

## Article

# Triggering Active Communities for Cultural Creative Cities: The “Hack the City” Play ReCH Mission in the Salerno Historic Centre (Italy)

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**Abstract:** According to the current European scenario, cultural, creative, and community-led policies play an increasingly important role in influencing local resources, systems, and infrastructures management and demand a novel approach in governing, financing, and monitoring urban regeneration processes. Therefore, cities become contexts where cultural and creative practices can be implemented, integrating social cohesion principles based on communities, shared values, and collaborative decision-making approaches, with particular attention to enhancing cultural heritage, mainly unused or underutilised. The purpose of this research is to explore how the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM) methodological framework, developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, can be integrated at the local scale to assess the impacts of urban regeneration processes in an interactive and dynamic way, through the data emerging from the monitoring of urban regeneration experiences activated with the communities. The paper describes the “Play ReCH (Re-use Cultural Heritage)” approach, that promotes a process of collaboration, gamification, and innovation in cultural heritage reuse, as an opportunity to test how cultural, creative, and community-led urban strategies can support the enhancement of heritage generating enabling environments and culturally vibrant contexts. The Play ReCH approach and the “Hack the City Salerno” mission, activated in the Salerno historic centre (Italy), open the reflection on some relevant issues related to how citizens become makers of cultural and creative cities’ policies, and contribute to evaluating and monitoring their implementation at diverse urban scales. The Play ReCH mission underlines how new evidence suggests declining the CCCM conceptual framework and related urban policies assessment, co-defining suitable community-based indicators.

**Keywords:** culture-led processes; community-led processes; community engagement; gamification; indicators; Collaborative Decision Support System (CDSS)



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## 1. Introduction

At the European level, the key shared objectives for urban regeneration and sustainable development are related to the growth of a collaborative and inclusive perspective in governance and management approaches, that considers the reduction of inequalities, the definition of a green growth model towards an energy transition in 2050, and the strategic role of culture and creativity for social and place-based innovation [1–6]. In particular, according to the New European Bauhaus, cultural heritage can be considered a key resource to activate urban regeneration strategies at different scales, shaping more beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive forms of living together; a “cultural capital” to rebuild local identity and co-create sustainable and productive relationships and bonds among people and places; and an opportunity to enable experimental places and spaces, empowering communities thanks to collaborative decision-making processes [7–12].

Investing in cultural heritage enhancement, improving the quality of space and socio-cultural services, harmonising the various social interests with sustainability, and the inclusivity and beauty of urban life are becoming priorities of the urban agenda. In this perspective, culture and creativity can be considered drivers for sustainable and place-based development, but a more detailed analysis is needed.

Indeed, in the last 20 years, urban regeneration strategies focused on culture have been promoted in many cities, and several studies have tried to explore their impacts on the urban environment [13,14]. Although many experiences have been recognised as successful cases [15], several criticisms have been lifted [16,17]. Some authors underlined that cultural and creative city strategies have been often associated with urban branding, and made central areas more attractive for both tourists and a specialised and creative workforce. Those kinds of interventions often caused property speculation, and led poor and working classes from the central areas toward the suburbs. This phenomenon, known as gentrification, has compromised the authenticity of many cities [18], especially those in which culture and creativity have been interpreted as ways to consume authentic urban experiences instead of drivers for diverse and inclusive cities [19].

With this respect, many studies agree on the need to give the right attention to the social impacts of cultural strategies in the long term, and reimagine the local communities' role in city policies. Different authors have underlined that cultural-led regeneration should be local, place-based, site-specific, and community-led [20] to contribute to reducing the physical and social segregation of contemporary cities [21].

Therefore, needs to reposition the city in the global market while simultaneously creating an environment fit for a new technology-based economy, as well as new kinds of creativity, human capital, and the ability to innovate today require that local governments look at community-led strategies [22–26]. This means connecting innovation, creativity, and design to citizens' quality of life, inspiring behaviours and influencing new ways of living, and considering cultural heritage enhancement able to shape the future.

However, the improvement of cultural urban policies also requires researching new ways to assess cultural and creative interventions at the urban scale. Indeed, the way to evaluate cultural and creative urban regeneration strategies has been changed over time. While in the last two decades of the 20th century, the interest was focused on demonstrating their economic benefits, currently, the interest has shifted towards the understanding of the multi-dimensional impacts (positive and negative) of these interventions on quality of life in the city [14]. In this respect, García [27] highlighted how the short-term perspective of assessments focused on how the economic and physical benefits of culture had determined the lack of serious attempts to learn lessons from experience. On the other hand, the difficulty in assessing the social and cultural impacts of these kinds of interventions in the long term have often obstructed the distribution of the spatial and social benefits.

According to the above perspective, the methodological framework proposed by the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM), developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, in addition to the related dimensions of cultural vibrancy, creative economy, and an enabling environment, can be declined at the urban scale to assess impacts and monitor the changes of urban regeneration processes, based on community-led and culture-led strategies.

Exploring the potential of the CCCM to respond to relevant issues about cultural heritage enhancement for urban regeneration at the local scale needs the elaboration of suitable indicators and needs to be place-based. Additionally, the result of the evidence should be observed through practice, and should be able to integrate the evaluation process with the point of view of the engaged community. The opportunity to combine the CCCM indicators with community-based indicators, developed through a co-evaluation process, can support the implementation of collaborative decision-making processes to trigger active cultural creative communities and provide an enabling context in which multiple creativity models (including business and technology) can take root and develop [28]. This regards both the traditional evaluation activities associated with the culture-led strategies

to ICT development, and the need to implement an evaluation CCCM framework in line with a bottom-up co-creational approach that considers mutual learning a strategic goal in its own right [29].

According to the above perspective, this research aims to investigate how community-led and culture-led urban strategies for enhancing heritage can contribute to facing unsolved conflicts and building innovative cultural services tailor-made for a specific context, activating creative communities through game dynamics.

This paper aims to investigate the potentials of the “Play ReCH (Re-use Cultural Heritage) approach” [30] to trigger local communities engaged in the enhancement of cultural heritage by processes of urban regeneration, and thus to elicit, monitor, and integrate the different CCCM dimensions emerging at the neighbourhood scale from the activation of cultural and creative communities.

Monitoring and evaluating the cultural and creative process tested in the Play ReCH “Hack the City Salerno” mission opens some relevant issues concerning how citizens become makers of cultural and creative cities’ policies, and contribute to monitoring their implementation at diverse urban scales. At the same time, new evidence suggests integrating the CCCM conceptual framework and related urban policies, especially concerning the community engagement at the neighbourhood scale, and adopting suitable community-based indicators defined in the process of co-evaluation.

Taking into account the research questions and purpose mentioned above, the paper has been structured as follows: Section 2 introduces collaborative approaches for cultural and creative cities through a literature analysis; Section 3 describes the Play ReCH methodological approach elaborated and implemented in the historic centre of Salerno; Section 4 presents the case study context; Section 5 describe the case study “Hack the City” Play ReCH mission and the related project in Montevergine Park, in Salerno, with specific attention to the proposal of co-indicators elaborated to implement the CCCM at the local scale; and finally, Section 6 presents the conclusions on the whole research path.

