

P2 REPORT

TACKLING HOUSING EMERGENCY THROUGH URBAN REGENERATION. THE CASE OF PORTA DI ROMA.

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Colophon:

TACKLING HOUSING EMERGENCY THROUGH URBAN REGENERATION.
THE CASE OF PORTA DI ROMA.
P2 Report

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0. INTRODUCTION

The project will be carried out within the Design as Politics Graduation Studio. The topic of the studio for this year is "New Utopias on the Ruins of the Welfare State".

We are living in an age where nation states seem to become weaker and weaker, under the influence of privatisation, localism but also of globalisation and supra-national politics like that of the European Union. Countries seem to be both falling apart in small fragments as well as being dissolved into huge global networks.

Architecture and Urbanism have for a long time been dependent on the nation state. We cannot imagine doing without a strong government and huge public investments for developing housing projects and public buildings, or for designing huge and even utopian visions for new cities and regions. Architecture and planning are starting to lose their traditional role and authority to represent the nation.

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1. MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The motivation of this study has two components, one is personal and the other one is academic. The first one depends on the fact that I was born and raised in Rome, and that I have a personal attachment to the city. I would like to be able to understand the mechanisms that are transforming such a beautiful city into an unsustainable model of development, in which the social distress is increasing and the lack of identity and social cohesion of the peripheral areas grows the further away you move from the city centre. I would like to contribute to the debate on the direction that urban planning should take in Rome by offering an alternative to the current model and some suggestions to the new city council.

The academic component of my motivation starts with the discovery that there is not much international reflection on the Italian situation, and especially not on the case of Rome and its housing emergency. Obviously the Italian academic and political debate on the issue of urban development and housing provisions has reached a dead end, revolving around the same old issues with the same old perspectives and tools. I think it is time to bring these questions to an international audience, and I believe that the Urbanism community of TUDelft is a good place where to start.



*Traffic on the ring road
source: iltempo.it*



Rione Rinascimento, new development north of Rome - source: romafaschifo.com

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION - CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Landowners and private developers have always had a very strong power in the life of the city of Rome: the historical development of the city has been strongly influenced by the interests of land ownership from the moment Rome became the capital of the newly formed Kingdom of Italy (Insolera, 2011). This power has been growing over the years, aided by the weakness of the local public authorities, which, most of the time, had very strong (economical, familiar, patronage) connections with landowners themselves. Comparing Rome's master plans with the history of what actually happened - where and how the city has grown compared to where it should have - shows how easy it has been - and still is - for real estate developers, constructors and landowners to ignore or change the planning rules, considered as mere complications on the way to real estate profit (Insolera, 2011).

The twisted ratio between private profit and public costs generated a great poverty of services and infrastructures. The political weakness and the absence of an administrative culture in the face of powerful forces in Rome's planning and economy caused inequality in the distribution of services and in the availability of affordable housing (Erbani, 2013c).

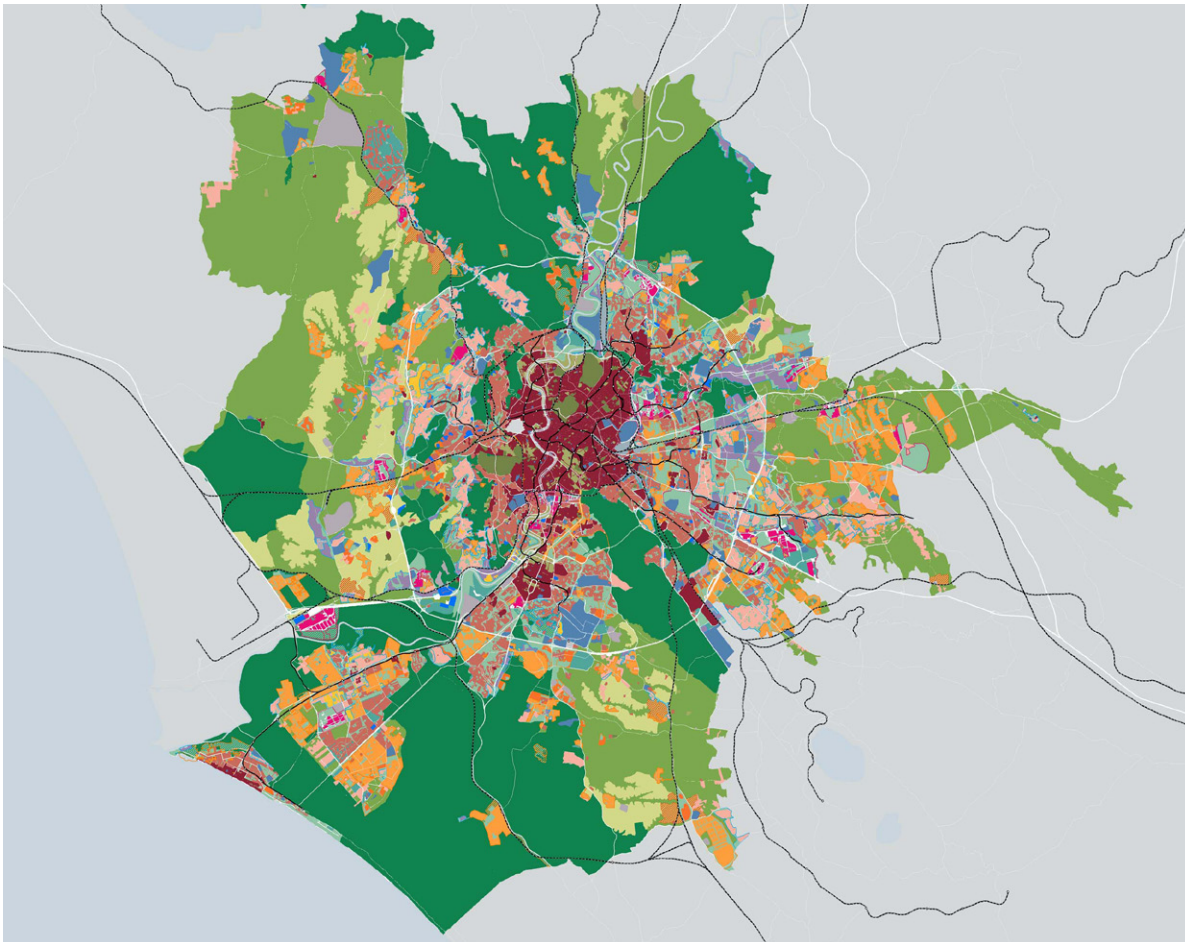
Political weakness has been particularly evident in the past 20/30 years, when Rome has been "sold" to developers in order to face the financial crisis of the Municipality. Former Mayor Gianni Alemanno literally talked about "urban money", meaning the economical advantage that the city could gain from allowing private developers to build increasing volumes of constructions (Berdini, 2013; Erbani, 2013c). In the urban management of Rome, one can very frequently witness collusion between economic interest and political administration, where private interests too often overcome those of the citizens.

This is evident by comparing statistics on population growth and the quantity of new constructions that have been scattered in the municipal territory. In 1981 Rome had 2.839.000 inhabitants, and this number has been decreasing ever since, to reach 2.612.000 inhabitants in 2011 (Istat, 2011 census). This decrease is also due to an internal migration of citizens. The city's chronic shortage of affordable housing plays a large role in the decision of many families to leave Rome and move to smaller towns of the Lazio province that have more reasonable real estate prices (Caudo, 2012). Immigrants (especially extra-European) are the only segment of population that has been steadily growing.

On the other hand, in the decade before the economic crisis the construction market and the number of real estate transactions were boosting: 52.000 new dwellings have been built between 2003 and 2007, around 10.000 only in 2007 (Bagnoli, 2013). Even the new city's master plan, approved in 2008, envisages an enormous amount of new developments. Millions of cubic meters of new constructions are planned; both to fill the gaps in the existing urban fabric and to further expand in the countryside.

The contradiction is blatant: while thousands of families are forced to leave the city due to the level of real estate prices, the master plan calls for the construction of a massive quantity of apartments which will be put on the market at the same unreachable prices as those that have been abandoned (Boccacci, 2007). Such an amount of new construction does not find any justification in the real needs of the city but it represents a great possibility for profit to real estate developers.

In 1992, "negotiated urban planning" was introduced as the new way of managing urban development: master plans become mere indications and every single development project becomes the ground for negotiation between public administration and private operators (Insolera, 2011).

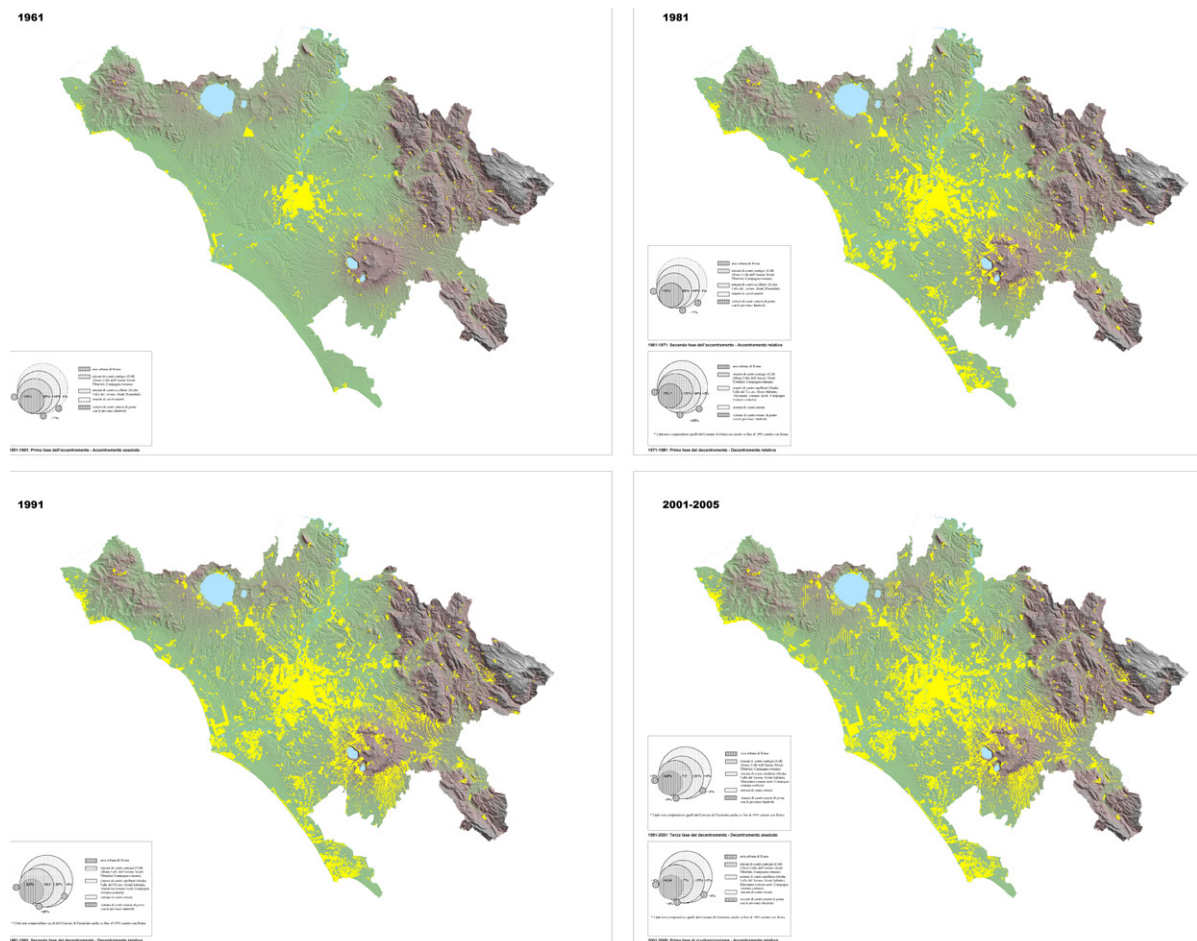


PRG - General masterplan of the city of Rome - source: comune.roma.it

The new developments envisioned by the 2008 master plan follow this model of public-private negotiation. They happen in the outskirts of the city, around and beyond the ring road, and they were supposed to regenerate the outer suburbs. However, they have completely failed to meet this objective and have essentially turned out to be financial operations (Erbani, 2013c). Of course the land use that is most profitable for developers is residential, which leads to disastrous developments exclusively made of dwellings. These new areas not only lack public services, as schools and health care facilities, but also public space, green, shops and all the amenities that constitute the life of a city (Erbani, 2013c).

This kind of private urban interventions create a standardized “market city”, made of new residential, business, and mall complexes mainly aimed at middle classes, while failing to meet the demand for affordable housing, which is very high in Rome. As a matter of fact the new developments tend to remain vacant, because the large majority of roman population is not in the condition to afford market prices (Caudo, 2007 and 2012; Berdini, 2013b). From estimates made by the Municipality and by the Tenant’s Union, Rome has something like 240.000 vacant houses, including unsold apartments in new developments and apartments that are not occupied by the owners or by a tenant (Legambiente, 2013).

