

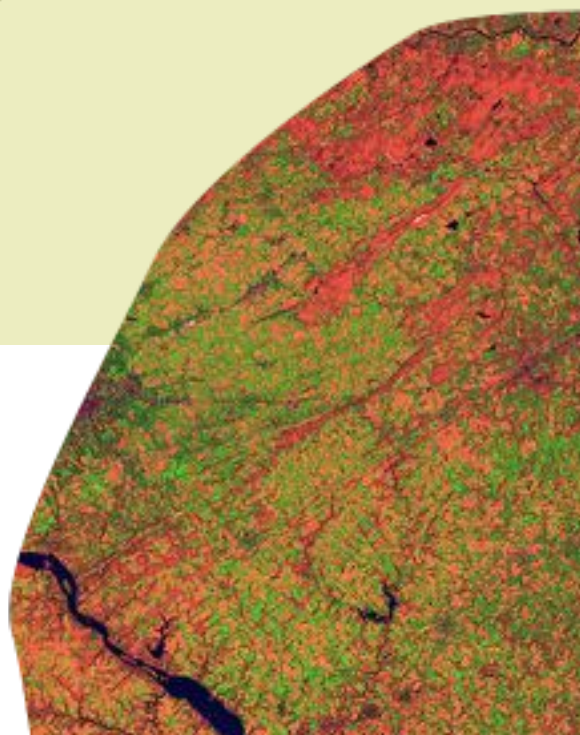
**Title:**

*Author:*

**Occupy Climate  
Change (OCC!)**  
*Grassroots initiatives  
entry*



FORMAS



## **Final project "Introduction to the humanities for the environment"**

### **Casetta Rossa Bene Comune**

*Eleonora Panunzi*

- **Where this grassroots initiative is implemented? Who are the promoters?**

Casetta Rossa is a self-managed social space located in Garbatella in Rome's Municipality VIII. It was founded in 2002 by a group of residents who, on a totally voluntary basis, took action to clean up a green space that had been abandoned for many years and asked for it to be managed for the benefit of the local population. Casetta Rossa was then established in 2011 as a social promotion association and began to promote social, cultural, and environmental initiatives.

- **Who are the beneficiaries?**

The main beneficiaries of the activities of Casetta Rossa are the inhabitants of the neighborhood with a diffuse target group (children, adults, elderly) who can take advantage of a redeveloped park and a space open to all. More generally, all those who decide to take advantage of the various initiatives proposed by Casetta Rossa can be beneficiaries.

In the past years, the space hosted several volunteer camps for the redevelopment of the park, so the exchange has taken place at local, national and international level.

The various activities promoted by Casetta Rossa are addressed to various individuals, both Italian and foreign, favoring inclusion and integration between micro-communities and thus enabling the growth of a culture of dialogue and knowledge exchange.

- **How does this initiative engage with climate? Does it tackle mitigation, adaptation, both or other dimensions of climate change?**

Casetta Rossa statute explicitly states that one of the aims of the APS is the promotion of initiatives to safeguard the environmental heritage. This activity is expressed in concrete actions such as the redevelopment of a green area - the Cavallo Pazzo park - wrested from neglect and abandonment, which has become an extraordinary space for the community. The park is also cared through periodic appointments for cleaning and maintenance, and for meetings and cultural and inclusion projects, dances and songs, workshops to learn about and care for the environment, and celebrations to celebrate the park. To these activities are added:

- the creation of the solidarity purchasing group to encourage the purchase of quality and organically grown products, lowering the cost of products through group purchasing and favoring small farms/cooperatives and 0 km products;

