



Impact of Asphalt Art on Public Space Activation: Rome, Italy

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For Bloomberg Philanthropies

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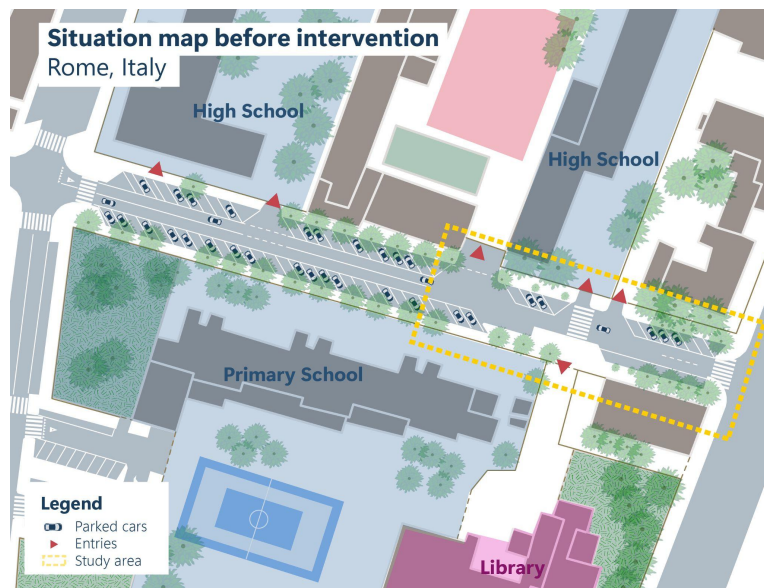
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Rome, Italy - the new artistic path for children's outdoor play

The section of Via Monte Ruggero affected by the intervention is the stretch at the intersection from Via Sarandì to Via Monte Rocchetta, which is home to several facilities. These include two primary schools, the “Ennio Flaiano” library, the municipal swimming pool, the “Artificio” cultural association, and three different high schools. Prior to the intervention, vehicles often exceeded the speed limit on this street, creating significant risks for pedestrians. It is also important to note that all ground-floor spaces facing the street are dedicated to these public services, with no residential buildings present.

Aim of the project

The primary strategic goal of the asphalt art project is to enhance road safety and prioritize pedestrian movement, creating a safe and inviting space where children and parents can meet, play, and spend time together. The initiative is particularly aimed at benefiting children attending nearby schools and facilities, who frequently use this area. Additionally, the project seeks to promote pedestrian activity and overall active mobility.



Community engagement

The process consisted of a preliminary involvement of the Municipio III to define the area of intervention, with respect to the needs of the neighbourhood, and then the publication of an open questionnaire. Citizens had a chance to vote for their preferred option.

Artwork

Pedestrianisation of a segment of road, with ground colouring to an artist's design and placement of benches, bike racks and planters. The street artist Gio Pistone prepared three sketches telling the idea of transforming the street into a “Flying Carpet”, a lively work that recalls evocative shapes and colours, giving the district its own recognisable identity.

Organisations involved:

Department of Sustainable Mobility and Transportation - Roma Capitale;
Municipio III;
Roma Servizi per la Mobilità;
Street artist Gio Pistone.

Size: 1100 m2

Date: 28 April 2025

The measurements

Since the main aim of the project is to create a safe and inviting space for children and parents to meet, play, and spend time together, the measurements took place on weekdays, at the beginning of school hours and during the afternoon break. The before measurements were held in the beginning of February 2025, and the after measurements in mid-May 2025, only two weeks after the intervention. On all occasions it never rained, and during each measurement period the temperatures were pleasant.

The maps summarize conditions before and after the asphalt art intervention, and detailed tables on the number of people, activities, group sizes, and dwell time are provided below.

	Date	Counting times	Observation Times	Weather
Before	25.02.2025	08.00-08.15	8.15-8.35	Cloudy, 11°
		16.00-16.15	16.15-16.35	Cloudy, 16°
	26.02.2025	16.00-16.15	16.15-16.35	Sunny, 16°
	27.02.2025	08.00-08.15	8.15-8.35	Sunny, 8°
	User survey responses			24
After	19.05.2025	16.00-16.15	16.15-16.35	Sunny, 26°
	20.05.2023	08.00-08.15	8.15-8.35	Cloudy, 20°
		16.00-16.15	16.15-16.35	Cloudy, 20°
	21.05.2025	08.00-08.15	8.15-8.35	Cloudy, 18°
	User survey responses			23

