

CITIES AND SELF-ORGANIZATION. A DISCUSSION STARTING FROM ROME

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The explosion of self-organization

In the contemporary city, we are today more and more witnessing different practices and processes of “re-appropriation of space”: regeneration of empty buildings, spaces of cultural production, urban gardens, green areas given renewed significance and re-shaped public spaces, and so on. Beside this, we could also mention experimentations that are activating new social services and welfare spaces, and finally squatting projects, which are defining different modes of co-existence, housing and service provision.

This is a vast field of activity and experience, with the widespread involvement and the leading role of the inhabitants, organized or not in committees or associations, and other local actors. Such experiences are both illegal and legal, and question the relationship and the very meaning of the institutions.

We should even consider in particular micro-practices that are able to broaden and transform the city from the bottom up, alongside more stable forms of social production. A specific kind of “city making” built upon a mix of practices, social relations and modes of local activation.

As a consequence, the way we are looking at the city is radically changing: questioning the relationship between the State and the citizens, these processes of re-appropriation are re-configuring both the mechanism of place making as well as the organization of social relations and local services, thus questioning the very concept of “public” and “publicness” in the city.

These practices of re-appropriation are representing different modes of city organization as well as different cultures of action/policy making in the contemporary city. They are also representing different modes of what “public” means in the city: some practices of re-appropriation are acting as collective actions that take into consideration the mechanism of social inclusion, while others are acting in a way which could be described more as private, or specific to some groups only, rather than designing public/collective actions.

In many cases, these are practices and processes of re-appropriation of the city that are also processes of resignification of spaces and production of places. Among these practices, many of them are re-opening spaces or re-activating some specific territories/neighbourhoods benefiting from very localized creativity and capitalizing on social relations that are fully embedded in local societies.

We should also critically consider that practices of re-appropriation are often substituting the role of local policies and in some case promoting actions that are illegal/informal in a context where institutions are losing financial capacity as well as accountability.

These experimentations are so focused on action that are simultaneously redefining the modes of social conflict as well as the routines and spaces of citizenship participation. These practices can be considered sites where to experiment and shape political capacity, thus questioning the very functioning of local democracy.

This context gives us the possibility to critically analyse the processes of re-appropriation that are changing the contemporary city, not only in big cities but also in small localities. We should be attentive to possible points of strength but also to ambiguities and challenges linked to these experimental processes.

First of all, considering the tension between the possibility to define different models of local activation and cultural/political production and, at the same time, the problematic erosion of the capacity of institutions in answering local needs. We should consider whether practices of re-appropriation are de facto substituting the role of institutions as well as weakening the transformative impact of traditional social conflict.

Some cities like Rome are strongly shaped by these practices and this condition is being mirrored all around Italy and Europe. If we consider the Global South, some of these practices have historically played a

relevant role in the production of local economies as well as in shaping parts of the city (Hou, 2010; Mehta, 2004). This pushes us to consider the role of more structural dimensions in the critical analysis of re-appropriation practices.

In the current climate of weakening welfare states, we should consider whether and how these practices of re-appropriation are substituting the important role of institutions, thus reinforcing neoliberalism, and, as a consequence, an unequal distribution of disadvantage.

Self-organization in the recent evolution of the city

Self-organization has always existed, it has been a fundamental component of the city. It was often the ordinary way of construction and evolution of the city, where the interventions of authority and political power were concentrated in some spaces and in some works of the city. Self-organization was placed within the evolutionary principles of pre-modern society.

Modern society, above all starting from the constitution of the modern States and the relative monarchies (but the democratic States have not been different in this), has instead tended to control or to absorb such processes (Bourdieu, 1994). In this sense, modern society has introduced all forms of control of space, which can be traced back to the logic of the panopticon (Bentham, 1791; Foucault, 1975; Scandurra, 2003; Decandia, 2008).

The same urban planning, although born with the needs of good management of the city, the solution of the health-sanitary problems of the cities in rapid growth, the rethinking according to mobility and efficiency, represented in many ways a form of control of space, as well as management of the soil regime. Haussmann's Paris is the best known and most striking example (Scandurra, 2001; Harvey, 2003).

