

# Practices of reappropriation

a cura di **Carlo Cellamare & Francesca Cognetti**



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## **Practices of reappropriation**

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Carlo Cellamare e Francesca Cognetti

# Practices of reappropriation in the contemporary city.

## Processes, places and imaginary

Contemporary cities seem to be characterised by new movements and self-organized initiatives that re/use and transform different parts of the city (in many cases marginal areas), by re-introducing them in the urban “life cycle”: abandoned buildings and areas, green areas, public spaces. These very different experiences are connected to a variety of social spaces, actors and imageries. We are talking about the transformation of vacant spaces for residential purpose, the construction of informal community gardens, the new and unprecedented forms of squatter occupations, the wide spectrum of self-construction practices and so forth. In many cases these experiences can be considered as interstitial and marginal practices. But they can also be interpreted as a growing set of actions that are characterizing a more and more diffused way of urban construction.

This special issue wants to collect research contributions on this themes by focusing on a wide range of experiences that are expected to be critically interpreted.

### Interrogating the practices

These practices are characterized by a production of meaning that needs to be critically interpreted both in its explicit and implicit dimensions. Although they are often built in order to address some explicit basic needs (the need for a house, green spaces, in-

come integration, socializing places), many of these practices are able to strengthen other “indirect” dimensions: the experimentation of alternative economies, the value of diversity, the caring dimension, the rationalities of the re-use and a richer and more complex way of inhabiting.

The special issue focuses on the production of meaning of these practices. The goal is trying to understand what kind of innovative elements – if there are any- emerge and what kind of imageries shape these practices.

This general interpretative goal can be articulated on different levels.

A first set of questions is about *the dimension of social connections*, the (individual and collective) interaction scales, the inner structures of power that shape the formal and informal organizations and the skills development. In this framework it might be useful to critically analyze the very same concept of the “collective” dimension potentially embedded in these practices by using lens that focuses on the represented interests, inner dynamics, the produced and evoked imageries, also in a generational, gender and “social status” perspective. These experiences invite also to reflect on the opportunity (or not) to have mechanisms of reinforcing some social capabilities gotten started: organization and self-regulatory capabilities, capability of “returning” some of the urban parts to the city, triggering care processes

and skills focused on the handling of public issues. A second thematic field focuses on *the space dimension*. Why some specific urban places and spaces and not other ones? What connection is established between these practices and the physical consistency of the city? This collection of articles pays particular attention to these issues, assuming that the space doesn't represent a support but the "infrastructure" and the "ingredient" of social events, able to accompany, inhibit, electrify, emancipate and contain the practices. The reference could be also connected to the symbolical meaning of some places within the urban context.

A third field refers to *the relationship between the institutional dimension and the "policy production"* of these practices: a good part of these social actors are not institutional, neither do they operate in the market. They often operate in informal or associative contexts, sometimes developing "antagonist" rhetoric communication toward the institutional actors and the possibility to develop "alternative" models of the city production. Their actions are often in opposition to the logics of economical valorization of the city, its transformation into merchandise, the prevalence of the exchange value over the use value. Furthermore, these experiences seem to constitute a kind of "public" production. We invite researchers to ask themselves what kind of connections these experiences propose with regards to what we call "institution". What idea of "community" does it emerge? Is it licit to talk about a new way of "doing politics" (also taking into consideration the urban policies)? What kind of relationships are there among public policies and regulations, not only in a juxtaposition reasoning? Which reactions and instruments have some institutions put into the field in order to start a fertile relationship with these practices?

The last field refers to *the cultural production*. These experiences, single or coordinated among each other, intentionally or not, produce a cultural re-elaborated version of their path and of the trends generally crossing the city; a re-elaborated version that often aims at creating the possibility of urban models alternative to those known so far. Therefore we eventually ask the researchers: by starting these practices, how are the models connected to gender, to the municipal and national identity, to the diversities connected to social and generational class discussed? What are the symbolic values and meanings that are produced? Is it possible to talk about an ideology and its possible innovative character beyond these initiatives? Is it licit to say that beyond these practices there are other "urban development" models and another idea of "cohabitation"?

### **Beyond the rhetoric**

'Processes of re-appropriation of the City' are not immune to ambiguity both for inner dynamics (i.e. imbalances among actors, micro-power dynamics, no-representativeness) and as concern the relation with the social and urban contexts (i.e. the quality of negotiation with local governments, the exclusive

appropriation of spaces, the inoperativeness of local governments, the individual logic of 'do-it-yourself'). Many times actors deceive their own ideological manifesto by performing the re-appropriation of space.

Many rhetoric are associated to this kind of practices, thus avoiding a comprehensive capacity of understanding by scientific research. These rhetoric usually superficially link the re-appropriation practices with a broader discourse on 'the right to the city' or on 'the insurgency of subaltern classes'. As a result, these representations limit both the density of analysis and the scientific research impact.

Given this, the special issue aims at inquiring the representations associated to the practice of re-appropriation; more specifically we ask for contributions that deeply analyze: 1) The production of meaning embedded in these practices that needs to be critically interpreted both in its explicit and implicit dimensions 2) the capacity of these practices of producing 'public space' 3) the relationship between appropriation of space and culture production 4) the capacity of expressing new forms of governance and new relationships between institutions and informal actors. As said before, the we want to go beyond the common rhetoric by producing a critical as well as multidimensional analysis of case studies, without losing the specificity of on-the-ground researches. At the same time we ask for contributions that are able to enhance the analysis of frames, ideologies as well as concepts such as the notion of 'public', 'institution', 'new political approaches', etc.

### **A multidisciplinary approach**

The publication was born in the Urban Traces Network research ([www.tracceurbane.it](http://www.tracceurbane.it)). Urban Traces privileges the exchange and confrontation among different approaches in order to promote a meaningful multidisciplinary approach. The Network is open to researchers dealing with different domains such as sociology, anthropology, geography, organizational studies, urban as well as policy studies.

### **Italian Version**

Le città contemporanee sembrano essere attraversate da nuovi movimenti e iniziative che in forma autorganizzata usano, attrezzano, gestiscono, riutilizzano parti diverse del contesto urbano (in molti casi gli "scarti" o i margini della città), spesso re-immettendoli nel "ciclo di vita" della città: edifici dismessi, aree abbandonate, aree verdi, aree agricole, spazi pubblici. Si tratta di esperienze molto diverse tra loro, legate a spazi e attori sociali portatori di differenti immaginari: dagli usi a scopo abitativo di spazi inutilizzati agli orti-giardini condivisi, dalle nuove occupazioni al recupero da parte di comitati e associazioni locali di edifici (anche storici) per renderli fruibili al proprio contesto locale, dall'autocostruzione e autogestione di spazi verdi attrezzati alla realizzazione di piccoli agglomerati insediativi in aree golenali, e così di seguito.

Questo servizio cerca di affrontare in maniera critica que-

sta tematica. Si tratta, infatti, di un tema diffusamente crescente sia nelle pratiche urbane che nella ricerca, trasversale a diverse discipline, dall'urbanistica, alla sociologia, all'antropologia, e non soltanto. Si tratta, però, anche di un tema sfuggente e che si presta a posizioni puramente dichiarative, se non addirittura genericamente ideologiche o agiografiche di alcune esperienze e di alcune posizioni. È un contesto in cui le retoriche hanno uno spazio rilevante e devono essere discusse con attenzione attraverso un'analisi approfondita ed una lettura critica delle esperienze. Questa raccolta di saggi si propone di raggiungere questo obiettivo: si tratta quindi di contributi di ricerca su differenti pratiche di riappropriazione che, attraverso contributi di natura interdisciplinare, offrono un ampio panorama di esperienze nazionali e internazionali, per riflettere in chiave critica e interpretativa sul tema della riappropriazione<sup>1</sup>. Introducono i saggi due importanti contributi internazionali, quello di Michael Herzfeld, antropologo emerito di Harvard University, e quello di Kenneth Reardon, urbanista dell'Università di Memphis.

### **Interrogare le pratiche. Quale significato e quale produzione di senso?**

In molti casi le esperienze di riappropriazione della città possono essere semplicemente considerate come pratiche interstiziali e informali di azione; d'altro canto ci si interroga se – configurando un quadro così ampio e ricco – non esprimano una tendenza in atto e un complesso di processi significativi da porre sotto attenzione.

La produzione di senso andrà ricercata nelle forme esplicite e implicite che caratterizzano queste esperienze. Sebbene, infatti, nascano spesso in risposta ad alcuni bisogni espliciti (il bisogno della casa, l'esigenza di spazi verdi e/o attrezzati, la necessità di integrare il reddito, l'opportunità di luoghi di socialità), molte di queste pratiche, anche come esito imprevisto del processo stesso che le caratterizza, possono essere lette come dispositivi per rafforzare altri significati (potremmo dire indiretti) come ad esempio la sperimentazione di economie alternative, il valore della diversità, la dimensione della cura, le logiche del riuso, una dimensione più ricca e complessa dell'abitare.

Le relazioni pongono quindi l'attenzione proprio sulla produzione di senso delle pratiche e dei processi *analizzati e sui significati che si incorporano nei luoghi che si vanno a costituire*, su quegli elementi innovativi che emergono al di là degli obiettivi dichiarati; su quali immaginari muovono gli attori sociali che le agiscono, sempre tenendo presente chi sono gli attori coinvolti e le loro specificità.

Un primo campo di interrogativi riguarda *la dimensione dei legami sociali*, le scale dell'interazione (individuale e collettiva), i giochi interni di relazione e di potere che si istituiscono nelle organizzazioni formali e informali, lo sviluppo di capacità. Appare quindi utile problematizzare la dimensione del comune e del collettivo, attraverso una lente che guarda agli interessi rappresentati, alle dinamiche interne, agli immaginari prodotti ed evocati, anche in una prospettiva di genere, generazionale e di "status sociale". Queste esperienze possono inoltre fare riflettere sull'opportunità o

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<sup>1</sup> L'occasione per prendere in considerazione questa rassegna di saggi è legata al Convegno annuale internazionale 2013, organizzato dal network Tracce Urbane presso l'Università La Sapienza di Roma. Gli interventi dei membri del network di ricerca Tracce Urbane sono stati pubblicati in una prima versione nel numero 68/2014 della rivista Territorio, insieme alla relazione di un'altra importante ospite straniera, Ananya Roy, dell'Università di California a Berkeley.

meno che si avviino meccanismi di rafforzamento di alcune capacità sociali: capacità di organizzazione e di auto regolazione, capacità di "restituire" alla città alcune sue parti e di innescare processi di cura, capacità di trattamento di problemi pubblici.

Un secondo campo tematico si concentra *sulla dimensione dello spazio*. Perché certi luoghi e spazi urbani e non altri? Quale relazione si instaura tra queste pratiche e la consistenza fisica della città? Il presupposto è che lo spazio non sia solo supporto ma "infrastruttura" e "ingrediente" dei fatti sociali, in grado di accompagnare, inibire, elettrizzare, emancipare, contenere le pratiche, avendo anche presente il portato simbolico di alcuni luoghi nel contesto urbano.

Un terzo campo attiene *alla dimensione istituzionale e alla "produzione politica"* di queste pratiche: buona parte dei soggetti al centro di queste azioni non sono istituzionali, né tanto meno operano sul mercato; spesso si collocano in ambiti informali o associativi, a volte sviluppando retoriche "antagoniste" nei confronti degli attori istituzionali e nella possibilità di mettere a punto modelli "alternativi" di produzione della città. Le loro azioni spesso si pongono in antitesi con le logiche della valorizzazione economica della città, della sua trasformazione in merce, della prevalenza del valore di scambio sul valore d'uso: sia con le logiche istituzionali, della pianificazione controllata che, alle volte, con quelle dell'urbanistica negoziata. Queste esperienze, inoltre, sembrano costituire una forma di "produzione di pubblico". Che tipo di relazioni le esperienze propongono nei confronti di ciò che chiamano "istituzione"? quale idea di "pubblico" e di "fare politica"? quali strumenti alcune istituzioni hanno messo in campo per avviare una relazione fertile con queste pratiche?

Un ultimo campo riguarda *la produzione culturale*. Queste esperienze, singole o coordinate tra loro, intenzionalmente o meno, producono una rielaborazione culturale del loro percorso e dei movimenti che attraversano complessivamente la città; rielaborazione che spesso mira a configurare la possibilità di modelli urbani alternativi a quelli fin qui conosciuti. Un ultimo focus di attenzione riguarda quindi la capacità di queste pratiche di ridiscutere i modelli legati al genere, all'appartenenza municipale e nazionale, alle diversità legate alla classe sociale e a quella generazionale, discutendo i valori simbolici e i significati che vengono prodotti e interrogandosi se si possa parlare di un'ideologia, e di un eventuale suo carattere innovativo, dietro queste iniziative o ancora di altri modelli di "sviluppo" e altre idee di "convivenza".

### **Oltre le retoriche**

Tali esperienze non sono scovre di ambiguità, sia per le dinamiche interne al processo (rapporti non equilibrati tra i soggetti coinvolti, dinamiche di micro potere, movimenti non rappresentativi di una più larga cittadinanza) sia per i rapporti col contesto urbano e sociale (negoziati con le amministrazioni, appropriazione di beni collettivi e logiche del "fai da te", "solidarietà sussidiaria", appropriazione esclusiva di spazi che non sempre vengono "restituiti" alla città). Alle volte, nell'agire, tali attori sociali contraddicono i loro manifesti più o meno ideologici.

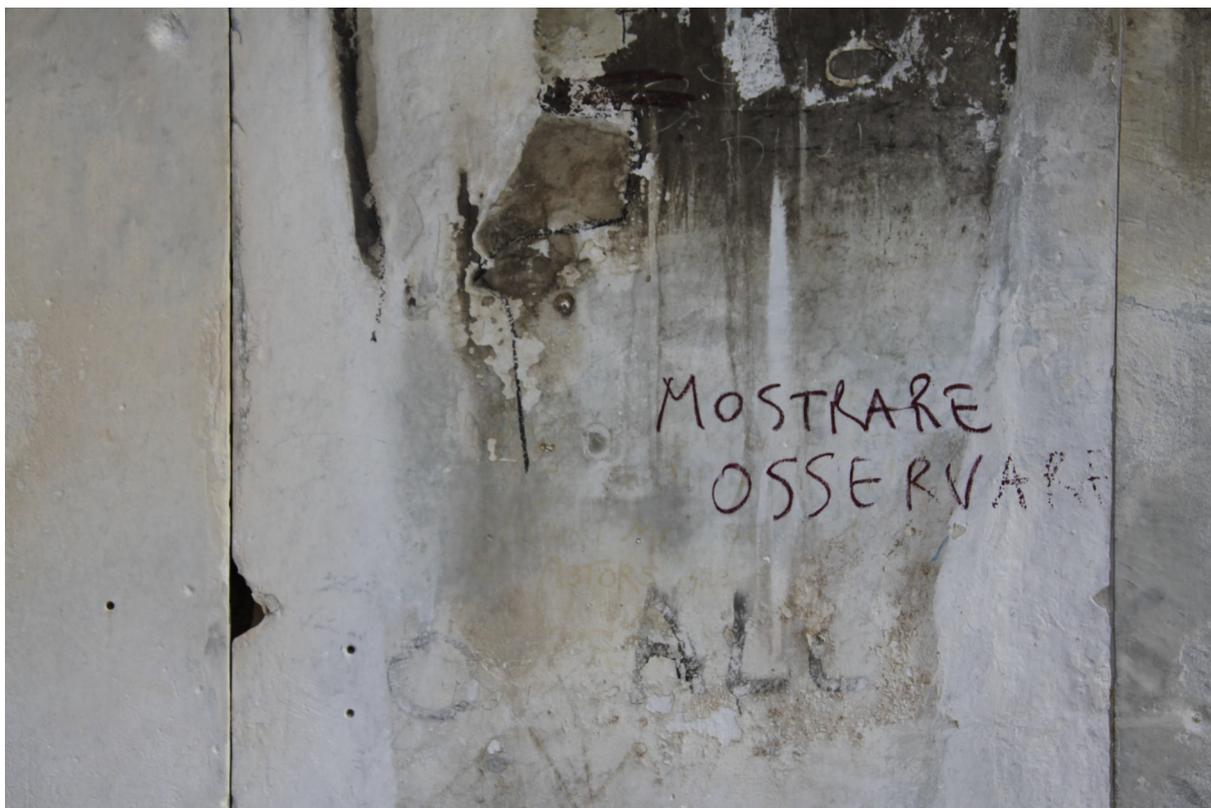
Molte sono le retoriche che si costituiscono intorno a queste esperienze, che spesso non aiutano a chiarirne i caratteri. Si tratta di discorsi che si intrecciano, in alcuni casi collegandosi in maniera distorta e/o superficiale, con discussioni come quelle sul "diritto alla città" o sul riscatto dei soggetti subalterni rispetto ai poteri forti. Queste retoriche, da una parte si affacciano all'interno dei processi stessi e ne guidano l'auto-rappresentazione, dall'altra

strutturano le interpretazioni “scientifiche” che dall’esterno si danno a queste esperienze.

Il servizio contribuisce ad individuare, definire e problematizzare le retoriche che emergono in queste pratiche, sviluppando un’interpretazione articolata e approfondita di queste esperienze e delle retoriche che le accompagnano, sciogliendo le ambiguità, dando una lettura critica delle diverse dimensioni che vi sono implicate, provando a sviluppare una visione di sintesi che non comporti la rinuncia all’analisi dei singoli e diversi contesti di azione.

#### **Tracce Urbane. Un approccio multidisciplinare**

La pubblicazione nasce dal lavoro di ricerca del gruppo Tracce Urbane ([www.tracceurbane.it](http://www.tracceurbane.it)), di cui facciamo parte. Tracce Urbane è un network di ricerca, connesso ad istituzioni universitarie e non, che privilegia un approccio interdisciplinare, coinvolgendo urbanisti, sociologi, antropologi, ma aprendosi anche agli storici, ai geografi, al mondo delle pratiche artistiche. Ritiene infatti che solo una visione allo stesso tempo complessa e integrata può restituire quella ricchezza e problematicità della vita urbana.



**Fig. 1** Molte pratiche di riappropriazione possono essere lette come dispositivi per rafforzare significati indiretti, come ad esempio la sperimentazione di economie alternative, il valore della diversità, la dimensione della cura, le logiche del riuso, una dimensione più ricca e complessa dell'abitare © Giovanni Attili.



**Fig. 2** Queste esperienze sembrano costituire una forma di "produzione di pubblico" © Giovanni Attili.



**Fig. 3** Tali esperienze non sono scevre di ambiguità e molte sono le retoriche che si costituiscono intorno ad esse  
© Giovanni Attili.

Michael Herzfeld

# Gestualità e responsabilità: come sapere a chi appartiene lo spazio urbano?

Gestualità, Spazio abitato, Antropologia del corpo, Religiosità, Intimità culturale

Troppo spesso si parla “della città” in generale, come se non ci fossero importantissime differenze culturali che influiscono sia sulle forme della vita urbana (tra cui le regole tradizionali dell’eredità) che sulle abitudini spaziali esibite nell’uso del corpo umano nei singoli contesti culturali (ad esempio le modalità di reagire all’affollamento, all’uso dei marciapiedi e delle scale mobili e alla produzione del rumore dagli utenti di telefoni cellulari). Per questo motivo è opportuno riconoscere che la gestualità ed altri aspetti dell’uso del corpo, come la scelta dei vestiti in diversi contesti, interagiscono con gli spazi urbani, creandone forme di sintonia e di complicità che scompaiono quando, invece, la pianificazione ignora tali legami inconsapevoli ma spesso tenaci tra lo spazio vissuto e le presenze corporali che ci vivono.

Sarebbe difficile parlare del “riappropriarsi della città” senza prendere in considerazione le prassi identitarie e quindi anche i valori culturali ai quali tutte queste tracce urbane ed umane risalgono per forza. I legami intimi tra persona e spazio svolgono un ruolo centrale nel rafforzare la volontà di resistere agli sfratti e alle altre modalità di smantellamento sociale volute, purtroppo non raramente, da chi gestisce il potere. È opportuno dunque chiedersi che cosa possiamo imparare dall’interazione tra la gestualità da un canto e la forma degli spazi abitativi e delle strade dall’altro, come intanto sarà importante precisare le responsabilità sia degli urbanisti che

degli abitanti rispetto alla loro sensibilizzazione a tali aspetti della vita quotidiana in città.

Parliamo spesso dell’“appartenenza” (o dell’identità sociale) come se fosse una qualità astratta, generale e in qualche modo anche ovvia. Certe pratiche sembrano far rivivere antichissimi rapporti, radicati nelle pratiche religiose e commemorative, tra cittadino e spazio. Ma è veramente così, o si tratta pure di una rianimazione di spazi le cui vecchie funzioni sono scomparse da lungo tempo?

Un esempio servirà per rendere la complessità del problema più chiara. Uno degli ultimi parroci della chiesa della Madonna dei Monti a Roma organizzava pellegrinaggi annuali alle “madonnelle” del rione, apparentemente per dare nuova vita alla religiosità degli abitanti. In realtà, tuttavia, malgrado fosse uno storico anziché un prete, il suo gesto sradicò ogni traccia del vecchio significato di questi piccoli monumenti, che invece invocavano la pietà della Madre di Dio per i numerosissimi peccatori di un quartiere malfamato dall’Antichità fino al recente passato. Si sa che il fatto che le madonnelle sono ben più numerose a Monti e a Trastevere che negli altri quartieri romani risale al fatto che, in passato, quelle zone erano il territorio preferito della malavita, della prostituzione e dell’usura. Non è un caso, come ho osservato nell’ambito delle mie ricerche monticiane, che l’unico pontefice a farsi un monumento secolare a Monti, cioè la malfamata Suburra

dell'antichità, fosse il papa sicuramente più libertino delle epoche, Alessandro VI Borgia, esemplare eclatante della logica casuistica del peccato e del condono. Chi abitava in quelle zone malavitose doveva chiedere l'intercessione della Vergine, modello della madre italiana tenera e piena di pietà in tutti i sensi, per liberarsi (benchè provvisoriamente) dal senso di colpa. Sicuramente si potrebbe dire che secondo le dottrine della Chiesa ogni essere umano è per definizione un peccatore, ma in effetti il pellegrinaggio cancellava i delitti dalla memoria collettiva (si veda Herzfeld 2009a: 106).

Era precisamente nel riconoscere che in generale gli esseri umani sono tutti peccatori che il parroco estinse la specificità e la frequenza delle delinquenze del passato, distruggendo apposta il legame forte fra la consapevolezza delle condizioni umane vissute e lo spazio architettonico della sua parrocchia. È lecito chiedersi se il fatto che il parroco non era romano abbia influito sulle sue decisioni, sia perché non sapeva perché la zona possedeva tante madonnelle, sia perché si sentiva meno vincolato alle vecchie pratiche le quali, infatti, le autorità ecclesiastiche avevano provato ripetutamente e in varie forme ad annullare – come, infatti, il parroco stesso aveva osservato nelle proprie ricerche storiche.

Quelle madonnelle, dunque, formalmente legate a gesti e a pratiche che risalgono ai riti della Chiesa, in realtà significano una religiosità radicata nell'esperienza sociale e spaziale, riflettendo così il ruolo centrale che la dottrina del Peccato Originale svolge ancora oggi nella concezione locale dei rapporti tra le singole persone e la società nella quale devono gestire la loro vita. Il parroco, malgrado considerasse tale compiacenza una chiara testimonianza del carattere pratico del Cattolicesimo (come inoltre mi ha spiegato minuziosamente), ovviamente non intendeva ribadire gli aspetti meno ammirabili della vita sociale del rione, ma mirava invece a trattenere i fedeli sempre più vicino alla sua percezione del significato ecclesiastico delle sacre immagini, cambiando comunque così anche il significato degli spazi percorsi dal suo gregge nella loro vita quotidiana. Il suo scopo, in altre parole, consapevolmente voluto o no, era di ridimensionare il rapporto tra spazio e corpo. Facendo così, rifletteva non solo la modernità ecclesiastica, una modernità definita dall'interpretazione letterale delle immagini e dei concetti religiosi, ma anche la concezione del comportamento civico soggiacente all'urbanistica moderna e, di conseguenza, alla burocrazia, il cui impegno è di mantenere le regole della convivenza quotidiana. Benchè si sapesse che la corruzione – concetto anch'esso di origine religiosa, legata alla corruzione inesorabile della carne tramite il tempo – minacciava di macchiare praticamente tutte le funzioni burocratiche, sia la Chiesa che la burocrazia secolare miravano a mantenere, almeno, una apparenza superficiale di obbedienza, onestà e conformità alle regole. L'Italia, non dimentichiamo, è il paese che ha inventato il condono edilizio, fatto che risale agli stessi aspetti della quotidianità urbana a cui mi riferisco qui.

Il parroco, uomo simpatico che provava sempre a istruire il suo gregge nelle dottrine della Chiesa ma anche a connettere quelle dottrine con le pratiche religiose di origine popolare e particolarmente quelle di origine locale, aveva un atteggiamento del tutto pratico nei confronti degli aspetti più scomodi delle condizioni umane. Mi spiegò, con una sincerità e una serietà che non si poteva mettere in dubbio, che il proprio rapporto colla struttura materiale della sua chiesa parrocchiale serviva a sostituirsi agli istinti carnali lasciati insoddisfatti dal celibato. All'inizio mi sembrava una spiegazione molto strana, poco a poco comunque incominciavo a capire che per lui l'estasi religiosa che gli ispirava il contatto tattile coll'edificio sacro, un contatto ripetuto intensamente giorno dopo giorno, serviva sufficientemente a calmare, in una maniera che forse gli apriva anche un senso reale del passaggio all'eternità, la sua natura di uomo piuttosto giovane e attivo, insomma di istinti sessuali del tutto "normali".

Quella prospettiva intima del suo rapporto con la sua chiesa, sia come edificio che come istituzione e idea, dava una certa coerenza alle sue attività parrocchiali. Era, tra l'altro, assolutamente coerente con il suo desiderio di stabilire un pellegrinaggio alle madonnelle, un pellegrinaggio che, invece di festeggiare il famigerato passato del rione e i vari peccati considerati caratteristici dei suoi abitanti, poteva servire al contrario da riorientamento corporale del suo gregge. Questa interpretazione innovativa, inoltre, era in piena coerenza con i valori e colle dottrine della chiesa cattolica, e gli consentiva di riorientare gli atteggiamenti del suo gregge a una religiosità molto più vicina a quella approvata dalle autorità ecclesiastiche senza condannare le stesse pratiche ad essere annullate, come era accaduto in passato a diverse pratiche considerate troppo "popolari" dal Vaticano.

La riorganizzazione dello spazio e del significato delle madonnelle monticiane serve, dunque, a rafforzare la dottrina ufficiale e a svincolare i monticiani dagli aspetti meno "decenti" del loro passato condiviso. Allo stesso tempo, comunque, da un punto di vista più analitico, ci svela l'importanza di una forza spesso nascosta dalla logica cartesiana delle burocrazie moderne: lo stretto rapporto tra corpo e spazio. Riorientare il pellegrinaggio, dunque, non significa soltanto la sostituzione di un rito ufficiale ad un altro, meno vicino alla dottrina, benchè, ovviamente, significhi anche questo; ma significa, più di ogni altra cosa, un riconoscimento del rapporto stretto tra lo spazio urbano e quel corpo umano che è anche la fonte immediata di ogni forma di corruzione siccome è sempre il corpo materiale che tradisce l'anima alla tentazione.

La burocrazia, i governi, l'ideologia neoliberale non vogliono riconoscere quel legame. Anzi, è un principio fondamentale del modernismo, che risale alla grand'epoca del colonialismo e della sua urbanistica particolare,<sup>1</sup> che il pianificare una città richiede

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<sup>1</sup> Si veda Rabinow 1989; Scott 1998.

la separazione assoluta tra pensiero e materialità e quindi tra valori culturali e l'efficacia. Sbaglio, cioè, il cui costo diventa sempre più pesante nei nostri giorni, appunto perché sono gli esseri umani ad abitare nelle città e a volere imporre i loro valori quotidiani sul tessuto urbano.

Innanzitutto è il potere che troppo spesso riappropria gli spazi vissuti e li riorganizza in tal modo che viene effettuato anche un riorientamento del senso dello spazio posseduto da ogni singola persona. L'esempio del parroco dimostra, inoltre, che tra la religione popolare e quella ecclesiastica c'è spesso, forse sempre, un rapporto immediato, uno scambio di elementi tra i due livelli che rende inaffidabile la loro separazione perché serve solo a rafforzare il potere del lato detto "ufficiale", come ha osservato l'antropologo Charles Stewart (1989). Quello che succede, invece, è che chi gestisce il potere ha più possibilità di riorientare il territorio secondo quello che serve alle proprie esigenze o a quelle dell'istituzionalità. Così, in più, possiamo applicare la stessa critica alla distinzione convenzionale tra insediamenti formali e informali. Tale distinzione è un inganno, perché ignora totalmente il fatto che tutto quello che si chiama "informale" si organizza invece secondo norme spesso rigide, severe e molto precise. Un esempio greco, questa volta, servirà ad illustrare il fenomeno.

Al Pireo, città portuale di Atene, ci sono diversi insediamenti creati dopo l'arrivo dei profughi cristiani dall'Asia Minore dopo il collasso dell'esercito greco nel 1922 e gli accordi compiuti tra la Grecia e la Turchia nel 1924. In passato lo stato li considerava baraccopoli e provava a controllare la costruzione abusiva (*afthereto*, arbitrario, in greco, termine che accenna la pura logica del piano regolatore!). Le famiglie, seguendo la tradizione della dote (eredità alle figlie secondo la logica che, siccome costituivano la "parte – eticamente ed economicamente – debole" – *adhinato meros* – di ogni singola coppia, ricevevano l'assicurazione economica di un appartamento urbano nella speranza che attirassero l'attenzione di potenziali mariti perbene), costruivano piani successivi alle loro case, sempre in maniera verticale siccome altro spazio non si trovava. Più la popolazione cresceva, più ci si opponevano le autorità, ignorando volutamente le esigenze sociali create dalla necessità di dare come dote a tutte le figlie un'abitazione decente ma anche collegata a quella dei genitori (secondo l'usanza della maggioranza dei profughi<sup>2</sup>). E qui si pone una domanda anche quasi sconosciuta agli urbanisti, ma forse un po' più vicina alle abitudini intellettuali degli antropologi: con la crescita non solo della popolazione ma anche, di conseguenza, della densità abitativa, come cambiavano le sensazioni corporali di quella gente abituata, per lo più, ad abitare in comunità rurali dove lo spazio non veniva

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2 Si noti comunque che le regole del trasferimento del patrimonio variava da comunità a comunità d'origine come anche nella Grecia continentale (si veda ad es. Herzfeld 1982; Sutton 1997).

considerato un bene così ristretto? Cambiava anche la gestualità, e, se cambiava, in che maniera? Era possibile rendersi conto di quei cambiamenti, o succedono in maniera così lenta che gli abitanti non se ne rendono conto, non ne sono nemmeno consapevoli?

Mancano, purtroppo, le testimonianze specifiche che ci potrebbero dare una risposta almeno provvisoria a queste domande. Gli antropologi, anche quelli che studiano la gestualità, ne fanno diverse analisi come se fosse una cosa statica, un codice si può dire, come quelli studiati dagli strutturalisti e rimasti per sempre sconnessi dal passaggio del tempo. Ma la gestualità, come la lingua parlata (colla quale condivide diversi aspetti ma, occorre sottolineare, non tutti), esiste tramite il tempo – il tempo, cioè, non solo nel senso strettamente cronologico o storico (come ad esempio nelle analisi degli aspetti evolutivi della comunicazione umana), ma anche nel senso musicale accennato tra l'altro da Bourdieu (1997: 6-7) come manipolazione del ritmo delle pratiche quotidiane.

L'altra dimensione che purtroppo manca a molte analisi antropologiche della gestualità è quella della spazialità. Le eccezioni sono davvero importanti. Citerei come particolarmente interessanti le eccellenti analisi antropologico-architettoniche effettuate più di quaranta anni fa dall'antropologa sudafricana Renée Hirschon (anche delle volte in collaborazione con l'architetto indiano Thakurdesai) nell'ambito dei lavori dell'Istituto di "Ekistics" ad Atene fondato da Constantinos Doxiadis, lavori, si noti, che esponevano il legame tra le forme degli insediamenti da un lato e le usanze sociali (e soprattutto l'eredità) dall'altro (si veda Hirschon e Thakurdesai 1970). Si tratta di aspetti della vita urbana che spesso sfuggono agli urbanisti perché non conoscono gli appositi lavori antropologici e non dispongono del tempo per fare etnografia nel senso stretto, ricerche, cioè, per cui scoprirebbero le esigenze delle norme dell'eredità che influiscono maggiormente sulla costruzione degli spazi abitativi e lavorativi, spesso, come accade in questo caso, contrariamente alle leggi vigenti al livello dello stato o del municipio. La Grecia offre un caso particolarmente interessante a causa dell'enorme varietà di norme locali, unite, comunque, da principi comuni rispetto all'obbligo dei genitori di assicurare ai figli e alle figlie un'eredità sufficiente per mantenersi in ricambio della riproduzione, nelle generazioni successive, dei nomi che così fanno "rivivere" le identità degli ultimi antenati (Herzfeld 1982). Senza conoscere queste norme, è impossibile capire perché i residenti di qualsiasi insediamento greco resistono a certe leggi edilizie mentre accettano o si adattano ad altre.

A prescindere dalle regole dell'eredità che tanto influiscono sull'evoluzione dello spazio vissuto, ci sono anche delle differenze culturali tra le popolazioni che cercano una certa conformità e modestia estetica e quelle che invece danno enfasi all'individualità degli immobili privati e concorrono tra di loro nello sforzo di adornare gli edifici religiosi in maniera eclatante.

Una tale differenza si trova alla base dello scontro culturale, studiato da Jennifer Mack (2012) nella sua ricerca su una borgata di Stoccolma, tra gli urbanisti svedesi, formati durante un periodo in cui la compiacenza e il compromesso in nome della convivenza sociale agevole lo sviluppo di una società ideologicamente egualitaria, e gli immigrati mediorientali cristiani, più interessati al consumo cospicuo e più abituati alla concorrenza sociale. La forma del vicinato che emerge riflette tutte e due le tradizioni, che, senza conciliarsi perfettamente, esprimono l'incontro tra ideologie culturali molto differenziate.

Ma se gli urbanisti spesso ignorano gli effetti dei valori sociali pre-esistenti sullo sviluppo della morfologia urbana, s'interessano ancora meno alla gestualità, aspetto del comportamento sociale ancora più difficile da precisare e ancora da osservare in tal modo che possiamo connettere le modalità della gestualità – fenomeno inoltre impossibile di ridurre in forma verbale e quindi abbastanza resistente a questo tipo di analisi – ai cambiamenti delle forme architettoniche della socialità.

Ma un'indagine del genere è, direi, un compito urgente. Se volessimo dare un senso di concretezza, per esempio, alle diverse lamentele che "abbiamo perso qualsiasi senso di orientamento o di connessione collo spazio", è in questo campo di ricerca che dovremmo cercare le testimonianze etnografiche che ci permetterebbero magari di spiegare quel senso di scollamento e di confusione. Solo pensando alle modalità gestuali in Thailandia e in Italia, ad esempio, possiamo capire in quali modi la concezione dello spazio corporale potrebbe influire sull'uso dello spazio architettonico.

Si porrebbe forse l'obiezione che un'indagine scientifica non sia necessaria per dimostrare una cosa così ovvia. Ma è davvero ovvia? E se lo è, perché non si sono realizzati, almeno nell'ambito dell'urbanistica, studi specificamente focalizzati sul rapporto tra la gestualità e l'uso quotidiano dello spazio in diversi contesti culturali, per poi magari coglierne alcune conclusioni più generali rispetto ai modi in cui la gestualità influisce sulla concezione dello spazio vissuto? È una domanda che risale all'esperienza comune di tutti: perdiamo il senso di orientamento e di appartenenza quando siamo costretti ad abbandonare gli spazi familiari, o quando quegli stessi spazi vengono trasformati per servire a nuove funzioni che non hanno a che fare con la vita quotidiana alla quale siamo stati abituati, parzialmente, almeno, perché le abitudini corporali vengono interrotte e il senso di armonia (o almeno di sintonia) tra gesto e spazio manca. Si tratta senza dubbio di esperienze provate da praticamente tutti gli esseri umani, ma, contrariamente a chi respinge questo tipo di analisi perché la considerano troppo centrata su cose ovvie, è esattamente per questo motivo che non possiamo dare il fenomeno per scontato. Un po' come il senso comune, che (come ho ribadito spesso in vari scritti precedenti) è sempre particolare ai diversi contesti culturali, i gesti del corpo, di cui sappiamo già che subiscono una variazione enorme a seconda delle

particolarità culturali, non hanno sempre lo stesso significato in ogni contesto. Al contrario, è dai gesti che nasce gran parte dei malintesi che succedono tra delle persone di culture diverse (si veda ad es. Herzfeld 2009b).

Lo stesso principio concerne anche la concezione dello spazio vissuto. Consideriamo il caso di anziani trasferiti lontano dai posti che conoscono. Spesso sembrano disorientati, e non raramente è da quel momento che incominciano a mostrare i primi segni della demenza. Ed è da tali momenti che emerge una domanda chiave: perché il distacco dagli oggetti familiari e dagli spazi vissuti da lungo tempo ha degli effetti così forti? Ci sembra ovvio che sarebbe così, ma questo è un fenomeno da spiegare, non da assumere *a priori*. La materialità delle interazioni tra corpo, spazio e movimento, soggiacente ad ogni caso culturalmente specifico, dà un forte significato, anzi, una nuova urgenza, all'analisi del concetto dell'appartenenza (eviterei la parola identità perché mi sembra troppo psicologica e quindi capace di sfuggire all'analisi strettamente sociale), visto che nella nostra epoca gli spostamenti veloci arrivano sempre più spesso e delle volte inaspettatamente. Perché l'appartenenza a un luogo svolge un ruolo così importante nella capacità delle persone di orientarsi anche quando si trovano allontanati dagli spazi che conoscono bene? Che cosa succede quando scoprono che i gesti non forniscono il solito senso di comprensione inconsapevole? Come imparano la nuova gestualità, e che ruolo svolge nella capacità (o nella mancanza di tale capacità) di riorientarsi nei nuovi spazi?

Torniamo al caso delle madonnelle nel rione Monti. A partire dal momento in cui il parroco incominciò a creare i mini-pellegrinaggi, pensando verosimilmente all'importanza del riconoscere la presenza divina in tutti gli spazi del vicinato, l'effetto prodotto sugli aderenti, benché parecchi tra di loro condividessero già gli atteggiamenti che lui intendeva impiantare nel gregge intero, era la creazione di un tipo radicalmente innovativo di appartenenza locale la quale rompeva con i legami personali tra le singole madonnelle e i singoli peccatori. Si tratta dell'invenzione di uno spazio immaginato in tal modo che potesse impiantare e poi confermare ripetutamente una nuova concezione sia dello spazio che della vita comune in tutti i fedeli che partecipavano, uno spazio consacrato e in qualche modo incorporato tramite i passi frequenti e ripetuti degli stessi pellegrini, che della dottrina religiosa. Si inventava tramite il pellegrinaggio una gestualità ripensata che legava persone, spazi e valori. Basta osservare la solennità dell'occasione per capire il senso di rintracciare, se non le stazioni della Croce, almeno un percorso analogo, che ricreava così di anno in anno un senso molto forte di aver vissuto quel percorso originale e di averlo *riprodotto* ripetutamente in uno spazio teologico e cosmologico rifatto in termini concreti e terrestri. Non si mette in dubbio la sincerità dei partecipanti, questo non è argomento in discussione. Al contrario, la coerenza dei loro gesti rituali con la solennità dell'occasione e

la spiegazione teologica del pellegrinaggio proposto dal parroco mette in evidenza una procedura di conversione, non religiosa forse, ma nel modo di concepire il rapporto tra l'estasi religiosa e l'attaccamento al luogo. (Non è un caso che lo stesso parroco abbia anche istituito un rito per cui in nome della Chiesa chiedeva perdono agli Ebrei a riguardo delle conversioni forzate effettuate in passato nella stessa zona e ricordate ancora oggi nel nome di Via dei Neofiti.) L'impatto del simbolismo religioso sulla forma della città è spesso enorme, e lo è in maniera particolare in una città come Roma, che svolge un ruolo così centrale nella storia di una delle religioni più influenti del mondo. In generale si può osservare facilmente l'impatto delle dottrine formali sull'organizzazione dello spazio urbano concepita dalle autorità secolari. Qui, comunque, ho provato ad accennare un aspetto diverso della sacralità della città, un aspetto che risale a quella zona culturale nascosta che ho chiamato "intimità culturale" (Herzfeld 2003), costituita dalle pratiche considerate, per lo più, imbarazzanti davanti allo sguardo esterno, ma comuni alle esperienze quotidiane di quasi tutti gli abitanti, ai quali, in più, forniscono un senso di appartenenza condivisa radicato nelle pratiche e nelle credenze ripetute di giorno in giorno. Tutto questo complesso culturale, inoltre, va rafforzato dalla centralità della dottrina del peccato originale, il quale soggiace anche ad alcune pratiche burocratiche come il condono edilizio e anche alla beltà straordinaria della città, una beltà che sorse, secondo un architetto che conosceva intimamente le pratiche quotidiane dei residenti, dal fatto di avere sfidato le leggi edilizie vigenti a diverse epoche del passato. In questo senso, e visto che la vita politica si connette spesso ai rapporti clientelari, la gente rimane abbastanza consapevole del fatto che, tra le forme ufficiali e quelle dell'intimità culturale nel senso appena accennato, la separazione è più un concetto ideologico che un aspetto della realtà praticata e vissuta.

D'altronde, è opportuno ribadire che non tutti gli aspetti dell'organizzazione dello spazio, compresa la gestualità, hanno a che fare con la sacralità. Altri aspetti hanno a che fare con le abitudini lavorative, come ad esempio i movimenti imparati dagli apprendisti degli artigiani e riprodotti come segni dell'autenticità degli oggetti e dei loro creatori. Gli spazi lavorativi cambiano; cambia la gestualità con essi? È una domanda che richiede una risposta empirica se lo scopo è di creare spazi nei quali i nuovi lavoratori giovani si sentiranno a loro agio mentre conservano anche qualche legame con i loro antenati professionali.

In una città come Roma, dove il senso di connessione con l'antichità lontana è estremamente forte, certe cose rimangono fisse o cambiano secondo ritmi quasi impercettibili. Un esempio eclatante è il comportamento dei baristi. Servono il caffè, bibite alcoliche ed acque minerali, chiaccherano colla clientela (sono, per gli antropologi, una fonte straordinaria del pettegolezzo che fornisce gran parte delle sue informazioni più preziose) e lavano i piatti e i bicchieri,

tutto tramite una gestualità assolutamente riconoscibile che garantisce al cliente un senso di vita sociale condivisa. Anche quelli che non sono di origine romana oppure italiana riproducono lo stesso comportamento, perché, se non lo facessero, perderebbero subito la maggior parte della loro clientela locale. Ma si pensi un attimo ai loro imitatori all'estero come, ad esempio, quelli della ditta Starbucks negli Usa. Loro invece usano un orologio per misurare i tempi della produzione del caffè; mentre sono abbastanza cortesi in generale, di fronte a una mancanza di tazzine si mostrano presi dal panico: cosa fare, visto che non è normale lavare i piatti mentre lavoriamo davanti al nostro pubblico? Tutto prosegue secondo norme iscritte sulle tazze di carta: *for here* (da consumare nel negozio) e *to go* (da asporto) sono categorie che definiscono lo Starbucks come centro di produzione di beni più che spazio sociale, il che appare anche dal modo in cui i clienti, uno ad ogni tavolino, guardano gli schermi dei loro computer ed evitano d'inserirsi nelle chiacchiere degli altri (e che delle volte affrontano con indignazione la minaccia di "invadere il loro spazio" da parte di chi chiede di sedersi allo stesso tavolino).

Qui, ovviamente, il cambiamento, non tramite il tempo, ma tramite il percorso culturale e geografico dal bar italiano al negozio Starbucks americano, riflette diverse importantissime differenze culturali. I ritmi della vita sociale sono diversi nei due casi, e questa differenza va riflessa nel movimento sia dei clienti che dei camerieri nei due tipi di spazio. Oggi, coll'arrivo dello smartphone in quasi tutto il mondo, la distinzione incomincia forse a scomparire, cedendo così alla logica di un'economia neoliberale globale e insopportabile nei confronti del ritmo socievole e a volte lento del consumo italiano. Ridotti tutti i valori in termini economici, il riconoscimento dell'importanza dei rapporti sociali casuali scompare davanti alla pressione del guadagno immediato (nei ristoranti nordamericani, ad esempio, lo stipendio del cameriere viene calcolato parzialmente in considerazione delle mance che riceverà, fatto che lo spinge ad incoraggiare i clienti a finire in tempo tempestivo per poi rendere i tavolini ad altri clienti). Evidentemente in Italia questo tipo di comportamento susciterebbe ancora una reazione negativa dalla parte di molta gente – ma occorre chiederci fino a quando le vecchie abitudini riusciranno a resistere a tali pressioni. In questo contesto, dobbiamo ripensare i rapporti tra gestualità e spazio lavorativo. I vecchi apprendisti, per esempio, "rubavano cogli occhi" – cioè, provavano ad imparare il mestiere tramite gli sguardi furtivi che nascondevano anche un forte senso di concorrenza sia con i coetanei che con i maestri. In una società come quella italiana o greca, inoltre, quel tipo di spionaggio professionale coglie un aspetto importante del suo significato dalle credenze intorno al malocchio, simbolo-chiave dell'invidia e della gelosia che caratterizzano i rapporti di concorrenza tra commercianti o artigiani in uno spazio sociale molto ristretto a cui mancano anche le grandi differenze economiche che, invece, troviamo tra i vari ceti delle

grandi città. Con lo sviluppo dei metodi meccanici della produzione, tuttavia, quel tipo di concorrenza ristretta ma intensa tra artigiani e piccoli negozianti incominciò a scomparire, apparentemente perchè non serve più a mantenere l'indipendenza professionale nei nuovi contesti. Anzi, la sua scomparsa sostiene gli interessi di chi – per lo più imprenditori di stampo neoliberista – mira allo smantellamento delle capacità artigianali in favore di un “deskilling” (cioè la disattivazione delle stesse capacità) il quale, sottovalutando il loro lavoro, umilia i lavoratori e li rende sempre più precari. (Il caso italiano studiato da Noelle Molé [2012] è particolarmente rivelatore di questi processi). Non contenti di distruggere il mondo dell'artigianato, inoltre, i neoliberali aggrediscono, in maniera analoga, le università, provando a renderle fabbriche di dati invece di posti di libero pensiero, pensando così di aumentare la parte precaria della popolazione e allo stesso tempo di soffocare ogni tipo di protesta ragionata. Lo si vede con chiarezza nel fenomeno chiamato “gentrification”, per cui gli artigiani tradizionali si trovano cacciati via non solo perchè non riescono più a pagare gli affitti ma anche perchè i loro rumori lavorativi – rumori che non superano quasi mai quelli dei nuovi bar e delle discoteche – danno fastidio ai nuovi abitanti, forse perchè quest'ultimi non vogliono che si rammenti in continuazione un passato distrutto da loro.

In Italia la gestualità fa parte integrale della cultura. In certe regioni, per esempio a Napoli, esistono anche dialetti gestuali che vengono riconosciuti come strumenti importantissimi della comunicazione locale (si veda de Jorio 1832). Ma non sappiamo se e in che modo questi sistemi di gestualità hanno cambiato negli ultimi anni o se hanno reagito alle nuove forme di organizzazione lavorativa o alle nuove forme architettoniche in cui gli operai sono costretti a lavorare. Certo è che in diversi mestieri i nuovi rapporti lavorativi comportano anche nuove modalità gestuali. A Creta ho osservato, per esempio, come un ragazzo che iniziò come apprendista di un falegname di parquet (*patomadzis*) e che si comportava sempre come l'umile ragazzo che doveva rubare cogli occhi malgrado il suo maestro gli insegnasse diversi aspetti del lavoro, diventò molto più apertamente arguto, sia nei detti che nei gesti, quando incominciò a lavorare in un garage. Il cambiamento di mestiere da una modalità considerata tradizionale ad un'altra molto più “moderna” gli consentì di esprimere il suo interesse, la sua voglia di imparare bene, in maniera meno furtiva e, di conseguenza, molto più rapida. Anzi, la sua nuova curiosità veniva premiata quasi ogni giorno, perchè, invece di incoraggiare gli atteggiamenti concorrenziali dei vecchi apprendisti, il nuovo maestro voleva sviluppare un senso forte di collaborazione nei suoi più giovani lavoratori affinché quest'ultimi somigliassero piuttosto agli operai urbani, con nuove conoscenze tecniche ma anche con un senso di dipendenza e di appartenenza collettiva che l'artigiano tradizionale non avrebbe riconosciuto e, nella maggior parte dei casi, avrebbe invece disprezzato (Herzfeld 2004).

Possiamo dunque concludere che lo studio della gestualità, e soprattutto dei suoi rapporti con l'uso dello spazio lavorativo ed abitativo, è un presupposto importante per l'urbanistica al momento in cui mira a capire come e fino a che grado gli esseri umani s'adeguano alle esigenze delle nuove modalità organizzative e spaziali volute dalle nuove forze economiche e politiche. È opportuno, dunque, sviluppare una nuova forma di collaborazione tra ricercatori in antropologia e in urbanistica, visto che gli antropologi hanno sviluppato metodi ben concreti per decodificare i significati non verbali nei contesti sociali di diversi tipi, mentre gli urbanisti hanno creato una metodologia ricca per l'analisi precisa della spazialità.

Negli ultimi anni ho sviluppato un approccio alla produzione del significato nel contesto dell'interazione sociale che chiamo “poetica sociale”, col quale intendo una riflessione precisa sul rapporto tra le forme sociali normative da un canto e la creatività personale dall'altro – cioè, tra le convenzioni e l'invenzione (Herzfeld 2003). Se intendessimo i significati solo nel loro senso testuale, capiremmo male, in molti casi, il vero senso di un'interazione. L'ironia, ad esempio, fenomeno frequente nei rapporti tra persone che si conoscono piuttosto bene, sfuggirebbe alle interpretazioni troppo letterali. In Thailandia, per offrire un esempio concreto, il gesto chiamato *wai* (un saluto o ringraziamento espresso con le due mani premute l'una contro l'altra), esprime anche il rapporto gerarchico tra le due persone tramite l'altezza del gesto. Fatto al livello del petto, esprime l'uguaglianza approssimativa. Al livello della testa, esprime il rispetto profondo per persone di pregio come, ad esempio, i membri della famiglia reale. Ma delle volte viene usato con questa seconda modalità affinché esprima invece un certo sdegno giocoso oppure anche uno sdegno genuino del quale non può lamentarsi il ricevente visto che, in senso letterale, viene salutato in maniera assolutamente rispettosa. Ma l'altezza esprime le differenze sociali anche nei contesti architettonici, in un modo tale che non si possa costruire un grattacielo al di là di un palazzo reale se quest'ultimo non viene coperto di alberi, e richiede da chi costruisce un albergo o un palazzo pubblico che sia possibile nascondere le persone che risiedono o lavorano sui piani superiori quando un personaggio reale entra sul pianterreno; al momento in cui un membro della famiglia reale passa per una strada pubblica, è vietato che i cittadini passino allo stesso momento per una strada superiore. In un paese dove la questione dello statuto di diversi personaggi di pregio viene spesso contrastato in maniera ironica per evitare le offese dirette, non si può immaginare che lo stesso potrebbe arrivare anche sulla “poetica sociale” delle costruzioni più permanenti, cioè degli edifici, affinché permetta agli utenti di godere della stessa flessibilità semiotica nei loro rapporti con il mondo del potere? La tensione quasi onnipresente tra l'uguaglianza e la gerarchia che caratterizza la vita sociale thailandese richiede, mi pare, una certa flessibilità anche nell'ambito del-

la pianificazione e dell'architettura, il che richiede, a sua volta, la ricerca etnografica sui dibattiti che si svolgono tra gli architetti incaricati della produzione dello spazio pubblico.

Nello stesso senso, direi che è opportuno studiare la gestualità nei contesti lavorativi, come ho già accennato sopra, per capire meglio come (oppure se) i cambiamenti spaziali influiscano sull'accesso reciproco dei lavoratori. Visto che, molto spesso, lo stile del management neoliberista mira al disgregare la solidarietà operaia sperando così di poter controllare in maniera più complessiva l'uso di ogni singolo elemento (corpo) nel gruppo di produzione, è probabile che un'indagine del genere svelerebbe diverse modalità sia di disattivazione comunicativa dalla parte dei managers che di comunicazione più o meno sovversiva dalla parte degli operai. In un'analisi di questo tipo, il rapporto tra lo spazio e i gesti sarebbe un elemento fondamentale.

Concludo con un'osservazione che potrebbe dare un senso del contesto più ampio delle analisi qui proposte. Il neoliberalismo vuole che ognuno accetti la responsabilità del proprio destino e che, così, lo stato smetta di svolgere qualsiasi ruolo nella protezione degli interessi sociali della popolazione. È per questo motivo che i neoliberisti accolgono con entusiasmo il ruolo centrale del volontariato, perché, appunto, assorbe le funzioni finora attribuite allo stato per poi rafforzare anche il senso di precarietà tra chi non riesce ad accumulare soldi sufficienti per rendersi indipendente dagli altri, biasimando intanto quelli che ricevono tale aiuto come persone incapaci (e quindi indegni) di assumere la responsabilità della loro esistenza sociale e, di conseguenza, considerandoli ricevitori passivi della beneficenza privata che per definizione, comunque, non si garantisce mai.

Queste persone, spesso consegnate a spazi inumani (Desjarlais 1997), che tipo di gestualità sviluppano? Le persone considerate "normali" pensano spesso che i gesti delle persone emarginate esprimano il loro fallimento sociale e che segnalino il pericolo che pongono alla società in generale. Ma è davvero così? È urgente fare nuove inchieste sul rapporto tra le nuove spazialità istituzionali inventate per persone emarginate e la loro gestualità. A mio parere, sviluppare una metodologia adeguata è un compito fondamentale, un compito, in più, che potrebbe servire a contrastare e magari a rovesciare i presupposti di chi vorrebbe destinare una parte non irrilevante dell'umanità alla pattumiera. Una mossa del genere ci consentirebbe di ripensare una domanda capitale: a chi, infatti, appartiene lo spazio urbano? La gestualità è un legame invisibile a chi non sa apprezzare la sua importanza ma, ciononostante, forte e fondamentale, tra il corpo umano e quel corpo complessivo che si chiama società. Ignorarla, quindi, vuol dire respingere il nostro diritto allo spazio urbano ed ai contesti della nostra vita sociale. Siamo già arrivati a un livello di rassegnazione che ci permetterebbe di gettare la spugna così facilmente? O siamo pronti a indagare su questo rapporto affinché rafforziamo quel diritto minacciato oggi, come non è

mai accaduto in passato, da forze economiche che vorrebbero invece rubare quei diritti prima ancora che li possiamo realizzare in maniera concreta?

## English Summary

In this essay, I lay out a programmatic call for the careful study of the relations between gesture and space. While anthropologists have for a long time paid careful attention to the analysis of both gesture and space, they have not systematically connected the two. I further suggest that planners and architects can usefully lend their expertise in the area of spatiality to the anthropological investigation of cultural differences as revealed in the meanings and contexts of gesture.

I begin the discussion by focusing on the impact of religious doctrine on the organization of urban space, which is a familiar theme in architectural history. Less familiar, however, is the impact of the less official dimensions of religiosity – dimensions that belong to the zone of what I call "cultural intimacy" (that is, the area of potentially embarrassing everyday practices on which officialdom actually depends for the effective functioning of society). The gap between the official and the unofficial is in fact (or at least in social experience) far from absolute; people understand the role of patronage and other forms of what is called "corruption" (itself a metaphor of religious origin) as it appears in the actual application of norms and laws about construction and the use of space. I cite the example of the way in which the Doctrine of Original Sin affects the way that Romans deal with these laws, especially in their tendency to seek official retrospective pardons that work very much like religious indulgences and are factored into residents' cost calculations. It is in the area of uncodified interactions that gesture often plays a vital role.

We also see something similar taking place in artisans' workplaces, where, however, the process of "deskilling" today seems to correspond to a breakdown in communication – a change that serves neoliberal economic interests. As artisans' skills are depreciated, the old habits of agonistic competition in the workplace give way to an apparently more passive acquiescence in the exercise of managerial power. Whether this is genuinely what happens at the level of actual social interaction is less clear, and a careful study of gesture in the workplace, with close attention to the gesture-space relationship, would, I suggest, prove highly revelatory.

In addition to such informal dimensions of everyday workplace interaction, I also discuss the significance of social institutions not (or no longer) recognized by the state. An example is provided by the dowering of daughters in Greece. This practice is now technically illegal in that country but is actually reproduced there in the legal disguise of a mode of property transmission. Such practices, legally recognized or not, play an important part in shaping urban environments. I thus also note what happens when conformist and individualistic social ideologies clash, as when immigrants bring expectations of differentiation among their houses that clash with a more conformist ideology at the level of the host nation's self-perception. Moreover, some forms of gesture are reproduced in architectonic form; for example, the Thai practice of wai (a gesture of salutation or thanks, made with the palms of both hands pressed together) can be performed at various heights, and this variability also allows for the possibility of irony.

Given that when prestigious persons such as royalty appear at ground-floor level it is forbidden for commoners to appear at higher levels, I ask whether the incorporation of such gestural rules in architectural practice might not also enable expressive alternative (including irony) to the formal disposition of urban space. Finally, I point out that the growing separation of individuals from familiar social contexts – a separation that I exemplify by comparing the traditional Italian coffee bar with an American Starbucks establishment – suggests a form of alienation that is encouraged by the increasingly dominant neoliberal economic ideology.

These reflections lead to a more general concern with the impact of neoliberalism on the way in which we understand our rights to and in the city. I suggest that more careful analysis of the gesture-space relationship will lead us to understand better why, for example, eviction is so traumatic for many of those who are forced to undergo it. And I suggest that the kind of analysis outlined here will be useful for developing an urbanism that actively opposes the social destruction that has been at the core of so much of neoliberalism's impact on how people live.

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Kenneth M. Reardon

# An empowerment approach to community planning and development

Social equity, Advocacy planning, Equity planning

During the next eighteen months, the United States will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of three historic federal laws designed to address several of the most important structural causes of social inequality in American society. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were landmark bills signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson during the height of the American Civil Rights Movement to improve the lives of the poor, especially those who were African American, Latino American, and Native American (Branch 2008: 206-271).

Together these laws created highly visible, and in many cases, extremely successful social programs that expanded educational and economic opportunities for the poor; reduced discrimination in employment, housing, and transportation on the basis of race, religion, gender and age; and provided millions of African Americans and other minority group members their first opportunity to vote in local, state, and federal elections. These laws also created many new public agencies designed to protect and advance these hard fought human rights victories. Among these were: Community Action Agencies, Legal Services Corporations, Fair Housing Councils, and Election, Civil Rights, and Economic Opportunity Commissions (Moynihan 1970: 75-101).

During the 1960s, these initiatives, in combination

with a healthy economy, reduced the nation's overall poverty rate from 22.4% in the late 1950s to 11.3% in the early 1970s (Danziger, Sandefur and Weinberg 1994: 18-50). Unfortunately, further progress towards achieving what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called "The Beloved Community" (Marsh 2005: 11-50) and Professor Susan Fainstein and others have termed "The Just City" came to an abrupt halt in the mid-1970s due to a number of factors (Fainstein 2010). Among these were the near total collapse of the Civil Rights Movement following the assassinations of Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.; pressure to reduce domestic spending to pay for the rapidly escalating costs of the Vietnam War; opposition to redistributive policies benefiting the urban poor by many White working-class families who were experiencing increasing economic insecurity related to heightened global competition; and massive deindustrialization that destroyed tens of millions of American manufacturing jobs upon which poor and working-class African Americans and Latinos depended (Goldsmith and Blakely 1994: 138-172).

In the 1980s and 1990s, these trends were reinforced by an increasingly popular neoconservative ideology that blamed America's economic problems on an overly generous "welfare state" that supposedly undermined the work ethic of the poor by providing an extensive "safety net" of social services

and discouraged new investment in the economy through confiscatory personal and corporate income and capital gains taxes. Seeking to improve the competitive position of the U.S. economy by dramatically reducing domestic spending programs in order to lower personal and corporate taxes, a series of “structural adjustment” policies which cut domestic social spending were implemented starting with the Reagan/Bush Administration and continuing through the Bush/Cheney Administration (Wanniski 1979).

Among the most significant of these cuts was the elimination of the Federal ACTION Agency responsible for overseeing the nation’s anti-poverty programs; reductions in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s social housing programs; the Department of Labor’s workforce training programs; the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Stamp Program; U.S. Department of Justice’s Legal Services Corporation and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services longstanding Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Program that was replaced by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) offering lower monthly stipends for poor families, a lifetime limit on benefits, and required work, study, or public service for beneficiaries to maintain their eligibility (Bowsher 2011).

Nowhere have the negative effects of these economic trends and policy shifts on the lives of the poor been more profound than in the older residential neighborhoods of America’s former industrial cities. In the historic manufacturing cities of the United States’ Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwest Regions – referred to as “The American Rust Belt” in the 1970s and 1980s - unemployment and poverty rates soared prompting many long-time residents and business owners to leave in search of better opportunities. These population and business losses, in turn, discouraged public and private investment causing physical condition of these communities to deteriorate leading to additional outmigration, weaker real estate markets, and lower property tax revenues. The fiscal crisis these developments caused forced municipal officials in the overwhelming majority of these cities, to implement drastic cuts in basic services as well as significant increases in property taxes and user fees. The fiscal health of these cities was further undermined by sharp reductions in intergovernmental transfer payments from state and federal governments (Mallach and Brachman 2013). By 2010, the percentage of American families living in poverty surpassed 15%. In the former “Rustbelt Cities” the percentage of families living in poverty ranged between 22% and 29%. Within the older residential neighborhoods of these so-called “Legacy Cities” it was common for 60% to 75% of families to be living in poverty (New Solutions Group 2013). After carefully examining the harsh environmental, economic, and social conditions existing in these high poverty communities, William Julius Wilson, Harvard University Professor of Sociology concluded

that these communities confronted a new and more virulent form of poverty requiring innovative and bold urban policies, strategies, and programs (Wilson 1996: 25-50).

Inspired by the courage, organization, and creativity of the American Civil Rights Movement, Paul Davidoff, a then-young University of Pennsylvania planning professor, wrote *Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning* (Davidoff 1965). This classic article challenged the existence of a unitary public interest within cities that planners could serve. Instead, it highlighted the increasingly diverse nature of the contemporary city featuring multiple, and often competing, interests seeking official recognition and support. Davidoff argued that centralized planning agencies historically focused on physical development had over the past half century, tended to serve the interests of what Logan and Molotch referred to as “The Growth Machine” comprised of powerful developers, contractors, financiers, union leaders and their allies at the expense of poor and working-class communities and other non-elite interests (Logan and Molotch 1987).

In hopes of promoting a more democratic form of city planning and urban governance, Davidoff encouraged planners to work with community-based organizations, civil rights groups, and trade unions to produce high quality plans as alternatives to those being developed by highly centralized and elite dominated, planning agencies. Davidoff, who was also trained as a lawyer, imagined City Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards of Appeals, Boards of Adjustment, and City Councils functioning as quasi-judicial bodies holding hearings at which municipally-generated plans as well as those created by multiple community-based organizations would be presented and argued by highly skilled advocacy planners. Through a public process of argument, counter argument, examination, and cross-examination similar to that used in courts of law, these bodies would be asked to critically examine the values, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, conceptual arguments, data and analysis, and policy recommendations contained within competing plans to identify either the “optimal” plan or to explore possibilities for integrating the “best” elements of several competing plans. The publication of this article in 1965, followed by a wave of urban uprisings that took place in low-income African American communities in more than one hundred American cities, generated significant interest in advocacy planning and in the work of Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO), a newly established network of progressive planners, committed to fighting for more redistributive urban policies and democratic planning processes (Thabit 1999). By 1968 more than 700 neighborhood activists, planning professionals, local officials, and urban scholars had joined PEO whose members were engaged in a series of high profile campaigns to stop the displacement caused by the Federal government’s Urban Renewal and Interstate Highway Programs; integrate African Americans into the planning

profession, municipal planning departments, and city planning commissions; and encourage planners to support resident-led planning in low-income urban communities through advocacy planning. PEO members pursued these goals through policy-focused research and writing, direct action organizing that sometimes disrupted the routine activities of local government, and advocacy plans that sought to amplify the voice poor and working-class communities commanded within elite-dominated planning processes.

During the late 60s and early 70s, advocacy planners worked with a wide range of community-based groups and Civil Rights organizations to advance the interests of low-income communities of color within publicly supported planning, development, and design projects. Among the most impressive of these was Ron Shiffman's work with Williamsburg (Brooklyn) residents who fought a city-sponsored Urban Renewal project that displaced hundreds of working class families in order to secure quality replacement housing within their community, Roger Katan's support for Harlem activists advocating preservation-oriented redevelopment plans and projects for this historic African American community (Katan and Shiffman 2014), and Chester Hartman and Marie Kennedy's collaboration with Boston neighborhoods to resist city-supported Urban Renewal, Public Housing, and Interstate Highway Projects that threatened widespread displacement in dozens of the city's poor and working-class communities (Hartman 2002).

While the overwhelming majority of 1960 and 1970-era advocacy planners worked with poor and working-class organizations, outside of government to produce plans featuring redistributive policies and participatory processes, others such as Norm Krumholz who described themselves as equity planners, sought to achieve similar social justice objectives while working within municipal government agencies (Krumholz and Forester 1990; Krumholz and Clavel 1994). From 1969 to 1979, Krumholz served as Cleveland, Ohio's Director of Planning during the administrations of three very different mayors. Krumholz and his colleagues stated their reform goals in a clear and unambiguous manner in the introduction to their highly-regarded *Cleveland Policy Planning Report*, "In a context of limited resources, the Cleveland City Planning Commission will give priority attention to the task of promoting a wider range of choices for those individuals and groups who have few, if any, choices." (Cleveland City Planning Commission 1975) Krumholz, assisted by a small team of dedicated young planners, succeeded in preserving the municipal electric company, reducing city bus fares, establishing a regional bus system, and significantly enhancing the organizational capacity of the city's community-based planning and development organizations (Krumholz 1982).

Advocacy and equity planners worked tirelessly during this period to advance the economic, social, and political status of historically marginalized commu-

nities through the creation and promotion of high-quality redistributive plans. However, they tended to do so using a "professional-expert model" of practice that often privileged their role as organizers, analysts, planners, spokespersons, and advocates within the planning process. While local residents, business owners, institutional leaders, and elected officials were actively involved in the needs assessment, community visioning, and goal formulation phases of most advocacy and equity planning efforts; progressive planners of this era exerted near-exclusive control over the data analysis, plan-making, organizing, media, and lobbying efforts required to implement the key elements of these plans (Peattie 1968; Heskin 1980).

The limited nature of citizen participation within most advocacy and equity planning initiatives during this period had a number of unfortunate consequences. The dominant role played by outside, typically White, planning professionals within these efforts offered those in power the opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of these plans. The failure of most advocacy and equity planners to actively involve community local stakeholders at each step of the planning process frequently generated plans that accurately identified important community concerns and development goals but featured policy and planning prescriptions that were either unpopular or unworkable given the affected community's unique history, culture, and politics. The highly circumscribed role local stakeholders played in the planning process also minimized the planning knowledge and skills local residents and leaders acquired through these efforts which served to maintain their dependency on outside professionals. Limited stakeholder involvement also reduced their willingness to fight for the implementation of these plans. The reluctance of local actors to lobby in support of advocacy and equity plans prepared on their behalf, in turn, weakened the resolve of their advocacy and equity planner partners to publicly campaign for these plans, especially in those situations, where local elites strongly opposed such efforts.

The failure of many 1970 and 1980-era advocacy and equity plans to be implemented prompted many progressive planners in the 1990s to search for new approaches to promoting more equitable urban policies and participatory planning processes. Among these individuals, was a small group of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning professors at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) involved in relaunching a recently established community development assistance project in East St. Louis, Illinois. Between 1987 and 1990, UIUC's central administration had allocated \$300,000 to support approximately 30 campus-generated projects aimed at improving conditions within the poorest neighborhoods of this once-bustling riverfront community. However, declining interest among local citizens, business owners and elected official in these campus-initiated research projects had resulted in a precipitous decline in student and faculty

interest in the effort (Reardon 1998).

After interviewing dozens of East St. Louis leaders about the project, the faculty discovered that few local stakeholders were even vaguely aware of the University's three-year-old community development project. During an interview with Bill Krebs, Executive Director of the Lessie Bates Neighborhood House, he mentioned a newly formed organization community whose leaders he believed would be interested in working with the University. The following week, the project faculty met with Ms. Ceola Davis, one of the Neighborhood House's Community Outreach Workers, who had helped a small group of neighborhood residents form the Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC). She explained how the group started when several area mothers and grandmothers, whose children attended the Lessie Bates Davis Child Care Center, decided to take action to address the large number of abandoned and fire-damaged properties surrounding their children's daycare facility.

With Ms. Davis' assistance, the woman investigated the ownership of three particularly offensive abandoned and fire-damaged properties located across the street from the Center. The women were enraged when they discovered that the St. Clair County Trustees had title to these highly problematic properties due to their absentee owners failure to pay their property taxes. Armed with images of the properties and a map showing their proximity to the Child Care Center, these women took several buses to the County Administration Building located in suburban Belleville, Illinois to request site control of these properties so they could be transformed into an "oasis for children" – aka a toddlers' playground. When it was their time to address the County's Land and Property Tax Disposition Committee, the women presented their pictures and map and asked the Committee if they would want their children or grandchildren to be confronted by such blight so close to their preschool? Following these remarks, they requested the County to transfer site control of these three-story, fire-damaged, brick structures to their association so local volunteers could begin the redevelopment process.

To their surprise, the Committee agreed to grant EPDC temporary site control of the properties provided they: made steady progress towards legally demolishing the abandoned structures; prepared an acceptable site plan for the proposed playground; mobilized the human and financial resources to build the facility; and, developed a workable plan for maintaining the playground following its construction. Ms. Davis went on to describe how this small cadre of inspired mothers went on to mobilize an army of volunteers to dismantle the fire-damaged structures selling all of the recyclable building materials to raise the funds needed to construct the playground. She finished her story by explaining how the successful development of Shugue Park had prompted these women to commit themselves to redeveloping their

entire neighborhood lot-by-lot and block-by-block. Ms. Davis then stated stating EPDC's strong interest in partnering with a university that could assist them with the engineering, architectural, planning, legal, and financial aspects of future development projects. She then showed the visiting faculty three large boxes containing what appeared to be dozens of University of Illinois studies documenting East St. Louis's many environmental, economic, and social problems. On the outside of each of these boxes a small post-it note indicated the number of University reports completed in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and their respective costs. She then challenged those present to identify a single recommendation contained in these UIUC studies that had been implemented! As the faculty examined the documents, Ms. Davis explained, "The bad news is that University researchers have used troubling East St. Louis Census data to secure major research grants to further research the community. These resources have been used to support your school's students and faculty, while our residents have received no tangible benefits". In addition, by highlighting the community's many problems without mentioning its significant assets these scholars had helped create a highly negative public perception of East St. Louis that has made it extremely difficult to attract the public and private investment needed to address these problems (Reardon 2002).

In spite of the highly exploitative nature of UIUC's past community/ university partnerships efforts, Ms. Davis indicated EPDC's willingness to partner with UIUC under conditions that she subsequently outlined – a set of principles that UIUC students and faculty came to refer to as "The Ceola Accords for Non-Exploitative Community/University Partnerships,"

1. Long-time residents and leaders of the community rather than the University or its funders, will determine the research, planning, and design issues to be examined by the partnership.
2. Local residents, business owners, institutional leaders, and elected officials, must be involved, on an equal basis with University-trained students and faculty, at each and every step in the research process, from issue identification and selection through project implementation and evaluation.
3. The community is not interested in another short-term relationship with the University allowing yet another group of students and faculty to document the city's many problems while offering "blue sky" redevelopment proposals. The community wants a minimum five-year commitment, beyond an initial probationary year, from the University in order to advance significant community development projects from their conceptualization to implementation phase. The longer timeframe is also needed to elicit the University's assistance in enhancing the organizing, planning, and development capacities of EPDC and other community-based development or-

- ganizations in the community.
4. The community expects the University to include EPDC and/or other community-based organizations it is working with in their external funding requests to support their East St. Louis work. Local organizations make a significant contribution towards collaborative research that adds costs to their bottom-line – long-term sustainability requires these costs to be covered, whenever possible, through University-generated East St. Louis research, planning, and development funds.
  5. Finally, the community expects the University to help local leaders establish a high capacity community development organization to assume responsibility for implementing the most promising revitalization proposals contained within plans produced by the partnership.

Seeking to undertake its East St. Louis work in a manner responsive to the principles laid out by Ms. Davis and her group, UIUC faculty decided to adopt participatory action research methods in their future community planning and design projects (Greenwood and Levin 1998; Parks et al. 1993; Whyte 1989, and 1990). Hoping to highlight the active role local stakeholders would play in selecting the issues to be examined, the research methodologies to be used, the interview and survey instruments to be developed, the analysis of quantitative and qualitative research to be completed, and the policy and planning recommendations to be made, UIUC faculty renamed the initiative the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP). During the 1990-1991 academic year, graduate planning students, working under my supervision, completed ESLARP's first collaborative planning project – the development of a comprehensive neighborhood stabilization plan for a one hundred and forty-block study area surrounding the Lessie Bates Neighborhood (Adanri et al. 1991).

Using a highly participatory planning process, designed in collaboration with EPDC's Executive Committee, University planning students succeeded in involving more than 500 neighborhood residents, business owners, and institutional leaders in the following data collection activities:

1. Archival research examining the community's rich social, especially labor, history;
2. A review of recent population, employment, and housing trends using U.S. Census data;
3. Documentation of neighborhood assets, problems, and untapped resources using disposable cameras;
4. A parcel-by-parcel and street-by-street survey of land uses, property ownership, lot/building conditions, and infrastructure maintenance levels;
5. One-on-one interviews with local residents and institutional leaders regarding their perceptions of existing neighborhood conditions and preferred future development options; and,

6. A survey of best practices in urban revitalization highlighting effective stabilization policies, programs, and projects successfully implemented by similar economically-challenged African American communities in so-called Legacy Cities.

Following the completion of each of these activities, EPDC convened local residents to review, analyze, and interpret the newly generated data. This process often caused University students and faculty to abandon their initial data analysis based upon residents' in-depth and historic knowledge of the community and its ever-changing position within city and region's highly-changing political economy. For example, an initial land use survey completed by the University revealed a very high commercial vacancy rate for properties along the neighborhood's historic retail corridor prompting UIUC planners to recommend a variety of business incentives to bolster demand. Smiling as the students offered their analysis and recommendations of this problem, residents offered a compelling "alternative" explanation based upon their in-depth understanding of the community that called for a radically different policy approach. Using the students' land use map to show how close Emerson Park's 9<sup>th</sup> Street Retail Corridor was to the recently approved riverboat gambling site, residents encouraged the students to investigate the ownership of the vacant commercial properties along the corridor. This investigation revealed that investors from the newly approved riverboat project had recently purchased these properties, without renewing the existing tenants' leases, knowing they could either rent or sell these buildings, at a substantial premium, following the start of state sanctioned gaming. This was the first of many significant contributions local residents made to the University's Emerson Park data collection, analysis and plan-making efforts based upon their local knowledge (Geertz 1983).

Positive feedback from residents attending these meetings, along with aggressive UIUC student and faculty outreach efforts, led to a steady increase in the number of stakeholders participating in these meetings. When local residents and leaders, with the assistance of UIUC students and faculty, completed their Preliminary Draft of the Emerson Park Neighborhood Improvement Plan a Neighborhood Summit was held at the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House that attracted more than one hundred and forty local residents, leaders, and officials. The community's evaluation of the draft plan was overwhelmingly positive! Following a series of minor amendments to the document's economic development and public education sections, local residents enthusiastically voted to endorse the plan. Excitement regarding the plan's implementation was subsequently boosted when it received the 1990 American Planning Association's Best Student Project Award. This excitement was soon overshadowed by local leaders' and University faculty's

mounting frustration with their inability to attract local public, private, or non-profit funding for the plan's most modest projects. Reflecting upon their failure to leverage the extraordinary investment local stakeholders and the University had made in the planning process, participants reluctantly concluded that participatory action research methods were highly effective in producing a well-crafted plan for a more robust, sustainable, and just community but were completely ineffective, at least in the East St. Louis context, in assisting EPDC and its allies in generating the political support needed to implement their plans (Reardon 2000).

The massive outmigration of residents, business owners, and institutional leaders from Emerson Park, and similar neighborhoods, had, in the opinion of project leaders, so undermined the organizational capacity and political influence of local institutions that even inspired efforts, such as the Emerson Park planning process, to mobilize the remaining vestiges of citizen power could not generate sufficient influence to insure the implementation of resident-generated plans. While EPDC's Executive Board had done a masterful job involving an impressive cross-section of tenant associations, block clubs, religious congregations, PTAs/PTOs, and labor organizations from the community in a highly energetic and creative "bottom-up, bottom-sideways" planning process – these groups lacked the broad base of political support and skilled leadership required to effectively challenge the redevelopment policies of those in power. Resident leaders' understanding of the dramatically reduced power and influence of poor and working-class organizations within their community, reflected Robert D. Putnam's observations in his classic, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, prompted them to search for an innovative approach to planning that would not only elicit local stakeholders' insights into existing conditions and hoped for improvements but would also motivate currently uninvolved residents to become actively engaged in building the power of community-based organizations, such as EPDC, struggling to promote transformational change within the neighborhood and city (Putnam 2000).

Recognizing the limitations of ESLARP's PAR-based planning model to counter the significant power imbalances separating the city's low-income neighborhoods and its long-entrenched political machine, project participants decided to incorporate the core theories, methods, and techniques of direct action organizing, as practiced by Saul D. Alinsky, Wade Rathke, Si Kahn, Judy Hertz, and others, into their future neighborhood planning activities (Alinsky 1971; Simon 1994). This shift in approach fundamentally altered the subsequent encounters University students and faculty had with local stakeholders in the city's Lansdowne, Winstanley/Industry Park, Olivette Park, Edgemont, and Southside neighborhoods. No longer were they simply "listening eloquently" to local residents' perceptions of existing conditions and preferred development proposals so

these could be incorporated into local plans. They were now actively challenging residents who articulated strong desires to see local conditions improve to become actively involved in building the membership base, leadership core, and political influence of the community-based organizations promoting change in their neighborhoods.

Highlighting the critical role citizen organizing had played in such highly successful urban revitalization efforts as the Bed-Stuy Restoration Project in Brooklyn, NY; New Community Corporation in Newark, NJ; Winchester/ Sandtown Jubilee Project in Baltimore, MD; Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston, MA; and the 18<sup>th</sup> Street Development Corporation in Chicago, IL, University-trained residents and students pressed civic-minded but currently uninvolved neighborhood residents to become actively engaged in community-based and resident-led planning and development organizations in their neighborhoods. In doing so, they consistently reminded residents that it was up to them and their local citizen organizations, not the University to seize control of their community and city in order to enhance the future quality of life in their community.

Occasionally, they would quote the following lyrics from one of Woody Guthrie's most famous labor songs to emphasize this point.

"You gotta go down and join the union  
You gotta join it for yourself  
Ain't nobody who can join it for you  
You gotta go down and join the union for yourself"

Influenced by this new commitment to incorporate direct action organizing methods and techniques into their basic community planning approach, ESLARP's neighborhood leaders and University students worked hard to expand the role residents played in the planning process from that of key informants and collaborating researchers to include that of grassroots organizers, organizational spokespersons, and issue advocates. As ESLARP initiated planning in other neighborhoods, they routinely mobilized residents, business owners, institutional leaders and their allies to circulate petitions and organizational endorsement forms to demonstrate broad-based support for these efforts. They also submitted letters to the editors of local newspapers; organized resident call-ins to area talk radio shows, and sought editorial endorsements of their plans. Following these activities, they typically organized small groups of neighborhood residents to meet with influential members of the Saint Clair County Democratic Organization and City Council to secure their formal endorsement of resident-generated plans before these documents were submitted to the East St. Louis Planning Commission and City Council for adoption.

During the public interest campaigns carried out by ESLARP to insure the implementation of resident-generated plans, special attention was given to

identifying previously inactive community residents for visible and challenging leadership roles within ongoing neighborhood transformation efforts. An individual previously uninvolved in civic affairs within their neighborhood, who appeared passionate about issues being surfaced during ESLARP planning processes, would be asked to undertake a series of increasingly demanding outreach and organizing tasks required to build the political base of their local neighborhood organization. Initially, this person might be asked to door-knock their block to encourage neighbors to attend an upcoming neighborhood meeting. Effective in carrying out this task, this individual might subsequently be recruited to schedule on behalf of their neighborhood organization a meeting with their local Saint Clair County Democratic Organization Precinct Leader and local residents to elicit the latter's support for an ongoing ESLARP planning initiative. Success at this task, might subsequently lead this resident to be asked to serve as a Delegation Leader and Neighborhood Spokesperson at a subsequent meeting with a local City Councilperson. Following such an experience, this individual maybe invited to report on these campaign activities at a subsequent community meeting and to join the Neighborhood-wide Sponsoring Committee for the ongoing planning process.

Key to the success of this kind of step-by-step (developmental) approach to nurturing the "public life" skills of newly identified poor and working-class leaders was the training they received prior to each of these activities enabling them to successfully perform these tasks; the support others offered when, in the course of carrying out these activities, they experienced difficulties, and, finally the assistance more experienced leaders and staff provided to assist them in maximizing the knowledge and skills they gained from these activities by helping them systematically reflect on these experiences. Under ESLARP's modified approach to community planning, the criteria for evaluating excellence in professional practice underwent fundamental change. No longer was the production of a technically sound, empirically supported, and resident-inspired plan the only standards against which ESLARP planners were evaluated. They also had to demonstrate the contribution the community planning process was making towards expanding the popular base of support for the plan and developing new poor and working-class leaders (Gecan 2002). Most importantly, they had to illustrate how the newly combined planning/organizing process was helping the community implement significant elements of the newly developed community plans.

Between 1992 and 1996, ESLARP's new approach to community planning generated sufficient political pressure to convince city and county officials to invest Community Development Block Grant funds to support many of the small-scale projects contained in its newly completed plans. These local commitments, in turn, encouraged area foundations, state agencies, and Federal departments to support many

of the medium and large-scale initiatives featured in these documents. These investments, combined with the efforts of growing numbers of community and campus volunteers, participating in ESLARP organized "work weekends" led to the completion of an impressive set of resident-identified improvement projects in the city's poorest neighborhoods. The success and visibility of these efforts increased both community and campus interest in ESLARP and attracted considerable national attention to the project in the form of favorable press, professional awards, scholarly publications, invited lectures, and external funding (Peirce 1996). The attention the project received within higher education circles had a very positive impact on student and faculty recruitment and retention for UIUC's architecture, landscape architecture, and city and regional planning programs. As the project's accomplishments multiplied and its momentum appears to be accelerating, Ms. Davis invited ESLARP's core faculty to a meeting with senior community leaders. Arriving at the Neighborhood House, the faculty met more than three-dozen neighborhood leaders, many of whom they had been working with for more than five years. As the meeting began, faculty noticed that many of the community leaders attending the meeting were holding a copy of an early article I had written describing the nature and rationale for ESLARP's empowerment model of community planning which had been guiding our efforts since 1992. Following a warm welcome by Ms. Davis, she asked the faculty to review the empowerment planning definition included in my article and tell those assembled whether or not they still supported this approach to community change. Feeling pressure to respond to Ms. Davis's question, I stated, "Yes, the positive results we have been able to achieve during the past five years offer compelling evidence of the value of our approach". While agreeing with my assessment of ESLARP's effectiveness in addressing many of the most important environmental, economic, and social problems confronting the city; Ms. Davis and her fellow neighborhood activists described how they had become increasingly uncomfortable in recent years with what they perceived to be the gulf separating our emancipatory planning and design rhetoric and our professional practice in East St. Louis.

Without meaning to, Ms. Davis described how we had created a semi-colonial partnership model that was unconsciously racist, classist, and sexist. "Each semester you provide students participating in the project with 9 to 15 hours of the best undergraduate and graduate training in the social sciences and designing arts so they are fully prepared to support resident-led change within our neighborhoods. These students are among the most talented and well-trained graduates from outstanding undergraduate institutions from throughout the country. Meanwhile, you have provided no advanced training in community planning, design, and development to the grassroots leaders participating in this project most of whom have never had the opportunity to

take a single college class". By providing advanced training to ESLARP's most privileged participants, namely the UIUC graduate students, while providing no relevant adult education for grassroots leaders involved in the effort, Richard Suttle, EPDC's President explained, "Without real training in topics related to community planning and design, we are not even the tail n the dog in this partnership. We are not even the flea chasing the tail on the dog. We are the flealet chasing the flea hoping to land on the tail of the dog".