The new peripheral developments are so scattered in the municipal territory that it is impossible for the administration to actually provide them with a coherent and efficient public transport. They are also lacking identity and are not really part of the city anymore: their distant location, their lack of connection and their total incoherence with the urban fabric of the rest of the city is such that scholars are talking about “pulverization” of the city (Erbani, 2013).



Historical development of the city of Rome - source: provincia.roma.it



Aerial view of the city of Rome - source: wikipedia.org

A good example of this type of development is Bufalotta-Porta di Roma, one of the new residential districts of the market city aimed at middle-class housing. It is located on the northeastern edge of the city, just next to the ring road.

The project started in the early 1990s, when the Toti family, powerful roman developers, acquired the area in a consortium with other construction companies (Parnasi and Caltagirone) and requested a change of land use. The area was changed from logistics and industrial sector functions to a mixed-use residential area with services and offices (and a huge shopping mall), keeping the same cubic capacity.



source: comune.roma.it

The exponential growth in the value of the area and the projected value of the housing to be constructed, guaranteed a huge profit to the developers, much more than the originally intended use could ever do (Cellamare, 2014).

The request was welcomed by Rome city government and the plan for the Bufalotta district, drawn up by the private sector, was adopted into the new urban master plan as the new centrality of Bufalotta-Porta di Roma, with the objective of regenerating the northeastern suburbs of Rome.

The construction works began at the end of the 1990s, starting with the new branch of IKEA and the large shopping mall, which opened in July 2007. The completion of the shopping centre was a priority, since it is a huge economic and financial machine. The main infrastructure, especially the link with the ring road (which was built with public money), was also given priority in order to support the mall. The capital gained during this first stage was then invested in the gradual construction of the residential areas, which allowed investments to be capitalized. Schools were



Aerial picture of the 3rd district, including Porta di Roma - source: google maps



Analysis of Porta di Roma district - map by author

quickly provided, while the rest of the areas that were supposed to host public services still remain empty. The green spaces are not yet finished and the large archaeological park (Parco delle Sabine) is still under construction, though open to the public. Since the real estate sector was hit very hard by the global economic crisis in 2009 many plots are empty. The residential blocks are only half built, while none of the offices or other tertiary functions have been built: Porta di Roma remains mostly residential and is indeed a “dormitory neighbourhood” (Erbani, 2008; Cellamare, 2014).



Porta di Roma: unfinished development - photo by author



Porta di Roma: view of main boulevard - photo by author



Porta di Roma: housing blocks on main boulevard - photo by author



Porta di Roma: general view - photo by author

The Porta di Roma complex is organized in housing blocks with common features. Flats are very small (sizes range from 20, 40, to 60 m²), clearly aimed at single people, young and old couples, and small families. The apartments have balconies that compensate for the limited space. Small blocks of flats are often grouped in complexes with their own swimming pool and garden, and even security systems to control access. Very few of them can be described as high end residential complexes, while the majority tend to replicate on a lower level the models of higher classes, according to the lifestyle that is promoted by the marketing campaigns of the real estate developers.

The shopping mall is a large monolithic structure that creates a physical and social distance between itself and the world outside and absorbs all the functions of living. Massive car parks stretch out around it as a barrier, reinforcing this distance. The local shops envisaged in the Porta di Roma project remain empty, creating - after just a few years - an atmosphere of desolation. The few shops that are able to survive are those that cannot find a place in the mall: bars, pizza places, some restaurants and services such as medical facilities and plumbers. At the same time also neighbouring districts experience a disappearance of local shops, and their reorientation toward the lowest segments of the market. The shopping centre has a magnetic attraction: in the absence of an alternative, it becomes the only place for social interaction, especially for young people, who tend to spend all their spare time in the mall. Therefore there is a major reduction in people visiting these streets, leading to an overall impoverishment of life in the district. People seldom make use of the public space of the neighbourhood and the few available squares are serving as car parks (Erbani, 2008; Cellamare, 2014).

Porta di Roma has little regard for the locality and the neighbouring areas: it is an urban structure that functions on a metropolitan level. It is a very complex economic, housing, and financial operation that has little to do with the regeneration of the outer suburbs. It represents the rise and fall of real estate speculation, heavily fostered by public authorities, guilty of supporting an initiative that is of most benefit to private operators (Cellamare, 2014).



Porta di Roma: housing block - photo by author



Aerial view of shopping mall - source: europaconcorsi.com

This type of development and the rate to which it happened in the past decades had devastating effects on the real estate market. Real estate prices and rents went sky high, not only in the central or semi central areas. Renting an apartment in many peripheral districts is now impossible even for the middleclass population (Mudu, 2014a). Families with an annual income of less than 30,000 euros cannot rent an apartment in Rome, where rent now absorbs around 45-50% of a family's income, according to estimates of 2012 by Nomisma¹. As a consequence, in 2013 there has been an increase of 8% in the number of evictions, 80% of which are due to impossibility to pay mortgage instalments or rent (Collevecchio, 2013).

Due to the fact that private developers, guided by profit making and not by public interest, keep building for a real estate market that is largely inaccessible for the vast majority of the population, Rome faces a housing shortage that has been lasting for decades. No structural action has been undertaken by the administration in order to fix the problem, transforming it in a real emergency.

In order to understand the housing emergency in Rome, it is necessary to be familiar with a range of terms such as *edilizia sovvenzionata*, *edilizia convenzionata*, and *edilizia agevolata* that describe important features of the Italian housing market.

Edilizia sovvenzionata (public housing) is a form of housing built, managed and owned by a government authority, which may be central or local. It is located exclusively on public land, existing, acquired through expropriation or purchased. This type of dwellings can be rented or sold at very low prices or their ownership can be granted for free to very low income families. *Edilizia convenzionata* (social housing) refers to housing that is built, managed and owned by private developers, by non-profit organizations or by a combination of public authorities and the former two. It can be located on private or public land and it usually aims at providing affordable housing through public-private agreements to keep prices below market levels. The dwellings can be rented or sold at affordable prices. *Edilizia agevolata* (subsidized housing) refers to housing that is built, managed and owned by private developers or non-profit organizations. It is located on private land and the dwellings can be sold or rented with government sponsored economic assistance for people with low to moderate incomes (Botta, 2013).

The last twenty years of local government have seen a massive withdrawal of the public sector from the housing market. No public housing has been built since the 1980s (Botta, 2013), money for subsidies has been drastically cut by both left and right wing governments and social housing is not very popular in Rome, given the power and freedom held by private developers. Moreover the management of the existing public housing stock is struggling, due to lack of funds, black market of dwellings and cases of corruption (Berdini, 2014b).

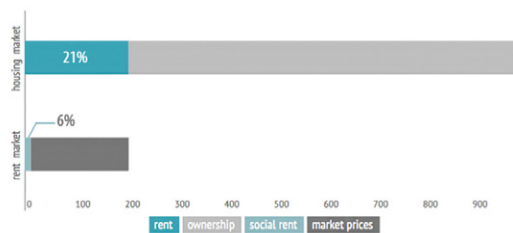
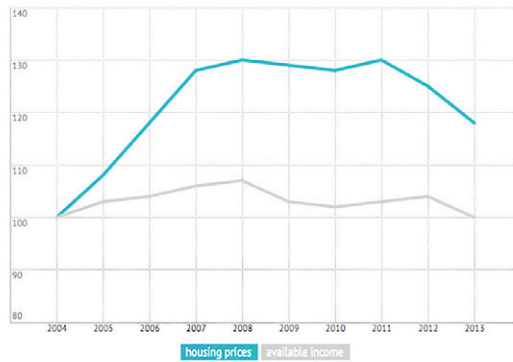
Rent makes up only for a very small segment of Italian, and especially roman, housing market. Housing policies have always pushed towards home ownership, generating a distorted market, in which rent almost disappeared.

With these premises it is easy to understand why the numbers of the housing emergency are astonishing: 50.000 families applied for public housing in 2013 (Comune di Roma, 2013), there have been over 7.000 eviction requests per year since 2009 (Collevecchio, 2013), and there are between 2000 and 3000 families squatting (Collevecchio, 2013).

The lack of housing policies and the deregulation of market forces have created a paradox in which thousands of vacant dwellings in anonymous middle class housing developments are the only response to the great numbers of people demanding an affordable dwelling.

1 - Nomisma is an independent company that engages in economic research and consulting activities for companies, associations, and public administrations at national and international level. www.nomisma.it

HOUSING EMERGENCY



Over the past ten years housing prices kept growing, while the available income of families has been dramatically decreasing, with the result that many families have been pushed out of the market.

Home ownership is very popular in Italy, while the rental market is very small compared to the rest of Europe (21%). Moreover only 6% of the rental segment is composed of public or social housing.

In 2012 the housing allowance scheme was cut by the national government and national transfers to local governments are insufficient.

Istat, census 2011 - Banca d'Italia, 2011
Agenzia delle Entrate, 2013 - Baldini & Poggio, 2013



50.000 families in waiting list
for public housing

Comune di Roma, 2013

300.000 people struggling for
housing

Sunia, 2012

90.000 non resident students

Adisu, 2011

2000 families are squatting

Unione Inquilini, 2013

7000 new eviction requests
per year since 2009

Provincia di Roma, 2014

2500 families actually evicted
in 2013

Provincia di Roma, 2014



100.000 empty apartments

Istat census, 2011

240.000 empty dwellings

Legambiente, 2013

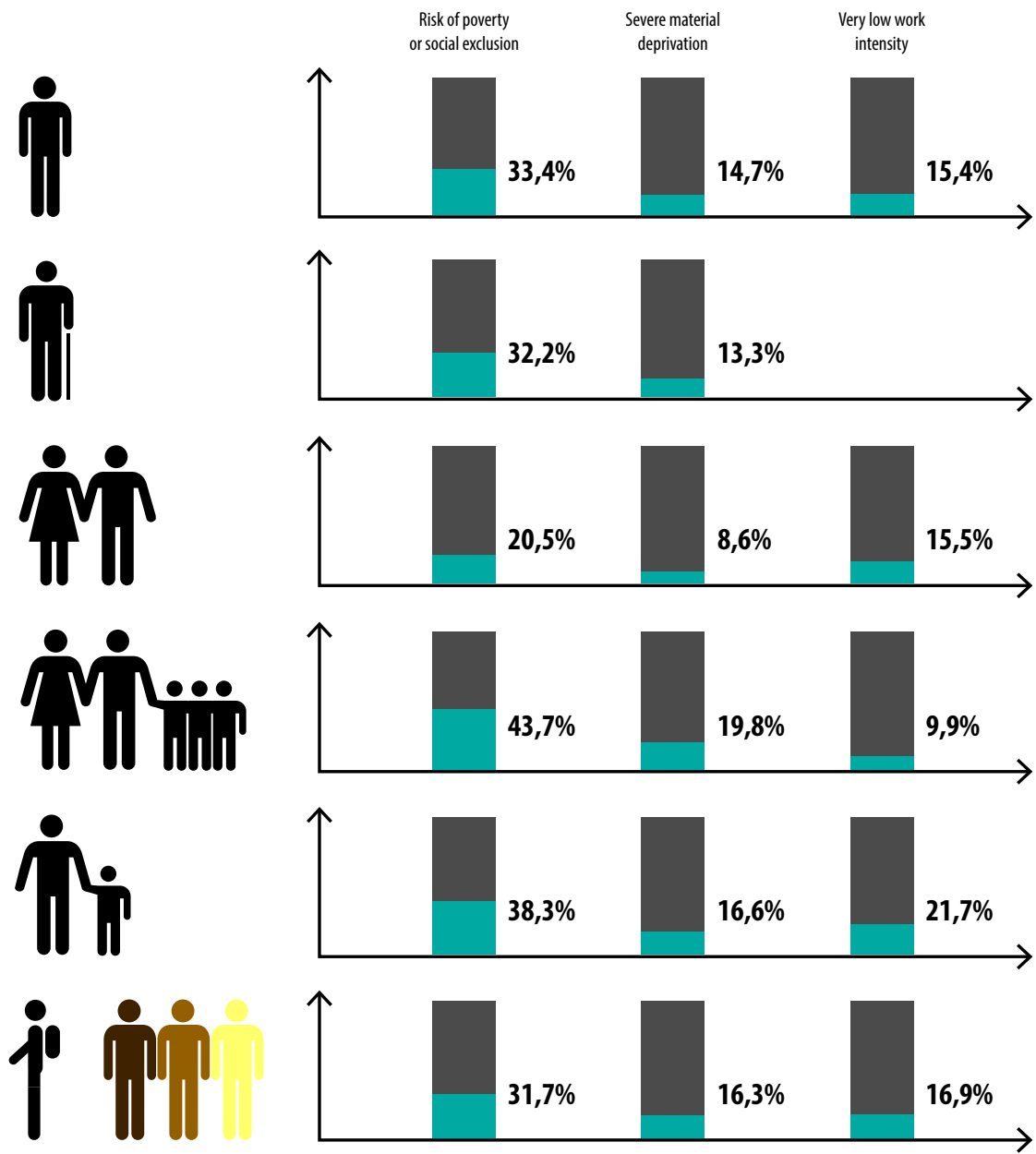
600 public student dwellings

Adisu, 2011

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

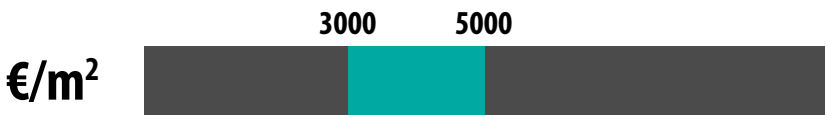
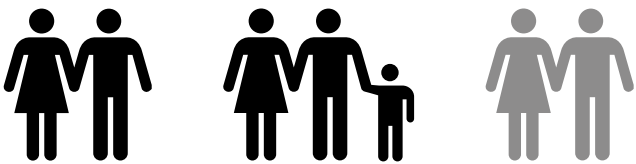
"Limbo" people

single persons, elderly, young couples with precarious jobs, large families, single parent families, students, immigrants



Porta di Roma inhabitants

middle class couples, families and retired people



The housing emergency no longer involves only the poorest social strata, but it affects a growing segment of population, impoverished by the global economic crisis and by the mechanisms of real estate speculation that distort the Italian housing market. These people are too rich to apply for public housing but too poor to afford market prices. They live in a “limbo”: marginalized by the housing market, which has no interest to satisfy their demands, and neglected by the public authorities, which failed to implement successful housing policies.