Despite all, self-organization has survived, has continued to live in the ordinary life of the city although in conditions of subalternity, often considered illegal, putting back into question that separation between institutions and inhabitants.¹

On the opposite, as we said before, today we are facing with an explosion of experiences of self-organization, even beyond the dimension of protest and the great social and urban movements that have characterized all the continents, from the Arab Spring to protests in the squares of Greece and Turkey to the great movements that have gone through New York and the United States (Harvey, 2012a, Graeber, 2007). Above all in countries where people experience the inadequacy of local institutions and administrations and their inability to respond satisfactorily and according to the public interest to the social needs that emerge in urban contexts, the territories tend to develop widely self-organization forms and overcome the autonomy of the politician and, in particular, of the institutions. They even aim to manage without them.

These processes must also be read within a change in the political and institutional context. In fact, in conjunction with a strong and prevailing affirmation and action of a neoliberal-style society, it is emerging a progressive orientation of the State to support such models and trends. The State seems often to be more allied or dominated by economic forces and private interests (and therefore the political dimension is subordinate to the economic one) than committed to protecting the public interest of citizens. This orientation of the "public", which is part of a historical process of retreating of the welfare state since the 80s of the last century, is so strong that citizens often perceive the State apparatus, and in particular local administrations, such as the main enemy to face. Within this context, we can also better understand the growing attention that, in different ways and in different contexts, has been addressed to the theme of the "common good" and "common goods", and more extensively of the *commoning* processes. Therefore, if the modern State had expropriated the capacity for planning and collective management of their life contexts due to a "superior" public need, today it is seen as the less adequate interpreter and no longer people recognize its capacity for define a "public interest". Faced with this problematic loss, it is therefore clear and profound the need to reconstruct processes that define a public and collective dimension of coexistence. Similarly, the need to reconstruct "community" dimensions of coexistence within diversities emerges with force, where social relations gain centrality to qualify daily life.

¹ Even in cultural terms, in the context of urban planning as a discipline and scientific research, a different tradition has been kept alive, which found in Geddes (1915) and in many other scholars its main representatives (Paba, 2010).

Finally, the forms of self-organization also represent an overcoming of participation as it has been progressively interpreted. The participation of citizens in the collective and political life of the city has a noble and very important meaning. The difficulties and distortions of the concrete experiences have disqualified it, disappointing expectations, creating processes more characterized by the construction of consensus if not the development of forms of “social buffer” with respect to problems and conflicts, causing great frustration and increasing the distrust in administrations. Faced with dissatisfaction with participation, when transformed into a farce, forms of self-organization are a way of seeking solutions in autonomy.

Discussing self-organization

As a consequence of this evolution of the political and social processes that cross the cities, there are different dimensions, not always co-present, that we can grasp in the experiences of self-organization. Firstly, there is a dimension linked to the spontaneous process of the inhabitants of use and management of the living context, of the construction of the city and of the production of both physical and symbolic, both material and immaterial space, of self-organization in daily life, of care and management of the places of collective life. To interpret these processes, to grasp the “structural coupling” between space production and re-signification processes, we need to develop an approach able to read and interpret urban practices, and the world of signs and meanings that they carry with them. As Castoriadis (2001) said, “the symbolic leans on the material”.

A second dimension is linked to the contestation of the prevailing models and of the dynamics of political, social and economic transformation of which we spoke previously. It is often activated starting from resistance to forms of urban speculation, from the reclaiming of disregarded rights and better urban living conditions, from opposition to subaltern urban development models to prevailing economic and private interests, which are part of the extractive capitalist dimension (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2017), of the commodification of the city (Harvey, 2012b), of biopolitics (Foucault, 2001). Not remaining in the dimension of pure resistance, these experiences develop strong planning and tend to practice alternative perspectives. All this gives rise, in the first place, to a strong political intention, a clear stance towards the prevailing cultural and political models, which generates a re-appropriation of the city’s spaces and their re-signification. Secondly, as we said, it is an action not only of resistance, but also of construction of alternatives. Although supported by a deep critical reflection, the dimension of action prevails in these experiences. The realization of change is a fundamental objective. In this dynamic, it is to recognize that such experiences have the ability to construct a real and meaningful politics. Thirdly, they constitute the attempt, as far as possible, to build spaces of autonomy, which others define spaces of freedom, i.e. spaces where rules of coexistence defined by alternative models and values take place.

