

An aerial photograph of a vibrant urban plaza. The ground is painted with large, overlapping geometric shapes in a rainbow of colors: red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, magenta, and pink. A network of thin black lines crisscrosses the plaza, creating a grid-like pattern. Numerous people are seen walking and standing throughout the space, providing a sense of scale and activity. The overall atmosphere is modern and dynamic.

CPC
SERIES

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CULTURAL HERITAGE LEADING URBAN FUTURES

Actions and Innovations from ROCK PROJECT



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PROJECT FULL TITLE

Regeneration and Optimization of Cultural heritage in creative and Knowledge cities

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ROCK

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730280

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Comune di Bologna

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The ROCK project sees historic city centres as laboratories to demonstrate how Cultural Heritage can be an engine of regeneration, sustainable development and economic growth. ROCK approach foresees the systemic and flexible application of a series of role-model practices in the testing sites of three Replicator cities, to turn historic city centres afflicted by physical decay, social conflicts and poor life quality into Creative and Sustainable Districts.

This book provides an overview of the project, extracting themes, material and final remarks from the Open Knowledge Week "Cultural Heritage Leading Urban Futures", held on 27-30 October 2020. Over the past three years, ten ROCK cities – Athens, Bologna, Cluj-Napoca, Eindhoven, Lisbon, Liverpool, Lyon, Skopje, Turin, and Vilnius – together with service providers and knowledge brokers have tested and advanced numerous soft and hard tools, collaborative approaches aimed at shaping sustainable, heritage-led urban futures. This book shows their shared results, best practices and lessons learnt from interdisciplinary research, innovative action, dissemination of knowledge and creation of new synergies at European level.

A Pathway from Research-Action-Research to Integrated Management Plan

Valentina Orioli, University of Bologna

Martina Massari, University of Bologna

Rossella Roversi, University of Bologna

In ROCK, cultural heritage is meant as a unique and powerful engine of regeneration and sustainable development but also of economic growth, starting from local assets and resources. ROCK Cities present a vast array of contextual values, experiences, legacies that were taken as a reference to start from, to define the on-site interventions to be implemented locally. This approach is based on a circular urban system model that implies the connection of initially separated urban “systems” - related to cultural, knowledge, green, regeneration, security, creativity dimensions. The circularity (Vernay, 2013) is strongly based on a continuous feedback loop, that shaped a research-action-research methodology (Boeri et al., 2019; Gianfrate et al., 2020), a continuous and dynamic investigation movement, in which speculation and practice, knowledge and action can never be separated.

These actions entail soft and technological enabling actions: on the one hand as technical, organizational and administrative intervention, on the other they include informal and spontaneous inputs. This is an approach that worked with the city as if it was a real laboratory, hosting micro scale experiments, pop-up architectural interventions, small installations, unconventional uses of public spaces and alternative proposals for cultural events in the city.

From Regenerative scenarios to research-action-research

The process started with the research, a planning moment where the actions were co-defined and designed together with local stakeholders, they were identified from the role model cities, but they also were technically assessed by local authorities. The whole range of actions fit into three thematic Regenerative scenarios, emerging from the knowledge of the context of the cities - related to accessibility (Dane et al., 2020), sustainability, and new collaborations.

The three thematic Regenerative scenarios represented a real moment of self-reflection for cities, linking the ongoing local political agendas with innovative actions and aligning actions in relation with the most pressing local needs. The Regenerative scenarios allowed to contextualise the definition of the main actions to be implemented in the cities and to verify their effectiveness through Research-Action-Research methodology.

The following phase foresaw the implementation of actions in the ROCK cities. They spanned from co-design experiences, events and performances with cultural formal and informal operators, temporary installations, small-scale experimentations, until also prototypes of urban services. The actions were then monitored with sensors, ethnographic observation, questionnaires, feedback were collected with the goal of re-defining and improving the interventions, but also to gather useful dynamic data and more importantly to eventually inform policy makers with the knowledge acquired.

