

Urban Maestro

Masterclass:
New governance
strategies for
Urban Design

Co-City Torino



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CUMIANA 15

- The Co-City Torino project examined the processes enabling collective management of urban commons by public administration and 'active citizens' who sign a common pact of collaboration.
- Using 'soft power' approaches, Co-City Torino creates new spaces for citizen engagement in an innovative model of urban governance that aims to build mutual trust and address urban deprivation.
- Cumiana 15 was inaugurated in 2020 as an initiative of the Co-City Torino project, launched in 2017.

Context

Dilapidated Structures

Since 2008, the co-financing of the city annual budget has been reduced by 80%



6.5 % of about 1600 buildings and about 1 million sq/metres of land owned by the city of Torino are unused or underused

Socio-Spatial Polarisation

The economic climate has contributed to a deterioration in living conditions



This fed mistrust in local institutions that are decreasingly responding to the needs of local communities through welfare services provision

Social Exclusion & Spatial Segregation

14.1% of the population in Turin live under the relative poverty line, while the group of people on the edge of poverty grows

In order to reduce poverty, it is necessary to break the cycle of socio-spatial polarisation

The decentralisation plan & decrease of public expenditure

The regulation on urban commons, affects the functions and the attitudes of the public officials in relation to the urban commons and active citizens

Impacting on the exchange, cooperation and definition of the roles of the participants in the shared care of urban spaces

Objectives

The objectives of the project respond to the outlined context. Here we consider the thematic objectives in relation to one another. Based on the anticipated impact of co-management of urban commons, we consider the primary objectives to fall within the themes of economy and sociology.

Processes

Pacts of collaboration for co-management of urban assets.

Output

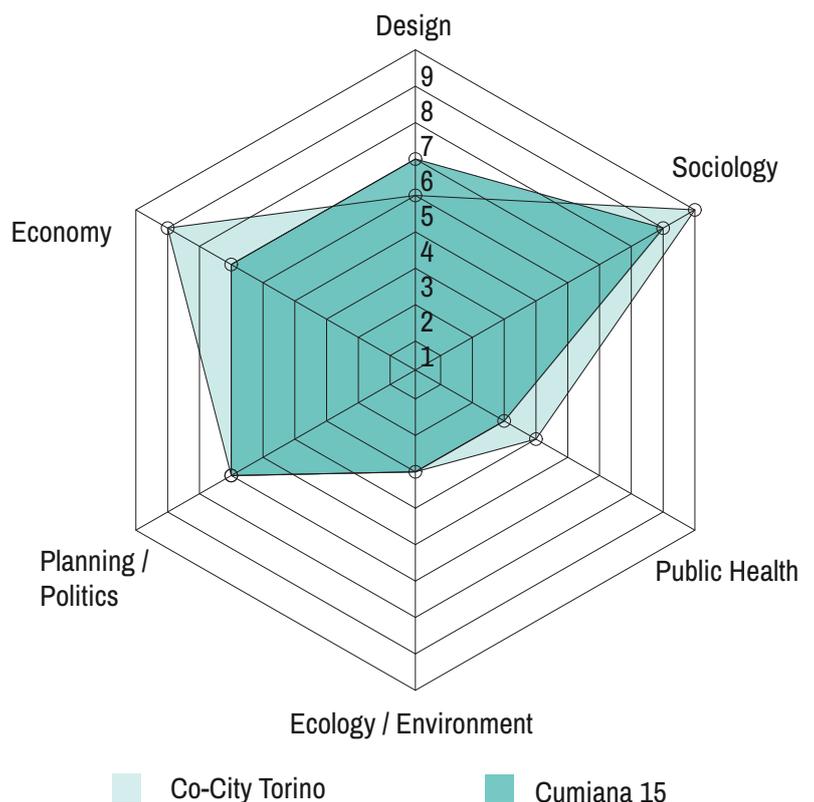
Long-term co-management of urban assets.

Anticipated Outcomes

New paradigm of collaborative administration between residents and urban authority.
 Regeneration of dilapidated structures / spaces.
 Citizen engagement through co-management.
 Social enterprise and low-cost service co-production in urban commons.

