Co-designing Alternatives of Adaptive Reuse: The Case of the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus in Moncalieri

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Abstract. This paper presents a participatory co-design process focused on the adaptive reuse of the Chiesa del SS. Nome di Gesù, a deconsecrated church in the historic centre of Moncalieri, Northern Italy, developed within the PRIN TREE 2022 research project on circular economy models for architectural heritage reuse. Through a full-day participatory workshop with 14 participants and semi-structured validation interviews with seven key informants, the study employed a Circular Business Model Canvas to bridge participatory outputs and governance planning. Findings consistently identify the Church as a potential generative infrastructure for a new intergenerational community, a civic common where different generations, cultural backgrounds, and forms of knowledge enter into durable relationship. Three co-generative value dimensions are mapped (cultural, social, and economic) alongside a polycentric governance model. Interpreted through the concept of heritage community as defined in the Council of Europe's Faro Convention, the results suggest that the most sustainable form of religious heritage reuse is one that simultaneously activates a new community of meaning around the heritage site. Implications for heritage governance, participatory design methodology, and Faro Convention operationalisation are discussed.

Keywords: Reuse of cultural heritage · circular economy · co-programming · co-participation · Circular business canvas model

1 Introduction

The construction sector is a major consumer of raw materials and energy, and a significant source of carbon emissions [1, 2]. On top of this, the sector is also responsible of the production of a substantial amount of waste deriving from demolition processes [3]. Within this context, adaptive reuse emerges as a potential way to update the building stock, avoiding the resource-intensive cycle of demolition and reconstruction [4].

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Adaptive reuse is broadly defined as any intervention aimed at modifying a building's capacity, function, or performance in order to meet new requirements [5]. Through both functional and physical transformations, adaptive reuse enables existing buildings to be given a second life.

Beyond its environmental benefits, this practice contributes to the social, economic and cultural dimensions of sustainability, representing a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple challenges simultaneously [6, 7]. By proposing new functions that are compatible with the heritage value of buildings, adaptive reuse promotes the long-term sustainable use of resources, in line with the principles of the circular economy. Furthermore, by preserving the cultural significance of buildings, it could provide an opportunity to enhance local community engagement while fostering economic well-being [8]. Reusing built heritage could be a driving force in the revitalisation of urban and peri-urban areas, or those affected by long-term demographic trends of depopulation, which leave a large proportion of the building stock underutilised, as is the case in marginal and inner areas [9].

With over 500,000 structures, religious buildings constitute a substantial proportion of Europe's built heritage and could present opportunities for adaptive reuse [10]. In peripheral areas in particular, this proportion of the building stock suffers from secularisation, demographic decline and urbanisation, leading to abandonment and deterioration, with the need to repurpose these buildings for new, non-liturgical functions [11–14]. Indeed, the dissolution of religious institutions and the transition to alternative forms of worship has had a profound impact on the religious heritage of many Western countries, effectively transforming it into an economic burden. In addressing this issue, tourism-related uses emerge as a prevalent adaptive reuse strategy. However, this approach is not without its limitations. Firstly, it is susceptible to the commodification of cultural values within the so-called "economy of experience" [15]. Secondly, it often fails to deliver sustainable or regenerative outcomes. Furthermore, it does not consistently represent a viable solution in peripheral or marginal areas. It is evident that economic viability continues to be a primary factor in determining success. The financial sustainability of uses is a pivotal aspect in ensuring the long-term preservation of heritage assets, which in turn contributes to broader sustainability goals [4].

Nonetheless, a number of instances of successful adaptive reuse illustrate the capacity for regeneration, particularly when participatory processes such as co-design and co-planning are initiated to establish novel uses for religious buildings [16, 17]. Engaging local communities is pivotal in ensuring that projects reflect shared values and needs, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and long-term commitment. The selection of appropriate functions constitutes a critical stage in the process [18], from both a technical standpoint (with regard to spatial configurations, structural characteristics, and material constraints) and a social standpoint (taking into account possible impacts and outcomes for the community). In this regard, several methodologies have been widely explored in the literature both ex-ante and ex-post [8].

Despite the recognised importance of community participation, its practical implementation remains challenging. While stakeholders generally recognise its value, the involvement of the public at every stage of the process is often deemed impractical due to the complexity of decision-making and the diversity of interests involved. As has

been noted by a number of practitioners, this results in community input being expressed informally through local groups and associations [4]. The feasibility of uses is ultimately dictated by market dynamics, especially in cases where there is competition between public and private interests [4].

