
Social Street and urban space: geographical considerations starting from the case study of Verona (Veneto Region, Italy)

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Abstract

Social street is a very recent phenomenon originated in 2013 in Emilia Romagna: the first social street is *Social Street Via Fondazza*, in the center of Bologna. Based on a spontaneous aggregation of the residents, it shapes as a practice of neighborhood that triggers inclusive dynamics through the use of virtual spaces (the social network) and urban spaces (the road and the other available public and private spaces).

The social street "model" of Via Fondazza spread very quickly in Italy (380 social streets at March 2017) and over the Italian borders, in Europe (for example in Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom, Spain, Suisse) and beyond (36 around the world such as Australia, Brazil Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America). This practice strongly produces positive effects not only from the sociological point of view but it is significant in the relationship between local community and territory, for the future/developing projects of the urban spaces.

In this sense this paper, on the basis of the features of *Social Street Via Fondazza*, develops an analysis of the phenomenon Social Street in Verona and in particular of *Social Street Via XX Settembre*, established in 2015. This social street is particularly interesting because it is placed in an area of Verona (named Veronetta) next to the historical center, characterized by visible signs of the presence of migrants - in terms of commerce, services and residences - intersected with buildings and activities of the University of Verona that here has its central headquarters. Given this cultural mixture, Veronetta has also been mentioned for social problems, urban blight and crimes that came to the attention of the local press.

In the last years, several new signals of transformation have appeared: the requalification and renovation of many old buildings, the displacement of part of the tourism in this area of the town, the rise in the prices of rents or of apartments. In this "fluid" situation where old inhabitants of the original Veronetta live near migrants, students and new inhabitants, the social street of Via XX Settembre could be an interesting device to integrate the different actors of Veronetta and propose concrete initiatives to find a way to live a place characterized by participation and taking part to decisions, importance of the neighbourhood, social and territorial capital.

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A well documented literature exists dealing with the crisis of relationships in modern life that led to individualism, lack of sociality as a pivotal factor of the everyday life as well as lack of the relation with the territories. A possibility to recover the relations among persons is recognized in informal and open collaborative forms and between them and the places. Following this view in a wider perspective, we can consider if a social street, with its characteristics and dynamics, can be an interesting "instrument" to improve the quality of spaces and territories, in a better relationship between inhabitants and cities.

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