

Observatory Case update

Cascina Roccafranca, Turin, Italy

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Cascina Roccafranca

Cascina Roccafranca is a multi-functional community center located on the southern outskirts of Turin, Italy. The building complex was built in the 17th century to serve as a farmhouse for the religious confraternity, Compagnia dell'Immacolata Concezione. In the 1970s, Cascina Roccafranca lost its function and the complex was disused. After over 30 years of being vacant, deteriorated, and a site of homelessness and marginalization, the Municipality of Turin bought Cascina Roccafranca and the old farm complex was completely renovated and re-opened with its new function in May 2007. Cascina Roccafranca center is currently managed through cooperation between public and civic actors providing extensive social and cultural activities. For instance, the space hosts various courses, a daycare center with an outdoor playing area, a monthly cultural program in which many of its activities are organized by community groups, a restaurant and cafeteria run by a social cooperative that employs people suffering from social exclusion or disabilities, and a public archive of local historical memories called "Ecomuseo". <https://www.cascinaroccafranca.it/>

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Cascina Roccafranca had to close for several months. Although officially closed, the whole building was reconfigured as a food distribution center, focusing on families with children, elderly people living alone, and people with physical disabilities. Additionally, they organized community activities (workshops-meetings-games), counseling for psychological issues and victims of domestic violence. The pandemic caused Cascina Roccafranca to struggle financially. All its employees were in "Cassa Integrazione", Wages Guarantee Fund, to save their salaries. They were only working 20% of the time and for the remaining 80% of the time they were officially unemployed. Luckily, they received economic help from the city of Turin for the food distribution activities, got a tax discount on some of their economic resources, (cafeteria, and restaurant), and canceling the cultural summer program made them partially capable to pay the rent. Out of 12 months, they were only able to open for two months, the estimated financial loss counted for around 50,000 EUR.

With the end of the lockdown, Cascina Roccafranca started again with its cultural and social activities. Cascina Roccafranca with **Casa del Lavoro**, which now is based in Cascina, started a job consultancy desk to help people who lost their jobs during Covid to get back to the job market. Moreover, Cascina Roccafranca started a series of activities to help people connect again via digital tools, such as social media and chat groups. Currently, the Cascina center is developing a Triennial Strategic Plan intending to make its internal administration more digital, rethink its role in the city of Turin through a series of socio-cultural activities, and work closely with other institutions and cultural associations.