

SOCIAL HOUSING AS A GOVERNANCE NORMATIVE APPARATUS

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Governance and urban regeneration

In this work, social housing will be examined as a neo-governmental apparatus, by studying a social housing structure recently inaugurated in Turin, Italy, by using the concepts of urban regeneration and governance. To introduce the topic, I will quote Maria Rosaria Ferrarese:

When we think of governance, we usually tend to think of devices shared between the public and the private. We also think of less codified and more flexible modes of producing rules of conduct on the local, national, international and global planes¹.

Although the term governance has many different meanings², in this paper governance is understood as a process whereby formal governing structures are no longer focused primarily on the political realms of public sector government but are increasingly incorporating a range of interests drawn also from the private sector and civil society.

Concerning urban regeneration, we mean the “rehabilitation of impoverished urban neighborhoods”³. Urban regeneration is primarily concerned with regenerating former

1. M. R. Ferrarese, “Governance: a Soft Revolution with Hard Political and Legal Effects”, in *Soft Power*, 1, 2014, p. 36.

2. Cf. R. Rhodes, *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1997; F. W. Scharpf, “Games Real Actors Could Play: Positive and Negative Coordination in Embedded Negotiations”, in *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 6, 1994, pp. 27-53.

3. Urban regeneration. *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition* (2011). Retrieved January 15

industrial areas, inner ring suburbs facing periods of decline due to compounding and intersecting pressures. Factors underlying the adoption of urban regeneration policies include deindustrialisation, demographic changes, underinvestment, infrastructural obsolescence, structural or cyclical employment issues, ethnic or social tensions, physical deterioration and physical changes in urban areas. Typically, urban regeneration actions involve economic, social and environmental improvement measures in the areas under intervention. In democratic societies, urban regeneration processes adopt governance approaches “that involve multiple stakeholders including residents and other civil communities-of-interest”⁴. The European Commission has provided its guidelines for a sustainable urban development, clearly influenced by a governance approach:

Measures concerning physical urban renewal must be combined with measures promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. In addition, the development of strong partnerships between local citizens, civil society, the local economy and the various levels of government is a pre-requisite⁵.

Local governance

Now we have all the elements to enlighten governance features in a local and urban context. Local governance tries to mobilize the different institutional and managerial abilities that territory has, with a view to the territory development. In this context, cooperation processes among all local actors, from enterprises to public entities, assume a particular relevance:

The new emphasis on cooperation involves constructing new policy relationships for a strategy development and integrating new actors in the planning exercise in a multi-governance environment, i.e. not only public bodies, but also coalitions of

2016 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Urban+regeneration>.

4. D. Czischke, C. Moloney, C. Turcu, “Setting the Scene: Raising the Game in Environmentally Sustainable Urban Regeneration”, in *Sustainable Regeneration in Urban Areas*, URBACT II capitalisation, April 2015, p. 7. Retrieved January 15 2016 from http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/04_sustreg-web.pdf.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

interests, including private investors, business associations, property developers and the community of voluntary and non-governmental organizations⁶.

In many areas, the increasing focus on large projects and the development of particular districts have given the business sector a driving role in planning⁷. Civil society and corporate sectors are invited to participate in collective decision processes and are encouraged to translate their involvement into specific initiatives⁸, often producing urban regeneration as a result. As Paulo Neto and Maria Manuel Serrano state: “the governance model stimulates local based creative processes and incorporates locally its outputs. The outcome is a set of innovative and proactive policies with a strong demonstrative effect on urban regeneration”⁹. But there is another consequence: “the conception and implementation of public policies, based on participative models, seems to promote the involvement of citizens and consequently their accountability”¹⁰: at work here is, in other words, the dialectic of subjectivation and subjection inside the devices structuring the subjectivity, the immanentization of the norm.

Through governance, in short, a new mode of a flexible and decentralized constitution of the norm is asserted. This also means that “numerous actors construct governance differently as they operate against the background of diverse traditions”¹¹, as we will see in the Porta Palazzo case.