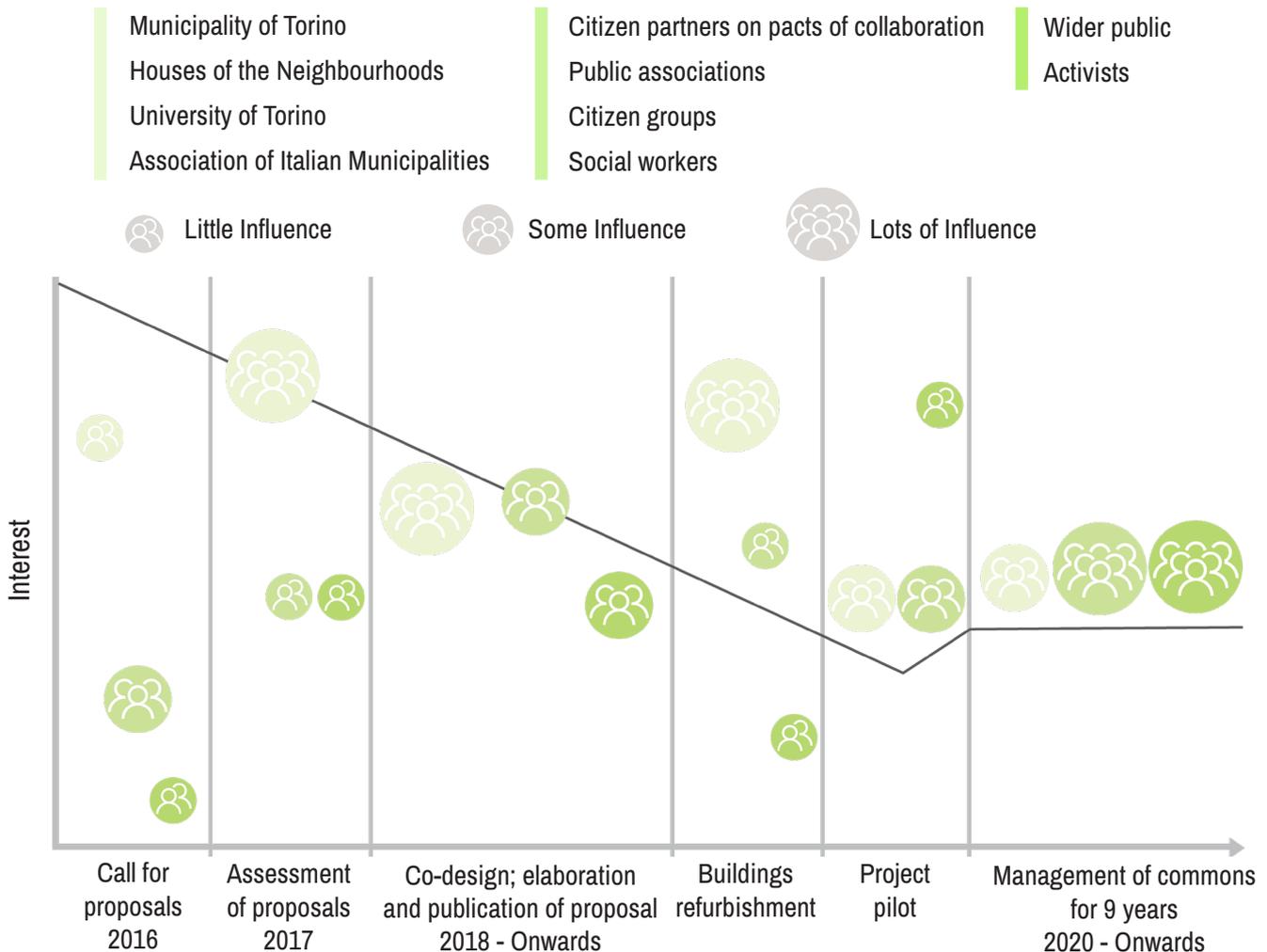
Anticipated Impact

Reduced urban poverty
 Reduced social exclusion
 Increased urban innovation
 Innovative urban management



Stakeholder analysis and timeline

Co-City Torino included stakeholders associated with the municipality and citizen stakeholders. The influence of these groups over the course of the Cumiana 15 project, as perceived by the authors, is depicted below.



