Adaptive Reuse of Religious Cultural Heritage: The Case Study of the Church "Santissimo Nome di Gesù" in Turin (Italy)

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Abstract. Religious cultural heritage represents a considerable part of Europe"s overall cultural heritage. In fact, Europe is home to over 500.000 religious structures, including churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques, cathedrals, monasteries and convents. Many religious buildings are in a state of abandonment due to the reduction of religious practices, the processes of secularization and demographic ageing. Circular Adaptive reuse of religious cultural heritage can be a feasible approach to give new life to this heritage through new functional uses that respond to the contemporary needs of the city and its inhabitants. The aim of this work is to present the preliminary results of a research project that targets the identification of evaluation processes and methods to study the possible adaptive reuse strategies for abandoned religious built heritage. The contribution presents the first results of a participatory process to co-construct the problem situation of the potential reuse identify and analyze possible adaptive reuse alternatives of the Church of Santissimo Nome di Gesù in Turin (Italy), with the objective of transforming this abandoned religious building into a resource that can contribute to the improvement of the well-being of the local community.

In particular, the paper aims to examine how the historical, architectural and cultural characteristics of the church can be preserved, while identifying new functional uses that meet the contemporary needs of the city and its inhabitants.

Keywords: Reuse of cultural heritage · circular economy · co-programming · co-participation · SWOT analysis

1 Introduction

Religious cultural heritage represents a considerable part of Europe"s overall cultural heritage, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects. In fact, Europe is home to over 500.000 religious" structures, including churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques, cathedrals, monasteries and convents [1].

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However, with the processes of secularization, a part of this heritage is characterized by non-use, and thus degradation due to lack of maintenance.

Following the processes of demographic decrease and ageing, the increasing urbanization and consequential depopulation of religious centers, as well as the decline of traditional religious practice, there is a growing need to identify new uses for buildings once used for worship. These uses, non-liturgical or religious, should be congruent with the "intrinsic value" of the religious heritage, its significance and social value for communities [2–7].

Heritage of religious interest in secularized Western countries has become an economically onerous commitment in terms of property maintenance and management. This is also due to the extinction of numerous church entities and the transformation of religious practices [8].

ICOMOS already in 2005, in its General Assembly, had promoted a resolution on the reuse of this extraordinary heritage, recognizing the significance of the value of the "spirit of places" [2].

A question that frequently arises is: what is the future of this religious heritage, especially when it is abandoned? How can cultural, historical and artistic values be safeguarded? What functional reuse can respect their original "sense" or meaning, i.e. that "inspiration" that gave physical form and generated these particular spaces?

The most frequently proposed functions for the reuse of religious heritage assets are related to tourism. The so-called "economy of experience" [9] has played a role here. However, tourism often does not offer a regenerative perspective: it tends to be "consumerist" of cultural heritage and, in some cases, even destructive of values [2, 10]. Furthermore, tourism may not always be a solution in marginal areas, smaller and peripheral centers.

On the other hand, the museum destination, although it may have cultural value, very often does not guarantee adequate profitability to at least cover the maintenance costs. Consequently, after a few years, the "museum church" may remain "empty" of life.

On the other side, alternative uses that have enabled the regeneration of religious cultural heritage have often been linked to productive functions [11]. For example, the spaces of Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries, which were also economic engines in their territory, have been reused as laboratories for the production of pharmaceutical, food and cosmetic products, using natural resources from neighboring territories and the traditional, still innovative knowledge of the monastic orders.

Although the abandonment of religious heritage is pervasive throughout Europe, a number of good practices of reuse and regeneration also emerge from several previous studies [12–15].

In this perspective, in a previous study by the authors [16], an analysis of specific cases of reuse of religious heritage (Catacombs of San Gennaro in Naples, Italy; Le Scalze in Naples, Italy; the Carmen Convent in Spain and the Domenikanenkerk in the Netherlands) was conducted, which highlighted the importance of co-design and co-planning processes for the choice of new functions for religious buildings through the involvement of the local community. Community involvement ensured that projects were adapted to local needs and values, promoting a strong sense of ownership and commitment. Furthermore, the new uses attributed to these churches have triggered both

the creation of new jobs and an increase in tourist visits and, above all, the involvement of the third sector [17].