Observing the shock, hurt, and anger on the faces of the participating faculty members, Ms. Davis said, "The bad news is that you created a type of partnership that is reinforcing many of the social dynamics responsible for inequality in our city and region. The good news is that we have a solution to this problem". She then described a community-generated proposal to establish a Citizenship School similar to the kind Ella Baker worked with SNCC to create throughout the South during the early days of the Civil Rights Movement and Myles Horton had created when he established the Highlander Center for Citizen Education and Research in New Market, Tennessee in the late 1930s to train labor and Civil Rights activists (Ransby 2003; Glen 1996; Horton, Kohn and Kohl 1998). Ms. Davis and her colleagues envisioned local residents completing a series of community organizing, planning, and design classes preparing them to collaborate, on a more equal basis, with their university-educated UIUC partners. ESLARP leaders were eager to access to well-designed courses offering the knowledge and skills required to provide effective leadership to resident-led revitalization efforts. They were especially interested in the kind of popular education courses designed by Paulo Freire that equipped the leaders of Recife, Brazil to understand and ultimately dismantle the ideological, organizational, and military forces supporting that country's longstanding dictatorship. Ms. Davis stressed the importance of going beyond the typical "how to" organize/plan courses offered by various national organizing institutes, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation and the Midwest Academy to offer "why" courses that would examine the specific ideologies, narratives, policies, structures, and procedures the city and county's relatively small but powerful political machine had used to dominate local economic development, affordable housing, public education, and urban transportation policies for more than eight decades. Ms. Davis concluded her presentation by asking the ESLARP faculty to consider how their current partnership model could be further modified to incorporate Freire's notion of "education for critical consciousness" through the addition of an adult education program like the Citizenship School.

My colleagues and I left this meeting with our long-time community collaborators both saddened and enraged! During the three-hour drive back to our campus we discussed, "How could ESLARP as deeply flawed as our community partners believe it

to be have achieved so much in a resource lean and politically contested environment as East St. Louis? Do local leaders realize the risks faculty took in undertaking such an ambitious engaged scholarship project in a Research I University where such work is routinely undervalued? Finally, if local leaders felt so strongly about ESLARP's shortcomings, why did they wait so long to share their critique with us? Following a spirited discussion of these issues which featured a great deal of criticism of our long-time community partners, the faculty looked at each other during a refueling stop and laughed, "How could we have been so blind to the shortcomings of our so-called "empowerment approach to community planning" to have committed so many resources to the training of our graduate students while ignoring the educational needs of our community partners?" We quickly concluded that the resident leaders' critique of our community-planning model was absolutely on correct!

ESLARP faculty responded to the residents' criticism by working with them to establish the East St. Louis' Neighborhood College that offered more than 400 resident leaders the opportunity to complete a series of jointly-crafted and taught classes covering such topics as: Principles and Practice of Direct Action Organizing, Introduction to Community-Based Planning and Development, Promoting Excellence in Non-Profit Management, Grantsmanship for Economic and Community Development, Urban Design 101, and Grassroots Fundraising. In addition to these on-site classes, ESLARP also organized a weekend seminar on Popular Education For Community Transformation at the Highlander Center for Citizen Education and Research that ten resident leaders and ten University students and faculty attended. The result of this search conference was an ambitious proposal to transform East St. Louis's ailing community college into a specialized training institute dedicated to preparing future generations of civic leaders and agency staff in the areas of community organizing, neighborhood planning, economic development, and community-building.

The most significant outcome of the Neighborhood College was the establishment of a citywide network of community organizations dedicated to mobilizing local residents and outside allies in support of resident-led planning and policy reform efforts. Through the combined efforts of resident-led planning committees being formed in the city's older resident neighborhoods, the newly-established East St. Louis Community Action Network (ESLCAN), and ESLARP, a growing number of local, state, and Federal agencies began to support significant projects emerging from the city's expanding network of community-based development organizations. Among the most significant of these efforts were the:

- Establishment of a successfully farmers market near the city's Central Business District;
- Stabilization and improvement of the Katherine Dunham Center for Arts and Humanity;
- Moderate rehabilitation of twenty Emerson Park

- Homes using U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HOME funds;
- Extension of a proposed light rail line connecting St. Louis International Airport and Downtown St. Louis to several of the poorest residential neighborhoods in East St. Louis providing residents with new access to living wage jobs throughout the region;
- Recruitment of one of the nation's most highly regarded affordable housing developers to serve as the master builder for a "new town in town" mixed-use development featured in the Emerson Park Development Corporation's Neighborhood Improvement Plan II; and,
- Establishment of a full-service community development assistance center providing community organizing, neighborhood planning, landscape architecture, architectural, urban design, grant-writing, and community education support to local residents, business owners, pastors, non-profit managers, and elected and/or appointed officials seeking to implement needed revitalization projects.

Since its development in East St. Louis in the mid-1990s, the empowerment approach to community planning featuring the integration of the core theories, methods, and techniques of participatory action research, direct action organizing, and popular education has been used by myself and other equity-minded planners, many of whom are former UIUC students who participated in ESLARP, to advance plans that seek to redistribute resources to low-income neighborhoods while amplifying the voice poor peoples' organizations within urban governance. Among the communities where empowerment planning has been used to promote significant economic development and resident voice are:

- Rochester, New York (19<sup>th</sup> Ward)
- Ithaca, NY (Northside and Southside neighborhoods)
- Town of Liberty, New York (Liberty Community Development Corporation)
- Town of Nichols, New York
- New Orleans (Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward)
- Charlotte, North Carolina (Charlotte Action Research Project)
- New Brunswick, New Jersey (St. Mary's Parish)
- Memphis, TN (South Memphis and Vance Avenue neighborhoods)
- City of Brownsville, TN
- Catania, Italy (Village of Librino, Simeto Valley)

While these replication efforts demonstrate the transformative potential of empowerment planning in many different practice settings; my experience suggests it has the greatest potential to contribute to change in settings characterized by the following three characteristics:

- Communities experiencing intense and pro-

- longed economic distress and fiscal crisis in which major public, private and non-profit organizations have disinvested for decades resulting in obscene levels of outmigration, business closings, residential and commercial vacancies, and building and property abandonment and drastic cuts in municipal services.
- Cities in which political power and influence are highly concentrated in the hands of a few institutional leaders who use their power to advance the economic and political position of local elites at the expense of the city's poor and working-class majority whose organizations have been dramatically weakened by the outmigration of their most accomplished and experienced leaders.
- Neighborhoods in which the key organizers/planners supporting resident-led organizing, planning, and development differ in terms of racial and ethnic identity, class membership, educational attainment, religious affiliation, gender, age, and region of origins from the majority of those they seek to mobilize as part of a bottom-up, bottom-sideways planning, design, and development project.

In these contexts, the model's participatory action research methods promotes a planning process in which the local knowledge possessed by community residents and leaders can combine with the expert knowledge of university-trained professions to produce plans that are theoretically informed, empirically based, and context sensitive. The model's direct action organizing methods enable its users to overcome the formidable power vested interests have to frustrate resident-led change efforts. Finally, the model's popular education methods enable practitioners to skillfully examine, understand, and intervene in local political systems where the alignment of local elites opposing grassroots reform movements can, on an issue-by-issue basis, vary considerably.

While this approach has produced promising results in a small number of North American and Sicilian communities where it has been systematically applied, it needs to be tested in other highly challenging environments which reflect the abovementioned qualities (i.e. resource scarcity, concentrated political power, and extreme social distance). Among the most important challenges this approach to community planning raises are: 1.) Who is going to fund the activities of empowerment planners who promote organizing and planning that challenge the privilege many powerful institutions, including local developers, financial institutions, and contractors, enjoy? and 2.) How can we accommodate the new knowledge and skills training in participatory action research, direct action organizing, and popular education required by this emerging approach to community planning within a typical two-year master in city and regional planning degree? While seeking answers to these questions may appear daunting,

the history of creativity, flexibility, and commitment regularly demonstrated by our field's many equity-oriented planners makes me optimistic regarding our ability to overcome these challenges.

## English Summary

During the late 1960s, the United States made significant progress towards reducing the number of Americans living in poverty. Most observers attributed this outcome to a healthy national economy and the passage of three federal laws designed to expand opportunities for low-income people of color. The Economic Opportunity, Voting Rights, and Civil Rights Acts were successfully enacted as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society Program following more than a decade of grassroots organizing by the Civil Rights Movement under the leadership of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

While many religious, professional, and trade union organizations, including the United States Catholic Conference, National Education Association, and the United Automobile Workers Union, demonstrated their early and consistent support for the Civil Rights Movement, the city planning profession was, as a whole, not among the movement's visible supporters. In many urban communities, city planners and urban designers were sadly in the forefront of urban revitalization efforts that destroyed or displaced hundreds of thousands of affordable housing units displacing millions of poor and working-class people of color. These unintended consequences of the Federal Housing Act of 1940, also referred to as the Urban Renewal Act, prompted James Baldwin, one of America's most prolific and highly regarded Post-War writers, to describe this Federally funded effort as the Negro Removal Program.

The lack of institutional support for the Civil Rights Movement among city planners and urban designers prompted Paul Davidoff, a young planning professor at the University of Pennsylvania, to write his seminal article, "Advocacy and American Pluralism" which appeared in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* in 1965. Nearly fifty years after its original publication, this article remains one of the most important and often cited articles among American urban scholars. It highlights the tendency of professionals working for large city and regional planning agencies to produce plans that advance the economic and political interests of major developers, real estate interests, and financial corporations at the expense of poor and working-class communities. After critiquing the idea of a "unitary" public interest, Davidoff challenged planners and designers to work with the most marginalized groups in the city to prepare high quality plans that would address the increasingly uneven pattern of metropolitan development in the U.S.

Davidoff advocated a future in which city planning commissioners would function, similar to judges in American courtrooms, as the final arbiters of the competing benefits and costs of alternative plans. He imagined city planners working for centralized planning agencies presenting their vision of the future supported by their best theoretical arguments, empirical research, and best practice cases. The proposals of these planners would be challenged by advocacy planners working for poor and working-class communities who would present their alternative plans supported by their most compelling theories and empirical findings. City planning commissioners, assisted by repre-

sentatives of the public, would then engage in a critical examination of the competing claims of these mainstream and grassroots plans seeking to select the best one or, in some cases, to facilitate the integration of the best features of each scheme.

In the years following the publication of Davidoff's article, a small group of progressive-minded American planners established Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO) to encourage professionals to work with poor and working class communities to promote redistributive urban plans, policies, and programs using highly participatory planning processes. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, growing numbers of planners influenced by PEO and its successor organization, Planners Network (PN), ignored employment opportunities within mainstream planning agencies which they viewed as being corporate dominated to assist community-based organizations in producing alternative plans designed to redistribute wealth and power to the often-overlooked urban poor.

These early "advocacy planners" were soon joined by others who preferred to promote redistributive urban policies using participatory planning from within local government. Inspired by the work of Norm Krumholz, Cleveland's long-time planning director, these "equity planners" advanced policies and procedures to expand opportunities for residents with the fewest choices. While advocacy and equity planners achieved significant results in the 1970s and 1980s, their methods proved ineffective in addressing the combined efforts of the massive suburbanization, deindustrialization, and disinvestment that devastated so many of the poorest communities within the industrial cities of the Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern Regions of the U.S. - often-referred to as the "American Rustbelt".

In the early 1990s, a small group of progressive planners and designers strongly influenced by Davidoff's work, in partnership with an impressive group of grassroots leaders from East St. Louis, developed a new approach to resident-led planning, design, and development. Working through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP), these university faculty and grassroots leaders developed an innovative approach to transforming conditions in planning contexts characterized by scarce resources, concentrated power, and extreme social distance. These individuals devised an empowerment approach to community planning and development that integrated the core theories, methods, and practices of participatory action research, direct action organizing, and popular education into a novel approach to planning offering non-elites a powerful new strategy for affecting the major public and private investment decisions that, to a large extent, determine the quality of urban and rural life. This article described the process by which participants in this long-term community/university partnership used empowerment planning to stabilize several of the poorest residential neighborhoods in this once-vibrant and still-proud riverfront community. It also discusses how empowerment planning, as developed by organic intellectuals and university faculty working in East St. Louis' most distressed neighborhoods has been successfully replicated by progressive planners promoting more equitable and sustainable approaches to urban revitalization in numerous other American and European communities.

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Carlo Cellamare

# Self-organization, appropriation of places and production of urbanity

## Self-organization, Appropriation of places, Urbanity

In this historical phase, cities are intensely crossed by processes and practices of appropriation and re-appropriation of places and life environments. Motivations are at different levels: necessity, political and personal. The fieldwork shows, however, another reason, namely a need for urbanity and quality of urban life. Space is the medium of all these experiences. Places and everyday life have a strong centrality in them. In fact, these experiences find in the texture and spatiality of places their solidification point, their drive and motivation, often their *raison d'être*, as well as an activator for their passion. A place is a material and significant space, which precipitates the linear chronographic time and turns it into everyday lifetime. The process of self-organization in / with the territory becomes a principle and a process of individuation. Finally, some experiences directly and explicitly pose questions about the modes of production of politics and institutions, thus entering into a broad debate.

### Introduction. Autonomy and the search for meaning

In this historical phase, cities are intensely crossed by processes and practices of appropriation and re-appropriation of places and life environments. These are, in fact, very different experiences: urban gardens, forms of self-management of a self-made informal city, parkour, occupations of houses, self-managed green spaces, recently occupied sites of cultural production (theatres and so on), the temporary use of abandoned areas as well as the use of public spaces for organized group activities. Such experiences are in progress not only in Italy, but all over the world (Hou 2010), including Western 'developed' and neo-liberal world; and it's no accident, although one would expect these areas to be more refractory to self-organization, mainly because cities appear to be more efficient, fully provided with all services not to mention offers and opportunities. Such practices and processes have always been present in cities, with degrees and in different ways, but today they are in the forefront, not only because some lines of research (and political movements as well) pay to them specific attention by raising an important debate at international level (and here we clearly refer to the 'right to the city' and to the related on-going debate), but also because they constitute an extremely broad landscape gradually widening with the most diverse experiences. This

phenomenon appears even more interesting if we consider that it affects pervasively heavily planned and institutionalized Western cities, thus highlighting a reaction, almost a search for an alternative to control and neoliberal development, a form of autonomy and research of meaning within the more or less tight mesh of the planned city.

### Self-organization and the need for urbanity

Experiences vary a lot, regarding not only the typology of self-made city: 'informal', 'abusive' or else, although self-made city plays a pivotal role in urban development and response to housing needs in the Southern hemisphere. Even within the same type of experience, such as urban gardens, we encounter important differences at many levels, from the subjects involved to the organizational forms, from the type of activity to the culture of the public and the connection to the urban environment, and so on. That is why it is so important to observe these experiences in their specificity (see for example Attili 2013, on urban gardens) to grasp their meaning and implications.

Motivations, in this variety of instances, are diverse and may be not present all together. Nonetheless, they represent the foundations of the experiences themselves. Motivations are at different levels: necessity, political and personal. First, the practices of appropriation often respond to a material necessity,

to a shared social need: occupations for residential purposes (based obviously on the housing crisis) are the main occurrence; but also occupations of places of cultural production, such as theatres and movie theatres (they touch, as in the case of Teatro Valle Occupato in Rome, the issue of job insecurity in the industry of culture and entertainment). Necessity is also at the basis of urban gardens, peri-urban agriculture and occupation / use of public lands, and even more in experiences such as 'recovered factories': in all these cases necessity of job and livelihood plays a crucial role. Often self-organization responds to a different type of necessity, for instance the demand for services that emerge in the city: the demand for green areas (and hence the extensive experience of local committees managing or even building gardens and green areas), for public spaces or spaces for leisure and cultural activities at the local level (as in the experience of S.Cu.P., Scuola di Cultura Popolare, in the Appio-Tuscolano neighbourhood, Rome). These experiences also respond to deficiencies in public administration and, by doing so, they play a compensating role, not untinged with some ambivalence.<sup>1</sup>

The second motivation is a strictly political one. Often these initiatives aim at countering speculative actions or transformation of sites of public interest within the city, such as in the case of theatres or barracks, often of considerable historical and architectural value (Teatro Valle or Cinema America in Rome and Teatro Marinoni in Venice are only a few examples). But they can also be 'restitutions' (in terms of utilization of services and public spaces) to citizenship of properties abandoned or unused, or of productive land – often public property – also abandoned or unused, as in the case of the public gardens or lands. In addition to these political goals, though, almost all experiences have the goal of proposing alternative models of development in explicit contrast with the 'neo-liberal' model: this gives ample way to extremely interesting experimentation, surely not easy to implement, since the field is the widest and complex. Experimentation touches various aspects: the establishment of a collective entity for the management; the identification of innovative institutional subjects (such as foundations that value an open and instituting participatory process in the definition of the subject and decision-making); the type of cultural production, innovative and experimental in content and method; quality agricultural production with low environmental impact; the construction of local networks to support local economies. Creative although challenging solutions are searched and practised, thus shaping alternative models of development and management, such as occupation (failing other solutions), common own-

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<sup>1</sup> Some argue about the dangers inherent in such a compensating role, especially without a reminder to public administration on its responsibilities, precisely because it could cover up deficiencies and contribute to remove the public presence from the territory and from its duties.

ership or the attempt to establish foundations as 'common goods' (the challenging road taken by Teatro Valle Occupato). If, on the one hand, some experiences give rise to ideological positions and messages (as is the case in the ubiquitous concept of 'common good'), on the other hand they often become occasion for profound cultural and political elaboration, supported by training, debate and discussion.

Thirdly, there is a personal dimension that is not to be underestimated. It's difficult to investigate, but it is clear for example in the choices people make to start these initiatives (for example, in the search for alternative models of life in urban gardening or urban and peri-urban agriculture) as well as in how processes are managed and lived, thus giving great value to relationships (Pisano 2013) not mediated by ideologies or even less interest. These are attitudes that go beyond the issue of 'lifestyle' that is often raised when it comes to sustainability (and which has its own importance, too; Manzini, Jegou 2003), to go and touch a profound dimension of the person and of their life project.

These three dimensions are in fact inseparable and mutually influence each other. Indeed, they are an innovative element: for example, political action and thought are reconsidered in the light of a profound sociality and a tight connection to daily life; responses to social needs are searched within different ideas of city and alternative practices for coexistence. However, not all dimensions are always present: many experiences have essentially practical reasons and do not assume political motives.

The fieldwork shows, however, another reason, which emerges not only in individuals, but in collectives, often in the social dimension of the local coexistence, namely a need for urbanity and quality of urban life, different from the other reasons mentioned and maybe impossible to inscribe in the current categories. Beyond legitimate basic needs, there is the need of quality of life, understood in terms of people's ability to shape and characterize the place where they live, to feel it as their own, to build a constructive relationship with the city (and not just to suffer it), to participate and to feel co-responsible for choices regarding their own life environment, to create conditions for a real and deep social life, to get free from hetero-directed models influenced only by interest and profit, to decolonize the collective concept of inhabiting, to give value to memory and beauty, to pay attention to the stories of inhabitants and to everyday life, to give shape to the collective planning skills. These are concerns that the current urban development appears to have forgotten and on which general attention, beyond social or cultural differences, seems now to converge. Moreover, the need for urbanity, differently from the reasons above, emerges not only on a personal level, but also necessarily at a collective level. It is constitutive of the very idea of appropriation of places and of self-organization, which would not otherwise exist.

Often, urbanity and urban quality grow in the evo-

lution of the experience: at the Cinema Palazzo in Rome deep relationship and collaboration with local communities have developed over time, as well as in the experience of Cinema America in Trastevere; the relationship with the territory as well as activities and useful services to the local environment are often constituents of the experience itself in the case of occupied factories; the relationship with buyers on the one hand and with manufacturers on the other is a specific area of work and development in the case of GAS (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale, solidarity-based purchasing groups) and peri-urban agriculture.<sup>2</sup>

Many of these experiences are affected by an ideological legacy: it suffices to remark how a term such as re-appropriation seems to evoke a return to something lost or taken away by development, and this could be very questionable.

On the other hand, from the point of view of the search for meaning, processes and practices of re-appropriation are a sign of vitality of the city and a response to alienation not only in the work, but in the very forms of urbanity (Harvey 2012; Brenner, Theodore 2002; Brenner Marcuse, Mayer 2012), in an age of advanced capitalism in which cities understood as a (urban and socio-economic) whole exploited, in ways ranging from the financialization of the settlement processes to 'planned consumption' devices (Lefebvre 1968). Self-organization is a response to the commodification of the city (Harvey 2012; Schmid 2012) and to the expropriation of creative design skills of the inhabitants, as well as of their ability to be active protagonists in the construction of the city. At the same time, they are processes of re-signification of places and ways of living together, in which people, whether they are residents or other individuals who have established a deep relationship with the places, act practices that give meaning to their life environments (Cellamare 2011).

### **Appropriation of places, everyday life and the *Baron in the Trees***

Space is the medium of all these experiences. Places and everyday life have a strong centrality in them. In fact, these experiences find in the texture and spatiality of places (understood as deep intertwining of tangible and intangible dimensions) their solidification point, their drive and motivation, often their *raison d'être*, as well as an activator for their passion. A place is a material and significant space,

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2 This is also not untinged by some ambivalence. Economist Bruno Amoroso has argued that, in fact, the development of direct relations between producers and buyers, the so-called "short networks", mostly shown in their positive side (reconstruction of relationships, even with territories, deleted from market), still completely skips the economic role and social function of small businesses within the neighbourhoods, thus weakening a network of relationships that instead is very important within urban environment, and has been already put in jeopardy by the massive presence of great distribution and shopping malls.

which precipitates the linear chronographic time and turns it into everyday lifetime, giving him a qualification against the stream that modernity has accustomed us to perceive as continuous and homogeneous, and therefore alienating (Gasparini 2001). Places, even in their physicality, with the concrete problems that arise from them and where the needs of each individual collide, are often at the same time means and the cause of social interaction and politics. The process of self-organization in / with the territory becomes a principle and a process of individuation (Simondon 1989; Stiegler 2006).

It is a very real and concrete space, which has to do with life and in particular with daily life. The places, urban and territorial environments are also 'spaces of practicable action', the 'manipulative area' (Jedlowski 2005) of a community in action. These experiences try to find a dimension of sense within the space of contemporary city, which is generally suffered and overdetermined, mostly generated by hetero-directed processes.

Their protagonists, in accordance with a sort of 'reality principle', are well aware of the strength and consistency of these processes, of their role in the construction of the city, which is hard to overturn and face directly. They open a gap in the network of constraints and imposed rules (often implicit, unspoken and unwritten), in contexts that are often stiffened by formalization and institutionalization, and conditioned by economics prevailing over politics. They aim at building and managing a sort of parallel space, by experimenting with new forms of cohabitation and then promoting them in wider contexts, often by building relationships within the territory and local solidarity networks. These experiences share the attempt to reconstruct a path of autonomy, understood as a 'practice of freedom' (Foucault 2001), as in the experience of *Baron in the Trees* by Italo Calvino (1957) who, in order to pursue what he believed in, had to take a completely different path from the ones given as viable in his reality.

Nevertheless, before any intentional policy or drive to build new institutions, the basic goal of self-organization is to pursue an autonomous social organization on the territory, regardless of external, institutional or statutory overdeterminations.

### **Self-organization and the culture of the public**

The experiences of self-organization differ greatly depending on their culture of the public. The idea and the cultures of the public can be very different (Cancellieri, Ostanel 2014) and generate different kind of problems.

In an consolidated anarchist approach (Ward 1973, 1997), if we lived in a state of complete self-organization, and if problems could be addressed by the community in total independence and without the influence of socio-economic models, people involved would be more strongly empowered, driven by a collaborative spirit, able to evaluate the pros and cons of choices and oriented to consider the collective interest also useful for the individual.

Where the neo-liberal model of society and culture prevails, however, the situation is quite different. It's the case, for example, of illegally self-build neighbourhoods, often born not to respond to a real housing need, but for reasons of mere convenience (i.e. to have access to dwellings that emulates those of affluent social classes, but without having to go through the real estate market, which of course would be much more expensive), make a sort of social upgrade. In these unauthorized neighbourhoods forms of self-management not to say self-government entrusted to the consortia owners are quite frequent. This leads to significant distortions<sup>3</sup>, such as forms of exclusionary territoriality or an utilitarian logic in the management of 'public affairs'; a clear example is the absence (or only marginal presence) of public spaces or green areas, in favour instead of the quality of private spaces (so much so that often the local neighbourhood committees, devoted to the quality of public spaces and green areas, often collide with the consortia of owners). In such contexts, urbanism often tends to move towards a logic of 'ownership' and private interest, defending the private sphere against the public one and with goals of self-promotion in the social scale.

At the same time, we have to look carefully at the meaning of the term 'own' when used in a process of appropriation (Fava 2014). Who is exactly the 'owner'? This logic can clearly result in exclusionary dynamics<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, many experiences, beginning with Teatro Valle Occupato in Rome, pay special attention to their constitution modes and to how they involve people in choices and orientations.

### Self-organization and conflict

In addition, conflict is differently shaped. Traditional definition of conflict teaches that: «To actually be such – that is, a structured social relation and not just a contest between individuals – conflict must mobilize an aggregate of people who, on the basis of both quantitative variables (a number of members who reach the critical mass) and qualitative (sharing a religious, political, social etc. vision), are able to act in a coordinated and effective manner» (Battistelli 2012: 283). Often in literature it is stressed how conflict is constitutive of the city and how it plays a pivotal role in political and social life (Battistelli 2012; Vv. Aa. 2012). Elsewhere scholars state the key role of conflict in making meaningful participatory processes: there is no participation without conflict (Cellamare 2011; Pasqui 2010, 2012).

Conflict, however, seems to take on different forms today that are no longer those the traditional political ones, supported by a widespread social mobilization. For this reason, in some cases it seems to lose its political significance and its heuristic and constructive power, so much so that some lament

its loss (Vv. Aa. 2012). However, this change can be interpreted differently, and the evolution of the conflict can also represent the emergence of different modes of political action and the expression of innovative energies. It is true, of course, that many urban practices and social actions deliberately avoid conflict in order to find a condition of its existence independently from political intentional action. In some cases conflict is avoided in order to practice alternative routes and build (almost to follow the logic of tactics à la de Certeau) independent paths (even in the literal sense of the word), ways of interpreting the city and space other than that of the urban structure and social models often impose on us. A clear example of this is parkour, with his ability (which is also a goal, and carries with it a great symbolic significance) to seek alternative routes within the spaces of movement in the city, often bypassing the obstacles which the modern city defines fixed routes and limits and channels and controls persons and bodies, and «practicing» alternative routes, often along lines of fracture, zones of weak resistance. The conflict loses its value as a tool for innovation in a structured political debate or in a social conflict, to leave space for an alternative form of life.

An evolution of the forms of conflict, in other ways and in very different instances, is also acknowledged in occupations of places of cultural production, such as Teatro Valle Occupato or Cinema Palazzo in Rome, or in the early experiences of 'recovered factories' in Italy. In these experiences direct conflict in the traditional sense of the term is avoided (and in this respect they differ completely, for example, from the *centri sociali* developed in the Seventies and Eighties in Rome: those were closed and marked by conflict, these are open and seek to create spaces of autonomy), while obviously maintaining a climate of conflict, to be able to work on the construction of an alternative that is primarily cultural and then political, through direct experience in the practice of organization, through relationship with territories and territorial networks at local and super-local level and in some cases even through the search for an institutional recognition, prepared by a great work in the cultural field. It is on this cultural ground where new and innovative categories of politics and institutions are worked out, in a manner not hegemonic, but inclusive, that must root the search for innovation and autonomy outside of the traditional areas of conflict and political debate, which are considered inadequate and in fact colonized by the prevalence of economics over politics.

### Self-organization and production of politics and institutions

Some experiences directly and explicitly pose questions about the modes of production of politics and institutions, thus entering into a broad debate (Revelli 2013; Graeber 2007) and often becoming involved in a specific cultural elaboration. However, also self-organization experiences that do not do it explicitly, in fact indirectly raise the issue.

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3 More about this in Cellamare (edited by, 2013).

4 The recent remarks by Piero Bevilacqua (2014) on "exclusionary property" are very interesting.

The first remark is about action, the idea to build and implement politics through action and practice. It is not the mere reduction of politics to a 'doing', but the belief that politics is not just a product of thought, but it is also the outcome of critical experience and self-evaluation, a collective practice of life. Politics is worked and re-worked out through action. Secondly, self-organized action has the relevant purpose to re-build 'public space' (a concept often abused and turned into a slogan), no longer seen as an abstract category of modernity or worn-out place in the traditional political debate, but as a place of production of politics that gives voice to the experiences and questions of everyday shared life, and hosts a debate free from preconceived ideologies. A 'public space' then that is rooted in the needs and demands of people in everyday life, and searches answers to those, where the matter is not one position prevailing on another but the path of consensus, the process leading to the construction of a shared position and responds to the needs expressed and shared.

Third, self-organization experiences want to move the places of production of politics and to rethink its mode. These experiences attempt to reconstruct the political sphere, not as a separate category with its specific rules, but as in-between, that is, starting from the social sphere in a form that you might consider more basal. If politics, especially understood in its trivializing declination of governance of public affairs, has been heavily weakened by economics and fails to produce a different perspective, it is necessary to revitalize it not moving from consolidated forms of transmission of meanings from social to political (parties, intermediary agencies, etc.) but moving from the basal level, rooted in the social dynamic<sup>5</sup> between diverse persons (Zagrebelsky 2013), thus calling into question the established categories of politics and the political cultures themselves. Putting it in the terms proposed by Castoriadis (1975), this means breaking the mould of 'instituted society' to re-start from the vitality and 'magma of meanings' of 'instituting society'.

This reconstructive process that starts from people and narratives has its focus in the territory, as a place of daily life, as a place of direct engagement with experience, with personal needs that become social, as a place of practicality, empathy and coexistence. As many other authors (Revelli 2013; Abruzzese 2012) have argued, for politics to re-gain its meaning, it must move from the territories; not as localism but as a place to reconstruct meaning. Several authors (including, for example, Stiegler 2006) draw attention to the need for a re-enchantment of politics. Territory as 'life context' is just the place and the medium of such a re-enchantment.

In consequence of this approach, and here I come

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 5 The space of this article does not allow it, but it would be interesting to develop the remarks made by Gramsci (1997) in the *Prison Notebooks*, for example the question of "civil society".

to the fourth point, experiences of self-organization pose the problem of how to re-think institutions. Unlike what happened in many past experiences, the *centri sociali* of the Seventies and Eighties for example, the theme of the institutions is crucial here. Teatro Valle Occupato has specifically worked on it, but also other experiences, even if only indirectly, have faced it. From the Foundation for Teatro Valle Occupato to the public ownership of Cinema America in Rome, from the collective purchase for the Isle of Poveglia in Venice to the debate about the use of public lands and to the cooperatives for the management of recovered factories, the question is pivotal, although articulated in different ways. The amount of energy invested on these issues, just as in the case of Teatro Valle Occupato who involved a number of scholars<sup>6</sup>, including high-level, and the extensive work of discussion, debate, group and communication work, testify to the great importance that is assigned to these themes. In some ways, it may seem ambiguous, if not contradictory with their great effort towards autonomy and their search for alternative forms of politics. However, more than to accept an institutional and external system, they attempt to respond to a twofold objective: to gain institutional recognition, the recognizability (which means a force, and before that a possibility, of action) as a political entity and even as a producer of work and culture; and to achieve this through innovative forms that express the diversity of paths practiced<sup>7</sup>. The vehemence, including evictions, with whom institutions (from Parliament to Prefecture) have recently responded, at least in Rome (particularly in the case of Teatro Valle), on precisely the grounds of rethinking institutional subjects, testifies to the importance and at the same time the risk of the path taken, which apparently undermines institutions and consolidated power. The opposition and the difficulty encountered by Valle are evidence of how the institutional dimension doesn't affect only the juridical ground but also power relations. Their experience, however, leaves open the way to experimentation and actions in the field of self-organization, making it possible to break the mould.

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 6 Suffice to mention Ugo Mattei (2011) and Marella (2012), as well as the work made by the Rodotà Commission.

7 We do not enter here into the merit of the institutional forms suggested and carried out, which are exposed in the proposed Statute of the Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene Comune. Please refer to the Teatro Valle Occupato website and to the extensive published materials for this matter.

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Francesca Cognetti

# What forms of participation today?

## Forms, pressures, competences

### Participation, Deliberation, Interaction

The field of participation is an already mature area of policies, which has gone through different cycles intertwined with the issues of urban government and social mobilization. Today, the varied framework of experiences requires a careful examination of the origin and the pressures concerned with the different cases (in a combination of top-down and bottom-up pressures); of the forms taken by processes (of deliberative nature or action-oriented), of the outcomes, especially in terms of improvement in social and institutional capabilities. Starting from these three interpretive lenses (forms, pressures and outcomes) the paper investigates the conditions under which participation, from being a planning technique, can constitute itself as a practice of active citizenship.

The theme of involving many actors in urban and territorial policies has been treated in some niche experiences during the Twentieth Century in Italy (Savoldi 2006; Laino 2010), but it has had a wide diffusion since the Nineties due to some new political, social and administrative conditions.

The design and the adoption by the European Union of a first set of programmes, which pushed the member States to make participation one of the main instruments of intervention, is one of the key elements that allowed administrators and local entities to

directly cope with these issues. The first experimentations of integrated urban regeneration programmes, in the national field, like *Urban Pilot Projects* (1993) and *Urban 1* (1994), and the consecutive Italian versions *Contratto di quartiere I* (1998) and *Urban Italia* (2000), belong to those years.

Moreover, it is possible to remark that, in the same years, broad and structured participatory paths combined with a practice of political leadership connected with direct commitment by administrators. The success of many participation experiences effectively depended on the capability of institutions to listen to citizens and inhabitants during decision-making processes. The implementation of the direct election of Mayors helped to change the style of government, leading to the rise of personalities able to connect visions of the future with mobiliza-

tion 'from the bottom up' and 'political piloting' capability, through the redefinition of a field of practices, competences, routines and rhetorics (Balducci, Calvaresi 2005).

If, in previous times, pressures towards the activation of participatory processes were basically bottom-up, and possibly forced institutions to accept instances and requests advanced by social movements, in 1990s we can see the implementation of design practices in which public administrations try to involve and to include citizens.

The background of these changes has to be found also in the high complexity of social context and of decision-making areas: the crisis of political representation and intermediate structures, together with the weakness of public actors as sole decision-makers, made evident the necessity to extend the arenas (to include different institutions, but also associations, organizations of interests, groups of citizens). More than a decade after the first experimentations, the institutional paths to participation have become diffused in Italy. Today, participation is significant in new urban renewal programmes and, always more frequently, adopted by new plans for the government of territory at the urban scale (projects to reuse public spaces, participation processes within the design of new urban plans, participatory budgetings).

After all, a new social entities' awareness has grown up about the opportunity to look for forms of interac-

tion with the institutional sphere, without adversarial relations, which can combine pressures 'from the bottom up' and pressures 'from the top down'.

### Cycles of participation

According to a classification proposed by Fareri (2004) it is possible to identify some references about the origin and the characteristics of participatory approaches in Italy, identifying a legacy derived from different cycles of participation.

The first one dates back to the 1970s, we can define it as the 'social conflict' cycle. It is characterized by the establishment of social movements 'from the bottom up', which «coincide with the break into the city, and about the issues related to the city, of movements that until then had remained inside the factories» (Fareri op.cit.)

These movements were clearly characterized on the ideological level and by homogeneous social composition; they redefined the proletariat on the urban level and played on the antagonism against institutions, claiming a right to alternative ways of city making. The characteristics of the 1970s movements are related to the general features of social movements (also those arose in recent years, at the global scale); they are entities based upon shared beliefs and solidarity, committed to antagonistic approaches mainly expressed through protests. Protest, when covered by the mass media, is seen as a political resource by powerless groups, which can be meant as groups lacking resources that can be directly exchanged with decision-makers (Della Porta 2009).

In the perspective of protest as a form of request for a larger public intervention, the diffusion of forms of participation 'from the bottom up' affected many fields, with a strong identification between territories, political realities and local communities. On the level of policies, as a result of actions carried out by neighborhood committees, one of the consequences of this diffusion was the establishment of decentralized bodies like the *District Councils*, the mission of which was to 'bring into neighborhoods' the local government functions and to create territorially well-established arenas for discussion.

This attempt to institutionalize local movements is perhaps one of the reasons that led to the decline of this cycle. Although they were an innovation and wanted to ease the relations between citizens and administrators, these institutional bodies were affected by many rigidities and by the difficulty to really engage with the local situations where they operated.

"In the years that followed, the 1970s participatory and protesting wave has been in some way reshaped and harnessed by these new instruments of 'subordinate participation', they almost deprived it of its radical contents. The recognition of the scarcity of results is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the downturn in interest in participation for several years" (Petrillo 2006).

This decline has been followed by the rise of a second cycle, at the beginning of the 1980s. It had

different features and was associated with the so-called 'NIMBY (not In My Back Yard) Syndrome'. The previous form of mobilization, which was tied to an 'actor-movement', faded into new characteristics of self-organization. It concerned groups of citizens getting together to deal with a specific issue, especially to oppose the implementation of great urban transformation projects fostered by institutions. Citizens' committees established themselves *ad hoc*, with the only aim to oppose a project or a public policy, and they were destined to dissolve once the case was over. They were neutral arenas, without political belonging, tied to a delimited goal, which also defined their duration. This dynamics "facilitate the consensus of 'common citizens' and forms of involvement that can be intense (in the immediate present) and few demanding (in the future). The informal character allows flexibility and room for maneuver, which are barely practicable by more official and structured organizations" (Bobbio 1999). These entities establish themselves very quickly, entrenching themselves in a narrow social tissue that has a poor repertoire of forms of protest. Their characteristics are decisively 'reactive'. This defensive trait underlines the will to 'participate' not so much to obtain some benefit, but only to avoid decisions that are considered as damaging. The outcome of this approach is a proper 'clash', through an attitude inspired by rejection of any project-oriented logic, in the name of a local and particular interest. Therefore, these organizations ask the political world 'to not intervene', to dismiss the project or to move it elsewhere. The diffusion of these groups in the 1990s can be related to the gradual lack of forms of mediation between society and institutions, which led to proliferation of forms of direct representation that gave voice to local complaints. This phenomenon can be seen as a "signal of a renaissance of basic democracy (meaning that they allow the expression of requests that, in the past, would have been softened by political mediation) or as the menacing display of the 'anti-politics' (in the sense that they refuse to take any responsibility for the 'common good')" (Bobbio op.cit.).

The third cycle of participation relates to the 1990s and it rises, at least in part, as an attempt by institutional entities to deal with the problems of decision-making and effectiveness created by the difficulties of the past period. In some way, there is a reversal of perspective. If, in previous cycles, pressures towards the activation of participatory processes were 'from the bottom up', and institutions possibly accepted instances and requests advanced by movements, in the 1990s design practices were established by public administrations to involve and to include citizens in the decisions for the city. That is also the period in which the dominant models of public intervention fall into a definitive crisis, and the involvement of inhabitants therefore becomes a condition for both understanding objectives (and perceptions) of the policy recipients, and researching new solutions on the level of economic sustainability and of

services management.

It is possible to highlight some elements that characterize this third cycle: participation is proposed 'from the top down' toward society, and it is meant as a mode of design and government (by institutions) rather than an instrument to play the conflict (by movements). The working field of participation is the local area, and inhabitants become central as bearers of the specificity of a particular environment. In the background, on the one hand, public policies lose part of their universal nature, and, on the other, the roles of administrators (and the technicians supporting them) as sole policy makers disappear: actions begin to be established as social and design processes, in which all the actors can play a significant role.

### **What forms of participation today? Where do they meet? From the 'top down' or 'bottom up'?**

When trying to outline how the field of participation is constituted today, it is possible to say that we are registering the permanence, in various ways, of the aforementioned cycles, but also the development of new methods. In the last decade, it seems increasingly evident the need to adopt new forms of city government, which have to include ways of interaction with a plurality of actors. Terms such as *inclusion*, *partnership* and *participation* characterize different projects and policies in the field of urban transformation, but also in the field of social cohesion, of cultural animation and integration. Therefore, many new areas of participation are established, which are often promoted by institutions, but this diffusion does not necessarily correspond to higher openness and effectiveness of the processes. On the contrary, there is the risk that participation will change into a 'procedural form' that leads to the loss of its innovative tension. This is one of the paradoxes of participation (Miessen 2010): the areas in which it is produced can also be reduced to 'weak' forms of consultation, which have low capability to influence public choices merely in terms of consensus building and conflict containment in a perspective of renewal of conditions for a 'good politics', which is important but not sufficient. The risk is that of creating a 'selected access' arena (Paba 2009) in the sense that only those forces (institutional, private, third-sector entities and associations) that have instruments to access the real areas of design are involved, therefore there is not a significant redefinition of power relations and structures of democracy. The paradox is that participation itself can become a way of exclusion, especially of the weaker actors, who do not have instruments to represent themselves. On the other hand, participation 'from the bottom up' has structured itself in forms that are partially new, not always plainly confrontational as they were in the past. Today actors with a history of conflict, but also the more recent ones arose from the pressure at 'making' (Cellamare 2014), undertake initiatives that effectively deal with the realization of projects, testing their ideas and capabilities. Social disadvantage

and exclusion, top-down mega-projects, disused areas, neglected green areas and models of consumption are some of the issues experienced by promoters as fields to work on in a perspective of social and physical transformation of the city, often starting from small gestures of the everyday life also linked to new lifestyles (Jegou, Manzini 2008). These experiences are also important occasions to 'cultivate sociability' in connection with the promotion of a project, experimenting relations, sharing of knowledges, new expressiveness, alternative models of consumption: in many cases these are 'social experiences' that concern the dimension of appropriation and the creation of common paths.

Therefore, many pressures towards participation coexist today, and they have two opposite origins: from the top and from the bottom. If, in fact, the start of participatory processes mainly depends on the initiative of local administrations, which for various reasons are oriented towards an enlarged management of their power, it is also true that, in other cases, it is possible to reach structured experiences of participation through long-lasting disputes and claims arose from civil society. All projects of participatory nature combine these components (top-down and bottom-up) in different ways, depending on the game between actors, in a *continuum* in which opposite poles are represented, on the one hand, by the processes of listening to citizens (which are established by institutions to see the policy recipients' point of view), on the other hand, by self-organization experiences of groups and committees in the absence of public institutions. Between these two extremes there is an interesting range of 'hybrid' experiences (such as the management of public property spaces, the 'conduct' of proximity services and the activation of urban spaces), in which it is possible to find forms of collaboration between different actors. In these cases, the roles and responsibilities of institutions and citizens are pushed to find new orientations beyond the business-as-usual.

### **The forms of participation.**

#### **Deliberative processes vs. design processes**

Participatory processes are characterized by networks of promoters, but also by the forms they take, which are of different types. Schematically, it is possible to identify processes that are oriented to the opening of arenas for the definition of public problems, or processes oriented to deal with a problem through the construction of an action-project. Starting to distinguish between 'deliberative processes' and 'design processes', within the large framework of processes of interaction, can be useful in recognizing different ways of interpreting and addressing participation.

On the one hand, in fact, participation is aimed at performing the match (and the 'translation') between political will and people's desires. The main purpose is to construct arenas for discussion and sharing that favor the possibility that "interested actors will constitute themselves as an 'investigating commu-

nity' supported by mutual and collective learning between co-protagonists" (Sclavi 2010). The outcome is an increased awareness of public choices, a new 'decision' for the government of the city, a renewal of the places for discussion and debate. The idea is to broaden public discussion, involving all those who bear the consequences of specific decisions. It is through this enlargement that it is possible to open up a debate about the subject of choices and their implications, which can improve the content of decisions and increase collective intelligence. In other words, inclusion is aimed at allowing a "cognitive enrichment" (Bobbio 2013).

Participation of deliberative nature, therefore, operates on cognitive resources and on the creation of a relational context: on the one hand, rulers can recognize citizens' preferences and prove their accountability, on the other, citizens can express their point of view and then inquire about decisions (Florida 2012). This process is not necessarily an occasion to remove differences and conflicts, but it can create an arena in which disagreements can be expressed in a reflective and informed way.

Those who practice this kind of participation emphasize that places and instruments of discussion have to be structured with the higher care in the identification of participants, the offering of debate, the conduction of processes and the organization of the physical space; citizens should be enabled to get balanced informations, to consult experts with different backgrounds, to express their opinions. These practitioners also underline that deliberation itself can be structured in very different ways, depending on the territorial and political context (Romano 2012).

Participation, when oriented toward the construction of design processes, can be called 'interactive design' or "design via social interaction" (Cognetti 2012); it is the kind of collaborative process that is aimed at treating a complex problem, also through the realization of a project or the implementation of a policy. We can say that the result of participation is not so much a decision or the opening of areas for discussion and debate, but it is an outcome that is primarily concerned with territorial and urban issues (policies, scenarios of change, reuse projects, modification programmes, and transformations). Interaction aimed at a physical structure helps participants to develop a real argument made of small advances in contents, which often take place more easily if concerned with the dimension of 'making' and the construction of a common space, which is not a deliberative space but a physical one.

Design via social interaction is an attempt to "construct a meaning and a common space, starting from the direct sharing of the 'things to do' related to interests and common goods" (Laino op. cit.). This activity does not necessarily refer to the design of spaces, but to design processes - in a broad sense - that start from places (a small garden, a disused building, an urban plan, an event in public spaces, a community center, etc.); it also refers to the pos-

sibility to establish new links with the territory based upon design and action, upon the construction of collective spaces of identity and self-representation. It can be called "a cultural process starting from places" (Hannerz 2001). The process of *place making* (Cottino 2010; Silbergberg 2013) should wisely combine very different elements: uses and practices, mechanisms of appropriation, transformations, functional structures and management structures. Experiences are not only specific physical changes; they are also processes that seem to be associated with potential for innovation on two different levels. The first level concerns the dimension of relations, in which places often become the scenario of "local micro-processes" (Bergamaschi 2012) based upon direct involvement and upon the opportunity to configure new spaces of action in the city. The second level concerns the methods of directly taking charge of urban problems, in which processes also affect the dimension of public policies in the perspective of establishing themselves as "public policies *de facto*" (Balducci 2004).

The distinction between participatory processes of different nature (deliberative and design processes), which help us to distinguish between different outcomes and dynamics of interaction, allows us to say that "in a deliberative democracy, after having argued, finally you vote or agree on a decision, whereas in participation you build up and, just because you don't vote, interaction must become more intense, forcing actors to build up" (Paba 2009).

### **The construction of social and institutional capabilities. In all the cases, work on competences**

One of the issues that is often in the background, when talking about participation, is related to competences: the actors' capabilities required to sit at a 'table of discussion', to assume a design role, to listen to the point of view of others, to make choices and decisions. These are competences held by individuals *ex-ante*, but they are also capabilities that can be acquired during the participation process, and the process should in part take charge of them. The emphasis on competences is important because it questions the legacies of participation: participatory processes are time-limited, but what remains at the end of the course? Among the results, an important aspect is concerned with what the different actors have learned. Also important it is what they have acquired both in terms of new instruments for collaboration, discussion, exchange, and in terms of new knowledge and awareness of problems and solutions. The "approach to capabilities", outlined by Sen, puts special emphasis on these aspects in the theoretical perspective of "basic social justice". It raises a fundamental question about democracy: what can each person do or be? Some important issues about the government of society derive from this question, they relate to (Sen 1999): the creation of opportunities for everyone (every person is a target); the defense of freedom of choice

(holding that the most important good for society is the promotion of a set of opportunities that people can put in to practice, or not); the attention to social injustice and entrenched inequalities (in particular, the lack of capabilities caused by marginalization and discrimination).

Capabilities, as defined, are both individual and interior, but they are also “combined abilities” (Nussbaum 2011), which are expressed through an exchange with a social, economic and political environment. The emphasis on capabilities, as a balance between the interior expression of self and the possibility of an exchange (collaborative or confrontational) with an external environment, has a central role when reflecting upon participation.

Under current conditions, where the arenas for discussion and decision arise from plural pressures, the construction of capabilities of society is side by side with the building of institutional capabilities. Therefore, participatory processes can be meant as processes that potentially work both on the “social activation” (Laino 2012) and on the “activation of institutions”.

Institutions are required to have new capabilities to act within horizontal processes of discussion, in which administrators are actors within others. Many participatory processes

do not deal very much with what the administrative machine learns, with how technicians open themselves to argument and with a certain inertia expressed by institutions. The administrative apparatus should accept innovations in terms of involvement; innovations should create lasting changes in the ordinary structures of management of the public policies, which could develop new procedures and techniques. Instead, very often, participation is perceived as a factor that slows down the processes and as a ‘forced’ step simply related to consensus building.

On the level of citizens, the habit to participate and the capability to share resources and to develop a design thinking approach do not belong to everyone; therefore, it is important that a participation process takes charge of the real possibilities of expression and choice that are developed within the process itself. Participation can therefore be seen as generative of contexts that allow to ‘make’ and to participate, giving more power to society but also taking charge of increasing people’s opportunities to satisfy their needs, interests and expectations.

The matter is not only about forms of redistribution of power and about the creation of a new culture of urban government; it is also about the opportunity to work on inclusive processes able to valorize social and institutional capabilities, to reinforce them, but also able to create new ones.

## Conclusion

Today the field of participation is characterized by different pressures, which have to be carefully recognized and investigated. Each of them has a point from which it derives, and this origin can be identi-

fied. The institutional dimension of processes, in fact, is often combined with tensions ‘from the bottom up’ that find new ways to channel their expression and to channel debate. Sometimes it creates a sort of ‘procedural form’ of confrontation, in which interesting premises and great expectations are followed by weak results in terms of innovation of policies. These situations are also tied to an approach that is mainly concerned with techniques; this kind of attitude has certainly helped to spread “participation” as a necessary element in the field urban policies, but also transformed it into a guided and structured path of interaction between actors. Whereas in Italy the possibility to adopt structured instruments of dialogue and interaction between citizens and institutions, on the different levels of urban government, is today consolidated, the outcomes seem to be more questionable (even in cases in which considerable resources are available). Sometimes, however, participation can establish itself not as a planning technique, but as a policy of active citizenship (Crosta 2003), generating interesting forms of learning both among institutional entities and among social entities. In order to make it happen, the capabilities of all the interacting actors have to be put to work and improved: from deliberative arenas to collaborative projects, these new contexts of interaction require completely different ways of expression and debate from everyone of us, and they cannot easily be practiced.

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Giovanni Attili

# A metaphorical path through the fractures of capitalism

## Capitalism, Social activism, Counter-environments

Nowadays there is a need to process the current massive economical and financial crisis and take advantage of the crisis as a moment to rethink what kind of world we want to live in. If it is true as Hölderlin argues, that where danger grows, so does that which saves, then the crisis can be interpreted as the opportunity to reconfigure the conditions of our lives. These new conditions cannot be conceived as an imaginative and utopic blueprint detached from reality and historical contexts. Rather they are something that is already working beneath the existing paradigms: marginal transformative potentialities that need to be named and given space. This paper will focus on these potentialities by building a metaphorical discursive path where fireflies, religion and profanations play a central role.

In 2008 a massive economical and financial crisis started affecting the lives of an increasing number of people, outlining new vulnerabilities, poverties and inequalities. The world is still struggling in the attempt of not drowning in stormy waters. While several attempts have been made to understand the causes of this crisis, no one has a clear idea about how to imagine a way out. The roots of this crisis are deeply connected with the apparently unrestrainable imposition of the so-called techno-nihilist capitalism (Magatti 2012). This paradigm promised unlimited freedom, growth, and profit and ended up producing severe social and environmental impacts.

Nowadays there is a need to process this failure and take advantage of the crisis as a moment to rethink what kind of world we want to live in. If it is true as Hölderlin argues, that where danger grows, so does that which saves, then the crisis can be interpreted as the opportunity to reconfigure the conditions of our lives.

These new conditions cannot be conceived as an imaginative and utopic blueprint detached from reality and historical contexts. Rather they are something that is already working beneath the existing paradigms: marginal transformative potentialities that need to be named and given space.

This paper will focus on these potentialities by building a metaphorical discursive path where fireflies, religion and profanations play a central role.

I start by outlining the context in which this discourse will be developed. Despite the risk of appearing ideological, I want to describe this as a religious context. After that I will name the forces that have the potential to *profane* or de-sacralize it, namely “fireflies in the darkness of night”<sup>1</sup>.

Nowadays it seems that a magnetic and suggestive religion is invading every aspect of our life. It is a permanent and worshipped religion in which work is celebrated as a cult and every working day is characterized by the extreme commitment of the worshippers (Benjamin 1997). This is the most ferocious and implacable religion that ever existed because it doesn't know redemption or rest (Agamben 2012). We are talking about the capitalist religion that nowadays is able to satisfy a whole set of preoccupations, worries and anxieties formerly answered by so-called traditional religions (Benjamin 1997). World changes and divinities adapt themselves to the new order. This religion transforms the city into an object that can be sacrificed on the altar of the God Market. As a result the city offers itself as an abundant showcase of seductive appearances that nourish a short-term spasmodic avidity and a compulsive consumerism. In this reality, life choices are nothing but shopping choices and consequently the freedom to

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<sup>1</sup> This paper represents a re-elaboration of a previous contribution that has been published in *Territorio*, no. 65.

choose seems to be equivalent to the freedom to buy. Metaphorically “the ideal conditions of wellbeing are to be and to do what you can be and do in a shopping mall: to be a client with money (or better with an unlimited credit card) in front of the widest offer of goods and services, and to choose what to buy with the greatest freedom” (Manzini 2011: 4).

From this perspective, in a city that is devoured by a consumerist greed, goods are substituted before they stop functioning. We are talking about goods that are planned to quickly become obsolete and therefore rapidly replaceable. The result is the creation of dependence mechanisms nurtured by a mass media expertise that miraculously transforms things into objects of desire. “Society is happier when people can spend and not save money [...] Consumerism fills the void that is the base of secular societies. People greatly need authority that only consumerism can satisfy” (Ballard 2006: 93).

This religious authority is venerated in the shopping mall: the only great contemporary temple where unconscious needs are created; the only sacred place shaped by the illusion that everybody can choose while everything is already decided. The multiplication of goods and profits ends up colonizing imaginaries and life spaces. Shopping becomes a successful collective ceremony, an optimistic attitude that is able to rescue people from the failure of a modernity made of rationality, liberalism and humanitarianism. A way to transgress a sense of inhibition and guilt (Lippolis 2009: 44).

A sermon resounds inside this temple: it is a new social order that doesn't recall the imperative *Must*, rather the imperative *Enjoy* (Recalcati 2007: 100). This homily promises an unlimited circulation of articles of consumption and the sacred right to the enjoyment.

It is a deadly enjoyment because it has no more contact with desire. In order to exist, desire needs a certain distance from the object. The immediate availability of the object of desire and the consequent cancellation of such distance ratifies a total eclipse of the desire. What is left out of this process is a compulsive and “lost” enjoyment: the new contemporary totalitarianism (Recalcati 2007). In this framework, the “capitalist discourse” (Lacan 1972) seems to be an hallucinatory sermon: “the illusion provoked by this discourse is to promise a general satisfaction and the suppression of every need but at the same time it produces new lacks and consequently new imaginary objects that are only able to fulfill them in an illusory way [...]. The capitalist discourse is structured around this astuteness: its aim is to produce new needs through the infinite offer of objects that are not able to answer to specific questions. Rather they are just able to produce new questions. (Recalcati 2007: 115).

If the new religious mantra tells us that everything can be consumed, then the city not only shows its goods but it ends up transforming itself into a good to be displayed on the shelf of global appetites. Urban marketing strategies generate competitions

among cities on the grounds of attractiveness and profit making: if you call an archi-star and make him create an avant-garde architecture, like the Guggenheim Museum by Frank Gehry in Bilbao, this very same city is immediately able to attract new residents, tourists but above all, new enterprises, firms, investors and capital (Harvey 2010). In order to achieve results in the global capitalist competition, cities need to offer themselves as attractive and sellable products or better still, as real enterprises (Foglio 2006: 41). As a result the dictatorship of consumerism ends up perverting the nature of the city itself.

We are facing a decline that needs to be deeply examined. We are lost in a thick darkness where clear references are getting blurred. This darkness produces suffocation, asphyxia of desire and thought blunting. And it can be really dangerous because it relies on a conformist, uncritical and unconscious adhesion to this new religion.

### Fractures

Decline is not a homogenous and contained entity. It is characterized by interstices, fractures, scraps and amnesias that are able to prefigure other paths and existential possibilities. We are talking about little heresies that transgress the order of the predominant orthodoxy. From this point of view cities are not only nodes for the accumulation of capital nor they can be merely conceived as altars for the capitalist religion. Cities are also places where conflicts emerge, where this new religion shows its inner contradictions. In these places people experiment with new ways of being together; create new languages that are able to name things differently; build social relations that can threaten what is already established. The city is where small exercises of joyful rehabilitation can become occasions to challenge the *choral autism* that characterizes us (Arminio 2013).

The attempt to name what is provocatively moving beyond the capitalist empire is a risky but necessary operation. The risk is to slide into a sentimental and consolatory attitude. The necessity is to stimulate new worlds out of the clues that we can appreciate in our everyday lives. It is urgent to depict the horror and the compassion at the same time. The catastrophism remains a certification of the existing world. “Lamentation is never the base for an active militancy, it is a defensive posture, it is something that is needed in order to crouch behind the lines” (Arminio 2013: 74). The decline of institutions, relations and organizations is undeniable. But deep inside the catastrophe, there is more than nihilism and desperation. It is not conceivable to hide ourselves in a mythic and reassuring past that could protect us from the contemporary ugliness. Decline exists but it is not enough to say that. What is more useful is to understand how, inside the decline itself, life organizes itself in new forms (Paba 2013).

We are talking about realities that are transforming our cities from within through a renewed social activ-

ism. Many inhabitants have built nets, associations, communities based on shared practices. Their intention is to: apply solidarity and equity principles to new forms of consumption (solidarity based purchasing groups, GAS); experiment with tools of social and environmental sustainability (short distribution chain, urban agriculture); fight against the monetization of our lives through free reciprocal service exchange (time banks) or through ethical finance services; invent virtuous forms of trade (fair trade shops); rethink urban space in an ecological perspective (through energy saving and use of renewable energy); reinvent places and save them from profit obsession (self-organization practices and reuse of dismissed/residual spaces); imagine different forms of production (reinventing production cycle inside abandoned factories); build a more conscious right to the city (through the occupation of houses or the collective planning of public spaces); rethink culture as a common good that cannot be commodified (through the re-invention of theatres destined for demolition).

These multiplicities of practices have the potential to create “relational goods”. The term “relational goods” has been introduced into contemporary theory nearly simultaneously by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1986,) the sociologist Pierpaolo Donati (1986,) and the economists Benedetto Gui (1987) and Carole Uhlaner (1989.) These goods are non-material goods that are essentially linked to interpersonal relationships (*Wound*: 85ff.): they cannot be produced or consumed by solitary individuals and they can be appreciated only when shared in reciprocity. In particular, Guy describes them as “immaterial goods connected to interpersonal relationships (1987: 37). Uhlaner refers to “goods that can only be possessed by mutual agreement that they exist, after appropriate joint actions have been taken by a person and non-arbitrary others” (1989: 254). According to Bruni these goods can be described through specific properties: they are goods where the *identity* of the people involved is an essential element; mutual activities, shared actions and reciprocity play a fundamental role; they are co-produced and co-consumed *simultaneously*; they are led by *motivations* and values that create a distinction between relational goods and non-relational goods; they can be interpreted as *emerging facts*, being a third component beyond the contributions made by the agents.

All the practices previously outlined have these properties. Moreover they can be interpreted as “contextual goods”: their aim is to better the quality of the context in which we develop our daily activities (Magatti 2012). In the last twenty years the economists thought that the advantages of the delocalization (transfer of activities, capital and employment in countries that are more competitive) would have transformed space into an insignificant variable. The crisis shows that this is not the case and nowadays industries realize they need solid logistics and infrastructures rooted in specific contexts. They are

about to relocate many activities. On a smaller scale, what many transformative urban practices can show is that context is what drives change: space is not a neutral support for human activities. Rather it is the mean through which we build our relations, identities and projects. “Contextual goods” are what is created out of a joint effort to improve the qualities of communities and their territories.

In this wide spectrum of different urban collective actions, many practices are “informal” actions of re-appropriation: practices that challenge property and normative regimes in the attempt to recover a multiplicity of spaces that have been dismissed by modernity. These practices are islands of resistance but also incubators of new imageries: organizational experiments that are potentially able to build the city even out of an institutionally recognized framework; symbolic and material tactics of spatial sense-making (de Certeau 2001); a net of molecular and minute writings that transgress the text of the planned city; the result of a capillary battle with power mechanisms (Agamben 2005).

According to this perspective, many urban spaces (abandoned, suspended or threatened) have been reinvented by heterogeneous populations. In these spaces, conviviality (Illich 1974), bonding value (Caillé 1998) and share value (Porter, Kramer 2011) have been tested as possible answers to the capitalist hegemony. The path is to build goods with a high relational, contextual and cognitive content (Magatti 2012). A way to get back a right to the city by transforming the city itself. In fact, the right to the city cannot be conceived as a way to access what already exists; rather it is the right to change it through the reinvention of an urban life that would be more in accordance with our desires (Lefebvre *et al.* 1996). The contemporary city is not that indistinct and oppressive darkness where differences are no longer recognizable. In the darkest night it is possible to find some luminous glow: an unpredictable multitude of little fireflies. These fireflies were acutely described by Pasolini in one of his letters. In that context Pasolini’s intention was to name the flares of desire and of embodied poetry that were standing against the dark night of fascism. But his vision didn’t last. Thirty-four years later Pasolini ended up theorizing the death of all the fireflies that, according to the Friulian writer, had been destroyed by a cultural genocide affecting the souls, the languages and the bodies of people.

Didi-Huberman doesn’t believe in this prophecy. He doesn’t believe the night has been able to devour, enslave, and reduce differences embodied by fireflies in love (Didi-Huberman 2010: 21).

Although the anxiety of Pasolini is comprehensible, it is difficult to surrender to his apocalyptic vision in which the darkest night triumphs with no obstacles. Even the more hopeless pessimistic attitude needs to challenge itself in the attempt of recognizing some luminous persistences in the dark: lucent anachronisms and shiny glimpses that draw a space of possibility. We are talking about a temporary, in-

terstitial, discontinuous and improbable space: a space of flares, openness and clues (Didi-Huberman 2010). Milo De Angelis (2007) would call it a space of glimpsed brilliance, of lights that belong to us. A space of fireflies.

### Profanations

It is true that these luminous traces are really faint. It is difficult to notice them. "Almost five thousand fireflies are needed to produce the light of a single candle" (Didi-Huberman 2010: 33). What is really required is an eye capable of imagination and desire. From this perspective the death of the fireflies that has been prophesied by Pasolini could be interpreted as the incapability of an atrophied eye to read signals of hope in the dark. Fireflies are not dead. The capability of seeing them is dead. The capability to "seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of hell, are not hell, then make them endure, give them space" (Calvino 1993).

Although most people would see our world flattened into an apocalyptical dimension, it is still possible to appreciate the presence of sparkling prophecies: luminous signals of resistance and brilliant traces of poetical foreshadowing. Among these constellations of intermittent fireflies it is possible to recognize some practices of urban re-appropriation that are able to *profane* the capitalist religion. In a world that self-immolates to the God-Market, what does "to *profane*" religious dogma mean? In order to built a meaningful answer it is necessary to look back. According to Agamben (2005), in the Roman world, "consecration" meant the exit of things out of the sphere of human right. People could not use consecrated things because these things became part of gods' exclusive property. From this point of view religion would work as "something that removes things, places, animals, or people from common use and transfers them into a separate sphere called the sacred" (Agamben 2005: 84). Not only does religion establish itself through separation, but every separation is rooted in a religious core. The God-Market works exactly in the same direction: it subtracts, separates and make things unavailable. Capitalism "generalizes in every domain the structure of separation that defines religion" (Agamben 2005: 93). The city consecrated to capitalism is subtracted from the use of people. Everything is displaced in a separated sphere: the sphere of spectacularization and of consumption. "Spectacle and consumption are two sides of the same impossibility of using" (Agamben 2005: 94). Capitalism as religion determines the irrevocable loss of use, of space that becomes more and more privatized, a city that is consumed and exhibited, and therefore subtracted from people.

Here's how a series of urban practices, diverse and irreducible to each other, can become devices of profanation. Profanation of the God-Market. Profanation understood as the possibility of regaining the lost use, of claiming back the city. To *profane* does not mean simply restoring something that pre-existed to its separation in the religious sphere. To

*profane* doesn't mean just abolish and erase separations, but learning how to make a new use out of them, how to play with them (Agamben 2005: 100). And that is why it is interesting to understand whether and how a multitude of urban informal practices are able to put these profaning potentialities to work, trying to build a new idea of the city out of the tyranny of the capitalistic religion.

These attempts are often shy and doomed to failure. Like short-lived fireflies, these bright and evanescent traces risk being incorporated into the darkest night or dying, overwhelmed by the artificial glare of some powerful spotlight. Moreover not all the glimmers of light in the darkness have the power to *profane*. Some shiny presences are treacherous hallucinations. This is the case of those urban practices that end up implementing the very paradigms against which they were originally opposed. They do not represent any form of transgression. These practices actually could be interpreted not as profaning tools but as devices of secularization, "a form of removal, which merely moves unchanged forces from one place to another" (Agamben 2005: 111).

It is therefore necessary to exercise the eye not only to find out some brightness in the dark night of the capitalist dogma but also to recognize those signals that have a profaning power. Here we allude to uncertain and babbling radical bottom-up projects that try to escape the litanies of the capitalist religion. These practices are small steps that do not pretend to represent a promise of salvation in an eschatological perspective. They are not the premises of a definitive counter-paradigm. They are intermittent and fragile clues able to trace rhizomatic paths that are not necessarily going in the same direction. The fireflies we talk about, are not the prelude of a great "light of all lights". And since they teach us that destruction is never absolute - even when it is unbroken - these survivals exempt us from believing that a final revelation or a final salvation are necessary to our freedom. A policy of survival, by definition, does not willingly, does not necessarily, recall The End of Time (Didi-Huberman 2010: 52). In these clues there is a promise of beauty. It is a way to organize pessimism. It is the urgency of not believing in those who color everything in the single hue of a dense dark (Gualtieri 2007: 61). As Hannah Arendt says, "even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination (...) Such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time-span that was given them on earth." (Arendt 2001: 11). Such illumination could come from what McLuhan (1998) defines as "counter-environments": places where it is possible to explore new forms of criticism; places where it is possible to imagine and activate antidotes, profanations and transgressions. These places can be real or imagined: transformative urban practices or metaphorical paths.

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# Re-create places

Re-create places. Re-imagining places .....	Caterina Satta
Graffiti and re-appropriation of political space in Istanbul .....	Moira Bernardoni
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Caterina Satta

# Re-create places. Re-imagining places

## Urban regeneration, Urban re-appropriation movements, Imaginaries

This article focuses attention on the regenerative effect which the set of re-appropriation practises examined in this section can engender in urban territories and in the specific contexts in which they are activated. By saying “can engender” the author wish however to introduce a critical dimension within these processes and pose a number of questions related to the ways in which such places “come back to life”. What are the processes and the imaginaries that guide these “rebirths”? What social actors are involved in these processes?

The adoption of a problematizing approach helps understand whether these experiences, albeit with their diversity, are all characterised by a new approach to city making, where the new, the present writer believes, resides in their ability to generate “other” imaginaries *before* actually creating new forms of coexistence.

The title of this thematic section, “Recreating places”, focuses attention on the regenerative effect which the set of re-appropriation practises examined in these essays can engender in urban territories and in the specific contexts in which they are activated. By saying “can engender” we wish however to introduce a critical dimension within these processes and pose a number of questions which will help leave behind not only “movementist” rhetoric, heedless of the direct involvement of the social actor in the process, but also journalistic rhetoric, through which such actions, precisely because of their developing and incomplete nature, are often described.

More in particular, by taking into consideration the spaces which are the objects of these re-appropriations, the section investigates the ways in which such places “come back to life”. What are the processes and the imaginaries that guide these “rebirths”? What social actors are involved in these processes?

The adoption of a problematizing approach helps understand whether these experiences, albeit with their diversity, are all characterised by a new approach to city making, where the new, the present writer believes, resides in their ability to generate “other” imaginaries *before* actually creating new forms of coexistence.

We feel that to simply observe the existence of

new uses for urban spaces is not sufficient cause to speak of regeneration; rather, it is important to understand how the spaces which are involved in these processes embrace new life and continue to live. What we wish to explore, in other words, are the languages, the symbols and/or the imaginaries through which these practices find ways of creating new socio-political scenarios. When do re-appropriation practices also become forms through which spaces may be reinvented?

To discuss the “imaginific” dimension of such experiences is a way to reflect on the mutations of a particular society, but especially on its ability to truly achieve change. The phenomenology of such experiences, in other terms, may be the key to unlocking the transformative and even the revolutionary potential of a city. This is what we wish to explore in monographic section.

In the end, as described by Appadurai (2011) in two extremely insightful essays on how the inhabitants of the Mumbai slums organised and engaged in political action starting with the sewage system and the toilets, the possibility for marginal subjects to leave their condition of subalternity pivots first and foremost on their “capacity to aspire”. Aspiration does not, therefore, merely pertain to the desire to satisfy material problems – broken pipes, potholes, or, as happens more and more frequently, the installation of CCTV cameras in areas perceived as dangerous

– but refers rather to the capacity to imagine oneself and to explore other possible futures. According to this narrative, poverty is therefore not only a condition of material deprivation but also a lack of imagination. It is imagination that describes the horizon within which are inscribed actual capacities (what Sen defines as “capabilities, 1985) to create and to act so as to substantiate our formal rights and our right to change.

In the nineties, philosopher Rosi Braidotti’s reflections on the decline of modernity concentrated on the deep transformations of the productive system and of the social and symbolic structures which have led to the present crisis of our models of urban life. Braidotti felt optimistic about the birth of new categories and especially of new patterns of thought that could sustain and foster change for those subjects traditionally left at the margins by the power system – women first and foremost, but also migrants, LGBTs, children, people with disabilities and so forth. Braidotti spoke of these changes as “figurations” (figurazioni), new representations and narrations which would allow us to “move away from the past schemes of thought” (1994: 6) to interpret and live the present. Such figurations are not merely descriptive, but also political and performative because they open up a pathway leading to new interpretations and new possibilities of resistance.

What it is interesting to note is that in the movements for urban re-appropriation at the centre of the four essays here presented, the collective, non-institutional actors involved, rather than attribute new meanings, often restore the conventional meaning of the place, the original sense, as it were, it has been robbed of. One need only think, for example, of guerrilla gardening actions that replant flower-beds or put plants in those abandoned areas of so-called “urban green” reclaimed from the institutions that should be taking care of them. Or of the work of those writers who restore walls and visible surfaces to their natural communicative function. Because walls speak: of this even those administrations and committees that mobilise counter initiatives to paint over the spaces “dirtied” by graffiti-makers are aware, as amply testified by the initiatives documented in the National Anti-graffiti Association website <http://www.associazioneantigrffiti.it>. At stake here is not only the issue of urban decorum, which is merely a distractor used by public authority to justify sanctionary interventions, but that of the particular *discourse* of speakable or forbidden words that walls are capable of communicating. This is the story of History with a capital “h”, the history, that is, of the institutions, which insists on being told above and against that of the myriad stories of ordinary men and women who inhabit the city. It is these stories that make the city a public space, or rather a space where different conceptions of public fight against one another for the use (Zukin 1995) or even simply for the semantization of that space.

In this process of symbolic – and material – signification, the experiences at the centre of these four

articles ultimately tell a story of constant tension between intuitions and movements, between administrations and practices of urban re-appropriation, between institutional power and “differences”, between dominant discursive regimes and the narratives that develop in their interstices. This constant tension may have developed following different theoretical frameworks but it does not change with the changing of the contexts, from the more “ordinary” setting of the *agro romano* to the French *jardins collectifs* and even to those rather more “extraordinary” contexts which were at the centre of the Gezi Park protests or of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the occupied territories<sup>1</sup>.

To re-create places, in short, means to move away from the conventional blueprint and place oneself in a position of Hegelian dialectic or sometimes simply in an antithetical position in order to allow new spatial meaning and, sometimes even actual change, to emerge. While in the first two articles, Bernardoni’s on Istanbul and Esu’s on Jerusalem and Hebron, the conditions of emergency caused by war and revolt mean that the regenerative aspects of certain practices are mostly symbolical, in Bertagnini’s article as well as in that by Marciano and Lepri some of the changes recounted take place on the material, physical plane, though with different outcomes.

The illegal graffiti of Gezi Park described by Bernardoni are performative gestures that do not merely figure the act of resistance of those who have gathered to protest but actually make that protest tangible by actuating it in and through physical space. These are therefore gestures which incorporate a deep political significance even though the author herself is the first to recognise “the limits of the practice when approached from a wider perspective on urban political activism”. While it is true that there has never been political and urban revolt unaccompanied by graffiti, it is equally clear that in order to achieve a real overturning of the positions of power within the capitalist system, what is needed is something more than communicative tactics. On the other hand, graffiti contribute to the transformation of places by fracturing those accepted notions and assumptions that hold together the very definition and organisation of space through what Bernardoni calls “a conceptualization of common space beyond the normativity of its traditional and established division in properties”.

In Esu’s article which centres on a territory contested both militarily and symbolically, a counternarrative for these lands is constructed through interstitial tours planned by Israeli organizations close to the pacifist movements in the territories of Jerusalem and Hebron – “the South Hills of Hebron and, in a larger area between the Qalandia checkpoint and

.....  
<sup>1</sup> For the use we make here of the terms “ordinary” and “extraordinary” we refer the reader to Di Cori e Pontecorvo (2007) where everyday life is analysed as a dimension continuously oscillating between repetitiveness and routine on the one hand and sudden ruptures on the other.

the internal barriers, the agricultural gates and forbidden roads encircling the settlements”.

The spatiality of discourse thus becomes an embodied experience. Through the act of seeing and through the practice of interstitial walks, the discourse of hegemonic territory, monolithically manufactured by the Israeli national propaganda, begins to crumble before the more subtle faceting of the everyday facts that are “mobility and freedom impediments”, in a space where reaching “one’s place of work, school, hospital and land to be cultivated depends on the discretion of open hours at checkpoints or on soldiers’ abuse of power”. Through the seeing and feeling body, places are re-created and acquire a materiality that in contested contexts runs the risk of being obscured by the sedimentation of the words and the visions of the official narrative.

Moving on from these scenarios of war and protest to apparently more peaceful urban contexts, the case described in Bertagnini’s article on the French *jardins collectifs* specifically answers one of the questions posed by this section by addressing the manner in which certain experiences of urban regeneration are able, over time, either to remain experimental processes or end up by being absorbed by the very power mechanisms they had set out to subvert.

*Jardins partagés, jardins familiaux, jardins collectifs, jardins pédagogiques, and jardins d’insertion* all exemplify the wide range of a phenomenon that in France, over the last decades, has taken on great importance: the occupying of interstitial spaces within cities and their transformation into green spaces. Bertagnini tells the story of an experience that started out as a successful dialogue between citizens and institutions but that was gradually transformed by the institutions themselves into a consensus-creating tool within the “*Programme National de Rénovation Urbaine*”. In many urban regeneration projects that are happening without any form of consultation with the citizens or indeed without any participation on their part, the creation of *jardins collectifs* is presented rhetorically as a guarantee of the institutions’ good will and as a way of taking care of their needs. Bertagnini’s article focuses on the way in which this practice has been transformed, where by transformation she intends “a detrimental change. The *jardin partagé* are an example of an instrumental use by the Institutions of “of how an instrumental use by the institutions of a good practice perverts the initial capacity of these experiences to advance an alternative model of production and use of the city”. Within the range of experiences described in this monographic section, therefore, Bertagnini’s article brings to the fore a contrasting case, where it is the institutions that do the reclaiming to the detriment of a practice born out of movements or participative group initiatives.

Marciano and Lepri’s article is also concerned with appropriation. In describing the movement for access to land in the municipality of Rome the authors highlight those features that make this experience

so significant, both on account of the tangible results it attained, and for the way in which it helps us understand a reclaiming practice from the inside. The authors describe in detail the role played by the cooperative Coraggio in bringing concrete meaning to what may otherwise appear as the rather empty slogan “the right to land”. The activists of this cooperative are somewhat younger than usual for agricultural workers (they are between 28 and 40); they also differentiate themselves for academic qualifications – most of them have a degree – and for gender, as there is a significant percentage of women. These aspects have all contributed positively to the development of a multifunctional agricultural project as well as to the planning of a number of urban agricultural policies with a high degree of technological innovation; most of all, however, they have impacted positively on the relationship with the institutions. For Marciano and Lepri the specificity – and therefore the strength – of this experience lies precisely in the way it is positioned with respect to political and administrative power. Differently from those movements that adopt an antithetical and antagonistic stance towards institutions, the Cooperativa Coraggio centres its vision on a circular conception of power and envisages itself as playing an “anthropological” role within this circle. It chooses, that is, to treat the institutions as the “other”, precisely because they use another language, inhabit a different universe of values and very often adopt different codes of communication: “Coraggio’s anthropological effort is to find some common signification mechanisms within the linguistic world of the other and to avoid considering the public institution as an enemy”. The efficacy of this practice is proved by the authors when they quote the concrete example of a public announcement by the Lazio Region “entrusting the management of 300 hectares of public land to a group of young farmers as part of a project of urban and sustainable agriculture”, followed by a similar deliberation of the Municipality of Rome “entrusting [to them] the management of 500 more hectares”.

In conclusion, as the selection of articles for this monographical section proves, we believe that in order to eschew the rhetorical accoutrements that accompany those processes defined as urban re-appropriation, our attention should begin to shift towards the actors who “recreate” these spaces, thus returning the dimension of everyday life within the scope of studies on urban political activism (Pink 2012). If the quotidian has always been the domain of the trivial, of *routine* and of that which is not visible (Jedlowski, Leccardi 2003), while activism has often been associated to engagement made manifest in the public sphere, our hope is that such research as is here presented, with its interest in situating the processes of re-appropriation in the everyday life of the urban contexts in which they are shaped, should become increasingly widespread. Such contexts can become theatres for the exploration of new imaginaries and it is from such places, rather than from the traditional spaces of political engagement

that the foundational link between city and democracy may be rekindled (Bagnasco, Le Galès 2003), because the quality of a democracy may also be gauged by the stance it adopts towards the city (Lefebvre 1968; Massey 1995; Isin 2002; Mitchell 2003).

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Moira Bernardoni

# Graffiti and re-appropriation of political space in Istanbul

## Urban practices, Creativity, Strategic planning

This contribution aims at critically reflecting on illegal graffiti as a practice of re-territorialization and of potential re-appropriation of space. Addressing graffiti as a practice of socio-spatial resistance transgressing property relations and spatial norms, I suggest its speculative and political significance in challenging existing (b)orders between public and private property and enacting alternative territorial boundaries. Henri Lefebvre's classic work *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]) offers my main theoretical framework to examine the space reclaimed by graffiti by exploring two interrelated issues: first, how it generally displays the contradictions of space and, more specifically, the one between exchange- and use-value; secondly, to what extent it remains a re-appropriated space (i.e. a "counter-space"). Problematizing the partial acceptance of graffiti as (street) art when their tolerance and/or even promotion respond to profit-making dynamics, I refer to selected cases of graffiti in Istanbul to verify Lefebvre's argument that the powers tend to reabsorb any produced difference into the dominant system by means of assimilation or repression. Accordingly, I particularly focus on the graffiti of the Gezi resistance, a paradigmatic case study to figure out the performativity of illegal graffiti as act of political spatial resistance. As a result, I argue a strategic and counter-strategic value embodied by the space re-appropriated by graffiti, yet remarking the limits of the practice when approached from a wider perspective on urban political activism.

### 1. Illegal graffiti as boundaries of re-appropriation

Graffiti refers to the practice of marking, writing and painting walls as well as other visible surfaces. Despite acknowledging substantial differences between graffiti as legacy of the hip hop culture initiated in the peripheries of New York in the 1970s, street art as and post-/neo-graffiti, I use graffiti as an umbrella term to refer those diversified interventions on either public or private space that are nothing but urban traces.

Graffiti are often addressed as associated with (urban) creativity, thus acknowledging them as interventions that imply not only a certain degree of novelty in the form but also the transformation of the pre-existing context (Bernardoni 2013a). The title chosen for this thematic collection of essays is "re-creating places" and, accordingly, the pivotal question of this paper is: how can graffiti contribute to change urban space and the representation of it? Yet, being at stake here is not the discussion of aesthetic criteria to eventually establish whether certain categories of graffiti can be defined as (street) art and thus to distinguish when they might beautify or degrade a certain place. Rejecting widespread prejudicial and rhetorical distinctions between beautiful street art and ugly vandalism (Lökman and Iveson 2010: 136), the aim of this contribution is rather evaluating the political significance of illegal graffiti as a practice of

socio-spatial resistance transgressing established spatial norms, rejecting conventional property relations and reclaiming urban space.

Boundaries indicate the presence of (b)orders that confine territories. Either jurisdictionally recognised or not, accepted and/or imposed, visible or invisible, fixed or mobile, borders mark the limits between areas subjected to different authorities, to their relative orders and thus to different conditions of access and, most importantly, use. Crossing them is possible, and in certain cases it means transgressing them. Rather than a border, a wall is a boundary, one that is visible and often loaded with symbolic meanings. Walls and other visible surfaces are social interfaces, exercising a communicative function according to the purposes of different actors and users. Walls, fences, gates and alike are also paradigmatic boundaries usually indicating the border between two private spaces/properties or between a private space/property and a public one, and the association of (urban) space with property is the longstanding issue that I would like to recall the attention to.

Walls – and urban space in general – embody a traditional instrumentality in reflecting and enacting strategies of centralistic and plutocratic power(s). The state uses public space for civic/national propaganda and outdoor advertising does it for marketing purposes. If misuse is the improper use of some-

thing, in this case of space, and if abuse refers to a morally and/or legally unacceptable use often implying violence, then illegal graffiti are an example of those practices that Derya Özkan (2008) calls of “spatial misuse”. Transgressing the (b)orders traced by property relations and spatial norms, they misuse public space and abuse private property. Whether they might abuse public space would depend, for instance, on the degree of violence involved in their specific messages.

Conversely, outdoor advertising does not misuse public space, given that it privatizes it in accordance to a legislative regulation granting the right to rent or buy space without taking into account the scale of the entailed visual pollution, a scale that urges at least the problematization of the abuse of public space at stake. As for state’s civic/national propaganda too, the dilemma lies not so much in the compliance with the existing legislative regulations and thus in the misuse of public space, but, in my opinion, rather in private property as main abuse in the history of space. Private property is, in fact, the measure to organize and model space in general (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 376), while public space is a notion that, historically constructed in the European tradition of thinking, has been translated into the Ottoman/Turkish context as referring to the state’s domain and to the space that is not private property (yet) (Bilsel 2007; Bernardoni 2012; Tanju 2008).

According to these speculative premises, illegal graffiti represents a practice that can be considered interstitial insofar it provisionally fills the chasm between enduring (b)orders of legality and potentially alternative boundaries of legitimacy. In other words, if a boundary marks the end (and the beginning) of a territory, and – as already mentioned – a wall is a boundary between two property (b)orders, I then assume illegal graffiti as new boundaries of reclaimed space. Yet, a more detailed analysis is required in order to evaluate whether the created space is another space of property or a re-appropriated space, where the latter refers to a space whose logic resists to the domination of a state that produces space naturally acting «in accordance with the aims of the capital» (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 375).

## 2. Interrogating the practice: property or appropriation?

David Ley and Roman Cybrisky argued that, as «territorial markers», graffiti «ascribe a proprietary meaning to space» (Ley and Cybrisky 1974: 504). Besides, Murray Bookchin (1995) mentioned spray-can graffiti as one of the principal expressions of lifestyle anarchism, that is to say anarchism understood and lived as a «personalistic commitment to individual autonomy” vs. social anarchism as a «collectivist commitment to social freedom». Graffiti are often the outcome of individualistic instances that have nothing to do with political engagement but rather respond to competitive dynamics of a forbidden game in the search for fame and recognition. However, while partly agreeing with Bookchin, I would

like to point out that my analysis is not focused on the possible subjective motivations behind the practice. I rather speculate on the spatial implications that the practice carries and on the alternative territorial boundaries that it potentially enacts, insofar potentially contributing to think of space out of the trap of a normativity from above.

Assuming the hypothesis that graffiti is a practice of resistance I make no claim to understand the intentionality of the writers (i.e. those making graffiti) or their cultural production. Questioning illegal graffiti’s political significance, I use graffiti as lens to verify that space generally reflects and mediates different and even conflicting values, which are not only socio-cultural but also political-economic, namely use- and exchange-value. For the analysis of the space produced by graffiti, I rely on the dialectical methodology used by Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]). By “spatial contradictions” Lefebvre meant those socio-political contradictions of society that, coming effectively into play in space, become contradictions of space (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 358 and 365). His theory of contradictory space detected the conflicts between quantity vs. quality, homogeneity vs. fragmentation and exchange vs. use value, all internal to the abstract space, which is the space produced under the capitalist mode of production. Abstract space *appears* uniform, homogeneous and coherent (everything is subjected to its logic), yet – as Lefebvre put it – «differences endure on the margins of the homogenized realm, either in form of resistances or in the form of externalities [...] what is different is [...] what is *excluded*: the edges of the city, shanty towns, the space of forbidden games, of guerrilla war, of war» (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 373). Socio-spatial contradictions are very important simply because they are interstices/cracks in the systems where potential resistance in the form of counter-spaces and counter-projects can be generated. Re-appropriated space is then a counter-space, a space that is «against quantity and homogeneity, against power and the arrogance of power, against the endless expansion of the “private”» (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 382). Social space in general and thus also the territories marked by graffiti reflect and mediate the contradiction between property and appropriation, and the contradiction between property and appropriation is nothing but the contradiction between exchange value and use value of space (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 356).