The third dimension is completely different and can easily generate distortions. However, it is often dictated by practical needs and is also found in very radical experiences, such as squatting experiences and housing movements. This is the need to make up for the shortcomings and / or absences of the public administration, to give concrete answers to urban and social problems in a context of progressive retreat of the welfare state. Some examples are the construction of autonomous responses to the housing problem (squatting experiences, but also the illegal housing or large slums all over the world), or to the lack of green areas and public spaces (from which the great proliferation of self-managed green areas and shared gardens), up to the theme of work. It is clear that this (implicitly) substitute action of the shortcomings of the public administration must be accompanied by recalling it to its commitments and tasks. However, this dynamic generates some distortions. Firstly, there is the risk of creating a social buffer, although this may be unavoidable. Given the lack of listening and response from the public administration, social need is urgent and calls for an answer. Unintentionally in this way, the public body is relieved of a problem and there is a risk of reducing social conflict. Secondly, in autonomously seeking answers to problems, “only those who make it go forward”. There is the risk of putting in difficulty the weaker subjects (except when the forms of self-organization expressly aim at mutual aid, as in the struggle for the home) and give space to the stronger ones, generally represented in the contexts of hardship and poverty by illegal economies and organized crime. Thirdly, there are open spaces for the re-examination of what the public interest is, which can be guided by a profound and serious political reflection, but can also emerge from unregulated

processes dictated by private interests (as often happens in the territories of unplanned built areas). In fact, there are several “public cultures” (Cancellieri, Ostanel, 2014). The differentiated character of political processes and positions can cause possible distortions, if not also anti-democratic dynamics. The same “popular economies”, born in South America as an alternative to extractive capitalism, give space to ambiguities that now put them under critical lens (Gago, 2015).

Because of this third dimension, the experiences of self-organization can today be characterized by profound ambiguity. Their interpretation does not arise in the wake of a romantic or apologetic vision, but leads to a critical approach, based on discernment, on the ability to critically read practices and processes of self-organization through the values and ideas of the city they bear.

Self-organization as a structural fact and the relationship with politics

The historical process of development of forms of self-organization calls for some considerations and some questions. A first consideration is the recognition, unlike what happened in modern society, of the multiplicity of subjects that build the city and “produce space”. To make the city are not only institutions or economic forces, but many other active subjects, who may also have the ability to be or become protagonists, in some cases with better outcomes and modalities of the institutions themselves.

The question is therefore “who is caring for the public interest if the institution does not do it any more?” and how it is then produced and defined. The city is a “field” *a la* Bourdieu, a place of conflict between these forces, where spaces of autonomy can be built.

The second consideration is that self-organization is a structural fact. It is not just an anomaly, a factor of protest, but a form by which society reorganizes itself.

Self-organization is (or has returned to be) a fundamental engine of “making city”, not only in terms of care, maintenance and responsibility of the local living space, but also in terms of “production of space” in all its dimensions, material and immaterial, of a structural factor that builds the city. The question is rather whether this structural character is linked to the recognition of existing ordinary practices and political intentions that construct spaces of autonomy or if it is rather the consequence of the change in the ways of acting of state structures and the retreat of the *welfare state*. In the latter case, the prospect is the disintegration of the city as a *polis* and as *civitas*, as an organic body that - despite its differences and conflicts - is self-governing and produces its own culture of coexistence. It follows a situation in which, on one side, the social subjects, especially the weaker ones, are abandoned to themselves and, on the other, we must develop a difficult path of reconstruction of the “common good” in a context of preponderance of economic forces and functionalization of social skills and abilities to the “extractive capitalism”.