Co-designing and co-programming processes are emerging as necessary actions to ensure the sustainable reuse of abandoned religious heritage, because the participation of the local community and the involvement of stakeholders enhances the likelihood that projects meet the needs of the local population, strengthening the link with the territory [18]. Fostering participation, is also beneficial for a more informed evaluation of the technical, procedural, economic, and managerial obstacles that could be faced in each problem situation [19]. Furthermore, a proper participatory approach to the Cultural Heritage discourse has been also stressed as a way to mitigate the risk of top-down conservationist approach [20]. Indeed, also the Faro Convention stressed the need for the participation of other organizations other than only public institution [21] in a spirit of co-responsibility based on cooperation and collaboration of the different entities involved in the management and preservation of the common good [22]. This aspect is further substantiated by a more practical argument related to the scarcity of resources of the Public Administration which is negatively affected by the state of unused or sub-used assets constituting a cost for them. In this sense, public–private partnership, and the integration of the Third Sector in particular, could represent an innovative way to compensate inability (or lack of interest) of the central authority to provide specific services in the field of Cultural Heritage management while pursuing civic, solidarity, and social utility purposes [20, 23].

The approach of reusing abandoned and underused cultural assets is part of a "circular city" approach, through the recovery of buildings and urban areas that have exhausted their original function [24, 25]. The circular economy can be applied at the urban and the single building level, increasing the sustainability of interventions both environmentally and in terms of long-term management and sharing with the community. Thus, a "circular" approach to the adaptive reuse of religious cultural heritage can be feasible to give new life to this heritage through new functional uses that respond to the contemporary needs of the city and its inhabitants.

This article presents the first PRIN-TReE research project results (Grant PRIN 2022 No. 2022TN5M7F) aiming at identifying evaluation methods and processes that can help decision makers in defining adaptive reuse strategies of the cultural built heritage. The aim of this first part of the research project is to identify and analyze possible adaptive reuse strategies for abandoned religious heritage, with specific reference to the case study of the Church of Santissimo Nome di Gesù in Moncalieri, in the metropolitan area of Turin (Italy), with the objective of transforming this abandoned religious building into a resource that can contribute to the improvement of the well-being of the local community. The lessons learnt from the real case application will be used to identify possible drawbacks to current practices and to study a generalized methodology to support the decision makers in adaptive reuse projects. Within this larger objective, the aim of this paper is to apply a problem structuring method (SWOT analysis) as a preliminary tool to support the decision-maker in identifying a possible space of solution for the reuse of the asset grounded on the specificity of the territory in which it is inserted. In particular, this work describes the preliminary results of the participatory workshop conducted with experts in the fields of urban regeneration, restoration, urban design, economics,

as well as with informed third sector entities operating on the territory to co-analyze the problem situation of the reuse of the abandoned case study, and set the direction for further steps towards the identification of adaptive reuse strategies. The workshop aimed at examining how the historical, architectural and cultural characteristics of the church can be preserved while identifying the new functional uses that meet the contemporary needs of the city and its inhabitants. The paper is structured as follows: in Sect. 2 the case study is presented; Sect. 3 presents the methodology; Sect. 4 presents the results and Sect. 5 discusses them; finally, in Sect. 6 conclusions are drawn.

2 Case Study and Problem Situation

The case study analyzed is the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù (Church of the Holy Name of Jesus). The church is located in the town of Moncalieri (see Fig. 1), part of the Metropolitan City of Turin (Italy). In the northern part, the town is characterized by a hilly terrain, while in the South-Eastern part several water bodies are present.