Bearing in mind that resistance might be conscious or unconscious, intentional and unintentional, direct or indirect, whereas the direct and indirect are not the same as active and passive, I suggest that the alternative territories drawn by illegal graffiti represent counter-space, i.e. re-appropriated space. Either as forbidden game with unintentional political significance or a communicative act of intentional political protest, graffiti challenge existing property (b)orders and normative space.

At this point of the argumentation it is then possible to deal with the key question of this paper: do illegal

graffiti produce space and thus recreate places? Answering yes because they re-signify existing places and give new meaning to them by marking new territories would be a too simplistic answer. The novelty of the meaning, in fact, does not depend only on the creativity of the makers (i.e. writers). Graffiti are place-bound in a way that their political significance depends on the specific context/place. I therefore suggest that the answer is related to the interstitiality of the practice. With regards to the physical spaces in which they proliferate, Anna Waclawek (2011: 112-115) argues that graffiti is a “liminal” practice activating marginal spaces with no particular meaning attached such as rooftops, alleyways, car parks, tunnels, bridges, pavements and city walls, which are given new meanings and from «liminal socio-spatial sites” are transformed into «sites of action, communication, beauty». Yet, Waclawek’s definition of graffiti as liminal practice according to the marginality of the spaces reappropriated cannot be obviously valid for any graffiti: the Berlin or the Gaza walls probably represent the easiest counterexamples to show how writers often choose sites loaded with a deep historical, political, social and/or cultural meanings. Exploring the spatial contradictions embodied by the site is then crucial to evaluate the degree of novelty and re-appropriation of the space marked by illegal graffiti. In other words, the question is to what extent illegal graffiti remains a practice of spatial resistance before eventually being repressed or even becoming an instrument in reinforcing the normative organization of space.

### 3. Absorption of re-appropriated space

«It happens” – as Lefebvre wrote – «that a counter-space and a counter-project simulate existing space, parodying it and demonstrating its limitations, without for all that escaping its clutches» (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 382). The space reclaimed and re-appropriated by illegal graffiti remains a counter-space so far as it is not swallowed by the dominant norms and thus reduced by institutional actors to a normative space. Understanding the *normalization* of graffiti requires a preliminary parenthesis on the process of their occasional legalization, which, in turn, is related to their partial acceptance and/or even promotion as (street) art embodying high exchange-value and potentially adding exchange-value to cities. Graffiti are more and more raising the interest of not only non-practitioners and academicians but, above all, of the world of official art as well as of local administrations. What calls for my attention is not so much the changing of the cultural meaning of a practice that, eventually ceasing to be a counterculture, is from time to time either taken into galleries or permitted in assigned spaces with the aim of valorising youth creativity. I do not focus too much on the process of its decontextualization that jeopardizes an elusively authentic meaning that the practice might traditionally have. In fact, even when legalized and recognised as art, graffiti can continue to carry a socio-political significance since their potential as

vehicle of expression of socio-political critique would not be necessarily excluded. However, much more important for my critique of normative spaces are the economic reasons and the political implications of the process of normalization of graffiti.

Banksy’s (art)works usually provide the easiest example to grasp why both official art and local administrations protect them from the risk of being overwritten in order to preserve the exchange value that they embody. The normalization of the space re-appropriated by graffiti simply confirms the tendency to the commodification of everything or, to say it with a Lefebvrian terminology, the tendency of the abstract space of capitalism to englobe all the differences that are generated either within or outside the system. As he wrote: «sooner or later [...] the existing centre and the forces of homogenization must seek to absorb all such differences» (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 373).

Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: 372 and 382) distinguished between induced, produced and reduced differences. Induced differences remain «within a set or system» since, generated by repetition without resisting to the logic of the system, they are differences «internal to a whole and brought into being by that whole as a system aiming to establish itself». Conversely, produced differences presuppose «the shattering of a system» and escape the system’s rule. Reduced differences are instead those differences «forced back into the system by constraint and violence». Depending on the context, illegal graffiti can be either tolerated as (street) art for the exchange value that they add to a place or erased as expression of vandalism and – especially in Turkey – even political terrorism. Referring to the Lefebvrian distinction between property and appropriation as main conceptual tool of analysis, I therefore argue the *ambivalence* of graffiti in functioning as alternative territorial markers and yet enduring property boundaries on one side and as boundaries of re-appropriated space on the other one, as the following selected examples in Istanbul city-centre show.

Both the photos have been taken in the same district, Beyoglu, where – at least for now – there is not so much street art as one can find in the European cities. While graffiti writers do not cease to be punishable by law, certain graffiti in certain areas, like for instance in Galata, are not only not being removed by the authorities but they also became one of the characteristics adding (exchange) value to the city (Bernardoni, 2013a)<sup>1</sup>. The graffiti on the left side are

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 1 As eloquent example I propose an excerpt from an article appeared in a Turkish airline company’s magazine, thus intentionally addressed to Istanbul’s visitors: «the unique city where Asia and Europe, East and West come together [...] Istanbul’s graffiti-covered walls, antique shops, museums, high-end stores and places of worship radiate joy and every corner is worth discovering» (*Pegasus Magazine*, 2012: 28).



Fig.1 “no border, no nation, no f\*\*\*ing borders”.



Fig.2 “Emek is ours, Istanbul is ours”.



Fig.3 “Katil polis” (“police murderer”).

there since at least three years and they are not being removed: not only the widely known Kripoe's yellow fists that are spread around Berlin too, but also the writing saying «no border, no nation, no f\*\*\*ing borders». And this probably because they both (= together) contribute to create the alternative flavour of Galata, a neighbourhood that already went through a deep gentrification process. In the picture on the right side you can instead see the reaction to the graffiti made in April 2013 on the scaffolding of the Emek cinema on İstiklal Caddesi, the main commercial artery of the city-centre, at 10 minutes on foot from Galata. It is important to bear in mind that the Emek cinema is a highly contested space with an extremely deep symbolic significance: several of the protests against the transformation of the historical landmark into a shopping mall have been repressed with a use of water cannons and teargas. The graffiti in the photo against the destruction of the Emek were covered with grey paint the day after they have been made. The differences “produced” by illegal graffiti become “reduced” differences as soon as reabsorbed into the dominant system, normalized through assimilation as in the case of Galata or repression as in the case of the Emek cinema and, even more clearly, in the case of the outburst of graffiti during the Gezi uprising.

#### 4. Gezi Park, resistance and performativity

The Gezi Park protests sparked on 28 May 2013 as reaction to the urban redevelopment plan for the Taksim area. Started as a sit-in for the re-appropriation of the common space of the park, they increased in power, scale and participation, becoming an uprising and marking a historical turning point. Unstopped by brutal evictions and violent repression tactics, they are still continuing in other forms, in the way of protests for the re-appropriation of freedom of expression and assembly as well as of our cities. A detailed analysis of the Gezi movement is out of the scope of this paper, yet I would like to briefly point out that, despite its “multitudinous” character (Negri and Hardt 2004) and thus the impossibility to flatten its actors under a unique umbrella or – even worse – one flag, forums, occupied houses and squatted gardens are the crystallization of a “metropolitan” (Negri and Hardt 2009) struggle to reclaim the right to self-determination as right to decide on the mechanisms of regulation and management of common spaces. Neighbourhoods’ solidarity ties play a fundamental role and the right to the city is reclaimed by citizens insofar users, inhabitants and thus producers of urban territories (Bernardoni 2013b). Gezi has been and continue to be a movement of resistance, resistance to the authoritarian drift of a contradictory process of modernization and, especially in Turkey, resistance to a weary strategy of repression. Censorship strikes down space as medium of visibility, the immaterial one of the Internet including Youtube and Twitter as well as the physical one of the walls. If writing in general is a potential practice of resistance, then the graffiti of the Gezi uprising provide a

significant case to figure out the violence of the Turkish state's repression.

One of the most discussed examples of media self-censorship during the uprising regards the CNN Türk, a major national TV channels of information that during the harsh attacks and the ensuing riots of May 31 has proposed a documentary about penguins instead of broadcast live from Taksim area. Since then the penguin has become a symbol of resistance (Bernardoni 2013a). In conjunction with the expansion and diffusion of the protests, a sudden emergence and explosion of graffiti occurred. A countless myriad of writings started filling the walls of the battleground areas, and this not only in Istanbul but also in the other cities where the uprising spread. The multitude of graffiti reflected and mediated the transversality of the movement and the plurality of its components, yet irony and sarcasm predominated as shared characteristics and tools of re-appropriation: the majority of the writings were, in fact, funny jokes about the pepper gas and witty subversions of the prime minister's declarations (Bernardoni 2013b).

Immediate has been – and continue to be – the reaction of the authorities that regularly send an army of painters to cover up the graffiti that regularly appear in concomitance with events of protest. Expanding like an ocular cancer, layers of grey paint fill the walls of the Taksim area, erasing the contents of the writings but not the traces of civil disobedience and, above all, widespread indignation. Emblematic is, for instance, the case of Berkin Elvan, a 14-year-old boy hit on the head by a teargas canister in June 2013 and died on 11 March 2014. During the several months of coma many were the writings inciting him to resist: *diren Berkin*, “resist, Berkin”. After the massively participated funeral and the following demonstrations his name or portrait are now somehow on every corner.

Addressing the graffiti of the Gezi protests as object of reflection opens up the possibility to analyse them in order to reflect on the aesthetics of the resistance. Yet, my intention here is to speculate on them as forms of re-appropriation of space, that is to say as performative acts embodying a deep political meaning. If performance is synonymous of expression but also of fulfilment, then those writing on the walls were – and are – not only acts merely describing events of resistance but actually performing resistance in space and through space. As discussed elsewhere (Bernardoni 2013b), the writings of Gezi realize the act of resistance and spatial re-appropriation that they describe, as it paradigmatically emerges in the cases of writings such as *diren* (resist) or *Taksim bizim, İstanbul bizim!* (Taksim is ours, İstanbul is ours!). Accordingly, I argue that the graffiti of the Gezi resistance add to the space that they re-appropriate a high counter-strategic value, a notion that requires a more detailed exploration.



**Fig.4** Greyfication/repression.



**Fig.5** "The streets are ours".

## 5. Strategic and counter-strategic value of graffiti

Strategies refers to a long run *plan* to achieve specific aims, whereas tactics refer to the means used to achieve the given objectives; in other words, tactics are specific actions in specific places to reach a strategic aim. For Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: 358, 377 and 391), power is equal violence, and abstract space is a political and normative tool of power to implement its military and political strategies, whose aim is «the removal of every obstacle in the way of the total elimination of what is *different*» (*ibid.*: 371). The same goes for urban speculation and for the space of architects and urban developers, whose plans and calculations respond to specific strategies and relative tactics to increase the exchange value of space (*ibid.*: 360 and 375). Furthermore, «the goal of any strategy is still, as it always been, the *occupation* of a space by the varied means of politics and of war” and «the most effectively appropriated spaces are those occupied by symbols» (*ibid.*: 366). Applying these theoretical premises to the subject of my research, I suggest the importance of the notions of strategic and counter-strategic value of space as fertile conceptual tools of analysis.

Walls speak. This implies that their function is not limited to the division of space in private and, by reflex, public properties. Walls and other visible surfaces are social interfaces *occupied* by symbols and, in certain cases, are loaded in themselves with deep symbolic meaning (e.g. Berlin or Gaza walls). As such they are tools of direct or indirect and communication according to either strategic objectives of powers or counter-strategic objectives of counter-powers and, at this point of the argumentation, a terminological specification of the concepts is required.

According to Lefebvre, the aim of a “counter-project or counter-plan” is «promoting a counter-space in opposition to the one embodied in the strategies of power» (*ibid.*: 381). The notion of (spatial) strategy is usually associated with «the side of power» and is equal logic (*ibid.*: 419 and 374). Yet, while agreeing in advocating the urgency for long run planned actions and projects, I propose to refer to what Lefebvre defined “counter-project or a counter-plan” as counter-strategy, whose revolutionary aim is a new society based on different social relations and practices. Within a Lefebvrian theoretical framework, a social revolution requires a revolution of (urban) space (*ibid.*: 419), where both social relations and space would be based on use- rather than exchange-value (*ibid.*: 381). It follows that the concept of strategic value of space is strictly related to the notions of exchange value and property, as opposed to counter-strategic value, use value and appropriation. Strategic planning of space implies the definition and regulation of normative (b)orders and relative boundaries. Conversely, counter-strategic planning is supposed to include tactics to challenge them, and this in order to produce counter-spaces by (re)appropriating normative space, particularly those places that, depending on the context, em-

body a highly symbolic and deep political significance.

Grffiti is surely a tactic and not a strategy, yet, depending on the context, they can embody both strategic and counter-strategic value. The normalization of graffiti is also a tactic, one that – as discussed above – contributes to the capitalist strategy of absorbing any attempt of re-appropriation of space. This entails that, in certain cases of tolerance or even promotion, graffiti embody strategic value insofar contributing to add exchange value to the surrounding space. On the other hand, as long as they remain a tactic of re-appropriation of space, graffiti can produce counter-space and *potentially* embody counter-strategic value. As a practice of spatial resistance, any illegal graffiti is a re-appropriation of space and thus embodies political significance. However, not all illegal graffiti embody counter-strategic value simply because of their being illegal. What I suggest is that a counter-strategic value of graffiti depends on the modality of the spatial resistance involved.

Those graffiti that do not display explicit political messages of textual or visual critique of the system do not embody any counter-strategic value, insofar only indirectly contributing to the critique of normative spaces. On the contrary, when graffiti are thought and implemented as tools of medi-activism (or eventually street-artivism), displaying explicit messages of political content, they embody a counter-strategic value. The resistance that they produced is in fact the outcome of a conscious and intentionally political act. This has a remarkable implication: it means that even legal-ized and normalized graffiti, when displaying political messages, can embody a counter-strategic value while at the same time embodying strategic value, confirming that the spatial practice of graffiti mediates the contradiction of space between property/exchange and appropriation/use.

The political value of the graffiti of the Gezi resistance, for instance, is neither only the outcome of their legitimate illegality nor stems from a counter-strategic project, that is to say from a *planned* counter-attack of aesthetic guerrilla. The Gezi uprising was, in fact, unexpected as much as its multitudinous nature and the outburst of graffiti was the result more of spontaneity than of planning. This does not deny, however, their high value as a tactic of guerrilla communication that has contributed to the resistance movement, a movement of counter-strategic re-appropriation of cities. The resistance they produce is therefore the result of a conscious and deliberate political act of media activism and, in the case of street art, of mediartivism. The “greyfication” of graffiti is an attempt of nullification of differences and the crackdown on visibility is a tactical operation responding to a wider and deeper strategy of repression. In an excerpt that I already quoted above and that I consider important to recall again, Lefebvre pointed out how «the goal of any strategy is still, as it always been, the *occupation* of a space by the var-

ied means of politics and of war» and «the most effectively appropriated spaces are those occupied by symbols» (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 366). The graffiti of the Gezi resistance reproduce not only the contents but also the method of the Gezi park protests: they reclaim and re-appropriate space by *occupying* it.

to the rethinking of the theoretical coordinates that lay behind the definition and organisation of space, towards a conceptualization of common space beyond the normativity of its traditional and established division in properties.

## 6. Conclusions: occupying (public) space

At this regard, Lefebvre would probably comment by repeating what he already wrote in 1974: «is it really possible to use mural surfaces to depict social contradictions while producing something more than graffiti?» (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 145). More than obviously graffiti is not a tactic sufficient to overcome power, but any analysis of revolutionary attempts would be incomplete without taking into account the constant presence of graffiti in large-scale political and urban uprisings, from 1968 to 1977 or from Tahrir Square to Puerta del Sol. Fact nevertheless remains that urban political activism urges for more than communicative counter-tactics if the aim is the creation of autonomous counter-spaces for the experimentation of social relations alternative to capitalism (Bernardoni 2013b). Given, in fact, that it can be only mainly visually consumed, the space of graffiti as place of resistance can be “conceived” and “perceived” but not fully “lived” (Lefebvre 1991[1974]).

Pointing out that graffiti «create and multiply urban territories rather than merely occupying them», Andrea Brighenti (forthcoming, unpublished) argues that, when dealing with graffiti we are dealing with territorialism not as «a primordial exclusive appropriation of a place», but rather «with interventions that take place in public space – and interventions in public space can only be intervention *on* public space». As he continues: «there is no blank public space to which words and tags are then added, but it is precisely those words and tags as addressees that make space public». Following Lefebvre’s framework and the discussion developed so far, I would comment Brighenti’s remarks by questioning: if space does generally not escape the binomial partition into public and private, and if (re)appropriation is different from property, is there any way to re-appropriate space other than re-occupying it?

All these considerations cannot elude the fact that the controversies on the right to visibility and use stem not only from normative questions related to specific cases and contents but rather depend on the form of the decisional making-process and on the dominant “representation of space” (Lefebvre 1991[1974]). In other words, my aim is highlighting that the controversy on borders between public, private and state domains stems not only from the normative question of who should have the right to use urban space and how, but rather from the following one: who has the right to be entitled to define those borders? I therefore conclude by arguing the political significance of illegal graffiti in contributing to the transformation of urban space and to the recreation of places. As practice of re-territorialization, they ambivalently re-appropriate space and are heuristic

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Aide Esu

# Contested geography: the extreme cases of Jerusalem and Hebron

## Territoriality, Land dispossession, Land political tours

The protracted conflict between Israel and Palestine has resulted in a complex patchwork of different representations of the same landscape. Territory animates various perceptions and meanings: physical, social, cultural, religious and psychological, all carrying multiple narratives and conflicting visions. The first part of this paper focuses on 'land dynamics' to underline the methods employed to diffuse, create, reinforce and maintain a contested space. The overall concept of 'land dynamics' is useful for understanding the two extreme cases of Jerusalem and Hebron. The urban transformation of the two cities unfolds amidst violent conflict involving the political, religious, ethnic, cultural and economic spheres. These cities could be considered as an extreme case study of political violence and the production of urban space. In these cities, some Israeli organisations belonging to the 'peace camp' umbrella movement organise land tours in order to present a counter-narrative of the official space account. These organisations seek to draw the attention of Israeli public opinion to political responsiveness regarding the Palestinian land dispossession and human rights violations engendered by the occupation. In the second part, we present an ethnographic account of this new form of political action.

### Introduction

The permanent state of tension between Israel and Palestine assigns a new insight to the concept of territoriality, defined by Sack (1986: 1-3) as a '*spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources, (space) is socially constructed and depends on who is controlling whom and why*'. This paper examines the socially constructed nature of territoriality by looking at the practices of symbolic and de facto annexations exerted by the rule of the occupation power in the West Bank to create, maintain and legitimate land ownership. The first part examines '*land dynamics*' to underline the social construction of the methods employed to diffuse, create, reinforce and maintain a contested space. We underline the three main methods: *physical annexation* by the manu military and the power and authority exercised over civilians through restrictions and coercive surveillance; *symbolic annexation* deployed through *space sacralization* and the adoption of sacred belongingness to legitimise land ownership and, lastly, *de facto annexation* exerted by the expansionist settlement policies supported by government aid to enhance space irreversibility and foster intractable solutions to state borders. Land dynamics are the frame carving the urban transformation of Jerusalem and Hebron; the two cities are at the core of violent conflict that involve the political, religious, ethnic, cultural and economic spheres. Division and segre-

gation are becoming an increasingly dominant paradigm in urban contemporary global cities, and since 1967, Jerusalem and Hebron have pioneered this process, mirroring space and place transformations. Both cities share a common religious resettlement movement with different paths to urbanism. Several actors aspire to this even though they follow different agendas. Religious groups, religious associations, urban planners, real estate groups, municipalities and the government contribute to the ceaseless urban transformation.

The second part analyses political action by Israeli civil society as a reaction to the social construction of territoriality. We present an ethnographic account of political land tours organised by Machson Watch, Ir-Amim, Breaking the Silence and Susya Forever that take place in Jerusalem, Hebron, the South Hills of Hebron and the checkpoints along Jerusalem and the West Bank. The common goal of these organisations is to draw the attention of Israeli public opinion to political responsiveness regarding the Palestinian dispossession and the normalisation of the occupation. Their desire has been to take their audience to the occupied Palestinian territories and show how territoriality has been constructed by the rules of the occupation over the years.

## Land Dynamics: The Archipelago Model of Enclave Geography

Since the early stage of state formation, map-making has been used as a strategy (Benvenisti 2000) to strengthen hegemonic power over the land and a pillar in the state-making process of Israel (Leuenberger and Schnell 2010). Later, biblical claims, fuelled by active religious minorities, employed historical lineage as an ideological and political tool to threaten local residents (Collins-Kreiner 2008: 197). Political and military strategies advocated by religious, sacred land visions enhanced mapping practices in claims for territorial exclusivity. Different narratives and multiple visions of 'territory' arose as a result of political and social representations by Israelis and Palestinians of the same place. Geographers in the early stage of the State of Israel were engaged in promoting patriotism and encouraging a sense of place (Leuenberger and Schnell 2010: 808); and social memory and cultural artefacts contributed strongly towards socialising the Zionist space narrative (Esu 2012; Issam 2002; Ram 2011; Zerubavel 1995). Space controversies in the post-1967 period multiplied, and mental, political and military maps accompanied a map-making fetishization process (Wallach 2011: 362). Palestinians retained their own land semiotics (Feige 1999), and maps emerged as the conflict's meta-narrative, unveiling the enduring state of tension between imposing or resisting hegemonies, legitimisations, belongings and rules. Both Israelis and Palestinians are in search of a geo-body to fit the ideal nation (Wallach 2011: 365). Thus, the Israelis' symbolic claim of biblical right for the 'Great Israel' is 'sanctified' in the uncontested renaming of the West Bank as Galilee and Samaria, an assignment which is today largely accepted in the Israeli public sphere. Sack's definition of territory as socially constructed is, in this case study, more than a symbolic meaning; it is a matter of military strategy and 'a process of transformation, adaptation, construction and neglect of the landscape and the built environment' (Segal and Weizman 2003: 19). It is a sum of military strategies, religious legitimacy, expulsion, resistance, dispossession and forms of ownership that are encapsulated in what Holston calls the *logic of creative destruction* (cited by Levine 2005: 16), a practice that mobilises technical knowledge, military skills, political will and religious community practices.

How is the logic of creative destruction set up? First, we should go back to the Israeli State declaration. The institutional practices aimed at legitimating rightful land ownership were set out in the post-independence stage by a topographic *Judaization and de-Arabization* process. While map-making is related to values, politics and religion, sociologists and geographers played a key role in the state-making process and neglected social differentiation (Kimmerling 1992) while adopting the paradigm of maps as an 'objective' representation even as they were 'inventing' the Hebrew map of Israel (Schnell and Leunberger 2010). *Symbolic annexation* was a

long-term strategy which started in the early stages of state formation and was revitalised in the aftermath of the 1967 War following the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The social construction of territoriality was first set up by the secularisation of the biblical moral 'that the land (*Haaretz*) belong to the Jewish people, and only to the Jewish people' (Yiftachel 1999: 371).

In the second stage after 1967, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza legitimised new forms of action. Following the strategy of 'land for peace', the Israeli government opened the door to uncontrolled settlement expansion, activating an endless process of land grabbing and obsessive territorial map-making. This strategy, which legitimised new practices in the occupied territories, turned into the so-called politics of 'creating facts', thus supporting the creation of several settlements in the West Bank sustained by welfare policies (Manookin 2005). What is relevant in terms of the mixed political and religious discourse is that the settlement policies are reflective of mainstream neo-Zionism, which renews the pioneering ethos (Ram 2011) and expands the borderless nation in a territory with multiple frontiers. By the rule of occupation, Israel set up a land grabbing practice fulfilled by five methods: seizure for military purposes, declaration of state land, seizure of absentee property, confiscation for public needs and initial registration. According to B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organisation, by applying these practices, Israel has managed to take over about 50% of the land in the West Bank.

The enclaves created by the 'land dynamics' are described by Weizman as 'islands' and their organisation as an 'archipelago', a fragmentation that redefines practices and struggles over land, habitat and 'every act of living, settling, extracting, harvesting or trading as violence itself' (Weizman 2007). This island-archipelago logic is clearly evident in Jerusalem's urban expansion; settlements are built following the logic of territorial control, fragmentation and compartmentalisation of the Palestinian territory. The encirclement of the sub-urban Palestinian villages located north of the old city, the so-called SEAM-Area, are outstanding examples of the 'spaciocide' (Hanafi 2006, 2009, 2013).

Space at the expense of any theory formulated so far is primarily a political tool and the political agenda of Israel. How was the enclave geography fulfilled? Since 1967, settlements have been, in the view of Ariel Sharon, a military doctrine to create a tactical defensive system located strategically in the hilltops, observation points designed like military fortifications, as the town of Ariel testifies (Weizman 2007). A military matrix of organised camps became the blueprint for their civilian colonisation settlement. As several studies have underlined (e.g. Schnell, Portugali 1993; Yiftachel 1999), the aim of this strategy was to split and paralyse the West Bank and show the force of the occupation power. The first place to test this space doctrine was Kyriat Arba, created three months after the end of the 1967 War by the

transformation of the military camp in the first ultra-orthodox settlement neighbouring the Patriarchs Tomb in Hebron. In this area, the Gush Emunim movement, animated by the credo of biblical land reunification, pioneered the practice of outposts without permission to force retrospective recognition. They designed a form of uncontrolled 'instant urbanism' (two caravans parked on the hilltop) side by side with the 'optical urbanism' of planned settlement, the concentric urban layout that follow the orographic shape, hiding in the slopes water, sewage, electricity and phone supplies (Weizman 2007: 131). The construction of the wall and fence to defend Israel's population against suicide bomb attacks increased the extension of enclave geography as a matter of state security. The public discourse on security turn to be the dominant paradigm in sought to control social anxiety and fear. The Israeli society thrived on a securitisation habitus (carry a weapon or be constantly checked in daily routines), which became the way to absorb a state of exception as a normal condition. The extension of this state of mind to the permeable borders between Israel and Palestine expanded the securitisation industry to the occupied territories. Borders and bordering became a national hysteria in the Israeli public rhetoric (Rogoff 2006: 2839). Walls, fences and checkpoints were thus the natural application of Sharon's doctrine, an extension of the territorial logistic device to control the Palestinian population flow.

### **Jerusalem and Hebron: Two Extreme Cases of Urbanism**

Hebron and Jerusalem are at the core of the spatial logic of exclaves and enclaves, the extreme forms of urbanism that make visible the powerful relationship between political violence and urban space, deeply inscribed in the social fabric (Misselwitz and Rieniets 2006: 24). Why is this process so relevant? The two cities share some commonalities. They are the first and second holy cities for the Arabs and Jews where the symbolic shrines of the two religions are located; they are at the core of the colonial religious settlement strategy, employing religious legacy as the right to move back to the ancestors' land. A complex boundary-making process is deployed in a mix of military action, land-use planning, political strategy and religious lobbying policies legitimised by social imagination. Space imagination in the Jewish collective memory has been nurtured through regular and recurrent social practices and ceremonies. The Seder mandatory rule 'preserve and remember' celebrates the desire, ('next year in Jerusalem'), to resettle in the holy city, setting out in the liturgical memory the heterotopic experience of being here and dreaming of the space elsewhere (Esu 2012). These rules are today converted into the settlers' ideology and rhetoric and ignite the daily land-grasping practices. The division and segregation described above, through the sacralization of land, the land grabbing, and the securitisation apparatus with its fence/wall and checkpoints have

become the dominant paradigm in Jerusalem's and Hebron's urbanity.

Jerusalem and Hebron share a common religious symbolism, but Jerusalem is considered the spiritual capital of the Jewish people and is claimed to be the political capital of the State of Israel. Thus, since 1967, urbanism has played a pivotal role in affirming the hegemonic aspirations to renovate the greatest city spirit, and several actors with different agendas share this ambition. Religious groups, religious associations, urban planners, real estate groups, municipalities and the government have contributed to the endless urban transformation. The 'Jerusalem capital city' generates a wider geopolitical, territorial and demographic struggle; space and place have been transformed, manipulated, destroyed and brutalised in order to adapt to different agendas. In fact, the 'Great Jerusalem' was planned as an example of the aesthetic display with the homogeneous shape; city planners imposed the use of the 'Jerusalem white stone' for the new buildings, showing the city's blueprint, an appearance of a natural, uniform city (Weizman 2007). The blueprint image hides the internal confrontation between Palestinian residents and Israeli authorities instantiated through the 'bulldozers that have destroyed streets, houses, cars (...). It is a war in an age of literal agoraphobia' (Hanafi 2006: 93). The Palestinian villages (Sur Beit, Beit Sfafa and Shufat) around Jerusalem's urban area have progressively lost their agricultural land and have been re-classified by urban planners as 'green areas' for public use where new settlements encircling Palestinian villages have been built. The Palestinian area, without an official planning scheme and unable to expand, experienced forced 'urbanisation without urbanity', developing illegal and semi-illegal renovations and home expansions (Khamaisi 2006: 121-122). After the Oslo Accords, the city's boundaries were marked by temporary military checkpoints forging new rules and ID permissions to regulate the mobility of Palestinian residents. The Second Intifada increased restrictions on movement and walls and fences separated families and neighbours, thereby exerting a severe influence on housing. Thousands of Palestinian residents abandoned their houses in an effort to reunite with family members.

The city of Hebron is the core of a different territorial strategy. Here, orthodox groups pioneered a mix of land grabbing and biblical claims. Hebron's hills enclose one of the most significant places of ancient Jewish mythology, the Patriarch's Tombs at the Machepela site. The conquest of Hebron's territory during the Six-Day War symbolised a historical shift for all Israelis, secular and religious, embodying an exceptional value in the perspective of the territorial expansionist policy. It is a holy city for both Jews and Muslims and encloses the symbolic shrines of the two religions. Capitalising on the high symbolism of the place, an ultra-orthodox group under the leadership of Rabbi Levinger began a successful action in 1967, a week after the occupation. The group quickly became the vanguard of the expan-

sionist action that was driven by religious messianism. It pressured the first right-wing government since 1948 to support their annexation practices, thus benefitting from a free hand to expand the area. The new messianic movement, Gush Emunim, established in 1984, organised a diffuse radical anti-Arab view in the frame of the Pentateuch reading of social reality. Samaria and Judea, as they called the West Bank, was the land of all Jews given to them by God. According to their view, Hebron was not an ordinary city; it was 'the Place' where the history of Israel began. This interpretation, fuelled by the unceasing action of Rabbi Levinger and his followers, attributed a special meaning to the Patriarch's area: a holy place with a factual political significance. Repossessing the holy place symbolised the retaking of control over history and, therefore, a reunified timeline, including the past, the present and the future. If in Jerusalem urbanism plays a key role, Hebron carries out an undeclared war between orthodox settlers and Palestinian residents in the old city, trying out sturdy practices later extended in the villages of East Jerusalem.

The H2 area<sup>1</sup> is the stage of the invisible battlefield, an unconventional everyday high intensity war of nerves between the Palestinian residents and the settlers who are seeking their expulsion. Harassment, rude humiliations, offensive injuries and stone and garbage throwing are the basic characterisations of this war. Since the Second Intifada, more than 2,000 shops in Casbah Street and al Shalala Street, the two main streets in the old market, have closed due to harassment<sup>2</sup> by settlers. In Hebron, the goal is to take control of the Medina area around the Machapela, and the all-symbolic historical landmarks – the administrative seat, the trading post, the military base and the religious practices (Silver 2010: p. 346). The extreme segregation and expulsion practices have become the city's blueprint, an exacerbated daily routine set up by the settlers to

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 1 Following the Interim Agreement in 1997, Hebron was divided in two parts: area H1 under Palestinian control, and H2 under Israeli control where live about 800 settlers live, 35,000 Palestinians and about 2,000 IDF soldiers who protect the settlers and securitise the area through a huge surveillance apparatus.

2 According to B'Tselem, «to protect and encourage the Israeli settlement in Hebron, Israel applies a 'principle of separation': the segregation, both physically and by law, of Palestinians and settlers in the city. This discriminatory policy results in protracted and severe harm to Palestinians living and working in the center of the city. (...) This expulsion, the greatest in magnitude since Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, constitutes a grave breach of international humanitarian law». Hebron, Area H2. Settlements, Cause Mass Departure of Palestinians. B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories Status Report, 2003.

make everyday life impossible for the residents of Tel Rumeida, Beit Hadassa, Beit Romano and Avraham Avinu and to force them to leave.

### **Political Tours:**

#### **Raising a Territorial Counter-Narrative**

Urban changes in Hebron and Jerusalem reflect space annexation policies that follow two distinct paths. In both cities, the Diaspora's imagination mobilises action by secular and religious groups; in Jerusalem, the main form of action is an aggressive spatial expansion of grabbing Palestinian agricultural land, villages and built-up areas. In Hebron, action is instantiated through an erosive daily practice of expelling square after square of Palestinian residents in the old city. As the conditions of the Palestinian population deteriorate due to land dynamics, within some milieu of Israeli society there have been practices of resistance/defence to land grasping' process, mobilizing a space counter-narratives. Here, we refer to ethnographic fieldwork on the space political/study tour. We focus on the cases of Ir-Amin (Jerusalem), Machsom Watch, Friends of Susya (South Hills of Hebron) and Breaking the Silence (Hebron). The tours took place between the spring and summer of 2012 in Jerusalem, Hebron, the South Hills of Hebron and, in a larger area between the Qalandia checkpoint and the internal barriers, the agricultural gates and forbidden roads encircling the Palestinian villages.

The space counter-narrative has flourished, mainly within Israeli society. In Palestine, we observed a more nuanced representation, that is, a mix of tourist transportation in Jerusalem and self-organised tours of Palestinian traders resisting settler aggression in Hebron. Here, they practice a mixture of trade and political enclosure tours of the Hebron Kasbah to sensitise the rare tourists visiting the market. They demonstrate their way of life as resisting a truly hostile environment, their survival in a ghost trade area, telling of their fathers' glorious commercial past.

The members of the four Israeli organisations, all established after the Second Intifada, come from different social worlds. The women from Machsom Watch are feminists and peace activists; the Ir-Amim members are academics and lawyers; Breaking the Silence members are combat veterans of the Israeli Army who served in Hebron; and the Friends of Susya are a more collective heterogeneous group. Their practices include a radical political movement against the occupation and the denial of Palestinians' right to move freely in their land (Breaking the Silence); an active information centre as well as legal support to make Jerusalem a more viable and equitable city for Israelis and Palestinians (Ir-Amim); supporting the actions of Susya's residents (Friends of Susya); more lively activity in monitoring evidence of human rights violations at checkpoints and courts of justice (Machsom Watch).

What do they have in common? Operating from different standpoints, these organisations seek to draw the attention of Israeli public opinion to political re-

sponsiveness regarding the Palestinian dispossession by informing, monitoring and giving legal support to first recognise the existence of the rights of Palestinians. The tours direct participants behind the curtain erected by the state security rhetoric, illustrating the relationship between the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian population, unveiling Israeli policies in Jerusalem and their social and political implications; exposing the surveillance apparatus and its effects; offering an unmediated encounter of Hebron and the South Hills of Hebron with former combats who served in the area. The core of the political/study tours of the enclave geography responds to: «being moved by what one sees, feels and comes to know is always one in which one finds oneself transported elsewhere, into another scene, or into a social world in which one is not the center. And this form of dispossession is constituted as a form of responsiveness that gives rise to action and resistance to appearing together with others, in an effort to demand the end of injustice. (Butler, Athanasiou 2013: XI)».

The act of seeing comes to play an interstitial function; it alters and erodes the perception of a constructed space by the nationalist narrative of the rightful belonging of the holy land and unmasks the simplistic Zionist representation of space. The ideology of the right to return drew a veil over the rights of the Palestinian population and 'demonized a stereotyped faceless Arab' (Leuenberger and Schnell 2010). For an Israeli, being mobilised to criticise the conduct of the government and the army in the Occupied Territories means to call into question culture and historical collective ties and loyalties.

Breaking the Silence is perhaps a paradigmatic example. The members have declared that they are engaged in portraying a grimmer picture of the West Bank occupation. When discharged from army duty, they discovered a gap between civilian life and the silence within Israeli society regarding the reality of the Occupied Territories. They experienced a double reality, a military life and a civilian one. Military sociologists have attempted to explain how military institutions develop and maintain high levels of social cohesion (King 2006). They have focused primarily on how personal and intimate social interactions between soldiers produce ties of comradeship. Cohesion cannot be separated by collective practices, but in the, Israeli case, it is strongly embedded in the nation's history, society and culture as well as the role of the military in politics and society. For a country born from a war, and since then has engaged in a permanent state of war, the discourse of security and the core values of the army code of conduct—state defence, homeland love, country loyalty—are not simply military rhetoric but general social values incorporated in society through civilian militarism. For the Israeli soldiers, the general meaning of social cohesion goes beyond that in military practices and training operations; it is a matter of national identity, a duty to defend the homeland from threats. Breaking the Silence's outings have gener-

ated strong criticism from the Israeli society and the military apparatus. Soldiers' testimonies about unethical army conduct vis-à-vis Palestinian residents reflects conflicting heterotopic experiences between the inner space of army behaviour 'behind the lines' memories and life in Israeli society that ignores it. Civilian life normalises the denial in the form defined by Cohen (2001: 85) as «the maintenance of social worlds in which an undesirable situation is unrecognised, ignored or normalized». The practices of denial, cultural and institutional, are set up by the hegemonic ethos of the intractable conflict (Bar-tal 2005), a moral base and psycho-cognitive background to identify a stereotypical image of the enemy.

The practice of interstitial tours seeks to break the solid hegemonic discourse and habitus about security; walls, checkpoints, military and surveillance apparatuses confirm the existence of a faceless threatening enemy. The tours' walking practice comes to be a «procès d'appropriation du système topographique par le piéton (...); c'est une réalisation spatiale du lieu (de Certeau 1990: 148)». Space realities engender a reconfiguration of previous space perceptions as structured by a territorially hegemonic discourse. This new perception has introduced a dramatic shift in the homogeneous nationalistic picture when the discovery is extended to the social space of the enemy, a new disturbing element, perhaps the most critical, enters into participants' outlook. When the participants discover the enemy in the everyday social reality of mobility and freedom impediments, when they see that to reach one's place of work, school, hospital and land to be cultivated depends on the discretion of open hours at checkpoints or by soldiers' abuse of power, they become puzzled. Bewilderment overcomes the participants. They discover the mute frustration of waiting hours in long queues at checkpoints. The 'undesirable and unrecognised' come into view; participants see the unveiled vulnerability of the unhopeful enemy that aspire to live an enduring life in a hostile environment. They discover that indifference, such as the «rejection of common humanity» (Herzfeld 1992: 1), has separated the Israeli and Palestinian social worlds. Political and study tours cross the lines, physical and emotional, create an experience based on a 'contact zone', defined by Marie Louse Pratt as «social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (quoted by Rogoff 2006: 281)».

To crack this indifference in Israeli society, these groups reinforce the act of seeing and practicing territorial walking. They provide a de-construction of the official space accounts, showing the grey areas of collective memory narratives and the information omitted by the national media. They reveal an unknown world of illegitimate annexation, abuse of power and human rights violations, and they unveil the face of the enemy, revealing a human being behind the dehumanisation practices set up by the

occupation power. The body is an active player in this discovery, walking behind the lines, crossing the space of the other show, a human being - a young mother, a child, an old peasant, a student behind the enemy mask. This interstitial practice moves in the direction of a non-violent ethos to show «what will and will not appear within public life, the limits of a publicly acknowledged field of appearance (Butler 2004: xx)». Spatiality, in the sense defined by de Certeau (1990), as an experience in relation to the world, is forged in the tour by the active body discover, visual, physical and emotional.

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Elisa Bertagnini

# ***Jardins collectifs.*** **Story of an urban practice in transformation**

## **Jardins collectifs, Urban practice, Public action, Urban transformation**

In France, the *jardins collectifs* are a phenomenon of great importance, various activities are within them and the values conveyed through these spatial practices are many. Initially these experiences are the result of a process in which the needs expressed by a majority of the population are 'taken over' by public action, a kind of combination between the people's needs and the political will; today, the design of this particular typology of space is embedded in many of the urban transformations supported by the government. An example are the projects carried out by the *Programme National de Rénovation Urbaine* aimed to incisively solve the problems identified in the social housing districts, through massive demolitions and reconstructions.

In most cases, these urban transformation projects are designed and realized without any form of consultation and participation of the inhabitants. Within the framework of these invasive operations, creating some *jardins collectifs* is presented as a guarantee for the inhabitants and a way to take into account their wishes. However, the pretexts put forward by the government seem to conceal the authoritarian nature of the problems related to the interventions of urban regeneration, and perverting the initial capacity of these experiences to advance an alternative model of production and use of the city.

### **Definitions**

In France, the definition of *jardin collectif* is always used in policy documents of various public institutions to indicate a parcel of land, primarily intended for horticulture, whose transformation and care are the result of a collective will. Under this term are grouped numerous types of arrangement and management of green spaces (or transformed interstitial spaces) entrusted by the municipalities (or by the owner public body) to the association that will aim for the creation of an urban garden.

The gardens assume a variety of denominations: they may be intended for the inhabitants of a district and used individually (*jardins familiaux*) or collectively (*jardins partagés*); they may be targeting people with social and economic hardships (*jardins d'insertion*); they may have a pedagogical (*jardins pédagogiques*) or therapeutic vocation (*jardins thérapeutiques*).

Due also to the promotion operated by the public policies, the spread of collective gardens is a phenomenon of great importance, as demonstrated by about 1500 associations created for their management, since the nineties, all over the French territory. Various activities are carried out within the gardens (cultivations, educational activities for children, neighbourhood festivals, distribution of agricultural products among the inhabitants or group dinners prepared with the same products) and many values

are conveyed through these practices that foresee the involvement of residents for the care of a common space: sharing, the creation of new social relations and a renewed relationship with nature, the environmental respect, the social mix and cultural integration, in addition to being a place of support for the popular daily practices.

### **Brief history: from the *jardins ouvriers* to the *jardins collectifs***

The *jardins collectifs* are a predominantly urban phenomenon, emerged from the industrial city of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally known as *jardins ouvriers*, they spread within the working-class suburbs to improve the health and economic conditions of the labourer people, becoming places for the recovery of social ties and a means of adaptation of everyday life in the new urban context (Guyon 2008).

The foundation of the *Ligue du Coin de Terre et du Foyer* dates back to 1896: it is an association dealing with the creation of the *jardins ouvriers* that are experiencing a real popularity and reach the greatest diffusion during the two world wars, when they constitute an effective solution to food shortages. The gardens are subject instead to decline in the post-war years, marked by strong economic and urban growth when, at the request of the State, planners and architects are called to the construction of the

new image of the modern city, culminating in the massive spread of the *grands ensembles*<sup>1</sup>.

In this new context, the institutional imagery considers the composite appearance of the urban gardens as an element of disorder and DIY, that leads to a similarity with the slums, thus not suitable to expressing the new idea of modernity (Didieu 2007: 123-124); to meet the contemporary planning principles, the *jardins collectifs* are included in the projects of the *villes nouvelles* and set at the foot of the buildings by the *Offices HLM*, delegated to the construction of social housing<sup>2</sup>.

The kitchen gardens are technically designed in a rational way, intended to convey an idea of order, gaining rigidity with the alignments of parcels, the rectification of the paths, the standardization of the service buildings. Even the denomination of the 'worker's gardens' changes: the law of July 26, 1952 replaces the previous epithet with 'family', and introduces a new implication of the public authorities for the acquisition and management of the *jardins familiaux* (Simonet 2001).

These areas, however, continue to be places where forms of sociability are regenerated and the new urbanized population perpetuates the agricultural tradition of the countryside of origin, as well as places of individual expression.

Since the '70s, the economic situation deteriorates and the questioning of the development model, which accompanies the ecologist thought and criticism to the functionalist urbanism brings back an increased focus on urban gardens.

This evolution leads the public institutions to more carefully preserve and disseminate the *jardins collectifs*: incorporated into the planning tools<sup>3</sup>, they complement the green areas and urban public spaces and seem to have become one of the essential components of current urbanism (Guyon 2004). The renewed interest in this type of area also lies in the role they play: as examples of community places, allowing the development of associational

life, and a means to a policy of social inclusion, the *jardins collectifs* are considered element of social balance (Simonet 2001).

Today, the creation of new gardens are also part of a logic of enhancing the cityscape and the urban heritage; internal regulations and municipal decrees become instruments through which agriculture is 'regulated'<sup>4</sup> in the city, allowing the maintenance of certain free zones of rurality within the urban fabric (Guyon 2008).

A growing attention is paid to the integration of the garden in the neighbourhood, in an attempt to create a coherent landscape that does not result in a chaotic image; the institutional promoters publish methodological guides, presenting the rules to ensure a better «*appropriation et intégration paysagère*» of the collective gardens, with the aim of preventing the «*bidonville verte*»<sup>5</sup>. The garden becomes a tool to improve the image of the city.

The double - social and aesthetic - effect of the *jardins collectifs* takes over especially in urban renewal projects, where they are used by public policies as a response to the «*mal des banlieues*»; the realization of this type of urban green accompanies extensive operations under the *Programme National de Rénovation Urbaine (PNRU - Loi n°2003-710)* which, through massive demolition and reconstruction, aims to incisively solve the problems identified in the social habitat districts, particularly those classified as «*zones urbaines sensibles*»<sup>6</sup>.

In a number of publications produced by the institutional actors to promote the extensive (and discussed) on-going transformations, the presence of *jardins collectifs* is referred to as an important element improving the quality of life in the targeted neighbourhood (social mix, differentiation in the use of proximity public spaces, *désenclavement* of the neighbourhood) and to mitigate its highly stigmatized image<sup>7</sup>.

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1 This expression indicates the neighbourhoods of social housing built in France, particularly in the 50s and 70s, in response to the housing deficit in the country. These settlements are characterized by the shape of the blocks, breaking in with the surrounding tissue; for building typology, especially bars and towers; and for their size, which provides a number of dwellings between 500 and 1000. In 1973, a ministerial directive put an end to their construction.

2 *Journal Officiel de la République Française. Débats Parlementaires*, Année 1976, no. 43 A.N., Jeudi 27 Mai 1976. Available at: <http://archives.assemblee-nationale.fr/5/cr/1975-1976-ordinaire2/053.pdf>.

3 The law of November 11, 1976 allows the SAFER (*Société d'Établissement Foncier Rural*) to exercise, at the request of the associations that deal with urban gardens, the right of pre-emption for the land acquisition in the aim of providing new spaces intended to this purpose and ensures protection and replacement warranty in the event of expropriation.

.....  
4 For example, the *Charte Main Verte* (Paris, 2003) is a work program and a guide for the establishment of a 'shared garden', with which the government in Paris tried to answer a series of movements, needs, desires appeared in various places of the city. This is a standard agreement through which the City entrusts to residents' associations (in most cases purpose-founded) the creation and management of the gardens, through its technical, financial and consultative support; the agreement defines the rules for the creation and management of the garden.

5 *Le Jardin dans Tous Ses Etats, Jardin Familiaux, appropriation et intégration paysagère*, Fondation de France, 2000. Available at: [http://jardins-partages.org/telechargezmoi\\_files/methodoJF.pdf](http://jardins-partages.org/telechargezmoi_files/methodoJF.pdf).

6 The law n° 95-115 of February 4, 1995 defines the «*zones urbaines sensibles*» (ZUS), as below-urban areas that are primary targets for the city public policies, according to local considerations related to the difficulties experienced by the inhabitants of these territories.

7 Union Social Pour l'Habitat, *Résidentialisation: qualité du projet, du paysage et des usages*, Collection «*Éléments*

In the invasive operations of urban renewal, the creation of the *jardins collectifs* is presented as a guarantee of consideration of the people's will and a support to the appropriation of new living spaces.

### The Commune des Mureaux and its *jardins collectifs*<sup>8</sup>

#### The Jardins du bonheur

The first realization of a *jardin collectif* in *Les Mureaux* dates back to 2003, when the city was not yet involved in the *Grand Projet de Rénovation Urbaine (GPRU)*, the urban regeneration project of its social housing districts.

At the time of its announcement, the initiative is welcomed by the inhabitants and brought as a good example by other urban communities interested in developing this type of activity. At the same time, the project is presented by the press as a challenge undertaken by the local authority for the decision to locate these urban gardens a short walk from *Les Musiciens* district, one of the so-called 'sensitive areas' of the city, regarded as an element able to jeopardise their success (Fossey 2003).

The purpose of this choice, besides the educational and environmental aims, is to foster dialogue and social ties between the inhabitants of this 'problematic' urban reality and the rest of the population.

The *Jardins du bonheur* are made on a plot of land divided into forty parcels intended to *jardins familiaux*. There are also two additional parcels: a *jardin d'insertion* and a *jardin pédagogique* for collective activities and social utility.

The parcels are aligned along a main distribution avenue, with secondary service paths, and are allocated according to certain criteria referring to the entire population of the city, to promote the social mix and the désenclavement of the district; the association

of the *jardiniers du Bonheur* signed a convention with the municipality which defines the rules of use. The relationship with the neighbourhood is positive: as an element of connection with the neighbouring Satour park, the garden is open and residents and visitors can stroll along the internal paths. The mediator for environmental activities of the *jardin d'insertion* and the *jardin pédagogique* believes these spaces are a great contribution to the integration and socialization of the district<sup>9</sup>.

The *jardins familiaux* in *Les Musiciens* seem to remain one of the few areas within the district where the inhabitants still manage to express their own 'planning ability' with respect to their living places (Cellamare 2011) through the 'everyday's making', despite the constraints imposed by the rules of use. The garden becomes an evident manifestation of a capacity of concrete construction and maintenance of a place, with a capacity of imagination, an idea of sociality and the awareness of an underlying symbolic world, all condensed into a few square meters of the lot.

However, the inhabitants' capabilities of understanding and intervention in the definition of the space remain largely untapped and without room for maneuver within the current urban policy, where the practices of consultation provided by the *GPRU* do not include other types of planning or intervention by inhabitants and are reduced to assemblies with mainly informational purposes (Deboulet 2011); also the deriving image of the place contrasts with the dynamics implemented in the district by the operations of urban renewal, where demolition, reconstruction and redevelopment of buildings and public spaces are transforming not only the physical aspect, but also the ways of use of the *cité*<sup>10</sup>.

The current image of the garden will soon be affected by important changes related to the transactions referred to the *rénovation urbaine*; Also the decision to cordon off the garden to control access is taken without that the users can express their own opinion: «*Vu que les jardins appartiennent à la mairie des Mureaux, c'est eux qui prennent la décision, nous on est simplement prestataire de service. Donc on à rien à dire et à faire ...*»<sup>11</sup>.

In particular, the continuity relationship between the district, the gardens and the Satour park is endan-

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de méthodes et de repères», no. 2, Décembre 2012.

8 The expressed arguments are inspired by a field study on *Les Mureaux*, city of *Ile-de-France* about forty kilometres west of Paris, object of one of the most ambitious - by extent and by magnitude of the planned operations - urban renewal programs. The city has about 32,000 inhabitants; the perimeter of the *Grand Projet de Rénovation Urbaine (GPRU)* involves the areas of public housing (*grands ensembles* or *HLM*) that collect roughly 15,000 inhabitants, that is, more than a third of the municipal population and a quarter of the urbanized area of the municipality. The *GPRU* was signed in 2006; the program involves the demolition of 1,076 units. The observations relate mainly to the five *HLM* boroughs of the city: *La Cité Renault, Ile-de-France - Les Bougimonts, Bécheville, La Vigne Blanche, Les Musiciens*. The research is based on a field survey began in 2009 within the project *Renouveler les pratiques de conception du projet urbain: renforcer l'écoute et la coopération entre les professionnels de la ville, les associations et les citoyens en Ile-de-France* (Programma *PICRI - Partenariat Institutions Citoyens pour la Recherche et pour l'Innovation*), coordinated by Agnès Deboulet. On the spot, the first investigations were carried out with the help of sociologist Roselyne De Villanova.

9 This information was gathered by the author during a visit to the *Jardins du bonheur* performed April 4, 2009, with Roselyne de Villanova, member of the project *PICRI*.

10 For example, the process of *résidentialisation*, a term used to designate one of the main operational tools of urban renewal, consisting in the redefinition of the public or private status of land, is formalized through the definition of a limit, which clearly draws the area of jurisdiction of each building in replacement of permeable public space, an originary feature of the *grands ensembles*; this tool is also accompanied by the introduction of a system of 'private residential functioning', with the provision of coded keypad intercom, access badges, controlled parking.

11 Environmental mediator of the garden.



**Fig.1** The *Jardins du bonheur*: overall view of the garden placed on the perimeter of the Les Musiciens neighbourhood (in the background).



**Fig.2** The *jardins familiaux*: a concrete example of 'planning ability' expressed by residents in relation to the daily living place.

gered; this environmental quality, which is one of the potential of the place, could not be recognized by the project. The relationships established between the garden and the context, creating the conditions for which «*les habitants aimaient bien venir se promener ici*»<sup>12</sup>, are in fact relevant to ensure the accomplishment of the task of sociability that originated the garden; also the ideal connection between the neighbourhood and the rest of the city comes in part from the permeability of this space that, thanks to its accessibility, becomes a meeting place for people from different areas in Les Mureaux.

### **The *jardin partagé* of the Cité Renault**

The operations of urban renewal regard also other 'sensitive' districts in the city: the Cité Renault, where the project is in the most advanced stage and the actions taken have profoundly transformed the urban and social structure of the neighbourhood<sup>13</sup>, is affected by the implementation of a *jardin partagé*. A residents' association was created for its management, assisted by an «*agent de développement locale*»<sup>14</sup>: an official of the City that plays the role of intermediary for the project.

A look outside, the mode of implementation of the project raises several concerns. First, because of the delay with which the proposal of the *jardin partagé* is appeared, near the end of the operations, after years of heavy physical transformations of the neighbourhood. There is a strong implication of the government, that pushes for its implementation and advertises it as a participatory project within the GPRU; that is, almost as an compensation element in lieu of the non-involvement of the inhabitants that has marked the whole process of urban renewal.

There also remains a strong interference in the activities of the association by the city government, that participates in the management of the garden through the agent of local development; the 'meddling' behaviour of these persons is confirmed by the words of some interlocutor.

Finally, the location of the garden is quite inadequate: after numerous demolitions and the redesign of the estates, municipal government and *baillieur*<sup>15</sup> - two among the promoters of the *rénovation urbaine* - decide to occupy an 500 square meters area at the base of a rehabilitated building, whose apartments overlook the parcel, in direct eye and sound contact.

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12 Environmental mediator of the garden.

13 Before the start of the GPRU, the Cité Renault included 236 social housing, 140 of which are demolished and only 86 rebuilt in site; the remaining 96 were affected by redevelopment and *résidentialisation*.

14 The role of the «*agent de développement locale*», a facilitator and a mediator at the same time, is to mobilize all the resources of a neighbourhood around the promotion of collective development projects and socio-cultural animation.

15 The *baillieurs sociaux* are the lenders and owners of real estate assets attributed with social criteria.

Supporters of the project chose to move against the will of those residents who have specifically requested to place the garden in a more central location compared to the current plot, but at the same time isolated from the buildings, to allow even the realization of a playground for children.

The proposed solution would allow the creation of a meeting place for different generational groups, a greater chance of parental control on children and a place that would not generate tensions in relation to the use of the spaces between the different categories of users; instead, the preferred ground by the inhabitants was used for the construction of new buildings and there is not, to date, a space for children's activities.

### **The *jardins collectifs* of the Parc Molière**

Inside the GPRU of Les Mureaux, is planned a large public park - the Parc Molière - intended to be the fulcrum of the entire project. The park creates a connection between the city centre and the HLM neighbourhoods in rehabilitation, arranged in sequence along a main road axis. Inside the projected park, two green areas are intended to be respectively *jardins familiaux* and *jardin pédagogique*.

The city government has launched a consultation workshop on Parc Molière structured in groups of participants to be entrusted with different themes of reflection (the playgrounds, the treatment of boundaries, etc.). One of the groups of «*acteurs-ressources*» is involved in the discussion on the *jardins*, with the aim of identifying strategies for their implementation, and of selecting in advance the future users, carers of the parcels; in a second phase, the selected horticulturists-gardeners will be involved in discussing the formal solutions to be adopted in the design of the area.

The declared purpose is to integrate at the maximum level the gardens with the design of the park, which, as a whole, should be the qualitative element for the entire GPRU and able to revive the image of the city: «*favoriser le traitement esthétique, se soucier de la qualité*» are in fact among the guiding principles of 'collective' reflection on the park<sup>16</sup>.

The arrangement of the *jardins collectifs* within the perimeter of the GPRU determines, as a result, the underlying principles and influences the process to define them. In particular, such a process can have a direct impact on the category of future users, which are selected through a pathway activated by the promoters of the project themselves. In fact, also the selection of the new gardeners will respect the *mixité sociale* as a basilar principle for the demolition-reconstruction projects and which, in essence, led the partial removal of the original inhabitants of these neighbourhoods and the arrival of less insolvent others. The consequences on their 'planning ability' and ways of use are uncertain.

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16 The information was gathered by the author during the meetings of the consultation workshop on Parc Molière, which began in November 2012.



**Fig.3** The entrance to the *jardin partagé* of the Cité Renault is realized in a peripheral site of the district.



**Fig.4** The relationship between *jardin partagé* and buildings is reason to possible interference between the various categories of users.

### The 'renewal' in the design of the *jardins collectifs*

In different times, urban gardens have been a significant tessera in the model of the city expressed by the relationship established between the public authorities and inhabitants. The functions related to the creation of the workers' and kitchen gardens evolve from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present in relation to economic, political and social context, becoming the spatial translation of ideologies of and urban concepts (Guyon 2008).

Urban gardens were initially a landscape element spontaneously produced by a cultural and creative individual expression; over the years, they have tended more and more to produce a normalized landscape (Simonet 2001), subdued to aesthetic criteria that are, in some cases, the result of a high-end design<sup>17</sup>.

The urban renewal policy brings a new evolution phase in the conception of the *jardins collectifs*. In fact, their design is often manipulated: the reorganization and improvement of existing green spaces and their integration with the new ones become the axes on which to place the restructuring of urban space.

The interpretation of the operations taking place in Les Mureaux suggests that these gardens can become a gimmick available to the public power in the constant search for to normalize the urban habitat and its inhabitants, until to become the expression of a selected social group. In particular, the process undertaken and being developed for the realization of the *jardins collectifs* of the future Parc Molière allows to suppose a certain willingness to implement a further experiment of 'social engineering' in the wake of the idea of social mix, so strongly promoted by the *rénovation urbaine*.

Within the framework of the urban renewal projects, the *jardins collectifs* are presented as spaces of solidarity and social cohesion and, at the same time, as sites involved in the implementation of sustainable development policies in the social housing districts, able to redesign the public space in the neighbourhood; the previous collective experiences of urban greenery were based on needs and requirements that now seem to be borrowed by government as justifications behind which the real issues related to the authoritarian nature of operational interventions of urban regeneration can be hidden.

Thus the gardens would constitute another element concealing the same authoritarian instances that seem to characterize other aspects of current urban policies, often conflicting with the hopes and forces fielded by the people who propose instead the 'planning ability' implicit in their own spatial practices.

This interpretation aims to highlight the trajectory by which public policies have approached this phenomenon that, through the emergence of a strong and widespread practice, led to an experience shared by

institutional and not institutional supporters; in some cases, this attitude translates in a rhetoric indifferently used by decision-makers, so that they distort the original capacity to propose an alternative model of production and use of the city.

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<sup>17</sup> The *jardins familiaux* of the Parc des Hautes Bruyères in Villejuif (Val de Marne), designed by Renzo Piano, are an example.

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Claudio Marciano, Giacomo Lepri

# Out of sowed.

## Coraggio cooperative and urban agriculture in Rome

### Urban agriculture, Right to the land, Social movement

In some of the abandoned lots of Rome's neighborhoods, young graduates cry and demand their right to the city, or to be more accurate, to the land. A cry and demand that take the form of a new urban social movement organized by young farmers, new and old farming cooperatives, trade unions and environmentalist associations.

Their first demand is around their need to work. But, together with perceptions of needs, the activists of this new movement, organize their struggle around a handful of specific proposals, such as to approve a norm that stops the possibility to transform farming land into housing land and to review the present property of farming lands to protect them from the risk of expropriation by large estates.

This paper analyses the emergence, the social composition and the relationships with local public institutions, through in-depth interviews with members of cooperative, in order to shed light on the biographies, expectations and the cultural backgrounds of activists.

#### 1. Background

This article illustrates an experience of urban agriculture in Rome. The focus is on a cooperative of young farmers, named Co.r.ag.Gio<sup>1</sup>, which started a struggle for its right to the land within the city. In a short time, the cooperative succeeded to engage with other social actors interested in a more equal and sustainable distribution of roman public lands. As a result of such demand, Coraggio became the operative branch of a wider social movement.

Coraggio transposed the concept of right to the land into four practical aims:

- To census urban public agricultural land;
- To elaborate public announcements in order to allocate the land to urban agriculture project carried out by young farmers;
- To institute funds in order to facilitate bank credit;
- To stop property speculations on the roman territory and to preserve biodiversity.

The article tries to answer to two questions regarding the genesis and the social composition of Coraggio. In particular:

- Which economic, social and cultural tenden-

cies determined the genesis of Co.R.Ag.Gio in Rome?

- To what extent Coraggio cooperative expresses a peculiarity in regards to the social composition of its activists and their relationships with power, as a political and generational authority?

The main aim of the article is to begin a branch of studies on roman social movements, which is a case not yet explored. Moreover, the analysis of a local case as the Coraggio cooperative, aims to promote a wider study able to:

- compare the experience of Coraggio with other similar ones in Europe;
- understand how and if urban agriculture is going to connect its social practices with others, converging towards a new cultural identity founded on ecology and information.

I begin by proposing a conceptual framework in order to generalize relationships between institutions and social movement. Many researches isolated urban agriculture as a phenomenon with its own theoretical background lacking in a holistic approach, which is indeed pivotal in order to frame the urban agriculture in a wider theory of social change. This is possible since urban agriculture can be analyzed as a privileged point of view from which to observe a transformation in the relationships between social institutions and movements.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1968), this re-

.....  
<sup>1</sup> Co.r. ag.gio it means "Courage". Is an acronymous that stand by Cooperative/ roman/ agriculture/Young. In following pages, for a more comfortable reading, it will be named "Coraggio".

lationship is characterized by a reciprocal closing space of action. If, on the one side, institutions arise in order to respond to permanent social needs shared by a community, on the other side, movements arise to de-reify institutions and to “cry and demand” (Lefebvre 1975) new processes of institutionalization. This occurs when the current institutions do not keep their promises, when they are inadequate to respond to new social needs being unable to understand them or, in radical cases, because the permanence of the old institutions stops the full expression of new political demands (Diani, Della Porta 2004).

The antagonism between institutions and movements is structural; however, it would be trivial to conceive this dialectic as an attempt to reciprocal elimination. According to Berger and Luckmann, when institutions see emerging collective heresies, they adopt strategies which can range from the “annihilation” to “therapy”: in this last case, the institution involved rethinks its internal functioning and tests its resilience, its capability to adaptation to transformation. This is the frame in which Coraggio’s case study gains sense.

Urban agriculture ranked itself as a new social need to which present institutions, like State and Market, are not able to respond, both because of a lack of competence and political willing (Gottlieb, Fisher 1996). Within such institutional gap Coraggio becomes a sociologically relevant case study since it brings forward, or at least it reveals, to which extent social tendencies are culturally oriented to hegemony, even though at the moment are shared by few elites.

## **2. Which economic, social and cultural tendencies determined the genesis of Coraggio?**

In conjunction with biographic variables, also social factors concerning job market, territorial policies and new cultural belongings, in the urban context of Rome, enabled the foundation of Coraggio Cooperative. Such factors clearly show that institutions left a few *vacui spacia* (lit. empty spaces), that we will analyze in detail, where the activists of Coraggio cooperative found the opportunities to transform their social needs in a political demand.

### **2.1 Vacui**

The first order of *vacui spacia* concerns the unemployment and job insecurity for young people (15-29). In the last decade, in Rome, youth unemployment rate increased by 50%, reaching the 45% of total young labor force. The spread of precarious work followed a more serious tendency since up to 92% of new contracts are atypical, that is short term contracts with little chance to be permanently hired (Istat 2013).

The average income of such new atypical jobs is 20% less than the permanent one. The crisis of property market, one of the most powerful in the past Capital economy, worsened the low-qualified manpower employment rates. However, also highly

educated young people have difficulties in finding a job: one year after a master degree up to 56% is still unemployed and 64% is not satisfied by its job (Ires 2013).

The second order of *vacui spacia* concerns territorial policies. The “planning variant of certainties” of Rome urban plan (1993) attempted to weaken the environmental impact of property speculations forcing the investors to leave out hectares of natural parks or agricultural lands in exchange for a non building allowance. Despite the agricultural surface decreased by 25% between 1981 and 2011 (-15.000 hectares), at least 1500 hectares of public land completely abandoned remain currently available for agricultural projects (Comune di Roma 2011).

A very strategic richness considering that a hectare of land for agricultural use, in Rome, reached the price of 40.000 euro in 2011, making it more difficult for young farmers’ cooperatives with limited capitals to start their business. Prices are very high despite the *vacui spacia* of 125.000 unsold apartments. In Rome the absorption coefficient, the index measuring the demand success in absorbing the supply, decreased from 75% in 2007 to 45% in 2013 (Nomisma 2012).

A third order of *vacui spacia* concerns a gap between the emergence of a new demand of consumption and the local market food supply. In the last five years, 65 G.A.S (an acronym for *Gruppi di acquisto solidale* - solidarity based purchasing groups) had been founded in Rome with thousands of users. Usually, a purchasing group is set up by a number of consumers who cooperate in order to buy food, and other commonly used goods, directly from the producers or from big retailers at a discounted price. However, between 2001 and 2011 35% of local agricultural firms went out of business; the imported food consumption overtook the 50% of the total food sold in the city; supermarkets and commercial centers appeared in the wide outskirts of the City, often constituting the only space for social reproduction.

A last *vacui spacia* left by the institutions concerns the cultural plan, in particular the absence of an ideological shared narration able to connect urban agriculture with the population. Green capitalism and radical ecology share the same symbolic universe, since the access to *eco* technologies, services and wages is entitled to economic or cultural elites. Both marketing and life style, societal key players in an ecological systemic conversion, are underestimated since urban agriculture risks to be merely conceived as a trend, therefore subject to a rapid obsolescence of its outputs. Such view is in conflict with the political vision of a radical change of the entire food chain in a Metropolis like Rome, and, above all, it is incompatible with economic projects, like the Co.R.Ag.Gio one, based on daily and mass food consumption produced at Zero Km.

### **2.2 Pleni**

Coraggio’s statute highlights that urban agriculture

can satisfy the work demand: “agricultural work is free, a choice and concerns the entire life of worker”. Interviews with the cooperative members, confirmed a vision of agricultural work as an occasion of emancipation. Indeed, the agricultural practice has unique peculiarities: a strong relationship with animals and plants, an open space with natural light, the senses’ exposition to the stimulus of the job environment, the responsibility generated by the awareness of producing an essential good like food, full of cultural and social valences (Senni 2005).

It is no surprise that in the last two years, in a general economical crisis, the agricultural sector had positive results: +4% of occupation, of which 26% are under 30 years old and an expectation of 200.000 new jobs in the next few years. In addition, young farmers managing enterprises have had a great success: within the agricultural sector their firms generated the greater income (79% of the total). Moreover, also the “Zeitgeist” seems to follow the expectations of Coraggio members: a survey recently carried out by one of the greater Italian newspapers (La Repubblica 18.03.2013), argued that 50% of youth between 18 and 34 years old prefers agricultural work to others, and 85% of parents call on their children to a future in agriculture.

However, as it emerges by interviews with Coraggio cooperative’s members, agricultural work seems to express its social emancipation potentiality only whether it is carried out onwards in the traditional agricultural work’s hierarchical structure. Members of Coraggio are long standing friends, university colleagues and often neighbors: probably each of them would look for a job experience in an agricultural firm, with a salary, a traditional time work, tilling -together with other people- the soil of a land owned by someone else.

Indeed, it is reductive to frame the Coraggio cooperative action as a mere social struggle aimed to find a job for unemployed youth. The politicization of their social expectations towards a different distribution of land in the city, suggests a wider interpretation since urban agriculture is both a resource to emancipate people from unemployment and a struggle for a new production of space within the city. The right to the city became a right to the land (Harvey 2012). Coraggio cries and demands to census abandoned public lands with agricultural destination; to publish management announcements opened to young cooperatives of farmers; to institute funds in order to facilitate start ups for cooperatives with little financial resources; to stop the alienation of public lands to private capital, often interested in converting their destination from agricultural to residential zoning.

Hence, Coraggio conceives urban agriculture as a concrete practice able to fill the institutions’ *vacui spacii*: able to offer fulfilling jobs to unemployed youth, to reduce the City dependence on food importation, to assure a better quality of food and to contrast the property speculation by using the land for purposes other than residential zoning.

Here we witness, at least, two significant cultural re-

versals.

The first one concerns the perception of agriculture in the symbolic universe of modern societies. Traditionally, the agriculture was conceived as a sector from which, and not toward which, to develop social emancipation processes. As a matter of fact, modernity assumed the passage from rural to urban environment as emancipating from community bonds, from an irrational symbolic universe overwhelmed by religion. As Weber writes, describing the peculiarities of Western cities, “in the city one breathe freedom’s air”. Even though the conditions for many city inhabitants were worse than those in rural communities, the possibility to be free from the objective spirit, from the weight of a pervasive culture characterized by the social and economic paralysis, attracted masses of people to urban borders, seeking for a better life.

The second cultural reversal concerns a new vision of the urban space and the way in which it can be lived. The escape from the city to the countryside is not a novelty: the urban expansion outside of the city borders, today called “peri-urban”, coincides with an escape to a “private” sphere. On the contrary, the experience of urban agriculture corresponds to the countryside expanding itself into the city, is the collective action replacing the private choice. Not by chance, many forms of the new urban agriculture paradigm require a collective engagement, what has been called a “Gemeinschaft”: it is impossible to have a one-person or one-family G.A.S or urban garden as opposed to buying a product in a supermarket.

### **3. To what extent Coraggio cooperative expresses a peculiarity in regards to the social composition of its activists and their relationships with power, as a political and generational authority?**

In comparison to traditional agricultural work, Coraggio has different values according to the social composition of its members. The main differences are related to educational level, age and gender.

On average, the educational level of agricultural workers in Italy is rather low: 20% hasn’t got any title, 49% has a primary school certificate, and only 14% goes beyond the middle school. In regard to age, 85% is over 40 years old. The women employed in the agricultural sector are 29% of the total labor force. The situation has not any significant difference if we separately consider the firm’s owners. Out of a total of sixteen members, Coraggio cooperative counts ten graduate workers while the remaining has a secondary school certificate. The youngest member of the cooperative is 28 years old, the older is 40 and the average age is 30. Six, out of sixteen, are women (Macri 2013).

Therefore, when compared to the Italian average, Coraggio is composed by more educated and younger workers, and has a higher number of female employees. Such diversities, as already exposed in the previous pages, has been caused by the labor’s market transformation, territorial policies and culture, which also conveyed new and unex-

plored energies to agricultural practices in Rome. It is yet to understand the long term effects of such social composition within the specific experience of Coraggio.

As for short term effects, a first one concerns the maturation of an agricultural project inspired to multi-functionality. It is the availability of different competences and sensibilities which allows the development of a productive strategy, since food production is just one component of the general economy. Urban agriculture, in Coraggio's vision, is practiced also through school environmental education projects, caterings, communication, maintenance and receptive services. The presence of an anthropologist rather than an architect, or of a specialized worker rather than a cook, facilitates a more complex idea of agriculture, able to reach the minimum level of economic sustainability.

A second effect concerns the urban agriculture political content acquired in time by the cooperative's workers. Indeed, some members of the Cooperative attended academic courses which allowed them to discover the presence of thousands of hectares of public land free to be cultivated. In particular, the contact with the urban planning association Territorio Roma facilitated the access to very useful information in order to organize sit ins and to find contacts within institutions.

A third effect concerns the innovation tendency, since the agriculture became a field where to test competencies acquired both at an academic and professional level. In particular, those competencies related to agriculture. The Cooperative cooks, for example, differently from others simple restaurant employees, cultivate their dishes' first matters.

But the more relevant effect of such an articulated social composition concerns the Cooperative's position in regards to power, understood as a political and generational authority. The history of urban social movements in Rome is characterized by a prevalence of confrontational practices and by theoretical frameworks on which institutions and movements collide. Coraggio doesn't follow nor agree to such formulation, since it is expression of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1980) finalized to repress those innovations produced outside of institutions.

Social movements always opposed to institutions, which on their side are constantly barred in defense of class privileges, embody a "habitus", namely deeply interiorized attitudes in order to preserve a status quo founded on both controlled rebellions and solutions' reification. As outskirts legitimate and explain rich neighborhoods, some social movements' radicalism legitimates and explains politics' auto-reference: two reflecting realities impossible to separate since they are reciprocally essential. Coraggio argues instead that ideas can penetrate any defense and they can change also very conservative system's internal functioning.

However, ideas need to be expressed in a specific way in order to be understandable to "the other".

With this last appellative Coraggio members name

the public institution. It is an "other" because it has another language, another landscape of values and often another code of communication. Coraggio's anthropological effort is to find some common signification mechanisms within the linguistic world of the other and to avoid considering the public institution as an enemy. Such effort requires, for example in the case of a politician, to understand his consensus exigencies, or in the case of a bureaucrat, his attitude to conceive actions within the limits of the normative.

The idea of power shared by Coraggio's members, recalls that of Foucault about the circularity: Coraggio feels itself as part of the power, understood as a complex of relationships able to produce subjectivity. Its challenge it is neither antagonist nor witness: it wants to change the current state of things, showing to policy drivers to make the right choices starting from their point of view. Coraggio put into practice its innovative way of conceiving power during many collective actions, and such struggles concrete outcomes are evident.

One first public action here worth to mention, is the achievement of a big graffiti in the northern area of Rome. Drawn by children and families on the agriculture theme, it was suddenly condemned by the municipality as an example of "urban degrade", and therefore erased stigmatizing the whole initiative. A second important public action has been the occupation of Tor Marancia and Borghetto San Carlo: two abandoned public plots of land that Coraggio would like to manage. During the electoral campaign, Coraggio engaged with politicians and exponents from other social movements in order to launch an on line petition that aimed to collect 10.000 signatures to support public announcements of land management entrust to young farmers.

Coraggio obtained its first victory when the Lazio Region published a public announcement entrusting the management of 300 hectares of public land to project of urban and sustainable agriculture. The Region ensured also funds to facilitate start ups. On such drive, also Rome Municipality deliberated a similar act, entrusting the management of 500 more hectares.

#### **4. Towards a new urban species**

This study opens to a wider research aimed to analyze the different ways of living life within contemporary cities. It is something more complex than simply life styles, since social practices such as urban agriculture sculpt a strong identity and involve both the material and symbolic culture of people. Indeed, who decides to occupy a theater, to open a cycle workshop, to cultivate an urban garden or to coordinate a buyers' social group, often finds in these practices the source of his own income, the place where to invest time and maintain social relationships.

The question at stake in this exploratory research is: how does urban agriculture dialogue with other collective actions having different contents but com-

mon finalities? Today, urban agriculture in Rome has a weak point, namely that of being practiced by a minority and by middle class with high education only. A sociological study systematizing a comparison between urban social practices, such as the right to the house, cultural space or public services, could offer a prompt for their political unity. In order to achieve such purpose it is necessary to adopt an empirical and interdisciplinary approach. An ethnographic research of social movements is certainly an important step towards a better understanding of the phenomenon, but more needs to be done. If “every street leads to Rome” also the contrary could be true.

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Giuseppe Scandurra

# Art and local appropriation: a journey from Tunis to Paris via Istanbul, Rome, Jerusalem and Hebron

Creativity, Art, Urban studies, Participation, Social movements

In recent years, many Italian towns and cities have been increasingly becoming theater of practices that, in an informal manner initially, consist in occupying, using, managing collectively specific urban areas in order to put them at the center of cultural urban production: barracks, military buildings, industrial buildings and, more generally, all the residues of a disused model of production; abandoned areas and all the pieces of territory that suffer the current economic-cultural-urban crisis; agricultural areas, degraded public spaces, schools, theaters, cinemas closed for years, houses declared unfit for habitation. Such experiences of appropriation are very different, yet they have a recurrent characteristic: art events and contemporary art exhibition often find space there. Why?

## 1. By way of a conclusion

The essays collected here with an Introduction by Caterina Satta stem from a debate that Satta, a group of colleagues with different disciplinary affiliations – among them planners, sociologists, anthropologists - and myself incited about a year and a half ago, to answer questions that, in light of these writings, we now have to define “classic” for *urban studies*, assumed that such studies actually exist in our country.

The city, starting with the ones mentioned here – Rome, Bologna, Milan, Padua, Pisa – are currently marked by social actors who, in an initially informal manner, occupy, use and manage collectively different parts of the territory, parts that some of us called “the waste of the city”, in order to put them at the centre of urban cultural production: barracks, military buildings, industrial warehouses and more in general all the residues of a disused model of production; abandoned areas and neglected pieces of territory, victims of the on-going economic, cultural and urban planning crisis, such as agricultural areas, decayed public spaces, abandoned schools, theatres, movie theatres and council houses unfit for habitation.

Such experiences of appropriation – even only in the cities mentioned above or even only with regard to the today much discussed case of Teatro Valle – though having often similar goals, are very different:

occupations for living purpose in abandoned buildings along with urban gardens proliferating within limited and heterogeneous urban landscapes, former industrial spaces occupied and transformed in *centri sociali*, disused historical buildings given back to citizenship, rebirth of green areas abandoned after the radical and enduring urban migration of the recent years.

These actions of recovery and reactivation of specific urban spaces do share, as said, some common characteristics. In the first place they, at least the ones on which we chose to focus in this monographic issue, act against (in more *engagé* terms people involved define their groups as “antagonist”) the speculative trend impressed by market imperatives on the planned expansion of our medium and large cities starting from the second Post-war. Secondly, all these practices build their identity and legitimacy – even before their “legality” and “officiality” – in response to an “expropriation” of the city (to use the words of the protagonists), in which every public good is increasingly under attack and sold down to private actors according to purely economic values. In a word, all these actions have a strong symbolic value. One more common feature is what we might call the “socio-cultural” rather than “class” origin of the actors involved. Mostly they do not have any kind of relationship with the housing market, and much less with municipalities and local political institutions

in general – from which, as shown in the essays here collected and well pointed out by colleague Satta, the language or even better the “buzzwords” common to the various practices of appropriation.

By reading the *manifestos*, where appropriation is presented as an initiative taken in favour of all citizenship, even the ideological connotations of these actions result clear and shared. Partly popularizing the debate that made them possible, these practices are “against”: against the logic of the real estate market, against the enslavement of the public to the private property, against the connivance of the government with the interests of the property within an ideology of advanced capitalism.

On the one hand all of them are based on a purely materialistic – and not just symbolic – very practical purpose: need for a house, for green space, need to generate an income, to make cultural events for citizenship; in this sense, one might say, they are truly “antagonistic” if we think of a sentence uttered by former economy minister of Berlusconi’s government that said “Man can not live on culture”. On the other hand, these practices stand out as models, or at least testing of alternative economies, thus coming out from a purely antagonistic attitude. This is the basis on which we selected the essays: we wanted to move not from the rhetorics about the “common goods”, which however have their part in the experiences of appropriation, but from concrete actions, experiments, precisely materials: practices that follow the philosophy of “local products”, based on the value of diversity, on the concept of care – for example in managing green areas equipped for children in peripheral quarters – on a new “cultural” dimension - organizing forms of entertainment for a wide audience with no “generalist” connotation but rather with high educational purposes. In those terms, we can assert in this Afterword, we did not want to refer only to actions significant for us in terms of experimenting with different economies, but also meaningful as carriers of other models of coexistence and, more generally, of citizenship.

In her Introduction Satta points out how our intention is to not omit the ambiguities and rhetorics that often characterize the actions taken into account: relationships not always equal in terms of power between parties involved, micro-power dynamics, negotiations still existing with local governments, exclusion of citizens as participant public, transformation, over time, from self-management practices into forms of “subsidiary solidarity” – namely appropriations that become a remedy for the weaknesses of local governments.

These rhetorics, which often can be read through the use of a common scientific literature – just think of the slogans about the “right to the city” or about the redemption of “underlings” against the “strong” ones (Lefebvre, Harvey and Sassen are often quoted by those who participate in these actions) – are not the focus of our work; yet, we wanted the reader to be able to see, by reading these essays, how these are never omitted or concealed, because this is the

invitation that we have done firstly to the Authors. However, rhetorics are not always inherent to the practices themselves, but sometimes arise from interpretations by external stakeholders - researchers, writers, directors not directly involved.

Our work does not have the ambition to dissolve the ambiguities of the practices of appropriation; more modestly we wanted to provide a critical analysis of the different dimensions involved in these diverse yet common actions in a view to open up a dialogue with scholars from other disciplines: what do economists, jurists, urban geographers, historians of the city, statistics, etc. have to say about this matter?

Earlier I said that at the basis of this monographic issue there were questions that we wanted to answer. We may summarize them in the terms posed by Satta: do these practices constitute a unique movement? Do they generally constitute a new way to build, and consequently live, the city? Can we read a general trend in them?

In selecting these essays we asked the Authors to investigate issues that we considered and still consider pivotal. Practices of appropriation are now beginning to be investigated in scientific literature, but most of all they are object of news reports in our country. Yet, apart from external description and interpretation, how do the subjects involved experience and represent their action? From this question stems the decision to select ethnographic contributions. And what do they mean by “public”, when they use this word in reference to their action? What do they mean when they define these actions “bottom” or “interstitial”, as suggested by Satta in the Introduction? In addition, outside of any discursive rhetoric and ideological claim, when and how do such practices cease to be informal and become institutions – as it happens in the case study under investigation by Bertagnini? Are these processes of normalization / normatization necessarily a loss of meaning or can they be read differently? Finally, when the actors represent their practices as a process of reinvention of the sense of the place they appropriate, what does this new belonging mean? Why do they choose some specific places and areas and not others?

Wanting to solve these questions, it seemed useful, while remaining focused on our country, to adopt a comparative approach in order to investigate the practices of appropriation in other cities, such as Istanbul, Jerusalem, Hebron and Paris.

## 2. The case of Tunisia

The interest in this issue arose from the profusion of articles and essays about the role that artists played in influencing what we in the West has been called “Arab Springs”. It is no coincidence that some of urban movements such as Teatro Valle in Rome or Teatro Rossi in Pisa have called on the Tunisian case model in several occasions. In fact, when we started planning this issue for “Planum” in 2011, the journal “Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo”, dedicated an issue to the “Arab Springs”. Editors Gabriella

D'Agostino and Mondher Kilani (2011), by selecting various national and international papers, wanted to understand the extent of these phenomena, but especially to assess the relevance of the analytical tools of social sciences in this matter. So they wrote in the Introduction: "Do our disciplines possess the tools to understand what's going on?" (*ibid.*: 5). One year after Ben Ali being driven out of Tunisia, and a few months after the special issue on "Archivio", in January 2012, along with fellow sociologist of art and cultural processes Maria Antonietta Trasforini we requested a small grant in the form of start-up to the University of Ferrara. The project that we presented then recited something like this:

After the "revolution" in Tunisia, "Arab Springs" are crashing against repression in many Arab countries. The Tunisian example has, however, upset many certainties, including the idea of an "Arab exception" according to which in the Muslim world a change in society would not be feasible. The changes taking place are the result of needs that have been there for a long time in Tunisian society and are regarded by the West as a revolution without leaders (well, with as many leaders as there are people out in the streets), without parties (a revolution of ideals, not ideologies), based on the profound change in a society that firmly asks to enter "Modernity". But what kind of modernity do they mean? Another peculiarity of Tunisian "revolution" – provided that it is legitimate to use this term – is the high presence of young people. The first to take to the streets were those same young people (students, artists, intellectuals, then joined by many other heterogeneous subjects that D'Agostino and Kilani described as a "multitude"), which until a few years ago sought elsewhere a chance for redemption. "Arab Springs", therefore, epitomize numerous revolutions, political, cultural, social.

From the beginning we decided to focus on these multiple actors that took to the streets of the capital in January three years ago causing the fall of the government. Who were and who are they today? Once obtained the funding, we gave ourselves objectives on the basis of the reasons for which we focused on the Tunisian case. These were the premises from which we moved:

While the role of new media (from the Internet to mobile phones) has been instrumental in creating and documenting the events of "Arab Springs", equally important was the continuum of training / information that preceded and accompanied them, and that created a new generation of "intellectuals". From this background a new artistic and cultural scene with new social actors is emerging, ranging from new young artists to cultural producers. Culture, in its most extensive meaning (media, art, education), has played therefore an important role in providing structure and framework for the changes taking place in Tunisia.

