Revitalizing Urban Places: How Prosocial Organizations Acquire Saliency in the Eyes of Resisting Stakeholders

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Abstract

Prosocial organizations represent key actors in the quest to promote positive change, foster social impact, and revitalize cities. Notwithstanding their importance in tackling the increasing challenges threatening our society (e.g., pollution, socio-economic inequalities), these actors may not be perceived as salient in the eyes of different stakeholders, and thus their work may be jeopardized by multiple forms of resistance. Scant attention in research has been devoted to understand how prosocial organizations may acquire saliency and navigate these forms of resistance while pursuing urban revitalization. We address this gap by engaging in a qualitative investigation of a Sicilian cultural center. We found that the prosocial organization in our study could navigate different occurrences of resistance and acquire saliency by enacting mechanisms that leveraged the engagement of supporting stakeholders and the idiosyncratic characteristics of place. Our study contributes to the literature about urban revitalization, prosocial organizations, and stakeholder theory—while also complementing research investigating the role of place in management.

Keywords Prosocial organizations · Stakeholder theory · Place · Urban revitalization

Introduction

Cities worldwide face increasing challenges such as inequality, pollution, and other social ills that jeopardize the sustainability of urban areas (Robinson et al., 2019; Rousseau et al., 2019). Policymakers often struggle to find solutions to revitalize their cities and successfully address these challenges, leaving "voids" that can be tapped into by prosocial organizations (Baker & Powell, 2020). Defined as "ventures who are organized at least in part to address social challenges or otherwise create social good" (Baker & Powell, 2020, p. 145), prosocial organizations have recently experienced increased management research attention to understand how to become change agents able to trigger positive social impact at the urban and regional levels (Berrone et al., 2016; Lumpkin et al., 2018).

This research posits that prosocial organizations leverage the idiosyncratic structure and assets of the cities where they operate to revitalize and develop sustainable and inclusive urban areas (Dutta, 2017; Longhofer et al., 2019). However, literature in the field also suggests that effective solutions to urban social problems often require support from multiple actors of varied backgrounds and social circumstances (Cornelius & Wallace, 2010; Diamond, 2002). Thus, revitalizing and transforming cities require the support and endorsement of different actors (Van Tulder & Keen, 2018). And, while the notion of involving and aligning multiple actors toward collective prosocial efforts is appealing (Selsky & Parker, 2005), it can represent a daunting task since disagreements, conflict, and resistance among the parties involved often emerge (Powell et al., 2018). Indeed, the process of revitalizing a city is often accompanied by the presence of multiple forms of opposition as the transformation may affect

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pre-established equilibria, and the status quo, for some actors.

This may be particularly the case for newborn prosocial organizations (Stinchcombe, 1965) which, although endowed with the urgency needed to grasp public attention, may lack the necessary legitimacy and power to get support for their work (Singh et al., 1986). These organizations may fail to be perceived as salient actors in the eyes of diverse stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997; Wood et al., 2021) who can, in turn, attempt to jeopardize the achievement of their goals.

Unfortunately, how these organizations acquire saliency in their efforts to promote urban revitalization has received limited attention. In particular, research has, to date, overlooked how prosocial organizations manage to raise their profile and maneuver through obstacles encountered while promoting urban regeneration. Hence, our research question is: *How do prosocial organizations gain saliency and navigate resistance when spurring urban revitalization?*

To answer this question, we conducted a qualitative investigation of a prosocial organization, Farm Cultural Park (FKP), an independent cultural center located in Favara, Sicily (Italy), which aims to regenerate and stimulate its surrounding urban area. We explored how FKP navigated the local cultural heritage to transform Favara from an economically depressed urban area into a prosperous territory. In the process of achieving its goal, FKP had to deal with a lack of saliency, thus having to face both cultural and institutional resistance from two stakeholder groups; namely, the local population and the local administration. Our results show that FKP was able to navigate these challenges by leveraging the engagement of two stakeholder coalitions: (a) local entrepreneurs and artists; (b) opinion formers and associations. These coalitions enabled FKP to implement four distinct mechanisms: revitalization of place's materiality, revitalization of place's meaning, showcasing the place's conditions, and acquiring support for its work.

Our work offers several relevant contributions. First, we contribute to a recent line of research investigating how organizations can foster urban sustainability and revitalization (George et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2019; Rousseau et al., 2019) by theorizing about the role of place, a relevant dimension largely omitted in management research (Wright et al., 2021, 2022; Zilber, 2018). Second, our work contributes to research on prosocial organizations (Baker & Powell, 2020; Berrone et al., 2016) by suggesting how they may overcome their lack of saliency and navigate different forms of resistance by engaging diverse stakeholders and their coalitions. In this sense, our research also extends the literature on stakeholder theory and engagement (Alvarez & Sachs, 2021; Greenwood, 2007; Mitchell et al., 1997) by proposing a bidirectional perspective, where stakeholders are not only the recipients of organizational interest but also active players in shaping the processes to achieve organizational goals. Lastly, our results also provide useful public policy recommendations and offer practical implications for managers and entrepreneurs engaged in the process of revitalizing surrounding communities and territories.

Theoretical Background

Prosocial Organizations

In the last decades, our society has been called upon to face pervasive and diverse challenges (George et al., 2016; Gümüsay et al., 2022). In this context, prosocial organizations—defined as "ventures who are organized at least in part to address social challenges or otherwise create social good" (Baker & Powell, 2020, p. 145) have been gaining increasing relevance as a solution to tackle, among others, rising inequalities (Florida, 2017), climate emergencies (Howard-Grenville et al., 2014), and exacerbated poverty levels (Cobb et al., 2016).

However, while prosocial organizations may act as agents of positive change and offer the potential to create positive social impact, their work may not necessarily unfold smoothly (Bryson et al., 2015; Savarese et al., 2021). Indeed, literature has pointed to the fragilities and challenges these organizations may face in their efforts to foster social good (Austin, 2010; Van Tulder & Keen, 2018) and in their quest to become legitimate actors in the eyes of external stakeholders. For example, Baker and Powell (2020) distinguish between two main categories of challenges: "conflicting material interests" and "conflicting identities." Specifically, in their study of prosocial organizations in South Africa, Powell and colleagues (2018) identify "conflicting material interests" as the trade-offs in socio-economic wellbeing occurring between the different partners involved in the effort of achieving prosocial outcomes. The authors show how these trade-offs can be overcome through boundary management practices, joint work on focal activities, and specific interaction patterns established with different partners. In addition, research on prosocial organizations (Baker & Powell, 2020; Powell & Baker, 2017) points to the challenge of "conflicting identities", showing how founders' different social identities—i.e., how members self-categorize into existing social groups—may hamper the efforts of promoting social impact. Particularly, Powell and Baker (2017) show that, although motivated by the same goals of helping the community, founders may self-categorize into separate in-groups. The creation of distinct in-groups may become a source of conflict and tensions when undertaking strategic decisions, which may, in turn, jeopardize the achievement of goals and the promotion of positive social impact.

Moreover, prosocial organizations, as hybrid ventures (Battilana & Dorado, 2010) that aim at realizing social goals alongside business ones (Mafico et al., 2021), may struggle to be legitimized in the eyes of stakeholders (Pache & Santos, 2013) and, thus, become salient actors worthy of their social or economic support (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). For example, Mittermaier and colleagues (2022), in their qualitative study about German prosocial organizations acting to alleviate refugees' suffering, show how negative media coverage following public attacks allegedly committed by refugees undermined organizational legitimacy and their ability to gather needed resources and support.

This may be particularly true for newborn prosocial organizations, which may also lack legitimacy due to their young age and their lack of experience in securing adequate economic and social connections (Singh et al., 1986; Stinchcombe, 1965). However, considering the role of these organizations in addressing several challenges jeopardizing the sustainability and growth of urban areas worldwide (Markman et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2019), understanding how they might get support from stakeholders and be legitimized is a critical issue to explore.

Stakeholder Theory and Engagement

Since the advent of stakeholders' theory (Freeman, 1984) and subsequent accounts by management and organizational scholars (Donaldson, 2002; Freeman et al., 2007), stakeholders have been gaining a popular role in organizations' lives. Indeed, stakeholders' theory shifted the focus of attention to a plethora of actors other than shareholders (e.g., governments, consumers, suppliers, citizens, etc.). These stakeholders may have claims or interests in organizational activities and outputs (Greenwood, 2007) and thus represent salient actors for organizations in the pursuit of their goals. For example, Ramus and Vaccaro (2017) show how the engagement of external stakeholders was key for Italian prosocial organizations to strike the appropriate balance between their dual social and commercial goals in accomplishing their mission of generating positive social impact.

More recently, scholars have focused on identifying stakeholders (Alvarez & Sachs, 2021) and on characterizing their claims and interests (Wood et al., 2021), also proposing a typology of stakeholders based on three different attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997). According to this distinction and its resulting typologies, stakeholders represent more or less salient actors in the eyes of the focal organization and are, thus, in varying degrees able to exert influence over it (Frooman, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1997). For example, Agle and colleagues (1999), in their study of large U.S. organizations, tested whether stakeholders' power, legitimacy, and urgency affect the degree to which top managers establish priorities among competing stakeholders and found support for their hypotheses.