## 2. Collaborative Approaches for Cultural and Creative Cities

Although participation and community involvement in urban decisions have been strongly recommended since the end of the 1980s [31], their application did not determine the awaited impact on the quality of the communities’ representation in public decisions. Many studies underlined that a crisis of participatory planning was determined by practices often oriented in consensus and outcomes of a narrow economic growth logic instead of supporting the equitable distribution and access to public infrastructure [32]. In those cases, citizen participation lost its transformative potential and critical influence to orient policies to the public interest.

However, nowadays, the need to innovate urban systems and opportunities offered by technology have favoured a new interest of citizen engagement into policies and practices of urban transformation. Dialogue and collaborative exchange among citizens, social and economic actors, and governments have been recognised as enabling factors to carry on changes that the urban systems need [33,34]. Consequently, a massive experimentation of collaborative processes was promoted around the world [35,36].

Different from participation procedures, collaborative environments aim to generate a deeper engagement of the participants. Indeed, in this context, people work together to develop things or practices, generating processual learning where the comparison/clash of alternative positions, arguments, explanations, and insights stimulates subjects to restructure their schemes [37] and produces knowledge for everyone, not only for an individual, a single organisation, or an institution [29].

Nowadays, several studies investigated how citizens may become “co-decision-makers” and how to implement strategic agenda setting and policy outcomes into the process of collaborative decision-making, co-producing, and co-evaluating cultural services for heritage valorisation and urban regeneration, where “co-” underlines the collective process in the collaborative environment according to a community-centred perspective. This

is essential to facilitate more equal relational processes among individual, local community, and organisational levels [38–41].

The relevance of communities as leading the process is widely recognised at the international level and highlighted by the “Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society”—Faro Convention [1], and in the later documents of the European Council. The Convention encourages and engages people to recognise the public interest of cultural heritage, and outlines the framework of citizens’ rights and responsibilities in participating in heritage valorisation by defining them as “Heritage communities” [1,9]. Many experiences are developed from existing user-centred, open innovation projects in Europe, particularly those set through the Living Lab approach [42–47], by empowering citizens who would use and co-produce innovative civic and culturally creative services within their collaborative networks. Each creative cultural city should attempt to establish conditions in which people might be involved and empowered by co-creation processes through open innovation [48]. It is essential to facilitate open innovation in cities, regions, and communities thanks to an “innovation ecosystem” to co-create, co-produce, and co-evaluate new products and services by users and experts [36,49–51]. Furthermore, considering the crucial role of communities in promoting new models of the urban economy through collaboration and co-operation [52], the co-evaluation [10,53–55] and the ICT tools can facilitate community engagement in valorisation proposals and urban strategies. Collaboration and co-operation, diversity, and openness become crucial in urban culture-led strategies for cities’ development, and identify community-led processes [56–58] that can activate social and environmental change through interaction with those communities that lead the transformation.

In the above context, co-evaluation is a self-assessment approach for open innovation that measures the performance of the co-creation of public services, where evaluation tools serve to communicate, interact, act, and make choices: an internal evaluation that characterises the multi-actor process [59–62]. Indeed, co-evaluation is conceived as a shared process, built with and for the community [63], a product of co-operation, participatory, and engagement activity that overturns the ordinary paradigm of one-way evaluation, integrating into the process the interactions among evaluators and stakeholders, experts and non-experts, communities and citizens. The focus of assessment has changed towards ongoing service co-production processes, considering accomplished results and ensuing impacts in real-world settings. Self-evaluation of the co-production process at an early stage is essential to the efficacy of urban strategies because it exposes how and why co-production is directed towards all stakeholders’ desired services and their utilisation [64]. Co-evaluation can also be defined as a product of co-operation and collaborative process (participative, constructivist, responsive types of evaluation) [55,65], conducted together with those involved and referred to the systemic relationship in multi-actor contexts. Co-operation is a precondition for co-evaluation, and enables accountability and mutual learning functions of evaluation in multi-actor settings.

According to the co-evaluation approach, the need emerges to identify new types of indicators capable of reflecting the preferences and point of view of the community involved in the process and which contributes to the evaluation. Community-based indicators, defined as “co-indicators”, offer an innovative paradigm that includes the subjective perspective to assess local regeneration processes.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development published an online catalogue of over 600 indicator projects in 2000, many of which were focused on the local and municipal level. As a result of this framing, interested stakeholders discovered through trial and error concepts that worked in theory but encountered problems in practice, and applied tactics that were not anticipated in the research [66]. Local priorities emphasised the role of economic security rather than economic growth by improving ecological efficiencies and reducing disparities; ecological integrity, rather than just environmental protection; local quality of life; and community empowerment and responsibility, rather than just improved service delivery, through strengthening and growing community social capital [67]. In this

perspective, co-evaluation approaches can improve culture-led urban strategies through social and collaborative processes [68], overcoming the limitations of neoclassical economic valuation in assessing shared, social, and shared social values [69].

The identification and elaboration of a set of co-indicators to assess and monitor the impacts of collaborative processes start from the ability to generate interpersonal trust and institutional trust through culture-led actions, implementation, and complex values. In this setting, cultural and creative cities and neighbourhoods should make their inhabitants “human-smart”, giving them the ability and confidence to employ cutting-edge ICT to revolutionise how they live and work and improve their quality of life. As a result, citizens’ communities would be able to participate in new and dynamic ways, co-owning the planning and delivery of services, and co-producing services [64] for themselves and the people they live with, care for, and work with.

### 3. Materials and Methods: The Play ReCH Approach

To trigger innovation and collaborative processes for the declination of the CCCM approach at a local scale, it is necessary to promote skills capable of interacting with multilevel governance processes and civic energies [70], making operational urban change through community engagement and the co-design of collective services. Community engagement is relevant to activating skills for cultural heritage enhancement, building an enabling context, and triggering “cultural creative communities” through adopting a flexible approach, tailor-made for a specific local context with fit tools. The different community engagement tools [71,72] have specific objectives of involvement and data collection: community mapping, planning for real, public meetings, workshops and focus groups, forums, future search, open space technology, citizens juries, roundtable/consensus building, citizens’ panels, street stalls, community surveys, web-based engagement, art and creativity, etc. [73].