The scientific literature collected in the issue of "Anthropological Archive Mediterranean" edited by D'Agostino and Kilani (Gandolfi 2011) showed how the appearance on the scene of these heterogeneous actors, their organization in defence committees and in self-managed associations and structures allowed Tunisian civil society to form: all this resulted from the simultaneous ripening on shared routes. But what routes? And shared by whom? This was more generally the question that we placed at the core of our project before starting the "field" activity. "What is the relationship between art and culture avant-garde and the political Tunisian 'revolution'?" Rather than the role of social networks, which we felt already overexploited and often used as a unique approach – the "Facebook revolutions" –, it seemed more important to us to investigate the history and the role of these "art avant-garde".

With these objectives, during 2012, we have been twice in Tunis to build trust relationships with many Tunisian artists. During the second "field" in Tunis we observed and took part in the international exhibition "Dream City", that took place in in the Medina.

Now, why is the "Tunisian case" apt to dialogue with the themes of this session? Why and how did it, most probably, influence them?

Contemporary art, as research fellow Trasforini puts it (2013), is a sphere that allows high "social reflexivity", namely the ability to produce alternative versions of history, forms of counter-memory that take the meaning of practices of social and political resistance. For this reason, researching the relationship between contemporary art and the social and cultural changes today means approaching an "area dense of social conflict" (*ibid.*). Tunisia, as well as other countries hit by "Arab Springs", is still today, three years after the revolt that caused the end of a regime, an interesting case study on which to investigate – through a Weberian approach – the role that culture and the arts perform in producing social change.

Since the early nineties, according to Trasforini, art has been undergoing a redefinition of the relationship between art and the places, marked by years of growing dematerialization, the spread of international biennials often disjointed and detached from the places where they occurred and by massive migration of artists towards the international capitals of art (*ibid.*). Trasforini and I, observing what was going on in Tunisia, noticed right away the emergence of something new in this matter. What is currently unfolding, Trasforini wrote (*ibid.*), is a phenomenon that we may call "re-territorialization of art" against the in many cases ideological abstraction of global culture and especially globalized art: local artists are taking on new visibility, consistency, leadership and generally a not isolated profile.

In 2013, exactly one year after "Dream City", we edited a new monographic issue of "Archivio Antropologico Mediterraneo" in the view to take up the theme launched two years ago by anthropologists D'Agostino and Kilani and to collect other essays

by Tunisian and Italian artists, art historians and critics (Scandurra, Trasforini 2013). Among these, we selected the essay “Enjeux sociopolitiques des arts contemporains en Tunisie” by art historian Rachida Triki (2013), who put the following question at the centre of her work: “What does *contemporaneity* mean?”. In the case of Tunisia, and specifically of the above mentioned art festival, contemporaneity is mostly intended as a request to create new ways of feeling, thinking and living art, a political field whose primary purpose is to “bring us back to the city’s life, that is to say, a way of living together” (*ibid.*: 25). Triki points out how in a place partly abandoned, partly degraded like the Medina a happy relationship between contemporary art and the public took form. The biggest victory of revolution was the street, where the population has finally surrendered, taking possession of it. The political novelty of contemporary art is that artists have understood how the struggle for the re-appropriation of democratic spaces of sociability is only possible through the participation of citizens in public life, “Resistant art and the on-going democratic process build one and only one movement affirming the belonging of the public sphere to all and everyone”. (*ibid.*: 29)

Triki chooses Dream City just to show how the Medina became for a week a scene for artistic expression by allowing artists, men and women, to exhibit their works in the streets, alleys, in cafes, mausoleums, in stores and even patios and terraces of Arab inhabited houses, that for many years were no longer places of conviviality. According to Triki, this critical work on the concept of “citizenship”, precisely in the field of contemporary art, allowed artists to involve many people together to reflect on the on-going revolution.

The essay “Tunisie, l’art en espace public, révélateur des enjeux d’une société” by art critic Aurélie Machghoul (2013), also collected in that issue, outlined the central role of these new and revolutionary artistic practices in the creation of public space. Author refers explicitly to “art in public space” (*ibid.*: 29). The decision to use art to review the social and political transformations taking place in Tunisia is legitimate according Machghoul because what has been called “Tunisian revolution” has changed the way of living in the streets by Tunisian citizens. The artist is a citizen among others, who reactivates the social bond that binds him to his fellow citizens and demonstrates the role of contemporary art in society.

In “Decentralizing art, play revolution” arabist Marta Bellingreri (2013), who have long lived in Tunis to follow up and tell us, as a journalist, the revolutionary processes in place, told the genesis of the “Arab Springs”. For Bellingreri the open or underground movement that crossed Tunisia before January 2011 involved both socio-political sphere and the art and cultural ones (*ibid.*: 61). It is not like art emerged with the revolution, but rather revolution came up also thanks to art. It changed its premises and increased its challenges; it opened and revealed more possibilities.

In the essay “In search of a new body. For a Tunisian contemporary theatre” arabist Anna Serlenga (2013) focused on contemporary theatre in Tunisia. Again, the stage set is used by the researcher to describe the relationship, always strong and inseparable, between performative production and the society on which it feeds and to which it is addressed, which is so questioned by radical political changes and put in front of different and antithetical plans for its future. Revolution in relation to theatre, Serlenga wrote, was mostly the re-appropriation of certain areas of the city of Tunis (*ibid.*: 67). In fact, if during the dictatorship public space was a symbolic place of censorship, which could present to the public eye only the representation of the regime’s power, in the last few years of transition to democracy a radical change has taken place. Certain public spaces, thanks to specifically artistic practices, performances and not, are coming back to be the property of all citizens, and today account for the places where the new identity of Tunisia is being negotiated.

### 3. Conclusions

The cases presented in this monographic issue certainly differ from that of Tunisia. Yet the case for the revival of a place such as the Medina in Tunis through festivals, street art, graffiti, theatre, reopening of abandoned spaces with the construction of gardens and places of meeting pushed us to ask those questions, one year and a half ago, that then guided us in the planning of this issue: that is, as Satta pointed out in the Introduction, “When do the practices of re-appropriation also become forms of re-invention of space?”. In addition, the Tunisian case prompted us to re-think the very concept of “politics” in the light of the practices of appropriation being carried out in our country and abroad: we asked our Authors to focus also on the meaning assumed by the concept of “politics” for the social actors involved in appropriation processes. The re-appropriation of the Medina of Tunis through art practices, while being radically different from the case analysed here, drove us also to focus on the role that a concept such as “creativity”, in the meaning given to it by Braidotti as Satta pointed out in the Introduction, plays in the contemporary reinvention of the space that the authors and the authors of this issue have told. These actions do not hinge on contemporary art practices but in part – the case of graffiti art in Istanbul for example – refer to these. Not surprisingly, as I wrote earlier, occupations of closed theatres and movie theatres as in Rome, Pisa and other Italian cities proliferate today, thanks to citizens who brought back to life these spaces using art to re-examine the concept of citizenship and “public good”.

Satta is right. I am also convinced that in order to get out of the rhetorics that frequently accompany these processes and prevent us from investigating them all the way, we should begin to shift the focus on the actors who “recreate” these spaces, bringing daily life in the study of urban political activism. This is exactly what we tried to do in this issue.

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# Re-make public

Traces of cultural regeneration in hyperdiverse neighbourhood: place and planning in mechanisms of social innovation ..... Elena Ostanel

To be or not to be... In. Off movements between culture and urban regeneration. A case study from Marseille 2013, Capitale Européenne de la Culture ..... Maria Elena Buslacchi

Urban spaces and anti-neoliberal social movements: the case of Exarchia neighbourhood in Athens ..... Monia Cappuccini

Reopening Teatro Valle in Rome. Urban practice development tools and languages: 'Public space' as the interaction between different dimensions ..... Marta Chiogna

The system of automobility and the reappropriation of the urban public space ..... Luca Daconto

From 'territories of friction' in new images of public space ..... Valentina Gurgo

Re-appropriations as neo-liberal practice? The case of Berlin ..... Cecilia Scoppetta

Signs of Publicness: public access, public encounter and public appropriation ..... Adriano Cancellieri





Elena Ostanel

# Traces of cultural regeneration in hyperdiverse neighbourhood: place and planning in mechanisms of social innovation

Cultural regeneration, Hyperdiverse neighbourhoods, Migration

The aim of this article is to inquire creativity and culture as productive tools to be used in area-based initiatives to revolutionize what Leonie Sandercock defined the 'taken for granted socio-spatial knowledge of the neighbourhood'. Even if in Europe and elsewhere hyperdiverse neighbourhoods are highly contested spaces where different cultural backgrounds and new demands for the city are mostly perceived as a threat to the established local order, is creativity capable to work on 'all that is familiar and homely' to produce 'new coordinates of cohabitation'?

In this article I will not refer to a normative idea of creativity as means to place competition but I would like to focus on the significance of *place* in cultural promotion. Can be creativity, conceived as an 'emplaced process', help 'decategorization' in the encounter among diversities? Valentine (2008) reminds us the evidence from social psychology studies that has shown the effectiveness of not focusing on group differences, but rather on shared interests cross over the categories through which encounters with diversity are normally approached. In conclusion, the article introduces the cultural planning issues in the social innovation debate, with the aim to focus on some evidence that probably do not let social innovation initiatives to perform the impact they should.

## Culture planning practice in hyperdiverse neighbourhoods

In and beyond Europe today we witness strengthened structural spatial divisions within city neighbourhoods, with increased inequality and sharper lines of division (Marcuse; van Kempen 2000; Balbo 2014). Neighbourhoods are increasingly hyperdiverse (Tasan-Koc *et al.* 2014): they are more diverse in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but many differences also exist in lifestyles, attitudes and activities. Continuing immigration and increasing socio-economic and ethnic concentration in neighbourhoods question social cohesion in local societies worldwide (Hulchanski 2009).

In Europe, high rates of unemployment, austerity and poverty make hyperdiverse neighbourhoods and local societies increasingly complex and contested. All low-income segments of society are affected, immigrants especially, who can only rarely rely on solid community networks. This situation strengthens the polarisation of urban space, and ethnic concentration in neighbourhoods overlaps with situations of social exclusion and deprivation.

Although some scholars have argued that some area-based and mixed community programs have led to wider economic transformations of cities, social polarisation and state-led gentrification (Moulaert *et al.* 2013), urban neighbourhoods continue to be a privileged unit of observation and policy interven-

tion. In some cases area-based initiatives have been key to producing social cohesion, and transforming power relations and socio-spatial inequalities in hyperdiverse neighbourhoods (Oosterlynck *et al.* 2013).

With regard to cultural policies, even if the aspiration to brand an attractive external image at city level has a strong impact on the whole set of urban policies, the main focus of these interventions usually are specific portions of city than on the city in its whole (Briata *et al.* 2009). Districts, neighbourhoods and specific areas are elected as problematic and thus become the frame for regeneration strategies (Bolzoni 2012).

The aim of this brief article is to inquire creativity and culture as productive tools to be used in area-based initiatives to revolutionize Leonie Sandercock (1998) defined the 'taken for granted socio-spatial knowledge of the neighbourhood'. Even if in Europe and elsewhere hyperdiverse neighbourhoods are highly contested spaces where different cultural backgrounds and new demands for the city are mostly perceived as a threat to the established local order, is creativity capable to work on 'all that is familiar and homely' to produce 'new coordinates of cohabitation'?

In this article I will not refer to a normative idea of creativity as means to place competition (Wait, Gibson 2009), but I would like to focus on the signifi-

cance of *place* in cultural promotion.

Some of the following articles that I have the honour to introduce open up a debate on the impact of 'the creative industry' and 'major events' when they do not respect the *sensibility* and *sociability* of places as well as local imaginaries. In different ways they alternatively try to focus on the *spatial dimension of cultural practices*, instead of the mechanism of 'top-down cultural branding' interventions that in many cases had the side effect of interfering with the 'existent' and ignore inhabitants, who in many cases are marginalised or indeed, subject to discipline and punitive measures (Wait, Gibson 2009). In other word this situation creates problematic tensions between 'policy on people' and 'policy on places' (Donzelot *et al.* 2003).

I would argue here that thinking about the significance of place and, more specifically, place identity, routines and inner cultural resources remain an important challenge for cultural planning. To this extent cultural practices should be conceived as an inclusive and collective social processes capable to involve a multiplicity of territorial actors in 'cultural adventures' (Attili, Ostanel, Satta, not published) where to explore and build new spaces of encounter and recognition. Creativity in this sense is not the solipsistic adventure of an artist or of an 'industry brand' but a process with a strong transformative power as it creates interactive *habitat* where to produce diverse insights on *Otherness*, destabilizing metaphorical contents as well as short circuit socio-spatial meanings of a shared (or contested) territory (ibidem, not published). This could be particularly important in dealing with hyperdiverse neighbourhood, bearing in mind some important evidence from recent research.

Ruth Fincher (2015) has highlighted how a number of urban planning policies have viewed ethnic diversity as being 'positive' if it gives rise to commercial and market-based outcomes as a part of the neoliberal vision of 'entrepreneurial cities'. This vision thus can foster gentrification processes which cause the displacement of poorer minority communities rather than contributing to the wellbeing of urban populations as a whole. In such conditions, cultural diversity becomes a sort of showcase for visitors or tourists, thus emphasizing the risk of considering migrants as mere bearers of cultural differences. To this point, another controversial contribution entitled 'Contro l'intercultural' (Against Interculture), edited by Italian sociologist Walter Baroni (2013), describes how, when dealing with immigration in the Italian context, the focus on cultural elements might serve the need to justify a purely assimilationist approach without promoting equal citizenship rights.

It is clear how the *governance* of difference at the local level cannot be confined to a festivalization of cultural elements nor to the reinforcement of individuals' belonging to specific ethno-communitarian groups in the name of intercultural contact. In fact working only on the cultural dimension of the self means neglecting the other, multiple belongings

that make up an individual identity. Quoting Santos (2005), Valentine and Mayblin (2015) indicates the importance of working on the 'collective meanings' that emerge from contact as an act of translation. Translation in the contact zone is 'dialogical and political work' which involves both 'recognition of the limits of one's own knowledge and culture, and an openness to the ideas, knowledge and practice of others' (Santos 2005: 20). Valentine further reminds us that evidence from social psychology studies has shown the effectiveness of 'decategorization': in other words not focusing on group differences but rather on shared interests cross over the categories through which encounters with diversity are normally approached.

Can be creativity, conceived as an 'emplaced process' as described so far, help decategorization in the encounter among diversities?

Answering this question appears relevant in an historical moment when what seems to most strongly characterize public debate about the presence of migration is the issue of its *hypervisibility*: in the process of manipulating urban spaces migrants are accused of surpassing the 'upper threshold of correct visibility' (Brighenti 2010). As a consequence, the level of visibility of their unconventional uses of urban space increases as well as that of their bodily presence, to defy a 'spatial order' which is essentially taken for granted as the 'right way' (Cancellieri, Ostanel 2014). Ash Amin coined the term 'phenotypical racism' to describe the contemporary European xenophobia that divides 'pure' bodies from 'impure' bodies concerning the right to use and even be present in public spaces. According to the author, this form of biopolitics is a 'biopolitics of catastrophism,' able to personify migrants as the ones producing social disorder and economic insecurity. At a local level the perception of this sort of 'socio-geographical transgression' occurs when migrants are considered to be 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996): the visible nature of difference becomes 'hypervisible' and public discourse creates periods of 'moral panic' (Cohen 1973) in which dominant social groups act out hysterically, depicting migrants as a threat to the appropriate use of urban space.

Valentine reminds us that 'while visible diversity may give the illusion of contact (Wessel 2009) it is unclear to what extent proximity alone has the potential to bring about social transformation, and to break down prejudice (Valentine 2008; Valentine, Waite 2012). She opens the vast question as to the role of urban policies in shaping real processes of encounter. To this extent, I will analyze here some cases that can inspire further reflections.

#### **Paratissima in Turin and Greenline in Padua**

'Paratissima' off event has been organised yearly in Turin (Northwest of Italy) since 2005, and almost half of the total number of the editions (from 2008 to 2001) were organised in the San Salvario district. I had the opportunity to meet the festival organizers in a conference I planned in Padua to discuss

about the role of culture in place-making in 2013. Moreover the articles of S. Rota and Salone (2014) and Bolzoni (2012) deeply analyze the impact of this unconventional event in the city of Turin, in the San Salvario neighbourhood.

As the authors explain, the decision to move Paratissima to San Salvario was not accidental. The organizers explain how an approach of territorial development was at the basis of the exhibition's conception.

Regarding San Salvario, the district experienced several waves of immigration which made it one of the most multi-ethnic areas in Turin. In the mid-Nineties, 'the neighbourhood experienced a climate of social tension and distress, in which issues of inter-ethnic coexistence, building deterioration, small retailer crisis and industrial decline merged together' (Bolzoni 2012: 5).

Even if San Salvario became the centre of a public discourse on insecurity and deprivation due to the presence of immigration, the research material shows the existence of a public intervention, mainly directed by the Municipality in the neighbourhood: the concrete interventions of the municipal authorities have been mainly related to the issues of public safety and building deterioration, with some infrastructural actions on public spaces (Allasino *et al.* 2000), as well as with the promotion of different grassroots initiatives (Bolzoni 2012), thus reinforcing the existent social capital. From the 2000s the neighbourhood was affected by a continuous process of urban gentrification that modified its social and economic composition. With the growing of its population, an increasing number of students, young artists, architects and designers started to live and or work in the neighbourhood.

Paratissima is one of the grassroots initiative that worked in the district, dealing with culture and creativity, that contributed to the neighbourhood's upgrading (*ibidem* 2012). As the authors highlight, Paratissima helped the social and functional transformation of the San Salvario neighbourhood (S. Rota and Salone 2014) in different ways: it was a collective event highly embedded into the networks of relationships (i.e. according to the authors, Paratissima was collaborating with other bottom-up initiatives in the area) that link together the community of the workers, residents and usual visitors of San Salvario.

At the same time, Paratissima contributed greatly in reinforcing and modifying the local identity and the image of the district, both at city and external level: it turned the lights on this neighbourhood, thus associating the image of San Salvario with the features of art, creativity and design (Bolzoni 2012). The author explains how after the art exhibition, different economic activities dealing with arts and creativity opened in the district.

As an outcome, Paratissima seems to have contributed to the social construction of an *inspected identity* of San Salvario, even if the urban regeneration process (together with a gentrification process)

cannot be associated directly to the organization of this event: the genealogy of the neighbourhood is more complex, with the presence of many grassroots initiatives developed in the long term period, under a public direction that somehow invested in a complex process of urban renewal. Moreover a gentrification process occurred before the starting of the event, thus generating a productive context for the success of Paratissima. Finally, as Bolzoni highlights, 'in a neighbourhood where a quarter of the population is foreigner, there are just a few associations run by migrants and none of them have been in the position to promote initiatives addressed to the entire neighbourhood. They are considered, and sadly they actually are, marginal. In these years, migrants have been considered as problems or as targets for social projects, but rarely as social subjects' (Bolzoni 2012: 10).

After some years in San Salvario, Paratissima changes its location and according to the organizers this choice deals with 'the changing dimension of the neighbourhood that became a reference point of the nightlife independently from the organization of specific events'.

A case study that opened up different reflections and that I could follow *on the ground* is the work that the Mimosa association developed in the railway station of Padua, in the Northeast Italy. The 15.7% of Padua's total population is made of foreigners, which is almost double the national average. The railway station neighbourhood (i.e. an urban unit called 'Stazione') registers a concentration of migrants that is particularly relevant, that is to say 22.45% of the entire population (Municipal Statistical Yearbook 2012). Similarly to what happened to San Salvario, the railway station in Padua epitomizes the current debate about the presence of immigration in Italian cities: migrants are accused of surpassing the 'upper threshold of correct visibility' (Brighenti 2010) while manipulating urban spaces. Beside this, migrants embody risks (Lupton 1999; Amin 2012) and, as a consequence, are considered 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996): automatically their solely presence on public spaces as well as behaviours are considered both deviant and described as 'incivility' (Mantovan, Ostanel 2014). To this extent a conflict among the use of the neighbourhood between autochthonous and immigrants is exacerbating and public spaces are the location where this contradiction mostly occurs.

Differently from the case of Turin, in Padua we assist at the development of different bottom-up initiatives mainly framed by local associations in proxy of the local administration that did not take a real public guidance of the dissimilar grassroots initiatives; the local government mainly acted with an approach that I elsewhere described as an excess of regulation (Cancellieri, Ostanel 2014). Furthermore, the management of diversity is shaped as a mere problem of social order (Gans 1995; Ostanel 2014b) and urban aesthetics (Cancellieri 2011). To this extent the Municipality at one has acted using zoning

ordinance and urban renewal, on the other timidly supported jeopardized grassroots initiatives dealing with social inequalities and cultural promotion.

In this context the Greenline Project (that started in 2012 and is still ongoing) directed by the Mimosa association has been developed with the aim of building a participatory process in the neighbourhood to renew public spaces localized in Viale Codalunga, a street that should connect the railway station to the city main squares. This renewal is mainly realized through cultural events as well as the physical rehabilitation of public spaces, in collaboration with architects and artists. In this case the main weaknesses related to the participatory process put in place (that according to the association is the focus of the project) are related to the weak participation of 'non active citizen' (i.e. the ones that did not participated to some grassroots initiatives before) and immigrants.

The cultural element is the mean to make different people work on a shared interest, that is to say the rehabilitation of a shared public space considered as deprived. Moreover the aim of the action is also related to the creation of a new (real and imaginary) identity of the place.

Even if some shopkeepers were at disposal during the events organized and many other 'ethnic' shops participated to some tasting events in the neighbourhood, the participation of immigrants inhabitants to the broader definition of the project was a challenge according to the organizers. Moreover the presence of marginality in the neighbourhood could not be addressed by a project that mainly deals with culture and citizenship participation, in the absence of a real take on responsibility of the local administration. In any case the strengths of Greenline can include the capacity of defining new moments of interaction among old residents and immigrants while participating to the events, as well as the starting of a new image definition related to the neighbourhood. This mainly occurred thanks to a *community methodology* used to build a process of participation and mutual understating and not focusing on the cultural performance as a mere aesthetic moment.

### **Social innovation and territorial development**

Are the above mentioned experiences practices of social innovation capable to activate processes of territorial development through cultural practice in hyperdiverse neighbourhood?

Evidence from research shows how social innovation could be considered a productive field territorial development, conceived as a process of urban regeneration intrinsically path dependent and contextual; social innovation is in fact supposed to find its fundament for socio-spatial change in the existing and lived tissue of the neighborhood, aiming at change both social relations between individuals and groups as well as the power relation in the planning process (Moulaert *et al.* 2013). In this sense, social innovation seems capable to go beyond some of the weaknesses of top-down regeneration processes

and territorial development of deprived hyperdiverse neighbourhoods.

While there are strong expectations of the socially innovative capacity of hyperdiverse neighborhoods, the conditions under which cohesive and inclusive practices develop within them are matters of debate; many scholars on social innovation have pointed out the risk of marginalizing the needs of fragile or weaker social groups within the urban fabric even with an approach of social innovation (*ibidem* 2013). Forms of participation and local policies that are ignorant of lines of social exclusion and fragmentation in society and civil society may lead to the reproduction or even deepening of the dividing lines between the integrated social groups and those excluded (Moulaert *et al.* 2005). Moreover, the scientific debate on social innovation recognizes the necessity of institutions that would enable regulated and lasting practices of social innovation and clear citizenship rights guaranteed by a democratic state functioning (Garcia 2006).

Scholars have recognised that the changing capacity of social innovative initiatives occurs particularly when neighbourhoods are set within wider city and regional contexts, and that macro-economic forces may exaggerate neighbourhood problems (Atkinson, Kintrea 2001). So conceived area-based initiatives can push towards the development of innovative assets of multilevel governance for urban revitalization and territorial development (Vicari, Moulaert 2009) overcoming the ineffectiveness of 'solo' local policies, thus promoting institutional learning.

The weaknesses highlighted could be particularly risky in hyperdiverse deprived neighbourhoods where: i) usually immigrants can access a differentiated grade of citizenship participation ii) neighbouring relations are affected by an 'emplaced' prejudice (Amin 2008) that prevents meaningful contacts (Valentine, Mayblin 2015) among diversities iii) a pervasive media representation contributes to the creation of a moral panic (Cohen 1973; Cancellieri, Ostanel 2014) that nurtures phenotypical racism (Amin 2008) iv) local institutions struggle in the provision of policies in the lack of resources and in the absence of integration and coordination between different competencies and geographical scales.

If we accept that the above mentioned case studies enter in the social innovation debate, territorial development through cultural practices should pay explicit attention to how institutional and social networks and interactions between levels of governance can work to enable or constrain local innovation; moreover it should introduce the notion of *path dependence* – not as a form of 'institutional determinism' but as a recognition of the conditions of possibility that are shaped by an area's own history (Moulaert *et al.* 2013). To this extent cultural planning should promote a process of institutional learning: development is therefore grounded in spatialised rather than moral communities, thus taking into account the inequality in spatial and social distribution of disadvantage (Oosterlynck *et al.* 2013). To this extent, in-

novative forms of cultural planning will be configured not a tool box that could provide rapid solutions to pressing problems (Moulaert *et al.* 2013) but a highly contextual matter that needs to be deeply analyzed within particular institutional and spatial settings.

### Concluding remarks

The proposed article aimed at produce some introductory reflections on the role of cultural planning and practice in urban regeneration discourse. It introduced the cultural planning issues in the social innovation debate, with the aim to focus on some evidence that probably do not let social innovation initiatives to perform the impact they should (Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative, Innovation Union 2010).

I briefly reported on two Italian case studies that in my opinion give food for thoughts on the topics addressed: in Turin and Padua which are the new imaginaries and forms of belonging aroused thanks to the cultural process initiated? Do the events revolutionize the taken for granted socio-spatial knowledge of the neighbourhoods? Were these transformations long lasting or did they permeate the discursive domain only?

As stated in the first part of this work, what I consider fundamental in cultural production when it aims at define a process of territorial development is: *places* and different spatialised *identities*, place attachments as well as routines and inner cultural resources; in other words, territorial development should be grounded in spatialised rather than moral communities to be effective. What the case studies tell us is that social and spatial distribution of disadvantage strongly performs in hyperdiverse neighborhood and cultural practices must be aware of the different accessibilities not only to urban space but also to social and leisure networks.

Planning practices that do not reflect on the lived tissue of the neighbourhood risk to minimize their impact or to interfere with the existent, thus perpetuating of reinforcing forms of social exclusion. Even if, according to Valentine, is 'decategorization' that mainly works while dealing with intercultural encounter, being aware of some material or immaterial barriers that prevent contact among diversities should be important.

The case studies addressed aimed at change both social relations between individuals and groups as well as the power relation in the planning process. According to the first objective, I think that cultural practices can strongly work with a 'decategorized perspective' in the intercultural dialogue: the cultural performance, when conceived as a mean for territorial development, can build a shared interest among diversities on a collective spatial dimension. Not specifically focusing on difference, but working with a community methodology, cultural practice can help to define new coordinates of cohabitation in hyperdiverse neighbourhood.

Relatively to the planning process, cultural planning could activate non-conventional policy networks as well as individual and collective processes of em-

powerment. This happened, as an example, in the case of Mamoiada (Sardinia Region) described by Lidia Decandia (2014, not published): here the community participated to the planning of *Mater*, a small museum dedicated to the archeology and memories of Mamoiada territory. In this sense the performance was 'relational' because it defined both moments of conviviality among inhabitants as well as processes of collective empowerment of the community that was helped to recognize itself.

A planning process that was dissimilar to the one described in Peggy Levitt's (2015) article that depicted the process through which the Singaporean government endeavored to make Singapore into a global city by using arts and culture to 'perform multiculturalism'. Here national identity was essentially defined from the top down in opposition to other nations and ethnic groups considered out of place, such as migrants or non-Christians, automatically depicted as backward or morally inferior.

Once again the main difference on the two planning approaches was the capacity of territorial mobilization and of sensible reading of local resources Vs the imposition of a cultural brand by a top-down institutional mechanism. In both cases, what is relevant is the capacity of cultural practices of paying explicit attention to how institutional and social networks and interactions between levels of governance can work to enable or constrain territorial development.

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Maria Elena Buslacchi

# To be or not to be... In. Off movements between culture and urban regeneration. A case study from Marseille 2013, Capitale Européenne de la Culture

Mega-events, Participation, Urban regeneration

This paper is the result of an ethnographic research (Quotations in the text are extracted from interviews and participant observation) led on Marseille-Provence 2013, European Capital of Culture, during my PhD thesis and in the context of the collective inquiry 'Publics et pratiques culturelles de Marseille-Provence 2013' (More info at [www.mp2013publicspratiques.wordpress.com](http://www.mp2013publicspratiques.wordpress.com)), presented as a work in progress at Tracce Urbane National Seminar, in June 2013. While observing the developing of the event all along the year and its impact in terms of usages, cultural consumptions and urban regeneration, it emerged that the case could not be studied without taking into the right account a minor player of the scene, whose name, emblematically, was 'Marseille 2013'. In spite of this title, which suggests it to play the lead role in 2013, it actually was the off-event of the European Capital of Culture in Marseille. Moreover it was, apparently, the first official off of an European Capital of Culture (Some precedents actually occurred in Weimar 1999 (Frank & Roth 2000, Frank 2003), and in Turku, "European Capital of Subculture 2011"). The scenario becomes even more complicated if we consider that the off-event 'Marseille 2013' was recognized by several players more as an alternative 'in' rather than a genuine opponent. Lots of opposing movements grew up indeed and made the field deeply intricate. Regardless and maybe by reason of its complexity, this is an ideal case to be studied in order to critically analyze the very function of off-movements and off-events, as well as the relationship they may entertain among them and with all the players of the field. Nevertheless, a critical definition of off-event, integrated in the existing debate, is due, in order to avoid the confusion that is often generated among different forms of criticism.

## Before any off

Some clarifications are needed before starting to explain the role of 'Marseille 2013 - Off' and the multiplication of *off*-movements in the European Capital of Culture 2013. Marseille is a problematic city, characterized by a deep inner discord, a widespread poverty and remarkable social problems neither easily nor evenly faced by the local administrators (Ascaride, Condro 2001; Fournier, Mazzella 2004; Peraldi, Samson 2006). Its *Quartiers Nord* became a symbol of the dealing, of the 'French Connection' and of the score-settling. Its centre is supposed to be forsaken to the poorest class and, as a consequence, to be the scene of continuous bag-snatching and pickpocketing. This dark side of Marseille, doubtless grounded on concrete criticalities, is nonetheless emphasized by the press and the public opinion and produces, as an effect, a bad reputation of the city.

In the context of globalization and competition among cities (Harvey 1989) for attiring capitals, investments, enterprises - no more fastened to their birthplaces - and tourism (Lloyd 2006), a key-role is played by the image a city can provide of itself (Vicari Haddock 2010) in a process of *city marketing* and *branding* (Kavaratzis 2004). Evidently, the bad image

Marseille is charged of is not helpful at all to enter this global competition and is hoped by the ruling class to be completely reversed. Therefore, the 'European Capital of Culture' label was felt as the turning point: as many local players say, it catalyzed and systematized some already existing actions and processes, working as a common deadline to turn the tide. A great operation was actually already underway: the state project *Euroméditerranée*, launched in 1995 and ongoing till 2020<sup>1</sup>. «As the largest urban renewal project in southern Europe, it commits to renovating a 480-hectare area in the heart of the City of Marseille, between the commercial harbor, the Old Port and the TGV station (...). As an economic, social and cultural development project, *Euroméditerranée* is accelerating *the process of making Marseille an attractive and influential city between Europe and*

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1 *Euroméditerranée* is qualified as an "Operation of National Importance". It is lead by the French national government, the City of Marseille, the Marseille Provence Metropolitan Urban Community, the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur Region and the General Council of the Bouches du Rhone. It is supported by the European Funds and managed by Guy Teissier, Mayor of the 9th and 10th districts, and Member of Parliament for the Bouches-du-Rhone.

*the Mediterranean*»<sup>2</sup>.

The project involves a large area in the North-Western part of Marseille and is aimed to create new residential and business zone, to develop infrastructures, to schedule investors for the construction or the rehabilitation of new buildings and to lead any marketing action «to make Marseille attractive; recruit businesses, investors and international organizations; and create new jobs».

This change, named *renewal*, is far from being uncontested. Actually it is not operating within an empty area: this part of the city, doubtless problematic, is nonetheless full of activity, notwithstanding an informal one. Although they are clearly out of legality, traffic and unofficial trade are strategic to the survival of a considerable part of the Marseillaise population, mainly sustaining through informal economy. This situation can not be solved just by “erasing an entire section of the city from the map – as the mouthpiece of a local committee affirms – in order to build a new one up”.

As it attests on its website, Euroméditerranée is authorized to: «Carry out its own development and facilities projects or projects on behalf of local authorities and institutions; acquire, if needed by expropriation, any already built or yet-to-be built buildings located within the project area; tear down the structures acquired through expropriation; exercise the ‘right of preemption’ when allowed by law»<sup>3</sup>.

The *liaison* between Euroméditerranée and Marseille-Provence Capitale Européenne de la Culture is explicit and can be easily found out in some slogans, as «Euroméditerranée turns Marseille into Capital»<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, it is also on the first effects of Euroméditerranée that Marseille leans for the bid: in 2007 application it is singled out as having «transformed the City and enabled the establishment of new international tertiary activities, the installation of a department of the World Bank, the World Water Council, the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Economic Institutes (FEMISE), the Inter-regional Mediterranean Workshop (AMI) and the Research Institute for Development (IRD)»<sup>5</sup>. Urban regeneration undertaken in the last 1990s is precisely oriented to change the image, in some way the identity of Marseille, using the European Capital of Culture both as a tool and as a crowning achievement. As Ulrich Fuchs, MP2013 deputy managing director, says, «Marseille did not win the competition for 2013 since it had the best candidacy: it did, because it needed it the most».

It is against this general mood, aimed to radically transform the city, that *off*-movements arose up.

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2 From Euroméditerranée website, <http://www.euromediterranee.fr/districts/introduction.html?L=1>, accessible at 16/3/2014. Italic is mine.

3 *Ibidem*.

4 *Ibidem*.

5 Marseille-Provence 2013, European and Mediterranean. Application to become the European Capital of Culture, doc. 2007.

Very different forms of protests grounds on a general lack of recognition in the new images both symbolically and materially provided of the city. However critics sprouted and developed in a variety of languages and can not be sketched out as something uniform. Within this general context each of them chose a specific placement, a main rival, an effective strategy. Grouping them into the general definition of *off*-movements is a purely theoretical operation which can even contrast with their own self-definition and needs to be reconsidered and contextualized. As we will see, under the large category of *off* both protests and artistic events can be listed; both cultural initiatives collaborating with the official event and pre-existing collectives, resisting to urban gentrification, can be enumerated. Coming from the field of arts, where an opposition between the recognized artistic production and the *avant-gardes* is assumed and at the same time reciprocally profitable and fruitful (Vivant 2006), the notion of *off* has been recently extended to other fields, maintaining this aspect of ambivalence and hybridization. That is why the first *off*-case we will analyze, Marseille 2013, can be found out as an earlier ‘in’ and should not astonish us by its collaboration with Marseille-Provence 2013.

### **Marseille 2013: the Off?**

In 2004 the Marseillaise artists M.Carrese, A.Doussot and E.Pringels decided to bet on the designation of Marseille as European Capital of Culture in 2013. They knew the choice would have been among some French cities and gambled on the correspondence between the Provence Département number (13) and the year, as well as on the spontaneous artistic character of the city.

They pre-emptively registered the brand ‘Marseille2013’ and the website ‘www.marseille2013.com’. A few months later, when the city is actually entering the competition with an official application, they became the reference of the local artistic scene and start to collect ideas and projects to organize the event, in the hope Marseille would win. In 2008 Marseille actually obtains the title of European Capital of Culture for 2013 and the group proposes a collaboration to the organizing committee: the association ‘Marseille-Provence 2013’, established in the previous year by the adhering Municipalities, the Region, the Department, the University, the Port, the Airport, Euroméditerranée and driven by the Marseillaise Chamber of Commerce. Yet the committee declines the proposal, since looking for a more international and renowned type of artistic creation: Marseille2013, while embodying the typical alternative and *avant-garde* kind of art, is not representative of the new image MP2013 wants to promote of Marseille – an artistic scene able to compete with other major cities according to the canon of legitimate art. Marseille2013 as an European Capital of Culture would probably have been itself an *off* in regard to the main interpretive trends of the title. Consistently with the policy of urban regeneration carried on by

Euroméditerranée, MP2013 developed a cultural planning more based on the international suggestion of the Mediterranean character as a powerful diversity for Marseille than on its peculiar specificity in the city. Marseille2013's proposal was discarded and, in response to the call, MP2013 offered 100 000 € to Marseille2013 to take over the website and the brand. Marseille2013 refused and automatically became the *off*.

It is just since that time that Marseille2013 has been setting itself as an opponent, becoming the mouth-piece of local artists and criticizing the rhetoric of Marseille as an international, globalized metropolis. The true identity of the city is not the image MP2013 wants to show to the world – Marseille2013 *Off* claims – since Marseille is rather a city of deep contradictions. Four of them are elected as the main axes of the program: «Marseille is transforming, Marseille is fibbing», «Marseille is charming, Marseille is dirty», «Marseille is unfair, Marseille has solidarity», «Marseille is cosmopolitan, Marseille is a village». This uncertainty and ambivalence of the city is not directly seen, by the *Off*, as a problem to solve: it is realized as constitutive and inextricable instead. This attitude both conceives art as a tool of change and exploits the problems to nourish creation. Within this context the *Off* sets up a program of 13 major events and 150 public performances. To do so, it accepts the support of some sponsors, as Region Paca, the General Council of Bouches-du-Rhône, the Banque Populaire Provençale et Corse. The whole budget amounts to 450 000 € - that is about 0,6% of MP2013 budget - 65% of which coming from private sponsorships and 35% from public funds<sup>6</sup>.

The artistic events it creates are irreverent and often satirical, but they are not openly aimed to drive the change. In this sense, Marseille2013 is an authentic *off-event* (or *fringe*), in the original acceptance of the word: a secondary event<sup>7</sup>, with its program and its audience, which takes place at the same time of the official event and collects in parallel each less formalized kind of creation, roughly in the same field.

Anyway, due to its predominant artistic aim, Marseille2013 - *Off* provides no concrete solution to the problems and contradictions it highlights. It just builds up another rhetoric on the city: a more realistic one, but a rhetoric nonetheless. As a discourse on the city, it can easily dialogue with other players: that is why some forms of collaboration and implication with the *In* (MP2013) are not incompatible. Actually with the arrival of Jean-François Chougnat at the head of MP2013, in Avril 2011, the collaboration between the two players becomes more and more clear: the calendar starts to be coordinated (the *ou-*

6 Data collected during the closing press conference.

7 The Oxford dictionary defines *fringe* as *secondary* by referring to Edinburgh Fringe Festival; we do not interpret it in terms of popularity nor in terms of audience, rather in a logical sense: a *fringe* or an *off* (movement, initiative or event) always originates (eventually by re-defining itself) in relation with an already existing event.

*verture* of the *Off*, with the 'Banquet de Platon' dates 12th January 2013, MP2013 inauguration dates 13th January 2013); a few events are organized by the *Off* at J1, a space granted to MP2013 all along the year 2013; *Off* fliers were distributed in Pavillon M, the reception and welcome office of MP2013. The collaboration culminates with Yes We Camp, an innovative urban camping defined as «an experimental and self-built micro-city, with ecological systems and innovative objects to re-think daily uses»<sup>8</sup>: the projet is co-financed by the *In* and the *Off*.

As promoter of an alternative rhetoric opposed to the main discourse about the city, it did not stop with the end of the official event 'Marseille-Provence 2013', but still goes on with a cultural planning whose name is 'Marseille 3013' and whose slogan is «Marseille, global capital of paradoxes until (at least) 3013». This prosecution of the program and its headline make it clear that the main aim is not a social intent. With Marseille 3013, the Marseille 2013 team «pursues the will to *shock the local artistic landscape* in order to let emerge new original, participatory and accessible projects»<sup>9</sup>. Meanwhile, at least officially, it loses the 'Off' label, detaching and emancipating from MP2013. At present, they continue to be called 'the *Off*', but the relationship with the 'In' is defaulting with the expiry of MP2013.

### Beyond the Off

By reason of its involvement with *In*, *Off* has been accused of connivance by other more radical opponents to the dominant rhetoric and has produced an explicit contestant placement of some critical initiatives. They claimed themselves both opposed to *In* and to *Off*, since none of them, in their opinion, was embodying a true image of Marseille nor doing something concrete for the city.

This kind of critic, already highlighted, for example, by Mike Davis (2002: 74-77) about Los Angeles, can be further clarified, as I am arguing with a few examples.

A first opponent both to *In* and *Off* is Alter *Off*, literally 'the other *Off*', which self-defines itself as «the true *off* in Provence 2013 and after»<sup>10</sup>. Born as a spin of *Off*, it became autonomous because of *Off*'s implication with the *In*<sup>11</sup>. It is animated by a restricted group of people, mainly artists, and organized a few expositions and debates all along 2013 and in the first months of 2014. If the activity of *Off* is considerable and emerging in the cultural agenda of the city,

8 Presentation of Yes We Camp for the crowdfunding: <http://www.kisskissbankbank.com/yeswecamp-marseille-2013>, accessible at 22/3/2014

9 From Marseille 3013 *manifesto*, accessible at [www.marseille3013.com](http://www.marseille3013.com), accessible at 22/3/2014

10 From <http://www.marseilleprovence2013alteroff.org>, accessible at 22/3/2014

11 From interviews with the responsible of Alter *Off*, Louis Alessandrini.

the activity of Alter Off is quite limited: it took place mainly with the publication of some posts on its website and the organization of two public debates aimed to judge on the success or failure of MP2013. It denounces lacking involvement of local artists, a cut of funds to cultural associations and debatable planning choices. Beyond artistic declared intentions, its position is intermediate between the classic *off*-event planned aside an official event and the social critics. Like Off, Alter Off is planning not to stop at 2013, but to go on «supporting culture and cultures, and moreover their players (artists and structures)»<sup>12</sup>. In this sense, the main objection is that cultural policies are focusing on flagship projects instead of supporting the ordinary scene. Off was not excepting, while proposing a new brand within a dynamic of city-branding, instead of fighting it.

There are, however, some forms of critics to In and Off neither coming from the artistic world nor affecting just cultural policies. The main objection they move both to In and to Off is that, in an extraordinary moment for Marseille, with the availability of exceptional funds, they neglected real problems in order to create a showcase. According to these positions, MP2013 renovated the face of Marseille, without intervening in its deepest difficulties or even trying to eradicate them by excluding a major part of its population, as Euroméditerranée has been doing since 1995.

This perspective is opposing to the rhetoric of culture-led regeneration and essentially accuses local administration to forget, even to hide social problems under a superficial restyling led by cultural policies. The same critic had already been moved by Gerry Mooney in his study about Glasgow, European Capital of Culture 1990. Considered as one of the more successful case of attribution of the title, Glasgow actually had been leading an urban regeneration project (*Glasgow Miles Better*) since 1980s and according to Mooney tried, with a city-marketing operation, to eclipse the tragic situation of some districts.

This kind of critics pre-exist to the mega-event: in the case of MP2013, they had the form of resistance groups opposing to gentrification of the central areas and dereliction of the *Quartiers Nord*. They do not qualify themselves as *off*-movements, but they feel obliged to place themselves in a relationship with the In and the Off: the Out assumes the name of a preposition, the Fric (Resistant to the Intoxication by Culture Front) launches the slogan 'Fuck In fuck Off', a group of community centres in Quartiers Nord points out that the festival they organize<sup>13</sup> is in Marseille, in 2013, but is not MP2013. The popular Keny Arkana's videoclip 'Capitale de la Rupture' clearly refers to MP2013 in its title.

.....  
12 *Ibidem*

13 Festival 'Paroles de Galère' in Grand Saint-Barthélemy and Picon-Busserine suburbs.

In these critics, culture is both seen as a tool for social issues and as a status which is not always recognized. What emerges is in fact that a lot of specific forms of expression and artistic creation, not aligned to legitimated aesthetic canon (Fabiani 2007), are excluded from the notion of 'culture'. A striking example is the absence of hip-hop production in MP2013 program.

Can we label all these initiatives as *off-movements* or *off-events*?

Since these forms of protest already existed before the official event, we could be easily tempted to negatively answer to the question. However, 'In' doubtless changed in some way their status, their form and language. Sometimes, at the occurrence of an official event, critical movements start to use an artistic or more spectacular frame on purpose to widely express their critic (Appadurai 2014). Moreover, as they existed previously, they survive to the end of the event and they go on using those new languages. Their antagonist is no more an official event, but again an ordinary player of the scene, or a group of players, but their action is transformed and can acquire new energy, exposure and appeal. These critical movements are often implicated with social issues which are wider and deeper than what a mega-event can affect and they can not extinguish when it finishes. They generate *off*-events during In and through this experience they acquire a new expertise, professionalism and useful tools to serve their causes. Therefore, their action can be qualified as *off* during the In and easily keeps this identification after the event, because of its stylistic continuity. Something already existing before In is qualified as a new player during the event and hence can take a different role in strategic power play of the city.

The multiplicity of players, the subsequent generations of dissenting movements appeared in Marseille and a general confusion among stakeholders and rivals makes it difficult to discern which initiatives have to be labeled as *off* and which ones should not. What is at stake here anyway, in my opinion, and what generates the most of misunderstandings is the still unsolved relationship between cultural policies and urban regeneration. If we believe, as in the *culture-led regeneration* trend, they are strictly connected and one can directly affect the other, we can not avoid to take social critic into account even in the field of culture. If we do not attribute to it a major role in urban regeneration, we can hypothesize distinct policies, keep separate the two levels and just answer to critics of a single field.

In any case, dissenting voices are essential, as to democracy, to the vital dynamics of any city and can not be ignored under the pretext of misaddressing. To be seriously taken into account is not a matter of urban regeneration, nor a matter of culture, but matter of recognition and, definitely, a «vital human need» (Taylor 1992).

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Monia Cappuccini

# Urban spaces and anti-neoliberal social movements: the case of Exarchia neighbourhood in Athens

## Neighborhood, Identity, Urban practises, Governance

In Europe there is a 'piazza', which is not the one of spread and financial markets but the 'piazza' still able to shape the urban space in the name of 'the right to the city'. Paradoxically that 'piazza' is based in Greece, downgraded to PIGS by European financial institutions, specifically in Athens, a social kaleidoscope on the age of the global economic crisis. Starting from the industrial era, the development of the Greek capital proved to be 'a story of failure', a day scenario exacerbated for the least four years cause the economic crisis. At the same time, following the fast decline of the quality of life, Athens has been the witness of huge squares movement, that have taken place whether in a central approach (in particular localized in Syntagma, where Greek Parliament is based) or widespread through local assemblies territorialized in every neighborhood. Surely Platia Exarchia, that takes its name from the local district, is the most radical among these 'piazzas', holding a strong tradition as an anarchist area that continues to play a leading role for urban movements against austerity. Exarchia represents a unique place in the metropolitan European context due to the low level of acceptance to a strict urban neoliberal enforcement. A mix of different political identities and several underground styles marks the district as a political, social and cultural environment, where 'cry and lament' of Lefebvrian memory can be still recognized as the 'sound of the identities' in Castells's meaning. The aim of this paper is to give a first ethnographic reading of Exarchia, starting from its contextualization in the Athenian metropolitan space up to the identities and practices narrative that through it.

### Introduction

Urban spaces and social movements: these two concepts, so closely linked in the context of global cities in the time of the economic crisis, provided the starting point for both my PhD research and this article. As a premise, I would also like to stress that my field work research in the specific area of Exarchia - the radical neighbourhood in Athens, Greece - was inspired by recent social uprisings connected to the financial collapse, i.e. all of the urban movements that appeared globally, until at least 2012, after the American company Lehman Brothers went bankrupt and the sub-prime mortgage bubble burst in 2008, dragging the entire planet - not only the Western world - into an endless spiral of economic recession. Initially created in a few specific urban spaces, these 'public square movements', as their protagonists called them, have now formed a trans-national trajectory that originated in Tahrir square and found its way through the American Occupy movement, the Spanish Indignados and the Greek anarchists, reaching the recent uprising in Taksim Square in Turkey and finally coming back to Egypt, where the Arab Spring doesn't seem to be over yet<sup>1</sup>.

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1 In addition these social insurgencies even share some

Entirely concentrated on the space and time of contemporaneity, my reflection moves within a scale that can be defined global-local - another crucial pair of concepts, to be kept in mind when having a closer look at the different spatial dimensions of the new neoliberal economic order. With this in mind, I restricted my fieldwork to the Eurozone and focused particularly on the Mediterranean area, conducting my socio-anthropological observation in Greece, more precisely in Athens' neighbourhood of Exarchia.

### Greece: «We made our mistakes»<sup>2</sup>

Athens is without doubt the European city most affected by the economic crisis, harshly paying the consequences of austerity in terms of social inequal-

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common elements such as their heterogeneous social and political composition; the management of the protest space as a camp; the increasingly symbiotic relationship between the square's corporeality and its virtual presence on the web 2.0; a criticism of representative democracy, even though they did not entail a concrete political shift on a national electoral level.

2 Declaration from a 'strictly confidential' International Monetary Fund document, published by The Wall Street Journal on June 5, 2013.

ity and spatial injustice. Even though the crisis cannot yet be considered from a historical distance, one can still attempt to outline an initial short-medium period analysis of the social and urban impact of the measures imposed by the financial Troika and accepted by the Greek government in order to avoid the risk of expulsion from the Eurozone. The resulting collapse of the labour market and dismantlement of the welfare state led to an exponential increase of poverty, social exclusion, urban marginality and a sudden decline of the quality of life. The current unemployment rate verges on 30%, reaching a peak of 60% as regards the younger generations.

In June 2013 the Troika went on record as saying: «We made some mistakes with Greece», admitting their guilt for the inadequate remedies forced onto the GDP insolvent patient. Even if the medicine had worked, the pressure exerted on the internal economy by these international financial institutions has raised sovereignty issues involving the shift in political decision-making from the constitutionally elected national Parliament to an illegitimate 'global' alliance between IMF/EU/ECB. Transposed onto a macro level, the Greek case clearly reveals the political nature of the crisis, as well as the failure of the great political project of European union. Accompanied by a sense of guilt carried to the extreme of an act of criminalization, a «neoliberal government of social insecurity» (Wacquant 2009) has been implemented in Greece, thus providing a precedent for other European countries.

#### **Athens, «a story of failure»**

European political contradiction, neoliberal disgrace, social guinea PIGS? A glance at its recent urban history suggests that Athens seems to have missed several opportunities to develop a fully Western capital. It expanded quickly without an overall outlook, and its capitalist and neoliberal development proved to be a «story of failure» (Maloutas *et al.* 2012), beginning with its urban growth in the 50s that was based on an informal low-scale construction system (*antiparochi*) that was not sustained by a real Industrial Revolution nor by appropriate institutional urban planning. Not even the attempts made in the Nineties to convert the country's weak industrial capabilities into a globalised economy led by the tertiary sector seemed to succeed. In their analysis based on data concerning the privatization of energy and telecommunication sectors at the time, Alex Afouxenidis and Manto Lampropoulou confirm «the hypothesis that (neo)liberal privatization policies have largely deepened the existing democratic, accountability and equity deficit and, perhaps much more importantly, widened social inequality» (2013). Even the efforts to redirect the modernization of the national economy into a cultural business strategy associated with 'great events' such as the case of the Olympic Games in 2004 proved to be fruitless, another debacle «to the degree that it did not contribute to the implementation of a durable, neoliberal urban strategy for Athens» (Maloutas *et al.* 2014). Nowadays

Athens is a tangled and ungovernable territory, a city with a thousand features but no unique face. With its tight reticulum of narrow streets found roughly 70 meters one from another, Athens does not adhere to zoning nor to a Hausmann-style urban pattern. Incessantly contested between (weak) central state control and (inadequate) autonomous local administration, Athens is a Mediterranean city by nature. Unlike other European cities, the Greek capital today appears to be only faintly defaced by gentrification and branding processes, while it is strongly polarized in terms of space and identity, taking a shape that reflects the dialectics between austerity and democracy played out over its own territory.

#### **Welcome to the civilization of fear<sup>3</sup>**

The term 'polarization' is a particularly suitable key to introduce my second block of research: Athens as a theatre for the vast and simultaneous square movements that began as a reaction to the poverty, social inequality and exclusion that has accumulated over the last five years. Paradoxically, we might say that in Europe a 'piazza' now exists in which two opposite ideals are put on display: one based on austerity, spread indications and financial markets, and the other on democracy, urban practises, social relationships and political conflict; the best and the worst overlapped in the same place, with a variable inclination towards life or death that is reminiscent of *eros* and *thanatos* in the Greek philosophical tradition.

Five years after their strong opposition to the Troika's loan programs, the Greek urban movements seem to have reached a deadlock and to have some difficulty in reinventing themselves. Presumably, after the huge demonstrations and the riots that asserted the centrality of the Parliament, a new phase started, made of different spontaneous social networks, local assemblies and political activities scattered across all of Athens' districts and intensified by the end of the *aganakstismenoi* (indignado) movement. «Syntagma square developed into a network of connected micro-squares, each one with a distinct character and spatial arrangement, all contained or, rather, territorialized in the area of what was known to be 'the' central public square of Athens» (Stavrides, 2011). In May 2011 the transnational movement that originated from Tahrir square reached Greece. It was May the 25th when hundreds of Athenians met in the central square of the Parliament in order to occupy it. In just two months almost three million people passed through Syntagma; among them a lot of young people involved for the first time in a political experience, and many people in their fifties who came back to this activity after a long period of absence. Nobody would have expected such a large participation, nor the experimentation of innovative and pacific forms of protest.

«The Greek 'piazza movement' in Syntagma seems to have been incubated in the new century and to

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3 Graffiti painted by NDA crew from Exarchia (Figure 2).



**Fig.1** Begging in Athens city centre



**Fig.2** Graffiti near the Polytechnic School of Athens



**Fig.3** Police in the city centre of Athens

find its roots in cosmopolitan networks, as well as the violence of previous uprising since December 2008; but it was peaceful» (Leontidou 2012). Emphasizing the global character of the movement, this Greek urban geographer prefers the concept of *piazza*, rather than *square*, «in order to denote the openness of a nodal centre of material and virtual communication, rather than an enclosed square with a defined landscape».

Inspired by the Spanish Indignado mass action, the Syntagma movement was expelled and evicted by the police with the same violence and brutality used in Genoa in 2001 – coincidentally also at the end of July, ten years earlier. Also similarly, this event seems to have marked a breaking point in the arena of political movements, thus representing the beginning of the «post-memorandum era» in Greece.

What seems to be currently at work in Greece is «a welfare state that goes beyond the ‘shock doctrine’ and beyond the fear induced by sheer police force, too. A type of fear epitomised in the formation of a social Other – or even, of multiple, successive Others that were to be immediately vilified and torn apart» (Vradis 2012). Athens seems to have gradually passed from a space of conflict to a terrain for biopolitics, where institutional and physical control over bodies creates a low-intensity multi-tactic warfare aimed at exasperating existence in order to eradicate any social or community bonds and to neutralize any potential political conflict. «Fear and state of terror are the only means to control rebellious or simply outraged and disappointed people» (Stavrides 2011). And yet, one of the most effective remedies for so-called ‘social atomization’ might be found in these very sacks of resistance and solidarity that Athens continues to nurture in a reactive and creative way. Like a series of Chinese boxes, Athens has now become the square of the crisis, which includes other ‘piazzas’ of different movements. Surely Platia Exarcheia, that takes its name from the local district, is the most radical of all, with its strong tradition as an alternative and anarchist area.

### **Exarchia, clash city identities**

A neighbourhood like many others. Not exactly the same, but in any case a neighbourhood. Based in the city centre of Athens, framed by October 28 Avenue (formerly Patission Avenue), Akadimias Street and Alexandras Avenue, bordered on the east by the upper-class neighbourhood of Kolonaki, Exarchia has the shape of an urban triangle that extends for one square kilometre in the city centre of Athens, barely 0.21% of the entire metropolitan surface. Out of a total of 5 million people living in Athens, 22,000 inhabit in Exarchia; in particular, this 0,6% is mainly composed of middle-class citizens along with many students, being the closest neighbourhood to the National Technical University of Athens and the University of Athens. Although since the Eighties most of the university structures have been gradually transferred to the eastern suburb campus built in Zografou, Exarchia’s distinctively student or intellec-

tual atmosphere hasn’t faded in the least. True to its symbolical status as the cradle of resistance against the Junta, that broke out on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1973, the Polytechnic still plays a leading role for the most radical political groups, mainly offering a network for public discussions and cultural initiatives, and eventually as a refuge during riots and clashes with the police in the surrounding area (even though its status as an Asylum has been reviewed and revised in recent years, in the light of the frequency of the recent urban riots the special post-dictatorship law still forbids the police to enter inside the University area). Even for those who are willing to see Exarchia as the best or the worst of all possible worlds, it remains surprising how such a small area is able to contain such huge contradictions within itself. Unchanged by the passage of time and yet so different with each coming year, Exarchia seems to mutate at every hour of the day, above all with a remarkable imbalance between day and night. Over the years, Exarchia has seen strong oscillations between moments of splendour and times of decadence, while constantly remaining internally dynamic in its zones of aggregation, which at times can change within just a few months. A territory that refuses to lend itself to a single model, it can only be approached by taking into account its social and spatial complexity. In contrast with the idea of the ‘piazza’ as an open and porous arena, as suggested by Lila Leontidou, Exarchia is much more similar to an enclosed square, specifically framed inside the city plan and crossed or inhabited by a multiplicity of political and cultural identities. «A space of exception, of *exceptional unrest*» Antonis Vradis affirms, adopting and adapting the philosophical concept of ‘state of exception’ originally coined by Carl Schmitt and further extended by Giorgio Agamben, to stress that «the crucial differentiation of the neighbourhood is that instead of ‘confirming the rule’, Exarchia *defies* the rule and by doing so, it legitimises it». This specific process of acknowledgement of Otherness was expressly enforced during the Greek *Metapolitefsi* - the transitional period from the fall of the military Junta to the democratic era - when Exarchia became a space for rising political dissent, urban marginality and alternative cultures, in line with its previous radical tradition. But this ‘social contract’ definitively expired in 2010 with the IMF/EU/ECB agreement. The political abdication in favour of the economical and financial supremacy powers disclosed a new spatial order, now disputed by the dialectics between austerity and democracy, which has become even more polarized in that it no longer includes an arena for dialogue.

Indeed, throughout this lapse of time, borrowing once again a thesis from Antonis Vradis: «Exarchia lies outside of the limits of the Democratic regime, therefore proving that it *does, indeed, have a limit*». This limit was virulently trespassed firstly on 6th December 2008, and later on a regular basis with the explosion of the crisis shortly thereafter. Although a clear relationship between the riots that spread from

Exarchia to all of Greece after the homicide of the 15 year-old boy Alexandros Grigoropoulos, perpetrated by the police with no specific reason, and the new violent wave of protests against austerity measures, seems far from being unanimously accepted, these circumstances nevertheless entailed a definitive change in the «equilibrium of violence», transferring «a turbulent Exarchia into a largely peaceful Greece» (Vradis 2012).

«Exarchia has changed, the neighbourhood is no longer the same» some local residents promptly declare, witnesses over the last decades of the attempts to transform the area into a zone for alternative entertainment and commercial branding, as it is portrayed even by many city tourist guides. Despite the efforts to gentrify and to 'kolonakize'<sup>4</sup> Exarchia, its strong anarchist tradition still survives thanks to various political and social groups whose activities received a new impetus in December 2008.

The life of Exarchia revolves around its main square, which is found in the centre of the district and is one of the few that can truly be so defined in a city as hyper-cemented and asphyxiating as Athens. A district that belongs to everyone and to anyone: Exarchia is habitually depicted from many different points of view, at least as many as the identities of those who live here or pass through. Anarchist collectives, autonomists, anti-authoritarian activists of the extra-parliamentary left alongside groups of punks, migrants, hooligans, graffiti writers, socially marginalised people, simple city-users and young rebels all live and conceive of the district as a real *steki* - the Greek word commonly used to indicate a familiar place in which one socialises - marking the entire territory with strong political and cultural connotations. Some of the practises that meet in Exarchia include the re-appropriation of urban spaces (at least four social centres are now in operation - the Steki Metanaston, Nosotros, K-Vox and the Autonomous Steki - while three years ago, in Odos Navarinou, a park was created where a parking lot was about to be built), movements dedicated to active participation (among which the Local Assembly, the Solidarity Network, the Network of Migrants and a soup kitchen) and the production of independent and underground culture (publishers, zines, comics, music labels, record stores). A swarm of activity and diversity in an urban area that is not particularly extensive, but is certainly crucial for life and existence/resistance in the city.

With all due respect to Henri Lefebvre, the life of Athens converges towards the city centre, which despite its current state of decay and neglect is still the heart of urban life, in which Exarchia actively participates with its specific connotations as a radical area. A neighbourhood inhabited by ordinary residents, common people who would just as

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4 A pun consisting in the mixture of two words (the verb 'to colonize' and 'Kolonaki', the upper-class neighbourhood immediately adjacent to Exarchia) that indicates the efforts made to homogenise the central urban area of Athens.

soon live here as in any other part of the city, as well as those who have chosen to live in Exarchia because of its political radicalism and its fame as an enclave for anarchist and leftist activism, the centre of counter-culture and intellectual life in Athens. A cradle for specific collective identities as well as small scattered tribes ever since its origin towards the end of the Nineteenth century, Exarchia has led the city's social and political resistance until the December 6-2008 riots triggered by the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a fifteen-year-old boy killed by the police in an ordinary Saturday night out in Exarchia. With its anti-authoritarian character and its clear ACAB matrix<sup>5</sup>, able to erupt with the same force in either joy or violence, creativity or destruction, Exarchia can be considered a smooth and at the same time irregular territory, a tautology and a contradiction within its specific urban context as well as in the wider global metropolitan landscape. Exarchia is Exarchia is Exarchia: a place for sociability and political resistance as well as a space of conflict and police repression. Both one and the other without any mediation, this ambivalence fully reflecting the image of a polarized city mentioned above. The downside of urban polarization is the ordinary eruption of violence, mostly touched off by riots against the police in a well-trying model to rule the territory. Historically held to be an off-limits area to 'authority', Exarchia is regularly patrolled along its external boundaries. Above and beyond the sensationalistic representation proposed by the media, and some ritualistic aspects of the Molotov spectacle, the police undeniably come inside the neighbourhood exclusively as an anti-riot force, acting indiscriminately for the purposes of repression and/or intimidation. As well emphasized by Dimitris Dalakoglu: «A series of new types of extreme policing tactics on the streets of Athens emerged after the revolt of December 2008 (see Vradis, Dalakoglou 2011), aiming precisely to control any future popular uprising». Among them: the creation of two anti-riot motorcycle police squads, DELTA and DIAS; the intensive use of tear gas and shock grenades during demonstrations; «an escalation of explicitly political policing targeting anarchist, radical Left initiatives, and even worker's unions»; the eviction of two different central squats - Villa Amalias, Skaramagà - in just one month, December 2012-January 2013 (Dalakoglu 2013).

In a social climate seriously affected by the economic crisis, in Exarchia one can still perceive an echo of the 'cry and demand' that Lefebvre spoke of, that has however been transferred to a claim of identity rather than an extensive project towards re-appropriating the city. Too busy defending its own distinctness, Exarchia basically does not care much about what happens outside its borders<sup>6</sup>. The 'right

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5 Acronym for All Cops Are Bastards, from a song by the band 4 Skins.

6 For example, one of the interviewed residents told me in an ironic way that when in 2011 Syntagma square was occupied by the Greeks Indignados (*aganaktismeni*), the



**Fig.4** Streets of Exarchia.



**Fig.5** Graffiti in Messologiu-Tzavela, where Alexis was killed in 2008.

to the city' that it claims is entirely projected onto itself, with a risk of solipsism and some harsh overtones similar to the punk song White Riot<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, as Manuel Castells writes: «In a globalised world like ours, people resist the process of individualization and social atomization and tend to cluster in community organizations that, over time, generate a sense of belonging and in many cases a communal cultural identity» (Castells 2008).

### **(Semi)conclusive notes**

Urban polarization and spatialization of conflict: both approaches have come up in my research over the first three months of an ethnographic investigation initially focused on the right to the city. As the case of Exarchia reveals, the contemporary urban landscape increasingly seems to be inscribed in a dialectical conflict between austerity and democracy, which is severely scarring the present of our cities and undermining their future as well. I tried to represent this ambivalent and dualistic attitude in an 11 minute video I filmed and edited during my field work research in Athens<sup>8</sup>.

Since the collapse of the neoliberal system in 2008, an unprecedented function has been assigned to global cities in the view of its reorganization. Previously existing decentralization has been carried to the extreme of a new polarization, marked by an increase in spatial inequality and social injustice. From this perspective, both in Athens and in Exarchia the implementation of debt politics represents a new model of governance, extended to all of Greece as one of «the new territory of poverty» where «financialization, and especially the securitization of, and trade in, debt, is a now a key mechanism of regula-

tion» (Roy 2013). The dialectics between austerity and democracy is shaping urban spaces in terms of conflict, revealing at the same time the political nature of the crisis as an issue of sovereignty. On a different scale, Exarchia, Athens and Greece have been used as social laboratories for inequality, injustice and experiments in police control, providing at the same time a governmental model for other European countries threatened by the same fearful destiny of collapse.

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majority of the anarchists of Exarchia didn't join the protest immediately but only in a second phase, initially not caring about what was going on just 1 km away. This is strange if one considers that, while thousands of people were experimenting with forms of spontaneous protest extremely close to anarchist principles, the anarchists themselves preferred to spend their time in their own neighbourhood, perhaps quietly drinking a beer at a bar.

7 The Clash, 1979

8 I made this short video using my iPhone as an unprofessional visual tool for ethnographic investigation (available on <https://archive.org/details/Clip20130713230329>). It begins with Platia Exarchia seen as a place for movements and sociability, and at the end shows it as a place for police repression. In the middle it portrays my ethnographic path that passed through Steki Metanaston, literally the migrants' house, where I based myself attending Greek lessons with migrants and hanging out there. The Steki Metanaston is a social center mainly for migrants located in Tsamadou Street, a pedestrian road starting from Platia Exarchia. The Local Assembly, the Solidarity Network, the Network for Political and Social Rights, a small occupied garden and the Asteras office (the official Exarchia football team) are also based there. Probably it is the only not strictly anarchist corner in the neighborhood, and for this reason it is very approachable, open to 'institutional' academic interests and very welcoming.

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Marta Chiogna

# Reopening Teatro Valle in Rome. Urban practice development tools and languages: 'Public space' as the interaction between different dimensions

Urban practices, Public spaces, Creativity

Over the last two years, 'cultural squatting' has become an arising urban practice in several Italian cities. This paper focuses on the case of Teatro Valle's reopening in Rome and calls for a careful rethinking of the theoretical framework of Commons relating to this informal practice. Considering 'urban space as Common' is becoming the necessary background to reformulate spaces as 'public': result of interaction between different dimensions. Following Carlo Donolo, 'Commons' have to be understood as a new useful paradigm to spread new organizing structures and to engage the citizenship in their reproduction. The present essay aims to illustrate this urban practice by illuminating the inherent variety of tools and artistic languages that grassroots mobilize and by valuing cultural differences and different points of view of the involved 'actors'.

## Introduction

«Creation is the ability to leave behind an order, deal with the mess and create a new order. In the middle there is the transformation, the invention of a different form, in art, in science, in organization forms, and also in everyday life. It is the moment when you decide to remodel your knowledge to make room for another mode of conceiving things and you can create a new order in which not only the individual who creates it, but others too can recognize themselves»  
A. Melucci

Over the last two years, 'cultural squatting' has become a fast-spreading practice in several Italian cities. A lot of social spaces, disused theatres and cinemas have been reopened, rebuilt and returned to the cities, offering alternative cultural attractions. Following Étienne Balibar, every political practice is territorialized because it identifies individuals or populations on the basis of their ability to occupy a space or to be admitted to it. Commoning practices, along with legal language that defines commons as tools needed to guarantee the fundamental rights (Rodotà 2011) reflect a range of rights that cannot belong to usual categories of public-private property. I would argue, through these interpretative tools, that plural dimension of public space is being identified by these practices and forms of insurgency.

This paper does not define what commons are nor

does it determine their role in the context of urban studies. It returns to the 'building process' (Crosta 2010) of specific tools and languages, creating and reproducing innovative modes of living and managing urban spaces in more experimental, critical and cognizant ways. It is an attempt to consider territory 'built' by common practices, or by practices that use territory.

The Teatro Valle's reopening from an initial form of insurgency has changed into a real informal laboratory for producing cultural policies. The elaboration process of the Teatro Valle Foundation, with occupants managing the theatre and its artistic - cultural programme and their will to establish a Foundation through a process from below, allows me to contextualize this experience as a result of 'strong interaction' with territory in which «individuals become actors in a mutual resolution process. In this process they are able to involve other individuals or elements - human or non-human - intentionally or not» (Crosta 2010: 82). These mutual assumptions move the analysis from territory as an object to 'use of territory'. In this sense territory is relative, it can relate.

I would like to focus on this kind of strong interaction<sup>1</sup> and question an emerging practice that has

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<sup>1</sup> This insurgent process has been reconstructed by the narration and images about specific situations. I would like

spread from Rome to several Italian cities. Cultural squatting involves several disused theaters that have been rebuilt and returned to the living network of the city<sup>2</sup> (Picture 1). Different personalities and purposes, with reference to many worlds and cultures, converge and build these spaces: the artistic dimension of cultural workers interacts with the theoretical production of legal experts, joining political and social movements, through networks of associations and citizens' committees. In increasingly impoverished, fragmented or denied areas, different self-organization practices identify specific attempts and actions to rebuild the public sphere of the city. Thus, it is possible to understand that «such subjectivities decline a potential framework. This means being related to subjects, but also to materials, to territories, to resources, to the 'living' in all its articulations» (Villani 2013: 220).

### **An urban re-appropriation practice rebuilding 'new cultural codes'...**

«Occupying this theatre derives from immaterial job-related motivation by a group of occasional theatrical performers and actors and relates to the cultural policies promoted by the city's local administration. In this particular moment, there is a strong lack of rights and recognition of work by theatrical performers. Six months before occupying the Teatro Valle, we had symbolically occupied the Cinema Metropolitan. This is a historical disused movie theatre, near Piazza del Popolo. We wanted to show that the city is not only a collection of disused places, but also an emotional and collective building...»<sup>3</sup>

The Teatro Valle reopening had to be circumscribed within three days. Two years later, Teatro Valle Occupato is the 'new theatre' of Rome. It is nestled between historical buildings and hidden in the dark alleys network of a completely commodified and transformed old town center. A traversable and multiform theatre has hosted important artistic companies, colors and sounds of multicultural festivals. Here it has been possible to attend show constructions and performances, theatrical training

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focus real 'growth moments' relating to whole experience. I have set anchoring points characterizing this practice, highlighting ways of thinking and concepts produced in this context, focusing the rationality and the causes contributing to its actual realization.

2 In Italy, other cultural squatting cases are: the Nuovo Cinema Palazzo in Rome. The Teatro Marinoni and the SALE Docks in Venice, the Teatro Coppola in Catania, the Ex Asilo Filangeri in Naples, the Teatro Garibaldi in Palermo, the Teatro Pinelli in Catania, the Teatro del Lido in Ostia, the Teatro Rossi Aperto and the Ex Colorificio in Pisa. Other cultural experiences are MACAO in Milan and Scup!, a center for sports and popular cultures in Rome.

3 These are testimonies by activists directly involved in this experience, like following ones. The testimonies have been received during different 'immersions' in Teatro Valle's activities in the course of research, from March to December 2013.

activities, debates and seminars. Through the artistic languages, people 'produce' this space (Lefebvre 1976). Here, they meet each other, reinvent daily activities, change spaces, remain, live and attend to the place. This theatre is a «crossing of mobile entities; an effect produced by operations that orient it, circumscribe it and give it temporalities» (de Certeau 2001: 176). In this sense, this theatre has to be understood as a square in the collective imaginary.

«All of us are creators of culture – culture has not to be understood as a passively enjoined service, but rather it coincides with life itself complexity: speaking, thinking, loving, writing, choosing, living, reading, understanding, being bodies, entering in relationship, imagining. Having another idea of culture means to have a different idea of society and citizenship. [...] Our first step has consisted of focusing what common factors existed between various biographies and professions [...] what recurring conditions existed between theatre, filmmaking, dance; between technical work and properly theatrical work and all different creative craft aspects; between carrying out material or immaterial works, between authorial or writing works; between being employed or being a free lance, an occasional worker or few things at the same time; [...] between living in a precarious working condition and needing lifelong artistic education...»

In 2011, Teatro Valle was not an abandoned space. One of the most important and historical theatres in Rome, it had been managed by Ente Teatrale Italiano. As a consequence of drastic cuts of public cultural funding, ETI had been closed and abolished. During this temporary closure, theatrical performers, artists, citizens, and students have occupied the theatre to prevent its probable future privatization. This action was a response to the complete institutional absence and inability to guarantee a real debate about the Teatro Valle's cultural project and management. The mobilization process<sup>4</sup> behind the reopening process has been characterized by coexistence of three action levels: objection as 'occupation', claim as 're-appropriation' and production as 'restitution'. The first two are so much more conflicting than third one. Reopening an historical social and cultural space was the main challenge. A theatre with an important architectural value has not more to be thought as an intangible object (Pictures 2-3).

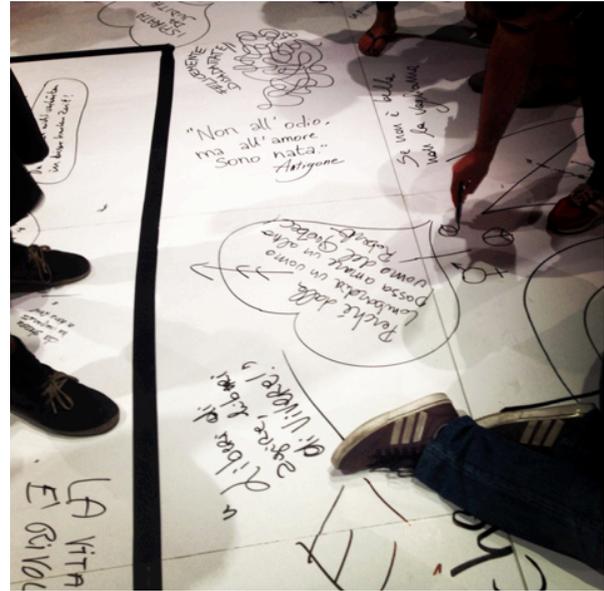
«Inventing new learning ways, opening creative process to public, inviting other artists, contaminating languages, producing a reflection about theatrical actions, in crisis times. From the beginning, we have chosen to maintain the international vocation of the Teatro Valle. We received active solidarity from many

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4 Following Vitale, 'mobilization' has to be understood in its more positive reflective meaning. «Mobilizing themselves, citizens exercise self-organization capacity. The term has a semantic meaning reversing authority relations and empowering collective action» (Vitale 2007, p. 11).



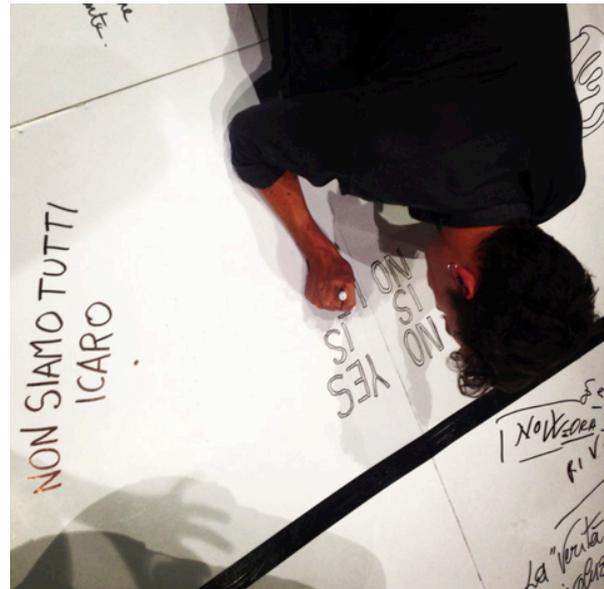
**Fig.1** The photos have been taken during the show 'The PLOT is Revolution' with Judith Malina and Silvia Calderoni, on 16th July 2013.



**Fig.2** During this performance, spectators have been involved in the action...



**Fig.3** ...Once performance finished, spectators have written thoughts or drawings on stage floor.



**Fig.4** The designed panels have been disassembled and shown in public squares, interacting with other looks.

European institutions [...] we continuously work with cultural Italian institutes [...] Experiences of squatting – that some of us have lived and crossed in our biographies and professional careers – have been evaluated in new ways: these informal and affordable spaces work as alternative circuits, as stages in which showing performances or part of them, supporting artists' activities, creating spaces of cultural research and production. The most interesting artistic experiences and experimentations often arise in not allowed spaces like these...»<sup>5</sup>

Among following occupations, the Teatro Valle's experience has focused a central question with more radical strength: what is, today, art and culture's role and, through what kind of tools, they are able to contribute building new forms of income and economies, recomposing territory and some 'parts' of Rome. Knowledge<sup>6</sup> has nutritive and regenerative abilities to re-create social spaces and to re-compose new relationships. The symbolic value of re-appropriation act consists of this aspect: it prefigures an active use of the space experimenting unusual roles through conflicting dimension, but also redefining relationships, aspirations, desires, singular subjectivity provocations through knowledge production and sharing. The space has a key role in transition from project dimension to building a territorial reality. In fact, the reopening experience involves an historical build, not marginal contexts. The theatre is not perceived as an introvert and unchangeable place in which anyone can make transformations nor resignifications. Rather, the response to its closure, to its probable disused condition, to the growing prevision of its privatization entails experimenting new possible orders.

«... In the past, Teatro Valle was one of the most important European theatrical institutions for management and cultural reproduction levels. This was our main challenge: occupying and self-governing, remaining at the same past level. Keeping European relations, maintaining high artistic quality levels. These reasons have contributed to help us move upwards: from the mere management of a space to the building of a model for producing new cultural strategies...»

Thus, the production of culture and knowledge gives a new meaning to some legal, technological, economic tools that all of us already possess and can make them «operate according to another register» (de Certeau 2001: 67). From the beginning, the main claim consisted in thinking of culture as a fundamental and non-negotiable right. This line traces and formulates alternative ways for producing cultural poli-

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5 This and previous testimony have been extracted from a publication by Silvia Jop and Ugo Mattei (2012).

6 I would like to refer to production of meanings built and offered by Teatro Valle Occupato's theatrical and cultural programme but also to the 'knowledge' declination by C. Hess and E. Ostrom (see *La conoscenza come bene comune. Dalla teoria alla pratica*, 2009, Bruno Mondadori).

cies and for urban renewal. A tactic, released from spectacular and advertising mechanisms of every urban context, destabilizes usual cultural and communicative codes. This tactic «has no opportunity to develop an overall project» rather «it is able to progress step by step» (de Certeau 2001: 73).

### ...towards new planning forms: the Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene Comune

«Another fruitful interaction with legal experts has enabled sharing technical knowledge. This allowed framing Teatro Valle's re-appropriation in the most general theoretical framework of Commons, articulating this paradigm around the specific theme of cultural institutions. Thus, the idea about Statute has spread. Imagining a Common Foundation as a new institutional form created from below, developing a radically innovative legal and economic system»

Over time, this urban practice has related to debates about legal rights<sup>7</sup> and Common category<sup>8</sup>. The cultural vocation of this space allows people to disengage from user – consumer conditions, bonding with others, producing and giving back access to culture releasing from the pure economic logic. The 'creative use' of legal tools has been able to suppose a legal foundation<sup>9</sup>. Its establishment, along with Statute's writing, can guarantee alternative vision and criteria for producing culture and can preserve all activities have been launched by an extra-legal occupation. The foundation project opens

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7 This is the main discontinuity factor regarding squatting of the 80s and 90s. In the past, a usual phenomenon was the reopening and re-construing disused peripheral factories. These counterculture spaces were often introverting. Their hard conquest derived from claiming the difference and identity, developing a «ghetto mentality» and a «possible normalization as a social enterprise» (see Pruijt 2012).

8 The Italian legal definition of Commons has been introduced by the revision of the law concerning public property re-organization and following classification criteria of social utility. The legal experts commission has defined Commons as a subcategory of public goods, resulting essential non-negotiable goods for free development of individuals (see Rodotà, Mattei, Reviglio 2007). Actually, this commission has reopened its work to update the definition of Commons developed in 2007, as a consequence of spreading of several urban practices. The first session has taken place in Teatro Valle Occupato. The ambitious and radical intent consists of re-writing 'new forms of right' drafting a Code of Commons in two parallel phases. The first one has taken place in several Italian places listening the different experiences and requirements. The second one consists of subsequent meetings between legal experts. Everyone can attend to these meetings. The main gain consists of translating the experiences and practices in a new form of right going beyond the classical formulation of private property.

9 Generally, foundation is a private law tool used to preserve private property. In this case, its purpose has been aimed to protection of a public good. This choice demonstrates needing to imagine and to build a law useful tool, representing real conditions and opposing to unjust redistributions of resources.

an experimentation field: imagining and focusing the most appropriate tools for its implementation. The preservation of culture as common has begun the Statute's collective writing process in which observations of individual occupants, actors and citizens converge. Its writing cadenced phases<sup>10</sup> established the structure, the role and the management system of the possible and future legal entity in relation to other public and private institutions, but also they defined relationships of occupants to one another. This informal practice has conceived on these transformative bases. Actually, the legal recognition process is at final stage<sup>11</sup>.

«...From now, there is a new subject on the institutional scene. There is not a shapeless community but an institution that possesses the right to communicate to other institutions. [...] In general, the social rights are always subjected to the pure economic logic. In these days, I have read some newspapers reducing Teatro Valle's experience to an accounting fact. I am not saying that accounting has secondary importance, but I think that the real sense of this experience has not been understood. We can discuss each of these items, but it's impossible to judge this experience without comprehending what it is happening in this theatre, the invention of a model [...] [...] The Foundation, the Statute, its aspects as vocation and political code [...] are not just an empty legal box [...] you can create several empty legal boxes but Foundation establishes an essential process happened in this theatre. In my opinion, this is one of most important, significant and beautiful events for this city, also from a luminous and dynamic point of view [...]

This is an open theatre. During all day and everyday, this is a space crossed by citizens. It has relations with cultural institutions, with schools, universities

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10 At the end of each revision phase, the Statute drafts have been published and amended online. The attempt consisted of facilitating the participation by everyone wanted contributing to this project, adding suggestions, comments and advices. (The Statute's final version can be consulted: <http://emend.wf210.memefarmers.net/fondazione-teatro-valle-bene-comune-0-4/>).

11 The foundation's public presentation took place on 18 September 2013. This is a phase still in progress. Numerous controversies are arising, relating to the establishing process of an informal practice. The strong critical debates have been published in several national and local newspapers. In many cases, this experimentation has been considered the result of an illegal action (although the foundation is an operative law tool, it has not received the final recognition by Prefect of Rome – February 2014). In other cases, the reopening has been evaluated as a real possibility building an alternative and reproducible cultural model (Teatro Valle Occupato has been rewarded by European Cultural Foundation with the prestigious Princess Margriet Award – March 2014). The different point of views make the relationship between social movements and institutions more complex, focusing critical points and creative solutions. About this, I would like to argue an initial critical interpretation in concluding notes.

and everyone desires to make an experience with this space [...] Here you can see shows, performances, exhibitions, films, you can enter and attend to a political philosophy discussion or other lessons. It is really a community place [...] All of this has already happened. Today the foundation is only the legal tool that recognizes, confirm and strengthens this status of things»<sup>12</sup>

Listening to these voices, it is possible to understand how the reopening process has developed and continued over time. The political debate continues to spread within the artistic and cultural dimension. This 'project' strengthens the relational dimension and reveals the affective one. Art is the constitutive language of creative action and becomes a sort of background transforming the same actions in the cultural project (Pic. 4). The heterogeneous artistic languages cross this space but do not remain in it; space is continuously performed. Numerous sceneries follow each other. The attempt is not to make a succession of ephemeral and limited in time events, through different practices work. Rather, this action has to be understood as the configuration of new modes for producing policies in which it is essential not only to proceed «merely with arguments (life is no argument) but also through affects» (Isin 2014).

#### **Leave room for alternative narratives**

Should the Teatro Valle's reopening be considered an isolated case? It is surely one of many transformative urban practices and it is a circumscribed experimentation. But the small steps and attempts characterizing this specific process should be thought as a different rationality in action?

The strong interacting capacity produced by different realities, as the other reopened spaces among Italian cities and Roman territories, as the Teatro Valle and the different 'populations' crossing this space with own specific cultural expertise, establish real 'network ties' (Crosta 2010), defining meanings and mutual recognition contexts. These places have to be understood as relationship amplifiers: the result of physical and symbolic re-appropriations activating direct participation and management mechanisms, using short networks deeply embedded in social and territorial contexts and, at the same time, using trans-local networks. The activities related to art and culture produce 'proximity relations'<sup>13</sup> (Cefai 2007) released by residential dimension. The flex-

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12 Some declarations received during the conference of foundation's presentation (respectively by the legal expert Stefano Rodotà and the actors Fabrizio Gifuni and Silvia Gallerano).