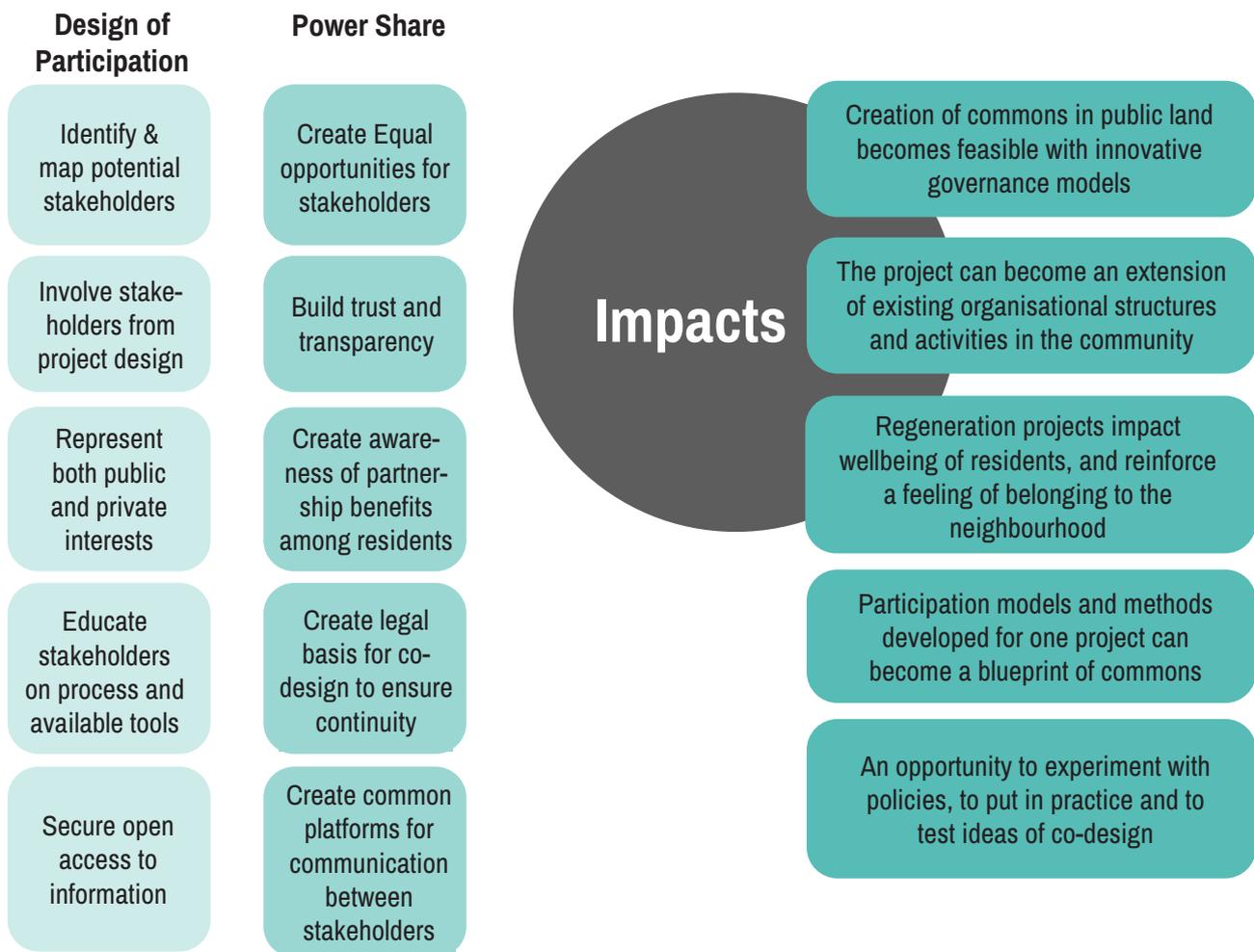
The degree of stakeholder influence and interest fluctuates over time and can be considered in relation to the scope to adapt the project. Influence is shared between municipal stakeholders and active citizens throughout the course of the project, although there is a transaction of power between active citizens and the municipality between the call and assessment of project proposals.

As might be expected, relative to municipal stakeholders and active citizens, the wider public (i.e. residents who are not involved in the pact of collaboration) have relatively limited influence on the project other than an opportunity to react to the open publication of the proposal and, potentially, use of the commons. It is currently not clear whether the co-management process may generate or dismantle barriers to use of the commons by the wider public. Informal governance tools may help to dismantle any barriers which are encountered. Engagement with the wider public at each stage of the project may permit a more equal balance of influence across the three groups.