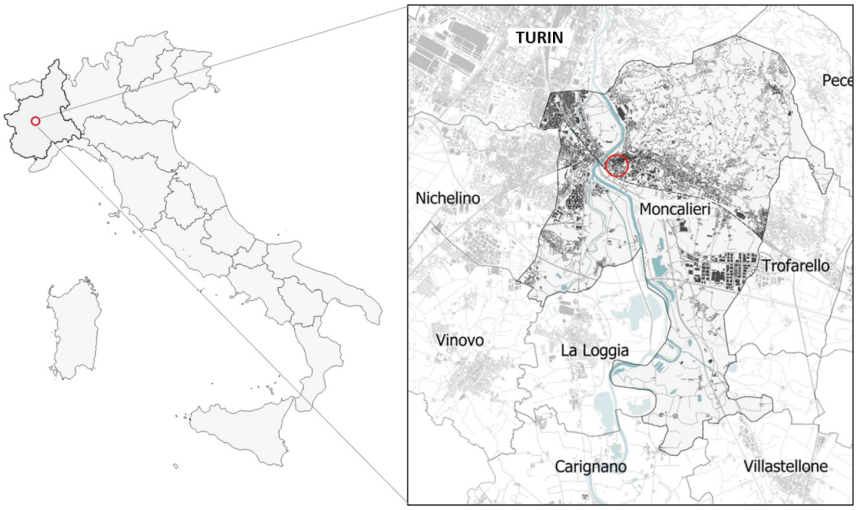


Fig. 1. Location of Moncalieri and the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù (source: authors" elaboration based on BDTRE [26])

According to the last national census, the city hosts 56,193 inhabitants, with a relatively high incidence of elderly population as shown in Fig. 2. Moreover, the population shows a fairly balance between males (49%) and female (51%), and a relatively small ratio (9%) of inhabitants with non-Italian citizenship over Italian citizens [27].

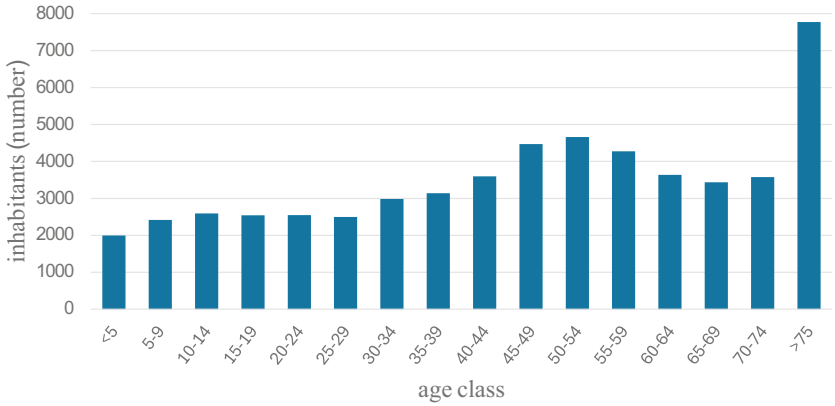


Fig. 2. Population by age classes (source: authors" elaboration on census data)

The tendency of the demographic distribution toward the elderly part of the population is confirmed in the historical city center, geographically defined by the urban planning tools of the town of Moncalieri. For instance, the city center shows a quite high level in three descriptive indexes of the population as shown in Fig. 3.

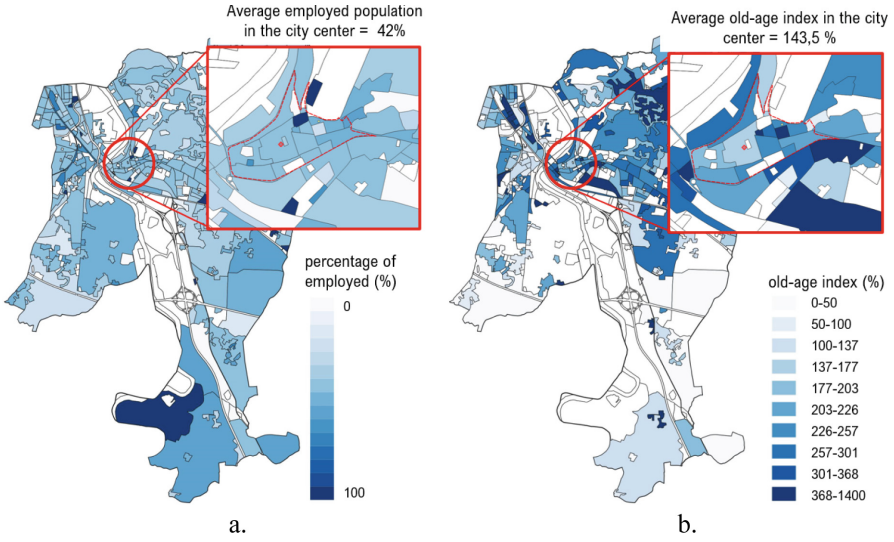


Fig. 3. Socio-economic indices in the census tracks of Moncalieri and averaged in the city center (source: authors" elaboration of census data [27])

In particular, the old-age index (Fig. 3b). shows the presence of roughly 1.5 (143.5%) inhabitants over the age of 65 for each inhabitant under the age of 14, while the old-age dependency index (Fig. 3c.) and the structural dependency index (Fig. 3d.) shows a ratio of 1 inhabitant over the productive age (65 years) every 3 inhabitants (35.6%),

and 2 non-active inhabitants every 3 inhabitants in the working-age class of population (60.4%). Finally, with reference to the city center, it is possible to notice that almost half of the population living in the city center (42%) is employed (Fig. 3a).

