



PUBLIC PLAY SPACE

# PUBLIC PLAY SPACE SYMPOSIUM

PROCEEDINGS





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PROCEEDINGS**

ISBN: 978-84-120885-4-0

Published in the framework of the project  
Public Play Space, co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme of the  
European Union.

The views set out in this publication are those  
of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the  
official opinion of the European Union.

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First edition, 2021

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**Published by**

Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia

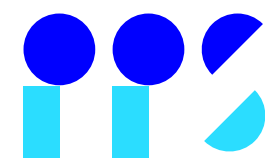
Pujades 102 baixos, Poblenou

08005 Barcelona, Spain

[www.iaac.net](http://www.iaac.net)

**Online-version of the Proceedings is available for  
free at: <https://www.publicplayspace.eu/>**

Printed in the European Union



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**14-15 JULY 2021  
PROCEEDINGS**



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# A New Theater Square For The Yak Community. Designing The Public Space Through Performative Activation In Varese Italy

**Anna Moro**  
**Elena Acerbi**  
**Matteo Pettinaroli**  
 DASTU Politecnico di Milano

## ABSTRACT

The regeneration of YAK square (De Salvo Square) is part of a two-years program which experiments an innovative way to merge a cultural program with public-space regeneration. Born at the intersection of the work of the cultural association Karakorum, based in north of Italy, and of some researchers from the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies - Politecnico di Milano, it aims to better connect Spazio Yak (a community driven theatre) with its neighbourhood, a fragile peripheral district in Varese where it was settled a few years ago.

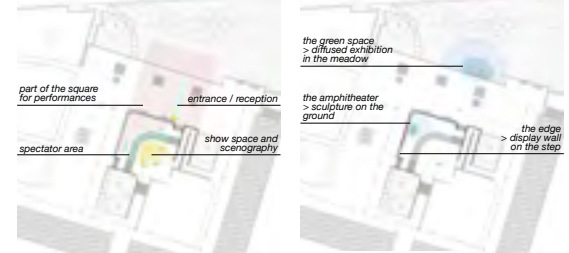
The project develops an open and incremental methodology to achieve space improvement and community inclusion at the same time. It intends the transformation of urban space as a mean of integration between individual and collective well-being, gained through the use of existing resources and done in order to enhancing the appropriation of open space by engaged citizens. Graduality, test and redefinition and co-creation of shared tools define the methodology of the project. Organized in different phases (sensing, ignition, catalysis, consolidation, release), a rich program of artistic actions was promoted to re-imagine the public space around the theatre, the De Salvo Square in particular, now conceived as a “permeable” and recognizable place.

## A new theater square for the Yak community. Designing the public space through performative activation in Varese

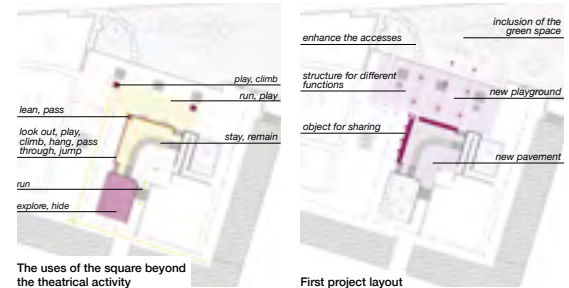
**General project: Yak Around. Theatre through fragile spaces**  
 Location: Varese (Italy)  
 Year of realization: March 2020-ongoing  
 Author: Anna Moro, responsible, architect and urban planning researcher at DASTU Politecnico di Milano; Elena Acerbi, architect, expert in research on public spaces and urban regeneration; Matteo Pettinaroli, architect specialized in co-design processes.  
 a project by: Karakorum association, in partnership with Politecnico di Milano - DASTU (Department of Architecture and Urban Studies), Municipality of Varese and B.Plano cooperative.  
 Founded by: Fondazione Cariplo website: <https://www.karakorumteatro.it/yak-around/>

**A Program about Action-Research within a fragile neighbourhood**  
 The regeneration of YAK square (De Salvo Square) is part of a two years program which experiments an innovative way to merge a cultural program with urban public space regeneration. Born at the intersection of the work and reflection of the cultural association Karakorum, based in north of Italy (Varese), and some researchers from the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano, it aims to better connect Spazio Yak (a community driven theatre) with the Bustecche neighbourhood, a fragile peripheral district where it was settled a few years ago.  
**Regeneration through culture and performances**  
 In the first period from its arrival in the site, the Karakorum company, despite its success upon a wider public and a broader context, was not able to tackle the involvement and interest of the settled community. The project answer to this problem through the application, declined as a cultural/artistic program, of an open and incremental methodology developed by the university researchers, to achieve space improvement and community inclusion at the same time.