13 Following Cefai, I borrow the French term 'proche' (translated with English term 'proximity'). This term has not to be understood as 'local' making reference to spatial scale concept or as 'private' opposing to 'public', 'particular' opposing to 'general'. «Proche means and refers to something having particular importance or relevance in the actors-residents, users or citizens' daily lives» (Cefai 2007: 137).

ible belonging forms shape a set of people, activities and anchoring devices for other practices. The thought behind this practice focuses attention about the living spaces not only in relation to the owners rather to social utilities that may be spread by same practice.

The look about property changes and becomes plural. Appropriative relationships identify transformative potentialities in space, evaluating the degrees of 'accessibility' and 'destination' rather than factors of 'belonging'. Finding new institutional conditions happens through exploration of new law frontiers. If the actual form of right determines the space in arbitrary and artificial ways, «there is no tradition on which the norm founds itself, only a will of position exists» (Decandia 2008: 73). Plural uses and sharing practices cause distress, reformulate and extend the thin dividing line detaching public and private, formal and informal fields. It is possible to identify 'openings', between these two spheres, rarely considered<sup>14</sup>.

The Teatro Valle's experience proceeds on this way. It is a real example of new legal tools' recognition and interpretation. Appropriative relationships modify the neutral field of 'public space', extending and integrating already available theoretical reflections about 'administrative innovation' and re-use spaces conditions, supporting a vision about urban renewal operations advancing for 'processes' rather than for 'sectors'. It is necessary to increase interpretations about «development conditions of these innovative experiences. [...] Usually they are different from consolidate urban planning procedures, often they are unlikely understandable from external points of view. [...] It is necessary to be stimulated and influenced by these provocations, leaving behind "zero tolerance" or laissez-faire approaches and escaping from ideological visions about informality» (Cottino, Zeppetella 2009: 56). In fact, such forms of insurgence can be understood as a feature of structures of power rather than be expression of democracy spaces. They cannot represent necessarily a system that runs parallel to the formal and the legal (Roy 2009).

The Teatro Valle's reopening poses another question. The attempt to deconstruct the law tool from within an informal practice, starting up an institutionalizing path through a process 'from below', moves reflection from capacity transforming space to ca-

capacity achieving it. The passage from extra-legal to legal condition makes the relationship between society and institutions more complex. From this analysis should the real mutual condition between state institutions and 'new' institutions be supposed? What might be the effects and possibilities as a consequence of the transition from a condition of insurgence to the definition of a model conceiving a generative management and use of urban space?

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14 I make reference to Elinor Ostrom's studies (see *Governare i beni collettivi*, 2006, Marsilio Editori, Venezia). In the common spaces such as in the spheres of common law, there is not a single right, rather there is a 'bundle of rights'. They can be separated and assigned to different people performing various practices. The ownership concept of the continental tradition (conceived as a right insisting on a material thing) delays to the common law systems (the right has to be understood as released from a material thing). See Settis, particularly Chapter 4, 'Why in common', 2012: 56-107. See Marcuse 1994.

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Luca Daconto

# The system of automobility and the reappropriation of the urban public space

## Mobility, Public spaces, Urban practices

The paper examines the reappropriation of urban public space acted out by Critical Mass Bologna. In the first part, it deals with the formation and reproduction of the 'system of automobility' and its effects on public space. Then it will be argued that Critical Mass stands out as the expression of the 'right to the city', which draws on some principles of the situationist movement and stems from cities with a very high car dependency rate. In addition, Critical Mass emerges as a 'non-public public', which makes itself visible, with the aim of legitimating its presence into the public sphere. Finally, it will be stressed that some of the dynamics in the process of public space reappropriation do not match the assumptions underlying Critical Mass' practice. For instance, the radical nature of the Mass is not shared by the majority of participants, so the active involvement of all cyclists does not always have an actual counterpart. In the last part, two initiatives developed from Critical Mass representing two different types of Critical Mass audience will be examined: *Ciclofficina Popolare AmpioRaggio* and *#Salvaiciclisti* campaign. The focus allows us to understand the different representations that sustain these practices and their relationship. In particular, it will be argued that the great variety within the audience is the emblem of the plural character of the public sphere and that it cannot be actually reconnected to any specific form of urban public space reappropriation. As a result, in order to transform the 'automobile' urban public space, the key issue is to develop a common language to smooth the way for communication in the public arena.

### The system of automobility and the urban public space

In the first part of this paper we will deal with the formation and reproduction of the 'system of automobility' (Urry 2004) and its effects on public space. The starting point of the investigation is based on the assumption that the car is not just a means of transport, but a complex system whose establishment and spread plays a central role in the process of transformation of the city.

If it is true that «every society produces its own space» (Lefebvre 1978: 52), our hypothesis is grounded on the idea that space, as a product<sup>1</sup> of the industrial city, is a 'car-centered' space. In terms of 'perceived space', car-centred infrastructures (i.e. streets, beltways, junctions, parking spaces, gas stations, traffic lights, roundabouts, etc.) strongly identify the urban context. The progress of the automobile system is closely connected to both the morphology of the contemporary city and to the urban

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1 According to Lefebvre (1978), the space created by society is the result of the dialectics between 'perceived space' (places proper to each social formation), 'thought space' (the representation of the dominant space in a society) and 'lived space' (the space of everyday life, which can either adapt to the dominant surroundings or try to emancipate from it).

growth and sprawl phenomena, as well as to the emergence of peri-urban areas.

In terms of 'space representation', since the idea of functionalist city advocated by the Modern Architecture (Le Corbusier 1957), the car has influenced the urban planning, occupying a dominant position. This is still true now, despite the growing number of pedestrian areas and cycle paths, whose «definition paradoxically confirms the predominance of the car in every other part of the city» (Vicari 2004: 189).

In terms of 'lived space', the car is not only the dominant mode of transportation in the city<sup>2</sup> but also a commodity associated to highly appreciated values in contemporary societies (Urry 2004). Plus, the strengthening of a car-based system activates a set of path-dependency processes (Urry 2004), which transform the city into a highly car-dependent context (Dupuy 1999). In this view, the benefits to those people who enter the system increase, while those who stay outside it suffer significant deprivations in terms of accessibility to other modal choices (Heran 2001).

As a result of the car predominance, urban public spaces are downgraded to mere traffic zones.

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2 According to an ISFORT investigation (2011), in 2010 more than 80% of the travels in Italy were car-based.

In other words, the urban space is perceived as a by-product of the movement, as a way to reach a destination, a view that negates its status of place for enriching social experiences. Some scholars (Habermas 1998; Sennett 2006) tend to associate these conversions to the decay of the urban public dimension and to the progressive isolation of individuals, who retreat into their private sphere as they are left without any meaningful space.

The domination of the car system is also viewed as a phenomenon that is able to spoil the notion of the city as time-space for the gathering of diversities (Mumford 1981; Jacobs 1969). This might be looked at both as a reaction to the growing fear of public spaces and as the expression of the need to feel protected against undesirable outcomes of the traffic relationships (Goffman 2002; Hannerz 1992) through self-isolation.

Another school of thought sees the car dominance as a paradigm of the capitalistic ideology and of the commodification of the urban space, where the car symbolizes a functionalist vision of space. According to this view, the exchange value is more important than the use value, while other dimensions, such as the ludic, informative and the relational ones, are ignored, thereby posing a major threat to urban life (Debord 1959; Lefebvre 1978; Nieuwenhuys 1987).

### **The system of automobility and the reappropriation of the urban public space: the Critical Mass case study<sup>3</sup>**

Although some far too partial conclusions related to the death of the city and of public spaces due to the car system have not been endorsed by any other investigation (Sheller, Urry 2000; Urry 2004; Bordreuil 2000), the predominance of the car is undeniably related to the marginalization of other forms of movement and of human inhabitation of the city. This phenomenon has given rise to a whole set of public space reappropriation practices, such as Critical Mass, an event born in San Francisco in 1992, which takes place on a monthly basis in more than 300 cities all over the world.

*Ciemme* is an urban happening at a set location and time during which a huge mass of cyclists get together and, once they reach the so-called critical threshold, they go riding through the streets of the city, blocking the motorized traffic. Critical Mass is an 'event' (Cognetti 2009) which differs from conventional gatherings in that there is no leader nor clearly defined objectives or strategies. In this "bike ride", people with different backgrounds and pur-

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3 The research has been mainly conducted in Bologna by means of direct observation of both Bologna Critical Mass movement and *Ciclofficina Ampio Raggio* in the period comprised between 2006 and 2012. Semi-structured interviews to privileged witnesses were also made (initially, to three *Ciclofficina Ampio Raggio* and two #*Salvaiciclisti* activists who have been taking part in Critical Mass events) and documentary sources of various kind used (thematic literature, websites, mailing list; flyers, press releases).

poses get together<sup>4</sup>, bonded by the shared will to join in the transitory and itinerant promotion of a different urban lifestyle and to move freely by means of their own bodies, reintroducing this way the ludic and playful dimension in public spaces.

In this view, Critical Mass stands out as the expression of the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1968), which draws on some principles of the situationist movement (Knabb 1981; Nieuwenhuys 1987; Simay 2008)<sup>5</sup>. Such claim involves the exploration of new situations resulting from a disrupting use of the road, where the marginal role of the cyclist is reversed<sup>6</sup> through the 'drift', namely, the practice of space exploration based on the interaction between the environment and the participants. Usually, such practice is shorn of material concerns and benefits (Huizinga 1951), while the dimensions of discovery, exchange, desire and game occupy a central place. Besides, the retaking of public space occurs thanks to the annihilation of the differences between the roles of actor and spectator (Knabb 1981) through a direct action, in which the realization of utopia and its claim coincide.

In the development of Critical Mass, all path-dependency processes play a significant role. On the one hand, Critical Mass stems from urban spaces where car dependency rate (Dupuy 1999) is extremely high,<sup>7</sup> that is, where the drawbacks of using a means of transport other than the car (i.e. bicycles) are greater and where the conflict for gaining access to public space is tougher. On the other, Critical Mass movement is rooted in the historical period of the 1990s, which is characterized by the growing awareness of the difficulties connected to the sus-

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4 In the Critical Mass case, the participants' diversity (squatters, migrants, cycling association members, students, manual workers, professionals, free lancers, etc.) is also suggested by the bicycles used: city bike, sport bikes, fixed-gear bicycles, tall bikes, twins, cargo bikes, etc.

5 The connection between situationists and bicycles comes down to us from the 1960s Provo movement, a group of Dutch activists and promoters of the White Bicycle Plan from which several Critical Mass movements and bicycle workshop activists draw their inspiration (Nieuwenhuys 1987; Guarnaccia 1999; Furness 2010)

6 Illustrated by the slogan "We do not block the traffic. We are the traffic" that appears in several fliers, hand-outs and websites.

7 As in San Francisco, where it was founded, and Rome, the most interesting Italian case. Rome is the second Italian city where, in 2002, the first Critical Mass gatherings took place. The capital is also the place where the phenomenon gained much ground and where, during the international Critical Mass 'Ciemme', more than five thousand riders from all over the world get together every year. Afterwards, several other forms of bicycle activism, such as popular bicycle workshops (or bike kitchen) (15), emerged from Critical Mass movement. To know more, visit <http://www.tmcrew.org/cm/>, <http://www.ciemmona.org/> and <http://ciclofficinepopolari.it>. Last view: June 3rd 2013.

tainability of a car-dependent development model. In addition, Critical Mass movement has triggered the formation of new social movements which have found in the urban space the perfect stage for their urban revolution (Harvey 2012). In addition, space-time factors affect the way in which Critical Mass operates. For example, in Bologna college town, the *Ciemme*, was re-launched in the fall of 2009 by a group of Political Sciences students.<sup>8</sup> Apart from being made up mostly of university students, other main features are the festive atmosphere - chanted by choruses and itinerant aperitifs - and the high activists' turnover, which results from the students' turnover rate.

Although they are unable to change the structural conditions engendered by the reproduction of the car system, thanks to Critical Mass movement, cyclists have the chance to spotlight a critical and utopic idea of mobility which is emblematically absent in the public sphere (Furness 2010). In this view, Critical Mass emerges as a 'non-public public' (Brighenti 2010) because, although it presents the attributes typical of the counterpublics (Fraser 1990),<sup>9</sup> it does not constitute an independent 'public' sphere and only foregrounds a hidden and marginalized audience in the public arena. In the public scene, such utopic vision comes into being by means of the occupation of the traffic areas and through the interaction between the occupants and the incidentally involved actors, notably car drivers.<sup>10</sup> However, to be considered a legitimate part of the urban traffic is not Critical Mass' only claim. Its main goal is to structure a different kind of public space through direct action and from the bottom upwards: a space open to everybody, regardless of their social or political status, in which encounter, exchange, expression and circulation of ideas is totally free and where interaction is based on game and discovery.

In other words, besides opposing the car system through the use of the bicycle, the representation of space put forward by Critical Mass movement redefines the very category of public space as a whole. This having been said, it is important to notice that some of the dynamics observable in the process of public space reappropriation do not match the assumptions underlying Critical Mass' practice. First,

8 In a historical moment when, in the political debate the discourse of the degrowth (Bonaiuti 2004) was starting to spread and authors such as Illich (2006) and Schumacher (1977) were rehabilitated.

9 In particular, the building of parallel arenas, where people are able to negotiate their identity, their interests and needs, is acknowledgeable by looking at the language, code and at the specific lifestyle that bonds the participants, excluding at the same time those who are outside the group.

10 The central role played by the communication with drivers is proved by the prominence given to the issue of conflict management with car users, with whom cyclists try to share the meaning of the initiative with a smile and friendly manners.

the radical nature of the Mass is not shared by the most part of the participants, who explicitly claim their non-militant approach to issues not directly connected with the mobility on bicycle. Second, Critical Mass is a niche form of reappropriation, where the majority of activists are young people and students. Plus, factors such as its horizontal orientation, the absence of a leader and the active involvement of all cyclists in the production of space does not always have a counterpart in the reality, so that internal divisions between activists and moderates, actors and spectators usually emerge<sup>11</sup>. Finally, the coexistence of different views on the concept of Mass, its promotion and experience is source of tensions and of important changes within the most active strand of the group<sup>12</sup>, whose Critical Mass practice sometimes does not match its principles.

### Between utopia and institutionalization: cycle-activism and its audiences

In this conclusive section we will discuss about two initiatives stemmed from (or, at least, in close relationship with) Critical Mass, which represent two different types of *Ciemme* audience: *Ciclofficina Popolare AmpioRaggio*<sup>13</sup> and #*Salvaiciclisti* campaign.<sup>14</sup> In the first case, as the name reveals, the idea of the bicycle as a means of a wider urban renewal project clearly emerges. The second one, the local #*Salvaiciclisti* movement, aims at sensitizing people

11 Such division can be easily accounted for if we consider the people engaged in activities such as the promotion of the initiative, the creation of the material and the event management (i.e. head of the mass, corking, dialogue with the drivers, etc.).

12 Apart from the turnover rate attributable to both relocations and changes of interests, some desertions are occasioned by disagreements between activists connected to the promotion of the movement and its management (i.e. the use of social networks and tools that identify Critical Mass as an identifiable category of people). Nonetheless, CM coped well with that situation and now it is just a simple ride where different people live together, without trying to impose their view on the other.

13 *Ciclofficina Popolare Ampio Raggio* is a self-regulating space within the XM24 community centre. To know more, visit: <http://ampioraggio.noblogs.org> and <http://ampioraggio.contaminati.net>. Last view: June 3rd 2013.

14 #*Salvaiciclisti* is an independent movement established in February 5th 2012. It does not belong to any political party or association but calls for the enhancement of cyclists' road safety in the Italian roads. After a first national campaign, #*Salvaiciclisti* movement of Bologna moved its first steps (together with some Critical Mass activists) and, along with the support and promotion of the national campaign, it organizes the weekly events Bike Square and UniBike (the Bike University) in collaboration with the Urban Center of Bologna. It also became part of the *Consulta della Bicicletta di Bologna e Provincia*, a network of associations and groups that organizes initiatives and suggests measures to promote bicycle mobility. To know more, visit: <http://www.salvaiciclisti.it/>, <http://salvaiciclisti.bologna.it/> and <http://consultadellabiciclettabologna.wordpress.com>. Last view: June 3rd 2013.

to the theme and at increasing cyclists' road safety through the dialogue with the institutions.

Briefly, making the most of the satisfaction of a need, i.e. assembling/repairing bicycles, *Ciclofficina* activists reject the Capitalist view and seek to explore new modes, grounding their actions on tenets such as self-organization, horizontality, consensus, DIY, gift economy, reciprocity, the sharing of knowledge and the use of sociable technologies. *#Salvaiciclisti* activists, on the other hand, make use of Critical Mass' ideas and techniques to focus their attention on themes connected to the mobility on bicycle. Unlike *Ciclofficina* activists, *#Salvaiciclisti* campaigners struggle to develop already existing infrastructures, using advocateship and communication to put forward new urban policies.

Field observation of its structure (i.e. absence of barriers, accessibility, horizontality, informality), suggests that *Ciclofficina* is an inclusive environment, in which a number of different people, such as migrants and residents, find support and feel free to express themselves, spending their spare time together. Here, the network of personal relations is vital and people get together with the aim of promoting a more sustainable and friendly lifestyle. However, the basic principles of the movement, are not always respected, as clearly shown by the merely functional use of the equipment and by the sale of recovered bicycles<sup>15</sup>, as well as by the gender divisions of labour, which reveals a masculine domination (Bourdieu 1999) in all mechanical and manual functions<sup>16</sup>. Even so, this experience is significant, as it struggles to set a brand new paradigm of public space, a utopia of the here and now (Carlsson 2009) that rejects any form of power (above all the institutional authority) and unsociable technology. Yet, there is the tangible risk that such experience becomes a self-referential model: instead of growing into a wider political action, the exploration of new practices might develop into a mere lifestyle, just when the debate on the role of the car in city centre is ardent<sup>17</sup>. On the other

part, *#Salvaiciclisti* aims at increasing its visibility and power within the public space forming critical groups of people sensitive to the issue of cyclists' road safety, and periodically setting up clear goals. Its purpose is to counterbalance the State's voice by adopting a problem-solving democratic model (Loehwing, Motter 2009) rather than reassessing the category of 'public' as a whole.

Hence, if the great variety within the audience is the sign of the plural character of the public sphere and if this sort of intervisibility cannot be actually reconnected to any specific form of reappropriation of the urban public space, the key issue at stake is to develop a common language to facilitate communication in the public arena. Indeed, on the one hand, *Ciclofficina* audience does not share the language and vision of the civil society and of the institutions<sup>18</sup>. On the other, by drawing on Critical Mass and *Ciclofficina*'s ideas and techniques, *#Salvaiciclisti* risks to make them look something 'weird' and uninfluential in the public sphere. As Camarena puts it: «Barking, howling and singing against the hierarchies of Capitalism is anachronistic and unnecessary» (Camarena 2012: 58).

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15 For instance, in January 2012 a bicycle repaired by *Ciclofficina* was sold online. The event triggered an immediate reaction on the part of the activists, who, pretending to be interested in the purchase, met the seller in order to face the problem.

16 In the Bologna case study, the issue of genre came up only in relation to the car system, with a critic to the sexist use of the women's body in the fairs (e.g. the Motor Show) and in the car advertisement. On the contrary, *Ciclofficina* did not work out projects as Ladies Night, which strives to overcome this form of male domination (that exists in contexts in which the issue of genre divisions is strongly felt) opening the workshops exclusively to women, lesbians, transgender and queers. To know more, visit <http://figliefemmine.noblogs.org/post/2009/12/02/critical-girl-in-a-critical-world-human-motor>; <http://www.exsnia.it/iniziativa/2011/ladies-night/>. Last view: June 3rd 2013.

17 This is the case of V. Merola's board and of the councillor A. Colombo's political strategies. In particular, we are talking about the project called *Di nuovo in centro*, whose aim is to increase the presence of pedestrians and cy-

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clists in the most central area of Bologna (the so-called T), by forbidding access to motorized vehicles during the weekends. To know more about this project, visit <http://www.comune.bologna.it/dinuovoincentro/introduzione/141:8717>. Last view: June 3rd 2013.

18 In this view, a sticker produced by *Ciclofficina* is illuminating, as it strongly criticizes the proliferation of cycle paths through the motto "We don't want paths, We want spaces".

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Valentina Gurgo

# From 'territories of friction' in new images of public space

## Public spaces, Social practices, Public policies

The article explores the relation between social practices of creating public spaces and urban policies of planning. I consider that the practices of taking care and re-appropriation of spaces by people have a crucial role in focusing on the potential qualities of these territories. So, keeping in the background the relationship 'planned public space *versus* spontaneous public space', I deepen the possibilities of producing new images of public places, starting from the encounter of these different ways of conceiving and implementing the contemporary public space. In this view, I analyze some conflictive terms of the relationship between urban planning and social practices that represent - in my opinion - 'friction territories' in dealing the communication between the different languages, the multiples places/people relationship from which social ties derive, the power dynamics among different 'agents' and the consistency of the practices by which people interact with places. I expand these themes through a case that was the core of my Ph.D. work, that concern the selfconstruction of a park in a central quarter of Barcelona (Spain) by a community of neighbours that with a sort of "little urban revolution" changes the plans of public administration. The main argument is about the possibility of dealing the contrast between public policies of planning and spontaneous practices by transforming these 'friction territories' in a starting point to conceive new urban policies and new images of public spaces.

### 1. Methodological introduction

The movements and practices of taking care and re-appropriation of territories which are either abandoned or left at the edge of spaces that are planned by heterogeneous social groups have an outstanding importance in focusing on the potential qualities of these territories.

For this reason, concentrating on the value of these processes, in my opinion, it is worthwhile make sense keeping in the background the relationship 'planned public space *versus* spontaneous public space' aiming at exploring whether possibilities of producing new types of urban spaces and new images might exist, starting from the encounter of different ways of conceiving and implementing the contemporary public space. In this view, there are - according to me - aspects of the problematic nature of the question concerning the identity of the lands that give birth to practices, the places/people relationship from which social ties derive, the power dynamics among different 'agents' and the consistency of these practices, that is what happens in these territories, what kind of conflicts originate and what practices actually produce new urban images and new relationships between lands and people. These are in my opinion 'friction territories', that is to say partly concrete and partly intangible terms, with which we must take into consideration in the tension 'planned public space *versus* spontaneous

public space'.

The interpretation I propose is divided into two progressive steps. Firstly, I analyze the meaning of the concept of 'friction territories' in its implications with the background theme. Secondly, I focus on a specific case of a conflict on a self-built park in the centre of Barcelona investigating on a practical aspect, the creative potential linked to the management of friction in the relationship planned public space/ spontaneous spaces.

### 2. 'Territories of friction'

«The most creative spaces are those which hurl us together. It is the human friction that makes the sparks». With this definition J. Lehrer, journalist and scholar in neuroscience and psychology, argues the validity of friction between dissimilar opinions as a means of producing creative thinking compared to tools such as brainstorming, characterized by the complete absence of negative feedback (Leherer 2012). Similarly, R. Sennett (Sennett 1970: 139) finds the principle of interaction in cities in the concept of "social friction", interpreting the urban environment as a place of diversity in which frictions and conflicts among heterogeneous social groups represent for individuals the instruments to solve their disputes and become aware of their own milieu.

Also J. Jacobs (Jacobs 1961: 225) emphasizes the value of diversity in the formation of different types

of social networks and develops the role of space in the process of strengthening diversity in city. In this direction we can consider the formal organization patterns by C. Alexander (Alexander 1965: 58-62) and production mechanisms of urban quality developed by M. Hayer (Hayer 1999: 29-34).

These various definitions of the term 'friction', close and interconnected, introduce the value which I attribute to the expression 'friction territories' as a problematic and creative dimension that holds together the spatial issues, social relations and power links among the various agents in the context of conflicts between planned public space and spontaneous public space.

The distinctive characteristics of different types of public space, which are designed or produced spontaneously, have the prerogative to stimulate or inhibit relationships with users, to favour control or freedom in urban spaces, to produce a certain kind of publicness rather than another. The different types of public space and the elements which constitute them, contain a strong symbolic value referring to different subjects imaginary often radically dissimilar. Thus a 'territory of friction' between streams of conflicting thoughts and images is determined. It is the source of conflict between the conventional planning methods and the ways of spontaneous public space production. This dimension is temporarily suspended in urban spaces 'in transition', i.e. all those spaces characterized by being momentarily without a clear destination or function and not related to a defined imaginary sphere.

These territories, whether they are abandoned buildings, or parts of the city undergone by transformation processes, or vacant spaces on the edges of urban contexts, or interstitial urban areas, are characterized by a temporary lack of rules, which makes them a sort of neutral zone, of 'drowsiness areas' between local dimension and global market, between public use and private value (Zukin 2010).

Therefore, a favourable space-time dimension unfolds, opportune for new urban imaginations in which one may invent new rules, even disregarding the ordinary ones. Likewise, for planning tools a 'rubber band' takes shape (Gausa 2004), in which the usual paradigms linked to the production of public space loosen and leave space to a territory, which can favor communication between conventional ways of planning and spontaneous production practices of public space.

The suggested case deals with a space 'in transition', characterized by a high degree of complexity. As a matter of fact, this is an area which was exposed to a long term abandonment in the process of renewal of the Historical Centre of Barcelona. Owing to its central location in the city, a well-defined pre-conceived image of his future destination already existed. That image is rooted in the crucial role which was given to the re-design of public space in the re-launch policy of the image of Barcelona as a welcoming city, both modern and cosmopolitan, as a herald of an idea of publicness aimed at a re-

ception which is addressed to foreigners rather than citizens, carried out by the municipality since the '92 Olympic Games. At the opposite of this idea another conception of space stands, deriving from the direct interaction between the inhabitants and their daily living spaces.

This is the background against which I put the conception of 'territories of friction', thanks to a practical case which makes us connect the explained issues with some specific images and complexities as well as appreciate them in relation to a particular spatial outcome resulting from a comparison between planned space and practice-generated space.

### **3. Parc del Pou de la Figuera/Forat de la Vergonya: two images for a single space**

The Parc del Pou de la Figuera is a small park located in a popular neighbourhood bordering the most renowned quarter of Born in the centre of Barcelona. The park would have been one of the many well-designed and organized spaces of central Barcelona if its construction, which was the last step of a big process of urban renewal implemented by the municipality, had not been interrupted for about seven years owing to lack of funds.

Gradually, the inhabitants, adapted that space through a series of practices of everyday life to their needs and created a small park for the neighbourhood life which they named 'Forat de la Vergonya' (Hole of Shame) to indicate the state of abandonment in which it has been left by the municipality.

The process of building the park was characterized by different practices, related to two extremely significant key moments in which the imagery and the dominant forms of relation concern in particular two different social groups.

At first the protagonists of practices are the *vecinos*<sup>1</sup>. These actions consist in the reconstitution of new spaces of relationship and in the care of a devastated space as a spontaneous reaction to the demolition of the neighborhood and to the evacuation of most of its original inhabitants. Planting a fir tree at the center of the space during Christmas time was the first foundation deed, which was later followed by the creation of a garden and collective orchards. Step by step, the space continued to take shape through simple rituals and daily habits such as the settlement performed by elderly people by taking some chairs from their houses to the area; the game of young people in extemporaneous football fields and basketball courts; the occupation of portions of the park carried out by parents with children and the use of the central space of the area for collective meetings devoted to organization of space

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<sup>1</sup> Spanish word used to designate the inhabitants of an apartment building or subdivision in which the identity of the subject is marked by the value of proximity. In this case the *vecinos* are mostly 'old inhabitants' migrated to the referred area from the Southern Spain in the '60s and newcomers, young couples or first-generation immigrants mainly from Maghreb, Pakistan and Central America.



**Fig.1** Everyday life in *Forat de la Vergonya* (pictures by ASFCat archives).



**Fig.2** *Plaza dura* (pictures by ASFCat archives).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FRAMES	FRAMES			
	<i>URBAN PROXIMITY</i>	<i>LOCALIZED UTOPIA</i>	<i>URBAN CONFORMITY</i>	<i>URBAN CENTRALITY</i>
THE NAME	"LA PLAZA MAYOR"	EL FORAT ESPACIO OKUPADO	A NORMAL PARK	A CENTRAL PARK
THE USERS	US, "THE VILLAGERS"	US "THE ACTIVES"	THE CITIZENS	EVERYBODY
THE PRESENCE IN THE SPACE	FAMILIARITY	PARTICIPATED (ACTIVE)	ON A BENCH	GOVERNED
THE DESIGN	IMPORTANT, <i>it comes out from our needs</i>	NOT IMPORTANT the core is the process	NOT IMPORTANT the core is the comfort	IMPORTANT, it must be representative
THE ELEMENTS	FOR US	SELFCONSTRUCTED	STANDARD	SUITABLES FOR EVERYBODY
THE LOCATION OF THE ELEMENTS	IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANTE the core is the process	UNCONCERNED	DESIGNED
THE MANAGEMENT	TO TAKE CARE	TO SELFMANAGE	DELEGATED	TO GOVERN
THE TIME	OF NEGLECT	FOR CREATING	WAITING TIME	OF CONSTRUCTION

**Fig.3** Summary table: figures of the conflict/frames.

management and public discussions about its claim as a community park (Picture 1).

The claim of space is at the root of a conflict with municipality that did not share the image and the management neither the type of publicness which originated, since this was a space which was calibrated on the needs of a community of citizens rather than on conventional criteria of a public space for all citizens.

At this stage of the conflict the *vecinos* invite some *squatters*<sup>2</sup> to settle in abandoned buildings in the area to support them in the defense of the self-built park. It is worth highlighting that, although there is a considerable distance between these two social groups, neighbours recognize the validity of practices of resistance commonly used by squatters, often successfully. You could say that in the course of the transformation of the historic center of Barcelona several urban conflicts have spread a language of practices of resistance.

With the advent of squatters begins a second phase of the construction of the park.

Actually there was an hybridization of original practices originating with other artistic ones which, besides to strengthening the community aggregation favor greater openness to the outside world. The squatters produce ludic labs, theatre and music workshops, and produce shows, concerts and performing actions to promote the park's claim both with the media and the citizens.

The meetings in the park among the inhabitants become awareness campaign days, accompanied by collective meals and performances open to the public. In a seven years' time these moments of communion and neighbourhood life alternate with episodes of severe conflict with the public administration, until the inhabitants manage to get into a participatory process in which they can contribute to the definition of the image of the park.

Pou de la Figuera park, deriving from the mediation with the public administration, is an "hybrid space", as it is characterized by a collection of items and pieces of space belonging to the imaginary sphere of the several subjects involved in the conflict.

What I have found of remarkable interest was that, despite the agreement between the neighbours and the city council on the new design of the park, neither of them was able to recognize this negotiated space as a positive result. Thus a new image of public space had been produced, however, the city council was unable to analyze the process it had set up and consequently to reuse it in order to experience different possible planning directions.

The main reason of the complete absence of a 'reflection in the course of the action' (Schön 1993: 76-95, 247-274), is to be found in the radical position that everyone embodied, related with a complex

.....  
2 Groups of people who occupy property or land to which they have no legal title, and modify places in which they settle with new lifestyles free from conventional rules.

mix of values, beliefs, images that characterized the relation of each subject with public space that has blocked the conflict on the negotiation of spatial metaphors to which different agents had entrusted the protection of their spatial imageries.

The theme that has strongly affected the dispute of the participatory process was the defense/rejection of the spatial metaphor of *plaza dura* a term referring to the paradigmatic design of the public space in Barcelona.

With the name *plaza dura* every subject identifies the typical Barcelona central public spaces, characterized by a hard ground, *terazas*<sup>3</sup>, mainly addressed to host tourists and citizens, organized playgrounds, green spaces managed by the municipality and other elements depending on the size and type of space.

The *plaza dura* represents - for the municipality - the only spatial term which can guarantee its own image of beauty and an idea of publicness in which citizens, tourists and city users (Martinotti 1993) are all equally involved in the public space (Picture 2).

The image of the *plaza dura* is the opposite of the self-constructed park, characterized by a ground of sand, community cultivated gardens, self made toys and the self-management of every space and series of elements absent from the Catalan public space as the stage for the shows or the sports ground that is found only in peripheral public spaces larger than the park.

The conflict between these two images has led the participatory process to the negotiation of hard ground instead of ground of sand, of green spaces managed by the municipality instead of community self-managed gardens, of playgrounds instead of self-made toys, *terraces* instead of other ways of using the public space. So the participatory process was based on the mutual granting of spatial elements and drove towards a space that, having something in common with the *plaza dura* and something in common with the self-made park, did not correspond to any of the spatial concepts in conflict. So the conflict remains.

The lack of adequate analysis of the implications among spatial imageries/power relations/social balance and spatial metaphors which have characterized the conflict, has blocked the negotiation on a basis of a win-or - lose relationship. As a result, what occurred was an unsatisfactory situation for every imagery which did not produced a shared design of the space.

In my Ph.D. research work I attempted to overcome the block of communication using an artificial device which allows to affect the participatory process by move the problematic core of the conflict from a loss-gain situation to a more productive territory for communication between the parties.

I used the cognitive tool of the *frame* (Gurgo 2010: 75-94), that I borrowed from anthropology to focus

.....  
3 Spaces belonging to bars with tables and chairs.

on the relations between beliefs, values, visions and experiences of public space of the different subjects of the conflict and the spatial elements (shapes and positions of the elements in the park, ways of managing and using the spaces, etc.).

By doing so I can get four different 'stories of space': the *frame urban centrality*, (the municipality), the *frame localized utopia (squatters)*, the *frame urban proximity* (the *vecinos*) and the *frame urban conformity* (the elder neighbours) (Gurgo 2010: 99-120). These *problem-setting stories* (Shön Rein 1993: 145-150), besides causing a more complex density in the relationship space/inhabitants, allowed me to decode the connection spatial elements/visions of space and focus on frictions enclosed in spatial metaphors.

So I've turned the conflict in a frame collision and set points of friction that affected the conflict, among them some of the most significant are: inclusion/exclusion, community/citizenship, permanence/transit, urban imaginary/suburban imaginary (Picture 3)

#### 4. From 'territories of fiction' to 'territories of reframing'

Starting from these points of friction, it could be possible for the municipality to build a kind of process to overcome its frame and the frames of the other agents and re-imagining the different spaces of the park in such a way that it allows the coexistence of different ideas of publicness and the establishment of new relationships between 'practical producers' and institutional agents.

This *reframing* (Shön, Rein 1993: 152-165; Kaufman, Smith 1998) process is named by Argyris and Schön as 'transit from *Model 1* to *Model 2*' (Argyris et Schön, 1998: 137-174) that is leaving an usual behavioural model (*Model 1*) with an uncertain result that does not work anymore and experience a new behavioural model (*Model 2*) with an uncertain result that opens the benefit of a creative status to imagine new solutions.

Referring to the park you can show at a glance the possible implications of this step in terms of space proposals and of different forms of governance.

Taking *terazas* into account, a rejection of this space by the inhabitants (*frame urban proximity*) did not concern the design of space, which was a significant item for the municipality, (*frame urban centrality*), but it was connected to his excessive outsourcing as an area for tourists at the expense of the life of the neighbourhood. There is indeed a chance to sit at the tables if not as consumers. Revisiting the *terazas* in direction of *café jardinets* (La Cecla 2008: 88-89) typical bars and cafes in Barcelona, you may find forms of governance that encourage interaction between inhabitants and visitors currently perceived as 'invaders' of a community space. For example, if through a policy of empowerment, *terazas* management was partly entrusted to the inhabitants, the feeling of exclusion would be reduced and the tourists would be perceived as a resource.

A similar example can be analyzed with regard to

issues related to the self-made orchards and its management system. For inhabitants the orchard is not important as such, but as a dimension of communion and care of a space which is common to members of a community. In the spatial imagery of the public administration the orchard is connected to an image of disorder, unsuitable to the city centre. Moreover, the citizens' self-government, besides not maintaining a constant care, makes these subjects be privileged since they use a space which should be for all citizens. In this case, a reframing process might include the development of an idea of neater green, such as 'urban garden', minded and attended by inhabitants, supported by *Parcs e Jardins*<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the *vecinos* may keep the chance of sharing the care of a space and at the same time they would be led in the choice of plants and its management so as to guarantee its design and its fruition to others citizens. This system was developed in Paris in the municipal politics of *Jardins Partagès* (Baudalet, Basset, Le Roy 2008).

Revisiting the park spaces in the perspective of the process of reframing can be similarly reproduced on other spatial metaphors that have kept a conflict situation even after the process of participation.

This methodological hypothesis, in my opinion, is likely to be a pathway to work at new forms of publicness for urban public spaces, and so an approach of planning instruments to spontaneous practices might be accomplished.

In this sense, I strongly believe that a leading role will be taken by the capacity of local governments to revisit their instruments with regard to the ability of communicating with social systems characterized by different rules and complex languages. Only in this way, the new planning tools will have the necessary resilience so as to permit the adaptability to the changing contexts and the reproducibility.

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4 The municipal body responsible for the management of the Catalan green areas.

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Cecilia Scoppetta

# Re-appropriations as neo-liberal practice? The case of Berlin

## Urban social movements, Neo-liberal urban policies, Berlin

Occupations of abandoned urban buildings and areas by urban social movements are critically analysed in the light of the shift from the “modern” concept of “rights” to the more undecipherable contemporary notion of “needs”. In this sense, the case of Berlin is proposed as emblematic of ambiguities and contradictions of urban social movements in neo-liberal times.

### Between rights and needs

Occupation and self-management of abandoned or underutilised urban spaces and buildings by antagonist groups is not a new phenomenon. Recently, an increasing interest in such issue is emerging again in planning practices and debates, and this sometimes arouses questions (and suspects).

In the case of occupations for housing purposes, such interest can be interpreted as an attempt to manage structural changes by containing social tensions by means of “tolerant” policies, whose aim is finding a balance between the expression of the right to a different way of living and the need of urban order and public safety. In this way, principles of social justice in accessing housing are promoted, so that one could say that such policies imply recognising both the occurred pluralisation of rights (Marcuse, 1994) (in this case: the right to housing) and their relationships with the spaces within which they are materially affirmed or denied, i.e.: the relationships between the mere affirmation of certain rights and the actual material conditions for their implementation. In addition, such policies can be seen as a device that is able to trigger interesting institutional innovations by exploring ways in which dealing with differences without making them irreducible.

But doubts and suspects mostly arise when we shift from changes occurred about “rights” to changes occurred about “needs” (as well as from occupa-

tions for housing purposes to occupations for other cultural activities). In fact, while planning has always legitimised itself as a tool to answer social needs generated by the (old) industrial city through the well-known catalogue of spatial “devices” (such as schools, urban parks, hospitals, and so on) constituting a «material and positive welfare» (Lanzani, Pasqui 2011), what is now required is dealing with new and not always easily decipherable post-modern social needs (Amin, Thrift 2005) emerging from the relevant changes occurred in the still ongoing restructuring of contemporary urban space/society. This highlights the existing relationships between planning and notions such as “citizenship” and “public sphere” – which are supposed to be no longer identifiable with those of the Keynesian State of the past century – as well as the abandonment of the traditional (but no longer useful) logic based on the old concept of “needs” (which required direct strategies) in order to rather implement indirect strategies through which the new emerging needs may be intercepted (in Scoppetta 2013).

In this sense, ambiguities precisely lie in the nature of such contemporary needs, which are strictly connected to the decisive mutations in social behaviours and lifestyles that are at the heart of what Zukin (1995) has called «symbolic economy», so that suspects primarily arise when one shows regard for the fact that antagonist social actors invest a lot of their

labour and expertise in modifying de-valorised properties by adding to them significant symbolic and social capital and by bringing the public's attention to them (Bishop, Williams 2012), thus accelerating their recuperation into the wider property market (Becker 2010; Smith 1996; Zukin 1982).

As underlined by many scholars (Colomb 2012; Zukin 1982; Hamnett 2003; Pratt 2009), the recent emphasis on such spontaneous practices has ample parallels to earlier waves of gentrification, since both occupants and unused spaces they discover and transform can be seen as «the few remaining pools of untapped resources» (Colomb 2012) that fit well to neo-liberal demand. In other words, we have here a practical case of post-Fordist production that exploits the niche of such amortised investments, accelerates their re-commodification, optimises their economic potentials through both the enhancement of their variegation and the cultivation of new consumer groups. All this thanks to minimal capital outlays on construction and infrastructure, by focusing instead on the «mediatisation» of the product (e.g.: through an «event») (Ioannides, Debbage 1997; Gale 2009).

The highlighted contradictions are analysed through the case of Berlin by referring to literature on the «new social movements» that emerged in Europe during the post-68 period.

Kreuzberg 1970-1989: appropriations for housing purposes as an enlargement of the sphere of rights. Built in the south of the «historical centre» (although this definition is incorrect in the Berliner case) as a result of the combination, in the 20s, of the existing settlements of Luisenstadt, Tempelhofer Vorstadt and the southern Friedrichstadt, in the 70s the neighbourhood of Kreuzberg appeared as a highly degraded heritage building dating back to the *Gründerzeit* of the early 20th century, i.e.: the tumultuous urban growth linked to the process of industrialisation, when the city had reached one of the highest population densities in Europe, with the greatest concentration in Kreuzberg (60,000 ab./sqkm) (SenBauWohn 1990).

The bombing of IIWW had destroyed most of the overcrowded unhealthy 5-6 floors buildings of this working-class borough, with about 40% of the remaining buildings in habitable conditions (*id.*). Having turned into a marginal zone close to the Wall, Kreuzberg became one of the areas affected by the first urban redevelopment program (Zapf 1969), announced in 1963, which involved the total demolition (started in 1966) of 43,000 apartments in 10-15 years and the reconstruction of 24,000. This led to a general disinvestment by the owners and the substantial abandonment of the neighbourhood, which was soon repopulated by a massive Turkish immigration since the early 60s, thus becoming, because of the «visibility» of such «*Gastarbeiter*» (not because their real consistency), the «Little Istanbul» in Berlin.

Occupations of the early 70s were linked, instead,

to the «new social movements» (Melucci 1976; Castells 1983; Lowe 1986; Calhoun 1993; Tarrow 1994; Door, Rucht 1995; Kriesi *et al.* 1995; Pichardo 1997; on the German case, see Grottian, Nelles 1983; Mulhak 1983; Katz, Mayer 1984; Mayer 1986; Koopmans 1995; Della Porta, Rucht 1995; Rucht 1997) emerged in the post-68 as innovative forms of collective action in which the conflict was extended from the field of public life to the private sphere, from the factory to the urban space, by taking on «existential contents, the only ones that are considered by the actors as irreducible, since they cannot be manipulated by the system» (in Melucci 1976, 1989; see also Katsiaficas 1997; Romano 1998; Polletta, Jasper 2001; on the German case, see Aust *et al.* 1981; Kiss *et al.* 1981), where the «need to «change live» is expressed through the refusal of rules [...], the attempt to establish non commodified interpersonal relationships» (Melucci 1976). What is questioned is the notion of «social order» through «the overlapping and intermingling of the concepts of «opponent» and «deviant»» (Touraine 1975), with self-management and autonomy as central issues (on the Berliner case, see Espert, Scheer 1982; Sonnewald - Raabe, Zimmermann 1983).

Unlike the first occupations (see Table I) by Turkish immigrants (a few, however, tending them rather to live in degraded apartments, but with lower rental costs), corresponding to the type that Pruijt (2013) identifies as «deprivation based squatting», the new appropriations of empty buildings can be included within more than one configuration, being the new social movements organised as «a network of relatively autonomous cells, linked by weak bonds, with a non-rigid leadership» (Melucci 1976).

Table I and II shows in details the different objectives, strategies and results of the two waves of occupations by highlighting the ways in which the construction and the enlargement of consensus constituted a distinctive feature of the more successful wave, started in 1979 with the occupation of a firefighters station of architectural value in order to prevent its demolition (see: Bodenschatz *et al.* 1983; Laurisch 1981). Within such frame, in fact, even the violent riots in 1981, guided by the movement's «hard wing», did not destroy the achieved popular support. On the contrary, the only result of the heavy repression by the CDU Home Secretary Heinrich Lummer – with public order, demolition and residents' displacement as a means to disperse the wide basis of consensus (Brand 1988) – consisted of making «explicit in the eyes of neutral observers or potential supporters the illegality of public intervention», allowing to «broaden the movement's scope of action within the political system, i.e.: its ability to influence» (Melucci 1976).

The inclusion of Kreuzberg in the Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) in 1987 – by extending the traditional concept of «exhibition of architectures», which was used in the past to create *ex-novo* model neighbourhoods (as in the case of Weissenhof in Stuttgart in 1927, or the Hansa district in Berlin in 1957) – meant a shift in regeneration approaches. In

fact, the new IBA moved in a double direction: the *Altbau* (“old city”, i.e.: a program of redevelopment of existing buildings) and the *Neubau* (“new city”, a building program for empty spaces due to the bombing), both based on the notion of “*behutsame Stadterneuerung*” (“careful urban renewal”), i.e.: the «discovery of the rules of the historical city», with an important role of the construction of participatory mechanisms and forms of planning “from below” (Homuth 1984; Konter 1994; SenBauWohn 1990). As a further result, about a half of the occupied buildings was legalised (while the “hard” wing, was violently evicted and criminalised). This shift can be interpreted as a need, by the political system, to adapt its organisation in order to face the breakup of the social order in the vulnerable and contradictory point of housing issues. Mayer (1993, 2009a; 2009b) interprets the *Selbsthilfe* legalisation process (see Table II) as functional to both reducing costs (thanks to the occupants’ unpaid work) of an economically unsustainable urban regeneration and (as political goal) destroying and disintegrating the movement through the implicit recognition of private property by groups who built their identity (Polletta, Jasper 2001) around the questioning of the latter, as an expression of the existing power relations. Such an interpretation evidently considers the *instanbesetzen* as «vindictive class movement» or «political class movement» (Melucci 1976), which respectively tend to push the boundaries of the system’s organisation by discussing its own rules and by attacking the very origin of power or by «directly challenging the hegemony of dominant political forces and their link with class interests» (*id.*). On the contrary, if we consider the *instanbesetzen* (see Table II) simply as «vindictive movement» or as «political movement» (Melucci 1976), the legalisation process can be seen as an actors’ positive achievement in their struggle against power as a «guarantor of norms and rules in order to achieve a different distribution of resources» (ie: a «functional adaptation of the system’s organisation»), «to widen the space of political participation and to improve the actor’s relative position within the process of formation of decisions» (*ibid.*). This functional adaptation can be regarded as a reaffirmation of the existing right to housing but, if interpreted in cultural terms, implies the rejection of ideas of collective action as pathological “deviance” (Merton 1957) and the recognition of a plurality of identities and ways of life, in which the conflict (which, in turn, helps to shape such alternative identities) is manifested in «the symbolic form of resistance, cultural revolt and individual refusal» (Melucci 1976).

Prenzlauer Berg-Mitte 1990-2013: neo-liberal practices in the production of urban spaces?

Prenzlauer Berg is one of the 23 Berliner *Bezirke* (“boroughs”), located in the north-east of the centre of the former East Berlin (i.e.: in what, before the construction of the Wall, was the city centre). It is characterised by a building fabric which is organised

around the so-called *Kiez* (neighbourhood squares or gardens), from which the concept of *Kiezkultur* (Eigler 1996), i.e.: community solidarity which had allowed, during the communist period, to develop forms of organised resistance against demolitions of existing buildings and the consequent population transfer in the so-called *Plattenbauen*, the “modern” intensive settlements in the suburbs, where, at the time of reunification, lived about a quarter of the population (Häußermann, Strom 1994; Hoszczlowski 1991).

During the communist period the area, inhabited mainly by dissidents and intellectuals (Eigler 1996; Häußermann 1997), was abandoned for both economic and political-ideological reasons (Häußermann 1998). On the one hand, the disinvestment by the state was due to the cost of buildings requalification (certainly more than the *Plattenbauen*, built in prefabricated concrete panels: Hannemann 2000). In addition, the severely damaged buildings constituted about 24% of the remaining 40% of the total private ownership in the DDR (Reimann 1997). On the other hand, the building type – with large windows overlooking the street and decorated facades, the apartments of Berliner bourgeoisie downstairs and the unhealthy cheaper flats upstairs – reproduced, in essence, the old class structure and the *Kapitalverwertungsprozess* (“process of capital accumulation”) (Häußermann 1997).

Rent prices – which, during the communist period, were “frozen” at the level of 1938 (1 DM/sqm) (Holm, 2006) – did not allow the maintenance of non damaged buildings (67% realised before 1918). Furthermore, at the fall of the Wall, about 6% of them was in poor conditions, with 88% heated by coal stoves and 68% without toilets, which were often in common (Hoszczlowski, 1991).

The fall of the Wall in November 1989 highlighted the need for Berlin to “re-positioning” itself in the world economy (see Krätke 1992; Häußermann, Sackmann 1994; Häußermann, Strom 1994; Berry, McGreal 1995; Campbell 1999) and the emerging of the powerful image of the cosmopolitan city of the “roaring 20s” can be seen as a result of such efforts. It oriented national and international capitals towards the old highly symbolic centralities such as Potsdamer-Platz, Pariser Platz and Alexanderplatz (Lehrer 2004, Strom 1996; Strom 2001; Strom, Mayer 1998), in sharp contrast with the Planwerk Innenstadt (Süchting 1999; Frick 1991; 1995), which was focused, instead, on decentralisation and social-economic balance (see Kleger *et al.* 1996).

This was the background for a new wave of occupations of empty buildings in what was the former East-Berlin. Post-Wall squatters (see Table III), however, were of a different typology and their achievement are to be framed within the progressive increase in rents and the emerging phenomenon of gentrification, on the one hand, and the putting little by little into question the regime of rental controls, the share of social housing (privately owned but largely subsidised) and, more generally, the entire welfare system



**Fig. 1** Berlin 1943: the central areas before the destructions due to WWII (by the Author).



**Fig. 2** Berlin 1945: effects of the war in the central areas (by the Author).

Period	Typology (Pruit, 2013)	Objectives	Strategy	Results
Early 70s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelopment program (1963): total demolition of 43,000 apartments in 10-15 years;</li> <li>• Reconstruction of 24,000.</li> <li>• Disinvestment by the owners &amp; abandonment; occupations by Turkish immigrants.</li> </ul>	«Squatting as an alternative housing strategy»: young people (not families), middle class, good education level.	«To be left alone and in peace» (Prujit, 2013) as bearers of an alternative and communitarian lifestyle expressing a counter-culture claiming for autonomy from the state, the market and traditional forms of political participation and constructing a group identity (defined by difference from “the outside”).	Based on concepts of <i>aussteigen</i> (“exit”, “break away”, “escape”) and <i>Freiraum</i> (“free space”).	The hoped mass-mobilisation did not occur: evictions seemed to mark the end of the whole movement.
	«Political squatting»: Leninists of K-Gruppen or the more anti-authoritarian Spontis.	Class mobilisation: occupation as an opportunity for clashing with the dominant power by highlighting the contradictions of the system, especially in working class neighbourhoods of cities governed by the SPD in order to show the link reformism/financial capital.	Taking on the hegemony of the students’ movement after the failure of the attempt to radicalise struggles within the factories.	

**Table I** Different waves of housing occupation. Kreuzberg (Berlin): first riots of the early 70s.

Period	Typology (Pruit, 2013)	Objectives	Strategy	Results
1979-1981 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 800 still abandoned buildings;</li> <li>• 40,000 Berliner in a condition of “urgent housing needs”;</li> <li>• “Heavy” projects (such as the <i>Neues Zentrum Kottbusser</i>) as a symbol of the failure of modernist redevelopment.</li> <li>• 248 occupied buildings; about 727 activists.</li> </ul>	«Conservational squatting»: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreasing of the “political” component as an “avant-garde”;</li> <li>• Emerging of pacifist &amp; anti-nuclear groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contrasting urban policies of physical/social transformation of historical working-class neighbourhood;</li> <li>• “<i>Instandbesetzen</i>” (“<i>instandsetzen</i>”, “to renew”, and “<i>besetzen</i>”, “to occupy”) as a conservative tool;</li> <li>• Proposing a model of alternative life rather than a “class” mobilisation;</li> <li>• Calling into question, through the housing issue, the SPD government’s progressive and “tolerant” image.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliances: collective <i>Bürgerinitiative</i> Sudost-36 (SO-36, the postal code) &amp; residents (SO-36 citizens’ association), jointly awarded (Nov. 1979) by the Bonn’s <i>Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft</i> for their “exemplary neighbourhood activity”;</li> <li>• Attracting the attention of the media and the public on the need of conservation of the neighbourhood’s typomorphological/social structure;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enlarging consensus to academics, intellectuals (e.g.: G. Grass), the SPD, the Alternative <i>Liste</i>, the environmentalists, the CDU reformist wing, the Protestant church;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• About 53 (34 very violent) riots (Dec. 1980-Sept. 1981) aimed at revealing inability, stiffness and inconsistency of the political system in absorbing demands created by change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jan.1981: resignation of the mayor D. Stobbe (fall of the SPD coalition, governing Berlin since 1954) and rise of the CDU mayor R. von <i>Weizsäcker</i> (June 1981);</li> <li>• The planned demolition of 2200 buildings stopped in 1981;</li> <li>• Inclusion of <i>Kreuzberg</i> within the IBA 1987;</li> <li>• Cultural elaboration of the notion of “<i>behutsame Stadterneuerung</i>” (“careful urban renewal”), adopted by the Senate of Berlin (1983), including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents can oppose demolitions;</li> <li>• Legalisation (about a half of occupied buildings) through the <i>Selbsthilfe</i> (“self-help”, i.e.: publicly funded self-recovery, according to certain standards);</li> <li>• Possibility of becoming owners.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table II** Different waves of housing occupation. Kreuzberg, Berlin: new strategies of the 80s.

Period	Typology (Pruit, 2013)	Objectives	Reactions and achievements
<p>After 1989</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Re-positioning” the reunited city within the world economy: the image of the metropolis of the 20s;</li> <li>• A sustainable participative <u>Planwerk Innenstadt</u> (urban plan for the inner city): de-centralisation &amp; social-economic balance; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National/international investments in the (highly symbolic) pre-Wall central areas; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25,000 abandoned buildings in the former East Berlin;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Costs of reunification &amp; general crisis of the DBR welfare regime;</li> <li>• From peripheral to central neighbourhood;</li> <li>• Return of Jewish properties: deep changes in ownership structure (70-90% from public to private);</li> <li>• Rise in rent prices (+70%) &amp; gentrification.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• «Squatting for housing needs»: young people (but also families) from the former DDR, guided by the “political wing” of the DBR movement;</li> <li>• «Political squatting»: politicised young people from the former DDR, where the <u>schwarz wohnen</u> (“to illegally reside”) was, however, largely practiced and tolerated as a way to both spatially concentrate and control dissidents and answer chronic housing problems, despite the efforts in building pre-fabricated <u>Plattenbauten</u> (intensive modernist settlements) and to the need to.</li> </ul> <p>70 occupations (Dec. 1989-Apr. 1990).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Re-conquering the west” by former-DDR citizens;</li> <li>• Class mobilisation: occupation as an opportunity for clashing with the dominant power by highlighting contradictions and shadows of the reunification and by taking on the hegemony of the re-born squatting movement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evictions of the most politicised occupations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to avoid further radicalisations, a “reviewed &amp; corrected” version of the <u>Selbsthilfe</u> of the 80s: not only public funds (250 million €) for self-recovery, but also loans managed by intermediary organisations (not directly by the occupants), who manage a comprehensive urban development program;</li> <li>• In the case of returned (private) buildings: the <u>Selbsthilfe</u> agreement becomes illegitimate, litigation, eviction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• «Entrepreneurial squatting»: young politicised artists from the counter-cultural scene of both the former East and West Berlin;</li> <li>• «Conservational squatting»: young politicised artists from the counter-cultural scene of both the former East and West Berlin.</li> </ul>	<p>Creating free spaces for artistic expression into building with a historical image (to be eventually conserved).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreading of studies (often funded by the Senate of Berlin) on temporary uses; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerging of NGOs (such as <u>Coopolis</u> or <u>Stadtbau</u>) that are specialised in providing information and negotiation assistance in order to link subject searching for low-cost spaces (for temporary uses), owners and institutional actors.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table III** Different waves of housing occupation. Prenzlauer Berg-Mitte (Berlin): post Wall neo-liberal strategies.



**Fig. 3** Abandoned former industrial areas along the river Spree. Photo by the author.

Period	Typology (Pruitt, 2013)	Objectives	Results
<p>After 1989</p> <p>Existing empty abandoned buildings in the neighbourhood once bordered by the Wall.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• «Squatting for housing needs»: young people (but also families) from the former DDR, guided by the “political wing” of the DBR movement;</li> <li>• «Political squatting»: politicised young people from the former DDR, where the <i>schwarz wohnen</i> (“to illegally reside”) was largely practiced and tolerated.</li> </ul> <p>50 occupations (May-July 1990).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Re-conquering the west” by former-DDR citizens;</li> <li>• Class mobilisation.</li> </ul>	<p>“Zero tolerance” approach: brutal eviction of 11 occupied buildings in <i>Mainzer Straße</i> and consequent 3 days-violent riots (about 3,000 federal police officers, helicopters &amp; 10 water).</p>
<p>Existing “no-man’s land”: abandoned rail stations (<i>Ostbahnhof</i>, <i>Schlesischer Wriezener Bahnhof</i>) and industrial areas connected with the <i>Osthafen</i>, one of the 4 old river-ports along the Spree (the former border-line between east and west) and close to the neighbourhood of <i>Kreuzberg</i> (with its counter-cultural scene).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal occupation of temporarily equipped beaches, (e.g.: <i>Oststrand</i>, the <i>Yaam</i>, <i>Kiki Blotfeld</i>), swimming pools and exhibition spaces;</li> <li>• Clubs focusing on electronic music into abandoned warehouse as a tourist destination in the so-called “easyjetset”: <i>Maria am Ostbahnhof</i> (linked to art festivals); the <i>Bar 25</i>’s (non-stop techno music sessions from Thursday evening to Monday on platforms on water), a well-known attraction; the <i>Club der Visionäre</i> (used as a film set).</li> </ul>	<p>Creating informal recreational spaces for leisure and artistic expression</p>	<p>Differently from what happened in <i>Mainzer Straße</i>, the recreational spaces informally developed along the two banks of the Spree are tolerated, thus facilitating the rooting of one of the most “dense” cluster in the world specialised in electronic music.</p>
<p>Since 2001</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the 90s: a 180 ha. &amp; 37 km. <i>Mediaspree</i> project sponsored by a partnership (private investors/Berlin Senate/Berliner Chamber of Commerce): office buildings, lofts, 5-stars hotels, recreational spaces + a 17,000-spectators music hall;</li> <li>• Universal Music’s (2002) &amp; MTV Europe’s (2004) headquarters into the <i>Osthafen</i> (with huge public funds);</li> <li>• <i>Wasserlagenentwicklungsplan</i> (Development plan for river areas) by the Berlin Senate, then articulated into 2 urban development programs: <i>Stadtumbau Ost</i> (2002) and <i>Stadtumbau West</i> (2005), with 4 strategic areas, among which the <i>Osthafen</i> &amp; the <i>Mediaspree</i> project as a revitalisation factor for both <i>Kreuzberg</i> and <i>Friedrichshain</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-emerging of the «conservational squatting» of the 80s: pre-existing activists groups (<i>AG Spreeufer</i>, “banks of the Spree” &amp; <i>Spreepiratinnen</i>, “pirates of the Spree”);</li> <li>• <i>Mediaspree Versenken</i> (“sink <i>Mediaspree</i>”), a wide citizens movement claiming against the risk of changes in the social-economic structure of the neighbourhood and for both a reduction of the foreseen building density and the conservation of public spaces along the river banks, to be used for recreational and cultural activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Despite the <i>Mediaspree</i> project is described as an opportunity for requalification of the existing buildings (where rental contracts still prevail), it is seen <i>by as</i> an “accelerator” for social and cultural changes, as already occurred in <i>Prenzlauer Berg</i> after the reunification.</p>	<p>After a 5-months protest, a signature collection was organised in order to calling for a referendum (“<i>Spreeufer für alle!</i>” “Spree river banks for all”), against the <i>Mediaspree</i> project: 87% of the inhabitants voted, with the victory of the opponents to the project.</p>

**Table IV** Different waves of housing occupation. Friedrichshain (Berlin): social movements of the neo-liberal age.

of the old western sector through what Holm (2006) defines «*Salamitactic*», i.e.: a series of imperceptible but systematic incremental “cuts”, with a significant transfer of resources from the public to the private sector (see also Bernt, Holm 2004).

The case of the Kunsthau Tacheles in Oranienburgerstraße is emblematic of both the new squatter typology and the institutional reaction (see Table III), including the spreading of studies on temporary uses (*Zwischennutzung*) (i.e.: Bürgin, Cabane 1999; Urban Catalyst 2001; 2007; Kreuzer 2001; Oswalt 2002; Bengs *et al.* 2002; MA18 2003; Blumner 2006; Haydn, Temel 2006; Kruse, Steglich 2006; Havemann, Schild 2007; Krauzich 2007; Lange 2007; Bornmann *et al.* 2008; Brammer 2008; Dransfeld, Lehmann 2008; Angst *et al.* 2009), which are described as “pioneer tactics”, bearers of symbolic capital (SenStadt 2007), to be promoted through the attenuation or the renegotiation of planning strategies or using special tools that are able to cope with the sometimes illegal dimension of urban practices. Designed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the architect Alfred Messel as a monumental “cathedral of commerce” made by reinforced concrete and seriously damaged by the IWW bombing, the Tacheles was left vacant and abandoned during the communist period. Being occupied in 1990 by a group of artists to prevent the demolition of the remaining evocative ruins with the aim of highlighting their historical value through various performances (Hasselmann 2002), in 1997, after a long negotiation, the building was finally sold to a “giant” of hotel industry, the Fundus Gruppe (Tacheles 2008; Die Fundus Gruppe 2008), which entered into both a centennial rent contract with the occupants and an agreement with the Berlin Senate regarding the elaboration of an architectural competition for developing a master plan covering the whole area (with the recommendation, however, to respect the “alternative” character achieved by the building in the meantime).

Today, the refurbished Tacheles, abandoned by only a part of the original squatters, beyond artists’ ateliers (Pratt 2009) not only hosts commercial spaces and a gourmet restaurant, but it also is the pretext for the creation of the Johannisviertel Hotel in an adjacent area of 2.4 ha. «designed as a four star hotel and [...] operated by a world renowned boutique hotelier [...] in a vital and growing area often compared to New York’s SoHo, with many art galleries, shops and restaurants [...] between the high-end atmosphere of central Friedrichstraße and the blackberries artistically inclined Mitte area» (in Tsao, Mackown 2006). A «luxury apartment house in the spirit of the Beresford Apartments on Central Park West [...] with a garden court at the centre» and «an office building recalling the Flatiron Building [...] between a square and the shopping Oranienburgerstraße» are also foreseen (in Stern 2003).

Differently from the first squatting wave, what is to be highlighted here is the fact that, on the one hand, the conflicting nature of post-industrial society (and of spaces it produces) is recognised, but, on the other,

antagonistic urban practices are seen as interesting opportunity for the revitalisation of marginal areas as an attractive factor, which is able to propose new “styles”, behaviours and consumption patterns aimed at the “construction” of a specific subjectivity, whose characteristics – flexibility, innovation, political and environmental correctness – seem to coincide with the neo-liberal business model.

Friedrichshain 1990-2011: a renewed role of social movements in the construction of urban spaces?

The area of Friedrichshain can be defined as a typical place of post-Fordist processes of urban transformations. Divided from Kreuzberg by the river Spree, it hosts the Osthafen – i.e.: one of the abandoned port areas that, before the division of the city, constituted (together with Humboldthafen and Nordhafen and Westhafen) the system of urban ports that made the Spree a sort of backbone of the city – and the adjacent intermodal node, with the stations of Ostbahnhof, Bahnhof Schlesischer and Wriezener Bahnhof.

Forming the east/west border, during the communist regime the area had become a “no man’s land” and, even after the fall of the Wall, it had long remained inaccessible until an “informal” revitalisation started (Dienel, Schophaus 2005; Klanten, Hübner 2010) through the temporary use of derelict lands for recreational purposes, attracting many users.

Unlike the “zero tolerance” approach of the Senate of Berlin (see Table IV) in the case of the occupations for housing purposes of the early 90s in Mainzer Straße (see Arndt 1991), the informal recreational activities along the two banks of the Spree were tolerated, so that one of the most “dense” clusters of the world (Lange, 2008) (DJmag 2009), specialised in electronic music, could root, being it seen as functional to a typical neo-liberal large urban project (see Table IV).

In both Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain such project was negatively perceived as an “accelerator” of social-economic transformations in neighbourhoods not yet invested by gentrification processes comparable to those occurred in Prenzlauer Berg since the early post-Wall years. This led to a broad reaction of the inhabitants, guided by activists, both claiming against the risk of changes of the existing social-economic structure and calling for a reduction in the planned building density and the maintenance of public spaces along the riverbanks. In 2008 a petition for a referendum was then begun and the latter was largely successful, with the participation of 87% of the inhabitants (Ahlfeldt 2010).

A careful analysis of vote distribution induces, however, to consider the fact that the areas of greater participation and with a majority against the project are not those in which rental housing prevails – i.e.: the most vulnerable to the risk of a rise in rental prices as a possible consequence of the project – but those where housing ownership is prevalent and with a middle-high income and education level.

In short: middle-class young “creative” singles (see Krätke 2010; Montgomery 2005; Peck 2005; Pruijt 2004), i.e.: paradoxically, exactly the social group explicitly promoted by neo-liberal urban policies since the fall of the Wall (Scharenberg, Bader 2009), which seems to have replaced what previously constituted the area within which social movements of the 80s could enlarge the consensus around the protection and a further extension of rights. In this sense, the ground on which constructing a possible coalition seems rather to be that of the fulfilment of new contemporary “basic” needs, such as the need to benefit from counter-culture, i.e.: precisely what can be considered as a triggering factor for gentrification processes.

More generally, on the one hand, the whole Berliner story seems to confirm the intrinsically conflicting nature of the process of «production» (Lefebvre 1974) of urban space as well as the significance of the local dimension, i.e.: where what is really at stake can be measured in terms of both actual spatial effects of global restructuring and emerging anti-democratic trends. On the other hand, in light of recent literature (Koehler, Wissen 2003, Mayer 2009a; 2009b; Nicholls 2008; Pickvance 2003), the highlighted contradictions cannot fail to lead to a broader debate on both the role (Lebuhn 2008) and the “creative” and communicative skills (Leitner *et al.* 2006) of contemporary urban social movements, but also on their ambiguity and the consequent risks of cooptation (Mayer 2002; see also Holm, Kuhn 2011; Uitermark 2004).

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Adriano Cancellieri

# Signs of publicness: public access, public encounter and public appropriation

## Sociology, Public spaces, Social exclusion/integration

The concept of public space has been at the centre stage of academic debate and policies for years. On the one hand, the public space is increasingly celebrated as an arena of easy inter-personal interaction and is framed in a narrative of loss, nostalgia and mourning. On the other hand, cities' public spaces are more and more considered and managed as infernal spaces where you always risk encountering potentially dangerous people, such as drug dealers, teenage gangs and other 'anti-social' groups (see the so-called 'urban revanchism').

Both these deterministic perspectives are removed from the empirical reality, where public space appears as a field of action and the stake of many everyday complex and ambivalent struggles and acts of territorialisation.

The paper aims at taking public space as a heuristic concept «to investigate the constitution and the relations of objects in the world of experience» (Kant, 1855: 411). It focuses on three social processes that give public space its publicness and constitutes three different (strongly interconnected and intertwined) levels of analysis: public access, public encounter and public appropriation. These three arenas and the related questions they raise can be very relevant for addressing some of the main issues that involve public spaces in contemporary cities.

### The public space: neither carnival nor hell

The concept of public space has been at the centre stage of academic debate and policies for years, capturing the attention of sociologists and geographers, political scientists and philosophers, as well as that of urban planners and architects. Nevertheless, it still remains a very slippery topic.

The public space is increasingly celebrated as an arena of easy inter-personal interaction (Wood and Landry 2007): a simple solution to better urban areas and satisfy social and human needs (e.g. to reinforce place attachment and local identity or to manage cultural differences, Carr *et al.* 1992; Low *et al.* 2005). Research indicates that people attach meaning to their everyday public spaces, which can enhance and sustain a sense of community (Tuan 1974; Boyer 1994; Hayden 1995). However, in too many cases, public spaces are automatically considered as carnival places of ludic experiences of encounter and conviviality. As highlighted by Valentine (2008: 324), it is implied that «cultural difference will somehow be dissolved by a process of mixing or hybridization of culture in public space». But these images of public spaces are highly idealized. This perspective conceals power struggles and conflicts over the ownership and control of public space. Local governments and planners, for example, «are redesigning public spaces largely to attract private investment and affluent taxpayers, while displacing,

banishing, and even criminalizing 'undesirables'» (Silver 2014: 1).

As a result, there is often a wide gap between presumed aspirations and outcomes in terms of the publicness (see Sandercock, Dovey 2002). Furthermore, too often, public space is framed in a narrative of loss, nostalgia and mourning and scholars speak of «the fall of public man» (Sennett 1977), and «the end of public space» (Sorkin 1992). But that which we are supposed to have lost is a 'phantom', just a romantic idealization. Far from being an ideal space, the public space «is (also) a place of trivialisation, commercialisation, spectacle, fragmentation and apathy – which, let us be clear about this point, does not at all detract from its importance» (Brighenti 2010: 18).

An opposite frame has dominated public policies in last few years: cities' public spaces are more and more considered and managed as infernal spaces where you always risk encountering potentially dangerous people, such as drug dealers, teenage gangs and other 'anti-social' groups. These discourses are part of the «pervasiveness of cultural discourses currently that constitute the stranger as dangerous, and that warn against interacting with persons unknown» (Cooper 2007: 227). According to this perspective, public spaces are places of violence, intimidation and other incivilities; and therefore they have to be controlled and emptied through architec-

tural, technological and political devices that restrict or discourage certain spatial uses and appropriations. It is the so-called 'urban revanchism' (Smith 1996), which, by contrasting the 'inappropriate uses' of public spaces, has produced an increasing number of paranoid crusty, prickly and/or sanitized spaces (Flusty 1994) and a growing privatization and enclavisation of the urban space. In this case, public space is more similar to the notion of 'public order' (Davis 1998; Atkinson 2003).

These two dominant representations of public space are not adequately conceptualised and are too deterministic. The main characteristics of public space are neither the ease of encounter nor the fear but rather of civil inattention (Goffman 1963). This does not certainly mean that to 'inhabit' and to use a public space is always (or even often) a superficial, non-intimate or non-intense experience (Cooper 2007). Indeed, public space is the field of action and the stake of many everyday complex and ambivalent social processes and acts of territorialisation.

The slipperiness and the ambivalence of the concept of public space have been recently addressed by many authors who have attempted to identify dimensions and indicators to better analyse and understand it (Benn, Gaus 1993; Akkar 2005; Iveson 2007; Madanipour 2010; Varna, Tiesdell 2010). In this paper I explicitly take public space as a heuristic concept in the Kantian perspective, an analytical tool for research to contribute to understand what public really means and what is so important in public space. I start from interaction sociologists who have devoted much attention to the notion of the public space understood as a collective action (involving people in/and space) that entails properly ritual interactions (Joseph 1998; Lofland 1998). I mainly refer to Brighenti (2010) and Staeheli et al. (2009), who pay attention to some specific qualities of the public such as the accessibility, the relationships between different publics and the acts of temporary territorialisation. As a result, this paper focuses on three social processes that give public space its publicness and constitute three different (strongly interconnected and intertwined) levels of analysis: public access, public encounter and public appropriation (Saint-Blancat, Cancellieri 2014).

### **Public access**

Generally speaking, we add the term 'public' to space to highlight the 'inclusiveness' and the idea that a space is open to all comers (Barnett 2008). A space is considered to be (more) public when it has high accessibility (Young 1990; Madanipour 2003) or, in other words, 'public access'. In this sense 'public' does not entail belonging to the state (Brighenti 2010: 19); prisons or courthouses are public property spaces but they have very restricted accessibility, while, at the same time, many privately owned collective spaces, such as bars and shopping centres, have a (quasi)public access. A large part of the public space literature and research agree that if people use a space is a 'public way',

regardless of whether public is understood in terms of rights, ownership or something else. In this view, 'publicness' is created by the minds and the bodies of the inhabitants (Varna, Tiesdell 2010).

In reality, a space which is completely accessible to everybody does not exist. Basically, public space always has to some extent some institutional and/or informal entry thresholds, especially towards specific actors. This fact requires us to always ask 'to whom' a place might be more (or less) public. As underlined by Simonsen (2012: 13) «some bodies are blocked in their mobility and access to places more than others who can freely pass and extend their physical mobility into social mobility». A significant proportion of new public spaces in business improvement districts and special improvement districts are controlled environments that «openly limit access to the 'undesirables' but as a result discourage many other users and uses in the space» (Mehta 2007). A closer look reveals that the users of such controlled environments are limited to the middle or upper-middle echelons of society. In many other cases, public spaces in cities favour certain age or gender groups, as is clearly evident through the limited types of activities that take place in these spaces. The limited accessibility of some groups to some public space highlights the great importance of adopting an intersectional perspective focusing on the relationships among several differentiating factors: gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and other axes of identity which interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels (Valentine 2007). This involves on-going struggles over access to public space that are never casual but linked to social power dynamics that often foster the 'naturalisation' of the exclusion of some bodies or uses of space, considered illegitimate and 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996).

The accessibility can be limited by laws and regulations (Ellickson 1996; Briffault 1999) as recently demonstrated by the growing control over public spaces, by architectural design, such as walls and gates (Flusty 1997; Atkinson 2003) or by social practices (such as the 'technology of racism' that operates and incorporates discourses of stranger danger in the bodily encounter, Simonsen 2012).

### **Public encounter**

A (more) accessible space is inevitably a space where (potentially) different (human as well not-human) actors cohabit; a space where diverse people encounter and engage in different practices. As a result the public space is the space where you can address, and be addressed by, many people (that are largely biographical strangers, Lofland 1998). This means that a second constituent part of the publicness is the presence of a public, and more specifically, the relationships between different publics and people within them (Barnett 2008). This is the 'public' address' (Iveson 2007). The public, in this sense, is 'bridging' rather than 'bonding' (Brighenti 2010: 20) and the public space becomes both a space of circulation and a space of communication (Joseph

1998). Through this lens, public space is a shared space of coexistence and a relational field of attentions. Entering into a public space means accepting that one becomes subject to visibility. As such, public space is a site where one can attempt to reach a public and to get social recognition (Brighenti 2007). For example, the Speakers' Corner, in London's Hyde Park, is an outdoor space where strangers can gather to engage in oratory, political debate, and religious proselytism (Coleman 1997; Roberts 2001; Cooper 2007).

To enter in public space can involve a (temporary?) social recognition, which is very important for some 'non-public publics' (Brighenti 2010) that are hidden and marginalized. For migrants, this may mean having a voice to counter stigmatization (Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri 2014): even if, considered the ambivalence of recognition/control connected to the visibility's asymmetries (fostered by contemporary surveillance technologies), they could also to become hypervisible and even more stigmatized and controlled (Watson 2006; Iveson 2007).

Public space is characterized by the primacy of bodily encounters in all their complexity. It is an arena of multi-sensorial communication that combines sight, hearing, smell, movement and touch among different actors. In public spaces, there are «visible-seers, tangible-touchers, audible-listeners, etc., enacting an on-going intertwining between the flesh of the body, the flesh of others and the flesh of the world» (Simonsen 2012: 17). These synaesthetic encounters have been recently challenged by new technological communication devices, such as smartphones and ipods that give rise to the growing possibility of closing some sensorial doors (such as sight and hearing) and reduce the intersensorial contact.

The encounter can also be limited or favoured by architectural design and policies as recently revealed by urban and corporate planners, that seem more based on desires for security and/or entertainment rather than interaction and politics (Sorkin 1992). As a result, they often impose limits and controls on spatial interaction (Davis 1990; Harvey 1989; Lefebvre 1991) which inhibit 'triangulation' between people and/in space (Whyte 1980).

In any case, encounters in public space are not automatic but rather are historically and geographically mediated. Every encounter includes and incorporates images and narratives formed beyond the phenomenological here and now because «one does not perceive another body as a material object; rather, one is affected by the meaning of its appearance» (Simonsen 2012: 17). Sara Ahmed (2000) underlines, for example, that the encounter with strangers is not just with real subjects but with socially constituted, discursively produced positions. Each contact in public space is porous because it encompasses representations, objects, spaces, actors and events (e.g. the mass-media) that are physically not present in the encounter (Garfinkel 2002).

## Public appropriation

A third very meaningful characteristic of publicness is the so-called public appropriation, a concept which highlights that a public space supports a large amount of temporary uses and appropriations. The appropriation in public space is very peculiar precisely because it is temporary. As underlined by Brighenti (2010), public space is constantly appropriated, crossed and marked. It is the place where many spatial rights can be experienced (Lynch 1981): to sit, to eat, to play, to rest, to linger, to dance, to chat, to sell and to buy, to parade, to explore and discover or to protest. Many uses can coexist in the same public space at different times or in different portions of space. However, public appropriation in the public space is often met 'with reactions which include competition, complaints, quarrels, discussions, in short, communication' (Brighenti 2010: 29). When an act of appropriation in public space develops for too long, there are social actors and practices that constantly stigmatize it, because, otherwise, public space would lose its publicness and become a parochial or private territory (Lofland 1998). Public space is a shared space and involves the recognition of and respect for other people's use of space without demand that differences be erased (Brain 2005; Fyfe et al. 2006; Varna, Tiesdell 2010). Public appropriation can be supported or inhibited by law, materiality of space and/or everyday social practices that operate as threshold-making and boundary-drawing. In this sense, some authors (Frank, Stevens 2006) discuss the notion of 'looseness' and 'tightness'. Loose space is adaptable and used for a variety of functions, planned or not (Stevens 2007). The 'looseness' can be discussed in terms of design, for example the lighting or the presence of specific seating types. The place might also be designed to actively prevent or deter certain uses and activities (Flusty's (1997) as in the Los Angeles «sadistic street furniture» described by Mike Davis (1998) or in Italy where, in 2008, after the approval of the so-called 'security package' which gave more power to mayors on the issue of urban security, some municipalities issued ordinances to remove benches or to create new 'urban limitations' mainly against migrants (i.e. removing benches in certain public places, where migrants gather, see Ambrosini 2013; Cancellieri, Ostanel 2015). In these cases, public spaces «whilst open and accessible, are merely places to move through, to cut across, rather than dwell in or engage with in any meaningful way» (Allen 2006: 451).

## Conclusion

The term 'public space' has become a buzzword often used in an untroubled and un-theorized way (Varna, Tiesdell 2010). On the one hand, the 'public space' is increasingly celebrated as an arena of easy inter-personal interaction framed in a narrative of loss, nostalgia and mourning. On the other hand, cities' public spaces are more and more considered and managed as infernal and dangerous spaces

(see the so-called 'urban revanchism').

In empirical reality, public spaces are far from these two deterministic perspectives; they appear more as fields of

action and the stake of many everyday complex and ambivalent struggles and acts of territorialisation.

This paper takes public space as a heuristic concept «to investigate the constitution and the relations of objects in the world of experience» (Kant 1855: 411). It explicitly focuses on three social processes (public access, public encounter and public appropriation) that give public space its publicness and constitutes three meaningful relational fields that cut across material (the spatial and the corporeal) and immaterial (the semiotic, the symbolic and the informational), as well as institutional and informal components of everyday life.

Focusing the attention on public access means to analyse physical and social thresholds, both due to legal regulations and to everyday bottom-up practices. The related issues are the following: are there informal/institutional or material/immaterial thresholds for some specific 'publics'? Which social actors do we want to favour in terms of accessibility?

Highlighting the public encounter means underlining the peculiarity of the cohabitation of different practices and representations, and the related questions of recognition, visibility and communication among a variety of publics. Through this lens, public spaces appear as fields of gazes, as arenas of intervisibility. This involves asking: which publics are present in a public space and which kind of social recognition they generate? Also, which kinds of multi-sensorial encounter are generated in that specific public space?

Underlining public appropriation, that is the presence of multiple (temporary) uses of the space, as a constituent element of publicness, invites us to raise other fundamental questions. For example, which acts of territorialities and uses are supported or inhibited in a public space? And which actors increase their spatial agency and spatial capital (Cancellieri 2013) through that public space?

These three social processes and the related questions can be very relevant for addressing some of the main issues that involve public spaces in contemporary cities. First of all, the increasing role played by the private sector in the design, management and control of public spaces, in supporting the homogenization of some public spaces characterized by an economic and aesthetic role ('the spectacle of the city') instead of their social functions (Harvey 1989; Mitchell 1995; Akkar 2005).

The second process is the growing entanglement between human and non-human bodies (space, technology and infrastructure) in public space, that challenge the intersensorial encounter in public space and that increasingly transform social actors in 'social cyborgs' and public spaces (also) in digital public spaces. This social process also strongly affects and changes the kind of peoples' spatial appropriation and experience.

The third process is the increasing cohabitation of differences that characterizes many urban contexts and, consequently, the growing relevance of adopting a post-colonial and intersectional perspective (Ahmed 2000) to address the different ways people use, live and represent public spaces and their publicness.

In conclusion, we can say that public spaces are cacophonous, hybrid, multifaceted and multi-layered arenas in which public accessibility, encounter and appropriation are three fundamental sub-fields of actions and conflicts, both at institutional and informal levels. As underlined by Phillips (1993), through this lens, the struggle for democratic urban public space and for socio-spatial justice (Cancellieri 2014) is an activity which involves the everyday creation and construction of public spaces, not the repair or retrieval of an originally or potentially harmonious space (Deutsche 1996).

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# Re-living

Evictions, urban displacement and migrant re-appropriation in Turin .....	Alice Rossi
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Alice Rossi

# Evictions, urban displacement and migrant re-appropriation in Turin

## Social practices, Immigration, Urban policies

Within the current context of the Italian economy, the erosion of welfare has become chronic and normalized in 'ordinary emergencies'. By now it gets associated with the political-asylum crisis, the structural phenomenon of evictions and alarm concerning clandestine immigration. Simultaneous processes of differential access to the labor-market and legal hierarchism of citizenship, produce various forms of 'forced urban displacement'; as in the case of contemporaneous 'urban displaced' Asylum seekers and Refugees. Moreover, National Policies and City Planning do not address the issue of growing unemployment; to be imputed for the non-payment of house rentals and they adopt increasing forms of criminalizing illegal residences. Currently, one of the specific arenas, where migrants get exploited is the rising black-market for rentals.

My ethnographic data have been collected in Turin, a Northern Italian industrial center; historical scenario of Moroccan migrations. Here, the gentrification and privatization process of social housing coexist with occupations of abandoned urban spaces; either by Italians or by immigrants, who have been legal residents and workers since the nineties.

In conclusion, by reflecting on various occupational experiences, it will emerge just how urban intra-frontiers are not simply a divide and barrier, but will show how they contribute to the socio-political construction of everyday lives. Currently, to be occupying explains the growing distance between citizens and non-citizens within a context of multiple and simultaneous socio-political divisions.

### Turin: geographies of an informal city

In Western Europe, current public debate conceptualizes urban diversity under dichotomous categorizations; such as, formal/informal, legal/illegal; a process that often obscures their connections and interdependency. Dominant debate on urban theory combines the 'informal' with human-settlement modalities (of exchange and trade), which regard 'extra-legal' structures and process (Porter 2010). The 'informal' is depicted as a 'crisis' sector, which needs urban planning, or as a 'heroic entrepreneurship' expression of the most vulnerable and marginalized people (Roy 2005). Via this present contribution, I argue that contemporaneous informal-settlements in Turin<sup>1</sup> are far from being representative of a rare emergency, but are part of a structural phenomenon of urban displacement recognizable on a global level and which variously materialize at a local level and during different periods.

Historically, in the 'city-border' (Bensaad 2007, 2009; Gielis 2008) of Turin, emigration, internal migration and immigration have been intertwined differently and, at the present moment, coexist with

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<sup>1</sup> The Municipality of Turin has a long history of displaced *Rom* (Gypsy) people in camps both formal and informal, including some more and others less tolerated.

transits of Asylum seekers and Refugees in search of better conditions. These cultural-productive and social-organizational areas of meaning (Hannerz 1992) are the hotspots, where racial segregation, urban policies and socio-economic control intersect one another; together with various forms of dis-sent<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile inhabitation alarm<sup>3</sup> and immigration difficulties<sup>4</sup> have become two interrelated political top-

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<sup>2</sup> Here the prefix 'dis' is interpreted as double, twice; a family of meanings, which have multiple senses. I intend 'dis-sent' in terms of its generative power of producing different forms of 'sense'; of re-making a world of meanings even via transgressive behavior.

<sup>3</sup> CGIL and SUNIA have updated their annual monitoring system on a 1,000 sample of families under eviction. Since 2012 data have evidenced the rise of "guiltless delay in payment", caused by critical economic conditions of those, who can't meet inhabitation costs any longer. Migrant families represent 26% of the total number of families, comprising a three-or-more-person nucleus (they were the 26% in 2011, 24% in 2010, 22% in 2009; Studio synthesis Cgil and Sunia – Roma, 20 December 2012).

<sup>4</sup> During the last decade, Italy too has been experiencing the global phenomenon concerning the criminalization of poverty with repercussions on the National Health-Care System (NHCS) accessed by migrants; especially so by undocumented ones (Dossier Caritas/Migrants 2009,

ics. Turin has been renamed the 'Capital of eviction' by the media<sup>5</sup>. Here, where private interest on the housing market is dominant, the structural phenomenon of evictions coexists with the edification of 'valuable' apartments. Italians, immigrant families and youths suffer the economic crisis. Devoid of formal prerequisites to access social housing, they occupy abandoned buildings.