A final consideration is to highlight how the experiences of self-organization are social laboratories and of cultural production. They are today the spaces where the production of politics and political culture takes place. In this sense, such spaces are today to be enhanced because those ones where the future can be thought (Appadurai, 2013).

Rome between self-organization, institutional policies and neoliberalism

Rome is a city crossed by many practices of re-appropriation and by many processes of self-organization, making it an emblematic urban context to discuss “self-produced” cities (Cellamare, 2014; S.M.U.R., 2014). These are very different realities: from local communities that self-organize and self-manage their territory to the multiple forms of occupation and squatting (for housing and non-housing purposes); from urban gardens to “restored factories”, from self-produced and managed public spaces to occupied cultural production sites (theatres, cinemas, ecc.), from self-managed local services (gyms, etc.) to illegal built zones and to many other different experiences. A very rich and varied world; nevertheless ambiguous and problematic.

It is a city in turmoil. There is a swarm of activity that goes through the daily life of Rome and that builds and rebuilds the city every day. They are practices and processes that often return some urban “wastes” to the city’s life cycle; practices and processes that are also processes of re-signifying places; a parallel world but also integrated with that of institutional policies and administration, and no less real than that and, in particular, no less capable of actually and concretely constructing the city.



These practices and processes do not transform the city only in its physicality, but also in its symbolic dimensions, in the forms of living and cohabitation: practices of transformation of the “urban”, and for this we speak of “self-made urbanism”.²

The Roman peculiarity is linked not only to the diffusion and coexistence of very different forms of self-production of the city, but also to the fact that Rome is the capital of a modern western state and a country in full capitalist and neoliberal economy. In the ordinary sense, informality and self-construction are often associated with “poor” or “developing” countries, with a weak government capacity and a strongly lacking welfare. In Rome we find informality and self-organization in a context characterized by a strong institutionalization and an advanced economy, very neo-liberal oriented. Rome emblematically demonstrates how these things are not incompatible, but rather represent a system of government, a specific “regime” of this city.

Although in a highly institutional context, a tradition and a strong public administration culture is lacking in Rome, differently from other European countries more consolidated in the organization of the modern State. Historically it has constituted an extremely weak bank against speculative pressures. In many ways the public administration has often played a role of connivance, in favor of speculative activities and of an economy strongly “bent” in the neoliberal sense, while maintaining some levels of services and welfare structures, even if lacking. The outcome is a city, as confirmed by studies and statistics, with a strong social divide, with very rich groups and an extensive social layer in great difficulty, in conditions of real or perceived poverty. We have even other related effects: a weak economy and exploitation of existing resources rather than development, a strong housing speculation that has always marked the history of Rome, an administrative culture of *laissez-faire*.

The same forms of self-organization can be considered functional to this system, as in many cases they play a role of “supply” with respect to the shortcomings of the public administration.

It is not just a matter of inadequacy of the administration, but of a real “style of government”, related to a specific “urban regime”. On the one hand, it keeps the struggling social strata under conditions of weakness and subordination, engaged in the constant effort to make up for the shortcomings, and containing their conflicts within a defined margin. On the other hand, it leaves “ample room for maneuvering” to the speculators and the stronger socio-economic subjects, in the search for their own margin of convenience. That of Rome becomes an emblematic “style of government” where there is a retreat of welfare and an affirmation of the neoliberal economy.

In Rome, one can certainly speak of a “policy of occupations”. For many years, it has been treading between accepting and weakly contrasting occupations for housing, while still keeping them in tension and pressure, at risk of eviction. They constitute a self-produced response to the problem of housing, but cannot be formally recognized and therefore totally accepted.

The whole history of illegal housing, moreover, so characteristic of the urban history of Rome, constitutes a system that determines reciprocal dependencies and conveniences and a patronage form outside a democratic system of government. It is placed at the crossroads of these two dynamics, the “self-making” and the “letting go”.

The “self-made” city, therefore, on the one hand, is at the crossroads of a system of political management, economies, cultures and social relations; it represents a real “socio-economic system”, within a context such as the Roman one characterized in recent years by a progressive political and institutional lacking.