### Uses and functions in the Yak square during the first experiments



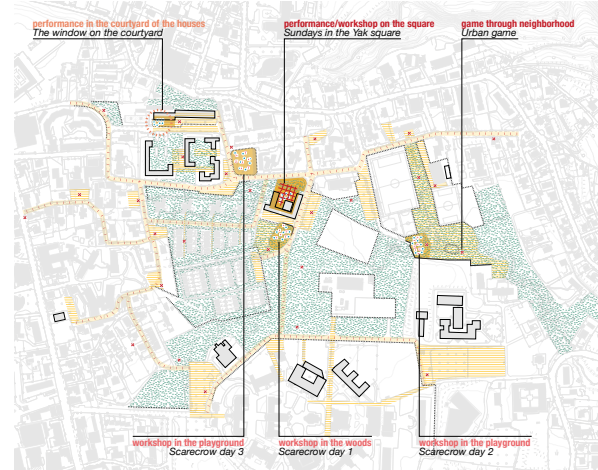
### The uses of the square for the performances



### The uses of the square beyond the theatrical activity

First project layout

### Map of the artistic events and performances in Bustecche neighbourhood in Varese



### The events



### The incremental design of the square

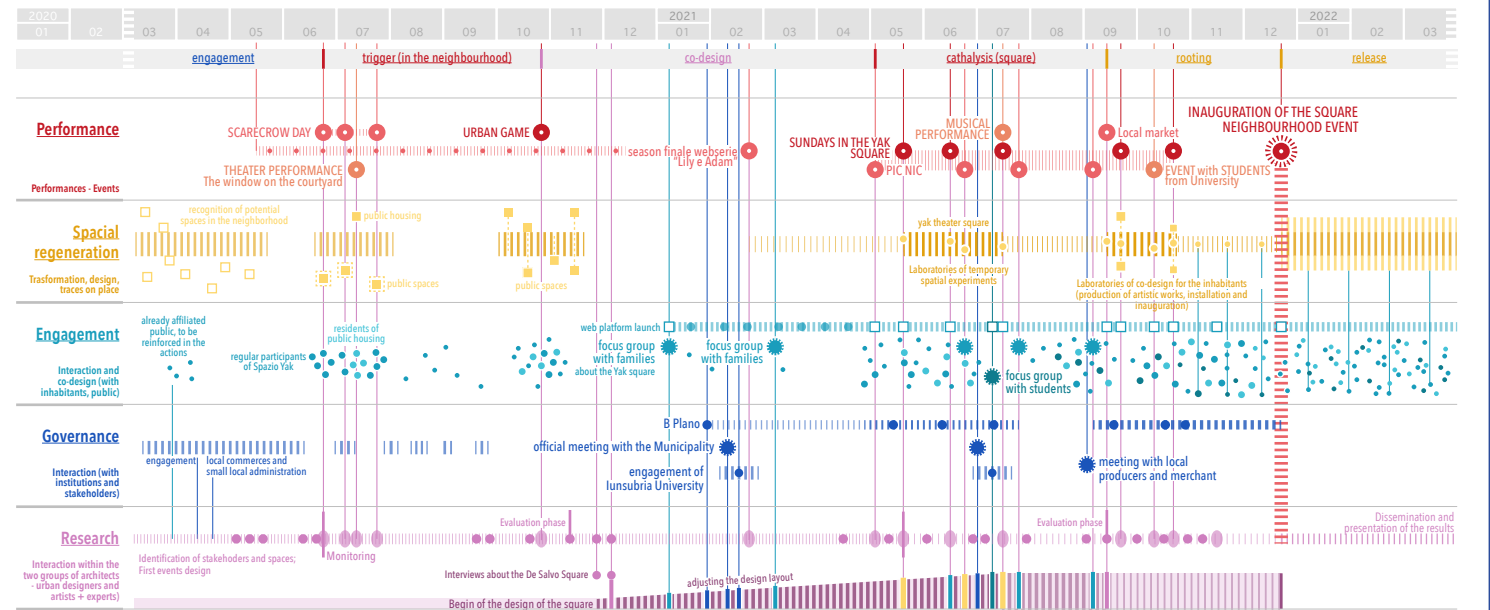


### Application of an place-based incremental methodology

The program follows an overall methodology, the “Playtime concept”<sup>(1)</sup>, for the transformation of urban space at the integration between individual and collective well-being, through the use of existing resources, enhancing the appropriation of open space by engaged communities, developed by a DASTU-Polimi group of research. Gradually, test and redefinition, co-creation of shared tools are the main features of the project. Organized in different phases (sensing, ignition, catalysis, consolidation, release), a rich program of artistic actions was promoted to re-imagine the public space around the theatre, the De Salvo Square in particular, now conceived as a “permeable” place.

(1) Moro A, et al. 2020. Playtime. An action framework for public space in fragile urban contexts: <https://www.architeti.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Playtime-ENG.pdf>

### Process timeline



### Outside / Inside the theater space

On the one hand, Spazio Yak went beyond the boundaries of its walls, in people's daily lives, staging shows in the courtyards of public housing and under the balconies, transforming the neighbourhood into a tableau for urban games, or sharing music and lunches with the neighbours. On the other hand, it has allowed the public to have an active role rethinking the space of the theatre together.

**An engaged community through artistic actions and co-design**  
 Spazio Yak has managed to improve its role in the community by many point of views: through YAK AROUND project is today contaminating and

regenerating public spaces and community life thanks to artistic performances. In addition to the material effects on space, Spazio Yak and the Yak square are also becoming a shared and participatory platform for its public, thanks to the development of innovative mixed, in presence/on-line, co-creation activities during the Pandemic.

### Scenarios for interaction and design of the Yak square





**The recordings from the Symposium can be found  
online on the Public Play Space website:**

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