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## Creative adaptive reuse of cultural heritage for urban regeneration

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### 1. Introduction

The paper deals with the theoretical framework in the field of adaptive reuse and decision-making in order to discuss about bottom up processes and key actors. The aim is to verify if spontaneous and creative initiatives may be able to return value to disused or underused built heritage, also producing regeneration effects in the local context.

The European cultural and scientific debate about adaptive reuse has been progressively widened with cultural, socio-economic and ecological issues. Complementing the traditional role of building conservation and enhancement, able to longer life-cycle of built heritage (Douglas, 2006), current literature considers adaptive reuse as a driver of a powerful strategy, by contrasting soil consumption and urban expansion, reducing supply of raw materials and resources (Bullen & Love, 2011; Conejos, Langston, & Smith, 2011) as well as contributing to revitalize urban areas through new functions and new socio-economic actors. This debate mainly refers to top down project and strategies that involved traditional actors of the decision-making process in adaptive reuse (Mısırlısoya & Günçe, 2016; Wang & Zeng, 2010; Yildirim, 2012).

Additionally, in recent years many bottom up initiatives demonstrated the role of adaptive reuse as strategy of collective responsibility for cultural heritage and highlighted the relationship between social capital and local cultural heritage in a spatial proximity. In the practices, local groups have been key actors in reusing abandoned buildings, by converting them into useful and vibrant spaces, often transforming them in productive and creative hubs for the regeneration of the context. These communities show an awareness of values and potentialities – cultural, symbolic, social, economic, and ecological – of their neighbour cultural heritage and an increasing willingness to practice collective responsibility to enhance these values and potentialities.

Some experiences strongly fit with the European route in the field of cultural heritage and society, first of all with the Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society (Council of Europe, 2005) that defines cultural heritage the «[...] resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions» and promotes sharing responsibilities by undertaking to «[...] respect and encourage voluntary initiatives which complement the roles of public authorities» (articles 2 and 11 of the Convention).

In this perspective, the value of cultural heritage strongly relates to the values that society attaches to it, also demonstrated by proactive initiatives focused on promoting and enhancing tangible and intangible local heritage. The relationship between cultural heritage and local community can be considered mutual and bidirectional: local community increasingly assumes an active role in enhancing cultural heritage in its own territory, as well as cultural heritage often strengthens social cohesion and sense of community.

Beyond to provide tangible links to the past and the memories, «Heritage has great capacity to promote social cohesion and integration, through regeneration of neglected areas, creation of locally-rooted jobs, and promotion of shared understanding and a sense of community» (Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe, Brussels, 22.7.2014 (COM 477/2014).

The creative and collaborative cultural production is a strategic focus in the European political agenda. Culture is as a pillar for sustainable development, able to generate both economic and social values (CHCfE consortium, 2015). Community, cooperation, creativity are also the key words of several bottom up experiences in which cultural and creative productions are the drivers of adaptive reuse, with impacts in terms of socio-cultural empowerment and territorial improvement.

In Italy, many cases highlight these relationships among built heritage, cultural production and social innovation, evidencing the need of a systemic approach to adaptive reuse, able to make together built, cultural, social and economic components in order

to trigger new local development. In this perspective, some reflections are necessary about the arena of decision-making processes in adaptive reuse, considering the role of local social capital for enhancing tangible and intangible heritage through a place-based approach (Barca, 2009; Huggins & Clifton, 2011; Pugalis & Bentley, 2014).

Starting from the analysis of these initiatives, the paper evidences some questions that can also represent the main challenges for success and sustainability. Have been the initiatives able to interpret and to answer to local demands for economic, cultural and social services? Have alliances, partnership and financial support transformed informal initiatives into economically viable activities? How management decisions and activities could find solutions to turn new ideas into successful services?

Finally, the paper underlines the need to discuss about what values creative and collaborative initiatives must generate, or regenerate, in reusing built heritage in order to contribute to local regeneration.

## 2. Creative communities and innovative services for cultural heritage

In the European scenario, several creative experiences are increasing in order to valorise local culture for urban regeneration in an international framework. These experiments – that include both tangible and intangible heritage – highlight the role of creative collaborative “design” as powerful tool in which private (profit/no profit) and public organisations are able to cooperate for a common vision.