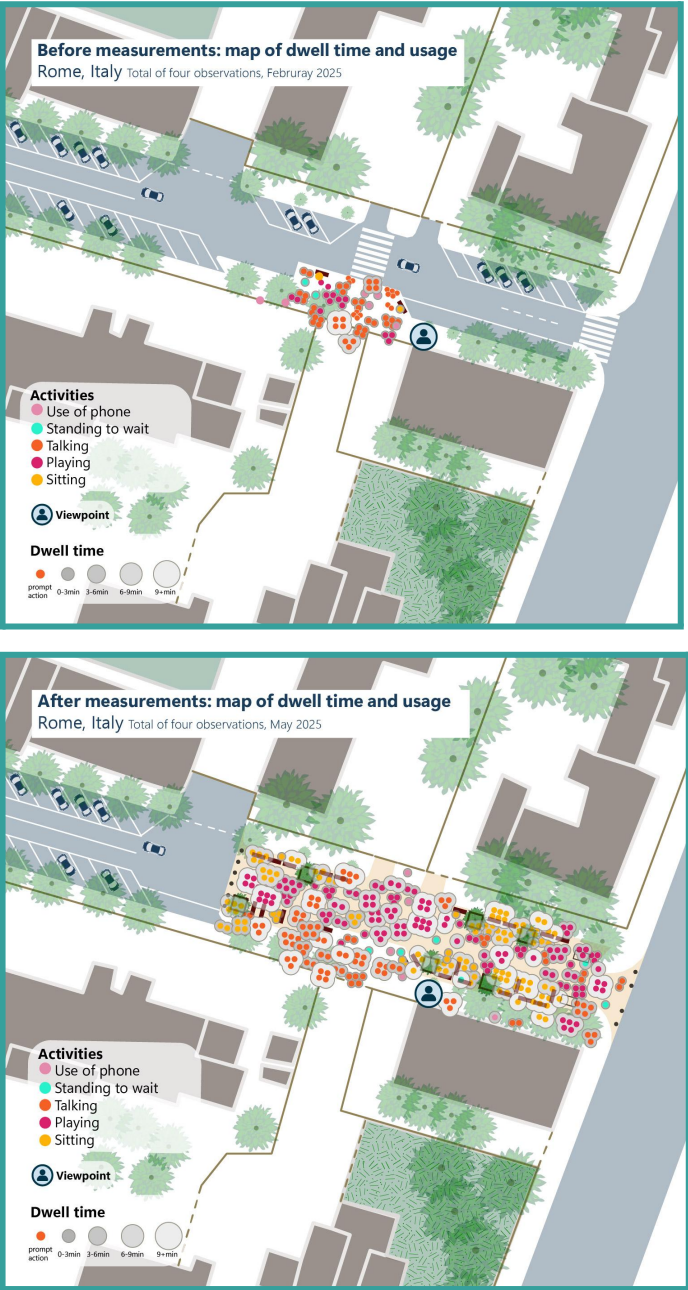
Before implementation

Before the asphalt art intervention, the space in front of the school, with a small widening and two benches, was mainly used as a walking area. Some people stopped before and after school hours. They waited, used their phone and some sat down and talked. We counted 771 pedestrians passing by.

