



URBinclusion
*Combating poverty
in deprived urban areas*

RE-DESIGN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD: A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR MULTICULTURAL REGENERATION

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Migrantour Napoli. Mondi lontani abitano qui

Per fare il giro del mondo a volte non occorrono 80 giorni, ma solo qualche ora. Succede con *Migrantour Napoli*, passeggiate interculturali condotte da cittadini di origine straniera, attraverso vicoli e strade, storie e vissuti, sapori e tradizioni delle comunità di migranti che vivono qui. Promossa dalla Cooperativa CASBA, cooperativa di mediatori linguistico-culturali, *Migrantour Napoli* fa parte del network europeo *Migrantour Intercultural Urban Routes* di cui fanno già parte Torino, Genova, Milano, Roma, Firenze, Lione, Parigi, Lisbona, Valencia.

“To make the tour of the world sometimes 80 days are not needed, but only few hours”

This slogan from the Migrantour Napoli project webpage nicely introduces the challenge of the “informal agency for local development” Aste & Nodi in Porta Capuana: to enhance a participatory process for the regeneration of a territory that presents a huge potential in terms of history, creativity and tolerance despite concentrating issues of deprivation and physical degradation. The objective of the initiative is to valorise the multicultural identity of the area while enforcing the sense of belonging of new inhabitants of the district. It aims at creating synergies between the migrant communities settled in recent years in the neighbourhood and the new initiatives and enterprises dedicated to art and culture flourishing here. Among the set of actions developed within the Urbinclusion frame, “Migrantour” is a program training youth with migrant background to co-design and lead guided tours of the neighbourhood.

Context

For the URBACT Implementation Network the city of Napoli selected the area of Porta Capuana around the ancient East-Side gateway to the city. The door and the defensive walls were built starting from 1484 under the Aragonese domination. At that time Porta Capuana was the most important access to the city facing the route to Capua and Rome. Developed around the remains of the Aragonese walls, this dense and highly populated neighbourhood concentrates today several categories of disadvantaged population, among which a significant number with migration background. Foreign residents accounts officially for 8,5% of the population, but their actual presence the area is likely to be much higher, as well as is their public perception. Since 1995, that is also when the whole historical Centre of Naples was declared UNESCO heritage, the main Law Court of the city that has been moved out from the monumental Castel Capuano to a new peripheral location, triggering the economic downturn of the surrounding area. Porta Capuana today it is affected by issues of unemployment, congestion, degradation of buildings and public space, and is interested by number of physical regeneration projects complicating local life with cumbersome construction sites. But this area is also very close to the most touristic sites of Via Tribunali, Via San Biagio dei Librai and is the natural access to the ancient Greek-Roman foundation town. It includes significant buildings and monuments of great cultural value and touristic interest like Castel Capuano, Madre Museum, SS. Apostoli and Donna Regina. It has a

highly accessible position, sitting next to the railway central station and to main metro hubs. Altogether this means a huge set of problems constituting the challenge for the city administration and the URBACT Local Group, but as well a great potential for the implementation of an effective integrated urban development vision.

In 2013-2015 Napoli developed a Local Action Plan strategy through the participation to the USEAct URBACT II network. It focused on three deprived urban neighbourhoods of the historical centre, "Porta Medina", "Porta Capuana" and "Porta del Mercato". The action plan addresses challenges of social inclusion and combating poverty in these territories considered among the most degraded areas of the city according to major urban, social, environmental and economic indicators. The reuse and re-functionalization of decommissioned buildings and the regeneration of public spaces is considered a key strategy to achieve different but interrelated objectives: reinforcing social interaction and stimulating social initiatives to solve community challenges; enhancing social entrepreneurship and the employability of youths and long term unemployed; promoting sustainable urban growth and innovative land-(re)use management models by reducing land consumption. The actions proposed by the plan should be implemented in a 7 years period (2014- 2020) within the local urban strategy of European Regional Development Fund, where the city of Naples has been identified as an article 7. Most of the USEAct-foreseen actions are funded by an urban axis in the Campania Regional Operative Program. Such dedicated funding strategy for the City of Naples includes the possibility to integrate Regional and National funding instruments (like the NOP for metropolitan areas), and gives the opportunity to go beyond traditional administrative boundaries improving co-ordination between different government tiers.

The general strategic objective of the city's action plan in relation to "Porta Capuana" area is the regeneration through creativity, innovation and "smart" solutions, energy efficiency and reuse of declassified and abandoned properties. The three specific objectives of the city's integrated action plan are:

- 1) Promoting social and economic development;
- 2) Improving context conditions for urban renaissance;
- 3) Re-qualifying public/private building heritage and infrastructures.