Creative communities are generating new cultural values and social innovation in an informal and unconventional way. Their innovative “auto-organisation” approaches for searching financing and partnerships’ opportunities are overcoming institutional and local barriers within virtuous processes. Especially, creative services for cultural heritage adaptive reuse have several impacts for the regeneration of the local context and are able to innovate business and management models in order to guarantee the sustainability of the organisation and the long life cycle of building. Impact financing models, collaborative governance, new forms of physical or virtual networks are spreading within creative processes as “hidden innovation” (Izzo & Masiello, 2015) not measurable

with conventional indicators and tools.

Within urban and regional development, involving local populations, research centres, authorities, innovators, universities, movements of city-makers and new groups of citizens, systemic approaches and integrated methodologies (European Commission, 2014; Fusco Girard & Cerreta, 2001) can be developed to identify this latent capacity of innovation able to re-activate and re-generate cultural heritage for urban regeneration.

In Madrid for example, the historical buildings of “Ex Matadero of Arganzuela” include social and cultural activities that stopped the reconversion project promoted by the Municipality in which the recovery of space was managed only by a private operator. The role of citizens, not only as users (1.5 million visits in 2016) but also as actors of reuse program, induced associations to manage directly some buildings of the ex Matadero area, that was subsequently included in the urban regeneration plan of the southern part of the city. From 2006 to 2011, investments in program are about € 110,865,467 (75% of which were public investment and 25% private investment from INAEM, Comunidad de Madrid, IFEMA, Germàn Sánchez Ripèrez Foundation).

This could demonstrate the strengthen of this type of initiatives especially within two key points of discussion: 1) the “bottom up” management by citizens, creative people, NGOs who know local needs; 2) the investments from both public and private actors for responding to this local demand in a collaborative way.

Another example regards the industrial archaeology of “Le Friche La Belle De Mai”, ex tobacco factory in Marseille, where a “top down” approach was applied thanks to the principal investor of the Municipality. The project includes a model of mixed activities in which performing arts are “key creative services”. The new space is now divided in: 6 recording studios (2000 square meters); 1 Bar / Restaurant (400 sq m); 1 Dance hall (1000 sq m); 3 rooms for the theater (3000 sq m); 1 gallery for art exhibitions (500 sq m); 18 workshops for artists (2000 sq m); spaces for associations (2000 sq m) and multi-use spaces (exhibitions, performances, workshops, 10,000 sq m).

Performing arts services and related complementary activities improve the sustaina-

bility of the initiative and at the same time guarantee renovating life to cultural heritage and its context, as a system and living organism (Mısırlısoya & Günçe, 2016).

Several virtuous examples include re-use projects like:

- “Officine Grandi Riparazioni” in Turin, supported by the CRT Foundation, as a new district of creativity and innovation;

- the recovery of the Ex Ansaldo area, which hosts BASE co-working and Cariplo Factory as well as the Museum of Cultures (Mudec), in order to promote the contamination between cultural enterprises, incubators and research centres;

- the project of the “Polo del 900” within the Military Districts of Turin, supported by the “Compagnia di San Paolo” banking foundation, which assumes a key role both for institutions and private organizations (profit and no-profit) that collaborate for innovative start-ups;

- Farm Cultural Park (opened in 2010) that regenerated the historic centre of Favara (dating back to 1500-1700), near Agrigento in Sicily, in which are involved 100 creatives and artists and numerous tourists (about 90.000 in 2016);

- the reuse of an ex industrial archaeology “Ex Fadda” in San Vito dei Normanni (near Brindisi in Apulia), financed by Region within the urban labs’ program “Bollenti Spiriti” and by City Council, transformed in a laboratory space in which the users’ flow is about 400 persons/month;

- Cascinet in Milan, in which about 1.600 persons are involved in creative laboratories, co-working spaces, shared gardens and social events;

- “Case di Quartiere” in Turin, that has experimented a common shared governance as network of Neighbourhoods Houses.

In this contexts, creative process is a new perspective for building innovative initiatives in which cultural value is co-created with new relationship among built heritage, persons and cultural/social production tools. These Italian experiences, as virtuous examples, are also supported by calls promoted by banking foundations such as:

- “Funder 35” of ACRI – “Associazione di Fondazioni e Casse di Risparmio” (Association of foundations and “savings banks”), aimed at under 35 persons involved in cultural and creative services;

- “Culturability” of Fondazione Unipolis, focused on the regeneration of disused spaces as commons;
- “Innovare in rete” (Innovating in network) of Banca Etica;
- “OPEN” calls of Compagnia di San Paolo and so on.