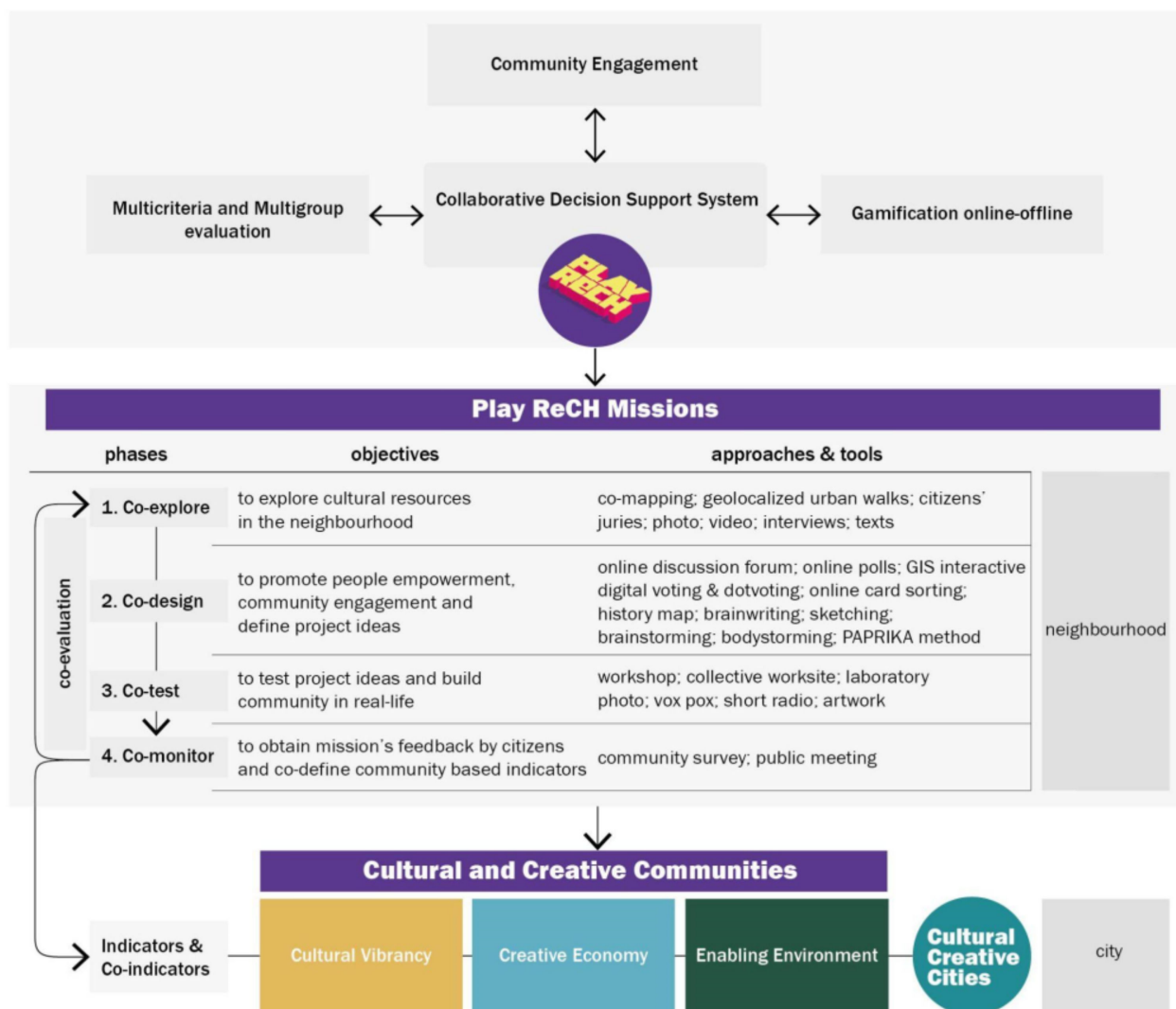
In several successful Italian cultural creative experiences (e.g., the network of neighbourhood houses in Turin, BASE Milan, Matera ECoC 2019, Procida Italian Capital of Culture 2022, etc.), these tools helped to reveal the nature and effect of culture and creativity as a driver of people’s awareness and skills empowering with different formats [74]: a workshop, an art event, a festival, etc. Furthermore, these creative cultural planning [75] formats support institutions and organisations in rethinking how cultural resources can strategically contribute to achieving community, civic [76], and sustainable development goals [6,77].

Community engagement is an essential component of a collaborative decision-making approach, where creative and cultural aspects are crucial to co-evaluate cultural heritage enhancement for urban regeneration, in which citizens are intended as “sensors” of change to monitor the impacts of project actions on the economy, society, environment, and individuals [78].

In this context, there are a lack of empirical studies investigating the effectiveness of some game-based teaching methods on mutual learning and activating for cultural heritage enhancement and urban regeneration. Indeed, as the topic is relatively young, the key role of specific game design elements (e.g., goals, feedback, and challenges) and gaming experience (e.g., flow experience) has not been thoroughly investigated yet [79]. Anyway, several studies have widely recognised the benefits of gamification on learning processes [80–82]. Gamification—intended as a tool of the creative collaborative decision-making process—stimulates dynamic learning and capability approaches thanks to spontaneity, self-reflection and collaboration, hospitality, and trust-building. Indeed, gamification can be defined as the “use of game design elements in non-game contexts” [83] and has become increasingly popular for business studies in higher education and training in companies. Serious games are innovative and unconventional simulation tools that reproduce the dynamics and logic of a specific scenario, becoming a bridge between theory and practice via active engagement. Following the “Play ReCH (Re-use Cultural Heritage)” approach (Figure 1) and steps, this paper tries to define a possible process for the Cultural Gems mapping

project [84], through the CCCM spin-off web app wherein people can also map informal spaces in cities where cultural, artistic, and musical activities are practised. In Play ReCH, the neighbourhood scale was selected because the different test missions have highlighted the value of local micro-actions in activating real engagement without wasting the ideas and skills of the people engaged.

The methodological approach explores innovation ecosystems in cultural heritage enhancement for urban regeneration, based on a Collaborative Decisions Support System (CDSS) that aims at exploring the synergy among gamification, community engagement, and multi-criteria/multi-group tools [85–88] to assess the relevant communities' points of view, engaging them in serious urban games [89] and missions for cultural assets at the neighbourhood scale.



**Figure 1.** Play ReCH (Re-use Cultural Heritage) approach.

Play ReCH interprets the CCCM approach at the neighbourhood scale, considering cultural and creative bottom-up communities. Specifically, the approach tries to make communities co-producers of innovative, creative experiences to enhance already culturally recognised places, and to trigger those places that are potentially expressive of cultural values facilitated by gamification tools.

Using the game elements [90], citizens can identify themselves as cultural heritage enhancement professionals and actively recognise themselves as a “cultural creative com-

munity". The Play ReCH approach aims at interpreting the CCCM dimensions, criteria, and indicators at the neighbourhood scale, considering the following "living lab" steps:

1. Co-explore: the first phase aims at exploring cultural resources (in terms of people, skills, and places) through engaging people in community mapping for capacity building and behaviour changes [91]. The co-explore step highlights people, physical structures, organisations, and institutions, i.e., resources and potential partners in the planning and evaluation of a project or service for cultural heritage and community needs based on exploring shared criticalities. Urban maps and photographs are used to understand how people perceive that place and what improvements they would like to see. The ideas are recorded: offline, through post-it notes on maps and discussions moderated by facilitators who can help people explore issues, identify criticalities and opportunities, and learn about the areas of conflict and build consensus [73]; and online, through geo-localised urban walks, images, videos and interviews, quiz games, and texts shared through apps and social media. The mapped ideas are then submitted to Citizens' Juries, a group of "jurors" representing the general public. Jurors can question experts offering different perspectives on the issue before deliberating, reaching an agreement, and producing a short report on the suggested actions [92,93].