- the Forno Popolare (Popular Oven) initiative, born in 2013, with the idea of self-producing bread in the Casetta Rossa oven; an idea that stems from the need to re-appropriate the knowledge at the basis of our diet. Bread in this sense also becomes a symbol to promote initiatives of environmental sustainability and quality of raw materials, but also a tool to bring people together and bring them to share;
  - the tree census of plant species presents in Cavallo Pazzo Park, developed by Prof. Mancuso and Chef Rubio. The project, which began in 2018, aims to understand the behavior of the trees present in the park by calculating the amount of carbon dioxide stored by the trees; the capacity of runoff water retained by the trees; and the cooling capacity of the streets and neighboring buildings;
  - the creation, in collaboration with the association A Sud, of a Climate Change Hub, a youth laboratory for the study and investigation of climate change, which has contributed its comments on the Sustainable Energy Action Plan - PAESC
- **What are the main objectives? What are the main values?**  
 Casetta Rossa aims to promote initiatives free of charge through the commitment of activists and. in recent years, it has given rise to political, social and cultural initiatives, as well as a popular wood-fired oven that can be used by the whole community, a solidarity purchasing group, activities for children, theatre, acting or baking workshops, photography courses, excursions, walking and cycling tours in Rome and Lazio to get to know historical places and working-class neighborhoods. In addition, they self-manage the Parco Cavallo Pazzo, the park next to Casetta.  
 [From this interview with one of the activists of Casetta Rossa, in my opinion, it emerges that Casetta Rossa is an extraordinary example of re-appropriation and protection of a space that has been made available to citizens, and of an activity that contributes to reinvent a community, these initiatives "can contribute to unhinging the socio-ecological relations that procure profit and power to a few individuals to the detriment of the many" [Armiero, 2021]. The experience of Casetta Rossa, in my opinion, proposes an alternative model of relations in the community and with the territory, a model that promotes a more inclusive and sustainable culture and can therefore be considered a new practice of relations both vertically with the institutional context and horizontally in the relationship between citizens of the community.  
 Bearing in mind that "the ecological crisis is not only a crisis of the physical environment but also a crisis of the cultural and social environment" (Mapping a common ground, Bergthaller et al, 2021 Derive e Approdi), Casetta Rossa contributes to proposing a new model of relations in the community and whit the institutional structures. Casetta Rossa can offer an alternative to the system that has generated the current crisis and thus respond to the climate change we are experiencing].
  - **What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?**

Casetta rossa was established in 2002 and the visible effects can be seen in the redevelopment of the space, the management of a shared place and the promotion of the various initiatives described above.

Casetta Rossa has signed an agreement with the Municipality of Rome VIII, for the management of the area until November 2023.

- **Who are the actors involved? What is their background?**

Casetta Rossa sees the involvement of different actors dealing with various issues ranging from the Casetta Solidale, which collects and distributes food and necessities to over 300 households, to the Buying Group, which promotes the purchase of quality and organically grown products, to the Reading Group. The various areas of activity see the involvement of different actors with also specific competences. In general, the common background of the people involved is that of activism, voluntary work, and solidarity.

- **Which limits does it encounter? Are any shortcomings or critical points visible? What other problematic issues can arise from its implementation?**

The artifact and the park have been entrusted to APS since 2013 following a public call for tenders. Casetta Rossa has signed a convention with the Municipality VIII that will expire in December 2023, this currently represents an element of instability with respect to future prospects.

The main difficulties faced by Casetta Rossa concern the issue of financing activities and the economic management of the park and the Casetta building. The activities offered by Casetta are all free of charge, the only two forms of funding being donations and income from a refreshment point set up inside the Casetta.

The complex organization of Casetta Rossa also inevitably encounters organizational and management difficulties, given the large number of proposals for activities relating to different areas.

There is also, according to the organizers, a communication limitation; a better ability to tell people about the work of the Casetta Rossa would be desirable.

- **How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?**

The initiative arose from the initiative of a few citizens and is certainly replicable in other contexts. There are other examples of active groups of citizens who organize themselves to redevelop and regenerate their territory. The model of Casetta Rossa is a self-management in collaboration with institutions for the care and management of common goods. In this sense, the experience is replicable even if the reconversion of untended public spaces and the long-term management of a public space is undoubtedly a complex activity that requires a concrete commitment and a major managerial and logistical effort.

- **Is this initiative conducive to broader changes?**

In the last three electoral rounds, Casetta has seen the election of its own representatives at the Municipality of Rome VIII and at the Municipality of Rome, thus strengthening its relationship with the institutions, but above all fostering the active participation of the community, which from the experience

of self-management has also moved towards a commitment within the institutions.

Casetta Rossa then formed partnerships with various associations and participated in the activities of various movements active in the area. An example of Casetta Rossa's role in the municipality and beyond is the close collaboration with the City of Rome's Urban Gardens movement, which saw Casetta's active participation in the process to arrive at a municipal council resolution for the allocation of urban gardens.

This example is illustrative of Casetta's role as a small system that operates in the local context but also promotes and participates in initiatives at a national level and acts as a stimulus and influence on institutions.

- **Material**

The information reported were gathered through an interview with an activist involved in the activities of Casetta Rossa, Maya Vetri, who currently also holds the position of councillor for Cultural Policies, Intercultural Policies, Gender Policies, Participation, Common Goods, Memory of the Municipality VIII of Rome. The website and social pages of Casetta Rossa (<http://casettarossa.org/>) and the statute of the social promotion association were also analysed (<http://casettarossa.org/statuto/>).



Photo of Casetta Rossa – public photo taken from the Casetta Rossa Facebook page



Photo Forno Popolare Casetta Rossa – public photo taken from the Casetta Rossa Facebook page



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