Zooming-in at the scale of the case study, the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù has been built in 1710 on the remains of the oratory of the Franciscan complex and the Church of the Holy Spirit commissioned by the Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus by an unknown architect attributed to the Juvarrian school [28, 29]. In 1786 the square bell tower was built over the pre-existing one belonging to the old Oratory. The use of the church is documented until 1950 when the Confraternity was dissolved and after the management passed under the parish of "Santa Maria della Scala and Sant"Egidio", officiating in the church stopped and shortly afterwards the church was permanently closed. In more recent times, with the help of the voluntary association "La Vitruviana", efforts have been made to revitalize the church, opening it for exhibitions and concerts. Currently, although restoration work and initiatives have been carried out over the years to protect the property, the church is in a serious state of neglect and general disinterest.

In Fig. 4 the floorplan of the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù is presented.

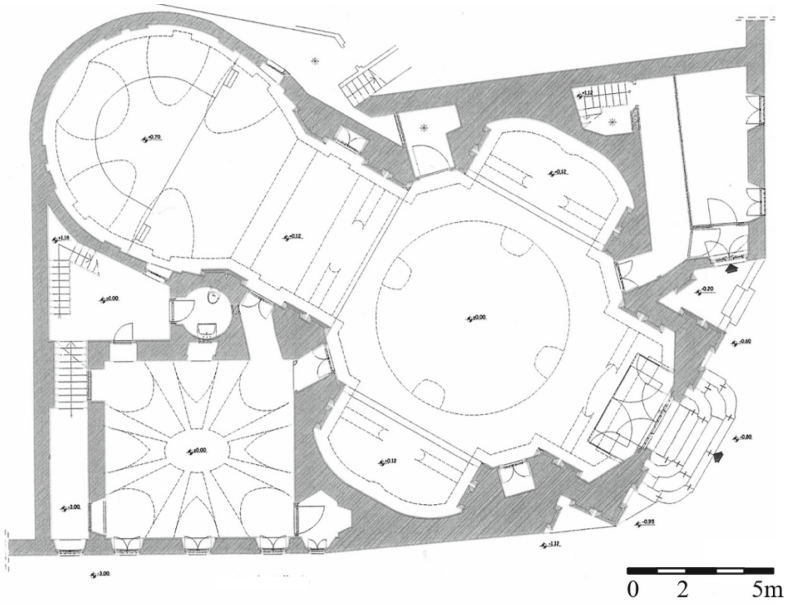


Fig. 4. Floorplan of the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù (source: [29])

The building is characterized by a main hall with annexed spaces distributed over two floors with a total Net Floor Area of 486 m^2 (341 m^2 on the First floor, and 145 m^2 on the Second floor, excluding the bell tower). The internal spaces are characterized by a rich fresco decoration by the XVIII century painter Milocco, as well as by painters from the school of Beaumont and Dauphin [29].

In recent years, the Diocese of the metropolitan city of Turin, owner of the abandoned Church, has expressed the willingness to re-open the building with a renewed functionalization that could benefit the local community, in line with the principles expressed by the PRIN-TReE project.