'Soft Power' Approach

Co-City Torino uses non-regulatory (soft power) tools for urban governance, comprising an innovative administrative framework (i.e. pacts of collaboration), an innovative ICT infrastructure for local social markets and networking and the provision of technical and management support (through access to professional expertise and coaching/ tutoring). This facilitates the co-design phase of the project and once the project is open, provides operational capacity (e.g. equipment, fire safety) and a platform for community projects or enterprises.

Recommendations based on Co-City Torino for:



Research Agenda

Considering that Co-City Torino and Cumiana 15 are ongoing projects, more research will be needed to analyse and evaluate the outcomes in the medium and long term.

As co-design projects are also starting to be fostered in other Italian cities (for instance, Bologna), future research could focus on comparing the outcomes and obstacles faced by these projects. Bearing in mind the importance of context, future research could also focus on comparing other case studies, particularly in the Global South.

Although we had the opportunity to hear the experience of some civil society actors participating in the co-design process of Cumiana 15, more research on the perceptions and experiences of residents and users will be needed to know the satisfaction and involvement in the co-design and subsequent co-management process.

Some of the possible questions for future research could include:

1. How to guarantee the inclusion of certain groups that tend to be marginalised from these processes and do not trust the authorities?
2. How flexible/ resilient are these projects to external shocks that can change the context or characteristics of the neighbourhoods?
3. What is the impact of this project in the long term on contributing to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals?
4. Are these projects increasing the neighbourhood attachment of residents/ users?
5. What are the mechanisms for enhancing commoning of spaces within cities?
6. How could the experiences from Co-City Torino be applied in the Global South?



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Torino, via Cumiana 15

Interviews

“The most significant advantage of the whole project is the possibility to use abandoned or unused infrastructure with the ‘Pact of collaboration’ tool that allows people to approach the use of urban commons differently. It’s very flexible and it’s a tool that allows the use of common assets for different purposes, so they are not linked to a single practice, either commercial or voluntary organisation, it can be anything with the right principles. It’s a flexible legal instrument, which I think its the most significant advantage. It doesn’t mean that the bureaucracy somehow becomes flexible or that the Municipality becomes a flexible institution because people in the administration are still rigorous in the way they use this tool, with its norms of use.”

- Alice Zanasi, Co-City Torino Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant

“The idea is to replicate these kinds of projects. However, these experiences of urban regeneration are not mainstream, rather part of the experimentation field. From the point of view of the city administration or the urban authority, mainstream policies are the ordinary construction and maintenance of infrastructure, or civil services, schools, and these kinds of service provision, both in terms of human resources and money invested. Still, I think that the governance of urban commons definitely has a chance to become one of the tools that public administration and citizens organisations can use in certain situations.”

- Giovanni Ferrero, City of Torino Officer, Co-City Project Manager

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Special thanks to: Loredana Di Nunzio, Giovanni Ferrero, Riccardo Galetto, Alice Zanasi

Outcomes and Obstacles

Co-City Torino / Cumiana 15 establishes a new relationship between the diverse stakeholders in order to manage urban assets. Below we present a list of expected outcomes as well as possible obstacles to their realisation.

Outcomes

The public officers and the active citizens have the skills for using the new legal framework

Active citizens' ideas are operationalised into project proposals and are presented to the urban authority via a public call

The urban authority and the active citizens underwrite and sign contracts (pacts of collaboration)

Implementation plan of projects fine-tuned with the technical and economic resources, the expertise and the needs of the territory, the possible synergies

The urban authority implements investments for urban commons

Citizens in need are reinforcing their life skills

Obstacles

Resistance to structural innovation in the public sector

Inexperience of local associations and citizen groups in sustainable management and financial sustainability

Failure in the co-design phase approach due to conflicts and impasses

'Tyranny' of the experts in the co-design phase. Self selection of citizens/ associations with the most resources and exclusion of citizens in need

Decisions taken by financially powerful groups

Asymmetric relationship with institutional actors



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Final Recommendations

The context of the neighbourhood, the specificities of the political system and the Municipality play an essential role in the development and success of Cumiana 15. It is vital to have this in mind when thinking about translating or applying some elements of the Co-City Torino project in other contexts, particularly in the Global South. Co-City Torino represents an innovative way to engage civil officers, active citizens and residents. However, in different contexts it is possible that barriers may be faced, such as: confrontation, lack of trust in public servants or institutions, political misuse of public resources, or a historical exclusion of certain groups and privileging of others.