Literature suggests that stakeholders may, not only act in isolation, but rather also "interact, cooperate, and form alliances with other stakeholders […] and join their claim against an organization" (Neville and Menguc, 2006, p. 377). Hence, stakeholders can create coalitions (Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Wood et al., 2021) to pool resources, power, and expertise (Butterfield et al., 2004) and eventually pursue their interests and satisfy their claims toward the organization (Frooman, 1999; Savage et al., 1991). In their study of the retail banking sector, de la Cuesta-González and colleagues (2021) highlight how stakeholders coalitions triggered a change in industry-level corporate responsibility (ICR) behavior, pushing banks to move away from unethical practices and adopt socially responsible conduct in line with stakeholders' interests.

However, research up to now has been mainly focusing on the perspective of stakeholders and on describing how they become salient actors in the eyes of organizations and form coalitions and collaborations to reach their objectives. Yet, stakeholders can play a pivotal role in helping organizations achieve their goals, particularly when these organizations lack saliency in the eyes of other stakeholders, who may thus manifest resistance. This may be the case of newborn prosocial organizations trying to sponsor urban revitalization by acting on their territory and which may need to acquire legitimacy and power in the eyes of different stakeholders populating the surrounding place.

The Role of Place in Management Literature

Recently, place has been acquiring increasing relevance in management and organizational theory (Staggs et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2021; Zilber, 2018) as an "active ingredient in social and cultural life" (Finnegan, 2008, p. 369). Building on the literature of environmental psychologists and geographers (Alkon & Traugot, 2008; Gustafson, 2001), place is conceived as something more than a location, rather as imbued with materiality and with a set of meanings and values (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Wright et al., 2022).

Specifically, scholars (Bourdieu, 1990; Cresswell, 2004; Gieryn, 2000) agree that place encompasses not only the buildings, structures, and streets characterizing a geographical location (i.e., the materiality of place), but also the interpretations and identifications made by the actors inhabiting these locations (i.e., the meaning place takes on). As such, place comprises—in addition to its location in terms of geographical area—two main dimensions (Agnew, 1987): (i) its materiality (the structures and settings surrounding interactions and social relationships of actors inhabiting places); (ii) its meaning (the significance and values that places evoke). Literature has been exploring these dimensions, dwelling

on the role of place in transforming fields and affecting the behavior of organizational actors (Jones & Massa, 2013; Rodner et al., 2020). For example, Zilber, in her ethnographic work, builds on the idea of place as not "merely a given, objective, and geographical location as such, but rather an assignment of meaning, values, and material form to a geographical location" (2018, p. 181). She shows how actors of the Israeli high-tech industry discuss and interpret differently the meaning of location and how such discursive practices contribute to the configuration of Israeli's high-tech institutional field. Additionally, Lawrence and Dover (2015), in their qualitative case studies, dove into the context of Canadian housing for individuals with health and social needs (e.g., people with HIV/AIDS, and the homeless) and found that place—in its two dimensions of materiality and meaning—has an impact on institutional work through three different functions. First, place drives actors to change how they construct meaning and respond to social problems, such as homelessness ("containing role"). Second, place functions as a filter through which actors may assign meaning to institutionalized beliefs—such as those regarding people with HIV/AIDS—and work to transform them ("mediating role"). Third, in its practical, material dimension, place may serve to perform activities or pursue goals other than the ones originally planned ("complicating role")—such as churches used as homeless centers rather than purely religious sites.

Places are not fixed and unvarying, rather they may be continually reproduced and transformed by actors in their interactions, acquiring over time new materiality and meaning (Gustafson, 2001). In their recent research, Staggs and colleagues (2022) show how actors transformed the field of Australian scientific research production through entrepreneurial actions that entailed, among others, a dissociation with and the reimagining of the meaning of the region surrounding the university campus.

We build on these previous works to articulate the role of place in its two dimensions of materiality and meaning and how, by leveraging stakeholders coalitions, a specific prosocial organization—i.e., an independent cultural center—was able to gain saliency and navigate resistance from some stakeholders, eventually achieving its mission of revitalizing the surrounding urban area.

Methods

Case Selection

To investigate how prosocial organizations gain saliency and navigate resistance while spurring urban revitalization, we conducted a case study (Langley, 1999) of a prosocial organization located in Favara (Sicily, Italy) named Farm Cultural Park (FKP). FKP was established as an independent cultural

center in 2010 with the aim of transforming abandoned areas of the historic center of the city into areas meant to host permanent and temporary exhibitions, organize workshops and cultural events, and favor actors' interaction. Its economic sustainability is mostly secured by the private funds of its creators. However, over the years, FKP managed to secure some public grants—"of an average [value] no higher than 100,000 euro" (Online Newspaper, 2020)—and use admission fees collected from some of the cultural tours it provided (Online Newspaper, 2020).

Since its foundation, FKP's mission has been to revitalize the urban area and renew the surrounding territory, working tirelessly to reach this goal. Prior the creation of FKP, the Favara area was, indeed, severely degraded, filled with old crumbling and abandoned buildings (in January 2010, its historic center also witnessed the tragic collapse of a building in which two children lost their lives).

The city of Favara, as mentioned, is located in Sicily—a region amongst the poorest in Italy. This region reported in 2011 poverty rates that exceeded 27%—more than 10% higher than the country's average (Istat, 2012a)—a GDP per capita of around 17,000 euros (among the lowest in Italy—Istat 2012b), and an unemployment rate among the young of approximately 43% (Sistema Statistico Nazionale, 2012)—more than 10% higher than the country's average.

The economic and social impact on the territory, triggered by the work of FKP since its foundation, has been significant. By 2017, seven years after its foundation, it was estimated "to have attracted an average of 120,000 visitors per year, to have spurred the emergence of several commercial activities, B&Bs, restaurants, investments from private entities of approximately 15 million euro, and to have created 150 permanent jobs" (Newspaper_2017_Archival_Data). The picture below (Fig. 1) shows how the city has transformed, in particular capturing the façade of a building that was before degraded, but after FKP's efforts, appears restructured and revitalized.

At the outset, the initial activities implemented by FKP were focused on the historic center area and mainly revolved around arts and culture. Specifically, FKP renovated seven courtyards located in the center of the city and organized exhibitions, workshops, and events. As such, FKP journey toward urban revitalization started from these courtyards, that had become expression of degradation and abandonment, although they in the past represented—in view of their structure as small buildings overlooking a common square—places that were meaningful for the collective as there people could gather and socialize.

In subsequent years, in addition to the seven courtyards and the cultural activities, FKP promoted initiatives in other areas of the city and with different aims (e.g., educational, particularly for children and young students), inviting the

Fig. 1 Revitalization of the city of Favara (2010–2017)

Table 1 FKP's main activities

Timing	FKP's main activities
June 2010	FKP, an independent cultural center, opens in the historic center of Favara, Sicily
Jun–Dec 2010	FKP participates in events in Sweden, UK and Spain to promote its initiatives and projects
2011	"Favara reloaded". FKP intensifies its efforts in developing art and cultural events in the historic center of Favara, hosting several exhibitions
2012	FKP participates to the Biennale of Architecture in Venice, and focuses its efforts on both architecture and arts, while developing some special projects (i.e., Church raising market—a research on the relationship between church and fundraising)
2013	Launch of the Favara Urban Network, a project to regenerate Favara's old Castle
2013	FKP starts to focus on education with the launch of workshops and masters in collaborations with several universities
2014	Partnering with local social enterprises (i.e., Moltivolti) and launching of international collaboration projects (i.e., cultural center in Mexico, Mass Art in Boston)
2015	Launch of laboratories for students and children; projects all over Sicily (i.e., Farm Football Stadium in Siracusa); Urban Farmer Network, aimed at creating ambassadors to spread FKP's values in other territories
2016	SOU opening, the Children School of Architecture
2017–2018	Global Farm. FKP launches several international activities and collaborations and is awarded with prestigious international prizes (i.e., Social Design Circle)
2019	Launch of Prime Minister, the politics school for young women
January 2021	Launch on Facebook of Members of Farm Community, an initiative to engage other stakeholders into FKP's activities and initiatives
March 2021	FKP is awarded the international "Human City Design Award" with the project "Countless City"
June 2022	Opening of a new, complementary FKP branch in Mazzarino

engagement of different stakeholders. Table 1 shows the timing of the main activities FKP has implemented.

Preliminary analysis of publicly available data indicates that FKP successfully engaged with different stakeholders and that it also faced resistance from some. The preliminary indications were later confirmed during interviews and with the analysis of internal documents and communications. In particular, we identified six main groups of stakeholders among which, two were actively resisting FKP, and four were supportive of its work.

Resisting stakeholders

Stakeholder Group #1

The local population of Favara. During the first years of its activity, in particular, FKP's stakeholders were the people living in the historic center. Interest in FKP's activities and initiatives arose from the positive changes the organization seemed to be generating within the area of "the seven courtyards," where buildings and spaces had been completely restructured to host cultural workshops and art exhibitions. However, in the beginning, this group resisted the initiatives implemented by FKP. We characterize resistance from the local population in the following sections.