The physical regeneration and social interventions planned at city level are integrated by bottom-up actions proposed by the local stakeholders. The focus is on sustainable urban development interventions and creating new or improved settlement opportunities for people, social activities and businesses in existing locations, without further consumption of land. The actions were based on a shared reflection on urban identity, intended as the historical vocation of the target area and on the deep understanding of context conditions. The stress on urban identity did not reflect a conservative approach, rather to acknowledge pre-existing conditions to build innovative strategies to transform the neighbourhood into a more inclusive place, and the regeneration of buildings and public spaces is strictly linked to poverty reduction, creativity and new economic activities' development .

URBinclusion first phase was dedicated to assess which projects and actions included in the USEACT-Local Action Plan were being implemented in the area of Porta Capuana and what other relevant initiatives had been activated meanwhile. This scoping revealed a variety of different actions, mostly sectoral, only addressing one specific aspect related to poverty reduction. Among the most significant we count the physical renovation of public spaces within the UNESCO Project for the Historical Centre of Naples, financed by the Operative Regional Program ERDF Campania. This includes the re-functionalisation of Castel Capuano (€ 5.000.000), the recovery of the *Aragonese* walls in Porta Capuana (€ 1.497.540), restoration and redevelopment of open public spaces (€ 600.000). These physical interventions are complemented by a series of social projects,

the most relevant of which include the public dormitory where Naples city council offers an emergency recovery service to 110 homeless people; a Social Laundry financed with ERDF, which supports the integration of homeless through a cooperative; a set of services included in the national system for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR); socio educational centres offering support to minors; a set of territorial educational workshops; anti-violence centres carrying out prevention and fight against sexual and gender based violence against women. These publicly funded actions are carried in parallel with of a range of private bottom-up led initiatives settling in and regenerating several buildings in the area. Furthermore, this happens in the background of a general experimentation of the city of Naples towards innovative forms of governance related to the public-community management of common goods and civic uses. The city of Naples is recognizing officially the "Urban Civic Use Regulations" of the common goods in the city through "ad hoc" administrative acts.

Accordingly, the challenge identified by the City of Napoli is to reconnect the number of publicly funded sectoral interventions in a truly integrated vision, fostering the involvement of local stakeholders and in particular citizen most exposed to exclusion and social disadvantage. The aim is the active involvement of relevant local actors: associations, citizens, economic operators and local administration, and of population at large, including those at mayor risk of exclusion. The URBACT Local Group has taken the form of the *Porta Capuana Coordination Table*, whose main task is to interconnect the different sectors of the municipality with the local actors, in order to promote an open, inclusive and effective decision-making process. The focus is on developing new procedures that facilitate co-creation, co-production and co-responsibility with third sector organizations and social economy, that, at the moment, represent the most interesting innovation in addressing social exclusion and poverty challenges in the city. The Porta Capuana coordination table in fact draws on the pre-existing experience of "I love Porta Capuana", an autonomous bottom-up initiative aiming at the participated regeneration of the area, involving a set of profit and non-profit organisations active on the territory. The physical core of the process resides in the Lanificio 25, an ancient cluster that hosts an impressive array of social and cultural enterprises settled during the last decade. It is within this cultural ferment that takes shape the "solution story" we are telling here.

Multicultural regeneration

Aste e Nodi (the name derives from the constitutive elements of a network as cited by Naomi Klein) is an "informal agency for local development" that started its activities in 2010. Among its projects, in 2011 started "*Nomi- Cose- Città*", a program of urban walks led by artists where the participants had to fill a *moleskine* notebook and contribute to the production of a collective narrative. During one of these itineraries they explored the complex of Santa Caterina in Forniello. This is a 15th century convent right behind Porta Capuana that in the Borbonic age was transformed in a textile industrial compound. After IIWW it went through a progressive abandon and was adapted to low quality housing and commercial functions. The relocation of the law court at the end of the 1990s accelerated the decline of the neighbourhood until a series of local private initiatives, attracted by its potential and facilitated by favourable real estate value, started to regenerate the complex. Aste e Nodi got in contact with the Lanificio 25, a cultural venue created by Franco **Restano** (a doctor and entrepreneur) who was one of the first to identify the potential for cultural development of this degraded area. Other enterprises and artists were starting to follow the example buying and regenerating properties inside the complex, like the American artists Jimmie Durham, the choreographer Valeria Apicella and the architectural firm Keller, which later designed the redevelopment of the cloister that today is the *Made in Cloister* art gallery. This last ambitious project, managed by an art foundation represents a turning point establishing Porta Capuana as a stable reference point in the Neapolitan cultural landscape.



The Made in Cloister gallery with the sculptural installation created by Chinese artist Liu Janhua portraying migrant citizens of the neighbourhood.