In this context, the PRIN-TReE research project (Grant PRIN 2022 No. 2022TN5M7F) has been conceived with the objective of identifying evaluation processes that can assist decision-makers in defining adaptive reuse strategies for cultural built heritage. The project involves engaging local communities in the co-construction of adaptive reuse processes, with a view to ensuring long-term feasibility. The present contribution delineates the present stage of the process initiated for the adaptive reuse of the abandoned Church of the Holy Name of Jesus (Chiesa del Santissimo Nome di Gesù) in Moncalieri, in Turin, Italy. In particular, it presents the participatory co-design process activated within a municipal governance context that had already taken a significant normative step toward formalising the relationship between citizens and the administration in the management of shared urban resources.

2 Case Study and Problem Situation

The Church of the Holy Name of Jesus (floor plan in Fig. 1), located in Moncalieri, was constructed in 1710 and subsequently abandoned during the 1950s. Following the consent of the Diocese of Turin to reopen the disused church, with the intention of repurposing the structure for the benefit of the local community, a preliminary workshop involving a panel of 12 experts was convened to collaboratively establish the knowledge framework surrounding the building. The in-depth description of the case study and its context, as well as the results of this preliminary workshop, was presented in a previous publication [19]. Here, the main results are summarized.

During the first workshop held in February 2025, a SWOT analysis was employed as a problem structuring method (PSM) to assist the analyst and the relevant actors in constructing the problem situation in which the decision must be made. Among the available tools, SWOT analysis is considered to be a simple and convenient method of structuring the knowledge base, engaging different experts and stakeholders, and improving communication and information exchange [20–22]. The problem-structuring exercise revealed a set of features of the case study. These were related to constraints and opportunities concerning the physical consistency, maintenance status and level of degradation of the church, with potential uses being limited by the depth of requalification intervention that could be proposed. In terms of the social context, the opportunity to ‘promote a sense of citizenship and belonging (artists of citizenship) and enhance the preservation of community memory’ also emerged. These outputs were considered to potentially benefit from establishing a relational network with other systems, such as worship and cultural/educational circuits, at local and territorial scales. Furthermore, links with institutions and local stakeholders represent potential opportunities for capitalising on synergies with local associations and possible partnership arrangements, fostering the creation of a real heritage community network.

The city of Moncalieri activated the “Regulations on Citizen-Administration Collaboration for the Care, Regeneration and Shared Management of Common Goods” in

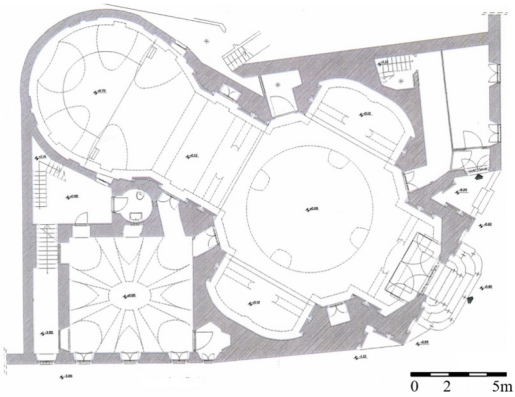

Fig. 1. Floorplan of the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus (source: [17])

April 2025. This legal instrument, modelled on the Italian "Regulation on Urban Commons" framework pioneered by the city of Bologna in 2014 and subsequently adopted by hundreds of Italian municipalities, allows citizens to cooperate with the public administration to actively and directly take care of public goods. The adoption of such tool took place independently from the research, involving the entire set of common goods in its territory, establishing a fertile ground for further initiatives.

The participatory co-design process presented in this paper was thus activated within a municipal governance context that had already taken a significant normative step towards institutionalising the relationship between citizens and the administration in the management of shared urban resources. The Moncalieri regulation establishes the legal and procedural conditions under which citizens and the administration may enter into collaboration pacts for the care, regeneration, and shared governance of material and immaterial assets recognised as functional to community wellbeing, to the exercise of fundamental rights, and to the interests of future generations. Its scope is explicitly wide-ranging, encompassing cultural and architectural heritage, and its underlying philosophy, namely subsidiarity, co-responsibility, and civic activation, is coherent with the principles of participatory heritage governance promoted by the Faro Convention. This regulatory backdrop constitutes one of the structural conditions that make the co-design process described in this paper both meaningful and actionable.

The second workshop convened around the Church on January 14, 2026, can be read, in this light, not only as a research activity but as an operationalisation of the governance model the regulation envisions: a process in which citizens, associations, cultural practitioners, educators, and institutional actors collectively imagine and begin to co-produce the future of a shared heritage asset. The collaboration pact thus functions as the institutional hinge between the abstract principle of the commons and the situated, relational practice of community building around a specific heritage site. In this sense, the Moncalieri case offers a particularly instructive example of how a local governance innovation, the commons regulation, can create the enabling conditions for a Faro-style heritage community to emerge: not as a formal declaration, but as a living process of civic co-design grounded in the concrete life of a place.