3 Method

In line with the objectives of the PRIN-TReE project, the final goal of the study concerning the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù is to identify the possible adaptive reuse strategies that could transform the abandoned church into a vital asset able to improve the wellbeing of the community. No previous alternatives are provided among which to select the most satisfactory one, the problem owner (the Diocese of the Metropolitan city of Turin) being uncertain about its own goal, as well as feasibility aspects related to potential uses of the asset. Moreover, the property owner is interested in meeting the desires of the population and provide a potentially beneficial solution for the local community, not neglecting the historical, cultural, and social values that the building itself possess in relation to the same local community. Such an urban transformation problem could be seen as an un-structured or ill-structured problem for its intrinsic characteristics, such as the presence of multiple actors and perspectives, the existence of conflicting interests, as well as uncertainties [30]. Thus, prior to any analysis of possible solutions, it was decided to explore different techniques available to identify the main evaluation problem, such as problem structuring methods. Problem structuring methods (PSMs) refer to a family of methods intended to help the analyst (and the actors involved) to shape and construct the problem situation in which a decision has to be carried out, without the attempt to "solve" it [30]. PSMs emerged from a perceived failure of traditional optimization methods in addressing complex and ill-structured problems [31], helping the analyst engage in a conversation with the "owners" of the problem, in the attempt to both synthetize the information around the problem itself, and to help to build a more informed view of the problem from different point of views [32].

Among these tools, SWOT analysis was considered as the most convenient tool to first structure the knowledge base around the problem situation, by also engaging different experts and stakeholders to widen the perspective of the analyst as well as the decision-maker. Particular merit of this tool is the possibility to involve stakeholders, by using simple methods to improve communication and learning, as well as establishing a common language to support the exchange of information [33–37].

3.1 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a qualitative PSM first used to support the development of organizational strategies [32], with several merits for the identification and structuring of the problem situation also in urban and territorial regeneration projects [38].

In Urban regeneration decision making contexts, SWOT analysis allows to rationalize the set of information known regarding a specific context by structuring a 2x2 matrix in which are clustered the aspects of Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O), and Threats (T) of the territory.

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors intrinsic to the context of the analysis and are those directly addressed by the potentially developed plan or project to be evaluated, while Opportunities and Threats are defined as external factor that might not occur but have to be controlled due to their potential negative or positive occurrence. The success of a development project in a certain context depends on its capacity to build on the strengths of a context enhanced by the opportunities that might occur, while removing and controlling for weakness and threats [39].

Several are the merits of SWOT in problem structuring. First, the tool is easy to use and widely known, thus often preferred to other PSMs which may be perceived as theoretically and technically demanding [40]. This easiness of use is specifically helpful in the engagement of stakeholders [33–37]. Moreover, SWOT analysis ensures that all relevant aspects are considered both from an internal and external viewpoint. Finally, the use of SWOT analysis has been seen as a suitable tool to support the development of new strategies or alternatives [32], especially in the presence of different point of views and potentially conflicting interests [41, 42].

Often used in strategical evaluation, SWOT provides an effective framework to be further expanded with other evaluation methodologies in strategic decision-making [35] and is a valid tool to accompany the lifecycle of projects, from problem identification, to modelling and problem solving [43].

3.2 Participatory Workshop

The SWOT methodology has been applied during a one-day workshop in which different stakeholders have been asked to gather to construct a shared knowledge framework around the problem situation of the identification of adaptive reuse strategies for the abandoned Church of the Santissimo Nome del Gesù in Moncalieri. The stakeholders that joined the workshop were both expert and non-experts. As reported in Fig. 5, the panel was composed by 12 experts: one representative of an NGO operating in the territory and a representative for the Diocese of Turin metropolitan area as the third sector representatives, two heritage restoration experts, one expert in urban planning, two experts in urban regeneration decision making aiding, two experts in urban economics, two experts in history of architecture, and one expert in mathematics models for urban regeneration applications, together with the research group of the TREE project.

The workshop has been structured in two main parts. In the first introductory part the participants have been familiarized with the PRIN-TReE research project aims and finalities and theoretical background. Moreover, the results of the precedent Horizon project CLIC [44] and the relative case studies of best practices in the context of adaptive reuse of cultural heritage have been presented. Finally, the case study of the Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù in Moncalieri and the characteristics of its urban context have been introduced. In the second part, the SWOT methodology has been presented and performed by the participant in a participative manner. Finally, the panel of experts and third sector representatives visited the asset together with the owner and the representative of the local parish.



Fig. 5. Number of participants and their field of expertise

In the application of the SWOT methodology the participants were asked to fill-in the matrix with the possibility of discussing the different factors to be introduced and their belonging to one or the other quadrant (S, W, O, or T). The participants worked together in a single group, this allowed them to self-define a common vision of the different elements composing the SWOT, with little intervention of the moderators in the synthesis of results. This intervention rather happened in cases in which the allocation of some elements to different quadrants was debated in order to better specify and argument the decisions of the experts. This was particularly evident in the description of the architectural and functional quality of the space, for which several elements of the SWOT have been proposed and detailed to better capture its potential.