Stakeholder Group #2

The local administration. FKP's events and initiatives organized within the city of Favara called for interaction with stakeholders, such as the city council and administrative offices, which could grant the necessary authorizations to occupy local public spaces with art exhibitions, workshops, and events. The interest of these actors stemmed from the visibility that FKP could grant the city at a regional, national, and international level (e.g., the cultural center, just two years after opening, ranked 6th among the best places to go for art amateurs according to the British blog Purple Travel), providing benefits in terms of economic returns for the area. Despite the positive spillovers FKP generated, this stakeholder group also showed some resistance toward FKP's initiatives, characterized in the following sections.

Supporting stakeholders

Stakeholder Group #3

Local entrepreneurs. This group of stakeholders includes individuals in the Favara area who envisioned an opportunity to build around the exhibitions and workshops initiated by the organization (and the impressive wave of tourists they attracted) and their entrepreneurial activities—thus generating an upsurge of hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, and cafeterias in the area. As shown in our findings, this stakeholder group, and the coalition it formed with artists (*Stakeholder Group #4*), was engaged by FKP in its effort to navigate resistance from the local population (*Stakeholder Group #1*).

Stakeholder Group #4

Artists. Hailing both from the Sicilian region and from all over the country, artists were attracted by FKP's initiatives and projects aimed at revitalizing the area through contemporary arts and culture and by the places created to encourage interaction and exchange amongst them. In the following sections, our findings highlight how FKP engaged this stakeholder group, together with local entrepreneurs (*Stakeholder Group #3*), to navigate resistance from the local population (*Stakeholder Group #1*).

Stakeholder Group #5

Opinion formers. FKP attracted the interest of opinion formers (e.g., media and related audiences), which were endorsing its mission and the work it was implementing in the area. As described later, FKP needed to engage opinion formers and did so through its coalition with associations (*Stakeholder Group #6*) to navigate resistance stemming from the local administration (*Stakeholder Group #2*).

Stakeholder Group #6

Associations at the regional and national level (e.g., foundations, schools, universities). These partners were willing to share with FKP their various competencies and know-how to pursue their individual goals in the overall context of social value creation, community development, and regeneration of the territory. As mentioned and further articulated below, FKP leveraged associations and the coalition they formed with opinion formers (*Stakeholder Group #5*) to navigate resistance stemming from the local administration (*Stakeholder Group #2*).

Data Collection

We gathered different sources of information, including public data, internal documents, media articles, interviews, and field observations. The data collected encompassed the activities of FKP from its foundation (June 2010) until August 2022. The goal was to understand the perspectives of the multiple stakeholders involved, FKP's efforts to gain saliency and the types of resistance it faced, how the organization was able to navigate them, and to achieve internal validity for our analysis through multiple triangulations of diverse sources (Flick, 2004). Table 2 details each source

Table 2 Sources of information

Sources of Information	Number (duration)	Use of data in the article
Farm Cultural Park (FKP)		
Media articles and administrative documents	170	B, C, D, E, F
Social media posts (Facebook + Twitter)	254	B, C, E
Video interviews and podcasts from YouTube	29 (175 min)	A, D, E
Internal documents		
Internal documents	186	A, D
Internal documents, video	95	A, D
Interviews		
Founders (#1 & #2)	6 (210 min)	B, C, D, F
Artists	3 (120 min)	D, E
Entrepreneurs	3 (65 min)	D, E
Students and collaborators of FKP	2 (30 min)	A, E
Citizen	1 (20 min)	D, E
Field observation	144 h	A, D, E

	Key to the use of data in the article	
A		Identify initiatives and activities implemented by FKP overtime in the territory
B		Identify stakeholders' perceptions and reactions (supporting vs resisting) to FKP's initiatives
C		Identify FKP's reactions to resistance
D		Characterize the role of place in FKP's reactions to resistance
E		Understand engagement with stakeholders and their interactions
F		Understand successfulness of FKP's reactions to resistance

and how we used the data and triangulated the different sources to capture FKP's story.

Archival Data

We collected different types of archival data, specifically: media articles and administrative documents (170), social media posts (254), video interviews and podcasts (29), and internal documents (281), totaling 734 archival data. These constituted the primary data sources for our analysis and allowed us to: precisely delineate the initiatives and activities FKP implemented over time; identify stakeholders' reactions to FKP's initiatives; understand FKP's engagement with stakeholders; characterize FKP's process of gaining saliency—and the resistances it faced; assess FKP's success in navigating resistances; define the role of place relative to observed reactions.

Interviews

We collected 15 semi-structured interviews from primary sources. In particular, we interviewed FKP's founders and its different stakeholders (i.e., artists, entrepreneurs, citizens, and collaborators). The semi-structured interviews

were conducted between October 2020 and August 2022 and lasted between 15 to 60 min each. Primary interviews were conducted either in person or by phone, or via online platforms, and were based on a protocol evaluated based on the informants' characteristics and emerging evidence. The interviews enabled us to understand, in-depth, the purpose and characteristics of some of the initiatives FKP implemented over time and allowed us to develop a clear picture of stakeholders' reactions and FKP's engagement with them. Also, interviews helped triangulate information retrieved from archival data, particularly information regarding FKP's reactions to resistance and their success, as well as the role of place in these reactions. Upon authorization by the interviewees, we either recorded the interviews or took detailed notes.

Field Observation

Between July 2019 and August 2022, one of the authors conducted 144 h of direct observation analysis, participating in daily activities (e.g., the set-up of a new exhibition), shadowing FKP's founders, attending public events (e.g., official presentations), and participating in guided tours and staff
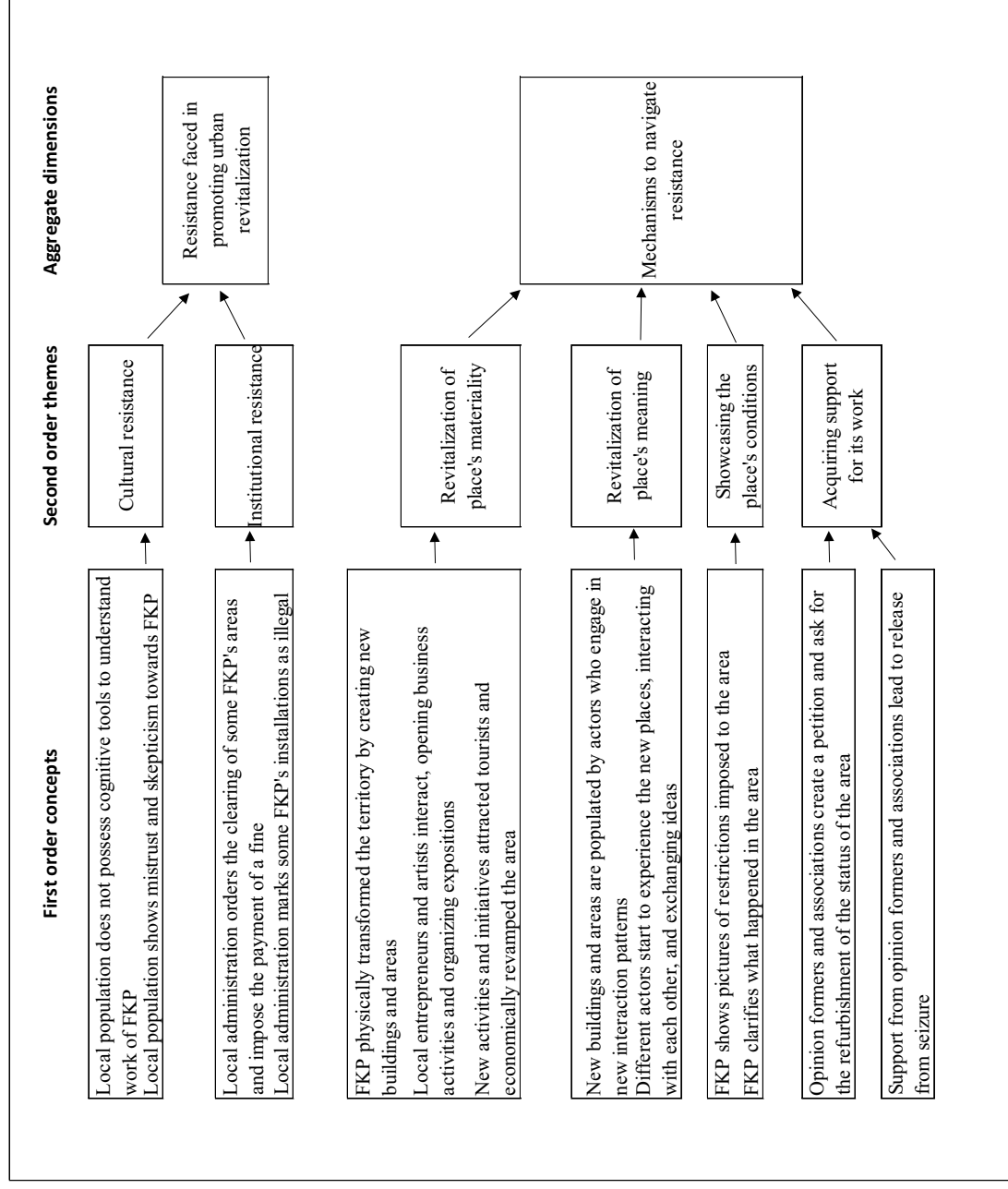
First order concepts   **Second order themes**   **Aggregate dimensions**