Social housing in Turin

We will now see how the situation is in Turin, a city in Northern Italy, capital of the Piedmont region. The Turin metropolitan area is estimated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development to have a population of 2.2 million¹². The city used to be a major European political centre, being Italy’s first capital city in 1861. Even though much of its political significance and importance was lost by World War II,

6. OECD, “Competitive Cities: A New Entrepreneurial Paradigm in Spatial Development”, in *OECD Territorial Reviews*, OECD Publications, Paris, 2007, p. 4.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

8. OECD, *Local Partnerships for Better Governance*, OECD Publications, Paris, 2001.

9. P. Neto, M. M. Serrano, Cefage-UE working paper July 2011, p. 24. Retrieved January 18 2016 from http://www.cefage.uevora.pt/en/content/download/2590/35387/version/1/file/2011_07.pdf.

10. *Ibid.*

11. M. Bevir, *Democratic Governance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010, p. 86.

12. OECD, “Competitive Cities in the Global Economy”, in *OECD Territorial Reviews*. Retrieved on January 18 2016 from https://www.uni-trier.de/fileadmin/fb4/prof/VWL/KUU/SS2008/PbSf/competitive_cities_in_the_global_economy.pdf.

it became a major European crossroad for industry, commerce and trade, being home to Fiat, Italian leader in automotive industry, and to San Paolo, Italy's biggest bank group, after its fusion with Banca Intesa. It is historically a migration destination, for people from southern Italy due to the existence of Fiat, and more recently for non-EU migrants.

In view of public services dismantling at the national level, the direct result is a new local management of them, in Turin also. The Turin local government could not face all costs without the private sector's help. So, the municipality sells big investors the goods of the city: state property building areas, disused public buildings, obsolete factories, and, in return, the private sector undertakes to provide some services to the citizens, with an eye to the requirements of the market. The following example shows how it works: the municipality leases an unused building to the Compagnia San Paolo (the Foundation related to the San Paolo bank), after a restructuring slap, spaces on the lower floors are used for commercial activities while apartments on higher floors make up a social housing project. In a city where the number of emergency evictions is sky-high, where the supply of council flats or public housing is very low, the private entity is substituted in offering a service, reducing the criteria of selection for economically disadvantaged people looking for regular negotiated rents. In this way, the exclusion of those who are not even eligible to participate in tenders it is emphasized, while those who are chosen to stay temporarily in a social housing unit will be disciplined, trained to act in accordance with the social housing rules and their behaviour will be shaped in accord with rules of conduct and productivity.

The name of the social residence, which opened in 2013 in Porta Palazzo, historically a working-class area and an immigration destination district in Turin, is *LuoghiComuni*. It was realized by renovating an old and unused building, owned by the city of Turin, which was falling into disrepair. The costs were covered by the Foundation related to San Paolo bank.

For the realization of the project, the Housing Program of "Compagnia di San Paolo", through the instrumental entity "Ufficio Pio", acquired on free loan a building located in Piazza della Repubblica 14, Porta Palazzo quartier, whose restructuring was completed in July 2013. As the Compagnia San Paolo outlines, the choice was not left to chance:

The decision to create the Temporary Social Residences in the areas of Porta Palazzo is in no way accidental. They are central districts, well-connected to the rest of the city, but at the same time they are marked by the presence of buildings in a state of decay and by the need to preserve and strengthen social cohesion, also as

a result of the flows of migrants that affected them in recent decades. The aim of this intervention by Compagnia di San Paolo and Ufficio Pio is to continue their involvement in activities sponsored by the city government and the private social sector actively supporting the development of these areas¹³.

The element that guides the definition of the target is, in Compagnia di San Paolo's words¹⁴, the principle of the social mix. As the Compagnia di San Paolo makes clear, the latter achieves many goals:¹⁵

1. Stigma prevention, which usually affects disadvantaged groups of people concentrated in one area or structure;
2. lower rents for those who are at risk of becoming homeless, due to higher fees paid by those who are not in a vulnerable situation and use the structure during short stays in the city or rent spaces on the lower floors with business purposes (catering, retail);
3. a relational context that allows to develop interactions with people from different social and professional groups.

Social mix is also related to the will to promote local development, both on a neighbourhood and on a city level. An offer that meets the specific housing needs of qualified and travelling workers, trainees and city users tends indeed to increase the attractiveness of a city, making it more competitive.