Over the last decade the phenomenon of illegal squatting has started to become more and more visible, with squatted buildings both in the central areas of the city and in the outskirts. The type of people that resort to illegal occupation of buildings is changing. Squatters are now the “limbo people” that have to resort to illegal occupation of dwellings because they have no other option (Mudu, 2014a). Their socio demographic profile is various, but they all have something in common: they are marginalized both from the job and from the housing market. “Limbo people” are young couples, single parents, families in which one of the parents lost their job, retired elderly with minimum pension, large families, students, immigrants. Many of them belong to the former lower middle class, which has been kicked back into a state of poverty by the crisis and by short sighted policies.



Roma, EUR, demonstration of right to housing movements - source: coordinamento.info



Roma, Centocelle, demonstration of right to housing movements - source: coordinamento.info

Many organizations operate in Rome to defend the right to housing. They are diverse and often are aimed at specific segments of population, but in recent years they have networked to advance joint requests and protests².

These associations and movements actively defend the right to housing by providing support (also legal), resistance to evictions, a social safety net for people in need and by organizing protests and demonstrations. Some of these organizations have a strong political background and have become able to sit at the negotiation table with the municipality, but their contractual power compared to that of the private developer is very low. For example, the left wing administration in 2006 recognized the importance of the efforts of "Action", a social movement for housing rights, and requested their collaboration to face the housing struggle. On the other hand, centre-right parties and developers - whose political action always took place within the right wing sphere of influence - treat the housing right movements with hostility, denying responsibility over the housing emergency by criminalizing the actions of the associations (Mudu, 2014a).

These associations not only fight for housing rights, but are also the expression of a different socio-cultural environment. They seek to escape from the real estate speculation model, which builds anonymous pieces of city and frustrates social and cultural needs. Many associations organize cultural activities, mainly aimed at low income population, which could not afford them otherwise. For example they set up "social gyms", language classes, music and dance schools, theatre and cooking classes, local food production and many kinds of building workshops, to provide practical training for young people. All these projects aim at strengthening social cooperation in order to achieve a more balanced urban life, also by reusing abandoned buildings, thus giving new life to neglected parts of the city (Mudu, 2014b).



Website of right to housing association - source: coordinamento.info

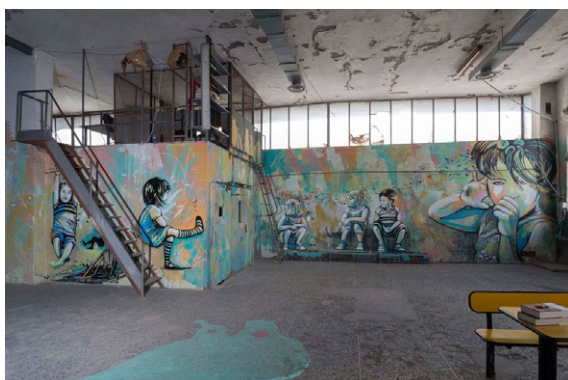
2 - Pierpaolo Mudu provides a list of the most important associations that operate in Rome at present (Mudu, 2014a): Coordinamento cittadino lotta per la casa (Citizens' Committee for the Fight for Housing) was created in 1988. In 1999, the association Diritto alla casa (Right to Housing) was created (and became Action in 2002), denouncing real-estate speculation and the complicity of the city administration in not providing housing for a large share of the population. Blocco Precario Metropolitano (Precarious Metropolitan Block) started their squatting experiences in 2009, becoming the first intercultural social movement for housing. To complete the picture, it is worth bearing in mind that other associations also operate in Rome: Comitato inquilini del centro storico (Historic Center Tenants' Committee), Comitato popolare di lotta per la casa (Popular Committee for the Housing Struggle), Comitato obiettivo casa (Committee for Housing Objective), Unione inquilini (Tenants' Union).



Carpentry lab_Accademia delle Arti



Bike repair_Ciclofficina Roma



Kindergarden_MAAM_BPM



Italian class_Arci



Cooking together_Casa delle Culture



Social gym_Colle Salario



TerraTerra market_Forte Prenestino



Theatre class for kids_Teatro Valle Occupato

3. PROBLEM DEFINITION - PROBLEM STATEMENT

Urban planning in Rome is not going in the direction of solving the housing emergency. The lack of housing policies and the deregulation of market forces have created a paradox in which thousands of vacant dwellings in anonymous middle class housing developments – such as Porta di Roma – are the only response to the great numbers of people demanding an affordable dwelling.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question would then be: how to tackle the housing shortage in Rome by regenerating the vacant housing development of Porta di Roma through the social capital³ of the right to housing movements?

5. SUB RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the possible strategies to face the housing shortage?
 - 1.1 How has the same problem been tackled in other European countries?
2. How can Porta di Roma be regenerated from an urban design point of view?
 - 2.1 What are the main spatial issues of “market city” developments?
 - 2.2 What is the role of public space in a residential district like Porta di Roma, which is born around a shopping mall?
 - 2.3 What could be the spatial quality of such a development?
 - 2.4 What is the role of “transitional spaces”, like ground floors, in the perception and use of public and private space?
3. What is the role of participation and bottom up initiatives in urban regeneration strategies?
 - 3.1 How can the right to housing movements be empowered and how can they cooperate with other actors to improve the spatial quality of the housing development?
4. How can urban regeneration help in promoting social integration of different income groups?

6. AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research is to investigate how urban development and the housing issue in Rome are related and if there is a possibility to combine the alleviation of the housing emergency with a more coherent and balanced urban development. The objective of the project would be to design tools and processes to empower the local government, in order to provide more affordable housing and a policy that prioritizes the welfare of the citizens instead of the interests of the developers.

The goal of the project is to achieve a more equitable provision of affordable housing and an overall social sustainability of the location chosen as an example of “ghost neighbourhood”. Social sustainability in this case is intended as *“Development (and/or growth) that is compatible with harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering an environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social*

3 - Social Capital: the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network’ (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998, p. 243).

integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population” (Polese and Stren, 2000).

The strategy to achieve these objectives is that of triggering a spatial and social regeneration of Porta di Roma, which capitalizes on the enormous potential of community associations. Overall the objective is to find a smart way of solving the paradox by making the empty houses meet the homeless people.

7. DESIGN PROPOSAL

In order for my project to be relevant I am addressing the presented issues from two different perspectives. On one hand I propose a housing policy, and on the other hand I show an example of urban regeneration derived by the policy itself.

The housing policy I am designing is quite radical, based on critiques and proposals from various organizations, plus examples of measures from other countries. It still needs some more research, especially for the housing stock management part.

The policy implies various measures to tackle the housing shortage, including taxation on vacant property and rent regulation measures. Moreover it proposes the acquisition of vacant property through expropriation and other means, in order to transform it into social housing through the creation of Housing Cooperatives.

I propose to ‘use’ the bottom up energy that comes from the right to housing movements, together with all the other socio cultural bottom up initiatives that take place in Rome. All these people are operating for social good but are kept in a condition of illegality. What these associations do is outside the schemes of ‘conventional’ use and production of space in Rome and if canalized correctly it could bring a positive change in how urban management is handled. Therefore I propose to empower this type of associations by making them responsible for the management of the social housing stock acquired through the new policy measures.

I argue that ‘scaling-up’ the local associational relationships and networks to wider power structures and relations is an important step to promote social integration between different income groups. This will be central in achieving a more active use of space (private, public and “transitional”) and in supporting a type of urban life that is culturally and socially different than that represented by the shopping mall.

Porta di Roma: shopping mall - source: galleriaportadiroma.it



Porta di Roma: Parco delle Sabine - source: tutelaparcodellesabine.blogspot.com

POLICY DESIGN

Taxation on vacant property (applies both to developers and private owners)

Three times higher than the tax on occupied property (IMU)
Purpose tax: ends up in the Housing Allowance Fund

Housing Allowance Fund

Money from: purpose tax on vacant property, 8x1000 to the State, qualified no-profit investors, 'temporary expropriation' incomes

Rent regulation measures

Income dependent rent for social housing
Much lower taxation for landlords that rent at social prices

Acquisition of vacant property (applies to unsold dwellings and commercial spaces of developers)

A - 'temporary expropriation': if vacancy is >50% for >2 years the Municipality can expropriate and give out for social rent for 3 years with no income for the developer. The income from rents goes to the Housing Allowance Fund. After 3 years turns to Option B for 3 more years, then goes back to the developer, who can also choose to continue with social renting.

B - 'temporary acquisition': if vacancy is 25% < >50% for >2 years the owner has the obligation to give out the dwellings/commercial spaces for social rent for 6 years. The income from rents goes for 80% to the developer and for 20% to the cooperatives for managing purposes. The developer can also choose to continue with social renting.

C - 'permanent acquisition': the Municipality acquires the vacant stock for ¼ of the market price (calculated by the appropriate national authority). The income from rents goes for 70% to the Municipality for other acquisitions and for 30% to the cooperatives for managing purposes.

Creation of Housing Cooperatives

The newly acquired housing stock will be managed by Housing Cooperatives, composed by dwellers associations, right to the house movements, social movements and entities that are already active in tackling the housing deficit issue (including cultural associations). The Coops will not gain ownership of the properties, but will be in charge of the allocation of dwellings (municipal waiting lists) and commercial spaces. They will be in charge of the regular maintenance of the stock, while the owner will be in charge of any intervention of extraordinary maintenance required. The Coops are allowed and encouraged to organize social activities in the appropriate spaces available in order to build a community integrated with the neighbourhood. The Coops will be financed through memberships, through no profit investments and through incomes from rents (as stated above).



The design proposal in Porta di Roma works as an example of how the policy could be applied. I am not designing a place; I am proposing a regeneration strategy in order to make it clear that things could be different than what they are now. The design strategy could be applied to many other places, but Porta di Roma is especially significant as it is a bright example of the rise and fall of real estate speculation in Rome.

The analysis of the site shows how only half of the original project has been built, namely only the residential part. Moreover even what is built remains unsold, both apartments and commercial spaces at ground floors, with peaks of vacancy in the tower buildings. At the same time the place has some potential: big green spaces and a lot of room for services and public space. Porta di Roma has the ambition of being a part of the city, but the only urban element it has is the building typology, while for the rest it has a much more suburban feeling.



Porta di Roma: view of housing block from Parco delle Sabine - photo by author

Elements of (good) urban life

- mid to high density of people of buildings
condensed - human scale - compact structure - dense street pattern
- building typology: apartment blocks, palazzine, high rise

- activities at ground level and living at higher floors

- active street profile
'public life' - 'life between buildings'; people in public spaces, eyes on the street
small but frequent public space - occasional larger spaces (parks)
distribution of services and activities
- functional mix
- proximity to services to other dwellings
travel choice - efficient public transport - walkability
central location
little open green space

Elements of suburban life

- low to mid density of people of buildings
- wide - car scale - dispersed structure - loose street pattern

- building typology: single family houses with garden, one/two storey apartment buildings
living and no activities at ground level
- passive street profile - wide roads

- 'private life' - no diffuse commercial activities, no eyes on the street, little street life

- frequent private open space
concentration of services and activities (shopping mall, BD)

- distance from services from other dwellings

- monofunctionality (residential)
- no travel choice - car based commuting - little public transport
- peripheral location

- much open green space




Regeneration strategy - maps by author

The strategy is made of three consequent steps:

1 - Acquire vacant dwellings and turn them into social housing managed by social cooperatives.