2. Co-design: this step provides web-based and creative engagement tools to enable contexts for social change, community building, and developing project ideas. Web-based engagement tools, such as online discussion forums and blogs, online polls, social networks, ratings, and interactive digital voting help to significantly change the planning/evaluation cycle [94] in terms of communication, collaboration, and impact on the territory [95]. In this step, some unconventional games' ICT tools are also tested, which allows for the engagement of the community directly and in a short time, such as online Card Sorting, Dot Voting, History Map, Sketching, Graphic Jam, Brainwriting, Brainstorming, and Bodystorming [96].

3. Co-test: the third step aims at activating a "collective worksite" as a local offline action to test ideas in heritage sites to be enhanced and to activate community users. The engagement tools that enable an informal discussion of the ideas to be produced in the worksite are workshops that help people outline the project's strengths and weaknesses, develop an innovative approach, and define a scale of priorities in the implementation of an action plan [97]. Several tools used in this phase are also related to art and creativity, such as: photography to capture people's visions, perceptions, and points of view; self-made architecture; and short radio or video interviews made in different places and at different times, but then discussed in a synthesis event.

4. Co-monitor: the final step would monitor the perceived missions' well-being, the time and skills donated, and the willingness to get involved in caring for a cultural asset as the historic centre through the Community survey tool [73]. In parallel to the survey submission, public meetings are scheduled with the cultural and creative community, activated for consulting many people through small group discussions with continuous feedback on the proposed contents and the ranking of priorities to be discussed [98]. Based on the feedback obtained through the Play ReCH mission, the aim is to co-create community-based dimensions for implementing CCCM criteria and indicators for individual and collective development and well-being [99]. Such dimensions are widely used to monitor community-led projects' success rates and progress, and make visible some invisible elements, such as awareness, trust, loyalty, etc. In some cases, they are used to assess the creation of communities around ICT [100] and cultural heritage, or for measuring vitality at the neighbourhood scale through some relevant criteria: Connection to Community Services; Participation in Community Structures; Presence of Community Facilities; Access to Community Facilities; Access to Public Amenities; and Skills Development [101].

In the above perspective, Play ReCH can be considered a way to implement the CCCM framework as a Cultural Creative Place-based Monitor for heritage enhancement and urban regeneration, progressively activating continuous community empowerment and defining collaborative and long-term local, sustainable development. In this way, the community

enhances, in a collaborative way, existing cultural sites that are already an expression of shared values for the map-makers, and trigger new ones that are not yet an expression of these values.

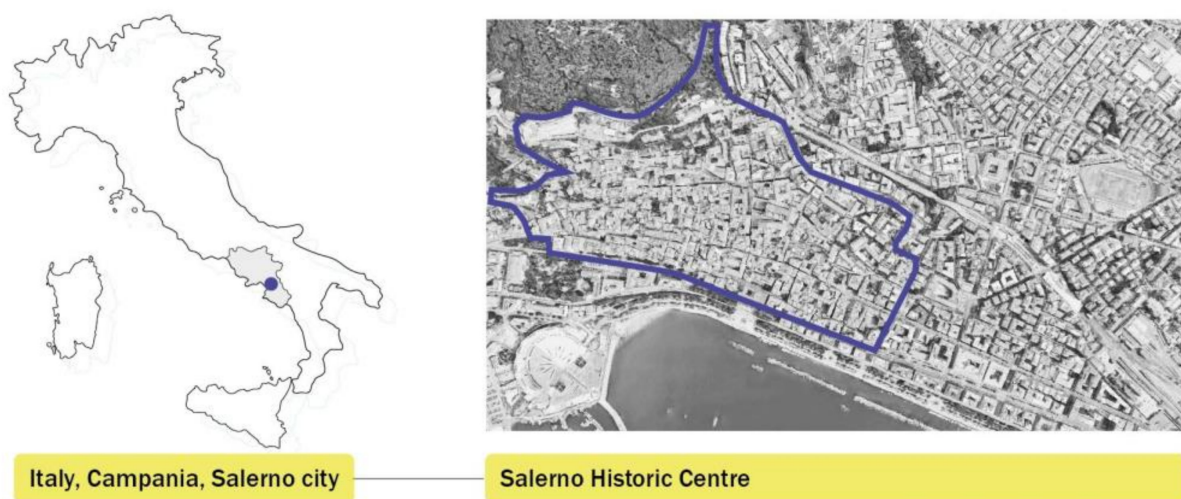
#### 4. The Case Study Context

In the South of Italy (Figure 2), Salerno represents the territory where the Play ReCH approach and tool was applied and tested. The city of Salerno, with approximately 130,240 inhabitants (ISTAT 2021), represents an extraordinary cultural heritage in a particularly privileged territorial context.

However, as shown by the data released through the 2019 ISTAT “culture and leisure” yearbook in the southern regions, the percentage of those who say they have never participated in cultural activity is 28.8%, higher than in other parts of Italy. These data are added to those relating to the employment and the substantial migration of young people, revealing a severe condition of overall distrust of their own territory.

Based on ISTAT data from the third half of 2019, an analysis of employment levels relative to Southern Italy shows that the female employment rate is 33.2% and the inactivity rate is 59.1%, respectively, which is 25 points lower and 28 points higher than the male employment rate and inactivity rate. As ISTAT data for 2019 show, NEETs between the ages of 16 and 34 in Campania are 37.6%, and Salerno also sees a sharp decrease in the population, especially the younger one between 18 and 34 years, the so-called “millennials” forced to emigrate (5,000 young people only in 2020) in search of new job opportunities and better living conditions. Adding to the economic crisis that continues at the national level and is now aggravated by the pandemic, the Province of Salerno ranks 90th in the ranking of youth employment, with an unemployment rate of 29.4% in 2020. Today, there are about 21,000 inhabitants under 35 (15% of the population), mostly high school graduates, graduates, highly skilled individuals, and NEET individuals.

Specifically, a Play ReCH mission was tested in 2019 in the Salerno historic centre. This area extends for about 34 ha, with historical buildings and many disused or underused spaces. Several organisations such as associations and neighbourhood committees desire to co-manage with public administration spaces, cultural assets (Salerno has not regulated the use of common goods nor activated collaboration agreements), and green spaces (Salerno has less than 15 trees per 100 inhabitants and only one lot dedicated to urban gardens in the city) as an opportunity for intergenerational meetings.