After implementation

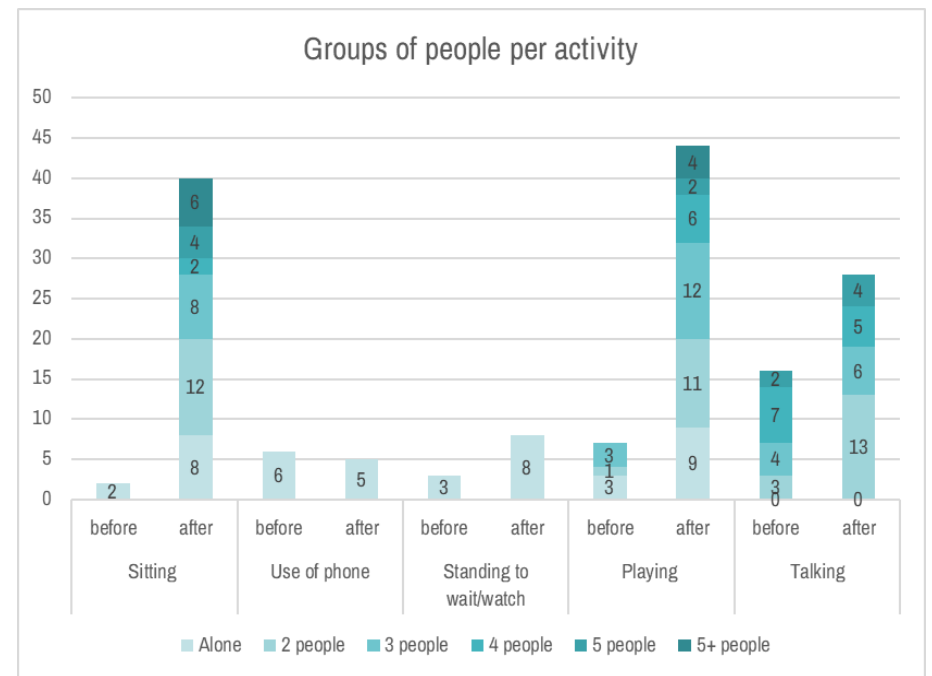
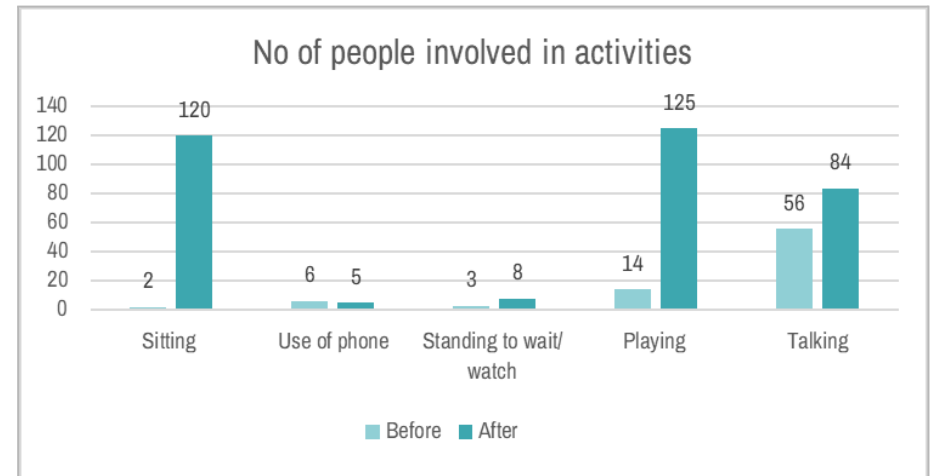
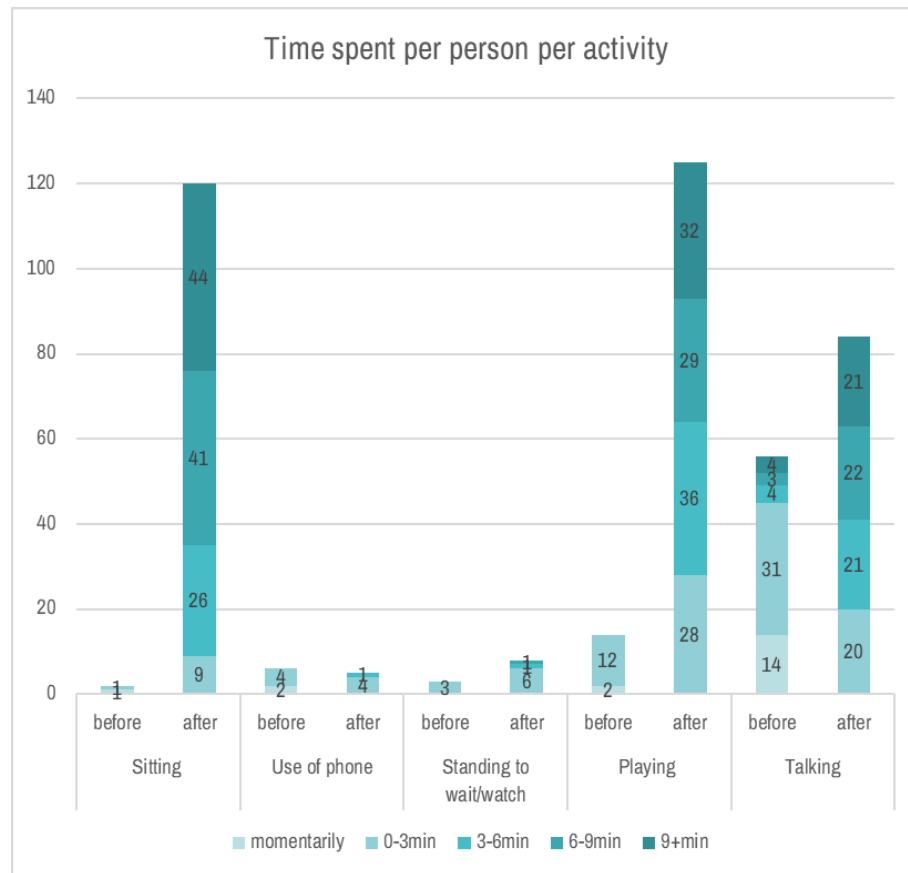
The intervention closed off the street for vehicular traffic, adding safe pedestrian space with colorful art on the pavement and additional benches, bike racks and planters. This facilitated new users and new activities. After the intervention, we counted a slight increase in the number of passers-by (811), but above all a huge increase in people stopping there to sit (from 2 → 120), play (from 14 → 125), and socialize (from 56 → 84).