2 - Acquire vacant commercial spaces and put them out for social rent, still managed by cooperatives. Keep some of the spaces for the community to use.

3 - Trigger urban regeneration with two different approaches. The top down approach includes changes in building typology, construction of new buildings (housing and services) and changes in street profiles to make new "transitional spaces" available. These spaces represent a transition between private and public space and are located at ground floors of the housing blocks, where usually shops are to be found and that now lie empty and abandoned. The bottom up approach calls for the organization of social, economic and productive activities in these available spaces (active ground floors) with the participation of local residents (upper income segment), new residents (lower income segment) and right to housing associations and cooperatives (social mediation).

The objective of the strategy is to promote a model of urban life that is different than that of the shopping mall, by encouraging its spatial expressions, where housing is strongly connected with sociability, communal life, the direct appropriation and shared dimension of common spaces. These are some aspects of the Mediterranean culture that went lost in the "market city" and that I seek to recover. Moreover the strategy aims at promoting economical activities and employment opportunities; and mixing different income groups and nationalities (non European immigrants are one of the main categories in need for social housing) through socially inclusive networks of activities. The overall goal is to make Porta di Roma attractive for investors again, in order to finish the building of public and private areas that are still missing, but without expelling the lower income population that has been

introduced through the housing policy.

This is meant to be a polemic project: I am not asking for the moon, I just want to achieve a normal urban life for this area (and for more similar areas in the city) and a normal life for the people struggling for a decent place to live. The policy is more radical than the actual design, hence the idea of “Utopia of Normality”. In Rome there is a distorted model of urban development and a mismanagement of the public thing, including social housing. All this makes it impossible to achieve a ‘normal’ urban environment, especially in the peripheries, which is why the boring, standard, plain neighbourhood becomes a Utopia that is almost impossible to reach. My argument is that it would take only so much effort to make things better, but that it will probably never happen, making it especially significant to show how things should and could be like.

Through a carrot and stick policy private developers could be seduced into re-investing some of their unused housing stock for social housing purposes. The goal is to convince real estate actors that social sustainability and the public interest are more profitable for them than mere speculation, which already proved itself unfit to face the crisis.

8. INTENDED END PRODUCTS

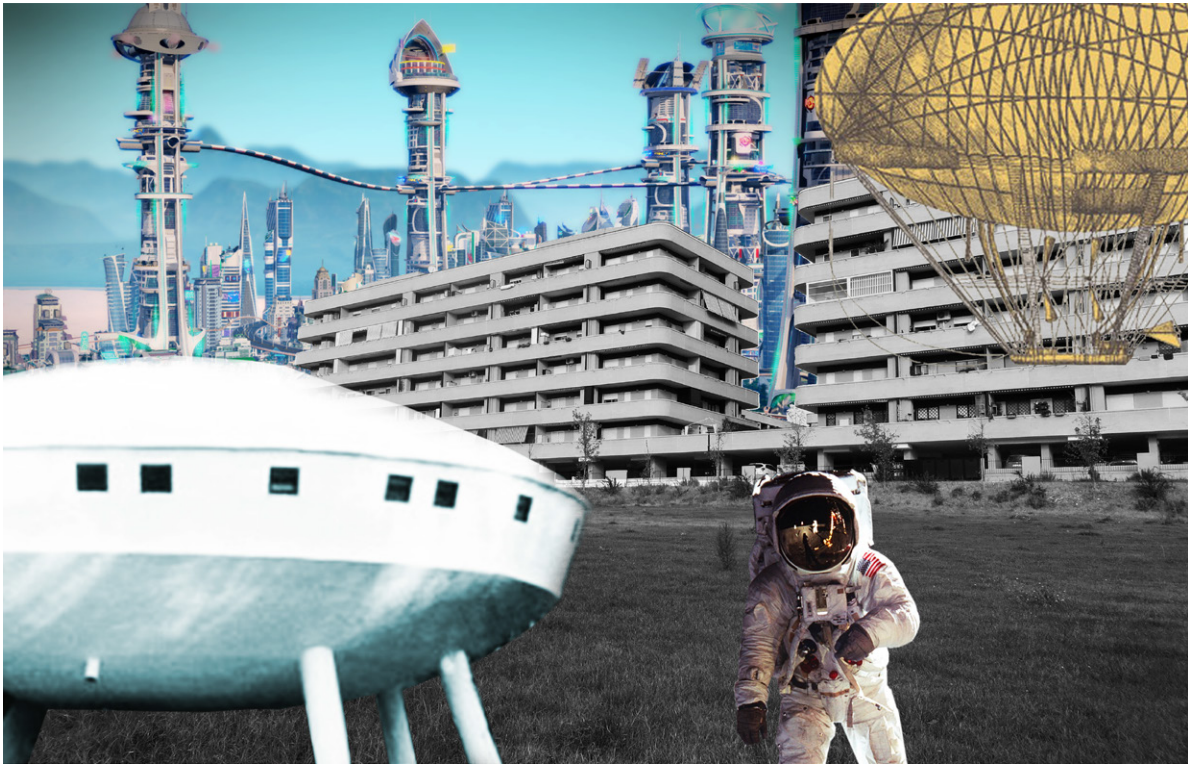
The intended end products will be multiple. First of all there will be a critical reflection on current policy on housing and urban development and recommendations for new tools and policies on housing. The policy part of the project will be developed through infographics and communication strategies to inform both developers and housing movements of the new partnership possibilities.

The design part of the project will address the urban regeneration of Porta di Roma, through a general strategy for the neighbourhood and two main focus projects. The first one is the design of some relevant public spaces: I will be playing with their identity and with elements that support outdoor activities in order to tackle the contraposition with the private space of the shopping mall. The second main focus will be on the street profile and ground floors of the housing blocks. I will propose a change in street profiles in order to promote more social life in the street, through the creation of “transitional spaces” to be used by the community. These changes will happen both in the already existing parts of the neighbourhood and in the areas still to be built.

The design will be presented through maps and visualizations, especially regarding the public and transitional space. An interesting way to visualize the project would be that of developing (graphic) narratives for different urban actors. All the stakeholders and people involved have stories that can show, through images of their everyday life, what their relations with the public and private spaces of Porta di Roma are. This could be a very useful tool to go from research to design and vice versa, in an iterative process of continuous reflection.

9. RESEARCH APPROACH - METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

My research approach follows different theories and methods, according to the stage of the project. Initially, an extensive literature review on the Italian housing market and especially the Roman situation has been performed, in order to understand the housing emergency and its context. Much effort has also been put into studying Rome’s urban development, its history and the model it followed, and also the dynamics of real estate speculation and its relationship with urban governance and politics. Next to the literature review, I also carried out in depth interviews with different stakeholders. I interviewed scholars, municipal officers, the developers’ architects and sales people, people from neighbourhood associations, people from the right to housing movements and squatters.



THE UTOPIA OF NORMALITY



Utopia of normality - image by author

Once the problem was clearly delineated and the location was chosen, I started building the theoretical framework for my project. In order to answer the research questions I used different theories and methods.

The first group of questions – the one on housing shortage – has been investigated through a literature review of the general theory of social housing policies. Moreover a comparative analysis of existing situations and housing policies in other European countries has been carried out, with a special focus on Spain, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In particular the Spanish case has been analysed in order to explore possible ways of tackling vacancy through innovative housing policies.

The second group of questions – the one on urban regeneration – has been investigated through a literature review on urban regeneration and public space. Following the literature review, an empirical research was needed, so I did some field work, carrying out a SWOT analysis for the chosen location, together with a typological analysis and a series of maps to investigate use of space, vacancy and accessibility.

The last questions – the ones on participation, bottom up approach and social integration – have also been researched by the means of literature review. Empirical research on these issues has been conducted through interviews with locals and with community leaders during visits to squatted buildings and community centres. Moreover, a stakeholder analysis has been performed.

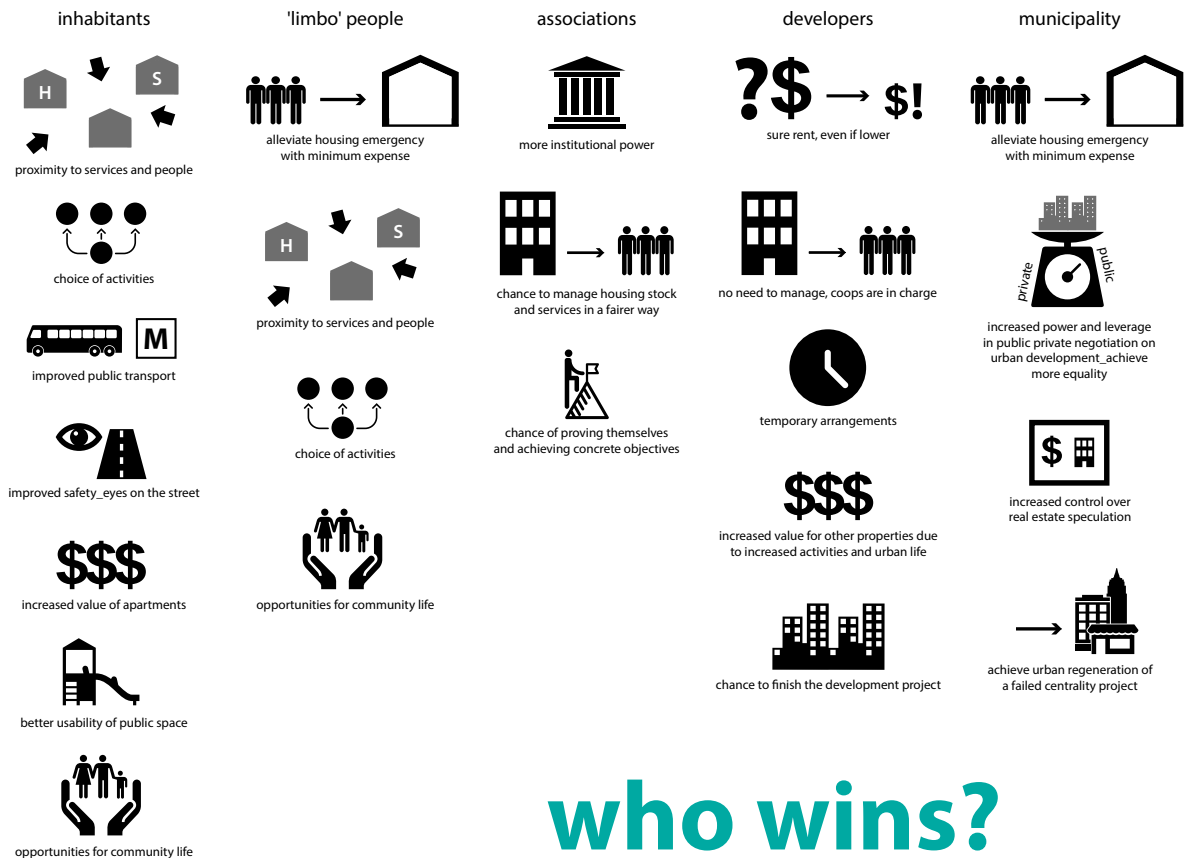
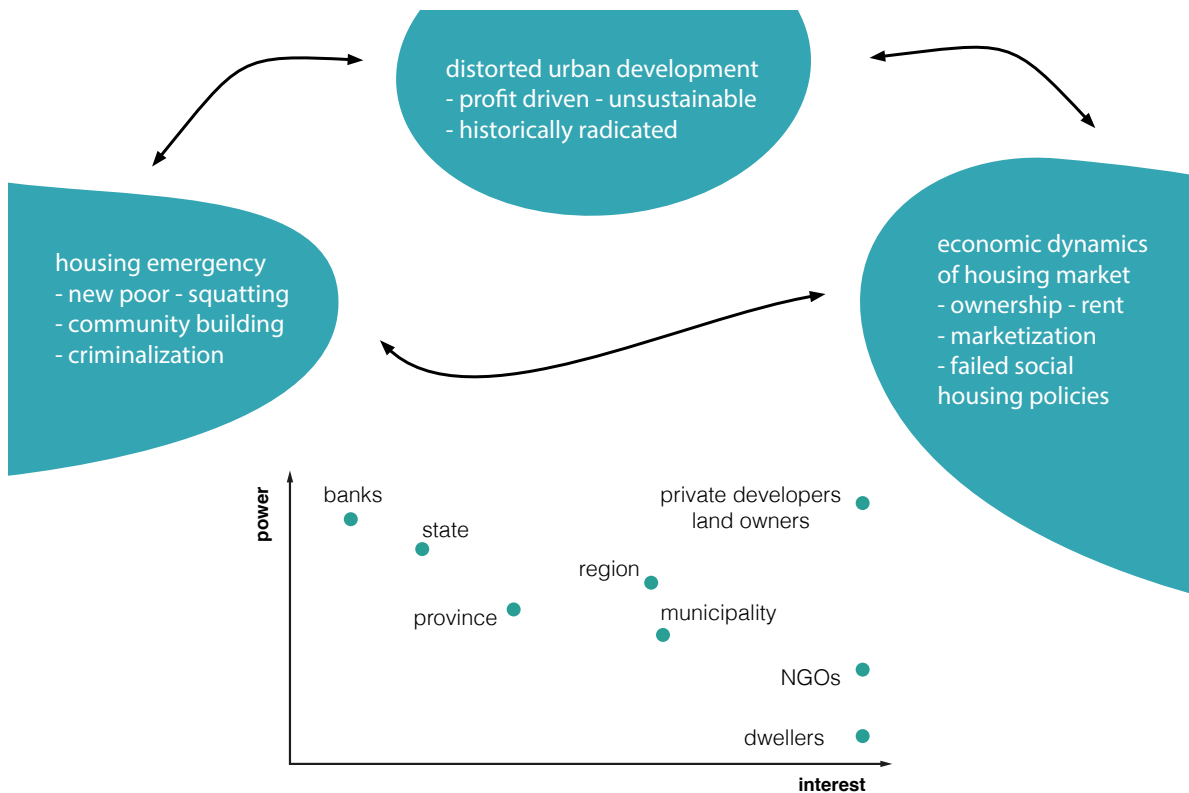
The theoretical framework built through the literature analysis will help me to identify the focus points in my urban regeneration strategy.