3 Methodology

The methodological approach combines participatory design practices, qualitative stakeholder engagement, and business model analysis. This hybrid strategy was chosen to address the complexity of adaptive reuse processes, which require not only technical feasibility but also social legitimacy, cultural relevance, and long-term sustainability.

The research process was structured into two sequential and complementary parts:

1. a participatory co-design workshop, aimed at generating shared visions and identifying possible functions for the space;
2. a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants, aimed at validating, refining, and contextualizing the preliminary outcomes.

Together, these phases enabled the co-production of knowledge between researchers, local stakeholders, and institutional actors (in Table 1 participants and informants are listed).

Table 1. Participants and informants.

Participants to workshop	Informants interviewed
• n° 2 members of the research group	• Local artist
• n° 2 Local architects	• Art Manager
• Staff of local public library	• Municipality bureaucrat
• Local NGO representative	• Public library manager
• Municipality representative	• National Energy
• Representative of the Diocese	• Local headteacher
• Representative of the parish	• Local deputy headteacher
• Diocese consultant	• National Agency for New Technologies, Energy, and Sustainable Economic Development researcher
• n° 2 University students	
• Urban economic expert	
• Renewable energy community representative	

Part 1 consisted of a one-day participatory design workshop held on the 14th of January, 2026. Fourteen participants took part in the activity, representing a heterogeneous group including cultural practitioners, local stakeholders, researchers, and representatives of institutions. The workshop was designed to collect situated knowledge about local needs, expectations, and opportunities related to the potential reuse of the church. The facilitation process followed principles of human-centred design and collaborative planning, ensuring that participants could contribute experiential knowledge and visions for the future of the space. The workshop was organized into a sequence of four structured phases aimed at progressively translating imaginaries into potential organizational and economic configurations.

The first activity "Imagination Phase" aimed to stimulate future-oriented thinking and creative reflection. Participants were invited to imagine the church as a fully active space in the year 2035. To facilitate this process, a visual storytelling tool based on illustrated cards was used. Participants selected images that resonated with their perceptions, aspirations, and concerns regarding the future of the church. Through associative storytelling, the images triggered reflections on possible roles for the space, including creativity, collaboration, intergenerational exchange, and cultural identity. This phase allowed participants to articulate both desires and fears, such as the risk that the building might remain unused or closed, while also envisioning the church as a vibrant cultural and civic space connected to the life of the city.

The second phase "Value Mapping" translated the imaginaries generated during the previous activity into explicit value categories. Participants worked in small groups using a large visual board structured around three dimensions: cultural value, social value and economic value. Using colored post-it notes, participants identified the types of value that the reuse of the church could generate for the community. This activity encouraged participants to move beyond the description of specific activities and focus instead on the broader impact and meaning of the space. The outcome of this phase was a collective value map, highlighting the potential role of the church as a place for cultural production, community building, learning, and social wellbeing.

In the third phase, "Stakeholder Mapping", participants identified the actors necessary to activate and sustain the envisioned functions. A stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted using a diagram structured around four categories of possible contributions: time, competences, relationships and resources. Participants mapped local institutions, associations, cultural organizations, and informal networks that could contribute to the project. This exercise revealed the presence of a local ecosystem of potential partners, ranging from schools and cultural organizations to environmental associations and local businesses. The output of this phase was a preliminary stakeholder map and governance hypothesis.

The fourth and final phase of the workshop focused on the economic and organizational sustainability of the project. Participants were invited to reflect on how the identified activities and stakeholders could generate and circulate value. Guided by the facilitators, the discussion explored questions such as who produces value within the system, who benefits from it and how people participate (as users, contributors, or supporters). The insights collected during the workshop were synthesized into a preliminary Circular Economy Business Model Canvas (CEBMC).

CEBMC [23] responds to the necessity of extending the traditional BMC to capture the complexity Circular Economy principles [24–26]. While the analysis of circular adaptive reuse strategies [27, 28] and circular business models for cultural heritage reuse have become a studied field [17, 29], studies applying a formalised tool are still not common [30].

In this research, the participatory CEBMC for cultural heritage adaptive reuse is tested as an analytical tool to organize emerging insights into categories such as vision, activities, stakeholders, governance, and sustainability mechanisms.