At the same time, the contexts of urban self-organization are, and have been, also social laboratories. In these contexts, experiences have been multiplied in which attempts have been made to experiment with innovative forms of cohabitation and living, ideas of cities that are alternative to the neoliberal urban development model.

In some cases, as in social centers and today in the occupied cultural production sites (Teatro Valle Occupato, Cinema Palazzo, Cinema America, etc.), but also in occupations for housing purposes, these experiments are thought out and continually discussed, so much so that they become the places in Rome for the elaboration and re-elaboration of a reflection on the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey,

² Considering urbanism as a way of life, taking up the well-known reflections of Wirth (1938).

2012; Isin, 2000)³ and on “commoning”. It is a reflection that emphasizes a rethinking of the city’s production processes, an idea of living that returns the complexity of living, social relationships, life in common, etc. Often just the problematic nature of these places, such as occupations for housing,⁴ leads to a profound reflection on the sense of coexistence and on ways of constructing it, underlining the relational dimension of living, the fact that the city is interwoven with relationships that are to be lived in (Pisano, 2013).

In many other cases, and perhaps they are the majority, there is not necessarily an intentionality. Experimentation arises from the ordinary practices of daily life, from the development that self-organization processes have spontaneously had, often due to the conditioning and pressures they have suffered and to which they have tried to give answers: the lack of a home, illegality or irregularities, the position in the labor market in conditions of subalternity, the stigma of the periphery or the “urban ghettos”, the resourcefulness from below, the status of immigrant (regular or irregular), etc. The experimentation was therefore often a need, a path to try to come out of the problems.

Paths of “regeneration from below” in Rome

The term “urban regeneration”, already an originally ambiguous concept, has become in many ways - in common and widespread use - a slogan. The expression “regenerate from below” which is used here has a provocative character. We intend to affirm that, in many cases, and especially in the Roman case, there is an inadequacy of public policies in the “regeneration” of the city, while some policies produced “from below” are often much more adequate. The reference is to some widespread self-organization experiences in Rome that, although they should be read and interpreted in a careful and critical manner, express an ability to define policies, develop projects and implement paths of social innovation and integrated management that in some aspects seems to be failure by the public administration. It is strongly absorbed and conditioned by the management of the ordinary, by the need to negotiate (on the downside) with the private sector to obtain financing that can be used in urban transformation, by the lacking of the welfare state, by the growing difficulty of answering questions social issues and to direct models of economic development. By “regeneration” (“from below”), we mean here an integrated approach that can deal with both the physical and structural aspects of the city’s set-up and the immaterial aspects, from the social ones to work and local economies, to those of production cultural, within complex processes that activate the latent or already existing and active social projects and energies.

The forms of self-organization certainly reveal great potential. Firstly, they express a social protagonism that involves the activation of important social organization skills. Secondly, they allow the construction of social fabric and symbolic values. They also perform a service “for” and “on” territories. They are then the expression of processes that aim to reconstruct democratic dynamics within a historical phase of crisis of democracy. In this, in fact they are the places where today really politics is produced. This is a politics that could be defined as “significant” because it is really able to express the emerging and relevant meanings to the social conditions of everyday life, that “magma of emerging social meanings” that Castoriadis (1975) associates with the “instituting society”.

We focus only on two examples that are, at the same time, extreme cases and very interesting occasions. These are extreme cases because they develop in difficult contexts, neighborhoods of public housing characterized by severe poverty, unemployment, concentration of social hardship, buildings and urban degradation, presence of criminal economy and drug dealing. These are very interesting experiences because, despite these great difficulties, they are realities in which the capacity for self-organization responds with energy and intelligence to problems, proposing interesting projects. In particular, it focuses on the problem of labor and local economies and connects the possibility of providing services to local contexts. It is the answer to the issue of poverty, unemployment and criminal economies, the first step to then proceed also to urban regeneration.

The interest of these and many other experiences in Rome pushes to support the development of “policies for self-organization”, i.e. policies characterized by certain criteria: enhancement of local projects and social

³ For example, numerous seminars, work groups and reflection activities on these issues have been held in contexts such as Cinema Palazzo and Teatro Valle Occupato (Occupied Valle Theatre).