First of all it is necessary to explore the definition of urban regeneration, in order to be able to intervene in the project location. According to Roberts and Sykes (2000) urban regeneration is *"(...) an outcome of the interplay between many sources of influence and, more importantly, it is also a response to the opportunities and challenges which are presented by urban degeneration in a particular place at a specific moment in time"* (p. 9).

Another interpretation is that of Couch (2003): *"Regeneration is concerned with the regrowth of economic activity where it has been lost; the restoration of social function where there has been dysfunction, or social inclusion where there has been exclusion; and the restoration of environmental quality or ecological balance where it has been lost"*.

Both these definitions are useful to understand the various interpretations that regeneration interventions can have. Urban regeneration is usually carried out in inner city or economically deprived areas (Colantonio and Dixon, 2010), while I seek to apply these definitions to a newly developed peripheral housing district, which was born based on distorted premises, and therefore is already desolate and vacant after just a few years. Porta di Roma responds to the first definition because it poses a challenge due to the degeneration of the real estate speculation model of urban development. At the same time it fits Couch's definition because local economic activity has been lost (or never even appeared) and social dysfunction is present in the form of non-existing public life and isolated population. Based on this, I argue it needs urban regeneration even if it is a new peripheral development, in order to prevent it from becoming a completely dysfunctional part of the city.

Residents of Porta di Roma feel cheated because they bought their apartments with the promise of living in a high end mixed use district with a high quality of life. Now they live in an anonymous housing development, with little population, no job opportunities and scarce public services and they are not even able to sell their house for a good price. In order for them to feel somehow connected to their neighbourhood and to allow a smooth coexistence of different social classes once the vacant dwellings will be used as social housing, it is important that the residents participate in the urban regeneration process. For a community, participation can indeed result in an engaged and informed society that feels better connected to its own environment (Francis, 2003) and it can also reduce the feeling of anonymity in culture and society (Davidoff, 1965).



who wins?

images by author

One of the clearest definitions I found of participation is given by Francis (2003, p. 59): *"Participation is the process of working collaboratively with individuals and groups to achieve specific goals"*. In this case the specific goal is to tackle housing shortage by allocating vacant dwellings in a middle class housing development to low income population. In order to make it a successful project, all the aspects of the issue need to be shared and purposefully discussed both with the locals and with the newcomers. The community associations and right to housing movements, together with the urban designers, need to be social mediators between the different interests and will be in charge of managing the housing stock.

In this situation the purpose of participation is clear and can be described as the involvement of people in the process of design and decision-making, with the result that their voice is heard and that they gain confidence and trust in the organizations working on the project. In this way it is more likely that people will accept new plans and policies (Sanoff, 1992).

The intervention on street profiles and ground floors - namely the introduction of what I call *"transitional spaces"* - finds its theoretical background in the ideas of Jacobs, Gehl and Sennett. In my project, these spaces represent a transition between private and public space and are located at ground floors of the housing blocks, where usually shops are to be found and that now lie empty and abandoned. They will host all sorts of social, economic and productive activities organized by the movements, cooperatives and citizens. In this way active ground floors will be filled with the activities that cannot be found in the shopping mall, thus creating an alternative urban experience that seeks to bring people back to the streets.

Small-scale economic activity by civilian initiatives is very important for vitality and city life. The failure of the urban plan of Porta di Roma led to a monofunctional residential area that desperately needs the mix of small shops, bars, social and cultural activities defined as a vital element for a healthy urban environment by Jane Jacobs already in 1961.

Sociologist Richard Sennett defines modern public space as *"places where anonymous individuals interact"* (Sennett, 1977). Here, the act of encountering strangers determines the nature of a public space. According to Sennett, urban leisure venues such as cafes, bars, restaurants and cinemas can be regarded as modern public spaces, as they offer a place for forms of informal contact, news-gathering, social exchange, and business transactions. In this sense also the *"active ground floors"* that I am proposing can be considered modern public spaces, though they are not simply bars or cafes, but host more complex functions, such as workshops, learning centres, artistic and cultural activities and so on. They are not just places to hang out and encounter strangers, but they act as urban catalysts because they engage people from different social background in socially productive activities, with the aim of promoting integration through cooperation.

The debate on public space also revolves around the urban meaning of open space: open spaces are the places that residents use, where they move through and spend part of their leisure time; places where experiences and uses of different inhabitants meet. Therefore, these places should be conceived as a space owned by everyone, and as a place for spatial expression of a community (Janches and Sepúlveda, 2009). Open public space should be the place for interaction, but its quality and spatial composition affects the perception by individuals, thus influencing the opportunities for interaction. The built environment provides the physical background for the interaction, thus if it is unpleasant, the degree of interaction will be low. On the other hand, spaces like courtyards, green spaces, playgrounds, but also small-scale shared spaces within buildings have a high potential for contact and interaction.

The interaction between different social groups with different interests and lifestyles depends very much on the use, quality, perception and typology of the public and semi public space. According to the theories of Jan Gehl the perception of the different types of public space stimulates different kinds of activities. It is in these activities that the interaction becomes possible. Gehl distinguishes activities in three categories: necessary activities, which are compulsory; optional activities, which demand a certain environment for certain groups or lifestyles; and social activities which emerge

from the presence of the necessary and optional activities (Gehl, 2011).

Necessary activities include those that are more or less compulsory: going to school or work, shopping, waiting for a bus or for a person. Because the activities in this group are necessary, they are more or less independent of the built environment.

Optional activities are those in which people take part if they wish to do so, and if time and place make it possible. This category includes activities as taking a walk for some fresh air, standing around and enjoying life, or sitting and sunbathing. These activities only take place when the outside conditions are optimal, when weather and place invite them and are especially dependent on the physical environment. When the outdoor areas are of high quality, the intensity of optional activities increases. In other words, if the spatial conditions are poor, the activities in the public space tend to be only the strictly necessary ones, thus reducing the potential for interaction.

Social activities depend on the presence of other people in public spaces. They include children at play, greeting and conversations, communal activities, passive or active contacts. Social activities occur spontaneously as a direct consequence of people being or moving through an area. They are directly supported by the necessary and optional activities and are heavily dependent on the conditions of the built environment.

The purpose of this literature review is to help me in the identification of public spaces in Porta di Roma that can be transformed into relevant places for interaction because they have good potential for different types of activities. The scope of informed interventions on public space is that of contrasting the anonymity and impersonality of the “private” public space of the shopping mall.

10. RESEARCH APPROACH - THEORY PAPER

Distorted urban development and the house.

Causes of Rome's development model and its consequences on affordable housing provision.

Introduction

The history of contemporary Rome is one of urban development predominantly led by private interests, which have caused the city to be a patchwork of disconnected settlements still revolving around the same historic centre (Insolera 2011; Erbani 2013).

In the urban management of Rome, one can very frequently witness collusion between economic interest and political administration. This led to a distorted model that influenced the shape of the city and the life of its citizens, especially in terms of availability and location of housing.

The aim of this paper is to clarify the nature of the urban development of Rome and some of the relations and consequences it has generated. Moreover, it aims at investigating if this profit driven model influenced the location of affordable housing, generating an unbalanced distribution of the housing asset. The first part of the paper presents the current situation of the housing market in Rome, while the second part is a brief history of the city's urban development and planning. In the last section I will elaborate on the relation between real estate speculation and the availability of affordable housing.

Today in Rome: speculation and housing shortage

Just as many other cities, in the last twenty years Rome has seen the implementation of neoliberal policies. The administration of the city is increasingly class-oriented, while upper classes dominate

decisions and flows of public money. Moreover, distribution and circulation of resources - housing is the best example - are not priorities for policies that are aimed at private profit and land valorisation.

The city's chronic shortage of affordable housing plays a large role in the decision of many families to leave: housing prices are the highest in the country, both to buy and to rent. Speculation increased the need for housing and generated a completely distorted market where real estate prices reach unbelievable heights (over 10.000€ per square meter in the city centre, and between 3.000€ and 4.000€ in the furthest peripheries¹). It is not surprising that 89% of Romans declare it hard to find reasonably priced accommodations².

The new city's master plan (Piano Regolatore Generale – PRG) has been approved in 2008, after 45 years from the last one³. It had great objectives, especially for the regeneration of suburbs, but its implementation is very slow and difficult. The most alarming feature of the plan is the enormous amount of development that it envisages. Millions of cubic meters of new constructions are planned, both to fill the gaps in the existing urban fabric and to further expand in the countryside.

The contradiction is blatant: while thousands of families are forced to leave the city due to the level of real estate prices, the master plan calls for the construction of an enormous quantity of apartments which will be put on the market at the same unreachable prices as those that have been abandoned (Boccacci, 2007). Such an amount of new construction does not find any justification in the real needs of the city: it only meets the demand of the higher classes and it is a “gift” to real estate developers.

“Centralities” are one of the main features of the PRG: nodes of functions and services to be placed in strategic peripheral areas of the city in order to stimulate polycentrism⁴. These private initiative projects have been incorporated into the new urban master plan with the alleged purpose of regenerating the outer suburbs. However, they have completely failed to meet this objective and have essentially turned out to be financial operations (Erbani, 2013). The public administration of the city did not oppose this kind of interventions; instead it supported them, creating parts of standardized market city, mainly aimed at middle classes. Thus the local government has a considerable responsibility in promoting operations that only benefit the private sector (yet proclaimed as being in the public interest) and create an opaque synergy between the city politics and entrepreneurs (Sina, 2014).

The kind of urban development supplied by the market does not meet the demand for housing, which is nonetheless very high in Rome. There is indeed a great need for affordable housing, especially since the global economic crisis started, but the new developments tend to remain vacant, because the large majority of roman population is not in the condition to afford market prices. (Berdini, 2013)

Renting an apartment in the central or semi central areas, and in many peripheral districts, is impossible even for the middleclass population (Mudu, 2014a). Families with an annual income of less than 30,000 euros cannot rent an apartment in Rome, where rent now absorbs around 45-50% of a family's income, according to estimates of 2012 by Nomisma⁵.

The numbers of the housing emergency are astonishing: 50.000 families applied for public housing in 2013 (Comune di Roma, 2013), there are over 7.000 eviction requests per year since 2009 (Collecchio, 2013), and there are between 2000 and 3000 families squatting (Collecchio, 2013). In this scenario the lack of a proper housing policy to tackle the needs of the low income

1 - Osservatorio del Mercato Immobiliare – Agenzia delle Entrate www.agenziaentrate.gov.it

2 - Eurobarometer 2009

3 - The complete plan can be found at <http://www.urbanistica.comune.roma.it/prg.html>.

4 - There are 18 centralities in the PRG, 8 of which are located on private land and developed by private operators.

5 - Nomisma is an independent company that engages in economic research and consulting activities for companies, associations, and public administrations at national and international level. www.nomisma.it

population seems even more irresponsible.

The last twenty years of local government have seen a massive withdrawal of the public sector from the housing market. In 1981, public housing directly managed by the city authorities represented around 17% of total housing (Abate and Picciotto 1983), while it fell to a mere 8,2% in 2001 (Istat, 2001 census⁶). This means that it is impossible to guarantee affordable housing, while the market generates social and spatial segregation.

The lack of policies and the deregulation of market forces have created a paradox in which thousands of vacant dwellings in anonymous middle class housing developments are the only response to the great numbers of people demanding an affordable dwelling.

