

PIAZZA ROSSINI BOLOGNA



The Municipality of Bologna, with FIU and the University of Bologna are leading several experiments in the heart of the historic centre, within the ROCK project, to tap into the creative potential of local users and in particular of students. One the main action concerns the re-definition of the use of Piazza Rossini, which is currently used as a parking lot in the middle of the University historical area.

The ROCK project (*Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural Heritage in creative and Knowledge cities* - G.A. 730280) - funded in 2017 under the EU Horizon programme in the axis "Climate Action, Environment, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials", "Greening the Economy", in response to the call "Cultural Heritage as a driver for sustainable growth" (Call ID: H2020 - SC5-2016-2017) - is led by the Municipality of Bologna with scientific coordination of the University of Bologna and involves 10 European Cities and 32 partners.

CO-DESIGN

the project and the design process have been shared



"Green Please: the meadow you don't expect" is the proposed project for the first temporary redefinition of the square, and the result of a shared and participatory process.

This project was conceived through a co-design and co-construction workshop that involved students of the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna, with the coordination of Fondazione Innovazione Urbana - a center of analysis, communication, elaboration and co-production on urban transformations to face social, environmental and technological challenges (which operates within the Municipality of Bologna). Moreover, the idea was born during the participatory laboratory "U-Lab" implemented on 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.), paying particular attention to greening and lighting as design elements.

INTEGRATED APPROACH

the project is integrated into a broader system of actions



The experimentation is part of a broader strategy of actions that systematically involved all public spaces of the district - 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. A proposal and an event dedicated to urban regeneration, optimization of cultural heritage 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.

MEMORY

re-use of public space and historical documentation link



Piazza Giacomo Rossini is a public space of great historical and architectural value. Many relevant buildings define the square. They are: the Basilica of San Giacomo Maggiore, the former convent complex of Santa Cecilia, home of the ‘Giovan Battista Martini’ Music Conservatory; the late Renaissance front of Palazzo Magnani - currently used as a bank office - that inside preserves remarkable frescoes and a picture gallery open to the public; the Palazzina Lambertini, an example of eighteenth-century civil architecture; and the sixteenth-century Palazzo Malvezzi, current headquarters of the ‘Metropolitan City’ public body of Bologna. The beautiful public square has always had the function of public parking area for cars and bicycles, preventing its use by citizens for stopping, gathering and socialize: pedestrians could only circulate on the narrow sidewalk margins next to the road lane, while the presence of the parked vehicles in the middle of the area interfered with the view towards its architectural scenario.

The unexpected perception of the square space proposed by the temporary-reuse project - that converted a part of the parking area into an “unexpected” vegetable meadow - in addition to experimenting with new uses and offering the opportunity to rediscover and appreciate the details of the architecture overlooking the square, finds an historical reference. As demonstrated by several archival documents - maps and views (Detail of Bononiensis ditio in the Sala Bologna in the Vatican, 1575; View of Piazza Rossini by F.B. Werner, 1732) - part of the ancient churchyard or cemetery of the Basilica of San Giacomo Maggiore had a green vegetable pavement: a choice, therefore, that recovers part of the historical memory of this Piazza in Bologna.

EXPERIMENTATION

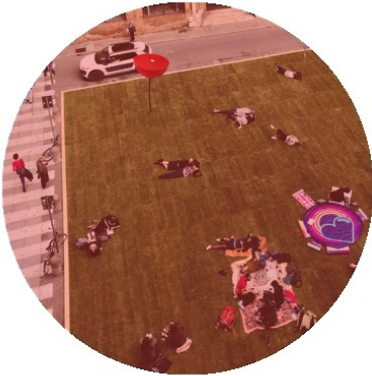
testing shared “green” strategies for urban regeneration



In September 2019, one of the experiments provided Piazza Rossini with a temporary project, designed and co-built with students who transformed part of this 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 choice of the meadow fits in an European framework, which sees European capitals at the forefront of efforts to tackle climate change, even creating urban forests (i.e. Paris) to reduce the CO₂. Heat waves in Bologna are increasingly frequent. Future scenarios show a probable average temperature increase in Bologna of 2° for the period 2021-2050 compared to 1961-1990, with the strongest anomalies that may occur during the summer period, leading to a consequent increase in heat waves. The city of Bologna must therefore adapt to climate change and rising temperatures, with concrete actions that follow its extensive planning and programming (BlueAp, Adaptation Plan, Mayors Adapt, new PUG with its Resilience goal, etc.). This can be done both with demonstrative (and symbolic) actions aimed at changing user behaviour, and with real “devices” that help to

reduce temperatures in urban spaces. The meadow in Piazza Rossini responds to both objectives in a demonstrative way. Integrated technologies, as sensors for outdoor comfort and people flow analytics sensors, register conditions and uses of this space in order to define possible future sustainable configurations. Therefore, the ROCK process - based on research-action cycle (ROCK cycle) – is guaranteed.



OPPORTUNITY

an active demonstration of re-appropriation of public space

The temporary experiment was successfully received by the citizens, with a weekly presence of about 200,000 visitors - monitored by crowd analysis sensors installed in the area - who did not just pass through the area but spent some time in the square. The installation was widely commented on social media, receiving about 85 shares on Instagram and [38 articles](#) on blogs and social networks. Furthermore, a large number of citizens, local associations and social entrepreneurial activities (e.g. Salvaiciclisti, Dynamo, Kilowatt), professional intermediaries (Ordine degli Architetti Bologna) and ad-hoc initiatives (Strade Aperte Bologna) enthusiastically endorsed the initiative as a first step towards a future vision and action for the city.

These events led rapidly to the decision from the Municipality to turn it into a permanent solution for the pedestrianisation of this space.

Emerging from the covid-19 pandemic, cities are embracing several strategies to grant wider and healthier public space for its citizens, to create more attractive situations for visitors and to provide inclusive environments for the largest categories of citizens to retrieve a social dimension.

It is largely shared ([art1](#), [art2](#), [art3](#), [art4](#)) that a space, such as the meadow in Piazza Rossini, could represent a further experimentation opportunity in the current era, to also monitor fluxes and correct the design to contingent necessities with the useful integrated support of technological tools. It fits in the general tendency to provide temporary spaces for testing first, review, correct and test again solutions for cities that are constantly changing and evolving, in the attempt to slow down the threat of climate and global changes with small local successful efforts. It finally fits in a future vision for cities that are changing their times and rhythms (e.g. [slow-fast city integration](#)) enabled by a peculiar use of technologies as empowering devices, used to monitor local small-scale experiments and verify their effects for the green future city.

TEMPORARY

a short-term intervention with a long-term impact



The project for Piazza Rossini is temporary and experimental in nature: a pilot experience that - although limited in time - aims to achieve long-term results. Rediscovery and re-appropriation of this public space by citizens, in a perspective of common good, must match the contextual construction of a sense of collective responsibility towards cultural heritage. The configuration proposed by the project will accompany users and citizens along the pathway of pedestrianisation of the square, proposing a perception - and use - in sharp contrast to the previous consolidated function, with the aim of underlining the importance of taking care of the places and strengthening their sense of re-appropriation.

The positive reaction from the citizens to the first opportunity for experimentation in September 2019 - also supported by a collection of signatures ([A meadow in Piazza Rossini - petition](#)) - has shown how a reversible intervention, carried out in self-construction and in a few days can trigger dynamics of re-activation of communities as well as places and generate a dialogue around the theme of sustainability in the historic centers.