The new social residence is in line with social housing plans that have taken hold throughout Europe. In fact, one of the goals in the construction of places like those is to change the concept of home: from the family den separate from public domain rules, functional to the reproduction of the workforce (according to the model of the industrial city, such as Turin has been due to Fiat factories), to a productive place with a whole set of rules based on the dichotomy inclusion/exclusion. A space you live in, that is organized to provide many services to individuals, families and the community, superseding all traditional social relationships, both neighbourhood and family ones.

13. Programma Housing della Compagnia di San Paolo, *Social Housing e riqualificazione. La residenza temporanea di Porta Palazzo a Torino*, p. 10. Retrieved January 19 2016 from: <http://www.programmahousing.org/ita/content/download/979/5132/file/Social+Housing+e+Riqualificazione+-+La+Residenza+Temporanea+di+Porta+Palazzo+2014.pdf>. (My translation)

14. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

15. *Ibid.*

Social housing as a normative apparatus

LuoghiComuni is intended for all social players who are considered to belong to a grey zone at risk of poverty. It is for people who might fall into a state of greater misery, or, with some small incentive, survive on the sidelines of market processes and not outside them. Social housing, among other things, can defuse the danger that these people might embody in case of an explosion of social anger. In fact, looking at the application form criteria to live in this social housing, we find that *LuoghiComuni* is intended to give its apartments to immigrants with profit capability (albeit low), single parents, young couples of artists, former prisoners who want to re-enter the productive and social fabric, singles with flexible contracts.

The chance to live in a rent-controlled apartment is accompanied by the imposition of a set of rules of coexistence that transform domestic space into a business place, and neighbourly relations into economic relations.

Some rules affirm simply that you may not freely dispose of the housing, some others are business oriented. From *LuoghiComuni* regulations:¹⁶

4. Access to the structure for short visits: Guests access to apartments is allowed, but the manager must be told about their presence. The manager reserves the right to verify the possibility of overnight stays in relation to the type of the apartment and to the maximum number of people allowed in each apartment.

5. Common spaces: The use of common spaces inside the house (kitchen, living area, children and young people area) is permitted from 9.00 to 22.00, in respect of activities planned from the manager. The use of common spaces for self-organized socializing is permitted, subject to a prior approval by the manager, in order to harmonize these initiatives within the range of cultural and leisure activities given. [...]

7. Prohibition of Smoking Act: Inside the building smoking is not allowed; the residence has smoke detectors. Violators shall be punished under the current legislation. [...]

12. Access to the apartments by the manager. The manager reserves the right to access apartments for reasons of maintenance, cleaning and security of the residence itself.

Under the heading “defining elements”¹⁷, it is stated that the active involvement of all the inhabitants is required:

16. Retrieved January 20 2016 from <http://www.luoghicomuni.org/sansalvario/pages/regolamento>. (My translation).

17. Retrieved January 20 2016 from <http://www.luoghicomuni.org/portapalazzo/che-cos%C3%A8-la-residenza-temporanea>. (My translation)

Temporary residence wants to be a home for those who stay, even for short periods, promoting mutual understanding and exchange, involving the people in the care of the common areas and in planning activities, supporting those in need in the activation and in the development of its resources to achieve full autonomy housing¹⁸.

The building plan reveals *LuoghiComuni*'s goals: on the upper floors there are long stays apartments for singles and families, on the ground floor commercial activities and common spaces in which inhabitants can meet, show their team spirit, regulate their social contact and organize and discipline their workforce according to San Paolo demands. All the residents of this social housing must spend part of his time realizing the Foundation's projects, i.e. collaborate on small events in Porta Palazzo, promote activities sponsored by San Paolo bank and distribute leaflets on bank loans for young people or social microcredit. These activities can have a two-fold effect: fostering entrepreneurial mindsets in the intimate space of the home and turning a building into a force of contamination of the surrounding area, making it a San Paolo outpost, contributing to the gradual disappearance of traditional forms of neighbourhood social relations, replacing them with activities that are part of projects imposed from above, worked out beforehand, capable of generating profit. In this way, a dinner with neighbours in Via Priocca (one of the streets *LuoghiComuni* overlooks) becomes a food and beverage event sponsored by a food industry company, a screening of a film in Piazza della Repubblica (the most important square in Porta Palazzo, where a big market takes place) turns into sharing a promotional video about a project of urban renovation, an artisan market becomes an opportunity to chase peddlers away from the square.