The second Part of the research process aimed to validate and refine the preliminary results of the workshop through targeted interviews with key informants. This

step allowed the researchers to deepen specific themes and test the feasibility of the ideas that emerged during the participatory process. Seven key informants were selected based on their strategic position within the local ecosystem, through a snowball activation. The interviewees represented different sectors, including cultural and artistic production, municipal administration, public cultural services (public library), energy and environmental research, secondary education institutions. This diversity ensured a multiperspective understanding of the project, combining technical, institutional, cultural, and educational viewpoints.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing flexibility while maintaining a consistent thematic framework. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 min and focused on three main topics:

1. the potential future functions of the church
2. the identification of relevant local stakeholders and partnerships
3. conditions required for long-term sustainability

Interviewees were also invited to comment on the preliminary CEBMC, providing feedback on its feasibility and identifying possible risks or opportunities.

Data collected were analyzed using a qualitative thematic approach. Notes and observations were reviewed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and points of convergence across participants. The findings were then integrated into an updated version of the CEBMC, which synthesizes the main components of the proposed reuse model. This iterative process allowed to move from collective imagination to structured project scenarios, ensuring that the proposed reuse strategies remained grounded in local needs while aligned with broader principles of circular heritage regeneration.

4 Results

The findings from the participatory co-design process, involving the two complementary phases (a participatory workshop and validation interviews with local stakeholders and key informants), converge on a coherent vision of adaptive reuse that integrates cultural, social, and economic dimensions within a circular framework. The findings also identify the structural conditions necessary for long-term sustainability.

4.1 Workshop Results: Emergent Value Patterns

Participants used illustrated cards as a non-directive creative device to help them project themselves into the year 2035 and imagine the church as a fully operational space. Two dominant narratives emerged. On the one hand, participants expressed anxiety about renewed closure or loss of vitality. On the other hand, the image of the church as a living hub for creative, performative and relational activity came to the fore. Recurrent visual metaphors depicted the church as a unifying and influential force in the historic centre, as a multigenerational space where different life cycles, artistic traditions and contemporary aspirations coexist, and as a site oriented simultaneously towards memory and transformation. These visions were consistent across both working groups, suggesting a shared vision that transcended individual disciplinary perspectives.

In the second phase ("Value Mapping"), participants translated their ideas into explicit value statements, organising contributions along three interdependent cultural, social and economic dimensions. These dimensions were not considered as distinct categories, but rather as co-generative processes. Cultural value was primarily associated with the construction of identity, both individual and collective; the provision of slow, non-digital physical spaces conducive to creativity, reflection and deep attention; and the promotion of encounters between different generations and cultures. The Church was envisaged as a place where memory and innovation coexist to produce shared intercultural narratives. Social value was linked to the idea of community as a process rather than a given entity. The Church was imagined as a place that could transform weak ties into stronger forms of solidarity through everyday practices such as encounter, play, care, and collaboration. Prominent themes included intergenerational integration, particularly between the elderly and young people, facilitated through traditional crafts, arts, and knowledge transmission. Another theme was the activation of self-organisation and shared responsibility, consistent with a commons-based governance model. Economic value, conceived in non-reductive terms, was considered a prerequisite rather than an end in itself: the Church's long-term survival would depend on a hybrid resource model combining monetary and non-monetary contributions, mutualistic exchanges, cross-subsidy logics and reduced social costs by producing collective well-being. Participants identified various revenue-generating activities, such as paid courses, artistic residencies, performances, temporary local product markets, event space rental, crowdfunding and subscriptions to cultural programming, as well as activities that generate high social value but require economic coverage, including free youth programmes, intergenerational play laboratories, study spaces, non-monetary exchange initiatives and time banks.

In phase 3 ("Stakeholder Mapping"), a multi-layered map of potential contributors to the adaptive reuse project was created and organised according to the four types of contribution they could make: time, competencies, relationships and resources. The map revealed a strong cluster of actors involved in education, culture and lifelong learning, including schools, universities of the third age, cultural associations and music organisations. These actors were identified as central nodes for programme development and competency activation. A second cluster encompassed local associative and institutional networks, including municipal councillors, civic committees, and environmental organisations. Their contribution was seen as essential for territorial legitimisation and connectivity to supra-local cultural circuits. A third cluster comprised proximity economic actors, including merchants' associations, local farmers, and nearby businesses. These actors were not positioned as traditional sponsors, but rather as partners in a circular territorial economy. Overall, the stakeholder map outlined a polycentric governance model, where sustainability depends on the ability to activate and coordinate diverse contributions, rather than relying on a single responsible entity.