**Figure 2.** The territorial background of the study area (elaboration of authors).



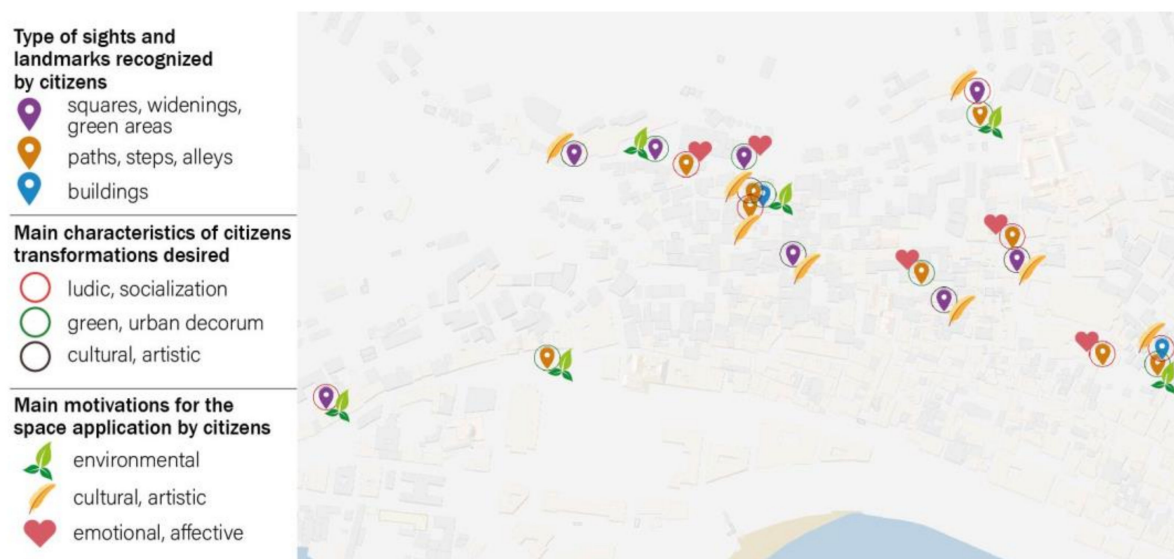
Starting from this context, the activation of a Play ReCH mission, so-called “Hack the City Salerno”, was aimed at sharing with citizens the ICT tool and facilitating active citizenship paths by co-producing values and transforming abandoned spaces into “cultural gems”, with the aim of trying to activate trans-generational processes of reuse and urban regeneration that are sustainable and generative over time. Specifically, the mission objective was to test a collaborative decision-making process in which citizens, taking on the role of designers, become protagonists in the enhancement of their neighbourhood heritage by identifying a space considered particularly fragile, proposing the idea of a micro-regeneration intervention, and cooperating to implement it in the process of co-design and co-evaluation. The experience, which involved the citizens through a mix of virtual and digital dimensions, according to the mechanisms of gamification, allowed them to acquire points to enter the ranking, the “urban regenerator” skill, and, above all, to be able to concretely realise their idea if they won.

### 5. The Results: “Hack the City Salerno” Mission

Following the described Play ReCH methodological approach, the mission activated a process articulated in the following steps with consequent results.

1. Co-explore: in the historic center of Salerno, through a community mapping action, Play ReCH transformed the inhabitants into explorers and designers of their territory, involving them in the process of identifying those places of the cultural heritage [102] not yet perceived as “cultural gems”, but considered particularly significant for starting a regenerative process of cultural enhancement and informally recognised as potential sights and landmarks in the quartier. The shared identification of these public spaces represented an opportunity to create new points of observation of the territory, and to make the communities active in imagining how these places could be transformed by submitting their project ideas. A cartographic tool such as My Maps was used for participatory mapping. Urban walks and brainstorming were activated to co-explore the territory with the inhabitants in real life and to facilitate the co-production of ideas.

Nineteen areas of the historic city centre were nominated for the “Hack the City Salerno” call for proposals, together with related project ideas proposed by 42 citizens, associations, committees, and professionals (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Sights and landmarks recognised by citizens for “Hack the City Salerno” call, first edition (elaboration of authors).

The proposals helped to select which areas of the historic centre need regenerative interventions for inhabitants. Starting from the characteristics of project ideas proposed, it emerges that citizens see in abandoned or underutilised cultural assets a purely recreational-cultural vocation (about 63% of the proposals). The choice of the intervention areas shows the recognition of an intrinsic value [94] generated by environmental, cultural-artistic (“it is the most beautiful view in the neighbourhood”), or emotional-affective (“it is the widening of my childhood”) characteristics. In some proposals, greater importance is given to the value of use, thus concentrating above all on the types of activities and services that would be activated. In these cases, the informality mode and mix of uses were considered necessary for triggering the cultural heritage enhancement process in the neighbourhood. About 32% of the projects proposed transforming areas in the historic centre through tactical urbanism interventions to support ludic and socialisation activities. Moreover, 42% of the ideas focused on the environment, proposing the regeneration of underused/abandoned green areas.

The proposal evaluation process to define the winning idea integrated the experts’ opinion with a popular jury in which citizens expressed their preferences by simulating a citizens’ jury.

The technical jury used the following criteria, judged on a value scale of 0 to 5:

- feasibility of the proposed interventions in line with the planned budget;
- the ability of the idea to generate a lasting regenerative process; and
- the presence of formal or informal groups interested in co-managing the reactivated cultural spaces.

During a public event, in a co-evaluation process, citizens played the role of “evaluators” through the dot voting tool and free comments expressed to each single candidate idea. The shared criteria were the following:

- relevance of the identified cultural space within the neighbourhood;
- the ability of the proposed ideas to improve the urban context; and
- the ability of the proposal to respond to the neighbourhood needs.

These criteria, shared with participants in the co-assessment event, were embraced. Excluding some minimal suggested additions, citizens were comfortable interpreting the candidate projects through them, as the language used was simple, consistent, and direct.

More than 100 old town residents, between 8 and 77 years, participated in the voting and awards event. Their votes were added to the preferences previously expressed by online participants in the Play ReCH experience and technical jury voting.

The winning idea, proposed by the Neighbourhood Committee, focused on the upper historic centre of Salerno along the ancient Montevergine road (Figure 4). This historic road extends along with the city’s ancient defensive walls that continue to the Arechi Castle. On these walls, in the XI century, the Montevergine conservatory was built, an ancient monastery now in a state of abandonment for over ten years. Near the conservatory, the Neighbourhood Committee has proposed intervening in a small abandoned public green area, for years illegally occupied by private individuals who had left the ruins of the building demolished. The candidate idea was oriented to transform this abandoned lot into a biodiversity area where citizens could produce flavours, fruits, and vegetables together to participate in the co-management of the public good.