Porta Palazzo is an area where historically indigent people from different backgrounds coexist, meeting place for legal and illegal attempts to make ends meet in the former working-class town. Now that strategic interests are moving from the huge factories of Mirafiori (Fiat headquarters) to hi-tech companies, international events and start-ups, the northern district of the city represent a fertile ground for implementing a social recovery and establishing new production centres. And now, in an area that has been long ignored by big business interests, urban planning, corporate headquarters, elite schools spring up like mushrooms together with San Paolo Foundation investments.

18. Ibid. (My translation)

LuoghiComuni seems, then, to be a device realized in Porta Palazzo to achieve the control of the area in terms of governance, spreading an entrepreneurial mentality, production oriented social relations and civic consciousness. Its rules, and the conducts pursued are not bottom-up as they could seem at first sight. All the activities taking place there are promoting profit motivated relations and a lifestyle suitable for attracting capital. Of course, this process cannot be immediate and needs to undo the ways in which people used to live in the neighbourhood and to improve, through pioneering places like *LuoghiComuni*, new opportunities to meet and new ways to interact, related to profit. The protection of capital invested implies the promotion of areas involved, as a first way to create value, not only real estate value. This is one of the governance features: the cooperation between public and private, that is, between banks and associations, institutions and agencies whose aim is the redevelopment and enhancement of the Turin northern district. All these urban regeneration agents and policies are intended to lay the foundation to boost productivity within a legal framework and avoid any type of illegal and ungovernable activities that are part of the traditional survival attempts in that part of the city.

A social housing project, then, attracts people in need, organizes the promotion of commercial activities, disciplines the workforce at no cost, but also imposes a precise social conduct. The latter is expressed not only by respecting the rules of the house, but also, by being able to develop a range of personal skills expendable after the short rental period, i.e. starting a business in the district by taking advantage of San Paolo microcredit, as advertised in *LuoghiComuni* spaces.

This is the promise of urban life that San Paolo offers through places like *LuoghiComuni*: *LuoghiComuni* is then a sort of hotel for professionals, moneyed workers and tourists, a service provider, and, on the other hand, gives some vulnerable social groups, in exchange for exploitation levels increasingly insidious and massive, a set of skills and small tools to live on the poverty line or slightly above it, in order not to sink into unproductiveness.

The metamorphosis of normativity

I shortly examined how a governance approach to urban regeneration is far away from a large-scale renovation through the reconstruction of housing and public works, as it was in the decades between the 1960s and 1980s, trying to focus on social housing as a normative apparatus.

Concerning similar topics, Antonio Tucci invites us to gain a “critical-deconstructive approach”¹⁹ to some traditionally effective categories, which nowadays are no longer exhaustive. But as Tucci warns us, older normative devices cannot simply be considered as an inadequate and outdated model, compared to up-to-date policies and devices. We can indeed talk about overlapping different logics that converge upon the same conceptual categories, expressing purposes and modalities in new and unusual power relations –those of the current governance–, within a framework that can be defined as “metamorphosis of normativity”²⁰. What can be defined as an “ambivalent space”²¹ between two opposite processes: the constitution of the norm that emerges in social practices and the normative impositions that are heteronomous and top-down.

Referring to the distinction made by Foucault between *normation* and *normalisation*²², we can state the release of the norm by a transcendence level (which connotes normative devices of sovereignty and discipline). *LuoghiComuni*’s inner normativity shows us that the norm is no more external, transcendental, heteronomous, but that it keeps some of those elements by being imposed from above, while its constitution comes from the autonormativity of the social fabric (a distinctive feature of current governance). The norm comes from the management of the space (both in the *LuoghiComuni* building and in the area external to it, changed by its presence) and its inherent normativity emerges through intervention and transformation techniques.

19. A. Tucci, “Crossing the Borders of Governance”, in *Soft power*, 1, 2014, p. 62.

20. A. Tucci, *Dispositivi normativi della governance*, Summer School: Vita, Politica, Contingenza, Erice, 8-12 giugno 2015. Retrieved January 18 2016 from <https://www.unipa.it/dipartimenti/beniculturalistudiculturali/content/documenti/relazioni-summer-school/Tucci.pdf>. (My translation)

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.