How did we get here? Brief history of the development of Rome

a. From 1870 to WWII

When Rome became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy in 1871, it only had around 220.000 residents: it was a tiny city, made up of the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque core, a new development connecting Termini station to the centre, and a very small industrial area by the river on the southern side (Insolera, 2011). Its new status as capital required the building of ministries, law courts, and other national and local functions. This new role and the new institutions attracted an entirely new population that needed housing and other services. Whole neighbourhoods were planned to house the city's official workers, but the city was unprepared for the massive arrivals of unskilled labourers fleeing the countryside and seeking jobs in the new capital. With them came the beginning of Rome's sprawl of slums: illegally self built shacks and huts where the poorest population lived, in conditions of social and physical segregation (Della Seta, 1988).

When the Fascist regime gained power in 1922, it initiated massive construction projects in the capital, not only in terms of governmental and public buildings, but also residential complexes and neighbourhoods to house the ever-increasing population, which, by 1936, had reached over a million inhabitants (Insolera, 2011).

The Fascist regime gave birth a new master plan for Rome in 1931. It forecasted a growth in population of about 1 million units, and called for a great exploitation of land. The urban growth was not organized in recognizable sectors, but appeared irrational and was spread throughout the territory. Quite some demolitions in the historic centre (*sventramenti*) were planned (far less than what actually happened) and the whole public transport system was based on railway.

The plan did not include the whole municipal territory, but it covered approximately 14.500 hectares. This means that there were wide areas that were left without any urban meaning. Article 14 of the master plan law regulated the building of areas outside the plan itself: those who could pay for electricity, water, gas and sewage were allowed to build wherever they wanted. This gave an enormous advantage to the big landowners and developers, which could steer the development in the areas they favoured, allowing them an unacceptable power over the urban development of the city. In essence, the master plan has been sabotaged by its own implementation law (Insolera, 2011).

The greatest urban intervention of the Fascist era, the E42, was not included in the master plan of 1931. The Esposizione Universale di Roma (EUR or E42) was an entirely new area extending toward the sea, which was intended to host the 1942 World's Fair and then to become the administrative heart of the city and the nation. The entire project, which covered an area of over 400 hectares, fell outside the boundaries of the master plan, completely ignoring its provisions and even contradicting it (Insolera, 2010). The area towards the sea was not supposed to be developed, if not for some minor industrial settlements, while instead it became the new focus of the city plans,

6 - www.istat.it

projecting the development of Rome towards southwest. The EUR was managed under a special committee that had special legal, financial and planning powers, which allowed to completely bypass any prior regulation.

Seeing how the city was taking a whole new direction, Mussolini required a new master plan. The plan of 1942 was prepared but was never approved due to the war. However, it has been called "*piano ombra*", shadow plan, because its provisions influenced the urban development of the city ever since (Insolera, 2011). The plan envisaged a huge expansion towards the sea, including all sorts of functions to be created around the EUR area; a high end development in the northern part, with little villas and sport centres for the high classes; working middle class developments eastwards and a series of major roads (Via Olimpica, Cristoforo Colombo, Corso Francia, etc.) that would lead to the historic centre, almost totally victim of more *sventramenti*.

The massive demolitions of parts of the historic centre to create monumental boulevards and show off the archaeological remains of the Imperial Rome (*sventramenti*) made thousands of Romans homeless. These were deported in specially built *borgate*⁷: anonymous agglomerates of cheap housing separated from the rest of the city by a "no-man's land", an extended belt of uncultivated terrain (Insolera 2011). These *borgate* were lacking even minimal services and any employment opportunities: they were just places in which to hide the poor population that did not fit the regime's self-image of progress. The houses were of very low quality: one room ground floor huts with no toilets, built with "autarchic" materials; soon they were in ruin. After only a few months it became impossible to distinguish the legal *borgate* from the illegal slums (Della Seta, 1970).

The moment one of those settlements managed to obtain the basic services and infrastructures it meant that the areas around it were increasing their value, becoming appealing for real estate speculation. This triggered a process that would lead to the development for the 'bourgeois city' of the neighbouring areas, leading in the end to the demolition of the *borgata* and, once again, to the displacement of its inhabitants.

The Second World War interrupted the growth of the city, halting the construction of EUR, but it did not stop the influence of the shadow plan of 1942 over the upcoming decades.

b. From postwar reconstruction to the economic boom

After the end of the war and the establishment of the Italian Republic in 1946 a crucial question for Rome arose: what to do with the fascist plans and laws that regulated urban expansion? Both the plan of 1931 (with its shadow plan of '42) and the regulations that came with it referred to a vision and to a type of development that did not belong to the new spirit and constitution of the country and of the city. The only positive aspect of the 1931 plan was that it allowed relatively easy expropriations. Pleading this as an advantage, the conservative part of the Christian Democrat Party⁸ managed to maintain the outdated plan and its legislation valid, with the promise to develop a new plan in the short run. This manoeuvre has been possible mainly due to the backing of the vast majority of the landowners and developers, which supported the plan of 1931 because it allowed them a great freedom. It indeed had some rules on expropriation, but they knew that after the war the Municipality would never have enough money to expropriate even the smallest plot. Moreover they relied on the fact that no one in the local administration dared to go against the interest of the big landowners and developers (Insolera, 2011). In the end the shadow plan of 1942

7 - The term *borgate* was used for the first time in 1924 when Acilia was built, 15 km from Rome in a malarial area. Italo Insolera clarifies the meaning of *borgata* as:

"This is a derogatory term that derives from the word *borgo* [village]: it is either a piece of city whose organization is not complete enough to be called a "neighbourhood" or a rural agglomeration which is still blocked by a depressed economic system that prevents its development as a complete organism. *Borgata* is a subspecies of *borgo*: a piece of city in the countryside, which, really, is neither one nor the other." (Insolera 2011, p.135).

8 - Democrazia Cristiana was a political party founded in 1943. A Roman Catholic, centrist, catch-all party comprising both right and left-leaning political factions, the DC played a dominant role in the politics of Italy, and of Rome, for 50 years until its final demise in 1994 amid a nationwide judicial investigation of systemic political corruption.

was indicated by the new administration as the direction to follow in the preparation of the new master plan.

The post war period of reconstruction saw the creation of public housing projects, in order to meet the needs of the growing urban population. Public authority promoted, financed and built unitary neighbourhoods for low income people, while leaving to private real estate companies the responsibility and opportunity to satisfy the demand for housing of the higher classes (Acocella, 1980).

In 1949, the INA- Casa Program (Law No. 43/1949) was established to alleviate the housing deficit from north to south (Beretta Anguissola, 1963). Designed to address both the housing and the unemployment crisis, the Ina-Casa plan housed around 56.000 people in Rome, building nine working-class neighbourhoods between 1949 and 1963, two of which in Ostia and Acilia, one towards Ostiense (Valco San Paolo) and the remaining six in the eastern periphery of the city (Tiburtino, Tuscolano, Villa Gordiani, Ponte Mammolo, Colle di Mezzo, Torre Spaccata). Unfortunately, being a national intervention, it had very little relation with the local dynamics of the development of the city: the locations chosen for the INA-Casa neighbourhoods were mostly outside the boundaries of the 1931 plan, in remote areas far away even from the last fringes of the city. These large housing complexes were built as single episodes and not as integrated parts of the city, thus reproducing the social marginalization seen in the borgate (Tosi & Cremaschi, 2003).

Paradoxically these interventions weakened the local planning tools, preventing coordination among local and national policies: even public housing projects were contradicting the planning law.

Even adding up all the different public initiatives, the numbers of public housing projects were largely inadequate and, with the collusion of the main political forces of the city, the market was left open to real-estate speculation and to an urban sprawl of mostly unplanned neighbourhoods, often lacking the most basic services (Della Seta, 1970). As a matter of fact, the choice to keep the fascist planning tools in place paralyzed the public sector when it came to urban development, leaving the field open for real estate entrepreneurs.

At the end of WWII landowners were richer and stronger than ever, due to a number of factors that hugely increased the value of their building lots with no effort on their part: depreciation, with the consequent appreciation of all non monetary assets; the block of constructions during the war, which caused a huge demand for houses at the end of the conflict; weakness of public authority, governance and planning tools, greatly disrupted by the war; and last but not least the concentration of land ownership in very few hands. In 1953 about 50 million square meters belonged to only seven landowners (Natoli, 1958).

From 1947, for almost thirty years, the Christian Democrat Party controlled the municipal government, allied with the same landowners and developers active during fascism (Scalera, Talenti, Tudini, Vaselli, Torlonia, Gerini, Chigi, Lancellotti), and additionally connected to a new generation of palazzinari⁹ (Armellini, Bonifaci, Caltagirone, Francisci, Mezzaroma, Toti). In Rome the term palazzinaro usually refers to housing developers and to property speculators, owners of several buildings, that emerged as prominent actors in Rome's "development" in the post war period. Their capacity to control city councillors and civil servants became so strong that they were able to ignore the city's master plan or adapt it to their needs (Mudu, 2014a). *"Among the civil*

9 - Born in the 1920s as the residence for the new bourgeoisie, the palazzina was intended as a smaller version of the aristocratic palaces. It is a stand alone building, not so big (up to 3 or 4 floors) and it was usually surrounded by a common garden. It became the distinctive residence of the new Italian capital and as such it became the preferred ground for architectonic experiments, especially after WWII. During the 60's economic boom it became the model for the wildest real estate speculation in Rome, reaching 5 to 6 floors. Bigger and cheaper than the original from the 20s, it represents the change of the social status of the majority of the roman population. Still today it represents the peculiar building typology of the city and its good characteristics have been distorted to fit the economic needs of the developers.

servants there was a certain subjection and fear towards the big development firms or other people closely connected to them" said the investigative report on real estate speculation and corruption from the magazine L'Espresso in 1958¹⁰.

Private initiative after the war operated in two ways. On one hand it filled the gaps in the existing urban fabric, completing neighbourhoods, often taking advantage of variations in the local plans. On the other hand it started to urbanize peripheral areas not yet reached by the city, often not even provided with basic services as sewage, water and electricity. If those areas were within the boundaries of the master plan, the Municipality had the obligation to provide the basic services and would charge the landowner for a small amount to cover for these expenses. Thus the developer could make great profit, since this amount was really little compared to the money gained from the development of the area and the financial burden fell almost entirely on the Municipality, whose treasury was already in terrible conditions. Moreover, the expenses to provide the services were often higher than they should have been, because the mechanism of what we could call "private urbanization" is quite complex (Insolera, 2011). It actually starts at the moment the income produced by an agricultural plot becomes lower than the potential income generated by the same plot if it was built. The fate of that plot is then sealed: the owner will try everything to build the most profitable typology of houses on it. But this objective is not immediately achievable: the city is still far away and this reduces the value of the land, making it more convenient to wait. But the owner does not want to wait: why should he be content with only the income from the agricultural plot? He then transfers (for free or for a very small price) a piece of his land to the Municipality to build public housing. Usually the transfer involves a plot at the furthest edge of the property, in order to "oblige" the Municipality to cross the rest of the land to serve the new public plot with the basic services and infrastructures. This increases the value of the rest of the land enormously, allowing the landowner to make the desired money. It is clear that by transferring a small plot the landowner can quickly increase the value of the remaining land, doubling it or even more. Even though the Municipality is in desperate need for cheap land to develop public housing projects, the transfer cannot be considered a good bargain for two main reasons: on one hand the increased effort needed to bring infrastructure and services to that remote plot creates a financial burden on the Municipality and on the other hand this increased expense will not be covered by the income generated by the development of the plot, since it will be public housing, which generates very little if no income at all (Natoli, 1958; Urbani, 2007). Through this mechanism, called "*saldamento*", which takes advantage of the need for land for public projects and mostly of the chronically bad financial conditions of the Municipality, the public housing interventions (INA-Casa, PEEP; CEP and more) ended up fuelling the most abusive real estate speculation, eating up the roman countryside (Insolera, 2011; Della Seta 1988).

The widespread failure of palazzinari to respect building regulations resulted in the creation of poor quality houses with few services (including lack of public transport in very large areas of the city). After the war, poverty and poor housing conditions could be somewhat justified as part of the reconstruction rhetoric, but this was no longer acceptable at the end of the 1950s when the Italian economy was booming. It became clear that there was no political interest from the Christian Democrat Party to provide decent housing for the low income segments of the population (Mudu, 2014a).

In the 1960s, illegal plot division and housing construction¹¹ (*abusivismo*) became the ordinary means of urban development, responding in an illegal way to the need for accommodation not only of lower social strata excluded from the market, but also, and mainly, of middle classes (Della

10 - Natoli, A., 1958. Il sacco di Roma. La speculazione Edilizia all'ombra del Campidoglio. L'Espresso, IV(3).

11 - Abusivismo is a term used to indicate the practice of plot division and construction without legal authorization and a license from local authorities who ensure conformity to the urban master plan. The word refers to the overexploitation of land and to a practice benefiting private individuals to the detriment of the whole city. In practice, abusivismo generates entire portions of the periphery of the city, whenever public institutions do not guarantee production, exchange, and consumption of houses.

Seta, 1970). A demand for new houses stemmed from the population that was being expelled from the historic centre and from the ring of neighbourhoods just outside the Aurelian Walls, which were being transformed into more profitable offices. *Abusivismo* met this type of demand, creating a sort of parallel housing market sustained by speculative intentions (Insolera, 2011).

