-building: “Cultural Heritage in Action. Sharing Solutions in European cities and Regions.” The programme, developed by a consortium led by EURO CITIES with KEA, ERRIN, Europa Nostra and Architects’ Council of Europe and funded by the European Union’s

Creative Europe programme from January 2020 to April 2021, is aimed at promoting study visits, knowledge exchange and evaluation of existing good practices on CH. The starting result is a catalogue of inspiring practices published in November 2020: policies, projects, events or organisational structures implemented by local/regional authorities themselves or by other local stakeholders were selected for their transferability potential and for their capacity to foster exchanges between different contexts, standing out for being innovative and having a real impact on the ground (Cultural Heritage in Action, 2020).

3. Testing temporary transformations of adaptive reuse to enhance public spaces re-appropriation: the ROCK intervention in Piazza Rossini, Bologna

Among the thirty mapped innovative and inspiring practices, selected through the “Heritage in Action” open call, the temporary interventions on Piazza Rossini, Bologna (Italy) was chosen as representative under the “Quality of interventions on Cultural Heritage” topic, with the title “A new life for Piazza Rossini. From a parking lot to a pedestrian green space.”

The shared, gradual and impactful interventions on this significant public space in the city of Bologna – one of the main squares in the ancient university area – are part of the sets of pilot actions implemented within the research framework of the ROCK project (Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural Heritage in creative and Knowledge cities EU – GA 730280), funded in 2017 under the EU Horizon program and ended in December 2020.

ROCK tested new models of urban strategies and practices interpreting historic city centres as living laboratories to demonstrate how tangible and intangible CH can be a powerful engine of regeneration, sustainable development and economic growth for the whole city. Through its experimental actions, ROCK provided opportunities to fully access CH, in particular public spaces of the university area (U-Zone) that had previously been neglected or underused, giving them back to common use and promoting their recognition as shared heritage and collective property. The peculiarity of the Piazza Rossini implementation process is its significant impact on the perception and habits of citizens and city users that led to other incremental transformations and fuelled a lively public debate. The first steps of Piazza Rossini have been fully described in the chapter “Enhancing Human and Urban Capital: A Value-Oriented Approach,”

recently published in the book “Cultural Commons and Urban Dynamics. A multidisciplinary perspective” (Longo et al, 2020). The present paper, by the same authors, deals with the further steps that followed and that made the whole experience worthy to be included in the “Cultural Heritage in Action” catalogue of good practices.

3.1. The co-designed and co-created temporary redefinition of Piazza Rossini

The project for a temporary redefinition of Piazza Rossini, named “Green Please: the meadow you don't expect,” is the result of a co-design and co-construction workshop which involved students, researchers and professors of the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna – started in spring of 2019 and promoted by ROCK actions with the coordination of Fondazione Innovazione Urbana (FIU) – the city agency which operates within the Municipality of Bologna (fig.1).



Fig. 1. The Five Square co-design *workshop* (Source: ROCK Project, 2019.)

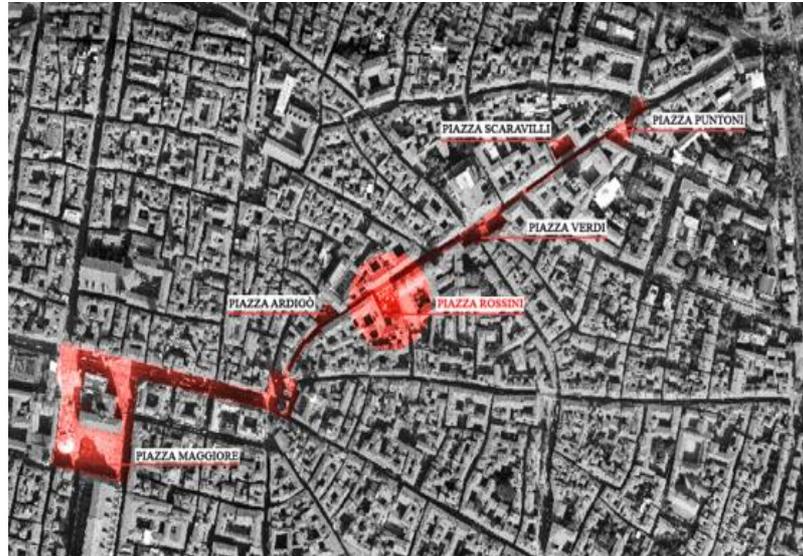


Fig. 2. The U-Zone system of open public spaces involved in The Five Square workshop. The red circular spot points out Piazza Rossini, object of the temporary urban transformation projects. (Source: ROCK Project, 2020.)