- Local population does not possess cognitive tools to understand work of FKP
- Local population shows mistrust and skepticism towards FKP
→ Cultural resistance

- Local administration orders the clearing of some FKP's areas and impose the payment of a fine
- Local administration marks some FKP's installations as illegal
→ Institutional resistance

Cultural resistance, Institutional resistance → **Resistance faced in promoting urban revitalization**

- FKP physically transformed the territory by creating new buildings and areas
- Local entrepreneurs and artists interact, opening business activities and organizing expositions
- New activities and initiatives attracted tourists and economically revamped the area
→ Revitalization of place's materiality

- New buildings and areas are populated by actors who engage in new interaction patterns
- Different actors start to experience the new places, interacting with each other, and exchanging ideas
→ Revitalization of place's meaning

- FKP shows pictures of restrictions imposed to the area
- FKP clarifies what happened in the area
→ Showcasing the place's conditions

- Opinion formers and associations create a petition and ask for the refurbishment of the status of the area
- Support from opinion formers and associations lead to release from seizure
→ Acquiring support for its work

Revitalization of place's materiality, Revitalization of place's meaning, Showcasing the place's conditions, Acquiring support for its work → **Mechanisms to navigate resistance**

Fig. 2 Data structure

meetings. Field observation allowed us to acquire detailed information about the following activities:

a) Ordinary day-to-day activity in FKP's facilities. Specifically, the author shadowed volunteers in their interactions with visitors, local entrepreneurs, artists present on site and other critical stakeholders;

b) Events organized by FKP that grouped critical stakeholders coming from all over the world for lunches, dinners, and special events. For example, in August 2022, the author attended an event involving several stakeholders (i.e., a U.S. journalist, the Director of an Italian national T.V. broadcaster, local entrepreneurs, and artists from outside Europe);

c) Internal meetings with founders, volunteers, and supporting stakeholders discussing critical issues and prob-

lems experienced by FKP and its strategic and organizational plans.

Data Analysis

To investigate our research question, we performed an inductive and abductive iterative analysis (Gioia et al., 2013; Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), moving from empirical data to abstract conceptual layers or "overarching categories", also informed by extant related literature (Grodal et al., 2020), to enable theory building. Specifically, this process occurred by following the three steps described below summarized in the data structure reported in Fig. 2 below:

Step 1. Identifying first order concepts. Given our interest in understanding how organizations can gain

saliency while pursuing urban revitalization, in this first step, we progressed inductively to analyze all collected data (i.e., media articles, internal documents, interviews, field notes) by studying FKP's activities and the dynamics triggered on the related territories. We engaged in "open coding" (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to delineate the empirical elements ("first order concepts" in Fig. 2) which characterize our case study.

Initially, we analyzed FKP's historical evolution since its foundation in 2010. This allowed us to temporally allocate their diverse activities and initiatives, understand the different kinds of resistance faced, identify the stakeholders involved and match this information to the outcomes their activities and initiatives had on the related territories. Hence, we were able to trace distinct instances of resistance and the mechanisms to navigate such resistances. Indeed, each instance of resistance triggered not only distinct sets of reactions but also involved specific stakeholders and coalitions. In this first step, we noticed that the work performed by FKP did not unfold smoothly as the local population declared not to be persuaded by the actions undertaken by FKP and, lacking the appropriate cognitive tools, showed "skepticism" and "mistrust" toward the organization and its initiatives. In addition to this skepticism and mistrust, we noticed that several articles we analyzed pointed to episodes in which administrative offices and bureaucratic procedures were "slowing down" or "hindering" the development of FKP's initiatives. Here, we also realized that FKP navigated these instances of resistance by engaging different actors and their interactions for transforming the surrounding territory.

Since, at this stage, we still lacked a theoretical understanding of the resistance faced by FKP and of the steps the organization undertook to overcome it, we progressed our analysis to a second step—one that could help us develop from these empirical elements conceptually sound themes.

Step 2. Developing second order themes. In this stage, our goal was to match the identified first order concepts with existing theories to develop new conceptual categories (Grodal et al., 2020)—i.e., our second order themes—by engaging in a more abductive phase (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). In the table below (Table 3), we report the empirical themes related to the first order concepts and the conceptual categories and aggregate dimensions they are explicative of.

In particular, we delved into extant research investigating how organizations may foster positive impact on their areas and regenerate territories (i.e., prosocial organizations, Baker & Powell, 2020). We noticed that being legitimatized and gaining saliency were both vital to the effort of urban revitalization, but that some actors may resist this effort. Consequently, we turned to recent management literature about stakeholders' theory and engagement (Mitchell et al.,

1997; Wood et al., 2021) as well as to research characterizing different instances of resistance (Lawrence, 2008; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001).

First, we build on the definition of culture as an "interpretive framework through which individuals make sense of their behavior, as well as the behavior of collectivities in their society" (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001, p. 546). In this way, we realized that the skepticism and mistrust shown toward FKP pertained to a cultural dimension as it represented a specific interpretive framework through which some people in the city of Favara made sense of FKP's behavior and the activities and initiatives the organization implemented. As shown in Fig. 2, from this first order concept, we developed a second order theme we named *cultural resistance*.

Second, given the definition of institutional resistance as the "attempts of actors to impose limits on institutional control and institutional agency" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 171), we realized that, by failing to recognize FKP's know-how, ordering the clearing of some areas, imposing payment of fines, and marking some FKP's installations as illegal, the local administration was trying to exert agency and control over the work pursued by FKP. As shown in Fig. 2, from this first order concept, we developed yet another second order theme we named *institutional resistance*.

Finally, while analyzing the different actions undertaken by FKP, we found that, as a response to cultural resistance, FKP leveraged the support of a coalition between two different stakeholder groups (Neville & Menguc, 2006) and how they transformed the physical tangible elements of the surrounding place. We found that extant research referred to these physical elements as constituting the material dimension of place (Agnew, 1987; Gieryn, 2000). Thus, we characterized FKP's response to navigate resistance by engaging stakeholders coalitions and transforming the physical elements of the surrounding place (e.g., renewing old decaying buildings, decorating degrading areas) as the second order theme: *revitalization of place's materiality*. Also, we understood that our data were showing how, by transforming place's materiality, FKP was also changing the way the surrounding place was lived by actors and was transforming its meaning—i.e., actors positively perceived the place and started to experience it differently, interacting with each other and establishing relationships. As extant literature refers to the "sense of place" as the meaning place evokes for actors inhabiting it (Agnew, 1987; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006), we included this mechanism, enacted by FKP, in the second order theme of *revitalization of place's meaning*.

Additionally, we acknowledged that some of the actions employed by FKP to respond to institutional resistance revolved around highlighting (through pictures and posts on

Table 3 Empirical themes and conceptual categories of the two aggregate dimensions

Resistance faced in promoting urban revitalization

Conceptual categories	Empirical themes
Cultural resistance	Local population does not possess the cognitive tools to understand the work of FKP
	Before, people would resist FKP's work as they did not know the project and could not understand it. (Citizen_Interview)
	It is useless to deny the initial distrust from the local population. "There is a portion of the local population that is enthusiastic, but also another one that does not understand," admits FKP's founder, claiming the resistance faced is mostly cultural "We – me and my wife – really struggle to explain our project with FKP: it is difficult to describe it."
	(Online Blog_2015_Archival_Data)
	Local population shows mistrust and skepticism toward FKP
	I have been collaborating with FKP for several years. Since their opening, FKP's founders have tried to sensitize people, involving them in FKP's work. But at the beginning, there was mistrust [from local population]
	(Online Blog_ 2018_Archival_Data)
	Since its opening, notwithstanding its efforts to engage people of the area, FKP experienced skepticism and lack of trust
	(Online Blog_ 2018_Archival_Data)
Institutional resistance	Local administration orders the clearing of some FKP'S areas and imposes the payment of a fine
	Every year, FKP hosts new artists and asks for authorization for installations to be placed into public areas. However, this year, while one office of the municipality was working on the usual procedure for authorizing the installations (regularly approved and with the payment requested for the installation already executed), another office of the same administration was claiming the irregular nature of the installations, asking for their removal and the payment of a fine
	(Online_Article_2017_Archival_Data)
	It is renowned how –thanks to FKP's work—Favara, the small Sicilian city in the Agrigento province, has become the "small worldwide capital of urban revitalization". Now this status is put at risk by an order from the local administration that arrived a few days ago, which asks for the refurbishment of the area within 90 days
	(Online_Article _2017_Archival_Data)
	Local administration marks some of FKP'S installations as illegal
	The bureaucracy attacks FKP: 'These installations are irregular.' In a few words, two recently renewed structures installed by FKP […] had been marked as irregular, with a related order of removal within 90 days
	(Online_Blog_2017_Archival_Data)
	Several bureaucratic issues are jeopardizing FKP's activities. The traffic police placed a seal on two wood structures of the Favara cultural center claiming "an irregular occupancy of the public area."
	(Newspaper_2017_Archival_Data)