Phase 4 involved translating the accumulated insights into a preliminary Circular Business Model Canvas as shown in Figure NN. The vision formulated for 2035 described the church as a living civic, cultural and community space that holds together memory and innovation. It is recognised as an urban common and is inhabited daily by multiple generations. Identified key functions included cultural workshops, creative laboratories, courses and training activities, intergenerational exchange programmes,

performances and exhibitions, study spaces and reading groups, and collective events tied to the local calendar. The Church would also be used daily as a neighbourhood meeting place. The target communities were residents of Moncalieri of all ages, with a particular focus on the elderly, adolescents, families with children, and individuals experiencing social fragility. These communities also included artists, researchers, educators, and cultural associations. The proposed governance model was participatory and shared, involving a coordinating entity, a community manager, and a variety of institutional, associative, and informal local actors who would share responsibilities and decision-making in a transparent and inclusive manner. Expected impacts included strengthening local cultural identity, increasing civic participation and social cohesion, improving individual and collective well-being, sustainably valorising religious heritage, reducing social isolation, activating local and circular economies, and creating a replicable adaptive reuse model (Table 2).

Table 2. Parameters used in the different Scenarios.

1. VISION FOR THE SITE. What had the Church become by 2035?		
By 2035, the Church will have become a vibrant and welcoming civic and cultural hub, where tradition meets innovation. It will be a shared, non-digital urban space for connection, creativity and growth, bringing together spiritual, cultural and social life across generations.		
2. VALUE CREATED. What value does this place bring to people and the local area?		
Cultural value. • Creation of meaning, identity and shared memory. • Space for artistic, intellectual and spiritual creativity. • Place for continuous learning, both formal and informal • Meeting point for different generations, cultures and faiths. • Creation of new intercultural memories.	Social value. • Building and strengthening the local community and relationships • Intergenerational inclusion (older people, young people and children). • Creating a space for listening, play, care and connection • Fostering self-organisation and shared responsibility.	Economic value. • Mobilisation of local monetary and non-monetary resources. • Support for cultural, educational and social initiatives. • Reduction of social costs promoting well-being • A local, mutualist and circular economy • Long-term sustainability of the area as community infrastructure.

(*continued*)

Table 2. (*continued*)

3. KEY FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES.	**4. TARGET AUDIENCE / TARGET COMMUNITY.**	**5. STAKEHOLDER.**
1. Cultural, creative and artistic workshops. 2. Courses, classes, training activities (crafts, practical skills, culture and adult education). 3. Spaces for study, reading, film screenings, discussion and intergenerational exchange. 4. Performances, concerts and immersive exhibitions 5. Bartering, reusing and recycling books, games, objects and clothes. 6. Community centre and neighbourhood café hosting community events.	1. Citizens and residents of Moncalieri. 2. Older people, young people, and teenagers. 3. Families with children 4. Artists, researchers, educators and trainers 5. Cultural and social organisations 6. Local traders 7. People in vulnerable situations 8. Public authorities, private individuals and companies organising events. 9. People who do not usually visit cultural venues 10. Future generations.	1. Active local communities 2. Education, training and lifelong learning. 3. Culture, arts and creativity 4. The third sector and social care 5. Institutions and local government 6. The local economy and local supply chains 7. Environment, sustainability and regional networks 8. Supra-local cultural networks.
6. GOVERNANCE AND ROLES.	**7. SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCES.**	**8. EXPECTED IMPACTS.**
• The Church is managed through a participatory and shared governance model. • It is viewed as an urban common good, and a coordinating body, community manager and range of local stakeholders — including institutional, voluntary and informal groups — share transparent and inclusive responsibilities and decision-making processes.	• Donations, crowdfunding and fundraising, Sponsorship from local businesses and traders. • Educational and cultural activities on a contribution basis and Season tickets for programmed activities • Hire of spaces for compatible events • Sale of books and local products (temporary shop). • Exchange of goods, skills and time (time bank). • Skilled volunteering • Inclusion in a renewable energy community	• Strengthening local cultural identity: • Increased civic participation and social cohesion. • Improved individual and collective well-being. • Sustainable enhancement of religious heritage • Reduced social isolation and vulnerability. • Boosting local and circular economies • Creation of a replicable model for adaptive reuse.

4.2 Stakeholder Interviews: Validation and CEBMC Refinement

Phase 2 involved conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with seven key informants, who were selected to provide insights into various aspects of territorial knowledge, including cultural and artistic production, public administration, associative networks, library and cultural services, energy, technical feasibility and secondary education. The interviews, which took place online in February 2026, aimed to validate, deepen and integrate the preliminary CEBMC produced during the workshop. For brevity, the interviews are not quoted, but are instead critically analysed to extract the main points raised by the informants.

Interviews with an artist and an arts manager emphasised Moncalieri's distinct environmental and historical identity, which is deeply connected to the Po River, the rolling hills and local agricultural traditions. This identity should not be overshadowed by its proximity to Turin. The proposal involved a strategic axis linking environmental sustainability, agricultural heritage and local food traditions, with the church acting as a cultural hub connected to biodiversity networks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve initiatives and local supply chains. Synergies with the corporate social responsibility programmes of regional firms were also identified.