⁴ Here the strong diversity, first of all social and cultural, is at the same time a wealth and a problem.



protagonism, involvement of local actors and their capacity of action also in the management of processes, role of coordination and planning of the public entity, role of guarantee of public interest by the local administration, ability to associate the development of local economies with urban regeneration, organization of long-lasting processes over time and rooted in the local social context.

Tor Bella Monaca

Tor Bella Monaca, a public housing district of the 80s with 30-35,000 inhabitants, in the collective imagination represents one of the symbolic places of degradation. Tor Bella Monaca is a totally “public” neighborhood, but also the less “public” one. The perception of the distance between institutions and public administration is not as strong elsewhere as here. The percentage of occupations, the lack of maintenance, self-managed cleaning (and not “public”), arrears and deregulation at times total, the lack of interlocutors to which to contact or respond, the failure to reassign the houses left free make this place the emblem of the absence of the “public”. The more they are places deserted by politics, which has left the field of the suburbs for many years.

To highlight the complexity of the situation and the problematic of everyday experiences, just think of the difficulty of living public spaces, even if they are present in the neighborhood. Public space is the place disputed by the inhabitants at the drug addiction and selling, it represents the place of daily struggle with drugs. This is why it is often an unpleasant place to avoid; and at the same time the place to be reconquered.

In these districts, and in particular in Tor Bella Monaca, some social local groups operate (both in the simple collaboration between inhabitants and in the organized forms of associations and committees) in such a good way that radically deny the negative and homologating image that often exists.

In Tor Bella Monaca, despite the majority of inhabitants (except for the defaulters, of course) pay with the rent a quota for the cleaning of the stairs and the maintenance of the common areas, the maintenance and cleaning of the stairs is not done. The inhabitants then organized themselves to provide for themselves. Generally, families are organized by stairs, self-assessed (for what they can), collect money and use them to pay a person (possibly of the same scale) that cleans the staircase. Even more complicated is self-organization to provide for the maintenance of common areas and in particular the green areas, but despite this (think, for example, a tower with 75 apartments and housing units such as difficulties in collaboration can meet) you can get excellent results and the green areas appear of great quality. The commitment of some associations and committees is particularly relevant and effective, for example the Tor Più Bella association in the area of via Santa Rita da Cascia or a group of particularly active inhabitants in the area of via S. Biagio Platani. In both cases (but they are not the only ones) the inhabitants make a daily battle to maintain the quality and take care of and make accessible to all some condominium spaces, adjacent lots spaces, unused spaces on the ground floor of buildings (used for services to the district), some green areas and small urban parks, abandoned by the Municipality. This is a daily battle because it means facing daily drug dealing that tends to colonize and degrade the common space (destroy the street lamps, eliminate the lights, ruin the doors to leave the accesses, etc.) in order to freely play their own illicit traffics.

Similarly, a great deal of work is done by the local ASIA union, which deals with the problem of housing and allocations. They discourage abusive occupations made only for interest and trafficking in favor of the black market, while supporting those who actually need it (also signaling when the houses are empty or unused, but are not reassigned). Among other things, ASIA and the associated Local Committee are interested in the use of the ground floor spaces of buildings, theoretically intended for commercial activities but currently abandoned, to carry out a neighborhood laboratory and services for neighboring residential complexes. We need to point out the work of the El Chè (ntro) social center and the connected Cubolibro, a self-managed library, but also the Ciclofficina and a ceramic workshop. In the whole district, there is no municipal library. A group of people, especially young people, set up a “public” library, even if made by “private”, collecting donations, even by the inhabitants themselves. It provides books and supports children in extracurricular activities. Obviously, it could be considered “irregular”, but it is the only “public” service of this type. All these activities (as well as the neighboring disability union, SIDI, which has its national headquarters here) reuse (irregularly) abandoned buildings, providing services to the neighborhood.