Mechanisms to navigate resistance

Conceptual categories	Empirical themes
Revitalization of place's materiality	FKP physically transforms the territory by creating new buildings and areas
	What before was a degraded, abandoned space, today is a welcoming and colorful space where you find houses alongside galleries, shops, bars, and small hotels
	(Online_Article _2021_Archival_Data)
	I'm walking down the street with a FKP's volunteer that is guiding a group of tourists…He stops on the right side of the street and says: "Look at these construction workers, they are working to build a new business that should become a cafeteria-restaurant… this place has been closed for 40 years… but now our activities [at FKP] have persuaded to open an entrepreneurial activity that will create jobs in this city where there is great need"
	(Observation_Data_August 2022)
	Local entrepreneurs and artists interact, opening business activities and organizing exhibitions
	[Before FKP] Favara was a town where nobody would go, it was a place of farmers, neither the tourist from Sicily nor the national or international one would set foot here (…). Today Favara is a place visited by people from all over the world, in the area around FKP local entrepreneurs have opened a lot of accommodation facilities (hotels, B&B), and you can find restaurants and shops that you would not find before, [you find] all the things that you expect to find in a touristic-artistic place
	(Artist #1_ Interview)
	There has been a huge leap in terms of quality of the area [from a material standpoint]. I have seen pictures of this place before and I can see how it is now. It is wonderful to live 24 h within street-art buildings and have in front of you an art gallery like this
	(Student and FKP collaborator #1_Interview)
	New activities and initiatives attract tourists and economically revamp the area
	When FKP created something visible and tangible, I don't think they had any difficulty in persuading tourists to visit and entrepreneurs to invest in the area
	(Artist #1_Interview)
	Our example, and the presence of tourists, had created the conditions for people to believe in us and start to autonomously invest [in their own activities]
	(Founder#1_FKP_Interview)

Table 3 (continued)

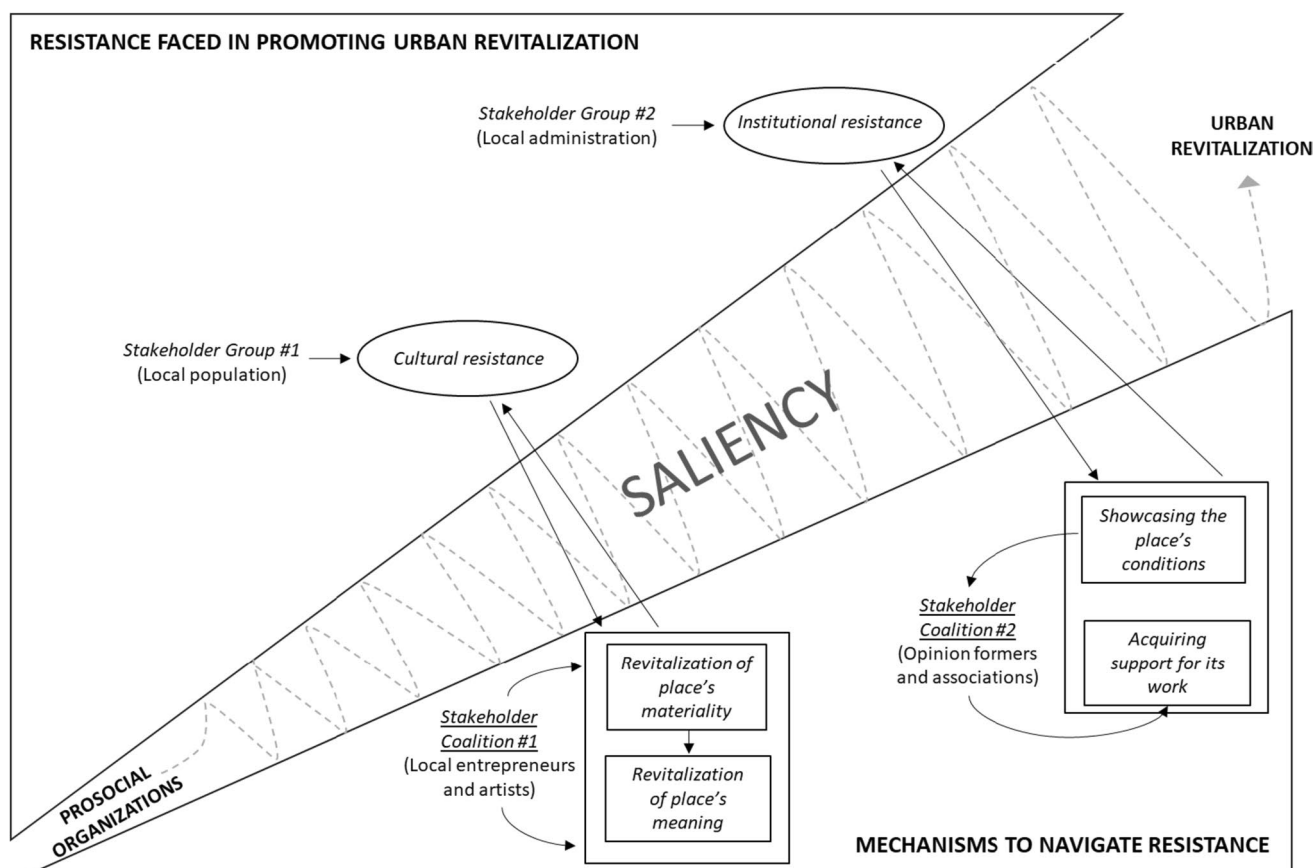| Mechanisms to navigate resistance	
Conceptual categories	Empirical themes
Revitalization of place's meaning	New buildings are populated by actors who engage in new interaction patterns
	By opening new activities, local people have started living the historic center, when before [FKP] they probably did not do so. In the renewed historic center, local population could suddenly get in touch with artists who they would not otherwise meet and interact with, giving rise to new initiatives
	(Entrepreneur #1_Interview)
	[FKP is] an "hybrid" place, and also a "revolutionary" place, that has transformed the way we think about processes of urban revitalization of marginal places, amplifying their power to make them places of debate and interaction, of learning, and of emulation
	(Blog_EuropeanCommission_2020_Archival_Data)
	Different actors start to experience the new places, interacting with each other and exchanging ideas
	[At FKP] There are tons of artists: they arrive, have conversations, imagine, produce, and leave once they populated [the process]
	(Website_ 2010_Archival_Data)
	When artists arrive at FKP, the first thing we ask them is to interact with the local population, and this has created a relationship with people who had never heard before of contemporary art and artists
	(Founder#1_FKP_Interview)
Showcasing the place's conditions	FKP shows pictures of restrictions imposed to the area
	Here is what happened this morning. Here are the pictures. I don't think there is much to add […]. The municipality agreed to revoke the warrant of 'refurbishment of the status of the area' once FKP had presented all appropriate documents. Everything is getting more and more bizarre. Almost an art piece. For the sake of completeness, we still do not have a document or formal act which explains what is happening.
	(Social_media post _ 2017_Archival_Data)
	This morning FKP's founder surprises everyone with a new and unexpected social media post. Indeed FKP's father has published the pictures of the structures that represent the "source of discord", structures that have just been seized [by the local administration]
	(Newspaper_2017_Archival_Data)
	FKP clarifies what happened in the area
	FKP's founders defend themselves [from the attacks of the local administration] with a long post published on the FKP's Facebook fan page and make clear that they had requested long before the authorization to the municipality to install the artistic pieces in the area
	(Online_Article_2017_Archival_Data)
	FKP's founders, on their Facebook page, (…) clarify that they are not scared by 'some bureaucrats' who 'blackmail people' and specify: "Dear 'some bureaucrats,' times have changed: me, my wife, and millions of other people are not anymore willing to keep silent, to be blackmailed or to be walked over."
	(Online_Article_2017_Archival_Data)
Acquiring support for its work	Opinion formers and associations create a petition and ask for the refurbishment of the status of the area
	#WeareFarmCulturalPark. Let's sign to ask for the immediate withdrawal (and due excuses) of the administrative warrant to raise the voice of the several realities as FKP in Italy, in the name of a profound change. Among the first to sign the petition: Foundation of Basilicata Region, Artistic Center Siri, Cultural Laboratory Palermo
	(Website_2017_Archival_Data)
	FKP is a renowned cultural and artistic reality, an example of urban revitalization at an international level that should be supported by the local administration as an example of excellence. However, [FKP] is involved in a crazy sequence of events related to seals and warrants that could only have the effect of jeopardizing the tireless and brave work done by FKP, and showing that today, in Sicily, is difficult if not impossible to create a successful cultural reality. We hope that in Favara they will soon find a solution that allows FKP to continue its work and pursue its mission within and outside Sicily
	(Newspaper _2017_Archival_Data)
	Support from opinion formers and associations leads to release from seizure
	That kind of response [mobilization of Stakeholder Group #5 and Stakeholder Group #6] has triggered a feeling of support toward FKP that made it really difficult [for the local administration] to keep obstructing our work
	(Founder#1_FKP_Interview)
	Finally the news regarding the release from seizure has arrived! A happy ending we had always hoped for (…). We believe that the aim of the petition has been realized: 7,200 signatures have been key to raising the issue, rendering it visible, making people listen to it
	(Website _2017_Archival_Data)