4 SWOT Analysis Results

About preliminary results, it is interesting to notice how the identification of the quality of the spaces initially gave risen to different points of views that have been then reconciliated during the moderator discussion. In particular, the necessity to preserve the historical significance of the space have been risen by the restoration and history of architecture experts, further sustained by the third sector representatives that perceived it as an opportunity to establish functions related to cultural activities or specifically devoted to community building (socialization and meeting spaces). On the other hand, the urban economics and urban regeneration experts have risen the concern regarding the non-profitability of the intervention, with the necessity to mediate the preservation of the asset with the target of the self-sustainability of the intervention. Also, the position of the asset has been a debated point. In particular, the centrality in the urban layout constituted a point in favor risen by the urban economics experts and the third sector representatives. On the other hand, the potential issues concerning accessibility has been raised by the urban regeneration experts. After the discussion it was agreed on allocating this point among the strengths, with the necessity to specifically address this point in the further development of the proposals.

In Table 1 the final allocation of the different points as agreed upon by the participants that emerged from the one-day workshop is presented.

Table 1. SWOT matrix resulting from the one-day workshop.

Strength	**Weaknesses**
• The possible promotion of a community attached to the building that recognizes itself in the memorial values related to the church • Centrality of the asset in the city center of Moncalieri • Dome of the main hall in good condition and recently restored • Large surface area distributed over 2 floors with a large open central space (main hall of the church) • Innovative tools for governance (regulation of common goods in Moncalieri recently approved) • The building is owned by the diocese with a consequent freedom in decision-making regarding possible reuse projects	• Lack of an open space in front of the building resulting in a lack of view of the property and potential issues in accessibility • The structure of the church lends itself poorly to the functional mix due to a closed form and lack of annexed spaces (large spaces but difficult to be partitioned) • Roof disrepair determines the worsening of the state of degradation of the interior space • High level of degradation • Lack of green spaces in the urban context surrounding the church
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Creation of partnerships with associations and synergies with the surrounding activities • Use of spaces even with only safety measures and combination of temporary and permanent reuse • Construction of a strategic plan for the reuse of churches in synergy with other places of worship/cultural/schools (territorial scale) • Promotion of the sense of citizenship belonging (artists of citizenship) • Formation of territorial capital and enhance the preservation of the memory of the community (house of grandparents) • Possibility to implant a mix of functions: Tourism (inclusion in visitor circuits), education (training school for activities lost in the territory, restoration school), cultural (musical/theatre activities and meeting spaces fostered by the circularity of the main hall)	• Effect of climate change and the increase of disastrous events • Loss of territorial cohesion and in the identification of the community in the heritage building • Psycho-social barriers: Inhibition/aversion towards the religious symbol • Advancing degradation of the building and its decorative apparatus • Risk of settling “empty” functions without continuity of use (e.g., auditorium) • Irreversibility of the intervention and lack of flexibility of functions • Risks of damaging the historical value of the heritage due to functional necessities of the reuse intervention

Analyzing the SWOT matrix, it could be possible to better shape the knowledge framework regarding the case study under examination.

The church space has a good size on two floors (S), but the absence of a space in front of it and the very structure of the church without annexed spaces presents limitations to the insertion of a mix of functions and the possible separation between them (W). Nevertheless, it could be possible to envision the settling of functions even if only by

securing spaces, this also implies the need for a preliminary analysis of the compatibility of uses (O).

The general condition of the building is in a state of a high level of degradation with the necessity to perform an analysis of the compatibility of the space (W) to prevent the further advancement of the degradation and the risk of increasing this effect in the case of the installation of incompatible functions or irreversible interventions (T). Even though the general condition of the structure and of the frescos is in a precarious condition (W), the dome was recently restored and is in good condition (S).

Regarding the relationship with the context, the Church is located in a central and strategic position in the city of Moncalieri (S), with the possibility to establish a systematic network with other systems such as the places of worship and the cultural/educational networks both at the local and territorial scale (O), this aspect to be further analyzed. Furthermore, the relationship with institutions (regulation for the reuse of assets) should be deepened, as should the analysis of stakeholders with the possibility of capitalizing on the synergy with local associations and possible forms of partnership (O).