A municipal officer responsible for environmental matters confirmed the absence of a structured social space in the historic centre, outlining the potential of the church as a venue for events, exhibitions and performances, capable of hosting established, city-wide festivals and seasonal events. The key strategic objective identified in the interview was the importance of "bringing the city into the church", thereby strengthening the link between cultural programming and urban vitality. The informant also emphasised the strength of existing associative networks as a resource that could be utilised.

The director of the Arduino public library identified the lack of study rooms and conference facilities in the city centre as a structural gap, and proposed leveraging the library's physical proximity to the church to create a functional extension of cultural services. The priority target users were identified as those aged 10–18. Proposals included the creation of a dedicated, themed library section with youth-oriented collections, the provision of study spaces, coordination with local schools and the engagement of civic service workers as permanent staff. The most plausible governance scenario identified was a municipal management model with dedicated personnel.

A researcher from the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy, and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA) emphasised the importance of conservation constraints affecting the building, highlighting the need for lightweight, modular and reversible interventions that are compatible with heritage protection requirements. Such types of intervention would respond to the double necessity of respecting the physical consistency of the building, while also reducing the generation of waste from renovation interventions, ultimately linking the preservation of the historical memory, with the necessity of reducing construction related increase of the asset embodied carbon. Opportunities were identified for passive cooling strategies that exploit the building's chimney-effect morphology, natural ventilation and humidity management. The church was also identified as a potential urban thermal refuge during summer heatwaves, contributing to a low-cost local climate adaptation policy. The importance of preliminary technical measurements and administrative support for accessing funding was emphasised.

Interviews with the headteacher and deputy headteacher of a local high school revealed a clear gap in youths' lives: a lack of non-domestic, non-educational spaces where they can exercise autonomy in a safe and stimulating environment. Suggested programme activities included visual arts, music and theatre workshops, peer tutoring, university and professional orientation, and weekend activities with public showcases of student work. The interviewees emphasised the importance of involving students as co-creators of the activities, and warned that the Church could be perceived as merely an extension of the school, which would undermine its transformative potential.

5 Discussion

An integrated analysis of the workshop outputs and interview data reveals a set of findings that are both convergent and structurally coherent. Four strategic axes stand out.

Firstly, there is a consistent demand for a third space that is neither purely institutional nor commercial. This demand is particularly evident among adolescents who require non-scholastic environments in which to study, be creative, and develop peer relationships. It is also evident among adults and elderly residents who require a daily social anchor in the historic centre. Secondly, the educational and intergenerational function of the church as a study space, conference venue, orientation laboratory and creative workshop appears not only desirable, but also structurally necessary, particularly in light of its proximity to the civic library. Thirdly, Moncalieri's environmental and identity-based characteristics emerge as a distinctive asset, and the church's programme should reflect the local relationship with the Po, the hillside, biodiversity and agricultural heritage, thus positioning the site within wider environmental and cultural networks. Fourthly, governance and programming continuity are identified as the primary organisational risk factors. Episodic activation would be insufficient to generate community belonging and sustainability. This would require a stable coordinating figure, a structured programme schedule and broad partnerships with schools, associations, cultural networks and local economic actors.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus could function as a multifunctional civic platform and intergenerational cultural and educational hub. This infrastructure would be rooted in local identity and aligned with the principles of the ecological economy, generating diffuse and durable shared value for the city of Moncalieri.

A transversal reading of the workshop outputs and interview data reveals a theme that surfaced repeatedly and with notable consistency across both phases of the research: the idea that the renewed church should not merely host activities or services, but become the centre of a new intergenerational social network — a place around which a community is actively and continuously produced, not just gathered. Participants described this aspiration from different disciplinary vantage points and in different registers, yet the underlying intuition remained remarkably stable: the church as a site where different generations, backgrounds and forms of knowledge enter into meaningful and durable relationships with one another and where caring for shared heritage constitutes community. This finding invites a theoretical reading that goes beyond urban regeneration frameworks or cultural economics alone. It directly aligns with the concept of a heritage community, as outlined in the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the

Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro Convention, 2005), which prioritises the relationship between individuals, heritage, and community formation within cultural heritage policy and practice. The following discussion engages with this convergence as its primary theoretical axis.

5.1 Intergenerationality as a Structural Principle

One of the most striking features of the workshop findings was how frequently and consistently intergenerational integration emerged, not as a secondary theme, but as a structural principle of the imagined community. Participants did not merely acknowledge that both the elderly and young people might use the space; they articulated a vision in which encounters between the generations would constitute the very fabric of the community. Knowledge transmission, creative collaboration, peer tutoring, sharing traditional crafts and contemporary artistic practices, and mentorship relationships between older residents and adolescents all appeared not as incidental programme elements, but as the relational core of what the Church should facilitate.