In the meantime the study for the new master plan was slowly proceeding, with difficulties and obstacles created by the many diverse interests connected to the expansion of the city. The plan was finally approved in 1962, partially following the ideas expressed in 1942, and was changed already in 1965 to include the protection of archaeological and green areas, and 1967 to accommodate the interests of the private developers in the expansion towards the sea and in the northern sector (Insolera, 2010). The master plan included the whole municipal territory and its main features were: new residential and tertiary expansions towards west and north, slowing down the eastward development; new industrial areas towards Fiumicino and the Pontina plain; huge expansion towards the sea; saturation of existing urban fabric and partial protection of the city centre.

What is important to note here is that it took over thirty years to form a new master plan for the city, but between 1931 and 1965 more than 165 detailed plans and more than 250 variants to the master plan have been approved, showing how little the planning tool was taken into consideration (Insolera, 2011). It was just a general direction, the administrations and most of all the developers were free to choose to whether follow it or not, according to what suited their interest

c. Big events and extra ordinary administration: from the 70s to present day

In the 1970s and '80s the development of Rome went on almost regardless of the indications set out by the painfully hard to approve planning tools.

Although the phenomena that caused *abusivismo* started to fade away in the second half of the 1970s, the process of illegal plot division, selling and building did not stop, and went on for almost two more decades, though on a smaller scale due to the demographic dynamics (Urbani, 2007).

Amazingly enough those were the years of the "red councils", during which the Municipality was led by different coalitions of socialists and communists together, that had always opposed the urban policies of the Christian Democrats. Nonetheless the "red councils" did not manage to do much better: planning had already lost its power and it was not easy to change the direction of the development anymore. Those were also the "Years of Lead", a period of intense political turmoil that went on until the early 1980s¹², which made it especially difficult to focus on something else, like urban planning for instance.

That being said, the left missed several occasions to make the difference and gave up to the interests of real estate speculation (for example regarding the protection of the Appia Antica and the realization of the SDO¹³). What they did instead was to set the boundaries of the existing illegal peripheries in order to regenerate them, basically accepting and legitimizing the "planning choices" made by the illegal developers (Insolera, 2011).

In 1980 roman urban planning was given the finishing blow by a verdict of the Constitutional Court¹⁴. The sentence affirmed that the Bucalossi Law¹⁵ on building rights was unclear because it did not properly distinguish between *ius aedificandi* and ownership rights, therefore resulting not valid. According to Italian legislation, without this law building rights are to be intended as intrinsic to land ownership, thus making the public management of urban development practically impossible. It took some time to fix this legal hash and in the meantime urban planning lost its

12 - During the Years of Lead (Anni di Piombo) - that lasted from the late 1960s into the early 1980s - there was widespread social conflict and unprecedented acts of terrorism carried out by both right and left wing paramilitary groups.

13 - The SDO (Sistema Direzionale Orientale) is a large mobility axis surrounded by business districts that should have been built in Rome, according to many of its master plans (1931, 1962), in order to free the historic centre from inappropriate business functions.

14 - Verdict number 5/1980

15 - Law number 10/1977

residual appeal. Instead of rebuilding more efficient ordinary planning tools, the culture of planning has been completely abandoned to dive into the season of “extra-ordinary administration” that continues to present day (Benevolo, 2012).

Managing everything as an emergency, as an extra-ordinary set of issues became a new tradition embraced by both political sides: it was argued that only big events can trigger urban development and that planning has no power anymore. This theory unfortunately finds backing in recent roman history: the 1960's Olympics, the 1990's Soccer World Cup, various Jubilees, the 2009's Swimming World Championship were all occasions (some more successful than others) to start big infrastructural interventions or to give new energy to urban transformation. This “extra-ordinary” model left the city in the hands of the developers, robbing the Municipal Administration of any control on urban transformation (Erbani, 2013), but also on transparency, and opening the way to corruption and abuse (as it was clear in many occasions, from Tangentopoli in the late '80s, to Parentopoli in 2012, to Mafia Capitale in 2014¹⁶). The consequence of this model on urban planning is that master plans become mere indications and that every single development project becomes the ground for negotiation between public administration and private operators, which, as we saw, have always been a step ahead in protecting their own interest to the detriment of the community. In 1992 law n.179 introduced the “integrated programs” as the main legal tool of the new “negotiated urban planning”, that is the way in which urban development is carried out in Rome at present day (Erbani, 2013).

Real estate speculation and housing, a complicated relationship

“Our helplessness, together with the uncontrollable pressure of private interest, fuelled by the desire to gain maximum profit from land revenues, made it possible for abusivismo and illegality to take over Rome. Fault does not lie in the hands of landowners, but in those of national and local authorities that were not able to stop the accumulation of huge capitals, created by buying and selling land.” (Enzo Storoni, municipal council member, 1956)

From the historical analysis and from this quote, it appears clear that the model of urban development of the city of Rome is somehow distorted. This depends mainly on two factors: the failure to actively regulate land ownership and revenues and a “culture of illegality” in which administrative rules are perceived as oppressive limitations to one's freedom (Berdini, 2008).

In 1958 civil society realized for the first time how powerful landowners and developers are in Rome thanks to an investigative report of the magazine L'Espresso called “Corrupted Capital, Infected Nation”. The report uncovered all the collusion, corruption and political patronage that existed between developers, entrepreneurs, politics and the municipal administration to achieve higher personal profit from abusive real estate speculation (Natoli, 1958). More scandals on corruption followed, in the late 1980s and then again in 2012 and 2014¹⁷, testifying how little an impact rules have on the behaviour of those who have the biggest power upon the city: the local government, the developers, the big municipal companies and the economic and entrepreneurial forces.

The power of constructors, developers and landowners is also shown by how easy it has been - and still is - for them to ignore or change the planning rules, considered as mere complications on the way to real estate profit. Comparing Rome's master plans with the history of what actually happened - where and how the city has grown compared to where it should have - only highlights this phenomenon.

16 - These are all judicial investigations (local or national) involving systemic political corruption, often related to real estate and construction industry.

17 - See note 16

The spatial model resulting from speculation and *abusivismo* is growing more and more distant from what happens in the rest of Europe. The twisted ratio between private profit and public costs generated a great poverty of services and infrastructures. The political weakness and the absence of an administrative culture in the face of powerful forces in Rome's planning and economy caused inequality in the distribution of services and in the availability of affordable housing (Erbani, 2013).

Right after the war, the Italian liberal thought embodied by the Christian Democrats failed to understand that transparency and free competition in the real estate market could only be achieved through a good control of landholding dynamics. The emergency of the reconstruction was therefore faced with a large deregulation in urban development and real estate transactions (Della Seta, 1988; Tocci, 2009).

Fiorentino Sullo, Christian Democrat Minister of Public Works, was the only one who tried to reform the landholding system, calling for mandatory expropriation of the land to be developed. He proposed a complete separation between ownership and building rights, according to the theories of Hans Bernoulli¹⁸: "*land to community, buildings to private property*". He argued that this was the best way to control excessive private land revenues in order to guarantee a balanced urban development, guided by public interest, and avoid abusive real estate speculation. Sullo proposed his reform of urban law in 1963, but by then the power of landowners and developers was too strong and too connected with politics. He was opposed by his own party and slowly ostracized from political life. After this burning defeat, no landholding reform was ever tried again (Tocci, 2009).

The intrinsic inequality generated by the "privatization of revenues versus collectivization of costs" model determines an infrastructural deficit (as explained with the *saldamento* mechanism) that takes away resources from the very process of property valorisation. Land and property revenues should be gained by the community to be re-invested in services and infrastructures, in order to create a positive urban environment, able to generate more revenues, both for private and for public actors.

In order to achieve such an objective, the urbanization charges for big landowners need to be raised and their financial contribution to urban development should be increased, instead of letting private actors profit from what should benefit the whole community (Tocci, 2009).

However this is not the case, and nowadays private actors still have too big a say on how and where the city should grow. In 1992, "negotiated urban planning" was introduced as the new way of managing urban development. It was supposed to gain higher revenues for the public administration through higher taxes and urbanization charges, while softening the rules to appeal to private actors (real estate companies, construction companies, landowners and developers but also private citizens), but it seems to have failed (Tocci, 2009; Berdini, 2013; Erbani, 2013).

Municipalities do not have enough money to build public infrastructures or services and ask private developers for their realization, in exchange for variations on the planning rules for other areas that are more convenient for the developer, in a never ending vicious circle. Local governments act as if territory were a commodity to trade in negotiation with private actors – using deregulation to obtain alleged advantages. In the long run, this unequal exchange is too high a cost for the citizens (Berdini, 2013). Especially in Rome, given the enormous political power of *palazzinari*, local authorities find themselves in a position of inferiority, in terms of money and power, and have to give up more and more to the advantage of the developer in order to achieve the basic services for the community. The appetites of real estate speculation are eating out the quality of life of the citizens.

18 - Hans Benno Bernoulli (17 February 1876 – 12 September 1959) was a Swiss architect and city planner. He explained his theories on urban planning in the book "Die Stadt und Ihr Boden".

It is evident how this distorted model had an impact on the availability, quality and location of affordable housing, intended in its broadest meaning as any form of housing that was accessible to the low income population in different historic periods, ranging from subsidized housing, to *borgate*, to public housing complexes, to *abusivismo*. Low income population has always been pushed to the edge of the city, either through forced relocation or by building social housing in the very outskirts. In Rome, social and spatial segregation proved itself intrinsic to real estate speculation.



Location of public housing neighbourhoods in Rome. The mechanism of "saldamento" is evident, as it is the spatial segregation and the inferiority of public interest against the power of real estate speculation. - map by author

The Fascist dictatorship openly favoured the upper and middle classes in their housing needs and used any means to ghettoize, remove, and evict the working-class population from the centre of the city (Mudu, 2014). In this period, rent prices rose and as a consequence many low income families were expelled from the existing urban fabric. In order to house this population, in the 1930s a law on "subsidized housing" gave economic benefits to those who built houses and kept the rent below certain standards for the first five years: the loss of money of those five years was widely covered by the municipal subsidy. Big landowners turned this social initiative to their advantage, building the subsidized houses on the furthest away land they owned, miles away from the edge of the city, using the described mechanism of "saldamento" as a way to value their own

land, that rested in between the city and the subsidized buildings. Real estate speculation not only could make great money out of this mechanism, but could also actively influence the location and connection with the city of the settlements for the deprived households (Urbani, 2010).

After the war public initiative only took care of the very poor, through public housing interventions, leaving middle and higher class in the hands of private companies. However, just as subsidized housing and the regenerated *borgate* did before the war, also the INA-Casa interventions and the PEEP fell in the mechanism of "*saldamento*" and were used as the engine to urbanize whole new areas, mostly outside the boundaries of the master plan.

The combination of uncontrolled land regulation and disrespect for legality led to *abusivismo*. Illegal building and unauthorized urban development has been - and still is - to all intents and purposes an acknowledged and accepted modality in the construction of Rome: it forms a part of the very nature of the city and its mode of governance (Insolera, 2011). It appears like a widespread form of social behaviour as it is testified by the legal system and measures taken by the administration: three successive building amnesties (in 1985, 1994, and 2003) triggered a mechanism of implicit and silent acceptance of the unauthorized process of building development. Rather than eradicating the problem and finding alternatives, the public administration has adopted forms of negotiation and consultation with landowners and construction firms that allow and indeed encourage irresponsible land use (Urbani, 2007). Although it originated out of necessity, it has later assumed the character of a standard modality of town planning. It has addressed the middle class and it has become speculative, no longer affecting only residential building. More recently, the housing laws at national and regional levels have reinforced this trend, favouring deregulation, supporting small-scale and scattered building development and putting a premium on cubic capacity. This incentive to building activity is seen as the only response to the global economic crisis (Erbani, 2013).

The current situation of housing emergency and real estate paradox described earlier is nothing but the final act of a story written by *palazzinari* over time: the distorted process of production of urban space has long stopped meeting the housing demand. Private developers, guided by profit making and not by public interest, keep building for a real estate market that is largely inaccessible for the vast majority of Rome's population, weakened by the global economic crisis. This generates the ambiguity of the empty middle class new developments that strikingly contrast with a whole new segment of population that adds to the categories traditionally suffering from the housing struggle.

Conclusions

Rome's urban history is the spatial image of a socio-economic model that demands deregulation, indiscriminate speculative building, haggling over the public good and sacrifice of the public interest for the sake of real estate speculation.

Housing represents the creation of a relationship between a society and its space and it is one of the most powerful devices in designing a city. The unbalance between private and public power alters this relationship, creating spatial and social marginalization of those that are more in need of housing.