**Figure 4.** Area of Play ReCH's "Hack the City" mission in the historic centre of Salerno (elaboration of authors).

Before proceeding to the co-design phase, with the aim of better exploring together with the neighbourhood inhabitants on a small scale, their relationship with the area of interest, and the values they recognised in it, a first questionnaire was shared online. In particular, among the 345 responses obtained, on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (from "very few" to "very much"), it emerged that:

- 57% of respondents to the survey declared themselves strongly linked to the landscape of Salerno and, specifically, to that of the high historical centre, expressing themselves through the most elevated number present in the Likert scale;
- 52% of people did not consider this specific urban landscape sufficiently valued, attributing a score of 2;
- 75% of the participants recognised a historical value to the investigated Montevergine hill, 70% a cultural value, 39% an identity value, while 33% both an aesthetic and a social value. In particular, in this section of the survey, the purpose was to understand what intrinsic values the inhabitants recognised in this piece of the city based on ecosystem services, being able to choose between the affective, recreational, symbolic, and economic values, in addition to those previously mentioned and most chosen. Only 6% of participants placed an economic value on the landscape in question.

The second part of the survey focused mainly on the shared identity of the primary users of the area, the main perceptions related to this, and the needs they could satisfy along this path:

1. Define the Montevergine area end-user identikit. Specifically, it emerged that the main users were young people (43% of the responses obtained), especially students, musicians, and sportspeople, interested in observing the panorama from that privileged viewpoint;
2. Reconstructing perceptions related to the project area through the five senses. Five Word Clouds collected the different elements that end-users connected to this specific urban landscape through the perceptions of smell (identifying it in jasmine, rosemary, and lemon), touch (by associating the materials of ceramics, wood, vegetation, and stone), sight (by connecting it above all to trees, vegetation, benches, and seats), taste (by thinking of rosemary, basil, mint, and tomato plants) and sound (by associating this sense with birdsong, cicadas, and the buzzing of bees);
3. To bring out community needs related to the winning project proposal of the "Hack the City" call. Almost 50% of the end-users expressed the wish to admire the Montevergine view and walk around surrounded by greenery. In comparison, 34% gave a higher score to the possibility of exploring a biodiversity area and experiencing new cultural services. In addition, 42% of respondents expressed a desire to organ-

ise/participate in ecotourism tours involving the new biodiversity area, while 33% were more interested in supporting environmental education activities and outdoor artistic performances.

Therefore, more than 300 online and offline inhabitants belonging to different generations were involved in this phase. Nineteen areas of the historic centre that are currently abandoned, disused, or underutilised have been mapped, with as many ideas to enhance them. Through a collaborative process, it was decided to support one of the candidate proposals, through human and economic resources, to experiment with possible new uses of public space through a micro-intervention by activating a broader regenerative transition. The opening of the co-exploration path to free citizen involvement through public events and online surveys was qualitatively relevant. The involvement of a heterogeneous community, both in terms of age and socio-economic background, virtually and physically, has offered to the ongoing process a diversity of interesting points of view to redesigning a public space that needs to interpret different citizens' interests.

2. Co-design: the winning idea was incubated and developed in a co-design process through a more comprehensive section of the community. The citizens played the roles of designers and evaluators to redefine the project as so-called "Montevergine Park". The co-design process aimed at building a cultural creative community around a collaborative redesigning process of the new configuration of the identified space both online (through structured workshops on conference platforms, online surveys, web and social interactions) and offline (through brainstorming, focus groups, co-design workshops).

In particular, from the data obtained in the first phase of co-exploration, the co-design step focused on experimenting with online co-design workshops (through role-plays and team games, drawing, and pictures and writing, to bring out the shared characteristics of the future area of biodiversity) and a co-evaluation workshop. Specifically, participants were asked to co-evaluate the key elements of an ideal biodiversity scenario proposed by the neighbourhood committee and technical experts in permaculture with the participants of structured online workshops. The 1000 minds platform was used for that, exploiting the PAPRIKA approach—Potentially All Pairwise Rankings of all possible Alternatives [80] as a multi-criteria method that involves the decision-makers in the evaluation process. Based on their knowledge and subjective judgement, the end-user can evaluate, in a pairwise comparison, two possible alternatives defined on two criteria or attributes at a time. The criterion linked to the "welcoming and immersive perception" emerges as the most important (with an incidence of 31.1% out of 15 participants). At the same time, less importance was given to the "relationship with the street", for 8.8% of the participants to be realised in "open" mode with greenery at various heights. At the end of this intense collaborative process of co-design and co-evaluation, the preferred project scenario was defined.

This phase involved about 60 citizens and three associations, both online and offline, including participants and experts (agronomists, designers), who did not previously know each other, but since the co-exploration phase have decided to follow the process actively. The participants in the online workshops, between 22 and 74 years old with very different skills, have engaged in four workshops for a total of 15 h in four weeks, expanding together with the winning idea, weaving relationships between them, still active and designing together the preferred configuration for the new public space of "Montevergine Park". The path of co-design and co-evaluation has thus proved to be an enabling process in which people can implement their skills, acquire new abilities, and develop their soft skills. Moving beyond the role of "participants", engaged citizens cooperate concretely within the decision-making process to repurpose public space. People of all ages with different abilities and socio-economic backgrounds can not only access and enjoy a place, but they play a crucial role in its identity, creation, maintenance, and co-management. In this sense, a path of translation of technical languages, through gamification techniques, the use of technology, and in-person experiences, has helped build a process of inclusive and enabling co-operation. In this process, the people's choices count and define a coherent mandate to

be accepted, interpreted, and re-instituted with technicians and professionals, thus also reconfiguring the role of designers.

3. Co-test: the collective worksite strongly characterised the transition from the idea to realise the regenerative intervention proposed for the “Hack the City” mission. By implementing a workshop involving students and professionals, “temporary communities” were able to meet the inhabitants active in the realisation of the Montevergine Park process to co-produce together a public urban design for the new biodiversity point, based on the data that emerged in the previous steps. The temporary architecture, realised through self-construction techniques, represented in this case an enabling device through which cultural creative communities capable of sharing knowledge, experiences, and aspirations could be built and activated. Simultaneously, the area was reclaimed through a series of meetings with the residents involved in the process and the winners of the call, and work began on seeding, planting, and caring for both the established perennial trees and the first seasonal cycle of the biodiversity area (Figure 5).

Through a Festival, open to the whole city, this phase has involved Salerno with twenty students from different parts of Italy, ten professional tutors, six experts in urban regeneration and environment, and ten associations of the territory. More than 300 inhabitants also participated in cultural events offered through collateral activities to experiment with new uses of public space, such as outdoor cinema, talks, green workshops, and childrens’ labs.

Shared action in the field has been decisive in reinforcing the bonds developed at a distance thanks to technology, thus encouraging relationships of trust between people, forming new networks and new groups engaged in enhancing cultural heritage in other areas of the city.



**Figure 5.** The regenerated space before and after the mission activated (elaboration of authors).

4. Co-monitor: the community involved was asked to evaluate the ongoing process after the first year of activity through a community survey for future neighbourhood planning. The community survey was structured in four main parts: the first introduces the Play ReCH tool, its approach, and its meaning; the second was dedicated to investigating the potential interest of the neighbourhood inhabitants in participating within this Play ReCH mission, their motivations, and for which thematic field; the third part was explicitly dedicated to cultural associations and organisations, cultural operators, and commercial activities of the neighbourhood to understand their degree of interest in the implementation of a Play ReCH mission; and the fourth part collected the personal data of the 120 citizens of the historic centre who participated (30.84% with an age range of 27 to 33 years and 65% female).

