



# A new life for Piazza Rossini



From a parking lot to a pedestrian green space



**BOLOGNA**



391,719

## Challenge

Bologna is known for its great cuisine, left-wing politics and high concentration of cultural heritage and high-quality cultural events. Culture makes up to 6% of the city's budget and is a powerful driver for the touristic sector.

Bologna is also home to the oldest university in Europe, nestled in the heart of the historic centre. The university area has long been considered a hybrid place made of disconnected open spaces where little to no interaction, even conflicts, happened between students, residents and passers-by, rich in hidden and often unknown cultural heritage treasures.

## Solution

To solve conflicting issues, regenerate the urban fabric and strengthen the identity of the area, Bologna launched Five Squares, a six-day event to reconnect open public spaces and give them back to citizens in a shared and participatory process. One of these spaces is Piazza Rossini, a public space of great historical and architectural value, which was transformed into a parking lot decades ago, in the middle of the university historical area. Using participatory methods, listening to the wishes of citizens and co-designing with students, the municipality, its urban agency (FIU) and the University of Bologna installed a green carpet in the middle of the square instead of cars, a temporary installation conceived and designed with students.



Quality of interventions on cultural heritage



## How ?

Together with the University and FIU, Bologna transformed the university area into a living laboratory to co-design actions combining conservation of cultural heritage, innovation and environmental protection.

The idea of redesigning Piazza Rossini was born during the participatory laboratory 'U-Lab' implemented in the university area, which was attended by over 250 people and from which emerged the need to restore a social dimension to the square, revalorise it and its surroundings, enhancing the collaboration of all the local actors (institutions, associations, students, etc.), while paying particular attention to greening and lighting as design elements.

For too long prevented from gathering and socialising on the square, inhabitants can now experiment with new uses and rediscover and appreciate the details of the architectural treasures overlooking the square.

Additionally, as heat waves in Bologna are increasingly frequent and the city must adapt to present and future changes in the climate, the transformation of Piazza Rossini is a symbolic and demonstrative action to change behaviour and reduce temperatures in urban spaces.

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## Budget/Financing

**€ 100,000**

- 80% European funds through the ROCK project financed under the Horizon 2020 programme. ROCK (2017-2020) is coordinated by the municipality of Bologna.
- Half of the budget covered the Five Squares event, including Piazza Rossini's transformation, and half was reserved for the follow-up phase.



## Management

The project has been promoted by the Municipality of Bologna, together with the Foundation for Urban Innovation, in charge of the operational implementation of the action together with the Architecture Department of the University of Bologna, and in collaboration with the Bologna Design Week and Unipolis Foundation.

A large ecosystem of stakeholders has been involved in the whole project: from the listening and co-design phases within U-Lab, to the experimentation on Piazza Rossini and the whole university area.



## Links

Bologna's initiatives in ROCK: [bologna.rockproject.eu](http://bologna.rockproject.eu)  
 General website of the ROCK project: [rockproject.eu](http://rockproject.eu)



## Transferability

- Use cultural heritage as an engine to work towards a common urban regeneration and development vision, involving citizens.
- Engage in active and serious listening in a cooperative manner. For meaningful interaction, have a third actor as a mediator between institutions and communities, who should be able to collect needs and expectations while coordinating a co-design process.
- Organise communication campaigns to promote local heritage. The best way to preserve heritage is to show the hidden treasures people possessed beforehand.
- Demonstrate your willingness to listen to citizens and to reflect their needs e.g. the approval of Bologna's municipal board to turn Piazza Rossini into a permanent pedestrian space.



## Impact

The ROCK project in Bologna developed shared actions between those who live, attend and run the university area, mixing visions, knowledge and skills.

The temporary experiment and transformation of Piazza Rossini was largely embraced, with an average daily presence of over 27,000 and a peak of 36,000 visitors, monitored through crowd analysis sensors. People did not just go through the area but spent time in the square.

Despite a protest movement against the transformation, a large number of locals, local associations and social entrepreneurs endorsed the initiative as a first step towards a future vision and action for the city.

This rapidly led to the decision from the municipal board to turn the temporary action into a permanent solution for the pedestrianisation of this space.



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