The children have totally taken over the new space, using it to run, skate, play with the ball, play with the new planters and invent ways of being together. This resulted in a remarkable increase in dwell time. Overall dwell time per person increased from 1,6 to 4,6 min. When we analyse further, the average time that was spent sitting increased from 1.3 to 7 min.; playing



from 1,4 to 5,6 min and talking from 2,4 to 5,7 minutes. Before the intervention we saw 20 groups interacting in the observation time. This increased to 95 groups, especially sitting (32) and playing (35) together.

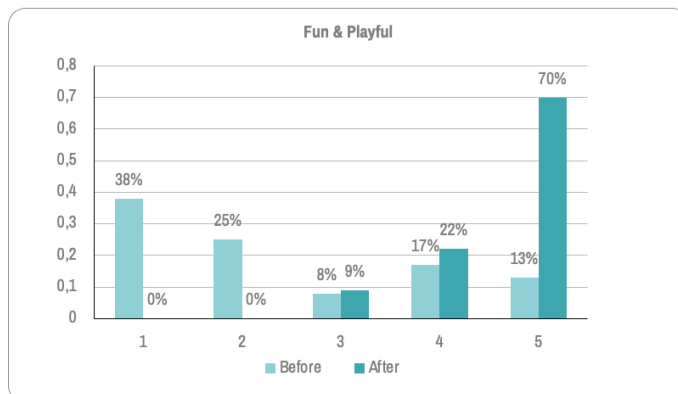
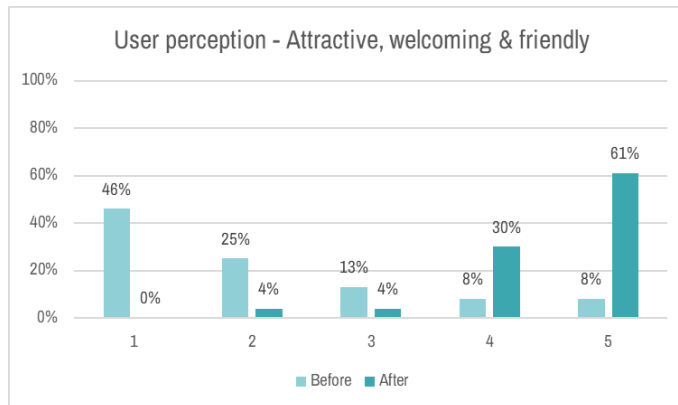
"It's exciting to see the children taking over the street and being able to play freely, we couldn't believe it" a resident



People's perception

Passers-by encountered in the area were very willing to chat in general about the area and the type of intervention, in fact many useful insights were gathered which were also shared with the local project team. However, not many of them felt like filling out the questionnaire, preferring a freer conversation.

The survey results (24 before and 23 after) demonstrate a striking positive shift in how participants perceived the intervention area after the Asphalt Art project. Before the intervention, the majority rated the area poorly (71% unattractive, 62% unsafe, 87% uncomfortable). Following the intervention, these perceptions were dramatically reversed: (91% attractive, 87% safe, 87% comfortable, 91% fun for play) These results clearly highlight the transformative impact of the Asphalt Art intervention in making the space more appealing, accessible, and engaging for the community.



We noticed that even those who were most sceptical of the intervention because it reduced the number of parking spaces could not deny that the impact for children and parents was absolutely positive and necessary.

Fun Facts

As soon as the street was closed to traffic, during the transitional period in which residents awaited the artist's ground coloring and furniture placement, schoolchildren immediately began utilizing the space, tracing drawings on the ground with chalk.

Final assessment Rome

The intervention, which created a beautiful and safe pedestrian space near schools with added street furniture, had a remarkable impact on social activation.

1. Before the project, the area was primarily used for walking, with minimal stopping or social interaction, and was widely perceived as unattractive, unsafe, and uncomfortable. After implementation, observations revealed a dramatic shift: pedestrian space increased, seating was added, and the colorful street art encouraged play, lingering, and longer stays.
2. Over 120 children actively used the space for play, and the number of groups engaging in social interaction grew significantly (+164%). While the number of passersby increased only slightly, the most notable change was in people choosing to stop, sit, and interact with the area (+322%).

The Rome case demonstrates how asphalt art, combined with pedestrianization, added seating, and easy access to amenities such as schools, can reclaim urban streets for community life. It drastically improves safety, comfort, and vibrancy while providing children and parents with a much-needed space to gather, play, and connect. The overall results may have been influenced by the novelty of the intervention, as only two weeks passed between its implementation and the observation, unlike other projects. However the difference before and after are so striking that its effect is expected to continue, while the road stays closed to vehicular traffic.

“Now we have only one problem: that the kids would stay here playing until night and we can no longer get home in time!” a parent