Finally, in terms of potential alternative reuse of the asset, it would be possible to leverage the demographic situation of the area may characterized by a high presence of elderly inhabitants, also considering functions capable of transmitting the history of the place and the community (grandparents" house), or to emphasize the educational value of the building and its decorative apparatus for the benefit of restoration schools of the territory, or to preserve specific craftmanship from disappearance (O). Even though the form itself of the building could be particularly suitable as a meeting space (O), it is necessary to avoid the risk to establish function that will not activate a long-lasting use of the building, ultimately resulting in an "empty box" effect destined to another potential abandonment of the building (T).

5 Discussion

After analyzing the results of the SWOT analysis in the previous section, some reflections focused on the "opportunities (OP)" that emerged, particularly on the "Promotion of the sense of citizenship belonging (artists of citizenship); Formation of territorial capital and enhance the preservation of the memory of the community". Implementing these specific actions to develop the adaptive reuse project of the church means strengthening the link between institutions, associations, and local community, thus fostering the creation of a real heritage community network, (community of young people, the elderly, professionals, associations, etc.). In general, a common vision is generated in the community, which concerns the general interest. The community is thus the foundation for the really efficient implementation of urban/territorial development strategies. It involves regenerating networks of relationships between people living in the neighborhoods with the various local associations (including religious ones) with public/private institutions. These relationships are configured as "social glue" capable of generating "attractive force fields".

Thus, it can be concluded that community is the glue that generates reciprocity that is absolutely central nowadays in the growing social disconnect. In the community, the perception of general interest is generated as a goal of common value. The community becomes a promoter of possible associations, working "together" to enhance the cultural heritage understood as a "common good" consistent with existing regulations.

According to this perspective, therefore, the success of the church's adaptive reuse project will be to produce communities/associations (as provided for in Art. 118 of the Italian Constitution) and not just the restoration of stones and paintings.

The above finds a fertile field in the city of Moncalieri, as it already has active the "Regulations on Citizen-Administration Collaboration for the Care, Regeneration and Shared Management of Common Goods," a legal instrument adopted by the municipality that allows citizens to take care of public goods together with the administration.

Furthermore, based on these considerations, the proposal of adaptive reuse in this research is that the revitalization of the heritage represented by religious buildings that are no longer officiated can make a significant contribution to the humanization of development [45]. Churches are characterized by the highest aesthetic quality in the urban contest being also localized in optimal and barycentric size/places. And this aesthetic property is associated with the generation of a gravitational field of attraction. But the above is realizable on certain conditions:

1. Contribution to the promotion of new communities. Adaptive reuse is indeed an opportunity to produce communities of places. This requires approaches characterized by effective participatory processes of inhabitants, civic and church associations, third sector organizations (to contribute to a possible co-planning and co-design perspective). Qualitative evaluations become the entry point for the above.
2. The capacity to contribute with adaptive reuse not only to the conservation of the "stones" but also to the enhancement of the "civitas", generating a contribution to the production of a civil culture. The Collaboration Pacts for the shared management of architectural assets interpreted as common goods are consistent with the above (cfr. Art 118 last paragraph of the Italian Constitution).
3. The capacity to contribute with the adaptive reuse of religious artefacts to the mitigation and adaptation strategies that cities are elaborating that concern the use of renewable energy sources, the re-capturing of rainwater resources of materials, etc.
4. New destinations of use should be congruent with the "*intrinsic value*" of architectural assets. In fact, the intrinsic value [18] is interpreted as the value from the point of view of future generations that should be recognized and emphasized following Articles 9 and 41 of the Italian Constitution. In substance, the proposed use values of use should be the more coherent with this "*intrinsic value*".
5. New uses destinations should be characterized by a self-generating capacity with regard to economic-financial resources in order to be able to guarantee management capable of meeting maintenance costs in the first place. Another criterion for the identification of uses is the symbiotic capacity [46].
6. Adaptive reuse should be part of the operational strategy of the circular city, for example through the application of the 15-minute multipolar model proposed by Carlos Moreno [47]. In fact, adaptive reuse in the circular perspective suggests a systemic co-evolutionary approach so that cultural heritage can continue to exchange

symbolic, cultural and social values with the context in which it is inserted. The circular economy is today interpreted as the foundation of sustainability (SDGs No. 12 Agenda 2030).