Since 2008, 'home-desks' and 'legal-desks' have been set up in several occupied social-centers of the city, where I live and where I have conducted part of my multi-sited ethnography<sup>6</sup>. These desks offer information and legal support to face the growing phenomena of eviction and migration risks. One of their main goals is to ensure the human right to a home by occupying urban spaces considered public goods<sup>7</sup>. Here, I focus on the process of occupation, which has been generated during the last four years, as part of a spreader and the previous movement of re-appropriation in Turin<sup>8</sup>.

By considering Urban Planning as a cultural (Porter 2010) and social practice, it can be noticed how projects for urban regeneration often indicate the nature of socio-ethnic-spatial control over these patterns linked to migration policies. The 'cleansing' campaign for the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin combined repression of 'poverty' and 'urban regeneration'. This concatenation of ethno-racial control has been materialized differently in the urbanized geography. It is linked to the militarization of urban areas, as is the case of the historical immigration zone

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2011; Human-Network Report 2009).

5 In Turin there is an eviction every 60 families – Tenant Association and Assignees; USB, Base Trade-Union, 2012.

6 In Turin I have been working as social worker in the field of migrations, youth and minors since 2000. Here I have conducted a previous research for my Master's dissertation; exploring the relationship between the Municipality services, unaccompanied Moroccan minors, young undocumented migrants and their strategies of survival, or re-making world sense and desires in the urban context.

7 Currently, migrants' dis-sent differs in reaction; as is the case of Refugees and Asylum seekers, who arrive from all parts of Italy and Europe to occupy the abandoned buildings of the former Olympic Village: the ExMoi. Originally aimed at accommodating journalists, but built for 'temporary' use, it has thus led to its present decay, which had started over six years ago. After having been abandoned, it depreciated to a point that the Police Superintendent considered its 'temporary peculiarity' suitable for the hosting of 'the present Humanitarian Emergency' of Refugees in 2013.

8 One of the first building occupied by Asylum seekers and Refugees in Turin dates back to 2008. Nowadays there live about 470 Asylum seekers and Refugees in the so-called ExMoi. In Turin, urban spaces occupied by Asylum seekers and Refugees are more publicized than occupations among other subjects as unemployed Italians and immigrants families. However it is a relevant phenomenon in the current urban landscape. Here, to respect the anonymity of people involved in my research I do not identify areas and streets of the city.

of the Porta Palazzo district, or in Asylum-seeker camps managed by the Red Cross during the so-called 'North Africa emerges'. The growing segregation of urban areas institutionalizes the 'exception's state' (Agamben 1995) set out with the CIE Institution (Centre for Identification and Expulsion)<sup>9</sup>.

This scenario and the contemporaneous global strain to classify migrants in terms of a negative-identity (undocumented, unemployed, homeless, illegal, sans-papiers, false Asylum seekers, displaced persons, etc.) evidence a 'gradual sovereignty' (Ong 2005)<sup>10</sup>. The hierarchism of citizenship and migrants' stratification also takes the form of 'urban displacement'<sup>11</sup>, in terms of been homeless or living in temporary, informal or institutional places<sup>12</sup>. The notion of displacement also evokes the paradoxical contemporaneous continuity between forms of forced displacement among migrants, Refugees and Asylum seekers in Africa and in Europe. The control of mobility is one of the main issue in the current South-North European struggle against migrations, but it is rooted in colonial and postcolonial<sup>13</sup> history, as it was in the case of domestic political and economic concerns of Morocco since its independence<sup>14</sup> (De Haas 2007). Historicizing the present variety of forms of displacement among immigrants in Europe, leads to reflecting on the fact that European migrations didn't only consist in the displacement of human mass through frontiers, but even in displacement of frontiers through human mass (Bade 2001) both in Africa and in Europe. A sort of 'displaced people phenomenology' emerges across the history and geographies.

In Turin, recent gentrification is an ambiguous phe-

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9 The Centre for Identification and Expulsion has been introduced by the immigration law Turco-Napolitano in 1998 with the label of 'Centers for Temporary Permanence'.

10 The author Ong argues that the development of neo-liberal globalization has gone hand in hand with the production of a 'gradual sovereignty', which means the incessant proliferation of zones, territories, populations and entities legally and hierarchically differentiated (2005).

11 To lose the job means to lose the home and the legal residence which represent one the first formal step of inclusion both for Italians and immigrants. However, these latter, once they don't have a residence, continuously live under the threat and the risk of been held in attendance of deportation, even after years of regular working. This often means to adapt to clandestine conditions of life and of inhabiting.

12 Camps, black-market for rentals, apartments offered within temporally limited integration projects, occupied spaces, Detention Centers for Identification and Expulsion, etc.

13 For a deeper analysis on postcolonial studies and critical views in Italy I suggest: Miguel Mellino (2012), 'Cittadinanze postcoloniali. Appartenenze, razza e razzismo in Europa e in Italia, Roma, Carocci.

14 'Ever since independence, the Moroccan state has encouraged emigration from particular regions. This choice was motivated by domestic political and economic concerns' (De Haas 2007: 9).

nomenon culminating in the restructuring of central and ex-novo districts through the assistance of public and private grants; publicized under the pervasive category of 'urban regeneration' (Semi 2004). In this scenario, occupational-dynamics have tried to urge institutions, such as the Municipal Department responsible for inhabiting, migration and the so-called policies for 'peripheries', or the office of the Govern (*Prefettura*) and the Urban Center<sup>15</sup> to act. Activism for 'the home-struggle' is *de facto* functioning as an informal; an alternative to Institutional barriers and Welfare degradation, compensating the institutional vacuum of formal government policies. Through life stories, I will focus on urban-areas in a popular neighborhood with a high density of Italian and immigrant population. Here, activists belonging to an occupied social center, promoting the occupation of abandoned spaces and inhabiting-protagonists for living purposes, are mostly individuals and families of Italians and immigrants with different origins.

### From 'urban displacement' to 're-appropriation'? Imagery and practices

Jasmin<sup>16</sup>, a school-friend of my son, is a four-year-old kid, who has recently moved into an occupied building with her family. This event has taken place as a result of an eviction and after a complex internal transit in-between temporary accommodations. Her father, Sufian, has been working in Italy for fifteen years and could re-unify with his wife from Morocco. Nowadays he is unemployed or temporarily employed and risks losing his legal residence. Moreover, the recent law concerning inhabitation policies<sup>17</sup> criminalizes people who occupy, preventing them access to social housing for five years and the connection with utilities. In winter time, when there's cold weather in Turin and parks are not suitable places where to play with kids, Jasmin has frequently invited me and my children to have a snack at her home.

"This is the ground floor, first entry from outside, we have to be sure that police can't get in ... every door and window must be closed with reinforcements as these iron bars, you see?" (November 2013). When we first met each other, Samira, Jasmin's mother, showed me the apartment. It is composed of a living room with a 'Moroccan-style sofa', carpets, television, the bed room, the toilette and a little kitchen. "[...] my alert is permanent, I study any noise, eve-

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15 Founded in 2005, it is a semi-public structure; rendered possible through the assistance of public (Turin Municipality) and private money (San Paolo Company) to promote citizen-participation with decisions on urban transformations and development. In activists' opinion it doesn't insure plurality, but its implicit purpose is to extinguish the hotbed of protests with the support of technocratic sector and associations.

16 In the paper all names are invented to guarantee the anonymity of people.

17 'Piano casa' which concerns recent amendments to the Decree-Law n. 47 (28 March 2014).

rything can be the sign of somebody presence, somebody may come in from outside, it can be a policeman, it can be a neighbor or anybody else..." (November 2013). In the morning when we meet at school, Samira is often speaking with her relatives and friends in Morocco, by holding the mobile-phone fixed under the veil, she continues her daily activities. Her dream is to return to Morocco because she doesn't feel she has a future in Italy.

Sufian, her husband, contributes actively towards repairing and renovating the building together with other inhabitants. After occupation, every space must be renovated and remodeled (especially so if it had not been built for inhabitation needs, but for other goals as in the case of offices) to be a suitable place, where to live. Usually, these operations need time, workforce and money; inclusive of long periods involving collective and individual working and numerous events to collect money for the benefit of occupied spaces. However, participation depends on subjective interests and it increases when 'home' is perceived as a place, where to plan the future.

In the occupied building, immigrants all have legal status, obtained after long periods of living and working in the city. Nonetheless, during the last few years their economic conditions have deteriorated in some cases concomitantly with their internal family-relationships.

In activists' imagery - mostly Italian - the inhabited building resembles the practice of mutual support; alien to city planning and 'poverty' management policies, a potential place of social justices. However, only a few immigrants represent themselves as activists and interpret variously the sense of occupying, in relation to which position they hold if compared with other inhabitants and activists. Following fragments of dialogues evidence how various status and social positions among inhabitants depend on how multiple, not static social constructs as gender, race, class, religion and nation intersect to each other<sup>18</sup> (Crenshaw 1989). Literature has shown that these notions, particularly 'race' and 'gender', share the common idea of been a 'natural group' (Guillaumin 1995), essentializing the group itself (Delphy 2006; Corossacz 2013), and the individual supposed to belong to it.

In the imagery of Hassan, a friend of mine, the occupying of spaces is a 'dirty' act, characterized by an illegal rather than a political meaning:

"In Morocco 'to occupy' is illegal", Hassan told me,

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18 The author Corossacz argued that the Combahee River Collective (C.R.C.), founded in 1974 in the U.S.A., is considered the pioneering group of black American feminism and the first context within the issue of intersectionality (interlocking) has been theorized as one of different forms of social oppression ("*L'intersezione di razzismo e sessismo. Strumenti teorici per un'analisi della violenza maschile contro le donne nel discorso pubblico sulle migrazioni*", in *Antropologia XV*, Ledizioni, Milano, 2013). Here I interpret this term through the critical view of Elsa Dorlin (2005), who evidenced the need to recognize intersectionality as dynamics and not a fixed process.

sympathizing with the cause, but not occupying. “[...] there’s no political intent in migrants’ purposes here. Anarchism<sup>19</sup> doesn’t exist in our country. Morocco is a regime. If you ‘occupy’, it’s because you feel dirty, with nothing to lose....it’s *haram* (illicit) [...] You do this when your record is criminal and thus already dirty; it means you know the risk! Even a mother with children is aware that she can be deported to Morocco tomorrow.” (March 2011).

This perceived dirtiness contributes towards the fabrication of a reality to be expunged, even though this guy supports the activists’ slogan of a ‘free home for everybody’. After having migrated from Morocco to experience a more ‘democratic’ context, he has been maintaining himself far away from a potential scenario of repression by policemen. However, in the occupation-story of a Moroccan woman; the main reason was for her not to lose her most precious treasure, her daughter; all that remained of her family in Turin after having been abandoned by her husband.

As caregiver to an elderly gentleman, she lost her job when he died. She thus couldn’t pay rent for her apartment, which had been under threat of expropriation by Turin Municipality for over twenty years. Meanwhile, property-owners had abdicated their duties and responsibilities when a pending economical offer of housing-constructions in a new street (never realized) was announced. Once the building had become a no-man’s-land, as an extreme consequence, none of the owners had ensured its heating during last winter.

“I don’t want to become a bitch in the street!”, she told me one day. “That’s why I occupy. I don’t trust social services. I’m afraid they separate me from my baby. Occupying is not right towards people, who make sacrifices to buy their home. [...] In Morocco it’s not allowed, police take you to jail [...] When I first came into my occupied apartment, there was no electricity, no water and my neighbors didn’t let me connect to theirs. We are Moroccan and Tunisian, all Muslim. It doesn’t mean anything! Here there’s no solidarity! They (other inhabitants) treat me like a servant and expect me to do much more cleaning in the building! The Italian woman next to my apartment is too elderly to do cleaning! [...] Everybody takes care of his own interest! Even here, we are all under the threat of police eviction because of no consideration for minors! [...] Months ago, I presented a request to social services for a council house and I certified a 400 Euro income. They told me it was too little. The elderly lady I take care of declared a 600 Euro income. They told me that I could easily pay rent with such money!” (Kadija, January 2013). In the context of occupying, even though originally emanating from the individual’s wish for dignity and from this subject’s rejection of being a subaltern,

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19 The reference to anarchism depends on Hassan’s view, but doesn’t correspond to an evident majority of anarchists among the social movement, which contains different political-belonging.

in the ultimate analysis, it is revealed as a factor of personal decay and community-destruction. Apparently, the subjects themselves contribute towards the fabrication of their oppression, albeit dependent on greatest social dynamics (Bourgeois 1996), as is in the case of Kadija and paradoxical criteria of social services.

From this viewpoint, there are risks of the building turning into private logic and to lose its sense of public utility. On the other side, cooperation prevail when life conditions don’t completely depend on continuous limits, norms, standards and various ‘performances’ required by social services, bureaucrats and those who function as guardians of public order.

On analyzing life-stories, they reveal that internal and micro-dynamics of discrimination based on race, gender and nationality must not be considered as simply having been added to each other, but rather as mutually-shaped constructs, which are embodied by subjects, as anthropologists had shown (Schepher-Hughes, Lock 1987; Csordas1990). Kadija expressed the feeling of pressure, of negative judgment among inhabitants concerning her condition as being a lonely Muslim woman. However, some inhabitants, rather than regarding religion, they make reference to her frequent absence in common events and social life; perceived as a relevant sign of individualism, a stigma in a context of cooperation and activism. Furthermore, to reflect on emerging different practices and imagery among migrant inhabitants, it must be considered that to be a Muslim it doesn’t imply a monolithic and universal religious identity (Osella, Soares 2010). For example, in the case of a Tunisian woman, Hasna, who lives with her children and husband, the open refusal of the Muslim fast precept during Ramadan, in addition to the refusal to use a veil, show a completely different attitude towards religion. Kadija justifies their distancing with the motivation of their national origin. In this regard, reflecting on different colonial and postcolonial processes - as was the case with Moroccan<sup>20</sup> and Tunisian<sup>21</sup> history - can expand the complexity of the elements involved. ‘Secular practices’ of Hasna and her leadership in events produce respect among inhabitants and activists.

Lydia Morris has shown how the current system of civic stratification in Europe (2002) function through

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20 In Morocco during French Protectorate (1912-1956) the power was constructed by a dual system concerning a more conservative attitude towards ‘Moroccan traditions’ and by the ‘modern’ French orientation. The author Hibou describes the genealogy of the duality of colonial power realized by the fiction of an autonomous State of Morocco (« Maroc, d’un conservatisme à l’autre » (pp.123-186) in J.F. Bayart, R. Banégas, R. Bertrand, B. Hibou, F. Mengin, Legs colonial et gouvernance contemporaine, volume 2, Paris, FASOPO, multigr., décembre 2006).

21 In Tunisia French colonial system didn’t result in a dual binary as it was during French Protectorate in Morocco; it was a unique administration (Béatrice Hibou 2006).

different classifications of migrants and asylum seekers. These categorizations correspond to different forms and rights of entry, residence and access to citizenship and can lead to various kinds of memberships. In the context of my field work, a higher, although residual, economic, legal and family stability, resulting from different past experiences of integration and regularization, can increase participation among migrants.

Moreover, perceived failure and success in previous experiences of migration and integration contribute to the construction of the present perception among inhabitants and relationships with activists interweaving with the latter dynamics. In some cases, the desire to resemble activists by demonstrating interests for policies and participating in public events, can lead to internal forms of competition, or can increase the distancing of inhabitants amongst one another. Other aspects to be considered are the internal conflicts between immigrants and Italians, who live in the same occupied building. Some inhabitants complained about an Italian inhabitant, who expressed racist opinions towards migrants' labor and towards their home-conditions depicted as something stolen by 'aliens and invaders'. However, "...he (the Italian man) adapted to eating what he calls a foreign, dirty food in the absence of anything to eat at home!" (October 2013).

Slavoj Žižek has argued that the enigma 'what I am for the other' is the original question of the desire, (2007). In my field-work, desires and affects are continuously produced and transformed within spread dynamics of social rules and structural violence (Farmer 1997) in ways, which are often contradictory and conflictive for subjects. To be under evictions, to be '*povero*' (poor) doesn't necessarily create a sense of belonging and mutual support, but it must rather be seen as a 'political arena' of conflicts and of historical conjunctures. In order to continue coexistence and to desire, so as to measure the significance of their own lives, inhabitants - both immigrants and Italians - continuously value, their image and 'produce' themselves in relation to how they 'imagine the other'.

## Conclusion

The complex and fluid landscape of different forms of belonging, customs and practices among inhabitants doesn't allow for rigid interpretations. In this regard, Elsa Dorlin warned of the risk to transform social positions determined by dominant factors into static positions, and begged not to confuse imposed stigmatized identities with political identities of minority groups (2005). As we have seen, different systems of oppression coexist in daily life at the same time and in the same place (Delphy 2006); on the other side, oppression produce different and simultaneous practices of re-making a world sense, of dis-sent. By not taking part in demonstrations and political activities, expresses, simultaneously so: misrecognition, refusal, a lack of interest, fear, the desire to be invisible at public events and in political

contexts. Moreover, silence can depend on past and present experiences of illegality; it depends on the 'culture of migration' (Reggi 2011); on ways in which social constructions (gender, class, religion, age, nation) are interpreted, embodied and performed by subjects within a spreader context of transnational relationships. To be homeless is not a self-evident political identity, which can legitimize a supposed homogeneous and mono-functional group of people, who will necessarily agree and fight for the same cause. Some migrants had experienced relevant political transformation in their country of origin before migration, but it didn't result into explicit political awareness. As we have seen, bodies and spaces represent places of embodied and historical processes in a complex interlacement of visible and less visible dynamics, power relations, materialized forms of migrants' categorization.

Moreover, as I have tried to evidence in the case of Maghrebi immigrants, religious appurtenance together with contingent conditions re-designate, break or amplify the demarcations between licit and illicit dimensions and *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit) religion categories transform themselves into a subjective viewpoint. Although, in accordance with an Islamic precept, *Haram* is the position of a transgressor, the meaning of transgression changes under the new, social-economic pressure in Turin.

Different imagery regarding the city is raised among migrants and Italians involved in the field. On the one side, the occupied building is a means to escape from a system consisting of forced institutional-sociability described as ghettos. On the other side, micro-power factors (Foucault 1977) re-stimulate and transform migrant interrelationships by generating interstitial spaces for discrimination. A third way is represented by those who interpret the City as a place where to experiment new practices and sociality. Rhetoric of either activists or not, outlines an antagonistic public-system as being un-assisting, racist and dependent on banks. If compared to Italian activists, migrant presence evidence their differing positions when confronted by power. During my participant-not neutral-observation<sup>22</sup>, I could notice emerging forms of social suffering (Kleinman, Das, Locke 1997) in the contradictory relationship between subjective experiences and social processes which surfaces from the imagery and practices of inhabitants. However, tensions and forms of suffering might appear to be remote from the real political struggle, is the result of the intersecting political, economic and institutional powers implied in structural (Farmer 1997) and symbolic forms of violence (Bourdieu 1972; Bourdieu, Wacquant 2004).

To consider urban geographies as social and mental spaces (Lefevre 1991), which produce sociality and specific geographies of citizenship, evidences a continuous process of hierarchism and differentiation of places, a growing distance between citizens

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<sup>22</sup> I openly support the 'home-struggle' during demonstrations and benefit-events.

and non-citizens. However, Italian and immigrants share common conditions in occupied spaces, legal divisions which construct 'natives' and 'aliens' under the distinction between *ius sanguinis*<sup>23</sup> (limited to Italians) and *ius soli* (concerning immigrants) create an irreducible distance between them.

Moreover, it is important to take note that the current 'run to be regular', to be a 'good citizen' among immigrants in Italy, regard both irregular and documented immigrants, 'entrapped within circuits' of welfare, of institutional services. All this is aimed at acquiring 'proof of the regularity of their conditions' as parents, as workers, as inhabitants, as immigrants. These bureaucratic technologies<sup>24</sup> dispose towards the impression that migrants live in a recognizable place (a residence) in the current paradoxical limitations concerning social housing access. In addition, recent forms of criminalizing illegal residences is one of the most oppressive government technologies, which produce effects in every life-dimension<sup>25</sup>. However, as I wish to have evidenced, urban intra-frontiers are not simply a divide and barrier, but rather the representation of an important entity in the social construction of everyday lives (Gielis 2009). To reflect on practices of re-appropriating and of re-functionalizing urban spaces offer a lens through which to observe how migrants' struggle to belong materializes and transforms urban landscape into the current scenario of the housing situation in Italy.

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23 Italian legal system is based on the *ius sanguinis*, under which the rights of citizenship continue to be transmitted through the logic of parental inheritance, the 'right of blood' opposed to *ius soli*, the 'right of territory'.

24 It is interesting to notice that similar dynamics of dependency and 'racial disproportionality' through continuous mandatory performances required by social services and institutions of Welfare emerged in other urban contexts in U.S.A; I particularly refer to the PhD dissertation: "What can I do when I know the system is wrong?" Rappresentazioni delle disuguaglianze nel Child Welfare System a New York City; Viola Castellano, University of Bergamo, 2013.

25 Health; education; legal rights; in a nutshell: the so called integration.

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Davide Olori

# Riprendersi il centro per opporsi alle espulsioni. Il caso degli IRA

## Urban regeneration, Urban practices, Public policies

In order to highlight the antagonistic forces following the implementation of the neoliberal housing policies in Santiago de Chile after the earthquake in 2010, in the following paper it has been analysed the squatting experience in the Franklin district.

Due to the launch of the reconstruction plans by the Chilean Government, the housing policies, based on individual grants, brought about dynamics of spatial injustice with clear effects on the most vulnerable groups in the city. The *Inmuebles Recuperados Por Autogestión* have reopened the discussion on re-appropriation and, through the production of new imaginaries and meanings, they have actively contributed to put the right to the city at the centre of the conflict for the house.

### Introduzione

Il processo di occupazione degli Immobili Recuperati Autogestiti (da ora, IRA) nella città di Santiago del Cile, nasce come risposta a un bisogno puntuale per diventare un'esperienza che problematizza trasversalmente i campi che investe. Per la micro-dimensione del fenomeno, la descrizione di queste occupazioni non vuole costituirsi come l'interpretazione di un *trend* generalizzabile: se da un lato sono presenti i segni caratteristici che stanno investendo la società cilena e forse latinoamericana, dall'altro la limitatezza quantitativa e la singolarità degli IRA, li rende un laboratorio specifico finora non ripetuto. Quel che è certo è che, forse proprio per la novità che rappresentano, emergono elementi innovativi che rimescolano gli immaginari frutto delle pratiche agite dagli attori sociali. Appaiono evidenti, in altre parole, le dimensioni problematizzate delle relazioni sociali e politiche degli individui che prendono parte ai processi di riappropriazione degli IRA, delle famiglie, di ex e nuovi vicini di casa, delle organizzazioni politiche coinvolte etc. e tutto ciò rende quest'esperienza di occupazione abitativa un *casus* di studio che trascende la sua singolarità relazionandosi al discorso sulla ri-appropriazione e investendo la produzione di immaginari e significati legati al *diritto alla città*.

L'urgenza delle occupazioni post-terremoto ha fatto sì che il processo aggregasse organizzazioni in-

formali (vicinato, parentela, lavorative) con alcune formali (movimento politico, partitiche) generando dinamiche di frattura e ricomposizione tra interessi, gerarchie e relazioni; la caratteristica di classe ha *territorializzato* le pratiche risignificando la spazialità degli immobili occupati, visti come componenti vivi nel processo –capaci di invitare e/o circoscrivere le pratiche–; la politicizzazione dell'emergenza ha scoperto bruscamente il discorso sul *diritto alla città*, rilanciando il progetto antagonista nel contesto abitativo da un nuovo punto di vista e ri-politicizzando le necessità abitative dei senza casa di un quartiere popolare, ma allo stesso tempo ha evidenziato i numerosi limiti delle avanguardie e delle organizzazioni politiche. Spesso l'organicità rispetto al movimento politico degli autori che hanno scritto sul fenomeno degli IRA ha fatto sì che il racconto mettesse in luce la portata innovativa e la dialettica politica del progetto, dimenticando alcune significative micro e macro dinamiche che interessassero temi meno evidenti: questo *paper* prova a sottolineare l'importanza degli IRA nel contesto delle lotte urbane anche alla luce della complessità delle dinamiche che impegnano le esperienze di chi occupa dopo un terremoto.

### La produzione dell'habitat in Cile

Come ben illustrato dai saggi di David Harvey (Harvey 2005) e della Klein (Klein 2007), da cinquant'anni l'obiettivo delle politiche pubbliche cilene in tema

abitativo è favorire le soluzioni offerte dal mercato privato, relegando lo Stato al ruolo di finanziatore della domanda secondo il modello d'intervento liberista. Come afferma Harvey queste logiche generano un processo di trasformazione in cui i governi locali, generalmente promuovono l'attivazione e la riproduzione dei capitali finanziari nella città, grazie alle politiche di alleanza tra i soggetti pubblici e privati che facilitano l'ingresso di investimenti finanziari nei mercati immobiliari locali. (Harvey 1989).

Il modello, in cui le soluzioni abitative sono delegate all'industria immobiliare privata attraverso il finanziamento di buoni statali diretti alla domanda, si poggia su una solida tradizione istituzionale e fu implementato per l'eradicazione delle *poblaciones* dai limiti urbani durante la dittatura. Il fenomeno popolare dell'autocostruzione abitativa ha radici antiche nella storia delle città latinoamericane (*favelas* brasiliane, *arrabal* guatemalteco, *villas* argentine, *pueblos jóvenes* peruviano etc) e in Cile prendono il nome di *poblaciones* popolarmente conosciute col termine *callampas*. Il fenomeno subisce una politicizzazione, nella concezione classica del termine, quando negli anni '50 del novecento incontra le ideologie progressiste che introducono elementi di rivendicazione nelle pratiche di coloro che occupano terreni a scopo abitativo. Durante la breve esperienza del governo Allende (1970-73), l'obiettivo della politica governativa diventa quello di evitare le *tomas* (occupazioni dei terreni) attraverso programmi di urbanizzazione previa l'assegnazione degli spazi da destinare all'autocostruzione delle case. In questo modo il progetto mira a legalizzare, ordinare urbanisticamente ed evitare di dover risolvere i problemi di sanificazione e urbanistici, ad edificazione già avvenuta. In Cile, che come gli altri paesi latinoamericani è interessato negli anni '70 dall'operazione statunitense "Condor", questo processo (al pari di tutti gli altri) subisce una battuta d'arresto con il colpo di Stato di A. Pinochet che imprime un'impronta fortemente neo-liberale al mercato immobiliare e alle politiche abitative (Harvey 2005).

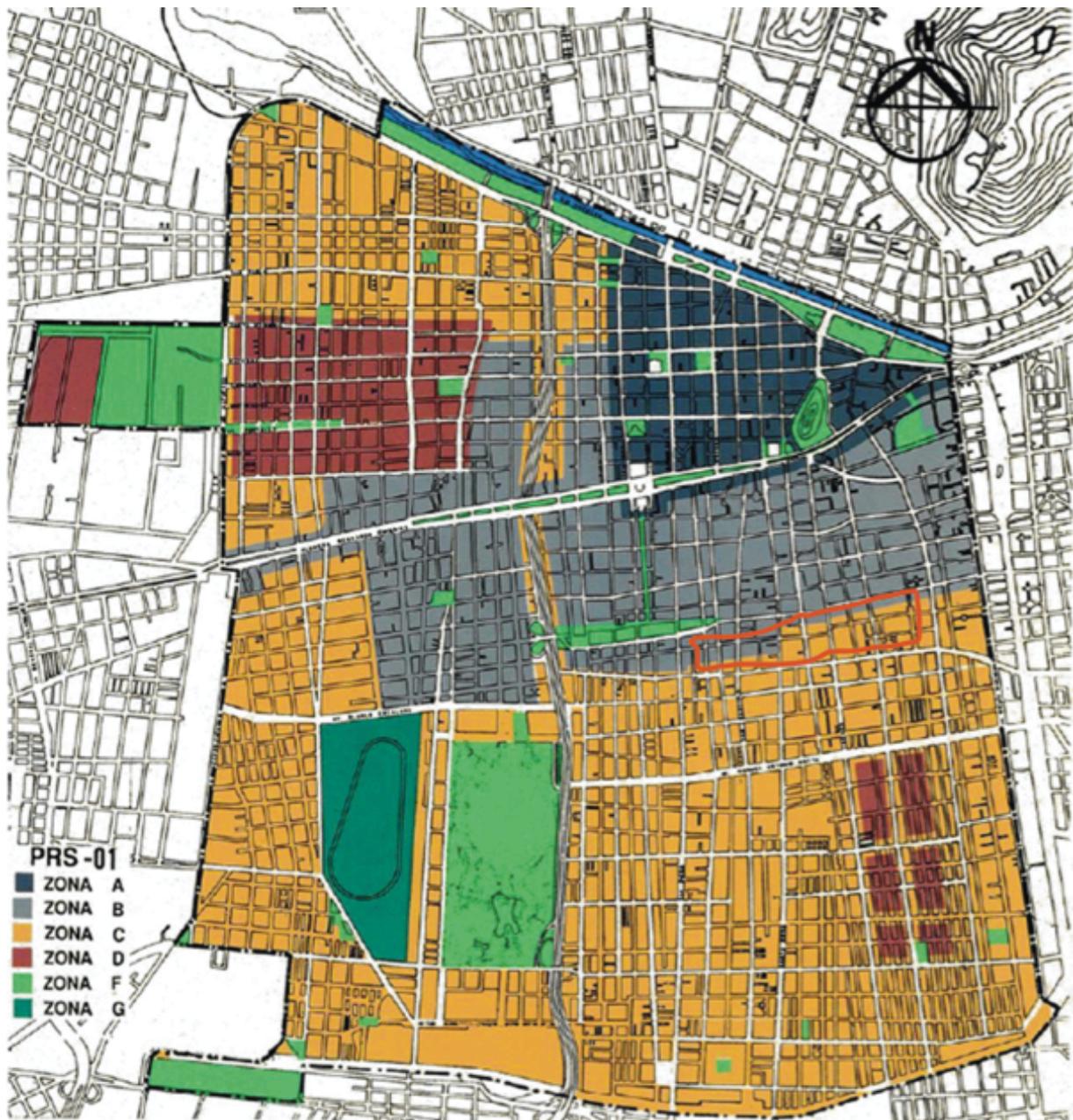
Il governo, guidato dai principi dei Chicago Boys (Klein 2007) avvierà inoltre un programma di sgombero delle *tomas* illegali che avevano dato un importante contributo di sangue durante la breve resistenza al *golpe*, e che si configuravano come un problema rilevante in termini politici, di sicurezza e urbani. Anche per questa ragione il processo di eliminazione e deportazione delle *poblaciones* urbane fuori i confini della città sarà accompagnato da una feroce repressione contro le organizzazioni di *pobladores*.

Come fa notare Sungraynes negli stessi anni, nel resto del continente avvenivano processi simili senza garanzie minime per le famiglie sgomberate, e le deportazioni avvenivano seguendo il motto "la città è di chi se la merita" dell'intendente della città di Buenos Aires (Ozlack 1991). Il Cile al contrario consolidava il sussidio abitativo per almeno due diverse ragioni: da un lato perseguiva la sua storica - e anomala nel contesto latinoamericano - tradizione di Stato inter-

ventista in ambito abitativo con la funzione di stabilizzare un mercato, quello immobiliare, che si caratterizzava per pericolosi alti e bassi potenzialmente destabilizzanti per il precario quadro macro-economico del paese (Sugranyes 2014); dall'altro mirava alla pacificazione e normalizzazione della Capitale con l'obiettivo di disattivare le possibili resistenze politiche che si attivavano durante processi simili. Durante i vent'anni di dittatura, la marginalizzazione dei settori popolari urbani crebbe di pari passo con la repressione militare dei movimenti sociali con poche eccezioni, quali le *poblaciones* storiche consolidate (La Victoria, La Bandera etc) che rappresentavano delle isole socio-politiche all'interno del contesto urbano della metropoli.

Con il passaggio al regime democratico e la stabilizzazione economica, il processo urbano sopra accennato si acutizza dimostrando che il mercato espelle le fasce sociali più deboli dalla città almeno quanto l'esercito (Renna 2011). La politica abitativa durante gli anni della *Concertación* (1990/2010) aderisce alla strategia liberale del sussidio abitativo, rafforzandolo: stavolta l'obiettivo è il contrasto alla povertà estrema, ma i risultati, socialmente parlando, simili. Grazie a questo meccanismo il sistema abitativo cileno è riuscito a garantire un tetto alla maggior parte della popolazione edificando due milioni di case in un paese di 16 milioni d'abitanti; secondo le statistiche ONU-Habitat circa lo 0,9% dei cileni vive nelle *poblaciones* contro una media continentale che oscilla tra il 10 e il 50% (Rodriguez, Sugranyes 2005).

Come da più parti evidenziato, tali politiche hanno provato a risolvere un problema generandone un altro ben più grande: la marginalizzazione delle fasce sociali più povere ha avuto conseguenze disastrose sulle stesse inaugurando la stagione de '*los con techo*', cioè il dramma abitativo di chi aveva ottenuto una casa legalmente, con scarsissimi vantaggi e sostanziale peggioramento della qualità della vita (deterioramento delle condizioni dell'habitat, marginalizzazione, stigmatizzazione, espulsione dalla città etc) (ivi). I movimenti di lotta per la casa in quel periodo hanno adattato la strategia alla negoziazione istituzionale (con un governo ampio, sostanzialmente 'amico', in un clima di diffusa pace sociale), di fatto abbandonando le pratiche illegali di occupazione dei terreni (con il concreto rischio di estremizzazione dei fenomeni abusivi ad alcune categorie marginali dei settori poveri che non riuscivano ad accedere ai programmi governativi). Dal 2000 in poi il dibattito delle organizzazioni extra-parlamentari, accompagnato dagli studi critici accademici, ha rimesso in discussione la pratica dei sussidi abitativi riconoscendo il peggioramento delle condizioni di vita, a partire proprio dal conseguimento di un tetto in periferia. Si è presentato con forza il tema del *vivienda digna* (letteralmente la 'casa degna'). Negli stessi anni il *Movimiento Pobladores* rilancia la necessità di occupare terreni non periferici con una serie di occupazioni nel comune di Peñalolén, Santiago. Il percorso viene stroncato con metodi così persuasivi da scoraggia-



**Fig.1** Piano regolatore di Santiago, 1990.  
 Zona A. triangolo centrale; B. espansione del centro; C. sviluppo misto; D. residenziale; F. area verde; G. area verde private. Marcata con linea rossa, l'area di Santa Isabel.  
 Fonte: MinVu, Ministero de Vivienda y Urbanismo (Chile). Elaborazione: Daniel Meza Corvalán.

re il proseguimento del percorso politico, sebbene gli eventi diano una scossa al sistema istituzionale, che opera una superficiale revisione dei programmi (Renna 2011). A Santiago del Cile non si verificano occupazioni di terreni, politicamente rivendicate fino all'episodio degli IRA, nonostante i processi che manifestano le inuguaglianze nel tessuto urbano continuano ad approfondirsi e moltiplicarsi.

### **Mercato dei sussidi e dinamiche di gentrificazione nella capitale**

Se le politiche abitative hanno riguardato l'intero territorio nazionale, la metropoli santiaguena ha mostrato i segni più evidenti di questi fenomeni urbani. Tra questi vogliamo porre l'accento su quello di gentrificazione per avvicinarci al discorso sugli IRA e sull'opposizione sociale contro gli allontanamenti dal quartiere.

Come ricordato da Inzulza, il modello di economia urbana classica di Burgess stabilisce che ogni zona circolare consolidata può generare una pressione sui suoi residenti e sul valore d'uso del suolo che loro rappresentano, nella zona circolare adiacente ubicata all'esterno. Nel comparare questo modello alla schematizzazione della città di Santiago, e riconoscendo in questi una similarità, l'autore specifica – a proposito del concetto di gentrificazione – che più che la pressione di un gruppo specifico di residenti, la gentrificazione può essere intesa a Santiago come una acquisizione corposa, ad opera di operatori del libero mercato, di suolo urbano adatto all'edificazione di edifici che si sviluppano in altezza (Inzulza Contardo 2014). Si noti, infatti, che identificando nelle due tipologie specifiche di abitazioni destinate a nuovi residenti, cioè i *condominios cerrados* e i grattacieli, i secondi sono cresciuti con una media del 73% in cinque anni, con alcuni picchi nel settore centrale e orientale e nella zona prossima al *Eje Alameda Bernardo O'Higgins*, cioè l'arteria principale della città.

Queste dinamiche che il governo municipale ha nominato di Espansione del Centro, e che sono prodotto di un piano di politiche urbanistiche che negli anni '90 miravano al ripopolamento del settore centrale coincidendo con il consolidamento della domanda della classe media, sono arrivate a superare la produzione immobiliare residenziale della maggior parte delle concentrazioni di produzione immobiliare della regione, intensificando al contempo un processo storico di espulsione delle classi popolari presenti nell'area già da inizio novecento.

Questo sviluppo ha profondamente inciso sul quartiere Franklin - attraversato dalla vicenda degli IRA -, uno storico settore popolare che ospita il più importante mercato agroalimentare della città, a ridosso dei grattacieli di Santa Isabel nel municipio di Santiago Centro, area che presenta un avanzato sviluppo di gentrificazione [fig. 1.1 e 1.2].

### **Ricostruzione e accelerazione dei processi urbani**

Ad aggravare questo processo, che ha un ruolo fondamentale nel complesso di ragioni scatenanti che ha mosso le occupazioni abitative IRA, è occorso il terremoto del 27 Febbraio 2010 che ha colpito gli antichi residenti e accelerato quei processi di espulsione e gentrificazione nominati.

Il 27 Febbraio del 2010 (da ora, 27F) un terremoto con magnitudo 8,8 scuote le regioni centrali del Cile. La scossa, verificatasi a largo dell'oceano Pacifico, genera uno tsunami che investe centinaia di chilometri di costa. Nell'area colpita si contano due aree metropolitane, 5 città con oltre 100.000 abitanti, 45 che superano i 5000 abitanti e circa un migliaio di abitati rurali o costieri. Il numero di abitazioni inagibili arriva a toccare quota 370.051 per due milioni di terremotati (su una popolazione di 15) dei quali l'83% appartenente ai due quintili socio-economicamente più poveri. Alla tragedia naturale segue il disastro sociale: dopo le prime giornate in cui si verificano casi di violenza e saccheggi, viene dichiarato il primo stato d'assedio. Dal Golpe del 1973 è la prima volta che il paese vede tornare i militari ad occupare le strade per un prolungato coprifuoco che durerà fino a tre mesi.

Il piano di ricostruzione del governo (che è tuttora in essere) è consistito nell'implementare i programmi di politiche abitative già esistenti, con nuovi e corposi finanziamenti pubblici destinati a sussidi abitativi per i terremotati. Tale meccanismo ha comportato, se si fa riferimento al solo dato aggregato, l'accelerazione di quelle dinamiche d'esclusione territoriale che nelle metropoli e nelle città medie latinoamericane sono già in essere sostanzialmente sofferti dai settori vulnerabili dell'ambiente urbano. In merito al ragionamento che stiamo affrontando, preme evidenziare, tra le differenti dinamiche di esclusione socio-territoriale, quella dell'espulsione dei soggetti appartenenti ai settori socio-economici più deboli dai propri habitat urbani di riferimento (spesso zone centrali o urbanisticamente appetibili) verso le nuove lontanissime periferie (Rodriguez, Sugranyes 2005).

È importante soffermarsi sulle procedure di finanziamento per focalizzare le conseguenze sociali della ricostruzione e comprendere come l'occupazione illegale si trasformi in un'alternativa concreta: il meccanismo dei *buoni statali* ha conseguenze soprattutto per le categorie vulnerabili del territorio devastato dagli eventi naturali, sia nei vissuti personali sia in quelli collettivi.

Senza voler entrare nel dibattito circa l'opportunità di non rinnovare gli strumenti istituzionali per affrontare situazioni fuori dal comune come un disastro, gli strumenti della politica abitativa cilena hanno aumentato esponenzialmente le proprie problematiche nel contesto del 27F.

Il meccanismo del finanziamento per i terremotati ha presentato problematiche già in fase di selezione: in primo luogo sono state dichiarate idonee ai finanziamenti solo le famiglie che sono riuscite a dimostrare di vivere nella casa danneggiata formalmente



**Fig.2** Casona Protectora; progetto IRA – Franklin. Fonte: GoogleMap. Elaborazione: Daniel Meza Corvalán.



**Fig.3** Localizzazione degli IRA; Quartiere Franklin, Santiago Centro – Area Metropolitana. Fonte: GoogleMap.

al momento del disastro, ottenendo un “certificato di terremotato”, trascurando da un lato le difficoltà di rispondere a processi burocratici durante l'emergenza e il difficile accesso al dispositivo dei certificati per alcuni gruppi sociali, dall'altro le forme dell'abitare non formali come gli *allegados* (famiglie ospiti di amici o parenti) etc. e in generale i non proprietari; un ulteriore ostacolo è stata la burocratizzazione degli aiuti che non ha riconosciuto le modalità di convivenza nelle condizioni pre-emergenza (es: altri legami al di fuori della famiglia legale, o vincolando il certificato al *sitio damnificado*, cioè ogni area abitativa danneggiata, e non ai nuclei familiari presenti); non viene inoltre riconosciuta la posizione nella città nel momento dell'emergenza, ne' attribuito un valore all'habitat; viene deliberatamente trascurato il sistema sociale del quartiere etc. Volendo però soffermarci solo su queste ultime questioni, e trascurando le problematiche accennate e che è possibile imputare all'inadeguatezza degli strumenti in contesti emergenziali, è chiaro come il sussidio abitativo familiare post-terremoto sia un potente meccanismo per disarticolare il tessuto sociale dei settori vulnerabili colpiti.

Se infatti trascuriamo il progetto che il MinVU (*Ministero de la Vivienda y Urbanismo*) ha stipulato con la CChC (Camera Cilena della Costruzione) riguardante la ricostruzione nel proprio sito per i proprietari dei terreni, che ha riguardato un potenziale bacino d'utenza di 20.000 terremotati (cioè circa il 5% del totale e che spesso non è stata sfruttato a causa delle condizioni poste), la maggior parte di coloro che sono ricorsi ai progetti dello Stato hanno dovuto valersi delle soluzioni abitative lontane dal luogo della città che precedente occupavano. La ricostruzione in questo senso ha generato vere e proprie accelerazioni dei movimenti di popolazione dentro le città, dove i settori popolari sono stati al centro dei processi di vulnerabilizzazione socio-spaziale. (Sugranyes, Morales, Aravena 2014).

### **IRA e resistenza alle espulsioni**

E' importante abbozzare un quadro dei processi urbani innescati dalle politiche pubbliche abitative e accelerate dai processi di ricostruzione, per capire il contesto in cui nascono gli IRA. Sebbene Santiago del Chile sia stata limitatamente toccata dai danni che hanno investito con forza altre città, nella Capitale alcune zone specifiche con caratteristiche costruttive omogenee sono state colpite violentemente dal terremoto. Tra questi alcune abitazioni del quartiere Franklin, le case popolari della Villa Olimpica, le case in *adobe* del quartiere Yungay etc. hanno costituito una vera e propria emergenza per centinaia di famiglie, principalmente in situazioni socio-economicamente svantaggiate. Tale dinamica si è manifestata con forza nel quartiere Franklin, che come abbiamo visto nel precedente capitolo affrontava già un processo di gentrificazione. Proprio qui, alcuni degli abitanti che avevano sofferto il peggioramento delle condizioni abitative, cominciano un percorso politico contro le soluzioni abitative proposte e le

conseguenti espulsioni dal quartiere. Per loro sarebbe stato impossibile risituarsi nella zona poiché nel corso del processo d'espansione della città l'antico quartiere popolare è stato inghiottito dal processo di valorizzazione del suolo dell'area centrale.

Il processo assembleare dei senza casa approda alla strategia delle occupazioni per risolvere l'urgenza abitativa senza dover lasciare il quartiere: nascono così gli Immobili Recuperati Autogestiti (IRA) un progetto politico che mette in discussione l'urbistica emergenziale, individua soluzioni abitative immediate e ridà centralità alla questione della marginalizzazione forzata. Tre edifici storici del patrimonio pubblico dismesso del quartiere Franklin vengono occupati e resi abitabili grazie all'auto-riparazione e all'autogestione. L'occupazione è rivendicata dalla *Fe.Na.Po* (*Federación Nacional Pobladores*).

### **Politicizzazione e conflitto: dinamiche interne ed esterne**

Dopo il terremoto alcune decine di famiglie del quartiere Franklin, che si trovano in condizioni abitative proibitive e che avrebbero avuto un complicato (o nullo) accesso ai sussidi per il terremoto, avviano un percorso politico assembleare che si formalizza con la creazione del *Movimiento Pobladores en Lucha* – quartiere Franklin (MPL – Franklin), un movimento che lavora soprattutto nel comune di Peñalolen, legato al *Partido Igualdad*, un partito extra-parlamentare d'ispirazione marxista. Dalle assemblee emerge con forza il tema della posizione all'interno della città: la scelta di difendere il diritto di rimanere nel quartiere, a prescindere dalle proprie possibilità economiche, scaturisce da un processo partecipato e sofferto. La maggior parte dei lavoratori della fiera non sono sindacalizzati e il quartiere non si caratterizza per una storia politica combattiva; quasi nessuno aveva preso parte, prima di allora, a un'assemblea politica (Gutiérrez 2012). Eppure la minaccia di trasferirsi nell'infinita periferia santiaghena, perdere l'accessibilità e la vicinanza al luogo di lavoro, la prossimità alle scuole pubbliche di qualità del centro, di perdere un'importante quota di capitale sociale etc. fa sì che un gruppo consolidato rivendichi politicamente non solo il diritto a un tetto, ma soprattutto, come indica lo slogan dell'assemblea, il diritto a un *techo digno* cioè degno di essere vissuto. In questo frangente, quello di costruzione dell'immaginario, va soprattutto evidenziato il legame tra la attività lavorativa, il territorio e l'appartenenza di classe: questo mix difficilmente riproducibile, in cui le peculiarità del mestiere influiscono su orari e tempi di vita allo stesso modo in cui incidono su salari e mobilità, ha fortemente territorializzato il discorso degli IRA.

L'assemblea, guidata dai militanti del MPL, mette in luce una molteplicità di criticità del sistema abitativo fondato sui sussidi: la mancanza di risposte per i terremotati non proprietari, per i proprietari poveri, la questione delle espulsioni e del processo di allontanamento, la gentrificazione dei quartieri popolari

centrali, la speculazione immobiliare legata al mercato del suolo urbano, il ruolo degli attori privati nel mercato della ricostruzione, il tema dell'accessibilità (la peculiarità degli orari lavorativi del comparto fieristico rende il problema del trasporto pubblico oggettivo) il tema della stigmatizzazione e delle periferie, etc. Alcune di queste travalicano la questione emergenziale per mettere in discussione l'intero modello dei sussidi abitativi: come afferma Gutiérrez in un lavoro sulle traiettorie individuali di politicizzazione negli IRA, i vicini che si organizzano, superano quella che Laclau definisce *demanda democrática* e costruiscono, volontariamente o meno, una *demanda* collettiva di carattere popolare cioè che articola diversi elementi che corrispondono a distinte necessità (Gutiérrez 2012).

Nel momento in cui, conclusosi negativamente il percorso di negoziazione con le autorità, l'assemblea passa all'occupazione di alcuni stabili di proprietà dello Stato i soggetti che vivevano il percorso assembleare si trovano in brevissimo al centro del discorso politico nazionale, in un vortice improvviso di produzione di significati e di immaginari. S'incontrano/scontrano con il linguaggio dei movimenti extra-parlamentari, dei media, delle istituzioni, della politica: ne scaturisce una dinamica alterna che dà luogo a rafforzamenti e sfaldamenti dell'assemblea, tensioni che incidono su relazioni familiari, amicali, di lavoro etc. Va segnalato infatti che sebbene al momento iniziale oltre 120 famiglie decidano di aderire al Comitato di lotta, in realtà circa 30 partecipano alla strategia delle occupazioni: questo perché la lotta e il conflitto diventano elementi costitutivi dei percorsi individuali di politicizzazione degli occupanti degli IRA (Gutiérrez 2012).

Sul disciplinamento dell'organizzazione incide fortemente l'impronta dei militanti dell'MPL che partecipano all'assemblea: *ley seca* (interdizione di alcool e droghe), organizzazione politico-militare (quadri, dirigenti etc), ore di lavoro gratuite comunitarie, carattere obbligatorio delle attività comunitarie etc regolano la vita delle tre casone storiche occupate nel quartiere Franklin. Da subito la linea dell'assemblea di gestione degli IRA è chiara e mira alla legalizzazione, attraverso l'abbattimento delle case storiche e l'edificazione (attraverso una cooperativa costituita dagli stessi occupanti) di un nuovo complesso abitativo: in questo modo riallacciano, idealmente e praticamente, il discorso politico dell'occupazione di terreni per l'autocostruzione abitativa lasciato in sospeso negli anni '70, rilanciando sul tema della posizione nella città.

Contemporaneamente sono costretti ad affrontare un nodo importante, quale quello del patrimonio storico pubblico: quest'oggetto del discorso, cioè la qualità dell'immobile e la sua presenza nello spazio rappresenta un argomento poco esplorato perfino nel dibattito accademico, occupato dalla copiosa produzione degli intellettuali legati al movimento *Igualdad*. Da una parte va detto che in Cile la pratica politica delle occupazioni di edifici costruiti è sostanzialmente inesistente (o marginale), contro

la diffusa storica e rivendicata dai movimenti di lotta per la casa, occupazione di terreni. Dall'altro va sottolineata l'incidenza di una mentalità politica che subordina l'interesse storico patrimoniale a quello funzionale dell'organizzazione. Il tema dell'abbattimento rappresenta, infatti, un problema soprattutto alla luce della produzione di significati che il tema del patrimonio storico ha rivestito nella lotta contro la speculazione edilizia post-terremoto. Va segnalato a proposito che i movimenti di lotta territoriali (casa, quartiere, habitat etc.) hanno recentemente riscoperto in funzione politica il tema del patrimonio materiale storico: affiancando una sensibilità intellettuale, è partita una mobilitazione per il patrimonio edificato storico che, dal quartiere Brazil-Yungay, si è diffusa in breve nella Capitale. Questo *frame* ha rivestito sempre maggiore importanza nell'opposizione alla speculazione edilizia (anche post-terremoto) nei quartieri santiagheni e non (si pensi a Valparaíso, sebbene parlarne come fenomeno nazionale o regionale sia prematuro).

Anche se va riconosciuto che le casone IRA rappresentano, come isole di storia tra i grattacieli, vestigia di un'architettura antica stravolta dalla rinnovazione urbana che ha investito la zona, quindi prive di quell'habitat che invece diventa centrale nella retorica del patrimonio culturale, è legittimo considerare l'esistenza, in questo senso, di una contraddizione in seno al movimento plurale di lotta territoriale. Sebbene quanto detto, insieme ad altri fattori, contribuisca a uno dei nodi meno chiari dell'esperienza dell'IRA, cioè il rapporto col costruito e il suo intorno, è proprio questa caratteristica che (bruscamente) riaccende il dibattito sulla questione del patrimonio pubblico storico dismesso riproponendo l'interessante dicotomia tra le necessità di chi occupa e le caratteristiche (di fruizione) del luogo occupato, tematica ancora oggi non abbastanza sviscerata nel discorso latinoamericano. Nonostante la progettualità del movimento di lotta per la casa, ad oggi, dopo tre anni di occupazione, due *Casonas* sono ancora in piedi e la Rete IRA lavora per la costruzione di 90 alloggi per famiglie occupanti.

### Considerazioni

Il lavoro presentato è frutto di alcune considerazioni mosse dall'interesse comune con una ricerca sul campo che dura – a fasi alterne – dal 2010, e che ha riguardato lo studio della ricostruzione post-terremoto e maremoto con particolare attenzione alle dinamiche che interessano le categorie socio-vulnerabili. Il caso degli IRA, sebbene marginale nella ricerca complessiva, è esemplare sia perché i vissuti dei protagonisti materializzano quei processi d'esclusione nominati, sia perché la reazione rappresenta un'alternativa *presente* all'accettazione dei processi di trasferimento della città liberale, una produzione di senso e di azione sull'urbano. Allo stesso tempo ci permette d'indagare la centralità del valore identitario d'appartenenza alle categorie lavorative e territoriali che si sovrappongono, e il loro ruolo giocato nella disputa contro il mercato immobiliare.



Fig.4 Casona Protectora, in secondo piano un edificio recente. Fonte: elaborazione propria.



Fig.5 Area Santa Isabel – Franklin. Fonte: LaTercera.

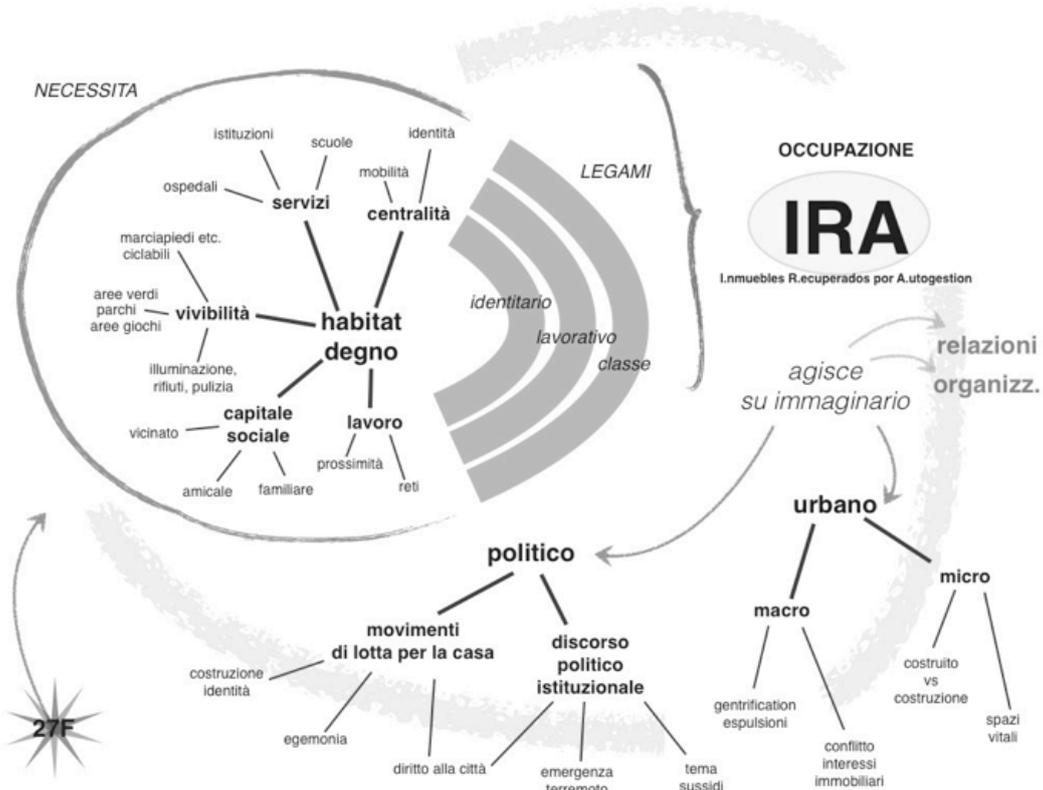


Fig.6 Processo IRA.

Gli IRA, nonostante le tensioni conflittuali interne (durante il processo di politicizzazione e formalizzazione delle pratiche), ed esterne (il rapporto con i movimenti che operano sul territorio e con le istituzioni), rappresentano il contributo principale alla questione abitativa cilena degli ultimi dieci anni: il superamento della dinamica assistenzialista per il rilancio – attraverso la pratica risignificata delle occupazioni abitative - della lotta all'ingiustizia spaziale e contro le espulsioni. Rappresentano altresì un'occasione fondamentale per affrontare le contraddizioni che un'esperienza tale mette in campo, dalla sperimentazione di modelli economici cooperativistici alle dinamiche di disciplinamento interno, dalla relazione con le istituzioni al doppio discorso legale/illegale. In questo quadro una questione più delle altre merita attenzione in merito al tema pubblico/collettivo: sebbene il discorso politico universalistico configga con una pratica di parte, è proprio questa forzatura a rappresentare la vera chiave di volta dell'esperienza degli IRA. Una città degna per tutti passa attraverso un momento conflittuale (proprio come nella retorica rivoluzionaria) fatto di ri/appropriazioni che spesso significano conquiste.

Nella città neoliberale esiste una tensione costante, dove alcune categorie subiscono gli interessi economici del mercato. Quando parte di queste riconquistano la propria soggettività c'è il concreto *rischio* che si organizzino per rispondere alle proprie esigenze, rimettendo in campo una pratica violenta di conquista e sottrazione di spazi: in questo modo vengono danneggiati taluni interessi, spesso di grandi corporazioni economiche o di speculatori, per soddisfarne altri.

In definitiva uno dei contributi più importanti dell'esperienza degli IRA, probabilmente, sta nell'aver palesato la necessità di rimettere in discussione il tema del suolo pubblico e del *diritto alla città* oltre le retoriche universalistiche, riaffermando l'universalismo al di là delle retoriche.

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Elena Maranghi

# Is it all about neoliberalism? Exploring the notions of ‘public’ and ‘common’ as references for grassroots organizations. Insights from Milan

Urban practices, Welfare, Public policies

This article aims to offer a critical point of view on the concept of ‘self-organization’ within a neoliberal framework, questioning the ability of self-organized grassroots movement to preserve their role of continuously restructuring the space of ‘the political’ (Rancière, 2003), core of the democratic relationship between society and institutions. The first part of this paper focuses on how neoliberalism transformed the process of self-organization into ‘self-regulation’. Such a shift is part of the changes that affected the Welfare State, especially by the promotion of the rhetoric of self-responsibility and ‘activation’ of individuals in production of their own welfare, excising, with the help of governmental devices, generative political conflict.

Referring to the context of Milan, particularly interesting in terms of neoliberalization of welfare policies, the second part of this paper reflects on how grassroots organizations, whose aim has always been the one of producing ‘political’ spaces of interaction for the definition of public welfare policies, relate with the framework of analysis that has been described above; especially questioning their reference either to the discourse of ‘public good’ or ‘common good’ (related to the discourse on ‘the Commons’) and how this distinction influences their practices, stressing problematic issues and potentialities of these differences.

## 1. Self-regulation and the Welfare State: a neoliberal framework

In an article published in 2012 on the French magazine ‘M3-Société urbaine et action publique’, Milan is suggested to be a city that spontaneously produces its own regulation and government (Galimberti 2012)<sup>1</sup>. The existence of a widespread net

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1 «Milan, capitale économique d’Italie et ville non gouvernée : voilà ce qui retient l’attention des observateurs étrangers. La ville de Milan et la région urbaine qui l’entoure sont l’archétype du développement économique italien de l’après-seconde guerre mondiale. Elle résulte des efforts et de l’action d’une multitude d’acteurs - grands groupes, autoentrepreneurs, PME, banques locales, fondations et associations - guidés par ce sentiment commun que le sociologue italien Giuseppe De Rita identifiait dans un article du Corriere della Sera d’avril 2012 comme l’antique esprit de far da sé (faire par soi-même) Milan est une ville au pouvoir polycentrique, dominée par les autonomies fonctionnelles (chambre de commerce, fondations bancaires, universités). Elle a adopté un modèle de fondé sur des mécanismes d’autorégulation et de subsidiarité horizontale, aussi bien dans la sphère du développement économique que dans la sphère sociale. Milan a été une ville au tissu productif et social très diversifié (en termes de secteurs d’activités, de types d’emplois), garante d’une certaine cohésion sociale. Cette situation lui a permis, au cours des années 1980, d’accompagner le passage d’une économie fordiste à une économie de la connais-

of associations and the tendency towards a great participation of civil society in the public debate, characterizes Milan by what could be called a ‘pre-disposition’ to self-organization. This characteristic could be connected with a consolidate development of the Third Sector as a key actor within the public policies’ arena; a development that may result problematic within the wider tendency of public welfare’s collapse, and its re-orientation towards a process of privatization of public services and ‘managerialization’ of the Public Administration.

A considerable amount of literature has been produced in the last decades, especially within the field of social sciences, regarding the mayor changes which invested the Welfare State and, broadly, the relationship between the State and its citizens. Some authors (for instance, Brenner, Peck, Theodore 2010) believe that the neoliberal expansion has radically affected the relationship that traditionally related States and citizens, developed through the expression of public interest and the redistribution of incomes, and pursued through the delivery of material and immaterial welfare services, provided by the State. Several factors, both economical and sociological, have affected, in the last decades, the ability

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sance et tertiaire avancée, sans traumatisme majeur» (Galimberti 2012: 59).

of States to provide welfare services; those factors are connected on one hand to a crisis of legitimacy of political representation which deeply affected the definition of 'public interest'; on the other hand to a crisis of efficiency (above all, fiscal efficiency) of public welfare's traditional institutions (Archibugi 2000; Luzzi 2009; Colombo 2012).

The development of Neoliberalism has taken advantage from this critical situation, and has deeply influenced the transformation of the Welfare State towards privatization, promoting the idea that individuals should be 'free' from State's interventions.

In all the European countries, where the so called 'social model' had developed, during the last decades a consistent reform of the Welfare State re-oriented to privatization and market economy (welfare mix), has been produced, relying on the promotion of market (or 'social market') as an actor that could better understand, interpret and satisfy individual's needs. In addition, the role of civil society, Third Sector and 'communities' has been progressively considered crucial in collectively responding to 'social needs', through the construction of a 'welfare society'.

### 1.1 The ambiguity of 'activation'

According to several critics, «[...]the expression 'welfare society' could be considered not only *integrative*<sup>2</sup> and *complementary*<sup>3</sup> to that of the 'Welfare State' but it would become even *antinomic*<sup>4</sup> to the latter: for the welfare society to exist it is necessary that first the Welfare State in one way or another is 'destroyed'» (Archibugi 2000: 177). In other words, the promotion of a 'welfare society' deeply questions the very existence of Welfare State and, therefore, has been 'used' by «new economic policies (neo-liberalism) to undermine the legitimacy of the 'social pacts'» (Amoroso 2008: 165) and to progressively 'bring back' to the Market the welfare sector. As argued by Dardot and Laval (2013) in order to develop itself, Neoliberalism needs a 'strong' State<sup>5</sup>, capable of imposing the naturalization of financial and economical choices, perpetrating the 'fiction' of the Market acting as a 'natural force' instead of a social construction. On the other hand, neoliberalism, to socially and politically reproduce itself, needs to implement a 'politics of society'<sup>6</sup>, based on the imposition of competition as a norm. In other words, market economy could function only if based on a model of society that adapts to values, desires, ways of being that are suitable for the reproduction of neoliberalism (Dardot, Laval 2013), becoming a

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5 In this sense the authors contest the view of other authors ( ) for whom the State in the neoliberal framework should be considered a 'weak' actor.

6 The authors refer to the concept elaborated by Foucault as 'government of society'.

specific objective of government's action, through which individuals should acquire 'entrepreneurship' and competition as the basis of every social relationship they build.

Within this point of view, the shared objective of society is to be as much productive as it can and individuals should 'activate' to cooperate and reach such objective. Therefore the 'retraction' of welfare, considered as an obstacle, is nourished by the rhetoric of the 'capabilities' of individuals considered not much in virtue of their rights, connected to the status of citizen, but in virtue of their own responsibility towards society and towards their own welfare (Imrie, Raco 2000).

To summarise, the naturalization or institutionalisation of neoliberalism relies both on a technical and managerial model of the State (Žižek 2002) and on the process of multiplication and atomisation of the rationalities involved in the process of government. This last process is deeply connected to what Foucault theorized as 'governmentality': in his view, political power develops and implements itself through several agencies and devices not reducible to the State. Strategies of control and devices related to 'security' are distributed throughout the social fabric and involve the active role of governed people, stressing on social responsibility as a key element in self-government and, therefore, in the government of the whole society. Techniques of self-government rely on 'expert knowledge'<sup>7</sup> and act as a process of governance-beyond-the-State (Swyngedouw 2005), a process within which the State share with other 'experts' such as the Third Sector, private enterprises, Foundations and other 'responsible' partners the process of 'partition of the sensible' (Rancière 2001). It is not, in other words, a reduction of the real power and sovereignty of the State, whereas it is a transformation in power relationships, an atomisation of control, a change from formal to informal techniques of government (Lemke cited in Swyngedouw 2008). In this process all the 'recognized' actors, who share the same framework of problems and solutions, are called to cooperate to reach the goal of productivity. Therefore, the responsibility given to individuals and society through concept such as «empowerment, social inclusion and active citizenship represent new form of 'governmentalisation' rather than greater autonomy for policy subjects». (Raco, Imrie 2000: 2192).

### 1.2 Governance and social cohesion: the loss of 'the political'

Within the framework of neoliberal governmentality, tools that aim to involve 'other actors' in the pro-

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7 Those techniques deploy through «the complex assemblage of diverse forces: legal, architectural, professional administrative, financial, judgemental, such that aspects of the decisions and actions of individuals, groups, organizations, and populations come to be understood and regulated in relation to authoritative criteria» (Miller, Rose, 1990: 3).

cess of policy-making and in the implementation of policies should be 'problematized'. We focus here especially on the concepts of governance and social cohesion, which have invested the field of welfare policies during the last decades. Firstly promoted at a European level, these concepts stress on the importance of horizontal and cooperative relationships between organizations (governance) and local communities (social cohesion). Both are considered successful in so far as they permit to minimize the intervention of the State, encouraging other forms of regulation and of providing services. In other words, the two enhance self-regulation as a key concept within the reform of welfare, redefining the whole concept of 'public' welfare. According to definitions provided in the framework of European organizations, both governance<sup>8</sup> and social cohesion<sup>9</sup> have a strong reference to the redefinition 'welfare' and of who has to respond to '(social) needs'. As argued by the supporters of the so called Third Way, social cohesion and governance are tools that enable the combination of social inclusion and market economy<sup>10</sup>. However, according to critical authors such as Fuller & Geddes (2008), the welfare policy promoted by the New Labour in the U.K., strongly focused on urban governance and development of social cohesion within specific territories, does not represent, as argued by its supporters, a 'third way' between Thatcherism and the New Labour, between social-democracy and neoliberalism. It is, indeed, a kind of neoliberalism adapted to the specific context of the U.K., and developed through its own social and political reproduction. This process enhances itself through an 'hybridisation of approaches and rationalities' (Purcell, Nevins cited in Raco 2012: 0) that, even if appear to be unrelated to neoliberalism are, indeed, part of its hegemonic discourse.

### 1.3 Conflict vs consensus

Within the Third Way, the State shifts from being a provider of services, to being an 'enabler' (Donzelot

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8 Government is no longer an appropriate definition of the way in which populations and territories are organized and administered. «In a world where the participation of business and civil society is increasingly the norm, the term 'governance' better defines the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society's needs, while government is rather the instrument we use». (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2001)

9 «[...] the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means» (CDCS, 2004, no.1).

10 «The third way suggests that is possible to combine social solidarity with a dynamic economy, and this is a goal contemporary social democracy should strive for. To pursue it, we will need 'less national government, less central government, but greater governance over local processes', as well as opening out in the direction of the global community» (Giddens cited in Fainstein 2013: 44).

2006) that drive the society to independently provide to its own welfare. Social cohesion is, therefore, promoted to stimulate consensus-building and not to promote social justice against inequalities, but to oppose to social exclusion as long as it diminish the ability to compete of individuals (Donzelot 2006). Social cohesion is therefore connected to the neutralization of political conflict that spontaneously rises against disparities and inequalities, caused by neoliberalism.

The neutralization of conflict in one of the most significant processes that affects neoliberal societies. Indeed, consensus becomes a device to guarantee that the whole society together participates to the neoliberal project of development, based on maximum productivity and competition on the global market between individuals and territories. As argued by Brown (2003) the place of political activity is therefore highly compromised and paradoxical. «Consensus means that whatever your personal commitments, interests and values may be, you perceive the same things, you give them the same name. But there is no contest on what appears, on what is given in a situation and as a situation. Consensus means that the only point of contest lies on what has to be done as a response to a given situation. Correspondingly, dissensus and disagreement don't only mean conflict of interests, ideas and so on. They mean that there is a debate on the sensible givens of a situation, a debate on that which you see and feel, on how it can be told and discussed, who is able to name it and argue about it. [...] Consensus is the dismissal of politics as a polemical configuration of the common world» (Rancière 2003: 4-6). Conflict has always been a critical issue for the definition of 'public interest' in the process of policy-making of welfare policies. Within the framework of the 'European social model', pursued through the Welfare State, it has been a tool through which subaltern classes could emancipate, defining their priorities and obtaining the access, as citizens, to certain rights. Some authors, such as Balibar (2012), define conflict as crucial in the very idea of democracy: within the democratic framework, a domination which cannot accept disobedience should be considered as illegitimate. To be truly legitimate every democracy should include elements of 'anarchic' citizenship (Balibar 2012). In other words conflict could be defined as the way in which society choose the objectives of its own development and the way in which it plans to reach them. Neoliberalism cannot accept the existence of conflict as far as it is not considered to be productive and since the objectives of neoliberal development are already determined. As to function neoliberalism needs to impose itself as a 'way of living' (Dardot, Laval 2013), it cannot accept to be questioned. For this reason, conflict is replaced by consensus, supported by the role of 'expertise' in the definition of problems and of possible solutions and in the outline of the rules of participation to its project. The role of experts is to impose the very way of framing problems and

solutions, making them as ‘natural’ and ‘unavoidable’ as possible: government’s choices need to emerge as non-choices (De Leonardis 2013), rather as necessities. Within this framework conflict becomes ‘irresponsible’, since it does not speak the language of expertise: it does speak political language. Since conflict was the more effective way to ‘socialize’ problems and solutions, as part of a public and political process, its collapse determines the ‘eclipse of the social’ (Alietti 2013: 5): risk of vulnerability and exclusion are more and more delegate to the action of individuals and to their own ability and resources they possess to avoid them. The very bases of welfare, political processes of definition and socialization of ‘public issues’, are undermined. The process of framing problems and responding to them appears to be more and more ‘privatized’ and ‘spatialized’ (besides being more and more technical and less political). As a consequence of these processes, governance and social cohesion appear to be devices effective for the affirmation of consensus and cooperation to the neoliberal project and the ‘privatization’ of welfare, since they refer to the active and cooperative role of citizens and organization in the process of government.

## 2. The case of Milan: self-regulation or self-organization?

The observations regarding the hybrid character of neoliberalism, adapting itself to local context, are fully represented by the case study of Milan. In the city of Milan, the dynamics of neoliberalization of welfare policies have taken advantage of a context characterized by a strong development of ‘social capital’ and a widespread sense of entrepreneurship, testified by a relevant development of the Third Sector’s organizations and of ‘social enterprises’. More than other Italian contexts, Milan is characterized by a phenomena that Kazepov (2009) defined ‘subsidiarization’ of welfare policies. This concept describes both the ‘territorialisation’ and localization of policies (subsidiarity, promoted by the reform of *Titolo V* of the Italian Constitution) and the phenomena of ‘externalization’ (or ‘contractualism’) of welfare policies (promoted by the law 320/2000) that involves the role of the Third Sector. This process has led to the expansion of a sector that has been recently called *Secondo Welfare* (Second welfare)<sup>11</sup>. This expression has been coined to describe an heterogeneous multiplicity of organization, including volunteer organizations, professional ones, private Foundations, families and individuals (and so on), with very different ‘missions’. It describes a ‘parallel’ sector that aims to integrate public intervention and innovate in the field of welfare policies<sup>12</sup>. The role of Public Administration, relating with this complex ‘actor’, should ‘just’ be the one of technically coordinating

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 11 More information on *Secondo Welfare* are available in a Report edited by Maino & Ferrera (2013), see references.

12 *Secondo Welfare* is deeply related to the concept of ‘welfare society’, we examined above.

and managing the process of producing policies. This approach is fully described by a document produced by the municipal administration of the mayor Giuliano Pisapia<sup>13</sup>. At the end of 2012 the ‘Welfare Development Plan’ (*Piano dello sviluppo del welfare*) was produced to express the main welfare strategy of the new administration. The document is centred on the promotion of governance as a process that could implement the role of ‘other’ actors in the production of welfare, and of social cohesion as a process that refers to the active and responsible role of civil society and local communities. The final objective of the Plan is to achieve a process of ‘osmosis’ between public and private sectors, within which civil society would provide itself its own welfare. One of the most relevant issue in this process is the role that the Third Sector and other private actors acquire in the definition of public interest. Indeed, a way of planning welfare policies which entirely relies on the role of technical and private subjects as ‘representative’ of specific territories and needs could be interpreted as problematic if we refer to the loss of ‘the political’ that has been examined above.

## Is it all Neoliberalism?

The last part of this paper tries to analyse how grassroots organizations, which could be formally included in the so called, *Secondo Welfare*, but whose aim has always been the one of producing ‘political’ spaces of interaction for the definition of public welfare policies, relate with the framework of analysis that has been described above; especially questioning their reference either to the discourse of ‘public good’ or ‘common good’ (related to the discourse on ‘The Commons’) and how it influences their practices.

The risk of identifying the neoliberal paradigm as dominant is not to consider that self-organization does not necessarily mean self-regulation and not considering that the strong net of local organization pre-exist to the neoliberal economy. In other words, if we analyse the social fabric and the active organizations located in Milan, we realize that it is not possible to ascribe them all to the model of neoliberal development. Indeed, some of them are still able to ‘exceed’ projected spaces of participation in order to build ‘conflictive’ but political spaces of definition of relevant public issues. That is, some of them are still able to ‘invent’ spaces of political participation which could be defined self-organized since they do not just propose new ways of managing welfare, but they question the very objectives of the process of ‘socializing’ our way of living together. There are still some organizations that, starting from everyday practice, are able to extend the reflection beyond it and to continuously redefine the process of transition from individual to collective, producing political spaces, as long as we intend political space

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 13 Giuliano Pisapia, belonging to a left wing of the Italian Democratic Party, was elected in May 2011 with a strong support of civil society.

as: «The space of the political is [...] always specific, concrete, particular, but stands as the metaphorical condensation of the universal [...] A political truth procedure [...] although always particular, aspires to become public, to universalize» (Swyngedouw 2008: 25-26).

### Ways of reacting to Neoliberalism: 'public' or 'common'?

Two ways of 'reacting' to the 'commodification' of welfare could be identified: the first one is related to the defence of public service, the other one to the process of 'instituting' and governing the commons<sup>14</sup>. According to Dardot and Laval (2010) the defence of 'public services' is problematic since the State, intended as the main provider of public services, is highly compromised with neoliberalism (as we have seen above). The two French philosophers argue that nowadays the act of defending the 'public' and therefore the State, means to defend the strategy of 'privatization' and 'commodification' that States apply to the public welfare system; they propose that, instead, a 'politics of the commons' (as opposed to 'public services') should be promoted since it would imply a whole re-definition of institutions themselves. On the other hand, «commons discourse is [...] duplicitous» (Caffentzis 2010: 25) since it could be easily be misinterpreted as a shrink of responsibilities of the public sector (as we have argued above referring to 'activation' of individuals and communities). In his opinion, the discourse on the Commons should always be associated with re-appropriation and antagonistic practices that continuously question themselves on whether they are acting outside the model of capital accumulation or not. As we can notice, it is not simple to identify which concept (and, therefore, which practices, discourses, organizations), among the ones of 'public' or 'common', could be more effective in the re-definition of a welfare system 'outside' the neoliberal paradigm.

### Insights from two grassroots experiences<sup>15</sup>

A comparison between two grassroots organizations that have very different political and social backgrounds and missions, and, among which, one refer its practice to the discourse on 'public' and the other to the one of 'common', has been useful to explore differences among the two approaches

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14 We refer here to the notion of 'the Commons' as theorized by Ostrom, 2006.

15 This paper is part to a wider research, that explores the role of policies of social cohesion and the way in which grassroots organizations relate to the expansion of this concept as guiding welfare policies. I have therefore analysed various contexts and organizations. In one of the neighbourhoods in which I have been doing my field research, the one of Molise Calvairate Ponti, a public housing neighbourhood in the south-east area of Milan, I had the chance to get in contact with the two grassroots experiences I analyse in this paper.

and their different potentialities and limits. Especially nowadays, considering the widespread success that the theory of 'commons' has had during the past few years, it seems to be crucial to discuss the implication it could have in the political debate on welfare, traditionally related to the discourse on 'public'. Observing the two grassroots organizations<sup>16</sup> that are part of this analysis, chosen for they refer to these two different approaches, the Tenants Committee of the public neighbourhood of Molise Calvairate Ponti<sup>17</sup>, and the group Macao<sup>18</sup>, that occupied a dismissed building of the old slaughterhouse of Milan, it could be noticed that both of them are operating to re-define the sense of the transition from individual to collective. However, while the first one works on the re-construction of a relationship of political delegation<sup>19</sup>, the second one mainly works on the 'opening' and 'return' of a space (the abandoned building) to the city, transforming it in 'place' for cultural production.

Especially looking at the impact that grassroots movements should have on the development of welfare (intended here as an integrate dimension of different aspects of 'living together'), and on the possibility of 'building' political spaces, a combination between the rhetoric of 'public' and the one of 'common' could be more effective in term of impact on the existing situation of neoliberalization. On one hand the reference to 'public', as it directly or indirectly refers to the State or to other existing institutions, helps to continuously re-define who belongs to a certain group or community, still considering the relevance of political representation, which is crucial for communities who are still fighting to be recognized. Moreover, the reference to some kind of 'neutral' institution, could help to stress on the negative effects of a 'reduction' of subjectivities in terms of differences, which could be problematic when we refer to 'common' as shared by a certain 'community' who takes care of a certain good or space or resource. On the other hand the reference to 'common' which especially in Italy, as in the experience of Macao, is related to the re-appropriation

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16 Chosen for their representativeness in the reference to the concepts of 'public' and 'common' in their practice.

17 The Tenants Committee Molise Calvairate Ponti was founded at the end of the 1970s with the aim of protesting against the 'abandon' of the public neighbourhood. The Committee is still politically active but it has also become a provider of volunteer services for the inhabitants. For more information see [www.comitatoinquilini.org](http://www.comitatoinquilini.org).

18 Macao is a collective of workers in performing arts who occupied the old slaughterhouse after being evicted from the police from other two abandoned buildings. Macao is part of a wider national net of occupied spaces by precarious workers in the field of performing and creative arts. For more information [www.macao.mi.it/chi-e-macao/](http://www.macao.mi.it/chi-e-macao/)

19 The Committee works on a re-signification of political delegation as a 'relationship based on respect' and employing a work on languages used by inhabitants in order not to alter the very sense of their expression.

of a certain space, could involve the role of space and territory and of practices that re-signify those spaces, as central in the re-definition of what is political. This tendency could partially avoid a trend of 'passive dependence on assistance' which characterize not only the action of State but even the one of some grassroots organizations and could also, if well interpreted, stimulate political participation in virtue of constructing, defending, managing certain spaces or territories, which could become 'spaces of political interaction'. Of course a main risk of the process is to concentrate only on the specific place or space and not on the political implication that the practices taking place in there could generate.

In conclusion, we prefer not to oppose the two concepts and the different 'grammars of action' (Renaud 2002) that connote them. Indeed, they seem to stimulate one another to be aware of the danger of relapsing on Neoliberalism, rather defending/recognizing the existence of a Public Administration which is 'commodifying' welfare, or reproducing a process of self-regulation which excludes the less powerful or 'capable'. We would suggest that rather than opposing 'public' to 'common' it could be useful for grassroots movements to recall the concept of 'invited' and 'invented' spaces, theorized by Mirafteb<sup>20</sup> (2004). The author states that those spaces of participation, the first ones characterized for being recognized and planned from institutions, the others for they 'invent' a 'space' of participation that questions the very frame of institutional participation itself, are not mutually exclusive: the ability of social actors who participate in them, is the one of creating a tension between them, enlarging their borders, making them porous. In other words, progressively redefining the whole process of 'socializing' the way of living together and re-signifying its (eventual) forms of institutionalization.

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20 «'Invited' spaces (Cornwall 2002) are defined as the ones occupied by those grassroots and their allied non-governmental organizations that are legitimized by donors and government interventions. 'Invented' spaces are those, also occupied by the grassroots and claimed by their collective action, but directly confronting the authorities and the status quo. While the former grassroots actions are geared mostly toward providing the poor with coping mechanisms and propositions to support survival of their informal membership, the grassroots activity of the latter challenges the status quo in the hope of larger societal change and resistance to the dominant power relations» (Mirafteb 2004: 1).

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Carolina Pacchi

“Feels like home...”.

## Two cases of urban mobilisation in Milan

### Public spaces, Social practices, Urban renewal

The paper aims at analysing and critically discussing two cases of grassroots initiatives, promoted by citizen groups in Milan, aimed at taking back and reusing abandoned or underused common resources. The two cases, although very different for their location in the urban context, object of the mobilisation, (urban) scale, time horizon, types of actors involved and interaction with Local Authorities, show nevertheless some common elements, which will be the focus of the paper and which do open up questions for further research.

Impinging on literature on social movements and social innovation in contemporary urban settings, the paper highlights an existing tension: if the ongoing trend towards the reuse of abandoned buildings tends to be a grassroots and participated one, rather than one exclusively technically and politically driven, at the same time some very features of contemporary social movement organisations make it particularly difficult for them to take and implement effective decision making in such complex environments in evolution. The possibly conflictual relationship with Local Government and other institutional actors becomes therefore crucial to imagine possible scenarios of transformation and to frame a convincing policy dimension<sup>1</sup>.

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1 It is possible to add a note on the choice of the cases: the author of this paper has been directly involved in the first one, as a consultant hired by a third party planning agency to prepare a conflict assessment, in the role of *scholar as contractor* as Matti Siemiatycki proposes to call it in his reflection about the changing (and shifting) roles of planning scholars, while in the second one the author has played the role of external observer, or *independent outsider* (Siemiatycki 2012: 149): this obviously implies a different approach, and a different distance from each of the cases, which will emerge in the discussion in the last section of the paper.

### Introductory note

Grassroots initiatives, animated by neighbourhood or citizens' groups in a number of different fields, are increasingly diffused in contemporary cities: «Provisional, informal, guerrilla, insurgent, DIY, hands-on, informal, unsolicited, unplanned, participatory, tactical, micro, open-source - these are just a few of the words floating around to describe a type of interventionist urbanism sweeping through cities around the world» ([www.spontaneousinterventions.org](http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org)); this phenomenon can be connected to different trends and has a range of different possible explanations: a shift in governance modes at local level (Le Galès 2002; Denters, Rose 2005); expectations about the strengthening of local democracy and processes of redefinition of collective identities (Melucci 1996; Tarrow 2011); the link with the shrinkage of traditional forms of welfare state in European cities, and in particular local welfare, connected in turn with the drastic reduction of local government resources, which leads citizens to mobilise in order to directly supply and share local services not available anymore (Moulaert *et al.* 2007; Vicari Haddock, Mou-

laert 2009).

For the first point, literature has focused on the significant change in the forms of political representation over the last twenty five years, which in Italy, but not exclusively there, corresponds to an increase in societal fragmentation and a loss of representation on the part of traditional mass political parties (della Porta e Andretta 2001; della Porta 2004); in this period they tend to lose their ability to elaborate and translate societal issues into political questions, or at least questions which could be tackled through policy tools. In some cases, this fragmentation goes in parallel a more direct connection between local government and citizens, as in the case of direct mayoral elections, which paradoxically increase the spontaneity and the fragmentation of emerging issues, together with a risk of demagogu.

For the second one, social movements literature puts the accent on the increasing importance of the cultural dimension in mobilisations, on the need to make sense of the fragmentation of society and of individuals. Together with a functional approach, that reads social movements as actors defending

sets of more or less shared interests, and focuses the attention on the structure of political opportunities (Tarrow 2011) and on the role of entrepreneurs of mobilisation and protest (Vitale 2007), there is a significant attention towards sense making practices and the construction of common identities (Melucci 1996). This is not just visible in social movements at the global scale, but also in urban mobilisations, especially when they are able to establish a bond with specific places and are engaged in place-making activities.

The third point is at the centre both of policy reflections and of extensive experimentation in practice. As far as the urban dimension of social innovation is concerned, a host of grassroots initiatives is taking place, aimed at providing citizens with services otherwise unavailable, by using, circulating and sharing the latent resources that typically exist and thrive at the urban level, resources and assets connected to the density and diversity of social networks, «who take the initiative to transform problematic urban situations into new opportunities or amenities to be shared by the public, without waiting for clients or permission, and in some cases, risking fines or arrest» ([www.spontaneousinterventions.org](http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org)).