Close to Mengaroni square, too, a network of associations carries out its activities using the "ex-barn", a building renovated with *Urban Program* funds and (in this case) regularly assigned through a call. More close to the R5 residential complex, a group of mothers occupied a small abandoned building (once used as a nursery), renovated it with the help and support of some families in the nearby residential complex, turning it into a well-organized playroom open to R5 children.

Some of these social groups have started a collaboration path and, with the support of Action Aid, through a collaboration with the local high school, they have developed a program of redevelopment of the neighborhood, which was then shared by the Municipality .

Therefore, we can define some criteria that are the ingredients of the "regeneration from below" programs that are being discussed, also with the collaboration of the University: reuse of abandoned public spaces (in particular, small buildings for services and rooms on the ground floor of buildings, originally intended for commercial purposes); destination to productive activities (craftsmanship) or service to the district; involvement of local actors (already active) in their management and enhancement of local projects; development in this way of services to the neighborhood; activation of work paths connected to the activities characterizing these areas (building maintenance, maintenance of the green areas, management of social services, management of common areas). Around these criteria, the retraining programs are being structured and some funding paths have been activated.

Piscine di Torre Spaccata

The district of *Piscine of Torre Spaccata*, not far from Cinecittà, between Tuscolana and Casilina streets, in the southern suburbs of Rome, is another very interesting context. It is also a district of public housing, certainly smaller than Tor Bella Monaca, but with problems quite similar. In this case, a factor of great interest emerges. A Committee (CSL - Local Development Committee) has been set up that brings together various local subjects, including - in addition to the Local Committee - especially active subjects, be they productive, socio-economic, cultural, such as TeatroCittà, artisans, gym, traders, etc. Here the focus is on re-launching the neighborhood through economic, productive and service activities, which on the one hand bring work and income and on the other perform a service for the neighborhood (just think of the gym and theater that are very popular with the inhabitants and that develop projects, also funded by public bodies). In this way some important "collateral" effects are obtained such as facing drug selling, to which concrete alternatives are constructed and thus trying to remove such problem. As well as the reuse of abandoned spaces, often easy prey of degradation, worsening the typical building degradation of a public housing district, where the "public" is no longer able to carry out its management and planning role. These are the spaces on the ground floor of buildings, usually intended for commercial activities, for which the current legislation provides for rent at market prices, making them inaccessible to local operators and in fact ordinarily unusable.

The CSL has obtained in "custody" these spaces, as well as those of the local neighborhood market, by a previous municipal administration, and its objective is full utilization, through alternative administrative procedures, developing the productive and service activities that are so qualifying for the neighborhood. In particular, attention is now focusing on the local market, undergoing a sharp reduction in commercial activities (as in most of Rome's local markets, in difficulty with large retailers and in particular shopping centers). The goal is to transform it into a multi-purpose civic center where some commercial activities are maintained, integrated with the craft activities, with restaurants and bars, with green areas equipped for children's play, with urban gardens and with service activities in the neighborhood. At the center of attention is local development, considered as the fundamental purpose of the redevelopment programs. Particularly interesting is the proposal of a managerial entity that integrates three different subjects: the economic operators, the representatives of the local realities (not only the CSL) to direct the activities at the service of the district, the representatives of the Town Hall (to guarantee the public interest).

Some final comments

From these experiences, we draw some final comments. These are experiences where policies are developed that should make the "public": recovery and reuse of existing buildings, reduction of land consumption, development of productive activities as a motor of redevelopment, provision of services on a



local basis, search for solutions to the housing problem, self-recovery, enhancement and use of environmental heritage, etc.

They are also realities that are often a garrison of civilization and solidarity, rich in planning and where forms of open and inclusive coexistence are realized, despite the evident difficulties in which they are placed. They highlight how a problematic node for the redevelopment of the suburbs, should be the ability to recover a role of planning and government by the public administration, the ability to develop forms of enhancement of these projects and these capacities for initiative, a new role that could be defined as “enabling” on the part of the institutions in the relationship with the territories. Those that can be defined as “policies for self-organization”.

In the awareness of the ambiguity and the problematic of situations and beyond possible romantic visions, one can discover a quantity of resources, commitment and planning that is the redemption potential of these places and the real ability to build the future.

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