Such knowledge acquired, in terms both of methodologies and real outcomes, needed to be organised again, this time within a policy framework. In fact, ROCK believes that decision makers can benefit from the data, from the results and the outcomes collected during the research action application, as they are evidences both of the effectiveness and of the failures associated with each initiative, and they allow their progressive adjustments and an increasing capacity-building of policy makers and also practitioners. This allows them to face new societal and environmental challenges associated with cultural heritage.

Implementation of actions, a pilot in Bologna

This methodology was applied to Skopje, Lisbon and Bologna. The latter has chosen as its ROCK pilot area, a highly dense artistic and historic district: Zona-U, the main university district situated in the medieval city and crossed by a major street, via Zamboni, hosting important material and immaterial heritage. For the city of Bologna, it was an opportunity to consolidate ways of operating in the public space of historical centers with a shared approach among institutional, cognitive, extra-institutional

actors, resident and non-resident, temporary users of the central areas of Bologna, first of all students, to tap into their creative potential.

The historical center of Bologna has a long history of changes and transitions generated by its actors, temporary users, material and immaterial heritage (Orioli, Massari, 2020). The project was able to act in this context, even conflictual (Scandurra et al., 2009), being also able to define a new model of collaboration between university, public administration and citizenship.

With the ROCK project, the dynamics of transformation of the historic center of Bologna have become the subject of a research project, which has deepened the role of cultural heritage as a generator of local practices, multiplier of values and connector of levels, actors and spatial forms, to the point of even changing the policies of the city.

This change is shown by some successful experimentations of the project in Bologna, such as the experiments that provided Piazza Rossini with a temporary installation. It was designed and built with students who transformed part of the area usually used for parking into a green space, proposing an unexpected perception of the area and restoring the trace of the ancient churchyard of the San Giacomo Maggiore Church. The temporary experiment was successfully embraced by the citizens, leading to the decision from the municipality to turn it into a permanent solution for the pedestrianization of the space. This is just one of many examples of the leverage effect of ROCK actions towards some stable changes in the city.

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Eventually, this process was organised in a systematic way for the definition of ROCK Integrated Management Plan (IMP). The IMP aimed at re-structuring the work and lessons learned from the implementation, in a medium-to-long-term vision for the local development and management of Cultural Heritage.

Integrated Management Plan, the structure and aims of the plan

The process of research-action-research performed in ROCK, required eventually to re-structure the lessons learned and experimental evidences, into a general policy and operative framework. The aim was to provide cities with both a strategic vision and an operative method to achieve a balance between preservation of the built environment and sustainable growth. The IMP starts from the idea of the already existing UNESCO Management Plans but it was tailored to ROCK project language, target and objectives.

Starting from these premises, IMP learned from the local experimentations, was fed by the contextual background provided by the Regenerative Scenarios and delivered a transformative vision for the Cultural Heritage of the three ROCK Replicator Cities, Bologna, Lisbon and Skopje.

The Integrated Management Plan is meant as the strategic and operative framework descriptive and prescriptive of multilevel heritage-led regeneration strategies (Boeri et al. 2019).

It has three main objectives:

- to increase the knowledge about regenerative processes linked to CH
- to define the different steps needed to activate the regenerative processes
- to offer continuous updating about innovative actions and initiatives linked to CH realms.

The structure of the plan reflects the circular attitude of experimenting, learning from the experimentation and turning the results into new knowledge that becomes the basis of recalibrated or new experimentations, in an iterative process. Experimentations in ROCK cities in fact, entails a wide range of site-specific actions, with different results obtained, outputs and outcomes. The idea of the IMP is to organize this large and contingent amount of contents in a shared knowledge and functional framework, to be useful as an operational tool for different targets.

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Following this, the IMP has been intended to inform policy makers but also to engage cultural operators and local decision makers in a coherent and shared framework of action of CH regeneration. It represents an opportunity for Public Administrations to acquire new skills, to gradually and collaboratively transform the setup of public spaces and better prefiguring the long-term effects.

Moreover, the University can benefit from the plan to allow the establishment of new partnerships, to enlarge transdisciplinary research, to better anchor research to real-life, and finally to empower the “third mission”, the set of activities by which the universities interact directly with society and their reference territory.

Bologna IMP

A first pilot of the IMP was applied to the experimentations performed in Bologna.