This emphasis is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it reflects a diagnosis of social fragmentation that is not unique to Moncalieri, but rather is characteristic of contemporary European urban contexts. Here, age segregation in areas such as housing, education, leisure and care tends to weaken the informal solidarity and mutual recognition that are essential for community cohesion. The Church was collectively envisaged as a structural antidote to this fragmentation: a place where encounters between different life stages are designed in, rather than left to chance.

Secondly, this intergenerational approach is directly connected to the temporal dimension of heritage communities in the Faro Convention. The Convention explicitly situates heritage communities in relation to future generations, emphasising the obligation to maintain and transmit cultural heritage across time. The workshop participants operationalised this temporal horizon in a strikingly concrete way, with several contributions explicitly referencing not only current residents, but also 'those who have not yet been born', thus framing the church's reactivation as an investment in Moncalieri's long-term social and cultural continuity. This is not merely rhetorical, but has direct implications for governance, programming and the long-term stewardship of the space.

Thirdly, the intergenerational emphasis complicates any straightforward mapping of user groups onto predetermined categories of beneficiaries, productively so. The vision that emerged from the co-design process is not of a space serving different populations sequentially or in parallel, but of a space in which relationships between age groups are the service offered. This has implications for programming logic, the design of the physical space and governance structures. It requires organisational forms that pay attention to the dynamics of encounters and translations between different generations rather than simply focusing on the efficient delivery of segmented services.

5.2 Heritage Community and Commons-Based Governance

The Faro Convention's concept of the heritage community carries implicit governance implications that are made explicit in the co-design findings. The stakeholder mapping and the preliminary Circular Business Model Canvas both point toward a polycentric,

commons-based model of governance, one in which no single actor holds exclusive authority over the space, and in which sustainability depends on the capacity to coordinate heterogeneous contributions of time, competencies, relationships, and resources. This model is not simply a pragmatic response to resource constraints; it is a normative choice, grounded in the conviction that the Church's identity as a civic and community infrastructure can only be maintained if governance arrangements reflect the distributed character of the community it serves.

The Faro Convention supports this orientation explicitly. Its provisions call for the active participation of communities in the definition, management, and transmission of cultural heritage, and emphasise the importance of shared responsibility between public institutions, civil society, and citizens. The governance model outlined in the CEBMC, a coordinating entity, a community manager figure, and a broad coalition of institutional, associative, and informal actors sharing decision-making transparently, is consistent with this framework, and with a growing body of European practice in the governance of urban commons and cultural spaces.

The interview findings add a further layer of complexity to this picture. While the commons-based model was broadly endorsed, interviewees also highlighted the risk of governance fragmentation: a space governed by too many actors, without clear coordination and stable leadership, may become a site of conflict rather than collaboration. Several key informants stressed the need for a recognisable, professionally capable coordinating figure, the community manager, whose role would be not to direct but to facilitate and sustain the relational processes on which the community model depends. This tension between distributed governance and operational coherence is a known challenge in commons-based management and will require careful attention in the design of the Church's governance architecture.

5.3 Adaptive Reuse of Religious Heritage and the Production of Civic Identity

The findings also contribute to a broader scholarly conversation on the adaptive reuse of religious heritage in European post-secular urban contexts. The progressive reduction in liturgical use of church buildings across Western Europe has generated both a patrimony management challenge, how to preserve architecturally, historically, and symbolically significant structures in the absence of their original communities of use, and a set of opportunities for civic and cultural repurposing that remains underexplored in policy and practice. Most existing frameworks for the adaptive reuse of religious buildings tend to prioritise architectural conservation, economic viability, or functional fit, without adequately addressing the symbolic and relational dimensions of heritage transformation.

The Moncalieri case offers a more integrated perspective. The co-design process generated a vision in which the physical transformation of the Church is inseparable from a social transformation: the building changes function because the community changes, and the community changes because the building is reimagined. This circularity, between space, programme, and community, is precisely what the Faro Convention's concept of heritage community is designed to capture. It suggests that the most sustainable form of adaptive reuse is not one that finds a new use for an old building, but one that activates a new community of meaning around a heritage site, enabling that community to define

the terms of its relationship with the past in ways that are genuinely generative for the present and the future.

The interview with the cultural practitioners further enriched this dimension by drawing attention to the specificity of Moncalieri's territorial identity, its relationship with the Po River, the hillside, the agricultural landscape, and the local heritage of production and craft. This territorial rootedness is not incidental to the heritage community model; on the contrary, it is one of its constitutive dimensions. The Faro Convention emphasises that heritage communities are always situated: they are defined not only by what they value but by where they are, and by the particular landscape, history, and social ecology that shapes their sense of place. In Moncalieri, the reactivation of the Church thus has the potential to function as a territorial anchor, a site at which the community's relationship with its broader environmental and cultural heritage is continuously renegotiated and renewed.