Among the different initiatives, if we look more closely, the valorization of underused resources has significantly attracted the attention of citizens in recent years, due to the diffused presence of abandoned or underused buildings or open spaces, that dot Italian and European cities alike, and the increasing awareness of the possible collective value of such underused assets. The situations are very different: there are abandoned or underused industrial or production sites, deriving from the shift to a post-industrial economy, as well as public buildings and facilities, the legacy of the important local infrastructure and welfare policies of the Twentieth century (schools, hospitals, public services, as well as power plants, slaughterhouses, wholesale market places, train stations, ...). The collective/public nature of such goods is central for the analysis: we can, in fact, «relate the 'urban' as material culture to the right to inhabit, on the one hand, and the right to occupy and use public spaces, to gather and to protest, on the other» (Leontidou 2010: 1181). In this perspective, collective urban goods become the occasion for different initiatives of re-appropriation of inhabitable spaces, and object of diverse forms of mobilisation, not exclusively based on protest, but on a much richer and varied repertoire of action. This type of initiatives is aimed at testing and showing the richness of the possible reuse paths, and to contrast the emerging neoliberal wave of value extraction (Weber 2002). In the ever growing relationship between the urban built environment as an asset, capital and public policy makers, «Obsolescence tends to suppress rental income and exchange values, but it may not diminish utility or use values» and therefore investors on the one side and citizens as users on the other adopt slightly different perspectives on reuse projects and life cycles of buildings.

This implies that many different variables, such as «... speculation, luck, political influence, and class resistance also conspire to transform the process of value creation and destruction into one of intense sociopolitical struggle» (Weber 2002: 173-76).

The two cases discussed in the paper concern grassroots mobilisation for the reuse of abandoned buildings or public spaces in Milan, but apart from that they are very different. In the first one the mobilisation started around twenty years ago, the second lasted a few years; in the first one a quite fruitful interaction with the City Council has been established, while in the other one the interaction has been highly oppositional, because grassroots groups did not see any possibility to be listened to. In both cases, on the other hand, it is possible to see forms of attachment to a collective good, or a good perceived as collective, and a sense of ownership concerning both the area and the process. The abandoned sites are seen as a collection of local memories and identities, implicitly shared by all the groups involved, and at the same time as a possibility for integration and social cohesion in the future. This acquires a strong symbolic meaning in contemporary urban areas, in which there is a diffused feeling of impoverishment of social capital and resources for social integration (Putnam 2002), a feeling which is strongly felt in the neighbourhoods we are looking at.

### **Two cases in a city**

In this paragraph there will be a short description of the features of the contexts and of the buildings or areas that were the object of mobilisation, together with a first interpretation of such mobilisations, in terms of initial motivation or trigger, duration, types of actors involved, forms of protest enacted. The spatial and social features of the neighbourhoods in which the two cases took place, as well as the very features of the areas themselves, play in fact a very relevant role in the evolution of the two cases.

The first case concerns the long struggle, which lasted more than twenty years, for the conservation, valorisation and promotion of a reuse project for Cascina Linterno, a farmhouse located in the Western area of Milan. It is a complex of buildings and surrounding fields dating back to the Middle Ages, which is frequently linked, even if there is no evidence of it, to the Milanese stay of Francesco Petrarca, probably the most important Italian Mediaeval lyrical poet.

The farmhouse is located in an area which, albeit significantly urbanized and transformed in the decades after World War II, maintains some relevant features of the traditional Milanese rural landscape, with its fine grain water infrastructure network, and is today one of the main cores of peri-urban agriculture in Milan. Since the mid-1990s a large group of citizens and local organisations promoted a series of initiatives of mobilisation, protest, cultural production and pressure over the City Council for the safeguard and protection of both the farmhouse building and of the adjoining rural areas, in order to prevent the



**Fig.1** Cascina Linterno, the peri-urban context (source: Agricity).



**Fig.2** Cascina Linterno, view from the courtyard (source: Agricity).



**Fig.3** The Darsena Area during the period of neglect.



**Fig.4** The Darsena Area. The project proposed by the DarsenaPioniera group.

danger of land use changes and to avoid the risk of formal and functional changes. In particular, after some changes of ownership in the mid-1990s the possibility of its transformation into a luxury condominium triggered the first forms of spontaneous self organisation at local level, and the first episodes of opposition and resistance. In this period, the Cascina Linterno local groups has shown the ability to use an ample and varied repertoire of mobilisation, including forms of protest, including the occupation of the building, lobbying the City Council, promoting a new cultural awareness on the importance of Cascina Linterno and similar symbols of the rural and cultural legacy of the city.

This case is characterized by a strong attention on the part of citizens and neighbourhood groups towards the relationship between the farmhouse building and its immediate and territorial rural context, and for their ability to look at the conservation of the rural context, still characterized by peri-urban agricultural production, as an unavoidable element to start appropriate reuse processes.

In the second case the object of local mobilisation are the different rehabilitation projects for the Darsena area, an old harbour terminal of the Navigli urban canal system, now abandoned and for many years in a state of decay. In the years of neglect, since the area was not in use and the Darsena had been almost completely drained, a valuable natural ecosystem developed, transforming it into a wilderness zone, with the traditional characters of woods growing near the water systems in the wider region, with which it shares the same type of flora and fauna.

The Darsena area is located in a very central position, bordering the historical centre of Milan and the Navigli area, known for nightlife; it is characterized by a very active local civil society, and has therefore been the object of a number of mobilisations for urban rehabilitation. The group we propose to analyse here appears on the local scene after many experiences of local activism, but it seems particularly interesting because it has been working on a project aimed at bringing wilderness back into the heart of the city, following a model of urban oasis which is diffused for instance in Britain, but is still quite new in Italian cities.

Formed by a group of designers, landscape architects and journalist, Darsena Pioniera gets mobilised in 2009 when the area was temporarily abandoned and neglected, while the Municipality was concluding a decision making process for an underground parking, a project which has been cancelled in the end. The aim of Darsena Pioniera is to propose and find support for a rehabilitation project for the empty space, which in the meantime had become a spontaneous green area. The project, unlike all the other ones which have been proposed by the City Council and other actors, recognizes the intrinsic value of wild flora, and thus proposes very light forms of intervention, aimed at leaving the new ecosystem untouched, and at identifying spaces for small lo-

cal gardens, in order to enhance participation on the part of citizens and neighbourhood groups. This proposal has been technically defined and proposed to the Administration, and it has gained some local support through diverse and creative forms of involvement, aimed at citizens, neighbourhood groups and children from local schools.

Despite a technically sound project and a thorough mobilisation process, the project has been implemented on a temporary basis by the previous City Government, but it has been dropped in the end by the current Government because it does not fit into the overall redesign of the Milan water system for Expo 2015. In the face of the need, expressed by the Municipality, to bring water back into the basin, Darsena Pioniera proposed to modify their original project, in order to allow the presence of a wetland preserving at least part of the wilderness, but this proposal has been met with skepticism and ultimately dropped by the Deputy Mayor in charge.

### **Local Mobilisations: struggles for the common good or forms local appropriation?**

After the quick description of the two cases, it is possible to propose some considerations about the emerging questions. Following Tarrow, it may be useful to explore more in detail in which way these mobilisations have been able to rely on *existing local networks and organisations*; in which way they have been able to combine in their discourse the build-up of *new identities* with cultural repertoires able to give meaning to their action, and how much they have been able to use and transform the *system of political opportunities* available to them (Tarrow 2011: 120-122).

In both the cases we mentioned, the ability to use and activate already existing networks and organisations is a significant variable in order to understand the effectiveness of their action; the differences of the two contexts contribute to explain the nature of such local networks, which can be linked to forms of political engagement, or on existing friendship or professional networks (as in the Darsena Pioniera case), or linked to traditional volunteering neighbourhood activities (as in the Cascina Linterno case). In the first case the network was rather small, and not entirely local: architects, designers and other experts who proposed the Darsena Pioniera new project, in opposition with the official one, came from various areas of the city, and their project was not fully recognized and endorsed by neighbourhood groups, traditionally rooted in the area. In the second case, on the contrary, the symbolic correspondence between the very features of Cascina Linterno (local agriculture, not disjointed from forms of popular religiosity) and the networks of actors who mobilised during the last twenty years can be seen as a key for the success of the mobilisation.

As far as the construction of local identities is concerned, this notion retains some ambiguity, even if it is clearly connected to the strengthening of forms of social cohesion complementary or alternative to

those promoted by local institutions; such ambiguity is visible for instance in the appropriation of spaces, that caused in some cases a more or less explicit opposition between existing groups and other groups who aim to use the building object of mobilisation, or with diffused interests at local or urban level. One of the functions of social movements, as identified for instance by Melucci, is the one of building meaning and sensemaking, in three ways, through *framing*, *identity construction*, *emotion*. «Starting with the pioneering work of Alberto Melucci (1988), scholars have increasingly seen identities not as an “essentialist” component of collective action, but as a constructed set of boundary mechanisms that define who “we” are, who “they” are, and the locations of the borders between them» (Tarrow 2011: 143). Connected to the discussion on identity building, the common or collective nature, the publicness of the goods object of mobilisation emerges as an uncertain and unstable notion, both when they are abandoned, neglected or underused, and when they are being re-activated through the mobilisation or other forms of direct intervention by local groups. The publicness dimension does not refer here in the strict sense to the sphere of public or State actors, but rather to actors engaged in producing public goods directly or indirectly. The groups who have been more intensely engaged have difficulties in sharing spaces with other groups, with different experiences and irreconcilable management modes, and this in turn can result in difficult paths. This typically happens when the reuse of the building or site implies a scale jump, from a neighbourhood level engagement to an urban use.

As far as the last point is concerned, the structure of political opportunities is strictly related to the very context in which these two stories take place. The Milan context, in fact, has always been and is, still today, characterized by a strong and diffused presence of civil society activism and intervention, both on the part of structured and organised actors (NGOs, charities, foundations and other third sector - voluntary, community, non-profit - organisations) (Ranci 2009; Bobbio, Dente, Spada 2005), and on the part of less structured community groups (Gullino, Pacchi 2012). It is necessary, in any case, to question the real ability of these initiatives to actually influence the local context, looking at the way in which they have built (or modified) the relationships between Local Government structures at urban and at district level and citizens, community groups and market actors (real estate developers or landowners), and on the basis of which future urban visions they have been developed. From this point of view, again our two cases are very different. In order to do so, it is also useful to look at the different types and forms of protest which have been experimented: «protest activity is defined as a mode of political action oriented toward objection to one or more policies or conditions, characterized by showmanship or display of an unconventional nature, and undertaken to obtain rewards from political or economic

systems while working within the systems» and, at the same time, «Alliance formation is particularly desirable for relatively powerless groups if they seek to join the decision-making process as participants» (Lipsky 1968: 1145-46).

While in the case of Cascina Linterno, after more than twenty years of mobilisation, the action has influenced both the property structure (from private to public, the farmhouse has been transferred to the Municipality following an agreement on a larger urban development project) and the possibility of physical and functional requalification (thanks to the intervention of a foundation), in the case of Darsena-Pioniera the project proposal did not have any possibility of changing the course of decision making, in part due to the presence of the Expo 2015 initiative, and in part to some internal weaknesses in the relationship with the City Council.

Finally, the impact that such mobilisations had for the same groups is very different: constantly confronted with the contrasting needs to promote projects which were at the centre of their collective identity, divided between the need to cooperate with the City Council and to maintain a political distance and preserve their identity, these groups have faced, along the years, quite difficult transformations, to the point of risking to be torn apart.

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Margherita Loddoni

# Pianificazione ed informalità: visioni da Sud

## Planning, Land use, Urban market

The paper tentatively tries to reflect about how by using the power of re-defining and shifting the boundary lines between formal and informal, the State produces a re-mapping of the territory defining new geographies of property, values, powers but also vulnerabilities. Those dynamics will be explored trying to look “from the South” (Watson, 2009) by focusing the analysis on the formalization policies of land tenure implemented in informal settlements of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The exploration of the changing aspects between formal/informal relations from the Global South, could perhaps allow to acquire a perspective where power relations, when land is at stake, that shape those dynamics seem to be more paradigmatically disclosed: (post)colonial influences, international control, financial powers. Intersections between pervasive rhetoric shaping land titling policies and life strategies of the most vulnerable people living the differentiated geographies of informal settlements, could perhaps allow the exposure of mechanisms of power and exclusion and the multiple ways in which urban planning discursively constructs itself.

### 1. Un'ipotesi di ricerca

Narrazioni dominanti nel discorso della teoria urbana associano l'informale a modalità d'insediamento umano, di scambio e commercio che avvengono in strutture e processi extra-legali (Porter 2011): nella retorica prevalente illegalità ed informalità appaiono così discorsivamente sovrapposte. L'informale viene dunque a configurarsi come realtà che eccede la pianificazione urbana.

Si tratta di cornici analitiche estremamente pervasive che, in un'operazione di riduzione, ripiegano i bordi della città informale, fino a consentirne la sovrapposizione con quelli della marginalità urbana (Roy 2005). Un'operazione che sembra nutrire in egual misura posizioni analitiche solo apparentemente contrapposte: l'informale come settore di 'crisi' che necessita l'intervento della pianificazione urbana oppure come espressione di una 'imprenditorialità eroica' dei più vulnerabili (Roy 2005).

Prospettive semplificanti che fratturano la città ed il nostro sguardo su di essa, in quelle dicotomie a cui sembra oggi ancorarsi il discorso e la retorica della pianificazione urbana: formale/informale, legale/illegale, legittimo/illegittimo. Tale dimensione analitica che opacizza, quando non tace, il nesso relazionale tra città formale/informale, ha origine nei paradigmi fondativi e nelle strutture di significato proprie della pianificazione occidentale moderna.

Provare ad indagare la dimensione relazionale che

tiene insieme questi poli concettuali, può forse offrirsi come occasione per esplorare le origini della pianificazione come pratica culturale, facendone emergere la natura di dispositivo di controllo socio-spaziale – quel «lato oscuro» (Yiftachel 1998; Flyvbjerg 2002) che letture prevalenti tendono a velare – e la sua complicità con le strutture del potere coloniale (Porter 2011; Attili 2011).

Una tensione analitica che può tradursi nella seguente ipotesi di ricerca: utilizzando il potere di ridefinire e tras-locare le linee di confine tra formale/informale, legale/illegale, lo Stato produce ri-mappature del territorio definendo una nuova geografia di proprietà, valori e poteri.

### 2. Collocarsi negli spazi in-between

Per mettere al lavoro questa ipotesi di ricerca, una possibilità è quella di procedere posizionandosi nello spazio *in-between*/intermedio tra costruzioni dicotomiche: formale/informale, legale/illegale, legittimo/illegittimo, interrogando le mutazioni di questo spazio e dei suoi confini, a partire da quelle analisi che hanno provato a superare le visioni oppostive per ricomporre tali fratture.

Se, come suggerito da alcuni autori, l'informalità è una struttura profondamente differenziata (Roy 2005), in termini di razionalità e poteri in gioco, occorre dunque provare ad intercettare quei processi multidirezionali e multidimensionali che animano

questo spazio. Assumendo l'ipotesi di un nesso mutuamente generativo che lega queste due dimensioni, nasce la sollecitazione ad una lettura di questo spazio intermedio – e delle dinamiche che continuamente ri-definiscono queste categorie e rinegoziano i loro confini – che provi a tenere insieme diverse prospettive.

L'importanza di muoversi all'interno di questo spazio ponendo l'attenzione alla comprensione dei processi di mutazione dei suoi confini è sollecitata dal riconoscimento, da parte di alcuni autori, che lungi dall'essere al di fuori dei sistemi formali della città pianificata, «l'informale è prodotto da quelle strutture formali ed è sempre intimamente connesso e relazionato ad esse» (Porter 2011: 116).

Gli spazi informali dunque, lontani dall'essere sfere extra-legali e dunque extra-statali come sostenuto nelle retoriche prevalenti, devono piuttosto esser compresi nelle teorie e nella pratiche della pianificazione, come «spazi dello Stato» (Roy 2005).

Lo Stato attraverso l'apparato della pianificazione, può agire su questo confine esercitando il potere di 'formalizzare' pezzi di città informali oppure, operando una sospensione della norma, producendo i bordi della città informale, degli spazi di eccezione. L'imposizione della norma urbanistica, cristallizza il territorio inserendolo in una sfera altra (quella del diritto) che definisce una serie di usi possibili perché legali. Quali sono le spinte, le razionalità, le forze in gioco in queste operazioni nelle quali ad essere in gioco è la terra? Chi ha interesse ad agire al loro interno, con quali obiettivi e modalità?

### 3 Quale sguardo?

Secondo J. Robinson (2002) dis-locare la produzione teorica guardando la città a partire da luoghi diversi da quelli (le città globali) che tradizionalmente hanno nutrito le analisi urbane, può offrirsi come feconda possibilità di trasformazione per gli studi urbani. Il tentativo di questo lavoro è quello di provare a lavorare sulla dicotomia 'costruita' formale/informale adottando uno sguardo che «parta dal Sud» (Watson 2009) focalizzando l'analisi in quelle città in cui l'informale non è l'eccezione alla città pianificata ma viene piuttosto a configurarsi come principale «modo di urbanizzazione» (Roy 2005) che disegna oltre il 70% del paesaggio urbano. Questo consente inoltre di acquisire una prospettiva in cui le relazioni di potere che intervengono quando ad essere in gioco è la terra assumono un carattere 'paradigmatico' ed 'estremo': influenze (post)coloniali, controllo internazionale, poteri finanziari.

In questa ricerca, l'esplorazione dello spazio intermedio tra formale/informale a partire dal Sud Globale, si è tradotta/declinata nello studio delle dinamiche di accesso formale/informale alla terra a partire dall'analisi dei processi di formalizzazione del regime di proprietà della terra in alcuni insediamenti non pianificati (*unplanned areas*) della città di Dar es Salaam. Portare la pianificazione urbana al di fuori del suo spazio di produzione teorica mettendone alla prova alcuni vettori concettuali (informalità, valore,

sicurezza, legittimità) in altri contesti, può diventare un'occasione per leggere criticamente alcune razionalità e strutture di significato che informano la disciplina della pianificazione urbana come elaborata nella tradizione moderna occidentale.

## 4. Attraverso Dar es Salaam: tre immagini

Nel tentativo di provare a restituire una prima lettura del caso di studio attraverso i filtri interpretativi appena esposti, terrei sullo sfondo tre immagini/documenti a mio avviso significative provando a tessere i fili: la prima immagine (Figura 1) è il documento nel quale il Presidente della Tanzania richiede al Ministero degli Affari Esteri norvegese di finanziare la consulenza attraverso la quale l'economista peruviano Hernando De Soto supporterà il governo tanzaniano nel delineare un *framework* nazionale per la formalizzazione della proprietà (2003); la seconda immagine è la foto apparsa su alcune testate giornalistiche locali che ritrae il momento della consegna della prima Licenza Residenziale (RL) da parte delle autorità cittadine ad un abitante del quartiere di Manzese, uno dei maggiori insediamenti informali di Dar es Salaam (2005)<sup>1</sup>; infine, la terza immagine (Figura 4), è l'atto attraverso il quale nel 2011 Anna Tibaijuka, Ministro della Terra in Tanzania ed ex direttore esecutivo di UN-Habitat, dichiara l'acquisizione da parte del Governo delle terra su cui insiste Manzese e definisce il quartiere Area di Riqualficazione (*Redevelopment Area*) per la quale sarà predisposto un nuovo Piano (*Redevelopment Plan*).

### 4.1 Immagine 1: Razionalità?

Nel dibattito sulle politiche di formalizzazione, ampio spazio ha avuto la trattazione dell'economista H. De Soto (2000) a sostegno dei vantaggi di un mercato formale della terra. Immersa nel paradigma neoliberalista che include la spinta alla sicurezza del regime di proprietà (Myers, 2010), la proposta di formalizzazione di H. De Soto (2000) come via di uscita dalla povertà, si nutre della teoria del «capitale morto» secondo la quale i beni (*asset*) detenuti informalmente dalla maggior parte delle persone nei paesi del Sud del Mondo, rappresentano quel capitale morto che può essere rivitalizzato e capitalizzato inserendo questi *asset* all'interno del sistema formale di diritti di scambio della proprietà privata. Secondo H. De Soto la legalizzazione dei diritti di proprietà informali è infatti un mezzo per generare nuovi capitali da investire poiché la terra legalmente intitolata (*titled land*) può essere utilizzata come garanzia per ottenere prestiti nei circuiti formali di credito.

La consulenza di H. De Soto in Tanzania è il terreno su cui si è radicato l'avvio delle attuali politiche di formalizzazione della proprietà della terra e del business (Programma MKURABITA) e nello specifico di un programma per la creazione di un registro

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1 A titolo esemplificativo, l'immagine inserita per questa pubblicazione (Figura 2) è la copia di una Licenza Residenziale rilasciata ad un abitante della Municipalità di Kiondoni, Dar es Salaam.

(catastale) delle proprietà presenti negli insediamenti informali di Dar es Salaam con la possibilità di rilascio di licenze residenziali (titoli di occupazione di breve termine) agli abitanti (Ministry of Land 2004). La consulenza di H. De Soto finanziata dal Governo norvegese da una parte ed il sostegno della Banca Mondiale ai programmi di formalizzazione dall'altra, aiutano a porre l'attenzione sugli effetti dell'influenza di attori e governi internazionali nel definire le politiche di sviluppo della Tanzania. La tensione investigativa suggerita da Kironde (1993) rimane assolutamente centrale: «Nell'interesse di chi sono portati avanti questi progetti? Chi esegue i progetti ed in che modo i soldi sono *repaid*?» e ancora «In che modo questo aiuto si relaziona al controllo esterno dell'economia della Tanzania?».

Se il quadro normativo vigente in Tanzania dal 1999 contemplava infatti già la possibilità di rilascio delle RL, è solo in seguito alla spinta alla formalizzazione che ha attraversato diversi settori governativi, che il Governo tanzaniano decide di ricorrere alle licenze come misura per applicare ai settori informali la teoria della trasformazione del capitale morto in capitale vivo proposta dall'economista peruviano.

«Creazione di un registro della proprietà della terra urbana per l' *empowerment* economico dei residenti negli insediamenti non pianificati della città di Dar es Salaam» (Ministry of Land 2004): è il titolo stesso del Programma, di cui il rilascio delle licenze residenziali è solo la componente finale<sup>2</sup>, a consentirci di aprire una possibile analisi su quali siano le razionalità in gioco nei programmi di formalizzazione del regime di proprietà.

La formalizzazione presuppone un processo di mappatura della spazio, o meglio, di quello spazio non ancora cartografato (in termini catastali), perché informale e che tramite il processo di formalizzazione può essere iscritto nello spazio formale e diventare così visibile e governabile dall'apparato statale. Come si sostanzia il potere sotteso alla mappatura? Come afferma Scott (1998), la produzione di mappe catastali nasce per poter descrivere gli spazi e quindi poterli leggere, il che significa controllarli ed esercitare su di essi un potere; la mappa catastale aggiunge un'«intelligenza documentaria» al potere dello Stato offrendo quindi la base per una visione sinottica funzionale al suo *apparatus*. È sempre Scott (1998) ad

evidenziare come in età moderna mappe dettagliate siano entrate in uso parallelamente allo sviluppo del mercato della terra<sup>3</sup>.

La mappa catastale, così come il registro in cui sono trascritti i titoli di proprietà, garantisce quindi una chiarezza utile allo Stato per estendere la base di tassazione (Scott 1998; Briggs 2011) e funzionale allo sviluppo di un mercato della terra di cui lo Stato è oggi attore e non più mediatore (Roy 2009).

Alla base delle politiche di formalizzazione e delle teorie che le sostanziano, tra le quali appunto quelle di De Soto, soggiace quel modello di proprietà individuale su cui si basa la pianificazione urbana moderna: frutto anch'esso di un'operazione di riduzione delle molteplici possibilità in cui la proprietà può esprimersi. Come fa notare Blomley (2008: 321) «la definizione stessa di proprietà è attentamente controllata/sorvegliata. Solo determinate relazioni sono definite "proprietà" e particolari attori sociali riconosciuti come possibili proprietari».

Un'accezione della proprietà che viene ad essere sollecitata in contesti nei quali l'accesso alla terra, come nel caso di Dar es Salaam, avviene per lo più attraverso contrattazioni informali di compra-vendita autorizzate spesso da rappresentanti del governo locale (*mtaa leader*) e sottoscritte oltre che dai contraenti, anche dai vicini e dai leader di strada chiamati ad agire come testimoni. Si tratta di titoli informali perché non rilasciati dal *Ministry of Land*, l'unica autorità che in base alle leggi vigenti in Tanzania può emettere certificati formali del diritto di occupazione (CRO) della terra della durata di 33, 66 e 99 anni.

L'accrescimento della «sicurezza», che figura tra gli obiettivi dei programmi di formalizzazione sembra ridimensionato dal fatto che ottenere un documento che formalmente riconosce il diritto di proprietà/occupazione, non determina direttamente una maggiore sicurezza *de facto* sulla terra che può invece essere garantita da canali informali (Briggs 2011; Roy 2005).

Se «la sicurezza è un concetto relativo, di percezione» (Payne 2009), occorre allora provare a comprendere ed intercettare quali siano i fattori in grado di influenzare tale percezione. Per i residenti più vulnerabili, sembra così emergere un'asimmetria sistemica tra diritti formali e sicurezza *de facto*; quest'ultima, intesa come garanzia percepita di accedere e utilizzare la terra, sembra non essere necessariamente legata

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2 Tra gli obiettivi del Programma figurano:

- identificare le abitazioni presenti negli insediamenti informali e predisporre appositi registri di proprietà;
- conferire uno status legale ai proprietari della terra negli insediamenti non pianificati esistenti, attraverso il rilascio di Licenze Residenziali (*Residential Licenses*) andando così ad incrementare il valore economico della terra e delle proprietà da utilizzare come garanzie per l'accesso al credito;
- aumentare gli introiti del Governo attraverso la raccolta di tasse per l'occupazione della terra (*land rent*) dagli insediamenti non pianificati;
- creare un ampio database per garantire un'amministrazione più efficace della terra da parte degli *stakeholders* e favorire la protezione ambientale.

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3 Il processo di creazione dello spazio coloniale è avvenuto con la messa a punto di specifiche tecnologie spaziali che ancora oggi supportano i sistemi di pianificazione e le politiche di uso e di gestione del suolo, tra cui la mappatura, l'indagine catastale e la creazione di registri di proprietà. Tali dispositivi venivano utilizzati per «produrre una usable knowledge del territorio nel tentativo di comprenderne estensione, caratteristiche e risorse» (Attili 2011). Queste tecnologie hanno poi trovato una continuità nell'«alto modernismo» che ha ispirato i grandi schemi di ingegneria sociale del XX secolo, piani autoritari di larga scala di cui J.C. Scott (1998) analizza le cause di fallimento. Tra i casi da lui analizzati figura anche il programma di impronta socialista di Villaggizzazione rurale di J. Nyerere in Tanzania.

al possesso di un titolo individuale ma sostanziata piuttosto da tracce di legittimità sociale.

Come suggerisce Kironde (2006: 463) «In molti casi la sicurezza della terra nelle transazioni non formali deriva dall'effettiva occupazione e dall'uso della terra, dal riconoscimento sociale e dalla tolleranza politica». Oltre ai processi di riconoscimento sociale, la dimensione della tolleranza politica come fattore che incide sulla sicurezza *de facto*, apre il discorso della percezione della sicurezza rispetto a possibili decisioni governative. Questo è particolarmente evidente in un paese come la Tanzania, dove la terra è di proprietà del Presidente della Repubblica ed i titoli di proprietà formali rilasciati dal Ministero della Terra, sono in realtà titoli di 'occupazione' (*Certificate of Right of Occupancy*). L'ampio potere di disporre della terra in caso di progetti di sviluppo o altre acquisizioni per pubblica utilità, con la questione delle compensazioni che emerge sempre come elemento di conflitto, pone al centro dell'analisi le dinamiche di potere connesse all'accesso alla terra nei territori informali e non solo.

#### 4.2 Immagine 2: Effetti(vi)?

Il lavoro di interviste svolto a Dar nel 2012 e recenti ricerche rendono plausibile l'ipotesi in base alla quale a Manzese l'effetto combinato del programma di *community upgrading* (CIUP) della Banca Mondiale ed il rilascio delle Licenze Residenziali, figurino tra i fattori connessi all'incremento di valore della terra ed all'accelerazione di processi di trasformazione urbana in termini di *gentrification*. Una maggiore accessibilità dell'area in termini di infrastrutture e l'incremento del valore della terra (anche in seguito al rilascio dei titoli di proprietà), hanno contribuito a rendere queste aree più attrattive soprattutto per quegli investitori interessati alla possibilità di costruire nuovi hotel, edifici commerciali e per uffici. Si pone dunque il problema di capire, come già affermava Kironde nel 1993: «A danno di chi sta avvenendo questa trasformazione?». Se, come già ribadito, l'informale è una struttura ampiamente differenziata, chi ed in quale misura sta godendo dei vantaggi derivanti dal processo di valorizzazione della terra in atto a Manzese?

Un'analisi che tenga conto della variabilità socio-economico-culturale e dunque dei diversi gradi di vulnerabilità di contesti nei quali le politiche di formalizzazione (o di *upgrading*) vanno ad operare, può consentire una lettura degli esiti di questi programmi in termini di *market eviction/market-driven displacement* (espulsione da parte delle forze di mercato) ed un'analisi più complessa dei fattori che determinano la scelta/la possibilità di restare o di vendere la proprietà sfruttando l'incremento del valore.

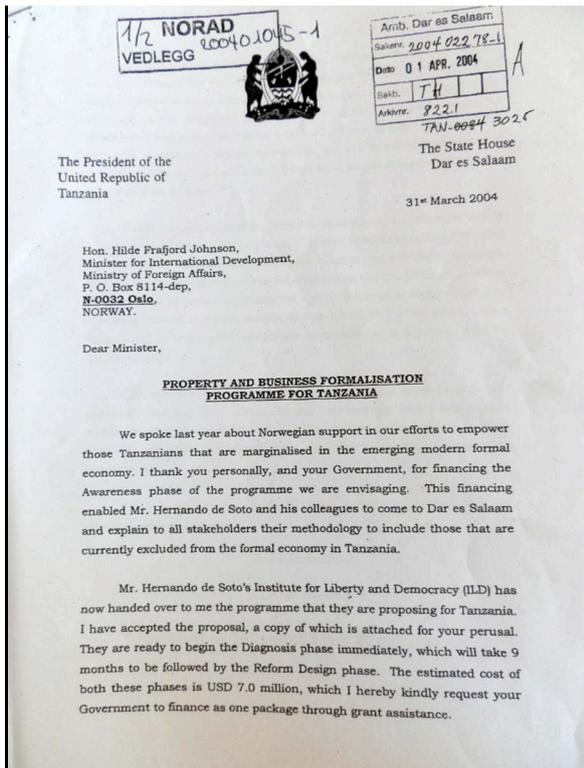
Se l'obiettivo finale di questo programma è quello di «contenere l'ulteriore crescita degli insediamenti non pianificati ed aumentare l'efficienza nel fornire servizi pubblici ai residenti» (Ministry of Land 2004), il lavoro di interviste svolto a Manzese, ha fatto emergere come la maggior parte delle persone che ha deciso

di lasciare Manzese negli ultimi anni sulla scia delle trasformazioni che stanno attraversando il quartiere, abbia scelto o sia stata condizionata a muoversi in quelle aree peri-urbane (ad es. Mbezi, Kimara) dove la disponibilità di spazio e la posizione, consentono di accedere a terre/proprietà di dimensioni maggiori e prezzi più economici rispetto alle aree interne. Si tratta di aree peri-urbane che risultano essere ancora, per la maggior parte, non pianificate e la cui occupazione «è un processo informalizzato, che avviene spesso in violazione di masterplan e norme ed informalmente approvato dallo Stato». (Roy 2005). Il caso di Dar es Salaam rivela come, paradossalmente, a concorrere a tale processo di peri-urbanizzazione siano proprio gli effetti di quelle politiche urbane che mirano formalmente al 'contenimento' degli insediamenti informali.

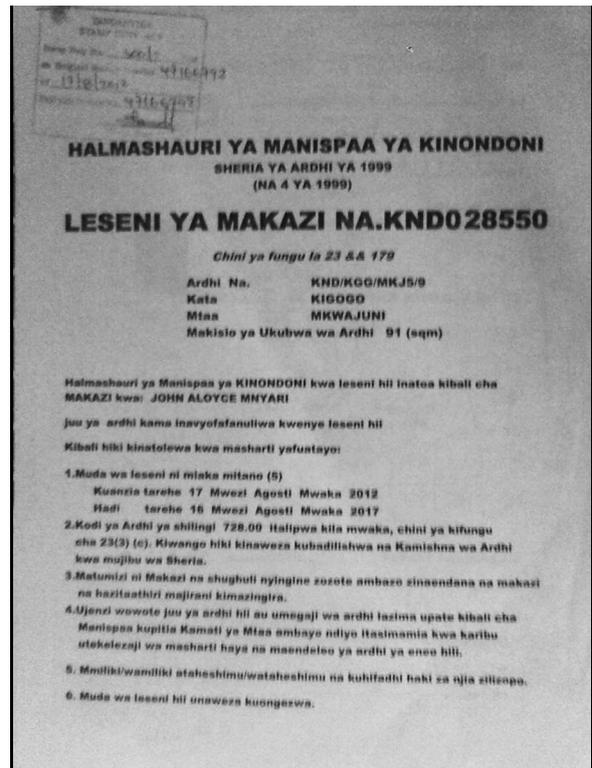
#### 4.3 Immagine 3: Visioni?

Le politiche adottate dal Governo tanzaniano nel corso del tempo per intervenire negli insediamenti informali (demolizione, *upgrading*, formalizzazione, ecc.), sono state influenzate da approcci internazionali (attraverso il sostegno finanziario da parte di Governi e Agenzie Internazionali), da contingenze politiche interne ma anche dalla progressiva occupazione da parte delle élite di insediamenti informali prima considerati dominio della marginalità urbana<sup>4</sup>. La storia di Manzese consente dunque una ricostruzione degli approcci e delle politiche con cui la pianificazione, con strumenti di piano e direttive, si è relazionata a quello che continua ad essere il più grande insediamento informale di Dar es Salaam. Nel 2011 Manzese è stata dichiarata *Redevelopment Area*, definizione che si tradurrà nella ricostruzione del quartiere secondo un Piano di *Redevelopment* del quale sarà responsabile la Municipalità di Kinondoni. Questa decisione si basa sul riconoscimento delle trasformazioni in atto a Manzese (*gentrification*) in seguito all'incremento del valore della terra nel quartiere, un valore che, secondo le autorità, non verrebbe pienamente sfruttato dagli attuali usi/costruzioni che occupano l'area. Il piano dovrebbe prevedere un nuovo sviluppo verticale dell'area con la realizzazione di edifici prevalentemente multipiano e la realizzazione di nuovi servizi, infrastrutture, edifici commerciali e uffici. Come afferma Roy (2009: 825-826) «il valore differenziale attaccato a ciò che è "formale" e ciò che è "informale" crea un patchwork

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4 Il rilascio delle Licenze Residenziali ad esempio, deve essere letto, secondo Kironde, insieme al Programma "20.000 Plots" avviato dal Governo nel 2002 con la finalità di mettere sul mercato nuovi lotti destinati (dati i criteri di accesso al programma) alle classi medio-alte. La concomitanza con le elezioni presidenziali in programma a dicembre 2005 in Tanzania, rendeva dunque necessarie politiche di accesso alla terra in grado di favorire anche i residenti più poveri degli insediamenti informali, garantendo così un ulteriore bacino di voti. Questa motivazione, sembra plausibilmente figurare, secondo Kironde, tra le giustificazioni di politica interna all'avvio del programma (intervista, 2012).



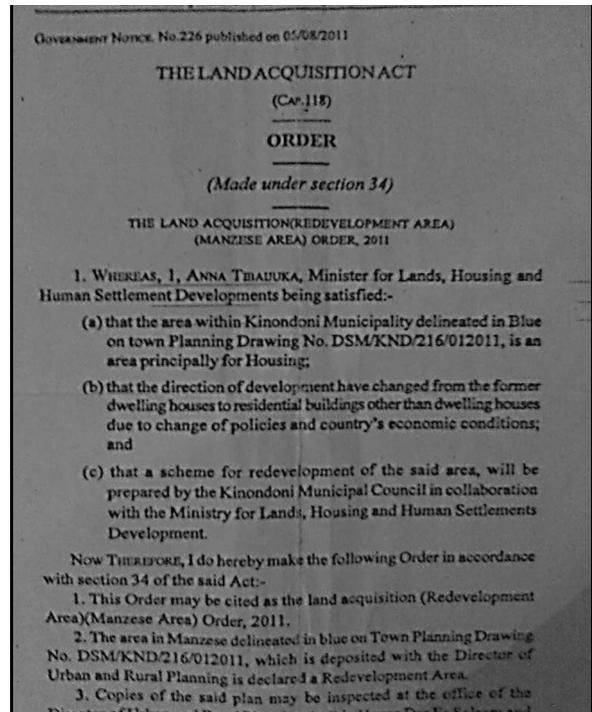
**Fig.1** Atto per la richiesta di supporto finanziario al Governo Norvegese da parte del Presidente della Tanzania per il Programma "Property and Business Formalisation Programme for Tanzania". Fonte: The Land Rights Research and Resources Institute (HAKIARDHI), Dar es Salaam.



**Fig.2** Copia di una Licenza Residenziale rilasciata nella Municipalità di Kinondoni. Fonte: Ufficio per il rilascio delle Licenze Residenziali nella Municipalità di Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam.



**Fig.3** Composizione di foto che ho scattato nel quartiere di Manzese. Al centro: elaborazione mappa di Dar es Salaam (fonte: Google Map), nella quale è evidenziata l'area di Manzese attraversata da Morogoro Road, una delle principali arterie urbane.



**Fig.4** Atto dell'ordine di acquisizione dell'area di Manzese dichiarata "Redevelopment Area". Fonte: Ministry of Land, Dar es Salaam.

di spazi valorizzati e devalorizzati che rappresentano la frontiera dell'accumulazione primitiva e della gentrification». Questa visione futura che il Governo ha per Manzese, consente forse di gettare nuova luce e dare un nuovo senso alle politiche di formalizzazione ovvero di svelare come al di là degli obiettivi dichiarati, questi interventi sembrano piuttosto aver preparato il campo alle ultime proposte di sviluppo urbano per il quartiere. La domanda che sembra emergere è: come possiamo leggere differentemente le premesse/esiti del Programma di LR e degli approcci di formalizzazione più in generale (così come delle passate politiche a Manzese) se iniziamo la narrazione delle tre immagini a partire da questo ultimo atto di acquisizione di Manzese? In che modo, ad esempio, il *Redevelopment Plan* di Manzese può sollecitare una riflessione sul valore d'uso/valore di scambio in gioco nei territori informali?

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Beatrice A. De Carli

# Informal trajectories of housing in San Siro, Milan

## Housing, Urban regeneration, Urban practices

This paper addresses the tensions between informal housing practices and their institutional representations by exploring the public housing estate known as San Siro in Milan, Italy. Here, tensions and discrepancies between citizen practices and institutional representations particularly materialize in the housing spaces left vacant in the neighbourhood, where multiple forms of appropriation of unoccupied/unassigned dwellings are undertaken by individuals and organized groups, against a background of over-simplifying images produced by local governments emphasising the demarcation between 'legal' and 'illegal' housing activities. Within this context, the work presented here attempts to formulate an inquiry into the multiple existing paths of access to housing, and to stage ground for the formulation of more critical representations of the housing landscape of San Siro. The focus of attention is thus shifted from 'squatting' activities and the forms of their institutional classification, towards the social relations underpinning these activities and their impacts upon the lives of dwellers.

Based on fieldwork, interviews, and mapping investigations as a base for research, the paper aims to explore the contribution of informal housing practices to the shaping of urban change in San Siro. At the same time it aims to engage with discourses on urban informality to finally assess how the reconnoitring of existing informal trajectories of housing can provide at least an insight into the 'mode of urbanization' played out in the city.

### Representative Deceptions

«Occupare una casa cancella un diritto»  
(Aler, 2007)

«La casa è un diritto. #OccupySfitto»  
(OccupySfitto, 2012)

In 2007, the regional public agency Aler<sup>1</sup> launched a security plan entitled: *Occupare una Casa Cancella un Diritto*<sup>2</sup>, aimed at 'confronting and preventing illicit activities' relating to the public housing stock managed by the agency both in the city of Milan and the surrounding urban region. The 'illicit' activities in question are predominantly related the residential use of vacant flats in public housing estates, without formal permission (Aler 2010). Since 2007, Aler's security plan has been accompanied by an awareness campaign that strategically operates on the level of representation – providing a clear portrayal of ongoing 'unlawful occupations' of public flats as frauds that result in formal occupancy-right holders being deprived of the possibility to access social rental

housing.

In Milan, both the campaign and security plan have been subject to intense debate. Putting this debate overly schematically, Aler's discourse has been particularly contextualised in relation to the long term running down of public housing in terms of both quality and numbers. In fact, whereas at the end of the 1970s the city's public housing stock counted approximately 100.000 units, the same amounts today to 75.959 units (Cognetti, Manfredini 2013). At the same time, in 2013 a staggering 23.380 households were on the local authorities' housing waiting lists, whilst 8.791 public housing units resulted vacant (Dazzi 2013). Given this context, it has been argued that official 'anti-squatting' campaigns are connected to precise knowledge dynamics where a wide set of housing-related problems are articulated, and solutions provided, by setting a security-oriented narrative that categorically frames informal housing practices as the breeding ground for a struggle between legality and illegality.

Whilst both the security plan and the campaign address a complex and critical matter, and an unquestionable array of housing rights controversies, these have also largely contributed to polarising public debate on the subject of informal housing. It can be argued that such campaigns strongly stigmatise

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1 Aler, Azienda Lombarda Edilizia Residenziale, is the semi-public agency in charge of managing the public housing stock in the region of Lombardy where Milan is located.

2 Squatting a House Annuls a Right (author's transl.).

individual occupants, while simultaneously concealing the role of public actors, as well as formal and informal groups and organisations, in the processes of providing and regulating access to decent and affordable housing. Furthermore, on-going forms of propaganda are increasingly defective in light of the current housing problems in Milan. These include the enduring lack of investments in public and social housing, the growing gap between the housing needs of low-income households and the available public housing stock, and the parallel superabundance of vacant and underused flats across the public sector (Cognetti, Manfredini 2013; Cognetti 2014).

In light of these dynamics and the multiple processes of both solidarity and exploitation that trigger the proliferation of informal housing solutions in the public housing context, it can be argued that the institutional emphasis on the dichotomy between the 'legal/planned' and 'illegal/unplanned' sectors is largely unhelpful. This fails not only to address the multiple relations between policy-planning and the production of informal housing solutions, but also to recognize the existing power dynamics that are present within the processes of informal housing. However this is a dichotomy that is easily retained, and figures widely in the debate about housing practices, and particularly in the context of public housing estates.

This paper proposes a reflection in the making, exploring the possibility of shaping more nuanced and critical approaches to informal housing dynamics in Milan. Whilst much is debated around the legality of housing practices and spaces, there has been little focus on the impacts of informal housing transactions on the lives of residents. Furthermore, there has been little consideration on how polarized institutional representations contribute not only to shaping on-going housing practices, but also to reproducing the underlying relations of inequality and exploitation that they claim to address. Whereas much has been written on similar topics across 'development' and 'urban informality' literature, the implications of these interrelations have been applied less to the European urban context, and the multiple manifestations of informality within it.

In reaction, this paper aims to provide an insight into the multiple and diverse manifestations of housing informality, and to raise questions on the societal underpinnings and effects of informal housing practices in Milan<sup>3</sup>. Toward this end, it develops a typology of actors involved in the processes of accessing/exiting public housing, and provides an insight into the mechanisms underlying informal housing. Its research is based on a case in the public housing neighbourhood known as San Siro<sup>4</sup>. In this context,

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3 In this paper, all forms of access to that are not in compliance with the main legal frameworks will be termed 'informal', rather than 'illegal'.

4 Research for this paper was conducted in the context of an action research workshop called Mapping San Siro,

informal access to housing assumes several meanings: it satisfies the housing needs and aspirations of many people; it is a form of political struggle; it is a means of profit, coercion, and exploitation. Using the case of San Siro as a reference, the paper thus seeks ways of articulating differing, deviating visions of informal housing practices in the public sector, as a means for challenging the current frames of institutional representation and policy-production.

### **Informal trajectories of housing**

«I see what I see very clearly, but what am I looking at?» (Hamdi 2010: 170)

In San Siro, the possible ways of accessing the public housing stock are evidently multiple, as housing in the neighbourhood pertains to a plurality of modes of management. Part of San Siro's total housing supply has been and continues to be assigned to the private market through scattered property transfers, typically implemented through individual sales and 'right-to-buy' mechanisms. Nevertheless, most of the housing stock is publicly owned and remains within the social rental sector. Within this stock, the largest portion of housing units is given for social rental to households who sit in public authorities' waiting lists; a portion of it is managed by the public but allocated to 'special categories' (for instance, police workers); finally an increasing number of flats is owned by public authorities but operated by co-operatives and third sector organizations that function outside of the public housing allocations ranking systems. Lastly, a significant number of public apartments sits vacant and boarded up – either because the units are in the process of being transferred to the private market, or because the internal standards of dwellings have been labelled as inadequate for social rental due to their dimensions or state of repair<sup>5</sup>.

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undertaken in Milan in January-April 2013 and co-curated by the Author together with Francesca Cognetti. The underlying motivation for this initiative was to support the dialogue within and across different local and municipal organisations, by generating information that could reinforce their understanding of the neighbourhood's problems and of their potential roles within them, and enhance their power to operate effectively in San Siro. Particularly in the course of one week between February and March 2013, workshop participants mapped and photographed the neighbourhood in collaboration with partner organisations, and conducted a total of over 80 semi-structured interviews with residents and key stakeholders. All these activities were oriented toward three main themes: Spaces of coexistence and conflict; Public/private neighbourhood; Underuse and vacancy. In the course of 2013, the workshop Mapping San Siro triggered the formation of a university-led action-research collective that has been active in the neighbourhood for over one year. Further information on the on-going activities of Laboratorio Mapping San Siro can be found on the project's Facebook page, entitled 'Mapping San Siro'.

5 Out of approximately 5.000 housing units in the neighbourhood, different sources report that the number of vacant flats is currently floating between 400 and 500 units (Cognetti-De Carli 2013).

At the same time, however, some of these vacant apartments are constantly reintroduced to the overall 'active' housing stock through informal mechanisms related to extra- and semi-legal practices of occupation. The same practices also tap into the publicly managed, social-rental portion of the total housing stock and, occasionally, into the private stock.

Thus a crucial theme emerging in San Siro is that despite the existing regulations intended to prevent any transfer of occupancy and/or tenancy, many transfers are ostensibly made on a day-to-day basis, and both vacant and non-vacant public housing units are readily exchanged through a number of informal transactions. Evidence from fieldwork also suggests that various groups play a role in facilitating, obstructing, or manipulating these transactions. As well, it emerged during fieldwork that these different actors play diverging and often conflicting roles in leveraging on informal housing practices as a means to either reproduce, or contest, existing inequalities and forms of exploitations within the space of public housing.

With regards to informal housing practices, the condition that most policy responses refer to is that of 'unlawful occupation' or 'squatting' – meaning that an individual or family have entered a public housing unit without permission. However, in the course of fieldwork, it increasingly appeared that this description is pertinent to only a minority of situations. In most of the cases, along with informal residents (generally people who need housing, frequently homeless and low-income households), we can picture a much wider and more nuanced network of actors involved in the process<sup>6</sup>.

A first relevant group is allegedly that of the 'providers' of flats – formal tenants who might either decide or be forced to sublet their dwellings to others. These might or might not be in coercive relations with (organised groups of) 'speculators' who benefit from a detailed knowledge of the neighbourhood's dynamics in terms of patterns of vacancy/occupancy – as well as from a profound knowledge of exiting housing needs, and of the mechanisms of access to public housing – to manage informal occupations as an opportunity for profit. Typically, this takes place by establishing/forcing informal landlord-tenant relations with the occupants.

Additionally, some of the informal occupations in the neighbourhood are backed by organised 'advocates', including a number of groups who act out of political motivation and explicitly support those who squat 'by necessity' (i.e. as a response to homelessness). For the purposes of illustrating the informal housing landscape of San Siro, the connection of political advocates with informal landlords/speculators is extremely deceiving, yet it figures widely in both the institutional representation of the neighbourhood's dynamics and in local debates. However a distinction should be made, as whereas the latter

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<sup>6</sup> The following typology partially draws from the work of Ahmed A. Soliman in Egypt. See: Soliman 2004.

operate by imposing profitable relationships with the occupants, the first are grounded in both a city-wide network of activists and a localised mutual-help network that provides, for instance, information and legal advice on housing and particularly on questions of eviction and repossession.

The coexistence of such different dynamics of exploitation of/ solidarity with informal occupants is echoed in the multiple positions of San Siro residents and citizen groups in relation to the processes of informal access to housing. In fact, neighbours often play a key role in supporting or rejecting occupants, for instance by reporting or not reporting occupations to local authorities. At the same time, several residents conveyed that informal housing practices deeply affect the neighbourhood's security, while others lamented that the on-going housing situation results in expanded living costs for formal residents, who might end up covering electricity and heating costs for non-registered occupants of the same building. In many case, elderly residents lamented the perception of risk related to the possibility that someone might forcibly enter their flat while they are not present.

In addition, the material and symbolic contrasts and alliances among residents are reverberated in the presence of multiple 'mediators' who broker the relations between the state and informal dwellers, each defining different strategies of support/mediation in relation to different occupants' groups. For example, several residents reasoned that trade unions operating in the neighbourhood play a topical role in protecting 'squatters by necessity' from evictions, and facilitating their legal recognition as formal public housing tenants. As a result, many reported that only those with substantial information and social networks in the neighbourhood could fully exercise their right to housing.

Finally, and crucially, some San Siro residents articulated a sophisticated critique of the role of public authorities as unaccountable, far-removed, yet pivotal 'regulators', who possess the fundamental agency to include/exclude residents from the framework of legality, as well as to re-insert certain housing trajectories within a path of rightfulness and recognition. Therefore, within the sole 'informal' sector, occupancy conditions vary considerably: from direct flat occupation, to informal tenancy (where 'landlords' are either organised groups or formal title holders), to the so-called 'administrative' occupations (implying a sort of semi-legal recognition from public agencies, obtained upon the payment of monetary indemnities), to situations of sub-rental which often generate conditions of overcrowding.

Within this complex housing landscape, two important features can be identified, that weave together largely differing positions and experiences in accessing/using/managing the public housing stock in San Siro. The first feature emerges through the residents' accounts of the many existing avenues of expulsion from formal positions within the public housing sector – for instance, because of pro-

longed arrearage or overcrowding. In the course of interviews, residents (and particularly non-native Italian speakers) often portrayed such trajectories of expulsion from the realm of legality as largely indecipherable. The second, related feature regards the variability of re-combinations embedded in this picture. In fact, many residents of San Siro seem to have experienced multiple positions within the existing range of possible housing solutions. As reported widely in the course of interviews, several dwellers have happened to move in and out the formal and informal sectors, depending on changes in their income, family composition, networks of relations within the neighbourhood, and affiliation to housing movements, trade unions, and other local and city-wide support structures. Both these features of San Siro's housing landscape suggest that informal housing situations are not only multifaceted but also mobile, and interlinked with continuous processes of restructuring of legal frameworks, social bonds, and individual life conditions.

### **Toward a reformulation. Multitudes and interdependencies**

While 'unlawful occupations' are certainly a vital issue in relation to providing a critical evaluation of the current state of public housing and housing rights in Milan, it is also the case that the broad nature, causes and impacts of housing informality within the public housing sector is potentially subject to multiple interpretations. Thus a thorough reconfiguration of the notion and representation of informal housing practices can lead in many directions, both conceptually and politically. Rather than engaging in the debate regarding the shape of housing rights, however, this paper argues that in order to advance a critical urbanist account of how informal housing practices occur vis-à-vis their institutional representation, one has to emphasize the significance of at least two analytical points.

The first is the recognition of the multiple forms and manifestations of informality (Roy 2004 and 2009 *inter alia*), and a thorough understanding of any spatial context as the coexistence of multiple life trajectories (Massey 2005). Behind the generic notion of 'squatting' or 'illegal occupation', in fact, a wide array of experiences can be gathered, often constituting relevant disruptions to the oversimplified and biased representations of contemporary housing experiences in San Siro. This argument acknowledges the limitations embedded in a simplistic, 'legal vs. illegal' understanding of on-going housing practices, and points to the need to enrich the terms of reference of institutional representations, if any public response is to be given to the on-going patterns of exploitation and prevarication that appeared to be most evident within San Siro.

The second point which needs emphasizing is that contemporary processes of informal housing are not only labelled but also shaped (and potentially manipulated) by a state-led form, which primarily means that background policy and management

issues should be brought to the fore in an evaluation of the multiple forms and impacts of informality. This potentially leads to the acknowledgment of the many existing forms of interdependency between public policy, and informal housing practices. A first and basic manifestation of such interdependency is, for instance, the enduring running down of public housing and the parallel superabundance of vacant flats in the public sector – which is accompanied by multiple dysfunctions in the mechanisms that should allow for assigning public housing units to those in need. A second aspect of this interdependency is related to the existing policy limitations that prevent many low-income households (such as newly arrived immigrants) from accessing decent and affordable housing, and particularly to entering the public housing waiting lists. An additional and subtler component of this reflection is that the boundaries between the formal and informal sectors often appear to be more blurred, mobile, and arbitrary than they are officially portrayed. In particular, this fuzzy mobility of the formal/informal boundary ostensibly brings some advantages to the public management system – allowing at least for a certain level of 'unruly flexibility' in the management and allocation of public housing units, occasionally resulting in both the suspension of residents' rights, and increased public earnings<sup>7</sup>. Upon this basis, it seems possible to argue that in San Siro, as possibly elsewhere, the legalization/formalisation or treatment of informal housing practices is a complex political struggle (Roy 2005), which necessarily implies a process of open re-negotiation of the terms and categories of public discourse.

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7 For instance, several residents reported that they have been occupying public units for many years (up to twenty in one specific case), without permission, yet with formal acknowledgement of their presence within the public housing supply. In their own account, these particular groups of residents have declared their position to public authorities and – upon the recognition of their conditions of 'necessity' – have been repaying Aler with an 'indemnity of occupation' that adds up to the payment of monthly rents. This process is activated by public authorities whenever informal occupants self-denounce their position of 'illegality', and are simultaneously recognised as 'occupants by necessity' or 'administrative occupants'. Supposedly, this mechanism should allow for a quick transition from a condition of 'illegality' and tenure uncertainty, to one of 'legality' and tenure security. However, public authorities often delay the process of legalisation, leaving residents in a fundamental state of uncertainty that is also characterised by stigmatisation, increased life costs, and continual exposure to the risk of eviction.

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# Practices in-action

Pratiche in azione ..... Carlo Cellamare

Pratiche di pubblico tra cittadini e istituzioni: l'esperienza del movimento  
"I cantieri che vogliamo" a Palermo ..... Luisa Tuttolomondo

Pratiche simetne. Spontaneità dei processi vs intenzionalità del ricercatore-in-azione ..... Laura Saija

Ricerca-azione tra etnografia e auto-etnografia: pratiche dell'abitare in una  
periferia milanese ..... Erika Lazzarino





Carlo Cellamare

# Pratiche in-azione

## Urban practices, Project, Action-research, Daily life

Town planning was born as a discipline of modernity and has pursued over time a functionalist and categorizing rationality, which has pushed it distant from the real processes that cross the city. While planning continues to search for an effectiveness of the urban machine, it has gradually moved away from the objective of improving the conditions of living. The urban planning, as well, must increasingly deal with the processes that develop in the territories and that involve the inhabitants, more or less influenced by the great socio-economic global processes. Inhabitants shape spaces or appropriate (or they are conditioned from) them through the practices of everyday life, which also express important projects. These can be structured into self-organized processes in which the inhabitants were the protagonists of urban transformation and appropriation of places. The transition to the field research or to involvement in processes of action research is critical to the designer and researcher, and involves a lot of methodological attention.

### Introduzione

L'esperienza di lavoro e di ricerca sul campo, nel momento in cui il ricercatore o il progettista (o genericamente l'urbanista) si interroga sulla dinamica reale dei processi di progettazione e di costruzione delle politiche, e in particolare nel momento in cui si confronta sulle forme di coinvolgimento degli abitanti o anche più semplicemente (assumendo una posizione più critica e indiretta, e meno coinvolta) sul punto di vista dell'abitare, pone molti interrogativi su una serie di categorie culturali e operative che vengono spesso date per scontate ed acquisite, a cominciare dall'idea stessa di progetto e dal ruolo che svolge il progettista o il ricercatore (che generalmente sono due soggetti diversi, ma che in un processo di ricerca-azione tendono ad avvicinarsi). Le note che seguono non intendono ricostruire un quadro sistematico, ma vogliono affrontare alcuni nodi problematici particolarmente rilevanti del processo di progettazione e di costruzione delle politiche a partire proprio da ciò che il lavoro sul campo mette in evidenza. Queste note aprono quindi a possibili successivi approfondimenti e intendono sollevare un dibattito.

### Città e progettualità delle pratiche

Tradizionalmente, l'urbanistica interpreta l'azio-

ne pubblica come un'azione diretta o indiretta<sup>1</sup> da parte del soggetto pubblico nel controllare, definire, orientare o anche agire la trasformazione dello spazio urbano. Se prima questo avveniva principalmente attraverso i piani e la pianificazione, oggi questo sembra passare attraverso le "politiche". Tra l'altro questo appare come un uso distorto della riflessione sulle politiche, sul loro senso profondo, che aveva portato a considerarle (Crosta 1998, 2009) come un esito eventuale di un processo di interazione tra soggetti diversi che usano e agiscono il territorio, con progettualità diverse (e che solo incidentalmente convergono su un interesse collettivo – non tanto

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<sup>1</sup> Negli anni passati, ma ancora nel recente passato, vi è stato un ampio dibattito sul tema della *governance*, termine iperutilizzato, di origine anglosassone, che di fronte all'inefficacia delle logiche di "governo" e delle sue modalità di azione, ha sembrato costituire una panacea per tutti i mali, rappresentando (ma qui le accezioni, le declinazioni, le interpretazioni sono veramente tante) una sorta di gestione e di azione indiretta sui processi e sulle relazioni tra i soggetti, affinché possano convergere su decisioni condivise e che tengano in conto l'interesse pubblico. Nelle declinazioni prevalenti e nell'uso comune, la *governance* ha finito per rappresentare un'azione indiretta sempre nella scansione (quasi "discendente") tra soggetto pubblico e altri soggetti (che in questo caso si moltiplicano, hanno una loro autonomia e una loro forza), sempre con obiettivi di efficacia; senza mettere in discussione radicalmente le modalità dei processi decisionali.

pubblico – che, come tale, è un esito esso stesso del processo). Le politiche rimangono, invece, pur sempre, nelle interpretazioni correnti e prevalenti, nella sfera dell'intenzionalità e dell'azione diretta (o indiretta) del soggetto pubblico nei confronti di un contesto che ne dovrebbe raccogliere le indicazioni. Osservando i processi reali di costruzione e trasformazione della città non possiamo non tener conto di una maggiore complessità nel pensare all'azione pubblica e all'azione progettuale; maggiore complessità dettata dall'interazione di soggetti diversi, dagli effetti imprevisi del rapporto tra politiche pubbliche e dinamiche socio-economiche, dal piegare strumentalmente a fini privati e a favore di interessi economici le politiche pubbliche, dal ruolo del tempo nello sviluppo del progetto, dal carattere processuale di queste dinamiche, dal ruolo delle culture urbane, dei modelli di abitare promossi dal mercato immobiliare, dei modelli sociali prevalenti, ecc. Ma anche non possiamo non tener conto di uno scollamento tra i processi di costruzione e trasformazione della città, le modalità con cui questa viene "progettata" e con cui si costruiscono le politiche e, infine, le modalità con cui la città viene realmente vissuta ed appropriata e continuamente ritrasformata dalle pratiche urbane (Cellamare 2008). Pratiche urbane che, oltre ad una geografia di valori e di significati, esprimono una forte progettualità. Questo vale, in primo luogo, per le azioni collettive più o meno organizzate ed intenzionali, ma vale anche per le pratiche ordinarie, quotidiane, di uso ed anche di consumo della città che apparentemente non sembrano determinare grandi cambiamenti nella conformazione fisica e strutturale della città, ma che in realtà incidono fortemente sulla caratterizzazione dei luoghi: processi di adattamento, di appropriazione degli spazi, di riutilizzazione di contesti abbandonati, di manutenzione e cura dei luoghi, in forma permanente ma in molti casi anche in forma temporanea, ecc.. In queste situazioni, il progetto si sviluppa nella dimensione dell'«agire», nel senso che Hannah Arendt dava a questa parola.

L'azione, d'altronde, è una modalità della conoscenza, ed è una forma di conoscenza progettuale.

Importanti sono quindi i processi di appropriazione e ri-appropriazione dei luoghi, che sono al contempo sia processi materiali e di trasformazione fisica sia processi culturali, immateriali e di attribuzione di un valore simbolico. Così come, dentro e fuori queste dinamiche di appropriazione, una particolare attenzione va rivolta ai processi di produzione sociale del "pubblico", che fondano una dimensione – quella "pubblica" – che spesso si sviluppa tutta al di fuori dei processi istituzionali e della democrazia formale.

### **L'espropriazione della capacità progettuale nella città moderna e i processi di trasformazione della città contemporanea**

La città è un prodotto sociale esito di processi e interazioni, materiali e immateriali, stratificati nella storia e nelle vicende umane, soprattutto dei suoi abitanti. Questa considerazione, sicuramente fondante e in-

dubbiamente condivisibile, deve essere però chiarita e definita, altrimenti rimane generica e anche ambigua.

Se, da una parte, la città può essere considerata un prodotto collettivo di alta qualità, dall'altra sappiamo anche e sperimentiamo concretamente che la città può essere anche molto brutta, faticosa, violenta, oppressiva e discriminante. La visione romantica di una città prodotta dall'azione dei suoi abitanti, in termini positivi e collaborativi, crolla miseramente nel confronto con la realtà. La città è ovviamente anche il luogo dove si dispiegano gli interessi privati e quelli economici, che nel tempo si sono strutturati nell'economia di mercato e oggi assumono i caratteri del capitalismo finanziario e del neoliberalismo. Allo stesso tempo, la città, luogo della convivenza complessa tra realtà sociali e politiche molto diverse, è anche un contesto fortemente "regolamentato" (originariamente proprio per gestire tale complessità della convivenza), dove si dispiegano le forme di controllo e regolazione da parte delle istituzioni e delle amministrazioni. La città è quindi un'arena dove interagiscono le forze economiche del mercato e del capitale, le regolazioni e le pianificazioni istituzionali, l'azione più o meno autonoma dei suoi abitanti e degli altri protagonisti della città: spesso confliggono, in alcuni casi trovano interessi comuni, in altri collaborano o negoziano.

Oggi i margini di un contributo progettuale, creativo o semplicemente concreto degli abitanti alla costruzione della città sono ancor più ristretti. Lo sviluppo della città moderna ha portato ad una progressiva e radicale espropriazione della capacità progettuale e creativa dei suoi abitanti. La trasformazione dello Stato moderno (a partire da quello francese), con l'introduzione della logica delle "competenze" (in termini tecnico-professionali e amministrativi) e dell'istituzionalizzazione delle professioni (Bourdieu 1994), ha definito con molta rigidità chi è autorizzato ad occuparsi della pianificazione e della costruzione della città. Allo stesso tempo, la crescente tecnicizzazione nella produzione edilizia e nella realizzazione delle opere ha aumentato il livello delle competenze tecniche richieste, sottraendolo alle capacità ordinarie e socialmente diffuse e limitandolo ad un ristretto gruppo di professionisti e a specifici sistemi economico-produttivi. La città moderna ha visto, poi, l'introduzione di strumenti forti di regolamentazione e costruzione della città e, attraverso la regolazione dello spazio, l'introduzione di logiche di controllo sull'organizzazione di vita e sui comportamenti sociali (Foucault 1975). Più recentemente, le forme del controllo e della regolazione dell'uso dello spazio hanno assunto caratteri più diffusi e subdoli che influenzano più minutamente e più efficacemente, anche se meno rigidamente, i comportamenti sociali. Infine, i meccanismi della rendita non sono rimasti più fattori passivi, ma fattori attivi di trasformazione e la città è diventata nel suo complesso un campo di azione economica e di realizzazione di profitti (e non solo per le logiche speculative). Queste dinamiche hanno dato vita ad una progressiva finanziarizzazio-

ne dei processi di costruzione della città (attraverso il sistema dei mutui e dei crediti, le cartolarizzazioni e le altre operazioni finanziarie, ecc.)<sup>2</sup> e alla trasformazione della città stessa in merce.

Tramite di una logica e di una politica del controllo ed effetto dei processi cui si è accennato, molto nella città è strutturato e predefinito e si traduce in un condizionamento estremamente forte e quotidiano della vita delle persone. Proprio lo spazio, predefinito nell'organizzazione degli usi, è uno degli "strumenti" o semplicemente il tramite e la mediazione di tale forte condizionamento<sup>3</sup>.

In questo contesto sembrerebbe che pochi siano gli spazi residuali di progettazione e di partecipazione attiva alla costruzione della città da parte degli abitanti.

D'altra parte, le persone che vivono e abitano la città non si adeguano automaticamente ad assecondare quanto nella città è strutturato; e, viceversa, assistiamo a continui processi di ridefinizione degli usi e della conformazione fisica, ma anche dei significati stessi degli spazi, che si realizzano attraverso le pratiche urbane, più o meno organizzate, e le forme di appropriazione dei luoghi. Spesso, proprio perché la città contemporanea comporta forti condizionamenti (di mercato o di controllo normativo), tali esperienze si sviluppano in forme conflittuali, con portati di intenzionalità politica di reazione e opposizione, come è nel caso delle occupazioni a scopo abitativo o delle più recenti occupazioni di luoghi di produzione culturale (cinema, teatri, ecc.). In altri casi, si inseriscono nelle pieghe della città non controllata o dismessa, come è nel caso degli usi temporanei, degli orti urbani o del riuso di edifici abbandonati o di altri luoghi scartati dalla modernità. In questo grande e diffuso "movimento urbano" sono insite profonde e ricche progettualità, risorse latenti quanto fondamentali per dare sia qualità che significati profondi ai luoghi che abitiamo e alla vita urbana quotidiana. Mi sembra di poter definire tre livelli o modalità in cui gli abitanti danno origine a pratiche alternative e producono progettualità significative. In primo luogo, vi è una dimensione connessa alle pratiche urbane, al modo cioè con cui gli abitanti vivono e usano lo spazio nella vita quotidiana. Se, da una parte, è vero che le pratiche urbane assecondano i condizionamenti spaziali, d'altra parte, è anche vero che esprimono in molti altri casi (in alcuni casi anche solo in forma tentativa) un agire che cerca di utilizzare gli spazi di vita quotidiana in "autonomia", cioè con riferimento alle proprie necessità, alle proprie utilità, ma anche a propri autonomi sistemi di valori e di significati, marcando una distanza rispetto ai condizionamenti socio-spaziali imposti o esistenti.

.....  
2 Per alcuni economisti ben il 40% del PIL di una grande metropoli occidentale è prodotto dal ciclo edilizio e di trasformazione urbana, non solo nelle sue componenti di produzione edilizia ma soprattutto nelle sue componenti finanziarie e indotte.

3 Pensiamo anche al concetto di "biopolitica" di Foucault (2001).

Quando le pratiche urbane diventano collettive ed organizzate si traducono in forme strutturate di appropriazione della città, ed è questa la seconda dimensione su cui volevo porre l'attenzione. Sono progettualità latenti che si radicano e si esprimono nell'azione concreta degli abitanti, che diventano fattuali, diventano "utopie concrete", pratiche e processi che spesso restituiscono al ciclo di vita della città alcuni "scarti" urbani, aree ed edifici abbandonati o dismessi, inutilizzati o da riqualificare (in alcuni casi anche da rendere produttivi).

Infine, ed è questo un terzo livello, i processi di riappropriazione e risignificazione della città possono essere supportati da forme di autorganizzazione, ovvero modalità strutturate e autoprodotte di organizzazione sociale finalizzate più o meno intenzionalmente alla costruzione e alla gestione dello spazio e delle attività che vi si svolgono.

Tutti questi processi sono, d'altronde, attraversati da molte ambiguità, che non bisogna sottovalutare, come spesso evidenzia la lettura critica sia delle forme e delle condizioni dell'abitare che delle idee di città sottese dalle pratiche urbane o dai processi partecipativi. Il problema della produzione culturale di alternative, a fronte della crisi delle ideologie e della difficoltà a produrre visioni di sistema anche da parte della società civile e non solo della politica e della pubblica amministrazione, rappresenta un nodo cruciale nella prospettiva di ripensamento della città.

#### **Dalla partecipazione all'autorganizzazione**

A partire dai primi anni '90 si è sviluppata in Italia una lunga stagione di partecipazione democratica e di esperienze di protagonismo sociale. Fu una stagione intensa, che durò fino alla metà del primo decennio del 2000, ricca di esperienze, di maturazione civica e politica, di impegno pubblico e sociale, di mobilitazione dei cittadini, di sperimentazione di strumenti e percorsi molto interessanti e innovativi. Innescò anche un profondo dibattito e molte linee di ricerca, a livello nazionale e internazionale, nonché la costituzione di reti di soggetti impegnati su questo fronte. Ma fu anche una stagione che si concluse con molta insoddisfazione e non pochi fallimenti. Le aperture si rivelarono non complete e reali, ci fu molta ambiguità e molte distorsioni nelle esperienze di partecipazione (a cominciare dall'esperienza romana che, avviata come una delle più interessanti di Italia, si rivelò una delle più ambigue e contraddittorie<sup>4</sup>), e la stagione venne ad una conclusione. Fu chiaro che la dimensione partecipativa e il coinvolgimento degli abitanti nelle decisioni era molto impegnativo (anche in senso politico, e non solo organizzativo) per le amministrazioni pubbliche, anzi troppo impegnativo, e che non c'era da aspettarsi un impegno totale e profondo se non da parte di quelle più illuminate e coinvolte politicamente.

Bisogna peraltro riconoscere anche i limiti intrinseci della partecipazione. La democrazia partecipativa è

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4 Si veda a questo proposito Aa.Vv. (2007).

stata spesso interpretata come una forma di mediazione tra la democrazia rappresentativa, che è quella che caratterizza in questa fase storica i nostri sistemi istituzionali e rispetto alla quale non si riesce ad identificare un modello alternativo, e la democrazia diretta, spesso auspicata ma mai totalmente realizzata. È una situazione di mediazione che però, poi, in fase deliberativa, si incanala generalmente nei percorsi della democrazia rappresentativa di cui recupera tutti i limiti. Questo spinge a limitare l'apertura dei processi decisionali ad ambiti ristretti o addirittura irrilevanti. Nel campo urbano e della progettazione architettonica la dimensione partecipativa ha avuto un suo ampio campo di applicazione, sotto forma di progettazione partecipata. Nella maggior parte dei casi si tratta di percorsi *top-down* con spazi definiti e limitati, sebbene comunque interessanti, di decisione e di intersezione di percorsi invece di tipo *bottom-up*.

Vi sono quindi alcuni limiti intrinseci nell'idea stessa di partecipazione, soprattutto se di origine istituzionale, nel momento in cui non vengono ripensate le forme della democrazia e del dialogo politico, o non viene mantenuto alto il livello del conflitto e della mobilitazione sociale (Cellamare 2011a).

Negli anni che sono seguiti a quella stagione così intensa è calata l'attenzione sul tema della partecipazione, si sono ridotte le esperienze e – salvo alcune realtà particolarmente illuminate e intelligenti – molte amministrazioni hanno ridotto se non azzerato il proprio impegno concreto in questa direzione, sebbene ampiamente dichiarato nei propri programmi elettorali o presente nei sistemi normativi.

Negli ultimi anni sta riemergendo nuovamente con forza il desiderio e la necessità di partecipazione, dettata forse anche dalla crisi di quella politica che non riesce a dare risposte ai cittadini e ha smarrito l'“interesse pubblico”, così come testimonia la forte e crescente attenzione sul tema dei “beni comuni”, a cominciare dalla vicenda del referendum sull'acqua pubblica. A parte esperienze interessanti di partecipazione “tradizionale” (che pur sempre ci sono e danno contributi importanti), movimenti e abitanti organizzati, richiedendo ancora e nuovamente uno spazio per poter partecipare alle decisioni, ma anche più in generale la ricostruzione di uno “spazio pubblico” di confronto e discussione, hanno per lo più perseguito due strade.

Da una parte, hanno elevato la mobilitazione ed il conflitto, sviluppando una molteplicità di vertenze locali e agendo in forma organizzata sia contro i grandi operatori sia contro l'amministrazione stessa, riconosciuta spesso come “connivente” delle grandi operazioni immobiliari e finanziarie che stanno travolgendo le città e incapace di una politica che non sia succube degli interessi economici. Spesso comitati e associazioni si organizzano in reti e strutture per rendere più forte la propria azione.

Dall'altra, avendo riconosciuto che le attuali democrazie occidentali non hanno gli strumenti per difendersi da questi processi, che hanno un carattere globale, molti perseguono la strada dell'autorganiz-

zazione, dell'azione in totale autonomia. Questo ha dato origine ad un vasto movimento di riappropriazione di luoghi e spazi della città, che non è solo una presa di “possesso”, quanto un rimettere nel ciclo di vita della città spazi e luoghi abbandonati, inutilizzati, sottoutilizzati, degradati, potenzialmente interessanti, per rispondere ad esigenze sociali diffuse (il bisogno di verde o di spazi per le attività sportive e culturali, il bisogno di spazi pubblici e luoghi di incontro, ma anche il bisogno abitativo, la domanda di casa), sviluppando un'idea di città ed un modello di convivenza che si pone come alternativo alla città del consumo, soggetta agli interessi e alle pressioni prevalenti del mercato e degli interessi economici: dagli orti urbani alle aree verdi autocostruite o autogestite, dalle occupazioni a scopo abitativo alle fabbriche recuperate e ai luoghi di produzione culturale (cinema e teatri) abbandonati o soggetti a vendita che diventano fulcro di una vita sociale e culturale, ecc. Sono esperienze molto diverse tra di loro, e con progetti politici e “culture di pubblico” differenti, ma che costituiscono allo stesso tempo forme di riappropriazione della città e processi di risignificazione dei luoghi.

#### **Il punto di vista della “vita quotidiana”**

Il lavoro sul campo e i processi di ricerca-azione permettono di assumere un punto di vista particolarmente importante, quello della “vita quotidiana” (Jedlowski 2000, 2003, 2005), che altrimenti sfugge a chi studia o lavora in contesti che conosce indirettamente o focalizzandosi soltanto sugli aspetti fisici e materiali.

Il punto di vista della “vita quotidiana” è fondamentale, per diversi motivi (anche ovvi, ma che per l'urbanistica non sono sempre ovvi, in termini sia operativi che interpretativi e quindi metodologici). In primo luogo, quello della “vita quotidiana” è il punto di vista attraverso il quale si possono cogliere le condizioni dell'abitare e la città per come viene vissuta; focalizzando l'attenzione sull'organizzazione nel/del tempo e dello/nello spazio<sup>5</sup>. Questo non è solo un aspetto interpretativo, ma è anche (e forse soprattutto) un obiettivo dell'azione progettuale e, in generale, dell'azione dell'urbanista. L'obiettivo fondamentale dell'urbanista deve essere il miglioramento delle condizioni dell'abitare, delle condizioni di vita degli abitanti; che non corrisponde automaticamente ad un'assetica maggiore efficienza della città.

In secondo luogo, il punto di vista della “vita quotidiana” permette di cogliere le pratiche urbane. Le pratiche urbane costituiscono un *medium* interpretativo che va oltre la semplice dimensione degli “usi” dello spazio e oltre le categorizzazioni funzionali dell'urbanistica moderna (Cellamare 2001b). Le pratiche urbane si pongono all'intersezione tra materiale e simbolico e permettono di tenere insieme queste due dimensioni: da una parte gli usi e la fisicità dello spazio, dall'altra i valori simbolici, gli immaginari, i

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<sup>5</sup> Ovvero sull'organizzazione dell'abitare nel tempo e nello spazio.

modelli sociali e le culture urbane che permeano lo spazio (e ne sono viceversa condizionati).

Questo comporta metodi e strumenti di indagine differenti. Ad esempio, per studiare l'organizzazione della vita quotidiana e le pratiche urbane, potremo guardare ai percorsi, ai luoghi di frequentazione e alle modalità d'uso degli spazi anche a seconda delle categorie prevalenti di persone<sup>6</sup> e a seconda dei tempi della giornata (o di altri archi temporali)<sup>7</sup>, al senso dei luoghi, agli spazi contesi e ai conflitti, alle storie di vita e alle storie dei luoghi (considerando che ogni luogo è una stratificazione di significati ed è l'esito dell'intreccio delle vite delle persone nella quotidianità e nelle successioni storiche)<sup>8</sup>, ecc.

Le pratiche urbane, d'altronde, sono caratterizzate da forti ambiguità. L'ambiguità può essere considerato un fattore caratterizzante e ineliminabile della vita quotidiana: "[...] i gruppi umani vivono secondo le modalità dell'ambiguità. [...] Il regno dell'ambiguità è anche il regno della banalità del quotidiano" (Lefebvre 1977: 252-253). L'ambiguità esclude a sua volta la coscienza dell'ambiguità ed uno degli obiettivi del ricercatore è anche quello di rivelare tali ambiguità e di riportarle ad una evidenza e ad una riflessione collettiva<sup>9</sup>.

Le pratiche sono quindi allo stesso tempo innovative e ripetitive, un mix di routine e di invenzioni costanti. In terzo luogo, il punto di vista della "vita quotidiana" permette di cogliere proprio quelle progettualità esistenti e quelle risorse che il territorio esprime e che devono costituire il punto di partenza per ripensare

i territori e le politiche; anzi che sono parte integrante dei processi di politiche. Questa dimensione ha quindi una grande rilevanza per l'urbanistica e ha importanti implicazioni anche operative.

In particolare, poi, permette di sviluppare una dimensione "valutativa" (La Cecla, Zanini 2012), relativamente agli aspetti spaziali (come viene vissuto lo spazio), agli aspetti funzionali (ad esempio, sul buon funzionamento dei trasporti, della mobilità, dei servizi) e alle politiche (ad esempio: certe politiche – ad esempio sul commercio – funzionerebbero? Sarebbero efficaci? Raggiungerebbero l'obiettivo – e quale – o avrebbero degli effetti collaterali indesiderati?).

Ma la cosa veramente importante è che assumere questo punto di vista permette di studiare il rapporto tra vita quotidiana e suoi condizionamenti (come sottolineava Lefebvre), il rapporto tra i processi socio-economici e le condizioni della vita quotidiana (come sottolineava Marx), perché lo spazio e l'organizzazione spazio-temporale della vita diventano anche il tramite (il *medium*, la catena di trasmissione) tra i grandi processi socio-economici (oggi globali) e le forme dell'abitare. Cogliere e interpretare questi rapporti significa anche rivelarne le problematicità, i punti critici e i punti su cui fare leva per affrontarli e metterli in crisi<sup>10</sup>. Andare a riferirsi alla "vita quotidiana", ai "processi di individualizzazione" e al "corpo a corpo quotidiano" (Agamben 2007) serve per capire meglio i processi e i condizionamenti e quindi come opporvisi (e non per un semplice fatto intellettuale).

Dice Lefebvre (1977: 260): "Studiare la quotidianità, vuol dire cambiarla. Cambiare la quotidianità, vuol dire portare alla luce e al linguaggio le sue confusioni, vuol dire far apparire, dunque scoppiare, i suoi conflitti latenti. È dunque contemporaneamente una teoria e una pratica, una critica e un'azione. La critica della vita quotidiana contiene e precipita una decisione, la più generale e la più rivoluzionaria, quella di rendere insopportabili le ambiguità, e di metamorfizzare ciò che passa per il più immutabile nell'uomo, perché senza contorni precisi".

Da questo punto di vista, le pratiche urbane e le progettualità che esprimono i territori possono essere un campo di forte innovazione sociale, dove si gioca una dinamica di immaginazione e appropriazione. Dice ancora Lefebvre (1977: 263): "Le forme spazio-temporali saranno – salvo esperienza contraria – inventate e proposte dalla prassi. L'immaginazione deve manifestarsi; non l'immaginario che permette la fuga e l'evasione, che trasporta ideologie, ma l'immaginario che s'investe nell'appropriazione (del tempo, dello spazio, della vita fisiologica, del desiderio)"

### Posizionamenti (del ricercatore)

In conclusione, può essere utile sviluppare alcune

6 Qualcuno le ha definite le "popolazioni" (Pasqui 2008), anche se in forma un po' categoriale e di difficile interpretazioni.

7 Elaborando quelle che sono note come "cronotopie".

8 Anche utilizzando metodi e strumenti come l'osservazione partecipante, sul campo, il diario (più o meno etnografico), le interviste in profondità, ecc. Sulle storie di vita e a strumenti più etnografici utilizzati per lo studio della città si rimanda a Attili (2007) e Macioti (1985). Sulle storie dei luoghi e sulla differenza rispetto alle storie di vita si rimanda a Cellamare (2008).

9 È bene precisare che, per interpretare il punto di vista della "vita quotidiana" bisogna passare ovviamente attraverso il punto di vista degli abitanti, che esprimono naturalmente anche valutazioni, interpretazioni, giudizi, progettualità. Bisogna quindi considerare il punto di vista degli abitanti come un aspetto da interpretare, non necessariamente "oggettivo" sui problemi che si stanno considerando e affrontando. In particolare, le progettualità espresse rimandano a posizioni politiche, a idee di città, a interessi, a propri modi di interpretare le condizioni di vita, che possono non essere condivisi, o anzi considerati criticabili, non solo dal ricercatore, ma da una comunità locale o da una collettività allargata. Per questo, in termini progettuali, si deve ragionare sul fatto che "gli abitanti non hanno sempre ragione". Sempre per questi motivi, quando parliamo di pratiche urbane e di vita quotidiana, sarebbe preferibile parlare di un'interpretazione che guarda al punto di vista "dell'abitare" piuttosto che semplicemente al punto di vista "degli abitanti", cosa che comporta uno sforzo interpretativo maggiore.

10 D'altronde le "tattiche" di cui parla de Certeau (1990) rappresentano una modalità di risposta ai condizionamenti di vita che subiscono gli abitanti e a cui non trovano altre modalità di risposta.

considerazioni sul posizionamento del ricercatore nei processi in cui è coinvolto, dove svolge ricerca sul campo o, addirittura, è impegnato in un processo di ricerca-azione. Su questi temi si è molto discusso ed esiste una vasta letteratura. Qui si vogliono riportare alcune considerazioni che partono dall'esperienza. In particolare, si sottolineano alcuni passaggi fondamentali.

In primo luogo, in un processo di ricerca-azione è fondamentale un coinvolgimento personale, in un approccio relazionale e interattivo. Solo attraverso di esso si possono capire alcuni aspetti, ma anche alcune modalità di interpretare lo spazio, i conflitti e le condizioni dell'abitare, ecc.; solo attraverso un'immersione completa, e anche partecipe, nel "campo" si può scendere in profondità rispetto alla propria ricerca. Inoltre, solo se le persone con cui si interagisce percepiscono il coinvolgimento del ricercatore, sono poi più disponibili a compartecipare considerazioni, vissuti, dimensioni esperienziali, notazioni profonde, storie di vita, ecc. Si tratta di un coinvolgimento, di un compartecipare all'esperienza (al progetto, o a quello da costruire insieme), che non può che essere serio e che, quindi, da una parte, se ne assume tutte le responsabilità e si fa carico degli impegni che vi corrispondo, e dall'altra, può (anzi deve) assumere posizioni critiche nella misura in cui non si condividono le strade che vengono intraprese, così come qualsiasi altro protagonista dell'esperienza. Il ricercatore mette a disposizione, da una parte, le proprie capacità e le proprie competenze, ma dall'altra mantiene anche un posizionamento critico. Anzi, uno degli obiettivi e uno degli effetti più importanti di un approccio di ricerca-azione è quello di fertilizzare il processo in cui si è immersi. E, d'altra parte, di lasciarsi cambiare, in un rapporto biunivoco che serva a far maturare il percorso di ricerca.

In secondo luogo, quindi, un percorso di ricerca-azione è un processo di apprendimento reciproco e di apprendimento continuo dall'esperienza. Significa mettere al lavoro le risorse e le capacità delle persone (sociali, culturali, umane, relazionali, ecc.), ma anche sviluppare un processo di *empowerment* della collettività coinvolta<sup>11</sup>. "Non infatti l'architetto da solo, né l'urbanista, né il sociologo, né il politico possono tirar fuori dal niente forme e rapporti sociali nuovi. «Solo la vita, la prassi sociale ha questi poteri»" (Lefebvre, 1977, pag. 264).

Un terzo passaggio fondamentale è legato alla capacità di distanziamento che deve avere il ricercatore sia durante che dopo il processo in cui è coinvolto. Si tratta, in qualche modo, di un "distanziamento partecipante", in cui cioè non si rinnega quanto

esperito e maturato e lo si tiene con un calore che aiuta anche a far affiorare gli aspetti importanti (mettendo quindi in campo anche altre razionalità e non solo quella scientifica e oggettivante), ma è altresì il momento in cui il ricercatore rielabora criticamente quanto elaborato nel processo per farne emergere i significati più rilevanti. A questo scopo, è spesso molto utile avere qualche collega ricercatore con cui confrontarsi o creare occasioni di riflessione critica con le persone più mature coinvolte nel processo. Si tratta di un passaggio fondamentale, sebbene spesso difficile e che richiede tempo.