But this area also was and still is significantly residential, housing disadvantaged families and people with migrant background. Aste e Nodi positioned in this process with the intention of facilitating the coexistence and integration of these two worlds and the specific aim of contrasting the typical gentrification dynamics that can emerge in similar a situation. This happens not only through a series of cultural initiatives - as for instance the collection and publication of a cookbook deriving from a series of culinary walks and social dinners in the neighbourhood - but as well as with fostering a coordination table of local stakeholders for the cultural regeneration of the territory. Aste e Nodi promoted in 2014 the establishment of a non-profit cultural association named “I love Porta Capuana” which includes the Restano Association, and the main enterprises, organisations and foundations active on the territory. The formal establishment of the association is the other side of a constant work of face-to-face mediation and informal facilitation carried on the field. This initiative promoted a study led by the faculty of Psychology of the University of Naples, with the involvement of a great number of students in a survey on local situation and a social promotion campaign ¹. The *I love Porta Capuana* initiative has been successfully steering the coordination and dialogue among the multiplicity of stakeholders that in the course of the years went on settling in this neighbourhood and participating to its cultural regeneration.

¹ the initiative is documented as a different case example “I love Porta Capuana”



This Must Be The Place at Museo Madre

This experience provided a solid background to set the action foreseen within the UrbInclusion project, which has been named “Redesign your Neighbourhood: a participatory process for multicultural regeneration”. It is a program directed at valorising the multicultural identity of the neighbourhood and the sense of belonging of the new inhabitants. It involves a partnership of different actors, which is led by Aste & Nodi and includes ActionAid Italia, the Social coop Dedalus, Social coop Casba, Madre Museum, the department of Social Sciences of Federico II University, Goethe Institut Neapel. The first step has been to cross the life path of migrant youth in a second-line reception stage with their coetaneous students of the Federico II University with the project “This Must Be The Place”, promoted by ActonAid talia. A set of three laboratories produced an installation presented at the Madre contemporary art museum: *Terzo Tempo* (Third Time) was a collection of personal objects representing the everyday of the participants, which represented an attempt in weaving a collective narration out of personal stories. The second step of the project is in course of development. Realised with the collaboration of the Cooperativa Dedalus, a social enterprise which seats in the area, and Cooperativa Casba, which proposes a 200 hours training module for migrant citizens to become tour guides, the Migrantour is a workshop co-designing an itinerary of Porta Capuana guided by the new inhabitants of the area. The project has the double goal of enhancing the sense of belonging to the place in the youth with migrant background while developing a contemporary narrative on a district of the city that has historically a multicultural and inclusive identity. During the URBACT transnational meeting in Napoli in December 2018 the trainees had the opportunity to test their first guide in a short version for the participants to the meeting.



Migrantour during the URBACT Transnational Meeting in December 2018

The next step will concern the organization of guided tours by the migrant trainees to the staff of the Madre Museum. The aim of this phase is to improve the connection of museum to the surrounding context, showing the richness of cultures that this territory has to offer, often unknown even to cultural operators involved in it. Another foreseen stage is the exploration of good practices, proposed by experts from other contexts, on the interaction between citizens and museum; the program realised with the support of the Goethe Institut Neapel, includes workshops for operators and organizations in the area. Final step will be to start, with the collaboration of the educational department of the Madre Museum, a training program for the local inhabitants with migrant background for the role of cultural mediators in the museum aimed at their communities of origin, disclosing this cultural facility also to social groups that are generally excluded. The ultimate goal of this strategy – using the words of its designers - is “to activate an experimentation of a threshold dimension between the territory and the museum, redefining the contemporary art institution as a space for observation, dialogue and participation for the social and cultural innovation of the territory”.

Learning from Porta Capuana

A relevant aspect of this solution story is in the attempt made by the City of Napoli to capture existing currents of social innovation and trust their networking and innovation capacity. It is quite impressive here the capacity of the local society to apply in practice an “integrated approach from below”, anticipating the need for a dialogue among different forces and social groups; and so is their ability to reclaim an inclusive local identity historically rooted in multi-culture and migration.

The URBACT ULG therefore benefited from a process that both at city and at neighbourhood level was popularising the integrated and participated approach within the practice of stakeholders rooted in local society. Yet moving from the wishful narrative of strategic visioning to the concrete reality of implementation this story still reveals gaps and hindrances. According to the perception of several interviewed stakeholders, the evocation of an integrated approach in the policy discourse not always corresponds to a real disruption of consolidated paths in the local administration's management of sectoral projects. This is reflected for instance in the failed communication to the public of the massive physical interventions financed by the UNESCO project, radically affecting the life of the neighbours, that could have benefitted from the channels opened by the local coordination table to be explained and discussed with the population; or in the missed opportunity to use the social laundry and the emergency services supplied to the most disadvantaged citizens to provide also actions directed at the social inclusion of the most segregated subjects.

So far the integration of actions resulted mostly in a fruitful short-circuit between talented and dynamic youths with migrant background and the educated and innovative professionala of the social and creative enterprises; but the impression is that still there is a bulk of the local society that needs to be reached and activated to benefit from such policies and actions. Nevertheless, despite the evident difficulties connected with the critical financial situation of the city and the resistance of departments of the administration to give up consolidated patterns in the implementation of actions, Napoli has found its original way to an integrated and inclusive approach to urban policy naturally rooted in the socially mixed and open character of the city.