The results underlined that 78.3% of citizens expressed their willingness to participate in the Play ReCH mission in their neighbourhood and, specifically, that they would be willing to do so both online and offline. Among the main motivations were “sharing ideas with other people”, “connecting the virtual dimension to the real one”, “becoming an example for others”, “feeling an active part of the neighbourhood”, and “activating regenerative processes that engage the inhabitants as a part of the city”. Among the remaining 21.7%, 8.3% would play only online, while 8.4% would not have time for participating. The collaborative reading of the possible participation in Play ReCH experiences is expressed by 73.7% of the users, who elicited a preference to join with their friends, with the Play ReCH community (49.2%), or with people they do not know yet (42.4%), to “integrate skills useful for the mission achievement”, “make a stimulating experience and produce innovation”, “consolidate ties and create new ones”, and “have a dialogue with other people”. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that 35% of the cultural associations and operators, with the highest value on the Likert scale configured from 0 to 5, identified Play ReCH as a possible approach and tool to amplify the actions that could be redesigned in a game mission to increase, for 85% of them, the social involvement of their organisation.

These steps are particularly interesting in a territorial context in which communities are almost excluded from the decision-making processes about urban regeneration, cultural heritage enhancement, and local development, suggesting that the collaborative process has a priority value for them. The cultural creative community also highlighted in which field they would prefer to express themselves or in which they would like to acquire skills through the Play ReCH missions, mainly focusing on architecture, cultural heritage reuse, nature, and history.

To date, almost two years later, the impact assessment phase is still ongoing. In the meantime, participants in the workshops and new residents who join the process have informally generated a community that takes its name from the caper plant, particularly along the Montevergine road, the “Chiapparelli”. This informal group, engaged in the cultural heritage enhancement, has recovered and culturally activated an abandoned area of the historic center, regenerating more than 100 square meters of public space. Supported on the territory by the Blam collective, through an empowerment process, they still share online tools to organise the activities of the biodiversity area, and offline, they meet during the week to take care of the public green, demonstrating their awareness of being part of a community. Furthermore, more than 100 vegetations have been planted, from aromas to fruit trees and seasonal vegetables, thanks to continued active fundraising. Moreover, this community, composed of artists, professionals, associations, and students, has co-produced a cultural and creative experience as a guided tour with site-specific performances (“Our Great Beauty”), to raise awareness of other citizens re-discovering an old part of the city and the regeneration work in progress. The process started thanks to the support of a local foundation for a total value of €12,000, and today it is supported through participation in local and national calls, local crowdfunding, and volunteering. In addition to the Neighbourhood Committee and the winner of the “Hack the City” call, three other local associations and the municipal administration are currently involved in the process, trying to define a collaboration agreement for the public area co-management.

Starting from monitoring the process, which is still in progress, the need to identify some “bottom-up” indicators or defined co-indicators that express the engaged community perception of the city’s’ cultural and creative level has appeared. Indeed, the activated regenerative process had represented a process of co-learning in which some significant criteria emerged when the active community tried to define the meaning of the experience in which it was activating. The undertaken process of urban regeneration, on the one hand, was aimed at a micro-urban transformation, and on the other hand, has represented a culturally significant collective experience. In this experience, dedicated to “making city together”, a part of the community has become the protagonist, contributing by investing their human capital to generate an enabling environment for themselves and others, and to assess and monitor the ongoing results.

From these considerations, the research tries to expand the CCCM dimensions with quali-quantitative co-indicators that emerge at the neighbourhood scale through processes such as those triggered by Play ReCH in Salerno (Figure 6). These processes are, above all, capable of generating cultural and creative communities, as portions of active citizenship, able to transversally influence the dimensions considered by the JRC Monitor. The main characteristics so far identified of cultural and creative communities, starting from the experience activated of “Montevergine Park” in Salerno, can be related to the main domains of “Cultural vibrancy” and “Enabling environment”.

Domains	Dimensions	Indicators	U. of M.
Cultural Vibrancy	D1.1 Cultural Venues & Facilities	Sights and landmarks recognized by citizens	n°
		Recovered and culturally active sites	n°
	D1.2 Cultural Participation & Attractiveness	Formal/informal groups engaged in cultural heritage enrichment	n°
		Formal groups involved in the co-management of cultural heritage	n°
		Cultural and creative actions co-produced by the communities	n°
Enabling Environment	D3.1 Human Capital & Education	New abilities acquired	Likert scale 1-5
		Development of soft skills	Likert scale 1-5
		Citizen awareness	Likert scale 1-5
	D3.2 Openness, Tolerance & Trust	Creation and encouragement of trusting relationships among people	Likert scale 1-5
		Creation and encouragement of new networks	Likert scale 1-5
		Trigger and stimulation of new community groups	Likert scale 1-5
	D3.4 Quality of governance	Creation and encouragement of trusting relationships between people and institutions	Likert scale 1-5
Collaboration agreements for the cultural heritage enrichment		n°	

Figure 6. The co-indicators framework.

In particular, about the domain of Cultural Vibrancy, we considered the following dimensions:

**Cultural Venues and facilities:** this dimension also takes into consideration non-institutional sights and landmarks, but “cultural gems” recognised as particular catalysts by citizens (e.g., abandoned or underutilised spaces or buildings), as well as places regenerated through reuse and culturally active actions (e.g., former churches, social centres, cultural centres, etc.). We, therefore, introduce the indicators: “Sights and landmarks recognised by citizens” and “Recovered and culturally active sites”.

**Cultural participation and Attractiveness:** where the cultural vibrancy is also guaranteed by the ability of citizens not only to enjoy cultural experiences, but also to become active in communities dedicated to the enhancement of cultural heritage, it is helpful to consider the “Formal/informal groups engaged in cultural heritage enrichment” and “Formal groups involved in the co-management of cultural heritage” indicators.

Regarding the Enabling environment domain and its dimensions, it is considered appropriate to consider a set of qualitative indicators that may return a broader conception of human capital, openness, and governance from the active communities’ point of view.

**Human Capital and Education:** if the environment is also enabling thanks to the experiences that can be experimented within the creative communities, those indicators for measuring personal growth within a broader social context of which one is part, albeit subjectively, are taken into consideration. Specifically: “New abilities acquired” through activation in cultural and creative projects, “Development of soft skills”, and “Citizen Awareness”.

Openness, Tolerance, and Trust: the experience in the field shows how the activation of cultural and creative communities facilitates the increase of mutual trust among inhabitants, as citizens get involved by cooperating with others to achieve a common goal, forming an enabling context of informal learning and, at the same time, generating it. In this perspective, it is essential to include, among the indicators, the “Creation and encouragement of trusting relationships among people”, the “Trigger and stimulation of new community groups”, and the “Creation and encouragement of new networks”.