Infine, in connessione con quest'ultimo aspetto, è importante mantenere una capacità critica anche rispetto a se stessi. Bourdieu afferma, ne *Il mestiere dello scienziato* (2001), che quello che ci rimane come ricercatori, ed è un fattore essenziale, è la capacità di leggere criticamente anche le nostre riflessioni e le nostre elaborazioni.

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<sup>11</sup> Questa modalità di procedere è molto simile alla modalità con cui operava Gramsci, nel momento in cui interagiva con i consigli di fabbrica. I collettivi sociali sono importanti luoghi di elaborazione culturale, anche innovativa, che partono da una dimensione esperienziale. Viceversa, Gramsci portava il suo contributo intellettuale nell'elaborazione comune. Ma si veda su questo, ovviamente, anche l'esperienza di Danilo Dolci in Sicilia.

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Luisa Tuttolomondo

# Pratiche di pubblico tra cittadini e istituzioni: l'esperienza del movimento "I cantieri che vogliamo" a Palermo

Mobilitation, Public space, Riappropriation

The paper proposes a critical review of the experience of "I cantieri che vogliamo", a citizens movement that rises in Palermo in autumn 2011 when a group of citizens, mainly cultural operators, begins to gather in public assemblies to discuss and denounce the lack of an appropriate cultural policy for the management of the many art and historical places of the city, often left in a state of abandon by the public administration. The actions undertaken by the movement of "I cantieri che vogliamo" focuses on the complex of industrial archaeology of the Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa.. Its goal is to re-open the space of Cantieri alla Zisa to the city and at the same time to work out a model of management alternative to the inefficient and exclusive one promoted by institutions. Then, the reasons fostering the mobilization regards both a political dimension and a practical one. The movement dissolves after a year but its actions have the effect to experiment the "publicity" of a space, meant as a place open to the encounter and sharing of all citizens. Moreover they produce social capital that keeps on fuelling new bottom up initiatives in the following months.

## Introduzione

Nell'autunno 2011 a Palermo un gruppo di artisti, ricercatori, operatori del terzo settore, ma soprattutto semplici cittadini si riunisce in un movimento, dal nome "I cantieri che vogliamo", per denunciare lo stato di degrado e cattiva gestione comunale dei Cantieri Culturali della Zisa, un complesso di archeologia industriale destinato negli anni '90' a diventare cittadella della cultura e dunque simbolo della rinascita culturale della città. Di fatto questo spazio viene lasciato in uno stato di sostanziale abbandono. Infatti, solo alcuni dei capannoni sono stati riqualificati (tra questi un cinema ed un museo), anche se mai resi funzionanti e fruibili. Con l'obiettivo di aprire tali spazi alla cittadinanza e promuoverne una gestione diversa, secondo criteri di inclusione e ascolto dei bisogni della città, il movimento porta avanti nell'arco di più di un anno diverse attività: assemblee pubbliche, percorsi di progettazione partecipata, eventi di intrattenimento e dibattito svolti all'interno degli spazi aperti e capannoni chiusi (quali il cinema) dei cantieri, azioni di protesta creativa per i dinieghi ricevuti dal comune rispetto alla possibilità di utilizzare gli spazi in questione, etc.

Il presente contributo propone una rilettura critica di questa esperienza, analizzandone significati, dinamiche ed esiti prodotti alla luce dei cambiamenti intervenuti nello scenario politico della città di Palermo. Dal 2011 al 2012 si assiste infatti ad un cambio

di governo, dal sindaco Diego Cammarata (del Pdl) si passa ad una nuova amministrazione comunale guidata dal già sindaco Leoluca Orlando (dell'Italia dei Valori). Dal momento di avvio della nuova legislatura nuove prospettive si delineano nella gestione pubblica dello spazio in questione. La nuova amministrazione ha individuato come priorità della propria agenda di politica culturale proprio la completa riqualificazione e riapertura dei Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa. Conseguentemente il cinema al suo interno è stato temporaneamente aperto e intitolato a Vittorio De Seta (ufficializzando quanto già fatto dal movimento); è stato inaugurato il museo di arte contemporanea; sono stati avviati i lavori per creare un incubatore d'impresa culturale, etc.

Parallelamente, nel dibattito pubblico cittadino le azioni portate avanti dal movimento "I cantieri che vogliamo" sono state citate e ricordate di continuo, a testimoniare il ruolo avuto nel determinare l'operato della nuova amministrazione. In realtà, nell'attivare questi interventi la nuova giunta comunale non ha avviato un reale processo partecipativo, così come precedentemente auspicato dal movimento. Ha invece preferito il coinvolgimento di singoli soggetti membri de "I cantieri che vogliamo": alcuni degli artisti sono stati coinvolti nella gestione del museo, lo stesso è accaduto con alcuni operatori cinematografici per il cinema, un architetto è stato nominato consulente a titolo gratuito per la direzione di tutto il

complesso.

Qual è dunque l'impatto realmente prodotto da questa esperienza di mobilitazione sulla città e su coloro che vi hanno preso parte? Come ha reagito il movimento a questo cambio di scenario? Gli interventi comunali relativi al periodo di insediamento della nuova giunta hanno provocato grandi rivolgimenti all'interno del movimento e l'attestarsi di posizioni divergenti (tra dubbi, delusioni e voglia di rinnovarsi) che hanno reso difficile la comprensione del raggiungimento degli obiettivi prefissati e l'elaborazione di nuovi percorsi di azione. Ad una prima impressione sembra che nel passaggio di testimone dai cittadini alla nuova amministrazione (in una progressiva istituzionalizzazione dei processi avviati) qualcosa sia andato perduto. L'obiettivo, comune ad entrambi gli attori, di aprire uno spazio alla città e di renderlo "pubblico" sembra sia stato raggiunto ma solo in parte.

### **Lo spazio dei Cantieri Culturali della Zisa**

La decisione di mobilitarsi intorno allo spazio dei Cantieri Culturali è strettamente legata alla storia di questo luogo. I Cantieri Culturali della Zisa sono un complesso di archeologia industriale situato nel cuore del quartiere popolare Zisa (situato appena a ovest del centro storico). Sorto nell'ottocento come sede del mobilificio Ducrot, al tempo realtà d'eccellenza nel panorama dell'imprenditoria siciliana, lo stabilimento cade in uno stato di completo abbandono a partire dalla seconda metà del novecento. A partire dagli anni '90 e successivamente al periodo delle grandi stragi di mafia l'amministrazione comunale allora in carica, con a capo il sindaco dell'Italia dei Valori Leoluca Orlando, decide di dare nuova vita a questo spazio trasformandolo in una vera e propria cittadella della cultura che avrebbe costituito il simbolo del periodo di rinascita culturale della città. Una politica culturale di spicco insieme alla riqualificazione del centro storico (grazie a grandi finanziamenti europei come quelli del programma Urban) costituiscono gli ingredienti fondamentali di quella che venne definita "la primavera di Palermo" (Azzolina 2009). Per tale ragione, nonostante lo stato di degrado e abbandono, lo spazio dei cantieri ospita fin da subito eventi e attività culturali di grande richiamo, grazie alla collocazione al suo interno di diverse istituzioni culturali tra cui l'Istituto di Cultura Francese, il Goethe Institut, l'Istituto Gramsci Siciliano (Söderström, Fimiani, Giambalvo, Lucido 2009). L'utilizzo di alcuni finanziamenti europei permette contemporaneamente la ristrutturazione di parte dei capannoni. Nel 2002 il passaggio di governo ad un'amministrazione di centrodestra porta ad una battuta d'arresto negli interventi di riqualificazione del complesso che si limitano per lo più al completamento degli edifici del Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, di un cinema e di un museo destinato all'arte contemporanea. Gli spazi così riqualificati non vengono però mai resi funzionanti e aperti alla città. Il complesso intrico di storie e interventi di riqualificazione dei Cantieri Culturali hanno quindi prodotto all'interno del me-

desimo spazio una stratificazione di significati molto diversi: da luogo di eccellenza imprenditoriale, a spazio abbandonato, a luogo della rinascita culturale e nuovamente a spazio in abbandono simbolo delle inefficienze della politica.

### **Pratiche di pubblico**

L'emanazione del bando comunale per l'affidamento dello spazio dei Cantieri Culturali costituisce la miccia che innesca un fitto intrico di azioni di mobilitazione volte a sollecitarne la riapertura attraverso la sperimentazione di un modello di gestione basato su principi di equità e inclusione. Il consistente numero di cittadini che si riunisce intorno a tale causa decide di costituirsi in un movimento dal nome "I cantieri che vogliamo", a sottolineare la necessità di mettere la cittadinanza e i suoi bisogni al centro del percorso di riapertura e affidamento dei cantieri. Il fine è infatti quello di sperimentare un modello inclusivo ed efficace da potere utilizzare anche in altri spazi culturali chiusi della città.

Le assemblee, i confronti, gli eventi e la formulazione di nuove strategie d'azione avvengono in un continuo processo di interazione e negoziazione con soggetti interni ed esterni al movimento, coi quali si stabiliscono relazioni conflittuali (nel caso dell'amministrazione) o di cooperazione (ad esempio con gli artisti che occupano il vicino Teatro Garibaldi, o con il collettivo Macao di Milano, con la rete del Quinto Stato di Roma) per stabilire reti di reciproco sostegno (fig. 1).

### **Verso quale "cultura di pubblico"?**

Nel tentativo di comprendere la natura e gli esiti delle azioni intraprese dal movimento dei cantieri può essere utile cercare di spiegare quale sia l'accezione di pubblico che muove gli attori protagonisti dell'esperienza di mobilitazione presa in analisi.

A questo proposito richiamiamo il dibattito in merito al rapporto tra spazi pubblici e sfera pubblica. Numerosi sono infatti gli autori e gli approcci che vedono un rapporto direttamente proporzionale tra questi elementi. Sia che si guardi alla sfera pubblica come processo comunicativo di confronto e dibattito (secondo l'approccio habermasiano), che come luogo di incontro per il crearsi di nuove reti d'interazione sociale (secondo l'interpretazione suggerita da Richard Sennett) la configurazione degli spazi nella città moderna sembra avere smarrito questa dimensione (Lucido 2000).

Parallelamente a questo filone interpretativo troviamo l'ipotesi secondo cui le varie forme di azione e socialità che si producono negli spazi urbani possono acquisire la connotazione di "pubblico" senza che necessariamente vi si debba riconoscere un carattere strettamente politico (Cremaschi 2009). In questo caso il concetto di socievolezza così come elaborato da Simmel può risultare utile a spiegare e rendere significativi altre forme di interazione che pure prendono campo negli spazi della città (Turnaturi 2011).

In definitiva uno spazio può essere definito pubbli-



**Fig.1** Riunione assembleare del movimento. Fonte: Alessandra Sicilia.



**Fig.2** Manifestazione di protesta davanti il Comune di Palermo contro al diniego ricevuto per lo svolgimento di attività culturali ai Cantieri alla Zisa. Fonte: Marcello Costa.



**Fig.3** Occupazione temporanea del cinema De Seta. Fonte: Alessandra Sicilia.

co quando questo si apre a molteplici interazioni e usi da parte di soggetti diversi senza che debba necessariamente esserci convergenza di fini (Crosta 2010). In definitiva: «Il carattere “pubblico” viene conferito ad un luogo se e quando tutti coloro che si trovano ad interagire in una situazione di compresenza, utilizzandolo in modi diversi e con motivazioni differenti apprendono attraverso l'esperienza concreta della diversità la compresenza in termini di convivenza» (Crosta 2000: 42-42).

Nel caso del movimento dei Cantieri che vogliamo le azioni che prendono campo non sono frutto di un'interazione casuale ma nascono da obiettivi e motivazioni specifiche che richiamano esplicitamente la volontà di ricostruire e restituire alla città spazi “pubblici”. La componente politica è richiamata di continuo, e si manifesta nell'idea di volere attuare ed elaborare un modello alternativo di gestione degli spazi cittadini. Le azioni intraprese hanno dunque come destinatari due interlocutori principali: l'amministrazione comunale, al quale si chiede di aprirsi alle richieste e istanze portate avanti dal movimento, e ai cittadini, cui si chiede di riflettere sui temi portati avanti e ai quali si chiede di sperimentare fisicamente il carattere di “pubblicità” dello spazio in questione. Le assemblee del movimento, aperte all'intera cittadinanza, si moltiplicano (e così i suoi partecipanti) al fine di individuare strategie ed iniziative adeguate agli obiettivi auspicati. Ogni incontro vede il continuo confronto tra punti di vista diversi, la riflessione sugli esiti delle azioni già intraprese e sulle reazioni prodotte nelle istituzioni, nei media, nel quartiere e nella cittadinanza. Ogni nuova iniziativa nasce dalla rielaborazione continua degli stimoli provenienti dagli esiti prodotti dalle azioni precedenti. L'organizzazione di un forum sul tema dei beni comuni nasce come reazione all'emanazione del bando di gestione rivolto ai privati, i sit-in di protesta di fronte ai cantieri come risposta all'impossibilità di accedervi nei giorni feriali, l'organizzazione di proteste creative scaturiscono dai continui dinieghi del comune per l'organizzazione di iniziative culturali (Fig. 2 e 3).

Nell'elaborazione di strategie sempre nuove l'azione viene dunque continuamente “messa alla prova” (Cefaï 2007), con l'effetto di attivare vere e proprie “pratiche di pubblico” (Crosta 2010). Nelle intenzioni e obiettivi che animano le assemblee e le azioni intraprese dal movimento de “I cantieri che vogliamo” è possibile scorgere un chiaro orientamento verso una specifica “cultura di pubblico” (Cellammare 2013) che guarda agli spazi pubblici come luoghi «di elaborazione di possibili innovative categorie interpretative della politica e delle istituzioni, interpretata in un senso non egemonico ma inclusivo» (*ibidem*: 24). In qualche modo la cultura di pubblico evocata è quella che guarda allo spazio pubblico come luogo in cui può prendere corpo la sfera pubblica, intesa come luogo di dibattito, confronto, discussione pubblica.

### Con quale pubblico?

L'indagare le pratiche di pubblico pone la necessità di comprendere non solo cosa è pubblico dunque quale cultura di pubblico viene prodotta dalle ‘pratiche’ in azione, ma anche chi è pubblico (Crosta 2010). Dunque chi sono i protagonisti della mobilitazioni e quali le loro motivazioni all'azione?

Le persone che aderiscono, di età e background politico molto diversi, posseggono competenze professionali specifiche: sono operatori culturali, professionisti del terzo settore, artisti, attivisti politici. Possono essere definiti dunque “expert citizens” (Bang 2005), impegnati a utilizzare i propri saperi per proporre e sperimentare pratiche virtuose e alternative di gestione del complesso industriale.

Pur avendo delle caratteristiche peculiari e portando avanti delle azioni di rivendicazione questo insieme di attori si dimostra estremamente permeabile rispetto a realtà esterne. Il rapporto con l'amministrazione non è di aperto scontro ma al contrario di dialogo e confronto, soprattutto nel momento di insediamento della nuova giunta di centro-sinistra. Questo anche in virtù della provenienza dal mondo dell'associazionismo di molti dei componenti della nuova amministrazione. Così come era già successo nelle precedenti legislature guidate da Orlando negli anni '90 (Andretta 2007).

Nel portare avanti le azioni di mobilitazione in poco tempo sembrano instaurarsi delle routine ben precise e a ciclo continuo: momenti di confronto assembleare in cui vengono elaborate e discusse strategie politiche e conseguenti azioni, realizzazione degli interventi/provocazioni (l'occupazione temporanea del cinema, manifestazioni culturali all'interno dello spazio, etc.), risposta da parte delle istituzioni e del resto delle cittadinanza) e a partire da queste avvio di un nuovo ciclo di discussione, azione, valutazione degli esiti. E' dunque possibile osservare una vera e propria arena pubblica, dove entrano in gioco rappresentazioni e interessi molto diverse che coinvolgono e sono di continuo alimentate dai soggetti della mobilitazione, dalle istituzioni, dalla cittadinanza, dai media.

Inoltre all'alimentarsi di questo dibattito corre parallela un'attività fisica di occupazione dello spazio e realizzazione di eventi a partire dalla quale si stabiliscono e si rafforzano legami di conoscenza e collaborazione che cementano i rapporti tra i partecipanti. La partecipazione regolare alle attività del movimento de “I cantieri che vogliamo” porta i suoi componenti non solo a maturare e mettere a fuoco ideali civici e politici ma anche a sviluppare un sentimento di “proche” (Cefaï 2007) ovvero di prossimità verso lo spazio all'interno del quale hanno luogo le varie iniziative. I dibattiti cittadini, gli eventi di progettazione partecipata, le proteste, le iniziative culturali e conviviali, le attività di animazione territoriale, gli interventi di guerriglia urbana permettono di sviluppare delle routine che consolidano le relazioni sociali e il senso di attaccamento allo spazio oggetto di mobilitazione. La riapertura/occupazione temporanea del cinema e la realizzazione al suo interno di eventi per

la città, oltre che sul piano politico, viene in primo luogo vissuta sul piano personale e affettivo come riappropriazione ad un luogo ormai sentito proprio in virtù delle iniziative sviluppate nel tempo.

La dimensione di attivazione politica procede dunque di pari passo e in rapporto di reciproca influenza con una dimensione più affettiva e relazionale. Lo svolgere e organizzare insieme iniziative comportano aspetti ludici e di socievolezza che producono nuova relazionalità (secondo quella che Simmel definisce "socievolezza"). Così come l'uomo artigiano di cui ci parla Richard Sennett (2012) il ripetersi di attività pratiche permette sia di migliorare un sapere fare (dunque anche un saper collaborare), sia di sperimentare nella pratica una dimensione di cittadinanza prima sentita come perduta.

In questo processo sembra dunque recuperarsi una componente di fisicità ("organicità") e visibilità che permettono al gruppo di riscoprirsi come soggetto collettivo, in risposta a quella che Dewey (1971) descrive come "l'eclisse del pubblico". Il carattere di "pubblico" viene dunque ristabilito non solo nell'esperienza di un spazio (come pubblico) ma anche nel percepirsi come soggetto (pubblico).

#### **L'arresto delle attività di mobilitazione**

Il cambio di scenario istituzionale, con la rielezione a sindaco di Leoluca Orlando, segna profondamente le vicende del movimento de "I cantieri che vogliamo". Il nuovo assessore alla cultura, lo stesso che negli anni '90 aveva avviato la riqualificazione del complesso industriale come cittadella della cultura, fa della completa riapertura dei Cantieri Culturali l'obiettivo principale della propria agenda politica. Il rapporto tra movimento e amministrazione comunale, prima di aperta contrapposizione, si trasforma in virtù dell'intenzione di quest'ultima a stabilire un rapporto di collaborazione sulla questione. Interessato a non perdere tempo il Comune avvia da subito i primi interventi di riapertura dei capannoni rinnovati. Nel fare ciò ribadisce di continuo, sia in occasioni pubbliche che attraverso i media, l'intenzione di porsi in continuità con l'operato del movimento de "I cantieri che vogliamo". Invece di avviare un percorso di progettazione partecipata con la collaborazione del movimento (così come questo aveva auspicato), l'amministrazione preferisce richiamarsi alla sua esperienza attraverso il coinvolgimento di suoi singoli membri: alcuni degli artisti vengono ingaggiati nella gestione del museo, gli operatori cinematografici vengono ingaggiati per l'elaborazione di un modello di gestione per il cinema, un architetto viene nominato consulente a titolo gratuito per la direzione di tutto il complesso.

Tale cambiamento genera una fase di empassa all'interno del movimento che si trova davanti alla necessità di riformulare obiettivi e strategie, oltre che discutere il diverso coinvolgimento di alcuni suoi membri. Le iniziative di mobilitazione si sospendono e le assemblee, sempre più lunghe e farraginose, diminuiscono. Così come osservato da Schön (1989) a proposito dell'intervento statale sulle reti informa-

li, i provvedimenti dell'amministrazione producono sulla rete di relazioni stabilite all'interno ed esterno del movimento un effetto di arresto. "I cantieri che vogliamo" interrompe definitivamente le sue attività di incontro e di intervento.

#### **Quali tracce nella città?**

Nonostante l'interruzione delle attività di presidio l'influenza del movimento de "I Cantieri che vogliamo" ricorre di continuo nei discorsi circolanti sullo stato attuale dei Cantieri Culturali. Le "tracce" di questa esperienza sembrano ravvisabili su più fronti. Il cinema viene intitolato ufficialmente al documentarista siciliano Vittorio De Seta, così come era stato già fatto dal movimento nel corso delle sue iniziative. Il museo viene invece riaperto secondo un modello di gestione aperto e inclusivo che vuole richiamare esplicitamente le modalità di confronto e organizzazione interna adottata dal movimento dei cantieri. Anche la gestione dell'intero complesso sembra seguire dinamiche simili, grazie alla costituzione di un gruppo di lavoro formato dai rappresentanti di tutte le istituzioni presenti all'interno dello spazio.

Nonostante la continuità nelle pratiche e nei discorsi le reazioni dei componenti del movimento oscillano dal ritenere raggiunti alcuni obiettivi, alla nostalgia per un luogo a cui non si sente di appartenere più, alla delusione per il percorso istituzionale intrapreso da alcuni compagni, alla contrarietà per un intervento comunale per niente partecipato ed inclusivo. All'unanimità si decide dunque di ritenere conclusa l'esperienza del movimento. Il capitale sociale di relazioni maturato nel corso della mobilitazione però si mantiene. I suoi componenti continuano a incontrarsi e a realizzare iniziative anche se non più legate ai Cantieri Culturali. Viene creato un co-working che diventa sede di lavoro di alcuni tra i soggetti attivi del movimento, nascono progetti professionali, si collabora per la realizzazione di attività culturali in città e si partecipa insieme a proteste su questioni ritenute importanti. I rapporti sociali instaurati tra i diversi soggetti coinvolti hanno realmente prodotto capitale sociale perché oltre a produrre conoscenza reciproca risultano in grado di mobilitare risorse (prevalentemente relazionali) in spazi e tempi diversi (Donati 2007). Anche se in maniera sparsa e frammentata i legami e le dinamiche di scambio si mantengono, animate dal piacere di mantenere le routine di collaborazione sviluppate nel tempo (Sennett 2012).

Anche la dimensione politica di queste forme di attivazione sembra mantenersi, anche se in forma più latente. A distanza di tempo e in maniera estremamente discontinua, nuove forme di occupazione e di rivendicazione degli spazi pubblici cittadini (prima un teatro storico, poi gli edifici della Fiera del Mediterraneo, un ex circolo letterario nel centro storico) vengono portate avanti grazie all'attivazione delle medesime reti di soggetti.

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Laura Saija

# Pratiche simetine. Spontaneità dei processi vs intenzionalità del ricercatore-in-azione

## Community, Local Development, Participation

In this article, the author tells, using an autobiographical approach, her collaborative experience preparing a Life+ 2013 project for a depressed area along the Simeto River (Eastern Sicily), on behalf of a partnership between The City of Paternò, the University of Catania, the local agency for water-related services, the Regional Department for the Territory and the Environment, and the local non-profit association named Vivisimeto. Such an experience is framed within the longer action-research path, initiated in 2008, carried out by researchers collaborating with a network of grassroots associations and local authorities of the Simeto Valley, whose outcomes might be of some interest for planning scholars worried about the technocratic nature of planning, even when it is inspired by participatory values. In the Simeto experience, researchers feel they have contributed, through their planning competencies, to community development without compromising the genuineness of bottom-up engagement.

### 1. Breve nota metodologica introduttiva

Nei paragrafi che seguono viene presentata l'esperienza di elaborazione collaborativa di un progetto Life + 2013 da parte di una partnership tra il Comune di Paternò (provincia di Catania), l'Università di Catania, l'Acquedotto e Multiservizi Ambientali S.p.a. di Paternò, l'Assessorato Regionale Siciliano Territorio e Ambiente e l'Associazione locale denominata Vivisimeto. Questa esperienza s'inquadra in un lungo percorso di collaborazione tra un gruppo di ricercatori urbanisti dell'ateneo catanese e una rete di gruppi, associazioni ed enti locali della Valle del Simeto (Sicilia orientale). Tale percorso si è evoluto, dal 2008 a oggi, secondo modalità di lavoro ispirate all'approccio noto con il nome di ricerca-azione. In quest'approccio, l'attività di ricerca è condotta da un gruppo misto di ricercatori e membri di una comunità in difficoltà, in modo che l'innovazione conoscitiva aiuti la comunità ad affrontare concretamente tali difficoltà (per una buona panoramica sulla ricerca-azione si veda Reason, Bradbury-Huan 2001). Gli esperti del settore condividono l'idea che la ricerca possa davvero impattare sulla realtà solo se tutti i membri del gruppo di ricerca, universitari e non, condividono pienamente le responsabilità di ricerca e di azione in tutte le fasi del processo (costruzione delle domande, scelte metodologiche, raccolta e interpretazione dati, formalizzazione degli esiti), in un rapporto di alta reciprocità e mutuo apprendimento.

L'esperienza di scrittura del Life + 2013 a Paternò è raccontata dall'autore – che ha coordinato le attività di redazione del progetto – con un taglio autobiografico, con una scelta stilistica che è solitamente considerata inopportuna per le tradizionali pubblicazioni scientifiche, ma che è invece quella più coerente per gli scritti accademici di ricerca-azione (si veda Saija 2014a per una più ampia trattazione sul tema della scrittura accademica nella ricerca-azione). L'obiettivo è di condividere con colleghi e studiosi dei temi della pianificazione per lo sviluppo locale le grandi potenzialità di un approccio, quello della ricerca-azione, che è ancora poco diffuso nelle Università italiane.

### 2. Una riunione estiva

È una calda giornata d'inizio estate, e ho appena finito di partecipare a un incontro di una decina di associazioni e gruppi organizzati che operano sul territorio di Paternò, una cittadina di circa 50000 abitanti, a pochi km da Catania. La riunione è stata organizzata da Vivisimeto, un'associazione nata nei primi anni 2000 da una mobilitazione contro il progetto di costruzione di un inceneritore e che adesso è diventata uno dei principali soggetti promotori di sviluppo territoriale attraverso la ricucitura di un rapporto virtuoso tra la comunità insediata e il fiume Simeto. Sono state invitate tante altre associazioni che operano "culturalmente" e artisticamente a Pa-

ternò, tra cui il MAV, Museo di Antropologia Viva, Stradanova, la Casa del Cantastorie (per il recupero di un'antica e importante tradizione locale, rappresentata tra i tanti dal celebre cantastorie Ciccio Busacca), l'associazione SAIA (una comunità di ragazzi che si è insediata sulle sponde del fiume e dedicata alla permacoltura), ecc. L'obiettivo dell'incontro è l'individuazione di modalità di partecipazione alle iniziative di coinvolgimento del terzo settore proposte dalla nuova amministrazione locale nelle politiche di sviluppo locale.

Dopo due anni di lontananza, per me 'tornare' al Simeto, ed essere parte di eventi come questo, eventi in cui si respira un'aria di entusiasmo e voglia di fare, è un'emozione fortissima e anche tutto sommato nuova, visto che, contrariamente al passato, vi sono tornata con un ruolo istituzionale. Sì, perché la riunione, sebbene nella sostanza sia piuttosto informale, è stata organizzata perché la neo-eletta Amministrazione comunale, di cui il mio Dipartimento universitario (Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Catania) è consulente, ha chiesto alle associazioni di dare una mano a scrivere il primo di una serie di progetti per il finanziamento delle tante azioni di sviluppo che la comunità chiede da anni.

### 3. Background

Con molti dei partecipanti alla riunione ho già condiviso un lungo tratto di strada: nel 2008, il mio Dipartimento fu contattato, per una consulenza tecnica, dai legali che si occupavano della causa contro il progetto di costruzione di un inceneritore a Paternò. Tra i soggetti sporgenti denuncia figurava l'associazione Vivisimeto, la quale, parallelamente alla causa, voleva avviare un più ampio lavoro di riflessione e promozione di un progetto di tutela e promozione del territorio fluviale ("per evitare che, una volta vinta la battaglia contro l'inceneritore, un domani qualcun altro si svegli e si inventi qualche diavoleria simile"). Inizialmente Vivisimeto ci aveva chiesto di organizzare un convegno per promuovere l'istituzionalizzazione di un parco fluviale. L'idea di organizzare un convegno è invece presto diventata una vera e propria partnership di lungo periodo che ha:

- attivato un lungo percorso di autoformazione (di fatto ancora in corso) sui possibili strumenti di tutela e valorizzazione del territorio, con un particolare focus sui possibili ruoli ricopribili dai soggetti del terzo settore (vedi figura 1);
- una iniziativa di mappatura di comunità che ha coinvolto i comuni limitrofi a Paternò (soprattutto Adrano) nell'ambito di quello che stava ormai diventando un nuovo ambito geografico e di identità territoriale, la Valle del Simeto (Saija, 2011);
- diverse pubblicazioni sui valori, leggende, e possibilità di sviluppo del territorio attraverso la costituzione di una nuova alleanza uomo-ambiente;
- la firma di un protocollo di intesa da parte di enti locali e stakeholders significativi per la costituzione di un Patto di Fiume, ispirato alle esperien-

ze italiane dei contratti di fiume (Bastiani, 2011) e degli Accordi di paesaggio (Pizziolo & Micarelli, 2011).

Il Patto di fiume, che oggi sta prendendo corpo in diverse realtà amministrative della Valle, è stato il frutto dunque di un lungo processo che ha messo insieme tanti soggetti che, inconsapevolmente, stavano tutti lavorando verso una stessa direzione. Si tratta di pratiche territoriali messe in atto da gruppi e associazioni che dal 2002 (l'anno in cui si manifestò il rischio dell'inceneritore) a oggi sono nate, scomparse, re-suscitate o rimaste, tutte mosse da un sottile filo conduttore: la promozione del bene comune, attraverso azioni indirizzate al beneficio della 'comunità' della valle; comunità che viene percepita come 'disgregata' oppure inesistente ma necessaria. Molti sono impegnati nella produzione di conoscenza di un grande patrimonio storico e ambientale dimenticato, martorizzato, spesso sfociando in azioni autorganizzate ed extra-istituzionali di protezione e valorizzazione di tale patrimonio (alcuni esempi: campagne di escursioni guidate gratuite ed eventi; l'acquisto 'in massa' di uno degli storici mulini ad acqua della via dei Mulini di Paternò, da anni destinato a discarica; la costituzione di un gruppo per la riorganizzazione e fruizione del prestigioso archivio storico di Adrano giacente in scatoli di cartone in uno scantinato umido del comune; l'organizzazione di campi di lavoro per il perseguimento degli scavi in tanto prestigiosi quanto dimenticati siti archeologici; ecc...).

A tutto ciò si aggiungono attività di volontariato che suppliscono e/o contrastano controverse azioni istituzionali (come ad esempio sportelli auto-organizzati per il supporto legale di azioni di protesta, prima fra tutte il rifiuto di massa del pagamento della tassa rifiuti e di quella per la depurazione delle acque reflue, in un territorio con gravi disfunzioni legate allo smaltimento dei rifiuti solidi e liquidi). Si ha, inoltre, una grande diffusione di pratiche abitative e produttive ispirate dal bisogno di alcuni di ridefinire drasticamente il proprio rapporto con l'ambiente e la società: nuovi eco-villaggi auto-costruiti sono sorti lungo il fiume in zone ad alto rischio di discarica abusiva, svolgendo la funzione di costante vigilanza e protezione di tratti pregiati e vulnerabili dell'alveo; aziende agricole sono state costituite ex-novo o riconvertite all'agricoltura o acquacoltura biologiche, combinando alle attività produttive quelle di natura ricettiva e educativa, in alcuni casi privilegiandone il carattere comunitario e spirituale rispetto a quello "retributivo". Oggi che le amministrazioni si trovano di fronte a una crisi economica senza precedenti, queste pratiche da sempre considerabili di nicchia, stanno ispirando una nuova stagione di politiche di sviluppo, anche sotto l'influenza di quelli che sono i principi e gli obiettivi dei programmi di finanziamento europeo nel quadro di Horizon 2020.



**Fig.1** Due esempi di attività di autoformazione della comunità del Simeto: a sinistra, un workshop sul ruolo del terzo settore nello sviluppo locale; a destra, pannelli sulle bellezze da tutelare della Valle del Simeto, esposti durante un incontro tra sindaci e comunità organizzato nell'ambito del festival Vivisimeto 2013.



**Fig.2** L'oasi di Ponte Barca lungo il fiume Simeto.

#### 4. Quale ruolo per il ricercatore

Il lavoro svolto con la comunità del Simeto ha influenzato molto il mio percorso professionale e riflessivo. Quando ho conosciuto Vivisimeto avevo sempre lavorato in ambito urbano, per lo più a scala di quartiere, nel campo della ricerca urbanistica, con un interesse verso gli approcci collaborativi ed ecologici alla pianificazione e alla progettazione urbana. Avevo già esperienza di collaborazione con gruppi e associazioni di quartiere in progetti di riqualificazione urbana, per lo più secondo un'ottica di "riappropriazione dello spazio urbano" da parte di gruppi più o meno formalizzati e in relazione di conflitto più o meno acceso con le istituzioni. Molti erano i miei dubbi su quale fosse il ruolo del ricercatore in questi processi. Il dibattito urbanistico era in una fase di critica aperta alla figura del facilitatore il cui unico ruolo è quello di alimentare dialoghi bilanciati, costruttivi ed inclusivi; vi era inoltre una crescente attenzione al ruolo della cosiddette pratiche urbane con un invito esplicito rivolto a decisori ed esperti a riconoscerne il valore "pianificatorio" (Cellamare 2008; Crosta 2010). Questo per molti miei colleghi significava sviluppare nuovi strumenti per indagare e capire le pratiche urbane (si veda per esempio, l'ampio interesse per gli strumenti di ricerca qualitativi). Pur nella condivisione di entrambi questi orizzonti di ricerca, io ero personalmente più interessata a capire quale ruolo 'attivo' potessi avere, come urbanista e ricercatrice, per 'migliorare' le tante pratiche ben poco virtuose che mi circondavano. Avevo già sviluppato un interesse per i filoni della cosiddetta ricerca-azione (Whyte 1989; Reardon 1998; Reason, Bradbury-Huan 2001) che si basano su una sostanziale inversione del tradizionale rapporto tra conoscenza (ricercatori di professione), tecnica (tecnici professionisti) e azione (comunità, attori sociali). La ricerca-azione si ispira alle critiche mosse sia alla ricerca accademica vista come torre d'avorio avulsa dalla realtà, sia al mondo delle professioni tecniche, accusate di essere tecnocratiche, usando la tecnica per sottrarre i processi decisionali al dibattito democratico (Severino 1998; Galimberti 1999; Fisher 2000). Ma, fino al 2008, questo interesse non si era espresso in una sperimentazione pienamente consapevole. La collaborazione con Vivisimeto è stata per me la prima occasione per avviare un percorso di ricerca condotto da gruppo di lavoro in cui i membri di una comunità a vario titolo collaborano attivamente come co-ricercatori per approfondire una situazione particolarmente problematica al fine di sperimentare strategie di azione. E sperimentare non è stato facile. Momenti di armonia e concordia si sono alternati a momenti d'incomprensione reciproca; fasi di euforia e chiarezza su ciò che c'era da fare si sono avvicinate ad altre di stanchezza e confusione (per un approfondimento su questi aspetti si rimanda a Saija 2014c e Saija 2014b, cap. 2).

Ciò che ho trovato dopo due anni di assenza dalla Sicilia (mentre altri colleghi e amici universitari hanno continuato a lavorare), mi fa pensare che davvero l'approccio collaborativo sia faticoso e lento nel dare

i suoi frutti, ma sia anche quello a lungo andare più proficuo per i territori, come la Sicilia, dove il cambiamento sembra non esserci mai, e tutto cambia affinché tutto resti com'è (per citare le celebri parole di Tancredi, dal romanzo *Il Gattopardo*, affresco che descrive la resistenza al cambiamento delle strutture politiche e sociali siciliane).

#### 5. Da ricercatore per la comunità a consulente istituzionale

Sono mancata più di due anni dal Simeto. Ho avuto l'occasione di far parte di un gruppo di ricerca-azione coordinato da uno dei più esperti nel settore, Kenneth Reardon, e accanto a lui ho imparato molte cose, soprattutto al livello degli espedienti tecnici e metodologici che i ricercatori in azione possono mettere in campo per coinvolgere i ricercatori non di professione nella preparazione di piani urbanistici e progetti di finanziamento (Saija 2014b, cap. 3). Ora sono tornata in Sicilia ancora più consapevole di quanto possa essere utile il mio ruolo.

Quando partii, due anni e mezzo fa, la comunità del Simeto, intendo la rete di gruppi e associazioni con cui avevo lavorato che allora era priva di un pieno supporto istituzionale, aveva ormai le idee chiare sul da farsi: si era ormai affermata l'idea che il parco di fiume – ossia l'istituzione di un perimetro soggetto a speciali regole per la 'conservazione' dell'area fluviale – non fosse lo strumento migliore per il caso Simeto. L'imposizione di vincoli, che, peraltro, sul territorio sono sempre scarsamente rispettati, non sembrava adatta per un territorio di fatto già martorizzato, le cui bellezze naturalistiche sono da rigenerare più che salvaguardare. Un parco sarebbe stato, inoltre, l'ennesima occasione di gestione clientelare di posti di responsabilità e fondi pubblici. Il Patto di Fiume – ossia un accordo volontario sottoscritto da chi ha già responsabilità o ruoli di tutela e valorizzazione del territorio, che metta a fuoco non solo cosa non si può fare ma soprattutto cosa è bene e urgente fare, ognuno con le proprie specificità – era invece più vicino alle attese e alle esigenze dei soggetti che avevano partecipato alla mappatura (associazioni, imprenditori nel settore dell'agriturismo, rappresentanti di alcuni degli enti locali, singoli cittadini, ecc.). Tuttavia, le difficoltà per trasformare l'idea in realtà erano tante, soprattutto legate alla mancanza di:

- risorse economiche con cui sostenere l'enorme mole di lavoro volontario richiesta ad associazioni e ricercatori per alimentare un simile processo;
- un interesse istituzionale che andasse oltre le adesioni solo formali al progetto del patto.

Oggi tali difficoltà non sono del tutto scomparse, ma lo scenario è decisamente cambiato. È cambiata la consapevolezza di noi universitari che, anche grazie all'esperienza americana, abbiamo più strumenti di lavoro.

È cambiato soprattutto lo scenario amministrativo. Turi, uno dei soci più attivi di Vivisimeto, racconta spesso di come, secondo lui, le elezioni amministra-

tive di Paternò, il comune più popoloso della valle, siano state fortemente condizionate dall'esperienza della mappatura di comunità, e mi spiega come, a suo parere, non sia un caso che il Dipartimento di Architettura sia stato chiamato dal neo-eletto sindaco a fare da consulente non solo in materia di urbanistica per la revisione del PRG, ma anche per la costituzione di un ufficio di politiche integrate da costruire all'interno della cornice strategica del Patto di Fiume Simeto. Il fatto che la Mappatura, un progetto spontaneo e per nulla istituzionalizzato, abbia avuto un impatto notevole me lo conferma il dato che è stato assunto da tanti come esempio di come si dovrebbero fare le cose nell'immediato futuro. In particolare, ci si aspetta che la sperimentazione 'mappatura' adesso sia l'ispirazione per un vero e proprio processo partecipato di pianificazione strategica della Valle, che costituisca la cornice attraverso cui lavorare per accedere ai nuovi bandi europei. La call del *Life + 2013*, in scadenza il 25 giugno 2014, è la prima di occasione per testare le buone intenzioni. L'Amministrazione, Vivisimeto e gli universitari hanno avviato una procedura di preparazione della proposta *Life + 2013* con cui si è scelto di provare a fare finanziare uno degli interventi che la mappatura aveva individuato come priorità ambientale ed economica: il risanamento di quella che è percepita come una delle aree più pregiate ma anche più a rischio del Simeto, il SIC di Ponte Barca (vedi figura 2).

Nel corso degli ultimi due mesi, ho coordinato dei tavoli di lavoro che hanno generato una proposta di intervento su Ponte Barca la quale combina gli obiettivi di risanamento ambientale dell'area (un nuovo impianto di lagunaggio per la depurazione delle acque che scaricano dal depuratore comunale e presidi di controllo contro il formarsi di micro-discardie) con quelli di infrastrutturazione leggera di un'area per la fruizione e il tempo libero (in molti lamentano che il rapporto comunità-fiume è compromesso dalla mancanza di accessi fruibili al fiume). Il progetto permetterebbe anche di implementare azioni di supporto alla debole economia rurale dell'agriturismo e della produzione di biomasse (soprattutto rivolte alle aziende locali di coltivazione e lavorazione delle canne d'acqua).

Il progetto è stato concepito come primo passo dimostrativo per la stipula di un Patto per il Fiume Simeto. Si spera esso sia l'occasione per sperimentare un nuovo modello di governance misto istituzioni-comunità (Ostrom 1990). In parole semplici, l'idea è che – una volta realizzato questo intervento 'collaborativo' su Ponte Barca – esso possa essere usato come esempio concreto per avviare simili esperienze negli altri territori comunali.

La riunione di cui accennavo nel paragrafo introduttivo è dedicata, in particolare, al ruolo di raccordo che può essere svolto dalla cultura e dall'arte per la scala geografica della Valle. La componente che generalmente nei progetti *Life* viene chiamata di "diffusione e sensibilizzazione" degli esiti del progetto –

spesso condotta pro-forma dai tecnici comunali con volantini e manifesti murali – qui è tra le più sentite dagli operatori della cultura del Simeto. Nel corso della riunione diversi gruppi mi hanno suggerito, in quanto curatrice materiale della scrittura del progetto, quali specifiche produzioni culturali potrebbero essere efficaci, e attraverso quali strategie artistico-comunicative queste potrebbero essere diffuse, con la collaborazione di tutti (per esempio: manufatti di artigianato con le canne, anche per l'arredo urbano; spettacoli teatrali prodotti con la tecnica dei cantastorie, ecc.).

Ho scelto di condividere l'esperienza del Simeto partendo e ritornando alla recente riunione tra le associazioni culturali del Simeto, perché in questa occasione è accaduto qualcosa che molti tecnici 'collaborativi' sognano, e che oggi ho avuto il privilegio di vivere in prima persona: non solo la mia 'penna tecnica' veniva alimentata dall'energia e dalle idee di tanti; mi sono anche sentita rassicurare del fatto che 'la comunità' (che stavolta non era astratta, ma davanti a me) si impegnerà a mettere in atto la maggior parte delle azioni proposte anche nel caso che i fondi europei non arrivassero. D'altronde, se si fossero aspettati 'i soldi', nel Simeto non sarebbe accaduto nulla delle cose importanti che sono successe dal 2002 a oggi.

## 6. Riflessioni conclusive

L'esperienza del *Life + 2013* di Paternò è una piccola pratica di progettazione collaborativa, sponsorizzata dalle istituzioni, che rappresenta la prima esperienza simetina d'istituzionalizzazione di un metodo pianificatorio partecipativo. Sulla scorta delle tante critiche che sono state mosse in letteratura alla pianificazione partecipata 'formalizzata', in molti siamo consapevoli del rischio che, anche al Simeto, tale istituzionalizzazione comprometta l'autenticità di un processo nato in modo spontaneo, a partire da un grosso conflitto tra cittadinanza attiva e istituzioni. Eppure, alla maggior parte di noi ricercatori e membri attivi delle associazioni, sembra che questo rischio valga la pena di essere affrontato, perché tra le istanze emerse nel corso del processo spontaneo vi è quella che le innovazioni di metodo sperimentate dalla comunità debbano contagiare le abitudini amministrative locali. A noi ricercatori, in particolare, questa esperienza, quella di preparazione del progetto *Life + 2013* su Ponte Barca e in generale il lavoro di redazione partecipata dal Patto di Fiume Simeto, ha fatto capire una cosa importante: a fronte di un dibattito disciplinare che si interroga fortemente sui rischi di deriva tecnocratica dell'azione tecnica in pianificazione, i risultati ottenuti al Simeto fanno pensare che in qualche modo, nella cornice della ricerca-azione, sia possibile per un ricercatore in pianificazione urbanistica contribuire fattivamente, attraverso le proprie competenze specifiche, ad un processo di sviluppo locale, senza comprometterne l'autenticità.

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Erika Lazzarino

# Ricerca-azione tra etnografia e auto-etnografia: pratiche dell'abitare in una periferia milanese

Anthropology, Urban Practices, Outskirts & Suburbs

'immaginarieplorazioni' is an action-research conceived and promoted by a group of local residents who are *also* researchers. The aim is to combine the looks of anthropology, urban politics, film-making and visual arts in a survey about the practices of urban dwelling. The author of the paper has gone throughout 'immaginarieplorazioni' as co-creator of the project, as inhabitant of the Giambellino district, as a researcher in cultural anthropology and as a member of the working group itself. On the basis of these multiple positionings, the author reflects *ex-post* on 'immaginarieplorazioni' as a case study, to argue that ethnography and auto-ethnography can, together, turn into dwelling practices, or rather, into *cultural* dwelling practices. Not only reflexivity and self-reflexivity are not limited to the production of anthropological discourse, but they are also open to an onset of visions and practices. If referred to one's own living, these practices develop novel reflections on the meaning of *collective*, urban *locality* and *agency*.

## Introduzione

«Tutto ebbe inizio ad una finestra. Una finestra su una piazza. Una piazza che è un mondo.

Dappertutto, nelle città e nei paesi, ci sono finestre che affacciano su piazze che esprimono mondi.

Dappertutto questi mondi sono flussi di un arazzo che cangia senza posa. Nel brulicare dei fili, nel mutare delle trame, nell'annodarsi e sfilarsi degli intrecci, i tessitori intessono.

I tessitori, abitando, tessono. O gli abitanti, tessendo, abitano – che è l'aspetto che più interessa a noi» (immaginarieplorazioni 2012: 11).

Così comincia 'Giambellino un entroterra', il testo che introduce alla lettura di 'Nella tana del drago. Anomalie narrative dal Giambellino' (immaginarieplorazioni 2012), un libro che raccoglie le voci di alcuni abitanti di questa estrema periferia milanese<sup>1</sup>. Il libro, come anche il film 'entroterra Giambellino',

sono l'esito di un progetto interdisciplinare di ricerca-azione dal titolo 'immaginarieplorazioni Giambellino', originatosi nel 2010 all'interno di un piccolo gruppo di affinità e protrattosi per un paio d'anni. 'immaginarieplorazioni Giambellino' è stato il luogo di raccolta di una trentina di giovani con diverse formazioni, che dal Giugno 2011 e animano il 'collettivo immaginarieplorazioni', autore appunto del libro e del film citati.

«A noi, chi? A noi abitanti, naturalmente. O tessitori, fa lo stesso.

A noi che ci siamo affacciati a quella finestra. Ma non solo, non basta. A noi che, in quella particolare congiuntura di vite, abbiamo incorporato gli sguardi sul mondo di piazza Tirana.

Piazza Tirana, quartiere Giambellino, periferia sud-ovest Milano» (immaginarieplorazioni 2012: 11).

Il progetto di ricerca-azione è stato ideato e promosso da un gruppo ristretto di abitanti e ricercatori, nell'intento di coniugare gli sguardi dell'antropologia, delle politiche urbane, del cinema e delle arti visive in un'indagine sul tema delle pratiche dell'abitare urbano. In particolare, le pratiche dell'abitare sono state intenzionalmente circoscritte e osservate sotto forma di un duplice costrutto: come il frutto degli immaginari di coloro che abitano gli spazi e come l'esito dell'esplorazione di coloro che immaginano una ricerca possibile. Oggetto e soggetto della ricerca si pongono reciprocamente in tensione, poiché l'uno

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<sup>1</sup> Sorto fra gli anni Venti e gli anni Trenta come zona industriale a sud-ovest della città, il Giambellino è considerato oggi uno dei quartieri più svantaggiati della cinta periferica di Milano. Nell'assenza di politiche pubbliche, esso ospita uno dei più degradati quartieri di edilizia residenziale pubblica. Già approdo della vecchia immigrazione meridionale, la convivenza di popolazione straniera è oggi profondamente eterogenea, facendo di quest'area una fra quelle con il maggior tasso di immigrazione a Milano. Per un resoconto urbanistico e etnografico rimando a Cognetti (2011).

ricomponere e raffigura l'altro, e viceversa.

«Era una sera tiepida di aprile, luce violacea. A quell'ora piazza Tirana diviene una profusione sonora in stretta relazione col silenzio che già sempre inghiotte i minimi gesti.

Una palla che rimbalza, gli schiamazzi dei ragazzini, una suoneria che trilla pop arabo, gli alleluja dei rom evangelici, la fontana che zampilla, il chiacchiericcio degli anziani coi cani, l'altoparlante della stazione. Ecco il paese.

Il paese arriva così, ad un'ora e con un suono infallibili. Viene e ti risucchia cosa fra cose, vita fra vite, non diversamente, ma proprio corpo fra corpi. Abitante fra abitanti.

Viene il paese così, di soppiatto, e senza intenzionalità alcuna astanti e spazi si attraggono nell'abitare» (immaginaryexplorazioni 2012: 12).

Chi scrive adesso ha attraversato 'immaginaryexplorazioni' come co-ideatrice del progetto, abitante del quartiere Giambellino, ricercatrice in antropologia culturale e membro del collettivo di lavoro. A partire da questi posizionamenti, rifletto ex-post su 'immaginaryexplorazioni' come caso-studio per argomentare che etnografia e auto-etnografia<sup>2</sup> (Hayano 1979; Ellis 2004; Holman 2005; Chang 2008) possano, insieme, restituirci come pratiche dell'abitare (Cellamare 2011) o, meglio, come pratiche culturali dell'abitare. Riflessività e auto-riflessività, infatti, non solo non si limitano alla produzione di discorso antropologico, ma aprono ad una insorgenza di visioni e di pratiche (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992) che, se riportate sul proprio abitare, sperimentano elaborazioni inedite di 'collettivo'<sup>3</sup>, 'località' urbana e 'agency'<sup>4</sup>. Nel confronto con l'antropologia dei movimenti sociali (Nash 2007; Boni 2011; Koensler, Rossi 2012), sulla filigrana del dibattito fra antropologia pura e applicata (Malighetti 2001; Kedia, van Willigen 2005) e nel solco delle teorie antropologiche sulla creatività culturale (Wagner 1992; De Certeau 2001; Liep 2001; Hallam, Ingold 2007; Favole 2010), rileggo etnografia e auto-etnografia come vere e proprie pratiche di creatività culturale dell'abitare.

Ancorando sull'asse del tempo questo caso studio, sezionandone un 'prima', un 'durante' e un 'dopo', individuo rispettivamente una fase di progettazione (cfr. il paragrafo 'Progettare'), una fase di implementazione (cfr. il paragrafo 'Sul campo') e una fase di restituzione (cfr. il paragrafo 'Uscire'). Per discernere

2 Senza considerare in questa sede il dibattito teorico ed epistemologico in cui si colloca, definisco l'auto-etnografia come una pratica di ricerca qualitativa, caratterizzata dalla riflessività sul sé come soggetto agente sia nel campo di ricerca e sia nel processo di traduzione/scrittura.

3 Inteso come complesso di relazioni plurali che si determinano reciprocamente.

4 Si intenda *agency* come «la capacità di produrre discorsi e azioni da collocare in un orizzonte culturale di significati, nonché la facoltà di plasmare contesti e formulare progetti culturalmente determinati per soddisfare coerentemente esigenze, desideri e interessi» (Ortner 2006: 144).

re, attraversando queste fasi, l'intreccio fra l'abitante che si attiva, le intenzionalità del ricercatore e il processo che 'immaginaryexplorazioni' ha messo in moto nel corso del tempo, mi concentro e tengo sullo sfondo due questioni chiave, capaci a mio avviso, se interconnesse, di delineare una tensione processuale creativa rispetto all'esperienza di 'collettivo', di costruzione della 'località' e di attivazione di 'agency'.

La prima di queste questioni concerne la posizione incorporata dal ricercatore. Essa si riferisce alle implicazioni che il soggetto della ricerca intrattiene con il suo campo di studio. Si tratta di implicazioni non di carattere teorico, ma che riguardano l'*embodiment* di repertori culturali, ossia l'iscrizione nel proprio stesso corpo (e nell'uso che se ne fa) di codici capaci di ambientarlo culturalmente<sup>5</sup>. L'esperienza vissuta del *mindful body* (Scherper-Hughes, Lock 1987) indica come abitando il proprio corpo si faccia abitudine del mondo<sup>6</sup>. Anche il soggetto della ricerca, poichè abita il proprio corpo ed in esso incorpora il suo mondo, si confronta con gradienti variabili di incorporazione del proprio ambito di lavoro e ricerca. Allora la questione che mi interessa ora tenere in evidenza è: a partire da quale posizione il ricercatore (che è anche abitante, anche progettista, anche attivista) guarda al campo di ricerca prescelto?

La seconda questione riguarda il punto di vista che il ricercatore intende assumere. Rispetto al proprio oggetto di studio, e in concomitanza con la sua costruzione, il soggetto della ricerca dà forma alla sua intenzionalità, posizionandosi anche come soggetto che enuncia il resoconto antropologico. Il lungo dibattito fra approccio emico ed etico, consolidatosi proficuamente in antropologia a partire dal testo curato da Headland, Pike e Harris (1990) (cfr. anche Kottak 2006)<sup>7</sup>, chiama in causa l'epistemologia e le metodologie della disciplina, rimarcando il fatto che punti di vista differenti generano differenti modi di svolgere e poi restituire la ricerca sul campo. Con l'approccio emico il ricercatore assume un punto di vista interno alla 'cultura' o alla 'comunità' indagata, il famoso 'punto di vista del nativo' traslato nei fenomeni socioculturali della contemporaneità. Questo approccio mira a riportare come i gruppi in esame

5 Per una prima panoramica critica del concetto di incorporazione riportato in auge nelle scienze sociali dall'antropologia medica nel corso degli anni Ottanta, cfr. almeno Scherper-Hughes 2000.

6 Abitare, abituarsi: «Questo gioco di parole si rifà alla nozione di 'habitus' di Mauss, termine più tardi ripreso da Bourdieu, e con cui Mauss intendeva riferirsi a tutte le abitudini apprese e a tutte quelle tecniche somatiche che rappresentano l'arte culturale di utilizzare il, ed essere ne, corpo (e nel mondo)» (Scherper-Hughes 2000: 284).

7 'Emico' ed 'etico' sono termini conati dal linguista Kenneth L. Pike che, negli anni Cinquanta, compara il funzionamento dei comportamenti sociali a quello dei comportamenti linguistici (Pike 1954). Precursori del tema in ambito antropologico sono Goodenough, 1970 e Harris, 1976.



**Fig.1** Via Giambellino vista da Piazza Tirana, 17 Settembre 2011.



**Fig.2** Videointervista con abitanti, Giardini di Via Odazio, Giambellino, 6 Settembre 2011.

interpretino ed elaborino dall'interno le varie forme di rappresentazione del sé, delle relazioni sociali, del mondo, ecc. Un approccio etico invece riferisce la voce dell'etnografo, che si pone esternamente ai fenomeni studiati come un osservatore imparziale, scientifico, in grado di procedere, tramite comparazione, verso progressivi gradi di generalizzazione. A prescindere dal fatto, in questa sede, che l'integrazione fra approcci sia stata da più studiosi rilanciata, l'interrogativo da tener saldo in questo caso è: qual è l'intenzionalità del ricercatore (che è *anche* abitante, *anche* progettista, *anche* attivista) rispetto al suo oggetto di ricerca e verso dove tende a guardare? Più sullo sfondo, infine, lascio una riflessione sul passaggio fra antropologia pura e antropologia applicata<sup>8</sup>, mostrando come in esso sia possibile rinvenire una dimensione progettuale della disciplina, più incline cioè ad ingaggiarsi progettualmente sul territorio, entro specifici campi di indagine.

### Progettare

Cinque giovani adulti, formati negli ambiti dell'antropologia, del cinema, delle politiche urbane e delle arti sperimentali, laureati, in prevalenza specializzati e in parte ricercatori con sporadici legami accademici. Un gruppo di affinità, fondato sulla condivisione di una prospettiva militante, in cui i singoli si convocano nell'urgenza di produrre cambiamento fuori dalla politica istituzionale. Ci sono tutti gli elementi per alimentare l'«identità del pioniere», agita nella rappresentazione di un «cenacolo di disallineati»: in gioco c'è il riscatto della propria formazione dal sistema universitario, del precariato dall'accesso alla scala mobile sociale, dell'abitare in periferia dalla centralizzazione delle opportunità di vita.

È così che un tavolo domestico si trasforma in un tavolo di progettazione interdisciplinare applicata al territorio: la «scoperta» del Giambellino è funzionale ad un progetto di attivazione politica, il radicamento al territorio costruisce e veicola la propria autorappresentazione culturale, sociale e politica. D'altro canto, anche il territorio viene «reinventato» per essere risorsa nel processo di soggettivazione, la sua

.....  
8 Per una panoramica generale sul tema, cfr. almeno Malighetti, 2001; Kedia & van Willigen, 2005. Nel corso degli anni Settanta, quando viene definitivamente invalidato il principio secondo cui la ricerca teorica soltanto possa rispondere al criterio di neutralità e obiettività scientifica, e si diffonde l'idea che ricerca e pratica antropologica siano in ugual modo orientate ideologicamente e politicamente, il dibattito sembra spostarsi su un altro, più attuale, versante: la traduzione e trasposizione di un sapere accademico (prodotto in e rivolto all'accademia) nei linguaggi dei progetti, della pianificazione e delle decisioni tecniche e politiche attuate da *practitioners*, operatori, stakeholders, valutatori, sviluppatori, ecc. Di qui una definizione generale di antropologia applicata, così come delineatasi in tempi più recenti, che utilizza «concetti e (...) metodi antropologici per ottenere scopi specifici, generalmente al di fuori del tradizionale ambiente accademico», e consegue «risultati pratici congruenti con gli interessi dei committenti» (Malighetti 2001: 17).

località costruita per corrispondere alle proiezioni e agli immaginari elaborati dal gruppo. Prima ancora di essere Giambellino, questo quartiere è periferia milanese, raffigurata come luogo iper-denso che si presta ad essere «barrio fortificato» e contrapposto al centro cittadino. La costruzione della località risponde dunque anche ad una logica di costruzione culturale della periferia, come territorio di radicalizzazione della differenza sociale. La potenzialità di *agency* che in esso si dispiega è, per questo nucleo di persone in questa fase del processo, puramente progettuale, inflessa, ripiegata sulle relazioni di affinità e sull'elaborazione di una visione comune.

Alcune ipotesi di ricerca, intanto, cominciano a farsi strada fra questa ristretta cerchia di persone, alcune questioni a cui il Giambellino, tramite i loro sguardi, può rispondere, cominciano ad emergere: «se non possiamo inseguire le persone attraverso i luoghi che attraversano, possiamo inseguire i luoghi attraverso le persone che li hanno attraversati? E in che modo?», e ancora «come le persone conservano memoria dei luoghi, anche i luoghi conservano memoria delle persone? Cosa significa «darsi luogo»?». I componenti del gruppo attribuiscono all'«immaginario» la potenzialità di dipanarsi fra queste suggestioni. «Immaginario» è una evocazione che mette in equilibrio le diverse competenze presenti nel gruppo: non l'identità o la cultura dell'antropologia, non l'immagine-in-movimento delle arti visive, non la visione delle politiche urbane, non la parola della poesia, ma «forse l'immaginario ragguaglia un po' tutte queste cose insieme, è interdisciplinare in sé» – a questa conclusione giungono spesso i lunghi dopocena intorno al tavolo della cucina. Intanto la prospettiva di lavorare insieme ad un progetto di ricerca e di trovare i mezzi per renderlo economicamente sostenibile diventa via via sempre più inderogabile: a tal fine, e per sancire un patto e un impegno, il gruppo formalizza la sua esistenza pubblicamente, fondando l'associazione culturale *Dynamoscopio*. Intercettato un bando della Fondazione Cariplo che finanzia progetti di «creatività giovanile», ha inizio la fase di progettazione in senso stretto: questa esperienza ha generato una riformulazione profonda dell'idea progettuale, immaginata, all'inizio, nei canoni di una ricerca universitaria ma senza università: la cornice della «creatività giovanile» imposta dal bando, recepita come retorica da aggirare, ha indotto a declinare la ricerca come una «sperimentazione artistica interdisciplinare»; altri criteri del bando poi hanno indotto a finalizzare la ricerca in un «prodotto culturale» fruibile in modo diverso dalla saggistica disciplinare, a coinvolgere un certo numero di giovani «beneficiari» nell'apprendimento di strumenti di espressione creativa, e a tematizzare la periferia come luogo di marginalità sociale bisognosa di mezzi culturali per emanciparsi. Un progetto di ricerca «tradizionale» nell'impianto (studio della letteratura, ricerca sul campo, comparazione e scrittura), pensato a misura di un piccolo gruppo di ricercatori di una generazione insofferente, gradualmente muta in un «cantiere creativo» di formazione e sperimentazio-

ne, allargato tramite *open call* a trenta partecipanti, motivato anche per la ricaduta in loco sulla coesione sociale<sup>9</sup>, finalizzato alla realizzazione di un film e di un libro sul quartiere Giambellino.

L'oggetto progettato (il progetto sottoposto al finanziatore) conserva della rappresentazione di partenza l'interdisciplinarietà di matrice collettiva, nonché l'approccio antropologico applicato sia all'analisi delle criticità in cui il progetto sarebbe 'interventuto', che alle interlocuzioni con gli attori territoriali, sia all'accento sulla località Giambellino come campo di lavoro, che alla convocazione di un gruppo di partecipanti composto per metà da giovani abitanti (con la competenza degli 'informatori') e per metà da giovani 'non-nativi' (purché in formazione negli ambiti dell'antropologia, arti visive e performative, architettura, politiche urbane, cinema e fotografia). Inoltre, l'aspirazione iniziale del gruppo ad aprire un confronto teorico e metodologico con alcuni docenti e professionisti di spicco internazionale si è ricomposta nella formulazione di un percorso di formazione, di cui *Dynamoscopio* stesso, *in primis*, sarebbe stato il primo fruitore. Ma è un altro l'aspetto che più di altri resta invariato, ossia la rappresentazione della periferia Giambellino come risorsa vitale – si legge nella *open call* diffusa dopo l'aggiudicazione del contributo – «minore, che ferve sottovoce. Le potenzialità creative si manifestano in una capacità caleidoscopica di inventarsi quotidianamente la vita ai margini della metropoli», a seconda degli immaginari proiettati sul quartiere stesso<sup>10</sup>.

Nell'aprile del 2012, la diffusione della *call* sancisce lo statuto pubblico di 'immaginesplorazioni Giambellino' e il definitivo passaggio da progetto di ricerca a progetto culturale. Sperimentazione di uno sguardo interdisciplinare, formazione di un collettivo di lavoro, rilettura dell'iconografia della periferia e valorizzazione del Giambellino, posizionarsi 'fuori posto' divengono finalità dichiarate del progetto, prima che della ricerca. Il risultato è un progetto culturale che mira a realizzare un progetto di ricerca. Lo scopo del progetto diventa «costruire una piattaforma partecipata che possa configurarsi come un vero gruppo di ricerca misto, impegnato a definire obiettivi teorici e strategie comuni per operare sul campo in un percorso artistico di ricerca-azione non convenzionale»<sup>11</sup>. L'oggetto della ricerca, seppur

orientato, non viene definito.

### Sul campo

La nuova configurazione di ruoli, obiettivi e mission comporta una continua riformulazione della leadership<sup>12</sup> nel processo di ricerca. Giunti infatti a questo punto di non-ritorno, il gruppo di affinità insediato in piazza Tirana deve prendere atto della propria responsabilità nei confronti di un collettivo *in potentiae*. In un gioco di assunzione e dismissione della leadership, nella costrizione e sovversione dei ruoli, il nucleo intraprende un percorso di apertura all'altro, di semplificazione del linguaggio, di condivisione della progettualità, di confronto pedagogico. Dallo spaesamento iniziale, i ricercatori si aprono ad una polisemia più inclusiva, ad una interdisciplinarietà trasmessa tramite l'ascolto e la relazione interpersonale. I mesi di formazione con docenti e professionisti nei vari ambiti disciplinari gradualmente danno luogo ad un processo di auto-formazione collettiva: discutendo e riflettendo, dai seminari e dalle uscite sul territorio il nascente collettivo trae spunti, ricombina linguaggi, connette teorie e metodologie per focalizzare sempre meglio il suo oggetto di ricerca e per focalizzarsi sempre meglio come soggetto della ricerca e come attore dell'azione.

A cavallo fra il periodo di formazione e quello di esplorazione sul campo, nella fase forse più delicata della ricerca-azione, il collettivo 'immaginesplorazioni' fa sintesi dei diversi posizionamenti che lo compongono, tara le sue aspirazioni e si misura con la sua ambizione: duplice ora si rivela l'obiettivo della ricerca-azione, una rilettura del territorio che sia anche strumento di attivazione dentro al territorio. Il collettivo vuole costruire un dispositivo di esplorazione del quartiere e al contempo degli immaginari dei suoi abitanti, ed anche di espressione della sua stessa *agency* rispetto alle tematiche per cui continua a convocarsi. Quale relazione si instaura fra soggetto e oggetto in una ricerca-azione di campo in Giambellino? Approcciando la questione dal lato del soggetto, il collettivo elabora una concezione di 'immaginario'<sup>13</sup> – come strumento sia per interrogare

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sperimentare, insieme, differenti modi di leggere e scrivere il medesimo panorama culturale e fisico. Una pluralità di sguardi che, attraverso un percorso creativo collettivo, vorrebbe nello specifico svelare e reintrecciare alcune trame delle periferie metropolitane e, più ambiziosamente, delle città» (cfr. <http://www.dynamoscopio.it/?p=1007>).

12 Il gruppo di *Dynamoscopio* è preoccupato che un modello di relazione polarizzato sulla falsariga di professore-studente, operatore-utente, benefattore-beneficario, offerente-fruitore rappresenti un'insidia per la formazione di un 'collettivo'. Smarcarsi da questi ruoli, per sperimentare una elaborazione orizzontale dell'indagine, è percepito come il primo compito da assolvere.

13 Altra è la sede per esaminare la tematizzazione che di questo concetto è stata proposta nelle scienze sociali e nella filosofia politica. In antropologia rimando almeno a Matera (2008). Ritengo che la rielaborazione di 'immagina-

9 Grazie alle interlocuzioni con alcuni attori del territorio, il gruppo di progettazione ha preso coscienza che, in un luogo come il Giambellino, il coinvolgimento all'interno del progetto di giovani abitanti sarebbe stato reale, oltre che virtuoso, se mediato, almeno nei contesti 'più sensibili' (come quelli delle case popolari), da competenze che oggi vengono definite di 'coesione sociale'. Il felice incontro con uno di questi attori, la Cooperativa Sociale Comunità del Giambellino, ha di lì a poco condotto alla formalizzazione di un accordo di partenariato e all'inaugurazione di relazioni continuative di stima e amicizia.

10 Cfr. <http://www.dynamoscopio.it/?p=1007>.

11 E ancora si legge nella *call*: «A partire da questa cornice, 'immaginesplorazioni' è un luogo per indagare e

il panorama fisico e culturale del quartiere e sia per situarvisi attivamente –, e una di ‘abitare’<sup>14</sup> – come sua propria riflessività interdisciplinare. Analogamente, dalla parte dell’oggetto, il collettivo elabora una concezione di ‘soglia’<sup>15</sup> – come strumento sia per riarticolare il panorama fisico e culturale del quartiere e sia per situarvisi attivamente –, e di ‘laboratorio politico a cielo aperto’<sup>16</sup> – come sua propria retorica della località. La ricerca si applica dunque non solo ad un oggetto, ma alla costruzione reciproca fra soggetto ricercatore e oggetto ricercato: da un lato, ‘immaginario’ e ‘abitare’ restituiscono al Giambellino l’attivazione territoriale di un soggetto plurale fortemente motivato; dall’altro, ‘soglia’ e ‘laboratorio’ politico a cielo aperto ridisegnano il Giambellino come oggetto resiliente in cui insediarsi nella logica della ‘infrapolitica’<sup>17</sup>.

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rio’ proposta dal collettivo sia interessante, sia come strumento per un’attività di rilevamento e mappatura urbana e sia come dispositivo di posizionamento dichiarato e di *agency* del soggetto che fa ricerca-azione.

14 Il gruppo di ricerca sceglie deliberatamente di non esaminare la nozione di ‘abitare’ in chiave disciplinare. Prendendo atto della sua fondamentale insondabilità ad uno sguardo analitico, opta per riconsegnarla alla visione evocativa della poesia, a cominciare dai noti versi di Holderlin ‘Poeticamente abita l’uomo su questa terra...’. Isabella Bordoni, poetessa e artista performativa che ha accompagnato trasversalmente l’esperienza di ‘immaginarie esplorazioni’, in una sessione di lavoro del 1 Ottobre 2012, afferma: «È nell’abitare, prima politica che attiviamo nel tempo e nello spazio, verso gli altri come verso noi stessi, che si sta vicini al mondo come insieme dei mondi possibili. Questa è la transizione incessante fra politico e poetico. Questa intimità è poesia».

15 Punto di partenza è che la periferia si presenti come fascia di confine (di un sistema economico, politico, sociale e culturale). Come può funzionare un confine? Come margine, che contiene dall’esterno; oppure come argine, che contiene dall’interno; oppure come bordo, che genera uno stacco e tiene a distanza; oppure come limite, che distingue e separa. Prese in esame queste tipologie, il collettivo ha scelto di ‘far funzionare’ il confine come soglia, che rende porosa la densità urbana a chi entra, chi esce e a chi vi sosta magari una vita intera, e come rifugio, eletto a dimora proprio per il fatto di essere soglia.

16 Il farsi e disfarsi delle pratiche dell’abitare fanno del quartiere Giambellino, secondo il collettivo di ricerca, un laboratorio spontaneo di prove di convivenza, intercultura, infrapolitica, mutualità, conflittualità e riappropriazione degli spazi. Questo aspetto induce a credere che in periferie come il Giambellino si elaborino, rodandole attraverso la quotidianità, pratiche dell’abitare che anticipano qui risposte ad alcuni –inarginabili– fenomeni della contemporaneità che, presto o tardi, riguarderanno tutte le parti della città.

17 Con il termine ‘infrapolitica’ James Scott (2006: 36-7) indica «la grande varietà di resistenze di basso profilo che non osano dichiararsi apertamente (...). Prendere in considerazione gli atti politici dissimulati o fuori scena ci aiuta a mappare lo spazio del dissenso possibile». L’infrapolitica si offre come uno strumento in grado di ‘farci vedere’ oltre la dicotomia subordinanti/subordinati, consentendoci di distinguere dinamiche e strategie che si pongono come

Sporadicamente durante la formazione, intensivamente nel corso dei mesi di ‘sperimentazione sul campo’, il territorio viene ascoltato nel suo spessore materico, non solo ideologico, assume gradualmente ‘la vita del corpo’, non solo quella del paesaggio. Esplorato con intenzionalità etnografica e ogni volta attraverso la lente di una disciplina diversa, la periferia urbana diviene dapprima quartiere (come forma estesa di vicinato) e poi quartiere Giambellino (come ‘incorporazione’ di una ‘ambientazione’ specifica). I suoi abitanti, stabili o temporanei, i suoi spazi, rigenerati, popolari o informali, le sue lingue, che dipingono un caravanserraglio, le sue pratiche, la cui creatività è capace di anticipare convivenze possibili: la periferia ‘fortificata’, il fortino verticale come punto di osservazione ideologico e dunque dall’alto, si fa via via più porosa, in una sorta di ‘processo di orizzontamento’ diventa soglia per scrutare gli orizzonti dal basso, domandare a chi va, a chi viene, a chi sosta. Insieme a quelli che giungono ad abitare in Giambellino, o perché aspirano ad inserirsi nel ‘sistema Milano’ o perché non riescono più a coltivare questa prospettiva, sostano sulla soglia-Giambellino alcuni invece per scelta, per rifugio. Alcuni componenti del gruppo di ‘immaginarie esplorazioni’ si ritengono fra questi. In questo modo la pratica etnografica si declina riflessivamente attraverso un duplice modalità, perché prende in considerazione sia il ricercatore come soggetto della ricerca e sia il ricercatore come abitante del Giambellino. A sua volta la pratica etnografica (e auto-etnografica) induce il collettivo ‘immaginarie esplorazioni’ ad assumere la pluralità dei suoi sguardi e, per loro tramite, la molteplicità di modi di abitare il quartiere. La multifocalità dell’esperienza soggettiva si riflette nelle molte voci di cui si riesce a fare esperienza, ivi compresa la propria: questo ‘processo di antropologizzazione’ dell’esperienza ogni volta ridefinisce dinamicamente la relazione fra sé e altro, abitante e abitato, soggetto e oggetto, teoria e pratica, generando una *agency* che espone continuamente il soggetto al collettivo, e il collettivo al territorio, estroflessa, esplorativa.

## Uscire

Alla fine di Giugno 2012 il collettivo di ricerca può presentare pubblicamente il risultato del proprio lavoro, un libro e un film. La prima presentazione pubblica si svolge in Giambellino, alla presenza di centinaia di persone e in maggioranza abitanti. All’interno del parco del Laboratorio di Quartiere<sup>18</sup>,

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obiettivo non dichiarato quello di mantenere in vita forme di resistenza a bassa intensità (cfr. Lazzarino 2012).

18 Il Laboratorio di Quartiere, o ‘casetta verde’, è in Giambellino una struttura attualmente cogestita da un rete di attori locali per lo sviluppo di coesione sociale sul territorio. Da non confondersi con la tipologia dei laboratori di quartiere previsti dai Contratti di Quartiere, esso se ne distingue per l’autonomia dalle logiche istituzionali e per le forme di partecipazione ‘dal basso’ che riesce a convogliare. ‘immaginarie esplorazioni Giambellino’ ha svolto qui tutte le sue attività ‘stanziali’ e proposto un ciclo di incontri



la presentazione del libro e la proiezione del film diventano occasione per un'attesa festa di quartiere, che diviene anche momento di aggregazione e attrazione di pubblico esterno. In essa si sono attivati, insieme al collettivo, anche gli abitanti che prendono parola nel libro o nel film. Per il gruppo di 'immaginarie esplorazioni' è questo un momento di verifica: consapevoli che l'aspettativa generale fosse quella di un'inchiesta o di una denuncia delle criticità del Giambellino, in cui tutti avrebbero potuto facilmente rispecchiarsi, lo scarto costruttivo che si viene a generare testimonia come sia possibile immaginare diversamente il medesimo spazio. Lo scopo del collettivo è infatti quello di riconsegnare al territorio non un dispositivo di riconoscimento *tout-court*, ma di generazione di scarti e sovrapposizioni, in grado di riposizionare l'abitante in una dimensione complessa e attivarne un differenziale di percezione, visione e *agency*. Nelle altre presentazioni del progetto e dei suoi esiti al quartiere, nel milanese e in altre città italiane, in contesti locali, festival, università e centri sociali, tale intenzionalità implica che il gruppo non si proponga come 'portavoce' o 'in rappresentanza' del Giambellino, ma unicamente della propria scelta di declinare in questo quartiere dinamiche che ci riguardano tutti come abitanti di luoghi.

La trafila di 'uscite pubbliche', di linguaggi, stimoli e confronti, che il collettivo riporta al 'campo base' Giambellino, contribuisce ad instaurare fra il gruppo di ricerca e il quartiere una relazione affettiva basata sul fatto che le rappresentazioni di sé come soggetto di ricerca e del territorio come suo oggetto vengono ogni volta rimesse in discussione dall'esperienza che *anche* come abitanti non si finisce mai di acquisire. La ricerca prosegue dal di dentro delle pratiche dell'abitare. Nella rete di abitanti, operatori, negozianti e ancora di bar, piazze, orti, retrobottega, che 'immaginarie esplorazioni' ha attivato intorno a sé, un 'processo di territorializzazione' del gruppo va compendosi, profilando in modo particolare la questione dell'autorialità. Il collettivo si ritrova ora ad essere riconosciuto pubblicamente come autore di un libro e regista di un film. Se questa etichetta, che riconduce un prodotto al suo produttore, crea un'epica dell'esperienza di 'immaginarie esplorazioni', d'altra parte è percepita dal gruppo come fuori luogo. Il collettivo non si avverte proprietario né di un'esperienza, né dei risultati della ricerca, perché il suo protagonismo viene ogni volta riassorbito dall'ingaggio dell'attivista in Giambellino. Il risultato del progetto non è un autore di un'opera, ma l'attivazione del ricercatore sul territorio, nell'innescare di un 'micro-movimento urbano' dove abitante, ricercatore e attivista tendono a coincidere nella medesima pratica. Il collettivo 'immaginarie esplorazioni' entra dunque a far parte della panoramica degli attori attivi in quartiere, partecipa al Laboratorio di Quartiere e rientra nelle attività di co-progettazione di rete; alcuni suoi esponenti contribuiscono a dar vita ad un comitato di abitanti delle

pubblici.

case popolari, altri si trasferiscono a vivere in Giambellino, altri ancora lavorano con *Dynamoscopio* ad altri progetti che nel frattempo si sono attivati. Tale serie di micro innesti territoriali può essere riletta sotto la lente un 'processo di ri-politicizzazione dell'abitare', che dissemina in Giambellino differenti livelli di attivazione del collettivo, in una pratica generatrice di altri ingaggi, di altre progettualità, di altre forme di *agency* ancora.

Ma raccontare del Giambellino e raccontarsi al di fuori del Giambellino contribuiscono a dar corpo ad una performatività sino ad ora intesa solo teoricamente: le presentazioni pubbliche si offrono infatti al collettivo come occasioni per performare un'intenzione coltivata in precedenza, sin dalla fase di formazione, ossia quella di costruire gli strumenti di restituzione della ricerca in maniera tale da utilizzarli nel dialogo con contesti analoghi o differenti dal Giambellino, quartieri e periferie di altre città del mondo. «Come strutturare e restituire una ricerca che possa fungere da terreno di confronto fra il Giambellino e la periferia di Accra o Nuova Dehli o Marsiglia?» – questa questione resta sospesa sino a quando il confronto non avviene nell'incontro, fra il collettivo e le molteplici realtà con cui si relaziona in questa fase. Questa pratica disegna un movimento duplice, quello di 'vivere nel *barrio* fuori dal *barrio*' – questo uno slogan coniato dal collettivo –, di saperne uscire e rientrare tramite la dinamica cognitiva dispiegata dalla figura retorica della *sineddoche*: raccontare il mondo attraverso il Giambellino, e raccontare il Giambellino attraverso il mondo. Uscire dal quartiere, 'de-localizzarsi' nella relazione con l'esterno, conduce il gruppo di 'immaginarie esplorazioni' a riarticolare ancora una volta la località Giambellino, riacquisendola nuovamente come 'una parte per il tutto' (l'utilizzo della parte-Giambellino per designare il tutto-mondo) e come 'il tutto per una parte' (l'utilizzo del tutto-mondo per designare la parte-Giambellino)<sup>19</sup>.

### (Ex)post

Molti altri sarebbero gli aspetti da riportare e tutti quanti restano in buona parte da approfondire. In conclusione vorrei però far emergere come, nel caso di 'immaginarie esplorazioni', etnografia e auto-etnografia siano leggibili come pratiche culturali dell'abi-

.....  
<sup>19</sup> Nelle ultime battute della fase di sperimentazione sul campo, una parola tratta dalla poesia, e dunque extradisciplinare, giunge a far sintesi di questa complessità, la parola 'entroterra': «Da laggiù, continuamente saggiamo i confini dell'immaginabile, disponiamo le retrovie silenziose, addensiamo gli affetti cui affidare ciò che resta. Né la sopravvivenza quotidiana né l'insurrezione che divampa possono essere disgiunte dall'entroterra, dove tale resistenza può ricevere linfa e significato. L'area dell'entroterra è quella dell'orgoglio, ma anche l'insoddisfazione, la speranza, la credulità, la partenza, la febbre sempre imminente. E non la saggezza. Ma forse, chissà, qualcosa meglio ancora». La citazione è tratta dal *voice-over* del film *entroterra Giambellino* (2012, Lab80 film) realizzato dal collettivo, liberamente ispirato ad un testo del poeta francese Yves Bonnefoy (2004: 42).

tare. Nella fase di ricerca-azione propriamente detta, che il progettista definirebbe di 'implementazione', il soggetto della ricerca si trova immerso nel suo campo di indagine. Sia che questo venga articolato come costruzione del soggetto-oggetto della ricerca e sia che venga inteso come sessione limitata nel tempo e nello spazio al quartiere Giambellino, la posizione incorporata dal ricercatore è interna ad esso. A ciò si combina l'intenzionalità del ricercatore a 'restar vicino' e tradurre emicamente il punto di vista del collettivo come anche dell'abitante, nell'accezione di agenti di trasformazione delle visioni e degli spazi urbani. Oltre alla posizione interna del ricercatore, questo approccio emico si coniuga all' 'essere azione' della ricerca, facendo della ricerca-azione stessa un ambito di antropologia applicata. La coincidenza fra posizione interna, approccio emico e antropologia applicata origina una pratica etnografica e, insieme, auto-etnografica che è già essa stessa pratica di re-invenzione dello spazio abitato e di ri-soggettivazione dell'abitante, ovvero pratica culturale dell'abitare (Grasseni 2009). Nell'intenzionalità della pratica etnografica e dell'auto-etnografia ha luogo la 'messa in forma' non tanto di una cultura dell'abitare, quanto di un processo di creatività culturale legato all'abitare, o, con Herzfeld (2003), di creatività dell' «intimità culturale». Nel cortocircuito fra ricercatore e abitante in questa ricerca-azione, la riflessività etnografica deflagra nei «piaceri della quotidianità, che costituiscono i piaceri dell'intimità culturale» (Herzfeld 2012: 302). Gli aspetti creativi delle pratiche (auto)etnografiche come pratiche culturali dell'abitare, «produttori cioè di condizioni impreviste, inedite, 'emergenti'» (Favole 2012: 10), sono riconducibili nel percorso di 'immaginarie esplorazioni' all'esperienza di 'collettivo', di costruzione della 'località' e di attivazione di 'agency'.

Dal 2010 ad oggi, nel fare esperienza della ricerca-azione che è stata 'immaginarie esplorazioni Giambellino', la proiezione di 'collettivo', inteso come complesso di relazioni plurali che si determinano reciprocamente, è profondamente mutata. Dalla rappresentazione della propria cerchia di appartenenza come di un gruppo ristretto di ricercatori-pionieri, passando attraverso un processo di redistribuzione della leadership, il nucleo promotore di partenza acquisisce via via una polisemia più inclusiva e si estende ad un insieme più vasto di persone, sino a definirsi 'collettivo'. Con la ricerca sul campo e la 'territorializzazione' affettiva che essa ha implicato, il collettivo declina l'autorialità della ricerca nella territorialità dell'azione, in un processo di ri-soggettivazione 'ad ingaggio multiplo': è in questa disseminazione delle forme di riappropriazione del rapporto fra abitante e abitato che il Giambellino può divenire lo scenario di attivazione di un 'micro-movimento urbano'.

Di pari passo, anche la costruzione della 'località' urbana diviene dinamica, trasformandosi da periferia 'fortificata', come luogo di posizionamento ideologico, a quartiere Giambellino, come soglia di conversione di forme di vita. Questo primo passaggio,

frutto di un 'processo di orizzontamento', ascolto e relativizzazione fra immaginari dell'abitare che stratificano il territorio, approda infine ad una 'località' ricostruita per sineddoche: uscire dal quartiere per presentare i risultati di 'immaginarie esplorazioni', raccontare e raccontarsi nella tensione di acquisire 'i Giambellino' disseminati altrove, induce a 'de-localizzare' la 'scoperta' del Giambellino nella scoperta del mondo e viceversa.

Alla trasformazione del 'collettivo' e della 'località' si accompagna anche un'emersione creativa di 'agency'. Sperimentare diversi posizionamenti tramite un 'processo di antropologizzazione' dell'esperienza trasforma un'agency introflessa e conservativa, incentrata in prevalenza sulla propria capacità progettuale ad agire nella differenza, in una estroflessione delle pratiche attraverso la relazione intenzionale con il gruppo di ricerca e il territorio nel suo complesso: la declinazione dell'attivismo politico attraverso l'azione territoriale innesca un 'processo di ri-politicizzazione' dell'abitare, generativo a sua volta di altre progettualità, relazioni, pratiche, ingaggi.

Chi scrive ora sta sperimentando anche un'ultima tappa del processo sin qui descritto, quella del ricercatore che si ricolloca intenzionalmente in una posizione esterna al campo di ricerca e, mantenendo invariata l'intenzionalità emica, dovrebbe rileggere l'esperienza con strumenti e teorie dell'antropologia 'pura'. A cambiare non è solo il destinatario della riflessione, ma anche il suo stesso oggetto: non più l'invenzione di pratica a seguito dell'acquisizione di teoria (come durante la ricerca-azione), ma viceversa l'invenzione di teoria a seguito dell'acquisizione di pratica (come in questo scritto). Il passaggio dalla dimensione applicativa a quella pura dell'antropologia mi induce a ritenere che stia proprio nella conversione fra le due il terreno più fertile per un'antropologia intenzionata a farsi veicolo di cambiamento, in cui indisserrabile sia il legame fra il 'cosa e come fare ciò che si pensa' e il 'cosa e come pensare ciò che si fa'. È il momento allora di ritornare alle pratiche.

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Presentazione del progetto, disponibile sul sito di Dynamoscopia, sezione "archivio progetti"  
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