These are calls on both tangible and intangible heritage, with experiments that vary from regeneration of spaces, management of cultural assets, promotion of visual and performing arts, valorisation of traditional/innovative handicraft, and other expressive languages of contemporary culture.

The launch of numerous calls for proposals highlights the willingness of large non-profit Companies to foster and support cultural and social innovation giving new life to “empty or underused spaces”, also creating new job opportunities and new form of social inclusion. These experiments show how the lack of funds by public administration to maintain and manage cultural heritage may be overcome when private creative enterprises are able to cooperate.

Within the Italian experiences described above, the creative hub of “Case di Quartiere” (Neighbourhoods Houses) in Turin can be considered a best practice of strategic governance. European Creative Hubs Network defines these hubs as: “platforms or workplaces for artists, musicians, designers, filmmakers, app developers or start-up entrepreneurs. They are uniquely diverse in structure, sector and services, and range from collective and co-operative, to labs and incubators; and can be static, mobile or online”.

Creative hubs are able to generate new cultural values, improve cooperation through creativity and transform local demands in economic, cultural and social services within a “cultural creative chain reaction” (Cerreta, Daldanise, & Sposito, 2018).

The “Rete delle Case del Quartiere” (the network of Neighborhood Houses) is a network, composed by eight non-profit organisations. The network manages public open spaces and buildings in eight different districts, in which several collective experiences include the actions of citizens’ participation and community self-organisation. The focus is responding to social, cultural/intercultural and economic needs promoting initiatives involving formal and informal group of citizens and associations. Neighbourhoods hou-

ses are common spaces, social and cultural laboratories in which people (citizens, associations, informal groups, cultural operators) and their activities interact for organising conferences, shows, courses (theatre, art, music), workshops, “popular restaurants”, time banks, supportive buying groups, and so on. A shared governance was experimented during the early project “Di casa in casa” (from house to house), rewarded by “Che fare 2”, based on a specific Convention and an informal coordination structure.

This experiment was born in a local context, the city of Turin, already involved in participation projects with citizens and associations thanks to the engine of European institutions that pushed cities to adopt new approaches to public spaces beyond sectoral policies in order to link centres and suburbs. In 2007, the first “Casa di Quartiere” was created in a peripheral area within the program P.I.C. Urban II that financed the renovation of farmstead and the project start up: “Cascina Roccafranca”. The project is the result of a participatory planning process that involved local associations, school operators, social and health services, district offices, etc. The working group established a partnership with the City Council of Turin as atypical civic participation foundation that now counts 70 informal associations and groups, 50 volunteers, operating in 15 working teams, 90 organized courses, 40 workshops, 150 annual events.

In the following years, other urban districts developed similar experiences, through different paths but with a common vision: regeneration of spaces for public use and citizens, thanks to the collaboration between public institutions, banking foundations, social enterprises, associations and inhabitants.

A virtuous example is the “Casa del Quartiere di San Salvario”, established in 2010 in the building of the former public baths in San Salvario district. It is a project of the Local Development Agency “San Salvario onlus”, with the financing support of Compagnia di San Paolo, City Council of Turin and Vodafone Italia Foundation. San Salvario house is a public service intended as laboratory for designing and implementing social and cultural activities involving associations, citizens and cultural operators. It self-produces more than 75% of the resources necessary for its economic sustainability.

The success of “Case di Quartiere” network consists in a mixed approach for a common perspective: a top down strategic vision of the city and bottom up approach for re-using urban heritage. The strategic vision came from City Council that implemented a cultural policy for Turin where citizens are key actors of social action and neighbourhoods are the first local resources. The bottom up approach derives from “houses managers” that develop new proximity welfare models through productive relations with citizens of different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood. These organizations operate as productive clusters in a multi-sector value chain, linking cultural and social innovation for a new regenerative economy.

### 3. Creative adaptive reuse: some perspectives of analysis

Cultural Heritage adaptive reuse may support cultural and social innovation as well as new productive and creative network. Innovation is often strictly linked to creativity as the engine of activities producing culture, knowledge and art. So, the convergence of actors, functions and activities in open hubs facilitates cross fertilization, social capital, knowledge sharing, as well as resource sharing and cost reduction.