RESISTANCE FACED IN PROMOTING URBAN REVITALIZATION

Stakeholder Group #2
(Local administration) → *Institutional resistance*

URBAN REVITALIZATION

Stakeholder Group #1
(Local population) → *Cultural resistance*

SALIENCY

PROSOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Stakeholder
Coalition #1
(Local entrepreneurs
and artists)

Revitalization of place's materiality

Revitalization of place's meaning

Showcasing the place's conditions

Stakeholder
Coalition #2
(Opinion formers
and associations)

Acquiring support for its work

MECHANISMS TO NAVIGATE RESISTANCE

Fig. 3 Process model

Findings

Navigating Cultural Resistance

Revitalizing Place's Materiality

Farm Cultural Park (FKP) was born from the mission of its founders to salvage the historic center of the small village of Favara—"which was before, sadly, known exclusively for illegal activities and crime news" (Online Blog_ 2010_Archival_Data)—and transform it from a prolific criminal activities area to a renowned tourist attraction of contemporary arts and culture. During the first period after its advent, FKP engaged in transforming ruined and abandoned estate properties, hosting "a series of permanent, site-specific works of Italian and international artists aimed at exhibiting temporary works that met specific criteria" (Online Blog_ 2011_Archival_Data). The goal of the initiatives and exhibitions FKP sponsored and organized was to leverage arts and culture to transform the surrounding area, which was considered as having little chance of regeneration—as shown by this quote that recalls the words of one of FKP's founders:

social networks) the current state of the areas seized by the local administration. Therefore, we coded this mechanism as *showcasing the place's conditions*. Finally, by *showcasing the place's conditions* FKP was able to mobilize yet another coalition of stakeholders—one that could provide the organization with the support needed to overcome institutional resistance and gain the needed saliency in the eyes of the local administration to act as a key player for urban revitalization. We labeled this mechanism *acquiring support for its work*.

Step 3. Developing aggregate dimensions. At this stage of the analysis, we engaged, again, in an inductive approach (Gioia et al., 2013) to condense the second order themes developed in Step 2 into aggregate dimensions that could be theoretically transferrable to other contexts. Specifically, while we started our analysis with 13 empirical themes (i.e., "first-order concepts"), we were able to aggregate them into two main dimensions: *resistance faced in promoting urban revitalization* and *mechanisms to navigate resistance*. Ultimately, this analysis allowed us to develop the following process model (Fig. 3), described in the next section.

Here art is not the aim, but rather the means through which to wake up, reclaim and revamp a territory that was once forgotten and considered doomed. (Online Blog _2013_ Archival_Data)

The efforts FKP implemented to give new life to the historic center did not unfold smoothly. Indeed, FKP soon encountered what we named *cultural resistance* from the local population (*Stakeholder Group #1*). As explained in the words of one of FKP's founders, members of this stakeholder group lacked the appropriate cultural tools to understand the mission, the projects, and initiatives FKP proposed:

Many people cannot understand as they do not have the cognitive tools to do so. 'How can you expect someone who has never taken a plane, visited a museum, or read a book could understand what we are doing at FKP?' (Newspaper_2017_Archival_Data)

Surely not everyone in Favara is passionate about our project. Those who have never left Favara struggle to understand why we pursue this project and that we are not gaining economically from it, even though we put all our time and efforts into it. (Online Article_2014_Archival_Data)

The cultural resistance stemming from the difficulty to understand the initiatives sponsored by FKP triggered skepticism and mistrust regarding its projects. In the words of a longtime collaborator of FKP, such skepticism and mistrust were evident notwithstanding FKP's efforts to sensitize the local population toward its projects:

People's reaction, in the beginning, was skepticism, due to a lack of understanding. (Online Blog _2018_ Archival_Data)

In an interview, one of FKP's founders admits: 'Initially, the dialogue [with the local population] has not been very easy as mistrust was much more diffused than trust but then, the local community started acknowledging that something was changing' (Online Blog _2016_Archival_Data)

To navigate cultural resistance, FKP engaged two different stakeholder groups and their coalition, thus enacting two mechanisms: *revitalization of place's materiality* and *revitalization of place's meaning*. Revitalization of place's materiality has to do with the physical deployment or modification of tangible elements. Specifically, in our case, material revitalization revolved around the renewal of degraded areas. For example, FKP was giving new life to old buildings by decorating and embellishing them with art pieces and installations. Revitalization of place's meaning has to do with how these renewed areas and buildings

are actually perceived and experienced by those inhabiting the area or visiting it. For example, once FKP had renewed the area of "the seven courtyards" to host cultural workshops and exhibitions, several people (e.g., artists) were not only hanging out in these places but also establishing new interactions and relationships with each other—thus revitalizing the meaning of place.

Hence, first, to navigate *cultural resistance* FKP engaged in actions aimed at physically transforming the area of Favara, thus materially modifying the surrounding place by revitalizing it through installations and buildings to benefit the local population. *Revitalization of place's materiality* was possible as FKP was able, from the start, to involve in this effort a coalition of different stakeholders (*Stakeholder Group #3* and *Stakeholder Group #4*)—and their synergistic interaction. Specifically, FKP engaged local entrepreneurs (*Stakeholder Group #3*) who contributed to transforming the area by opening commercial activities, thus changing the structure of the place by physically modifying it through the establishment of bars, restaurants, and shops:

Ten years ago, Favara was a place that you could not even visit, it was a mix of ruins and degraded accommodations for poor people. It was a place with one building and two collapsed ones. Another residential building and three collapsed ones, some places were just dumping ground [...] Now it is a place you go visit, and if you have already visited it, it is a place you come back to as it is always renewed, bursting with new activities and recreation places. It is always different and if you have never been there, you cannot believe it. (Artist#1_ Interview)

Together with local entrepreneurs, FKP also engaged artists (*Stakeholder Group #4*) who were moved to come to Favara and organize their exhibitions at FKP as they were "embracing its social mission, and because doing exhibitions at FKP was like doing an exhibition at a big international museum because FKP has the competencies and skills to organize an exhibit that is truly an exhibit" (Artist#1_Interview). As one of the authors observed during a visit to FKP:

FKP's founder is cruising the terrace introducing people to one another [...] He now suggests to Vincenzo to go and meet with a North American colleague who just arrived with his wife [...] He approaches a local entrepreneur and introduces him to an artist who just arrived in Favara [...]: he explains to each of the two their project with FKP [...] Now he invites everyone to follow him to see the new exhibition they prepared in June [...] During the tour he explains each piece of art but also the difficulties they experienced with local institutions [...] He is explaining some future plans and

invites everyone to propose new ideas that might be 'cool'[...] During the tour he approaches an artist and says 'this space is at your disposal [...], make me a proposal and let's try to do it'. (Observation_Data_2022)

Additionally, local entrepreneurs interacted with artists (*Stakeholder Group #4*) and offered them the possibility to organize exhibitions at their restaurants or hotels, thus benefiting them by allowing their art and work to be enjoyed by a broader segment of the population and by tourists. In turn, artists would benefit local entrepreneurs who would see their locales ameliorated and embellished by the artists' work and could gain from flows of new clients (i.e., people interested in art pieces):

Local entrepreneurs offer artists their spaces to organize exhibitions, and artists offer their work to restructure local entrepreneurs' spaces. For example, a hotel near FKP has been restructured by a renowned international architect, and the hotel hosts installations and exhibitions by artists associated with FKP. The collaboration between artists and local entrepreneurs supports FKP's project. (Artist#1_Interview)

By engaging local entrepreneurs and artists and leveraging their interaction, FKP was able to physically transform the historic center of Favara, triggering a *revitalization of place's materiality*. As one of the authors was able to observe during his visit to FKP in the summer of 2020:

We are walking around Favara with one FKP volunteer and she shows us how the historic center has radically changed […] Indeed we can see several buildings that have been recently restructured [...], some of them are buildings from 300-400 years ago, others are public houses constructed in the aftermath of the Second World War that have been restructured in every detail [...] The volunteer mentions that just in this area, at least 10 B&Bs have emerged and that they are always fully booked given the great number of tourists flowing into the city from all over the world. Now we arrive with our volunteer at Palazzo Miccicé, which is under renovation [...] There are several construction workers who interact and work together with artists from Latin America [...] The goal is to create a 'human forest', thus a forest within an old building perfectly renovated. (Observation_Data_2020)

Revitalizing Place's Meaning

Such revitalization of place's materiality subsequently enabled a second mechanism—*revitalization of place's meaning*—also vital in navigating cultural resistance. Indeed,

the revitalization of degraded areas allowed people to start inhabiting and experiencing these places, enabling diverse actors to meet and interact, exchange ideas, conduct discussions, and shape their projects. For example, FKP engaged artists "who arrive, have conversations, imagine, produce, and leave once they populated [the process]" (Website_ 2010_Archival_Data) and local entrepreneurs, and "the circulation of artists in the local businesses and territories has been the cornerstone to reimagining a place, [and see it] in a completely different way" (Entrepreneur #2_Interview). In the words of another informant:

Before, the place around FKP was totally degraded: where now is the art gallery, there were eight deserted buildings, and the area was full of crime. Now [the place around FKP] is a people museum, it is very easy to meet artists and tourists, and the impact of urban regeneration is undeniable because buildings live again, not only from an architectural and artistic point of view but particularly from a human one. Often people think that urban regeneration is a material thing but, actually, thanks to FKP, many people had the chance to meet and talk while, before FKP, among the people who inhabited the area there was no exchange. (Citizen_Interview)

By leveraging the interaction with local entrepreneurs and artists (i.e., *Stakeholders Group #3* and *Stakeholders Group #4*), FKP was able to revitalize place's materiality and meaning and eventually, successfully navigate cultural resistance:

In the beginning, people's reaction was skepticism and a lack of understanding. Now everything has changed. [People] participate in events, live in Favara night and day and frequent its center which is alive and offers interesting places. (Online Blog _ 2018_Archival_ Data)

In the beginning, the dialogue [with the local population] was not very easy but soon, the community acknowledged that something was changing; that Favara was positively recognized, that tourists started to arrive and so, even they [the local population] started to believe in the project and trust it. (Founder #2_FKP_Interview)

Navigating Institutional Resistance

Showcasing the Place's Conditions

However, FKP did not merely face *cultural resistance*. Specifically, it also encountered *institutional resistance* from the city's local administration as some of its members—as described in the words of one of FKP's founders "were not

actively collaborating, but rather hindering [our work] with [bureaucratic] documents [and were] lacking the technical abilities to control and manage specific processes." (Founder #2_FKP_Interview). One example, in the words of FKP's founder, as reported by an online website and corroborated the official documents retrieved on the website of Favara municipality, stands out:

> At the end of last year, FKP participated – together with another organization, Alpha – in a call for tender to regenerate the urban area of Favara through street art and design. Notwithstanding there were only two subjects participating in that call – FKP and Alpha – and Alpha had never dealt with art in its professional life, Alpha won the tender. However, Alpha was also missing a formal requisite, thus the Legal Office asked for its exclusion from the tender. At noon on December 29th, FKP had won the tender: great! Unfortunately, at 5:00 pm on the same day, the Sicily Region decided to cancel the call and funds as the municipality had taken too long to act. But this is another story. (Website_ 2017_Archival Data)

Such *institutional resistance* became particularly evident in August 2017 when a warrant from Favara's municipality ordered the clearing of a FKP's area and demanded payment of a fine. As indicated by the founder in his post on Facebook, this warrant was issued even though FKP had complied with all normative requests and had regularly asked for permission to occupy a specific area for artistic installations:

> FKP had regularly asked to occupy public spaces [...] and had paid the relative deposit […] Notwithstanding we go back and forth for one month [to get the necessary authorizations], we receive a warrant that asks for the clearing of the area and the removal of the art installations within 90 days from the issue of the warrant [...] Also, for having supported FKP's work, the same warrant asks to pay an administrative fine ranging between 2000 and 20,000 euros. (Social_media_ post _2017_Archival_Data)

Therefore, the local administration was still hindering the work promoted by the cultural center by means of bureaucratic issues, eventually labeling the installations as illegal:

> Urban regeneration, contemporary art, the architecture taught to children (..). FKP in Favara (…) has given a new identity to a territory that was at risk of abandonment and degradation (..). Now a series of bureaucratic issues are hindering its activities (…). The warrant issued in July is the consequence of a series of delays (…), of an intricate [administrative] iter. (Newspaper_2017_Archival_Data)

We are witnessing the clearest expression of obstructive bureaucracy – says FKP Founder – [we are witnessing] the rigid identity of the local administrative staff who, with unique diligence, believes it can ensure compliance to laws while asking the art to step aside. (Newspaper_2017_Archival_Data)

The bureaucracy attacks FKP: 'These installations are irregular. In a few words, two recently renewed structures installed by FKP […] had been marked as irregular, with a related order of removal within 90 days. But the paradox arises because FKP's founder, to install these structures, had asked for the non-impediment to proceed with the certificate from the appropriate authorities. More than three months ago, FKP had presented to the administration the regular notifications needed to occupy public areas and had also complied with related taxes. (Online_Blog _2017_Archival_ Data)

To address such institutional resistance, FKP, at first, engaged in a mechanism we named *showcasing the place's conditions*. Specifically, it published on its social network account a post showing pictures of the restrictions imposed on the area to describe what happened and clarify how it was challenging the town's local administration by asking for the removal of the warrant:

> Here is what happened this morning. Here are the pictures. I don't think there is much to add […] The municipality agreed to revoke the warrant of 'refurbishment of the status of the area' even though FKP had presented all appropriate documents. Everything is getting more and more bizarre. Almost an art piece. For the sake of completeness, we still do not have a document or formal act which explains what is happening. (Social_media_post_ _2017_Archival_Data)

Acquiring Support for Its Work

FKP's reaction to the restrictions imposed by the city's local administration—exemplified by the post on their social network—aimed at eliciting the interest of a broader set of actors "by publicly reporting an unpleasant situation [regarding technical inefficiencies and bureaucratic obstruction] that would also likely be shared by other actors at a regional and national level" (Founder #1_FKP_Interview). As envisaged by one of FKP's founders, the post mobilized another coalition of stakeholders (i.e., opinion formers and associations) in the quest to navigate institutional resistance. Specifically, it sparked the engagement and reaction of media and actors such as "universities, collectives, cultural laboratories, intellectual groups" (Newspaper_ 2017_Archival_Data) in trying to defend the cultural center with more than 7000 individuals signing a petition to "ask for the immediate withdrawal

of the administration's warrant and to raise the voice of the several similar realities all over Italy, for the sake of driving profound change [against obsolete administrative procedures]" (Online_Article_ 2017_Archival_Data). The petition also, and provocatively, circulated a picture of the ruined and abandoned historic center of Favara with a caption calling for the "refurbishment of the status of the area"—the very same claim the local administration of the town made when ordering FKP to clear out the area from art installations.

In addition to the petition, efforts from national associations were stirred in support of FKP's quest to face bureaucracy and resistance from the local administration. For example, as shown in the following quote and a Tweet from FederCulture—a national association representing the most important cultural realities of Italy:

> FederCulture: the sequestrations posed on #FarmCulturalPark are expressions of an obtuse bureaucracy. (Tweet_2017_Archival_Data)
> [In the words of FederCulture's Director] What happened is both serious and absurd – and is unfortunately the expression of paradoxical public management and of an administration subjected to an obtuse bureaucracy that exercises an inflexible power that damages the entire community. (Newspaper_ _2017_Archival_Data)

As shown by the quotes, by *showcasing the place's conditions* FKP mobilized a coalition of stakeholders (i.e., opinion formers and associations) and, leveraging their support, "was able to achieve the strength needed to navigate resistances and revitalize the territory". (Founder#1_FKP_Interview). In particular, the support of this stakeholders coalition enabled the organization to navigate *institutional resistance* and eventually *acquiring support for its work*. As reflected in the words of one of FKP's founders:

> That kind of response [mobilization of *Stakeholder Group #5* and *Stakeholder Group #6*] has triggered a feeling of support toward FKP that made it really difficult [for the local administration] to keep obstructing our work. (Founder#1_FKP_Interview)

Indeed, later on, the local administration of the town ordered the release from the seizure of the area. As explained in this article:

> As it is possible to read in the official documents, the warrant has been nullified as the 'lack of any violation' has been demonstrated. (Online_Article_2017_Archival_Data)

The quotes below explain the rationale that moved the local administration to order the release from seizure. Specifically, the rational was the recognition that the facts and pictures had on one hand, clearly revealed the absence of any illegality and, on the other, shown that FKP had been promoting initiatives that were generating positive spillovers for the urban area and the entire regional territory:

> In the document signed by the legal representative, it is possible to read that 'the seizure originally imposed had lost efficacy following the absence of any legal validation'. Also, there are no 'reasons that justify this kind of seizure, having acknowledged, thanks to the facts, documents, and pictures acquired all the elements to appropriately evaluate the situation'. (Online_Article_2017_Archival_Data)
> Among the reasons that moved the local administration to this result [the release from seizure of the sequestered areas] is the key role played by FKP and its activities in terms of culture and civil regeneration, [activities] that have benefited Favara and the entire regional territory. (Online_Article_2017_Archival_Data)

As a signal of the success in navigating institutional resistance and gaining saliency, a few days after the release from seizure, the local administration signed an official document acknowledging FKP's relevance for the general public and the territory of Favara:

> [The local administration] (in view of the initiatives implemented by FKP that have transformed the surrounding area and have rendered the city of Favara the 'small capital of urban and human regeneration') states its intent to start procedures to recognize the relevance of FKP for the general public and the territory of Favara as an 'Urban Cultural Park'. (Municipal_Resolution_2017_Archival_ Data)