The experimentation was part of a broader strategy of actions that systematically involved all other public spaces of the university sector – as recalled by the name of the initiative, "The Five Squares" of the U-Zone – developed in synergy with the programming of Bologna Design Week and Researchers' Night in September 2019. The event was dedicated to urban regeneration, optimization of CH and its accessibility, the incentive and promotion of public space care, through the development of its potential by imagining and testing different and unconventional uses, according to an environmental sustainability perspective. The project involved the five public squares connected by the porches line of Via Zamboni – the historic urban axis crossing all the university area – providing the implementation of different design strategies, coherent with the specific sites morphological, architectural, functional characteristics and the reference communities features and expectations³ (fig. 2).

³ Le Cinque Piazze (2019), <https://www.fondazioneinnovazioneurbana.it/45-uncategorised/2087-le-cinque-piazze>, accessed on January 29, 2021.

Piazza Rossini has been used as cars and bicycles parking lot for a very long time, losing its role of public urban space to stay, gather and socialize: a condition both physical – pedestrians could only circulate on the narrow sidewalk margin next to the road lane, while the presence of the parked vehicles in the middle of the area interfered with the view of the surrounding architectural scenario – both perceptively – passing totally unnoticed by the many people (tourists, students, citizens, residents, etc.) who daily move along via Zamboni and cross the university area.



Fig. 3. A phase of the co-construction of the “Green Please: the meadow you don't expect” temporary reconfiguration of Piazza Rossini, September 2019. (Source: ROCK Project, 2019.)

The fundamental design idea was the square temporary transformation from parking lot into a green pedestrian area. The co-design project envisaged the partial occupation of the existing parking area, about 400 sqm, through the setting up of a vegetable meadow in rolls covering the corresponding surface, completed by the positioning of an iconic “Maxxi Poppy” outdoor

floor lighting fixture – designed and produced by Viabizzuno srl, company partner of the ROCK project (fig.3,4).



Fig. 4. Piazza Rossini with the “Maxxi Poppy” and, in the background, Palazzo Malvezzi, September 2019. (Source: ROCK Project, 2019.)

The proposed unexpected vegetable meadow found a suggestion in the recall of some Piazza Rossini historical representations that portray it with a different pavement surface compared to other squares or roadways,⁴ as

⁴ A detail of *Bononiensis ditio* map in the Vatican “Sala Bologna”, dating back to 1575, shows a green vegetable pavement for the building’s internal courtyards: similarly, the view of Piazza Rossini by F.B. Werner, dated to 1732, represent a

well as resulted from an archival survey carried out by the students involved in the project. This new settlement allowed for new uses and offered the opportunity to rediscover and appreciate the details of the architecture overlooking the square. It is particularly important to underline that the workshop proposal stemmed from the preliminary considerations born in the context of "U-Lab" – a participatory process involving this specific area, which was attended by over 250 people and from which emerged the need to restore a social dimension to the square, enhancing the collaboration of all the actors of the territory (institutions, associations, students, etc.).

The physical transformation was designed to be self-built by the workshop unskilled participants and carried out in about three days of work: the setting-up was itself conceived as a performative event, actively demonstrating the re-appropriation of space and its possible and unconventional use.

3.2 The citizens' empowering impact on the use and space configuration of the square

The space transformation's preliminary impact on citizens' perception occurred during the co-construction process stage: as soon as the pieces of lawn started to be rolled out and the green surface expanded, passers-by attention and curiosity on what was happening was drawn, establishing an immediate relationship with people.

The positive reaction continued during the following experimentation days, with citizens gathering freely on the green carpet, joining the various activities – both scheduled and both born spontaneously – and enjoying this usually passageway of the city in a different way, rediscovering and appreciating the details of the architectures that overlook the square.

The temporary experiment was successfully embraced with an average daily presence of over 30.000 visitors. Passages and time spent in the square have been monitored through 10 crowd analysis sensors with Wi-Fi-GPS technology installed in the area. During the testing week an increase in flows was measured, with an average of 27,000 daily footfall and a peak of around 36,000 visitors: the total weekly inflows amounted to 200 000 visitors (Boeri et al, 2020).

cobblestone floor that defines the area of the ancient churchyard or cemetery of San Giacomo Maggiore Basilica, marking his different surface texture.