The scheme of the IMP introduces the “principles”, that reflect the mid-term strategic visions for the three ROCK pillars, emerged as the guiding elements of the regeneration process of the Cultural Heritage areas



PRINCIPI

Gli elementi guida del processo di rigenerazione della zona universitaria del centro storico di Bologna



PRIORITÀ STRATEGICHE

Definizione di priorità progettuali identificate sulla base dei 3 principi di ROCK; sono costruite a partire dalla trasformazione di quello che è emerso dai tavoli tematici locali e riguardano un livello politico/strategico, riferito al patrimonio culturale del centro storico della città

COSTRUIRE UNO SPAZIO DI INCLUSIONE

In cui le esigenze delle persone disabili diventano linee guida per tutti

INFORMARE PER ABILITARE
Fornire informazioni oggettive per consentire l'autovalutazione dell'accessibilità

CONSERVARE PER INNOVARE
Interpretare le istanze di conservazione come spinta all'innovazione

COSTRUIRE UNO SPAZIO SOSTENIBILE

Per innescare, attraverso esperienze dirette, comportamenti sostenibili che assumano il patrimonio culturale come un bene comune

RIUSO CIRCOLARE
È adattivo del patrimonio per la gestione e uso circolare delle risorse

VERDE E TECNOLOGIE IN AZIONE
Infrastrutture verdi come elementi connettivi degli ecosistemi urbani degli spazi pubblici

COSTRUIRE UNO SPAZIO DI RELAZIONE

Perseguire l'accesso attivo di diversi gruppi di persone a spazi e offerta culturale

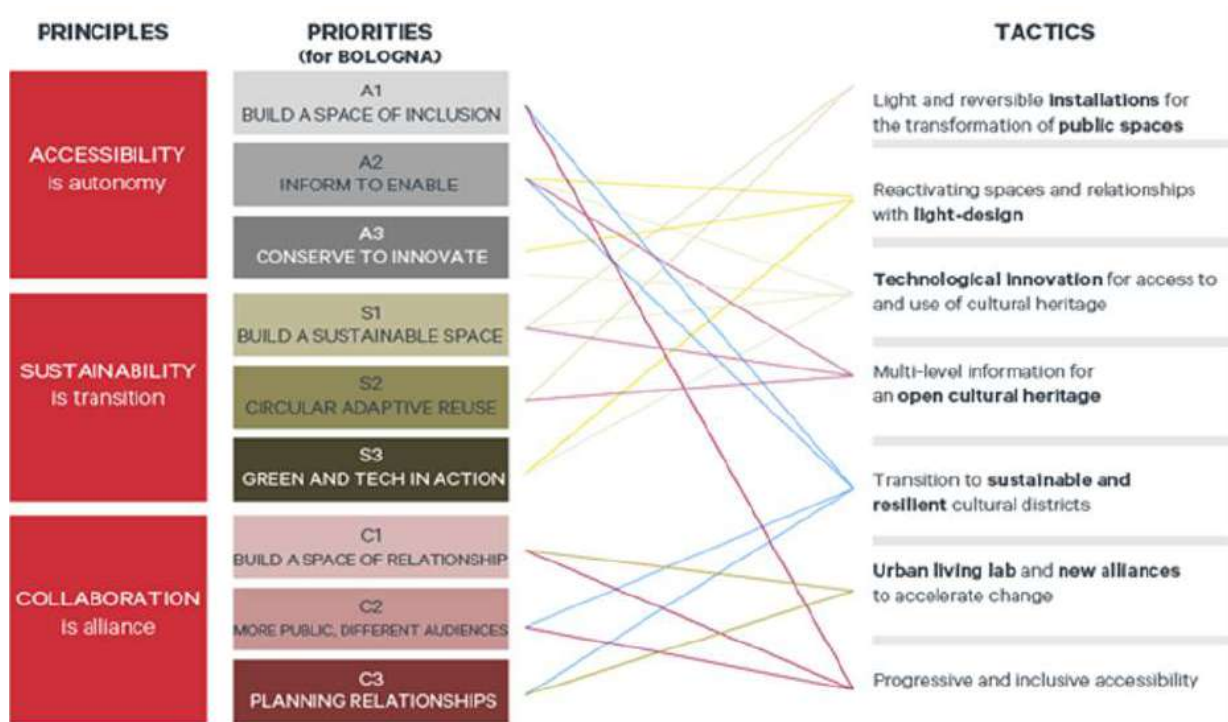
PIU' PUBBLICI, DIVERSI PUBBLICI
Favorire la crescente moltiplicazione di situazioni - interazioni - da cui ci si può aspettare una possibile "produzione del pubblico"

PROGETTARE RELAZIONI
Mettere in rete attori di filiere diverse (istituzionali e non) per la co-produzione di valore urbano.