5.4 The CBM as a Tool for Heritage Community Governance

A distinctive methodological contribution of this research lies in the application of the Circular Business Model Canvas as an instrument for structuring and operationalising the co-design process. The CEBMC proved effective not primarily as a financial planning tool, its conventional function, but as a mediating device between the imaginative and relational outputs of participatory processes and the analytical categories required for governance and sustainability planning. By translating emergent values, stakeholder configurations, and activity proposals into a shared schema of functions, resources, relationships, and impacts, the CEBMC enabled participants and researchers to maintain a systemic view of the Church's potential without prematurely foreclosing the openness of the co-design process.

From the perspective of the Faro Convention, this methodological choice has a further significance. The Canvas, as used here, is not a blueprint for a heritage product but a map of a heritage community in formation: its cells are populated not with predetermined solutions but with collectively produced insights, tensions, and questions that remain alive and generative as the process continues. The validation interviews in Phase 2 demonstrated the CEBMC's capacity to absorb and integrate contributions from different sectoral perspectives, cultural, educational, environmental, administrative, technical, while maintaining the coherence of the overall vision. This suggests that the CEBMC, combined with a participatory co-design methodology, may constitute a replicable instrument for heritage community governance in comparable adaptive reuse contexts across Europe.

6 Conclusions

Adopted in 2005 and progressively ratified across Europe over the following two decades, the Council of Europe's Faro Convention introduces a conceptual and normative shift in the way cultural heritage is understood and governed. Rather than focusing on monuments, buildings or collections as objects of protection, the Convention highlights the

relationship between people and heritage, and the meanings, practices and social processes that heritage activates and sustains. The Convention's central concept is that of the heritage community, defined as 'people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to maintain and transmit to future generations'. This definition is deliberately open; a heritage community is not a pre-existing social group and is not necessarily bounded by geography, institutional affiliation or shared religious identity. Rather, it is a community in the making, constituted through the shared act of recognising, caring for, and passing on something held to be of collective significance.

The findings of this research speak directly to this theoretical framework with a specificity that deserves careful analytical attention. Throughout both phases of the co-design process, the participatory workshop and the stakeholder interviews, a consistent and recurring aspiration emerged: that the Chiesa del SS. Nome di Gesù should not merely become a venue for cultural activities, but the generative infrastructure of a new intergenerational community. Participants did not present this as nostalgia for a pre-existing parish community or as a mere extension of existing associative life in Moncalieri. Rather, they articulated something more demanding and interesting: the idea that the process of collectively deciding what the church should become and then inhabiting and co-managing it would produce the social fabric they were imagining. In Faro terms, the heritage community and the heritage project are simultaneous and mutually constitutive, rather than sequential (first the community, then the project). Community is not a precondition of adaptive reuse, but one of its primary outputs.

This interpretation fundamentally changes the way we view the adaptive reuse of religious heritage. It suggests that the most significant value generated by the reactivation of the Chiesa del SS. Nome di Gesù would not be architectural, economic or narrowly cultural, although it may be all of these, but would be fundamentally relational: producing new forms of intergenerational solidarity, shared responsibility and civic identity. This aligns closely with the Faro Convention's assertion that heritage has a 'human rights dimension' and that democratic participation in heritage processes is a social good in itself, not just a procedural requirement.

6.1 Limitations and Open Questions

Several limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. The research presented here is necessarily preliminary: Phase 2 interviews were completed at the time of writing, but the broader participatory process, including the formalisation of governance arrangements, the definition of an operational programme, and the mobilisation of resources, remains in progress. The findings thus reflect a specific moment in an evolving process, and should be read as inputs to ongoing governance deliberation rather than as definitive prescriptions.

A further limitation concerns the composition of the workshop participant group. Although the 14 participants were selected to represent a broad range of disciplinary perspectives and sectoral affiliations, the sample inevitably reflects the existing networks of the research team and the local organisational context. Future stages of the co-design process will need to extend participation to groups currently underrepresented, in particular, adolescents and young people, whose needs were extensively discussed

but whose voices were largely mediated through institutional interlocutors rather than directly expressed.

Finally, the theoretical articulation between adaptive reuse, circular economy principles, and the Faro Convention's heritage community framework remains at an early stage of elaboration. The convergences identified in this paper suggest that this triangulation is analytically productive and policy-relevant, but a more systematic theoretical development, grounded in comparative case studies and a deeper engagement with the heritage studies and urban commons literatures, will be required to consolidate its contributions.

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