A large number of citizens, professional intermediaries (Ordine degli Architetti Bologna), local associations and social entrepreneurial activities (e.g., Salvaiciclisti, Dynamo, Kilowatt), expressed an explicit consensus to the installation and the new possibilities offered by the full accessibility of the area. The widespread endorsement and a spontaneous collection of signatures led the Municipality of Bologna to establish that the square would permanently remain pedestrianized.

This further “un-expected” and unplanned result triggered a new transition path towards the definitive transformation of the square, passing through temporary experimentations leading to a permanent configuration. While waiting for the development of the final layout of the square, a following temporary set-up of the expected duration of one year was implemented, in line with the first project principles, and realized by FIU in collaboration with BAG studio and the scientific contribution of the Department of Architecture.





Fig. 5,6. The “Green Please 2.0” installation completed, June 2020.
(Source: ROCK Project, 2020.)

The new configuration – named “Green Please 2.0” – kept the lawn surface but provided adequate technological solutions for a longer stay, with a soil substrate bounded by a wooden edge and an irrigation system. The area – previously left completely free except for the lighting element – was partially occupied by wooden tanks, housing a small vegetable ecosystem of shrubs, perennial herbaceous plants, aromatic herbs, ornamental grasses and first size trees selected to ensure biodiversity and to reflect seasonal changes. The incremented presence of the green elements aimed at raising awareness on climate and sustainability issues in historic city centers, in line with the ROCK project objectives. At the same time, messages written in white letters on the sides of the furnishing elements, were entrusted with educational information about the transitional character of the set-up (fig. 5,6).

The experimentation will accompany the city in learning to respect, enhance and make grow – like a vegetable seeding – this re-discovered place during the present year, waiting for the square to assume its final configuration. This experience demonstrates the potential of low-cost and temporary pilot experimentations on CH and their capability to positively influence long-term urban dynamics and to re-activate communities as well as places.

3.3. The debate opportunity and the arising of new challenges

Piazza Rossini's transformation, in addition to generating the mentioned reactions and results, highlighted all those barriers and conflicts that have always distinguished this particular area of Bologna, rising an intense debate on the opportunity of the choices that had been made, in view of the future asset of such delicate and valuable urban space. Over time, several factors – the increase of the student population (about 80,000 students frequent the U-Zone), the migration phenomena, the change in the number and composition of population in the centre (15,000 new residents each year, of which 9.000 Italian), the growing new tourism fluxes – generated phenomena of social coexistence and conflicts between the different “inhabitants” of the area, triggering decay and disturb. The U-Zone stands out as one of the main places in Bologna where marginalized people gather and meet, and it is perceived by the rest of the city as a separated part, notwithstanding the location in the historical earth of the city. So, despite the richness in cultural and artistic institutions and museums, its CH is not fully known and exploited by citizens and tourists. Controversy and discussions, about possible improper uses of square space (e.g., wandering, sunbathing, making noise, etc.) or on “appropriateness” of green spaces in a historic city of stone, summed up with the production of alternative proposals during a public hearing involving all the interested parties. The most interesting point of this heated debate, anyway, is to have triggered the spread a wide interest ad civic commitment on an underused city space, emphasizing the sense of re-appropriation and rediscovery by stakeholders, citizens, city users and communities (in both directions), manifesting the collective responsibility towards CH stated by the 2005 Faro Convention and, at the same time, relying on a broader discussion on urban resilience topic.

Collective and urgent challenges have emerged for all the cities around the world due to the covid-19 pandemic; cities are forced to experiment

several strategies to grant safer, wider and healthier public spaces, to create more attractive situations for visitors, to provide inclusive environments for the largest categories of citizens and city users and to retrieve the necessary social dimension compromised by the forced distancing.

Next to several paradigmatic examples coming from big cities such as New York or Paris, to name a few, also in the Bologna's context widespread interventions and temporary installations were promoted to support new forms and uses of public spaces, fostering the suburbs enhancement through the reactivation of proximity spaces and the creation of suitable streets for pedestrians and bicycles (e.g. "Open Street Bologna" initiative): a necessity with respect to which the availability of well-designed and comfortable urban outdoor spaces represent an important resource. During the pandemic's lockdown and the reopening phases, public space, streets, parks and playground served the very unique needs of communities in these unprecedented times (Gehl People, 2020). Looking towards a different conception of public space, additional kilometres of cycle paths, new pedestrian zones and the reorganization of outdoor spaces – thanks to tactical urbanism to have more space for each person – are confirmed as effective way to ease new activities and forms of urban life. The pandemic emergency stressed the collective value of availability and distribution of open and accessible public spaces in all urban areas, becoming a key indicator of adaptation and resilience of cities' level, showing present barriers and possible new models for the future.