The assessment of the variation in wellbeing suggests reference to a series of subjective indicators of perception: family relationships, amicable relationships, proximity relationships, affective relationships, face to face relationships, reciprocity, well-being, sense of satisfaction, care/attention/cooperation, mutuality/reciprocity, social justice and involvement.

6 Conclusions

Cultural heritage reminds us who we are, what history we have been to, what roots we belong to. Cultural heritage represents the memory of the urban/ territorial system, it represents the sign of the creativity of past generations, but also a way of interpreting life, interpersonal relationships. It expresses the value of aesthetic quality, beauty as a source of humanization that generates "open-mindedness" etc. It proposes a human scale, links a place to a community. It should be seen as an entry point for educating critical knowledge, the ability to relate, to distinguish the essential from the marginal, what should be preserved from what is not permanent. Cultural heritage is the link between past, present and future generations, it is a re-generator of values.

The role of technological innovations alone is not sufficient to ensure a desirable future: human development. Innovations are necessary, but there is a need to operationally link technological innovations (AI, ICT, nanotechnology, etc.) to the human/social sciences, in order to direct innovations towards ends that "have value".

Cultural heritage can play this role as an entry point to human development.

In this complex time characterized by profound transformations, the thesis that any transformation of the status quo should be oriented towards the human development is consolidating. There is increasing discussion about of neo-humanism in the digital era. But also, about post-humanism and even trans-humanism [40].

The adaptive reuse of religious heritage is increasingly debated and is intrinsically tied to the issue of maintenance practices, which are inescapable for both the ecclesiastical and the civil community, due to the plurality of socially shared values and the corresponding potential for community resilience. The canonical, political, and economic origins of these buildings strongly influence the dynamics of use, dismissal, conversion, or abandonment, and the processes of capitalization and de-capitalization.

In this sense, the complexity of the evaluation problem is deeply rooted not only in the physical condition or historical significance of the asset but also in its legal, institutional, and symbolic dimensions. In the case of religious heritage, ownership and permitted uses especially under the guidelines of the Holy See should be considered with particular care before identifying viable reuse options. This requires an in-depth analysis of the context and of the possible opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses related to the reuse process. The participatory SWOT approach used in the present research serves precisely to support this essential step of knowledge construction and problem structuring.

As emerged from the SWOT analysis, the physical consistency of the building itself would require some preliminary analysis to better define the most suitable solution able to

revitalize the building without further damaging the frescos and decorations. An analysis of the state of decay and a further analysis of the different options of intervention and the related costs will be performed. Moreover, it would be possible to leverage on the specificity of the socio-economic context such and in particular on the presence of a quite consistent proportion of the elderly population by envisioning uses that could link the memory of the community to new functions.

An analysis of the stakeholders and of the third sector entities and associations will be useful to engage with the population and co-construct the different alternative uses. In particular, the community will be asked to state their preferences regarding the adaptive reuse alternatives by using different methodologies (Discrete choice experiments, questionnaires) in order to reach the definition of possible alternative uses and to the best synergies among them in order to enhance the acceptability of the intervention and its socio-economic sustainability.

Religious heritage is by nature oriented toward serving community needs, and its reuse cannot be effective without building synergies and relationships within the local context. This highlights the importance of adopting participatory governance strategies, involving actors across the public, private, and civic sectors. In this regard, the third sector particularly when working in cooperation with the municipal administration and the ecclesiastical property holder can serve as a critical bridge between the community and the asset, guiding reuse functions not only toward financial and economic sustainability but also toward social and cultural sustainability [48–50]. Moreover, reuse strategies should be aligned with principles of environmental circularity, favouring interventions that regenerate rather than merely consume resources (tangible and intangible).

In this framework, co-design, co-programming, and co-management—also aligned with the values of the New European Bauhaus—emerge as fundamental strategies to ensure that these sacred spaces, originally conceived as places of spirituality and community, may continue to serve as meaningful spaces of encounter without losing their intrinsic value and significance.

The next stages of the PRIN TReE research project will include further co-design and co-evaluation processes, through which the relevance, feasibility, and replicability of the selected strategies will be tested and refined. These outcomes will help to understand whether the adopted approach—consistent with the best European practices, such as those developed in the Horizon 2020 CLIC project—can deliver results that are transferable and scalable for other religious heritage assets across Italy.

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