In Rome, private real estate has always been considered the only possible engine for urban change, wiping out any other form of urban development, including that guided by public principles of collective welfare. Urban planning has become meaningless, because speculation has frustrated public efforts to provide citizens with an adequate and non-discriminating housing supply. It is virtually impossible for low and middle income population to find decent affordable housing without giving up on other benefits such as public transport, public services, green or social interaction (Erbani, 2013). Rome's distorted model has robbed its citizens of the possibility to live in an urban environment that is at the same time good and affordable.

It appears clear that a change in urban legislation is urgent, especially regarding the landholding

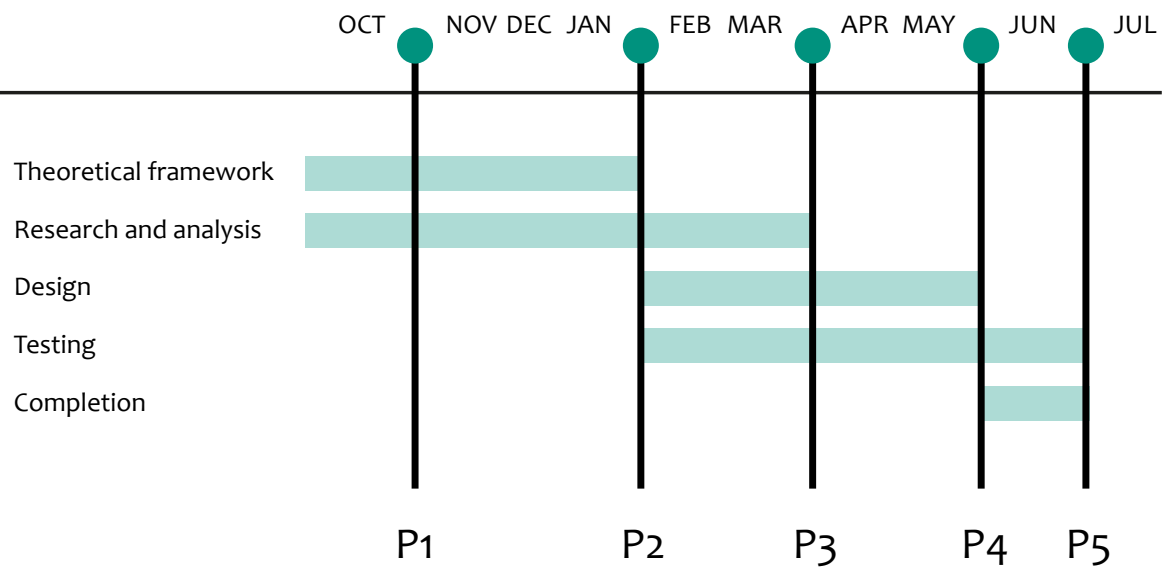
system, and that something needs to be done to contrast illegality and corruption. Unfortunately urban planners cannot tackle political morals, but they can promote new planning tools to regulate urban development and to fix the housing shortage. A successful strategy could be that of playing by the market rules and try to couple the two issues. Through a carrot and stick policy private developers could be seduced into re-investing some of their unused housing stock for social housing purposes. The goal is to convince real estate actors that social sustainability and the public interest are more profitable for them than mere speculation, which already proved itself unfit to face the crisis.

11. SOCIETAL AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Investigating the issue of urban development and how this influences that provision of affordable housing is relevant on two sides. On one hand it is necessary to reflect on the social implications of the urban planning of a city like Rome: the debate on the right to decent housing for all has never been more passionate and it is the duty of our discipline to understand what can be done from a spatial point of view to improve the conditions of the urban dwellers. A Welfare State that is retreating and a long lasting economic crisis, followed by austerity measures, force municipalities to a struggle in provision of welfare services to their citizens. In this context it becomes relevant to explore new possible ways of supplying the deprived households and neighbourhoods with their basic rights, using the different tools that are in our power: policy making, urban planning and urban design.

From a scientific point of view, this research is relevant because it wants to investigate the relationship between the profit driven model of development of the city of Rome and its ability to provide affordable housing. The relevance of the spatial structure of the city of Rome in the managing and provision of services, including affordable and socially sustainable housing is enormous: the urban development as carried out since after WWII has created a “pulverized” urban fabric, that dissolves into low density settlements, incoherently dispersed in the roman agricultural land. This research seeks to challenge the assumption on which the last 20/30 years of urban planning in Rome have been based: that the market alone is able to regulate the supply and demand of housing in a socially and economically sustainable way.

12. TIME WORKING SCHEDULE



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APPENDIX

Graduation Orientation Material

A. *Link between the graduation topic and the chosen Research Theme*

The project will be carried out within the Design as Politics Graduation Studio. The topic of the studio for this year is "New Utopias on the Ruins of the Welfare State".

We are living in an age where nation states seem to become weaker and weaker, under the influence of privatisation, localism but also of globalisation and supra-national politics like that of the European Union. Countries seem to be both falling apart in small fragments as well as being dissolved into huge global networks.

Architecture and Urbanism have for a long time been dependent on the nation state. We cannot imagine doing without a strong government and huge public investments for developing housing projects and public buildings, or for designing huge and even utopian visions for new cities and regions. In Italy a functioning Welfare State is a Utopia itself. We know how it feels not to have a strong government and huge public investments: no public housing projects, money wasted on public works that are never completed, no chance to afford utopian visions for cities and regions. As a matter of fact we are facing a great housing emergency, a failure of the state in regulating market dynamics and a widespread corruption. With these premises, the new Utopia would be to live in a functioning nation state.

That is why with my project I propose a "Utopia of Normality". Urban planning in Rome is not going in the direction of solving the housing emergency. The lack of housing policies and the deregulation of market forces have created a paradox in which thousands of vacant dwellings in anonymous middle class housing developments – such as Porta di Roma - are the only response to the great numbers of people demanding an affordable dwelling.

In Rome there is a distorted model of urban development and a mismanagement of the public thing, including social housing. All this makes it impossible to achieve a 'normal' urban environment, especially in the peripheries, which is why the boring, standard, plain neighbourhood becomes a Utopia that is almost impossible to reach. My argument is that it would take only so much effort to make things better, but that it will probably never happen, making it relevant to talk about a "Utopia of Normality".

The aim of the research is to investigate how urban development and the housing issue in Rome are related and if there is a possibility to combine the alleviation of the housing emergency with a more coherent and balanced urban development. The goal of the project is to achieve a more equitable provision of affordable housing and an overall social sustainability of the location chosen as an example of "ghost neighbourhood". The strategy to achieve these objectives is that of triggering a spatial and social regeneration of Porta di Roma, which capitalizes on the enormous potential of community associations. Overall the objective is to find a smart way of making the empty houses meet the homeless people.

The research question of the studio is how to find a smart way to succeed without the Welfare State, and my project connects to that because it does not rely on the state to provide social housing, but it empowers the right to housing movements that already provide low income population with alternative housing solutions.

The studio is very open to personal interpretation, therefore the only piece of literature we had to connect to was "Utopia" by Thomas More. In this book he describes a utopian society in order to expose the ills of his own society, that of England in the 16th century. With my "Utopia of Normality" project I seek to do the same thing, drawing attention to what is wrong in Rome's housing market by proposing a utopian solution to it.

B. *Report from the workshop “Get Inspired by Biennale”*

By Tanya Chandra, Martina Gentili, Di Fang, Juste Stefanovic, Sarah Rach & Krzysztof Pydo

The 14th Architectural Exhibition in Venice Biennale 2014 has become a fairly convenient location for a workshop organized by Msc3 Urbanism students from TU Delft. The major aim of the student workshop organized at the Biennale was to reflect on different forms of representation of various exhibitions located mainly in the Giardini and in the Arsenale. The major task was to analyze how the pavilions and exhibitions attract visitors, what emotions they evoke, what senses are involved in communicating the meaning of display and what is the interaction between installations and users.

The conclusions of the workshop was linked to the *Design as Politics* activities taking place at *Swiss Pavilion*, whereas students were asked to think through and to visualize the independency of Scotland, Veneto and Cataluña. The intention of the exercise was to exaggerate one of the crucial aspects of examined regions in order to create their utopian images. The utopian systems of *Scottish Lottocracy*, *Veneto: Country of Production*, *Polenta & Palladio* and School of life supposed to be finalized with a pavilion design of the newly formed country for the purpose of its first Biennale Exhibition in Venice in 2016.

As a group we defined different manners of involving visitors in an exhibition/pavilion. Involvement can be done in an active way where the visitor takes an active role in viewing the exhibition and needs to take effort to be provided of information or in a passive way where the viewer is more of an observer. Then there is another distinction where the viewer is either a visitor of the pavilion or is experiencing the pavilion. So summerizing there is a distinction between active and passive, and visitor and experience.

In the following the different pavilions as an end product of the Design as Politics workshop are presented which were inspired by the different pavilions we visited during the week.

The Pavilion of Scotland: Martina Gentili

The recent Scottish referendum was debated not only on the basis of national identity but on notions of justice and equality. These stem not from a regional identity but from disenchantment with dysfunctional democratic processes. Scotland is not unique in this respect but provides a convenient boundary and broad political consensus in which to base a project.

In the Scottish pavilion the future 'lottocratical' Scotland is presented: an independent country in which a series of lotteries have replaced normal systems within society.

The government is elected lottocratically (all citizens may be called upon). The lottery considers the hours of labour, leisure, GDP and housing required towards achieving the governments broad goals and distributes them unevenly, much in the way that resources are distributed unevenly in 2014. Money earned, house, salary and work hours are appointed at random and have no correlation to (eg. thanks to the lottery a butcher, working 3 hours a week, earn £400,000-a-year, living in a caravan in Peebles may find himself in Nairn the day after, a surgeon working 40 hours for £10,000-a-year whilst living in a high-rise). This is a form of fairness in which everything is not equal but in which all citizens will experience all ways of living - it is our contention that empathy arising from this situation would create a better society (would undermine spatial segregation, condemnation of certain housing types, accepted forms of government etc.).

In the course of a week spent in Venice working through the utopia to its absurd conclusion, with its implications for human instinct, self-determination, reproduction, education, law making, immigration etc, we feel that it provides a compelling alternative to the situation in 2014.

The visitors of the Scotland pavilion can experience it in an active way. They will find a lottery machine in the middle of the pavilion to guide them through a personal journey in the life of Lottocratic Scots. Personal paths, determined by the lottery machine, will lead the visitor through a series of images depicting the possible life he or she could have if living in the new independent People's Lottocracy of Scotland.



The Pavilion of Veneto: *Tanya Chandra, Sarah Rach & Krzysztof Pydo*

The pavilion of the Veneto region is showing the utopic country of production. The production state of Veneto is aiming an optimized production system in the sense that it should endure as long as possible. In order to create a utopic country of production it runs a cycle of optimal production which tries to reach consensus between using all available resources and exist as long as possible in this state.

The intention of this utopia is to generate a cycle that takes this character but removing the idea of ownership. Everything in it belongs to production. The four quadrants of this system is production, housing, resources and recreation. One is at its peak of production when they use the 24 hours of a day equally for working, sleeping and recreating. The pavilion consists of a conveyer belt which passes by the different quadrants of the production country. At certain times the visitor is forced to get off the belt to either rest or play a mandatory game.

The visitor of the Veneto pavilion experiences the pavilion in an active way. He is forced to participate in mandatory activities (which are a metaphor for the optimized activities in the utopic country of production) and a set time will lead the visitor through the pavilion just like the inhabitant of the Veneto region sleep, works and recreate for exactly 8 hours a day.

The Pavilion of Cataluña: *Di Fang & Juste Stefanovic*

For our group work we got inspiration from two pavilions – the Swiss and the French pavilions.

The inspiring part in a French pavilion was the movies, which they were showing. It was easy to understand, but at the same very informative and unique. And what was also important, that it interested a lot of people.

The Swiss pavilion mainly shows works from Cedric Price and Lucius Burckhardt, who were both much concerned with the idea of the present moment, of the need to relate to “now” and chart a future path for their contemporary society. Both Burckhardt and Price critiqued the traditional tertiary education system and were interested in rethinking the basic concept of a university. When we first arrived at Swiss pavilion, we looked at the models in the room and checked the archives, just as normal visitors. Later on, we had our workshop in Swiss pavilion and visitors came and stopped to watch our work. Then our activities became part of the exhibition and our roles changed from passive visitors to active actors.

We were working on a theme of independent Catalonia, where we basically proposed a strategy of a “School of Life”, where people are obliged to learn/produce Catalan culture and production during all their lives, and spread it all over the world. Therefore, the main idea of the pavilion of Catalonia was to create a space for workshops, where people could learn some Catalan culture. This way of exhibition is chosen in the same logics as the whole idea of the Utopia. It is based on learning to publicize Catalan culture. The pavilion is shaped as a circle, on the wall there will be screens showing movies of Catalan culture, which involves visitors in a passive way.

Inspired by our workshop in Swiss pavilion, our Pavilion will also provide workshop for people and make visitors play a more active role. The workshops in the room become performance, people sitting on the stage in the middle become the audience. As people keep coming in and going out, the “actors” and “audience” keep changing all the time, every moment becomes different.