Piazza Rossini, such as other outdoor places in Bologna, became a stage where people started to meet and gather during the summer 2020, supported by the programming of a series of activities included in the seasonal cultural events. In particular, the Municipality of Bologna – in collaboration with FIU and the "Cronopios" collective, specialized in cultural project management and facilitation of creative processes – selected the recovered public square as a frame for a program of events called "Take care of U", including guided tour to discover the past of the University area and theatrical reading to enhance, through the imagination, the uniqueness of this space.

Moreover, the initiative promoted in favour of Patrick Zaky – the Egyptian student of the University of Bologna detained since February 2020 – took symbolic place in this rediscovered urban public space where a workshop to create and make fly kites was organised: a place to act in common (fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Piazza Rossini in the occasion of the cultural event realised by the “Cantieri Meticci” Bologna based intercultural theatre company in favour of Patrick Zaky, the Egyptian student of the University of Bologna detained since February 2020; September 26, 2020. In the background, the San Giacomo Maggiore Church. (Source: Rock project 2020.)

4. Conclusion: impacts and transferability of cultural-heritage-led innovative strategies for public space

The path traced by the experience of Piazza Rossini, intended as integrated process of space transformation and active involvement of citizens and

stakeholders, has been recognized as “an inspiring story” by the Cultural Heritage in Action catalogue. The selected interventions to be included in the collection are representative of possible different approaches, scales, different ways and different amounts of investments in CH, but all of them have the potential to ensure long-term benefits and to be transferred to other local contexts. The actions are briefly described and grouped according to three main transversal topics that represent the added values of the implemented practices on CH: participatory governance, adaptive reuse and quality of intervention.

Piazza Rossini’s path includes all the three topics, even if in the catalogue the quality of interventions is the underlined one. The people-centred approach, the engagement of the local community, the listening activities and the involvement of the public sector were pivotal for the success of the initiatives. Having third main actors involved – FIU and the Department of Architecture of the Bologna University – that acted as hinge subjects and mediator between institutions and communities was a strong facilitating and strategic factor. The design of the regeneration pilot actions in the university area, among them Piazza Rossini, have been carried out by the ROCK project through the ‘living lab’ approach and methodology through U-Lab, a urban living lab for participatory practices to experiment, observe and verify different CH-led regeneration actions (Dane at all, 2020). It created a local *Ecosystem of Stakeholders* (institution, university and research area, association, students, citizens, companies) by relating new and existing blueprints, enabling co-designed and co-construction workshops based on cross-fertilization among several disciplines (U-Atelier). As a consequence, the experimentations led to the improvement of knowledge about the university area and to changes in the behaviours of citizens who started to gather, freely access and manage meetings, feeling involved in shared safeguarding practices and care for the acquired common good. The co-design projects of temporary adaptive re-use built new places shared identity next to places physical transformations, respecting the characteristics of a space of great value from a community capabilities and historical/architectural point of view. The quality of interventions is referred to the entire set of values activated and expressed by the spatial solutions combined with the community dynamics that have been activated, so to allow the valorisation, maintenance and the bequeathing of our heritage to future generations ensuring aesthetics, habitability, environmental friendliness, accessibility, integration into the surrounding environment and affordability.

All these aspects, in addition to describing the strengths and the legacy of the methodology implemented by the ROCK project, frame the conditions of its transferability. In particular, as highlighted by the EC catalogue, Piazza Rossini represents a “good practice” of how the interaction between cultural heritage and citizens involvement can generate new forms of public spaces re-appropriation, preservation and valorization. The critical reading of the all factors that triggered the degradation and abandonment of urban areas, the people-place-based transformations carried out through democratic and participatory processes, the systemisation of different knowledge and skills, the application of research as an active tool, the acknowledge of the potential of CH and heritage-led good practices in positively affecting the consolidated dynamic of city context, finally and jointly define a value-oriented approach that recognize in the public space a privileged realm to explore, test and monitor practices towards more inclusive and effective common urban regeneration processes.

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