Discussion and Contributions

The findings of this study point to the challenges that prosocial organizations may face in their quest to gain saliency and revitalize urban areas, and suggest mechanisms that can be leveraged to address them. In particular, and as shown in our model (Fig. 3), we found that prosocial organizations usually start by lacking saliency (the bottom left part of our model shows prosocial organizations that still have to walk the diagonal of "saliency"). Also, they face considerable pressures in terms of resistance (the greatest portion of the area of the triangle "resistance faced in promoting urban revitalization," in the upper part of our model, is weighing on prosocial organizations), and have yet to engage stakeholders and build coalitions (support for prosocial organizations comes from the smallest portion of the area of the triangle "mechanisms to navigate

resistance", in the lower part of our model). However, as prosocial organizations start working toward their mission and navigate different instances of resistance (i.e., cultural and institutional) by engaging stakeholders and their coalitions, their saliency increases (the diagonal of our model gains increasing breadth), eventually allowing these ventures to achieve their goal of "urban revitalization." Specifically, we found that prosocial organizations can implement four mechanisms to navigate resistance and gain saliency: *revitalization of place's materiality, revitalization of place's meaning, showcasing place's conditions*, and *acquiring support for its work*. In addition, we found that these mechanisms can be enacted by engaging different stakeholder groups and their coalitions, namely: local entrepreneurs and artists (*Stakeholder Coalition* #1) and opinion formers and associations (*Stakeholder Coalition* #2). We believe our model has the potential to contribute to several streams of research. First, we contribute to a recent line of research investigating how organizations can foster urban sustainability and revitalization (Berrone et al., 2016; George et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2019). Indeed, organizations can generate positive returns in cities and local communities in terms, for example, of environmental performance and economic and social development (Johnson et al., 2018; Sharkey et al., 2017) and in triggering the creation of new business models able to tackle some urban problems (Robinson & Dougherty, 2014). However, our case study shows that their process toward urban revitalization may be complex, nonlinear, and may incur different kinds of resistance from diverse actors. In particular, our findings point to two different categories of resistance organizations may face when striving to regenerate their territories and innovate urban contexts: cultural resistance and institutional resistance. These types of resistance were enacted by two different groups of actors, namely the local population and the local administration, thus delineating opposition not only from some of the people inhabiting the local context but also from political actors and administrative offices in hindering efforts of transforming cities. In particular, our findings show that the institutional resistance stemming from the local administration was enacted by means of bureaucratic issues, thus providing insights to studies theorizing about the power of bureaucracy as a mechanism of control and domination (Monteiro & Adler, 2022).

Our empirical evidence, thus, highlights how resistance represents a key element to be taken into account when promoting urban revitalization and provides detailed empirical evidence on the different opposition forces reinforcing each other against the advocated change. In other terms, we show how the work of organizations toward urban revitalization may be ostracized by resistance triggered by diverse actors

who question the saliency of the organization and take active positions against their work.

These findings suggest a second contribution of our paper, which refers to the different types of resistance faced in promoting urban revitalization, pointing to the lack of saliency that characterizes prosocial organizations. (Baker & Powell, 2020; Van Tulder & Keen, 2018). Such lack of saliency may constitute an important challenge for these organizations in the quest to reach their goals. We know from extant literature that organizations that lack saliency can benefit from alliances (Dacin et al., 2007) as the positive image of strong and credible partners may transfer—by association—to the focal organization. However, our empirical evidence shows that rather than engaging already legitimized organizations to deal with a lack of saliency, prosocial organizations may need to engage multiple stakeholders and their respective coalitions, hence spurring synergistic interactions. In other words, activating stakeholders presents a critical issue for prosocial organizations aiming at gaining saliency. In particular, leveraging their mutually beneficial collaborations may be strategic as these stakeholders could satisfy their interests while simultaneously supporting organizational efforts for urban regeneration. In this sense, our case study also contributes to the literature on stakeholder theory and engagement (Winkler et al., 2019; Villela et al., 2021). While this research has looked at the dynamics that render stakeholders salient in the eyes of organizations (Mitchell et al., 1997) and, thus in a position of making claims regarding organizational actions and goals (Wood et al., 2021), we illustrate the process through which organizations may become salient actors in the eyes of resisting stakeholders. Such findings shift the focus from how stakeholders are perceived by an organization pursuing urban regeneration projects to how the organization is perceived by stakeholders. This consideration proposes a bidirectional perspective, one where stakeholders are not only the recipients of organizational attention and interest but also active players in shaping the processes to achieve organizational goals.

Lastly, we argue that the mechanisms that emerged as key to enabling organizations to achieve urban revitalization can inform the increasing debate around place and its role in organizational and management literature (see Wright et al., 2022 for a recent review). In particular, this study contributes to fine-grain some dynamics related to the "mutually constituted perspective" recently put forward by scholars (Wright et al., 2022, p. 5) that portrays place as part of a recursive relationship with organizations and institutions. Indeed, while cultural resistance from the local population moved FKP to engage some stakeholders and their coalitions to revitalize the materiality and meaning of place, such revitalization also resulted in persuading other resistant stakeholders to endorse FKP's work and eliminating their mistrust and skepticism (thus triggering institutional change). Hence, our empirical evidence not only shows that place, in both its materiality and meaning,

is influenced by institutions and resistance to change but also contributes to transforming such institutions and overcoming the status quo.

We believe our findings also point to exciting paths for future research. Indeed, we found that urban revitalization and transformation require organizations to engage in diverse efforts to navigate resistance from actors who want to preserve the status quo. This suggests that prosocial organizations may need to enact what the literature has referred to as "institutional work" (Lawrence et al., 2013) by engaging in political and strategic work or collective actions aimed at changing taken-for-granted institutionalized norms and logics characterizing the actors populating the surrounding territory. Future research could explore what type of institutional work is required for organizations to transform urban areas by embedding this discussion in the sociological work—which looks at how actors may become agents of change (Battilana & D'aunno, 2009), break through their current habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, 1997), and depart from institutional structures (Battilana et al., 2009). Likewise, while we acknowledge that prosocial organizations can be conceived as hybrid ventures (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017), we have not focused on other challenges that, by being hybrids, these organizations may face—particularly growth and scaling up (Pache & Santos, 2013). Future research may further explore these issues by looking at how hybrid ventures may leverage place and space or the engagement of multiple stakeholder coalitions in navigating challenges.

Practical Implications

Our work also offers some practical suggestions. Specifically, it provides managers and prosocial organizations aiming at fostering territorial regeneration and creating more sustainable cities and communities with some tools to be considered when they aim to gain saliency and navigate resistance stemming from different actors. These tools comprise suggestions on what to do (i.e., concrete initiatives such as the revitalization of place in its materiality and meaning, as well as exploiting communication leverages to mobilize stakeholders' support) and whom to engage with and how (i.e., the people to bring onboard and their interaction) to achieve urban revitalization in facing resisting stakeholders. In particular, our findings show how coalitions of diverse actors may serve as a means to acquire saliency, putting forth a key managerial implication: prosocial organizations should engage with different partners from the territory and from outside their surrounding areas to overcome the lack of legitimacy and power due to their inexperience and young age.

Furthermore, we show that by revitalizing degraded buildings and areas (thus encouraging the rise of new entrepreneurial activities) and giving new life to otherwise abandoned spaces (thus creating opportunities for fruitful interactions that involve different actors), prosocial organizations can overcome stakeholders' resistance and persuade individuals concerning the positive spillovers for the territory.

Our work offers valuable advice to policymakers, governments, and local administrations. These actors can invest resources in changing the urban structures and the way different stakeholders perceive and live their cities by not only renovating buildings and areas but also by incentivizing the creation of entrepreneurial activities and of spaces where individuals can interact with each other and exchange ideas. Indeed, by revitalizing—alongside the materiality—the meaning that places acquire for actors inhabiting them, cities can transform from degraded and abandoned areas into energetic hubs that make local population willing to stay and invest in the territory, as well as tourists to visit the area. For example, when a degrading urban area is transformed into a space filled with bars, restaurants, and other activities, citizens start meeting and socializing in these places, and these latter become triggers of positive emotions such as friendship, and love—a sense of place attachment (Cartel et al., 2022) that spurs them to care about their place and invest significantly into it. Such increased entrepreneurial activities and regeneration in turn attract both tourists and other actors to visit and invest in the area, resulting in important economic and positive effects for the city and the surrounding territory.

Also, our findings speak to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals of achieving sustainable cities and communities, and in particular to the target 11.3 of "Inclusive and Sustainable Urbanization" (UN 2015). Specifically, we believe that an understanding of how to overcome resistance from some stakeholders may trigger an engagement of different actors in ensuring the building and management of urban areas that are inclusive and participatory, and that can spur creative solutions to render cities sustainable and liveable for all individuals, each with their own characteristics and needs.

In addition to target 11.3, we believe our findings can provide insights for the achievement of target 11.4 "Protect The World's Cultural And Natural Heritage". Specifically, our evidence about how prosocial organizations can revitalize cities by overcoming stakeholders' resistance and acquiring saliency may suggest how to protect the cultural heritage of those territories that risk abandonment and degradation, while simultaneously preserving the needs of the communities living in those areas.

Finally, our findings suggest that governments that want to encourage a renaissance of their territories can go from simply not resisting such efforts to promoting the emergence of places where different stakeholders can interact

and coalesce, triggering synergies across different actors that result in positive spillovers for society at large.

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