Quality of Governance: in addition to the efficiency of institutions in the overall administration of the city, it is considered, at the same time, the ability of administrations to apply systems of co-governance, sharing concrete projects on the territory with the inhabitants and supporting the involvement of citizens in the enhancement and co-management of the cultural heritage of their city. Therefore, the following indicators were identified: “Creation and encouragement of trusting relationships between people and institutions”, and “Collaboration agreements for the enhancement of cultural heritage enhancement”.

The indicators and co-indicators, deduced during a cultural and creative community activation through the Play ReCH bottom-up experience, try to pick up and introduce in the CCCM citizens’ perspective and their mutual learning process based on practices, who live and transform it with their informal action with communities dedicated to the cultural heritage enhancement and the cultural experience of co-producing.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

Culture-led strategies and community-led processes are strategic priorities in current theories, policies, and practices. Indeed, culture, as an integrated and driving component, can make a difference in the processes of culture-led urban regeneration: renewing the synergic and symbiotic relationship between business and territory; developing new processes of exchange between producer and consumer that guarantee efficiency, effectiveness, and equity; and empowering citizens and co-creating innovative products and services in the cultural heritage enhancement.

Therefore, the synergistic effect of culture-led strategies and community-driven processes depends on how the process can generate shared social values. The citizens can learn to expand their abilities, create and share information and ideas, and self-assess and co-evaluate community goals and actions. Cultural heritage and urban spaces’ complex values [103] are co-produced through collaborative planning and co-evaluation procedures. Thus, both the bottom-up and the top-down approaches coexist, enabled by creative experiences and social and cultural interaction.

Starting from the Cultural Creative Cities Monitor approach, a co-production and co-evaluation process was structured to detect characteristics, behaviours, and goals of existing heritage communities, building new “cultural creative communities” involved in specific game missions for enhancing material and immaterial heritage, and regenerating urban spaces.

In this research, the Play ReCH approach would power the Monitor Cultural Gems project at the neighbourhood scale through a community-driven process that considers quantitative/qualitative data to highlight people’s perceptions and desires. The interaction among Collaborative Decision Support System (CDSS), community engagement, and gamification in cultural heritage enhancement represents a research field that can improve enabling contexts and community capacity building and empowering.

The related multi-criteria and multi-group analysis and community engagement tools are selected to develop the co-evaluation of a Play ReCH mission in the historic centre of Salerno (“Hack the City Salerno”). The elaboration of the described CDSS combines the suggestions derived both from literature analysis and from experience in the field.

In the methodology tested within the case study experiment of the “Hack the City Salerno” mission, taking into account the explored and revised Living Labs steps (1. co-explore, 2. co-design, 3. co-test, and 4. co-monitor), we can underline how the mission fosters pride and a sense of belonging, improving quality of life and social cohesion,



and enabling new opportunities in the cultural and creative sectors. Furthermore, the identification of change opportunities activates a decision context that can optimise shared values to achieve local and sustainable development goals.

The contents of the various steps were built thanks to several inputs with specific collaborative planning and evaluation tools to co-design missions that activate and monitor the community. Following these inputs, the Blam members received and gathered these suggestions and developed the approaches and tools of each subsequent step thanks to creative teamwork. The process thus takes the form of a cultural value chain, taking into account three key points: resources in terms of sustainable crowdsourcing and fundraising strategies; shared rules to activate positive, cooperative strategies among people, public, and private sectors; and the project idea through which the mission is implemented both online and offline.

In this perspective, lowering the threshold of access to the experience also through the use of languages, tools, and a path deferred and constant in time has been fundamental to building a heterogeneous and cohesive community, so able to invest its human capital in the shared development of a more creative and liveable city. Co-operation between the inhabitants makes it possible to streamline the positive energy required in an urban regeneration process, multiplying its impacts. Following the principle of “lighter, faster, cheaper” [104], inhabitants can become protagonists for micro-processes of heritage enhancement by investing their skills and resources in a short time and through transformations that may even be temporary, but nonetheless very significant.

Within Step 1 (co-explore), the investigation of cultural resources and local needs through community mapping and a citizens’ jury was crucial to activate the community engagement and extract those shared values necessary for the proposal of “Montevergine Park”. This step offered different perspectives for deliberating, reaching an agreement, and then testing perceptions of the historic centres’ inhabitants and professionals.

Later, in Step 2 (co-design), building web-based engagement, roundtables, and gamification tools were essential to co-design the intervention of heritage enhancement, to define the monitoring and action tools, but also to identify key actors of the project and their roles and responsibilities in managing the proposal budget.

Subsequently, Step 3 (co-test) with the “collective worksite” helps to build community by weaving real-life relationships through collaborative experiences guided by a “learning by doing” approach [105].

The final step, Step 4 (co-monitor) through community survey should be necessary to monitor the process constantly and to evaluate the results of each phase to monitor the perceived well-being of the missions, the time and skills donated, and the willingness to get involved in culture-led strategies for heritage valorisation and urban regeneration. It is a key step for accompanying the local community to continuously evolve an urban cultural asset as the Salerno historic centre.

The empirical study and the first results showed that the “Play ReCH” approach could be a scaling up method, but should be supported by a collaborative governance model and tailored indicators for local cultural production that combine both objective and subjective evaluations in the decision-making process. The CDSS is incremental and adaptive, aiming to consolidate flexible and evolving networks of relationships, and is open to productive dialogue among the actors and users based on multi-dimensional values. The degree of uncertainty that characterises this type of process makes the replicability of the experience complex, due to the variability of the choices that can be made; the type of subjects involved, which affects the quality of the experience; the finding and quantity of human and economic resources to support the process; and the management of the time in which the experience takes place are some components that influence the process and its results. The definition of a methodological framework with objectives, timeframes, and basic criteria from which to start and to share from the beginning with the community is a necessary effort. It is equally essential to foresee a more accurate monitoring phase able to detect the levels of empowerment and generativity of the communities activated around

the individual projects to be able to deduce from time to time new possible criteria from the local scale that can integrate into the CCCM framework.

The mission “Hack the City” identified new functions for the Salerno historic centre, and combined traditional local uses with innovative management models, additionally supported by ICT users including inhabitants and the wider virtual community that follows the Play ReCH activities on social networks.

Play ReCH could be a helpful shared cultural production and co-evaluation approach for monitoring cultural creative cities at the neighbourhood scale by hybridising different disciplines, people, and values within a continuous process of planning, assessment, production, and monitoring towards “open innovation”.

The research that follows up could test “cultural welfare” [106] indicators set at the neighbourhood scale, able to enhance local peculiarities (cultural, environmental, social, and economic) through an approach that considers “platform spaces” [107], and ICT as “open community innovation places” for culture-led development [108]. Such a welfare model becomes a driver of new “hybrid” production [109] for cultural heritage as a transformative potential for urban regeneration. One of the most relevant potentials is the relational systems embedded in cultural places and activities, where authentic participatory experiences can be lived, managing the challenge of putting creative, community-led, and culture-led strategies into practice at a local scale.

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