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involved in the ROCK project: Accessibility, Collaboration, Sustainability. A specific definition to each principle has been given, in relation to ROCK local experiences: Accessibility is autonomy, the autonomy to choose and fully live the opportunity offered by the city; Collaboration is alliance, between all the actors of the processes; Sustainability is transition, in politics and behaviours towards green economy, green energy and social inclusion. Principles are shared by all the cities because they represent the baseline of all the ROCK Cultural Heritage-led regeneration strategies.

Fig.1
ROCK Credits: Nowhere



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The following component of the plan is devoted to the “priorities” (Fig.1), addressing the strategic level. They are strongly contextual, different from a city to another, because they emerge from the particularities of the material and immaterial context and from the instances emerged during the participatory phases (i.e. in the local laboratory U-lab in which emerged needs and design input).

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The operative part of the IMP is described with the “tactics” level. Tactics describe the process derived from the key actions of re-activation and re-generation, especially those with a high transferability degree. Here the attempt is to codify the different steps taken during the actions design and implementation, to register barriers and enabling factors and to translate them into a very practical set of recommendations.

This part concerns the operative level of the Integrated Management Plan, that stands between actions themselves and the strategic priorities. Tactics are contextual to each city, depending on their specific experiences and lessons learnt. Within the pilot plan for Bologna (Fig.1), the tactics imagined concerned:

- Light design for more livable and accessible spaces
- Light and reversible installations for the transformation of public spaces
- Technological innovation for the access and use of cultural heritage
- Multilevel information for an open cultural heritage
- Urban Living Lab and new alliances to accelerate change
- Transition towards sustainable and resilient cultural districts
- Progressive and inclusive accessibility

Fig.2

the scheme represents the IMP for Bologna, with the connections among principles, priorities and tactics.
Credits: Martina Massari

Each tactic was described in its different enabling elements: the involvement techniques, the obstacle to overcome, the evaluations and possible data resulted, the inspiration case studies and the local plans to which they can be linked.

Eventually, the IMP systematizes the different actions and initiatives which involved the CH in the demonstration areas of the cities. The actions involved mostly the public space of the historic city, which has been transformed from being an inactive asset to an active resource and engine (Dvir 2003) of urban innovation.

The work of knowledge-construction of the IMP for the university area of Bologna, has highlighted the capacity of the space and its sediments of knowledge to be able to trigger, generate, promote and catalyze innovation in the city, in a complex process that includes people, relationships, values, tools and social and environmental infrastructure.

Conclusions

The experience of action-research in ROCK - of knowledge-building and co-design first and experimentation and prototyping later - has highlighted both the complexities and the opportunities that arise from a regeneration process that simultaneously derives and generates urban relational capital between spaces and people.

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IMP most innovative aspect is its systematisation of an iterative work methodology, from the research (Regenerative Scenarios, contextual knowledge, mapping) to the action (implementation of local experimentations) back to the research, to eventually define a policy framework perspective

The Pilot Plan applied to the city of Bologna, which provides for coordination at different levels with the programming and planning tools, has been the stimulus to identify which forms of integration were on the one hand more suitable to fit into the regulatory system and the consolidated planning of the city, and on the other hand to be flexible enough to follow the evolutionary framework of urban processes.

This approach might be capable of defining in an interactive and collaborative way, appropriate spaces for the production of new urbanity for the university area and consequently for the historic center: an open and permanent laboratory.

In this laboratory, cultural heritage can become a living engine to rethink the evolution of historic centers and prepare them for future challenges, an attempt at providing a methodology for the co-design of a cultural and sustainable cities.

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