To produce systematic research and advancing knowledge about adaptive reuse of Cultural heritage, any step of the process has to be investigated (fig.1)

Which is the role of the local community and/or creative enterprises in promoting a vision of building reuse, designing a system of services and economic activities able to innovate functions and utilities the building offers to the local system and community. Which are the more active and creative players? How can they drive innovation process, involving new partners and gathering financial resources? How can key players manage the innovation process, creating governance structures able to coordinate stakeholders opinions and interests? Which governance structure and business model can better compound public goals, social mission and economic sustainability?

How can reuse initiatives generate positive impacts on the local context?

Researchers can try to answer these questions, detailing hypothesis and testing it through single or multiple case studies. To



Figure 1—Cultural heritage reuse: key factors to investigate (elaboration of authors)

detect communalities and site-specific dynamics is necessary to understand if and at what extent best practices are generalizable. The main goal is to understand the evolving link between cultural heritage and the owner community; aiming at this result, a dynamic perspective has to be adopted, taking into account historical as well as new uses. Furthermore, different steps are not considered as strictly sequential, or as a one-way dynamic; actors needs and role in creative services may stimulate community opinion, stakeholders decisions and financial involvement toward uses more in line with local culture and productive system; whereas exploitation and business perspectives may undelay projects designed and/or funded by external stakeholders.

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<http://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/ita/Bandi-e-scadenze/Open-COMMUNITY>

European Creative Hubs Network

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## “Circular models for the city’s complexity”

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### Introduction

The Circular Economy (CE) approach has been conceptualized in 114 definitions collected and analyzed by Kirchherr, Reike and Hekkert (Kirchherr et alii, 2017) and has been massively used for promoting productive initiatives based on sustainable supply chains and cooperative logistics (Ghisellini et alii, 2016). In several scientific papers the CE has been described as a “regenerative” model based on the reduction of wastes and the optimization in the use (and reuse) of natural resources. The experiences of early CE applications show that cooperative models are key to success, since they are able to create the necessary linkages and synergies to “close loops” and create new value from economic, social, cultural and environmental resources.

In the last two decades literature in the field addresses circular economy as a new business model able to encourage a transition toward a more sustainable development and a more wise and harmonious society. It has been seen as a strategy for achieving the sustainability objectives by integrating its environmental, social and economic dimensions (Pierce and Turner, 1989; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013). Nevertheless, despite the flourishing of literature, industrial practices and policy-making processes in which the circular and sustainable models are intermingled, the similarities and differences between both concepts remain ambiguous (Geissdoerfer et alii, 2017).

The UN Agencies Reports, the EU documents as well as several researches developed by international bodies and foundations – since the UN Agenda 21 subscribed in Rio in 1992 – encourage to cope with environmental problems such as biodiversity loss, pollutions, resources depletions, land abuse and excessive waste production. The activities that are increasingly jeopardizing the environmental equilibria of the planet are progressively depriving the majority of the

world’s population – not only in the Global South – in terms of cultural, economic and social imbalances between the few rich and the most under the poverty threshold. Dealing with these inequalities represents one of the main societal challenges. According to literature and policies worldwide, one of the most accredited answers to this challenge is the circular economy model which dates back to the early 90s as reaction to the linear and open-ended characteristics of the production-consumption economic model (Pierce and Turner, 1989).

The origins of the model are mainly rooted in ecological and environmental economics and industrial ecology, aimed at implementing greener economy and regenerative eco-industrial development (Ghisellini et alii, 2016: 12). This loop economy with an industrial matrix oriented at waste prevention, regional job creation, resources efficiency, dematerialization as well as selling instead of ownership of services and goods for production aims at reducing environmental externalities and social risks without additional costs (Geissdoerfer et alii, 2017). Since the dawn of the new millennium, the understanding of the CE model evolved to incorporate different concepts, such as cradle-to-cradle closed loop (McDonough and Braungart, 2002), regenerative design (Lyle, 1994), industrial ecology (Graedel and Allenby, 1995) and the most popular definition by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation: “an industrial economy that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design” (2013: 14).

This means that the new model requires not only the implementation of green technologies and innovative employment solutions but mainly it refers to the re-design of the entire life cycle of the productive processes in which waste and resources are strictly intermingled. The core of this model is the circular (closed) flow of raw materials and energy managed by “slowing, closing, and narrowing resource loops” (Bocken et alii, 2016: 309). This approach has been consolidated in the sectors of waste management policies, industrial symbiosis, eco-industrial systems, zero-waste clusters and other networks of collaborative consumption (Geissdoerfer et alii, 2017). The new frontier of this model is to transfer the closed loop of materials and energy flows to territorial systems as a whole, at micro, meso and macro