Navigating the limits of capitalism: new strategies for social autonomy in squatting

by

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Abstract

A considerable sizeable body of literature has discussed the possibility of creating an alternative to capitalism through resistance practices. Social movements have developed various forms of contentious actions, yet it seems that all practices of resistance are doomed to decline or to deradicalization. In this work, I investigate the role of squatting in the redevelopment of vacant spaces and on re-thinking citizenship. This research contributes to existing studies on squatting by considering the specificity of "communing" in relation to the traditional repertoires of actions of squatters. Through ethnographic fieldwork in a former squatted social center, Casa Madiba Network in Rimini, Italy, I study the outcomes of the legalization on the informal temporary use of space and I reflect on the transformation of Italian social centers into forms of self-managed urban common, after the 2008 economic crisis. The ethnographic data demonstrates that radical temporary use of space opens the possibility to subjects who are usually excluded, to envision space and contribute to urban planning. At the same time, it reveals a continuous tension between the promotion of collective mutual aid and the quest for autonomy and non-hierarchical organization.

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Introduction

The creation of an alternative mode of living, autonomous from the state and outside capitalism, has been at the center of social movements' goals, globally and for centuries now. The transition to neoliberalism triggered a colonization of urban spaces that was unseen before, and which aggravated marginalization and precarity in the urban metropolis. For ten years, since the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis, new social movements have had to develop a new set of resistance practices that could provide a solution to the increased precarization and to the absence of social care. As squatting became a tool for bottom-up welfare, its success started to depend on institutional stabilization and on the opportunity of accessing resources. In this thesis, I reflect on the extents and the limits of resistance to capitalism through squatting, and I wish to draw a picture of what is the new imaginary of antagonistic resources that squatting represents. Specifically, I intend to reflect on how squatters navigate on a path of compromises and balances in order to have a pragmatic impact on the community and to eventually make changes on a normative level.

These pages are the outcome of an ethnography carried among the activists from Casa Madiba Network, in the winter of 2018. Casa Madiba Network is a grassroots initiative, whose aim is to empower minorities and to create alternatives to capitalism, through squatting and self-management. It was created in winter 2014 with a group of activists and homeless people squatting a former firehouse. Casa Madiba was legalized in 2015, after long negotiations with local authorities, and today it has become a community space that serves as an incubator for the activities of various local collectives, engaged into housing, labor, education and citizenship issues. Casa Gallo is located 200 meters away from Casa Madiba, it is a homeless sheltered,

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and it was opened by Casa Madiba's activists through a public tender for the temporary use of a warehouse. The activists kept Casa Gallo illegally open after its official closure. Today Casa Gallo is undergoing a process of legalization but is still in the limbo between illegality and legality.

By conducting ethnographic research in a squatted social center in Rimini, I investigate how squatted social centers have changed in Italy under the effects of an increase in economic insecurity and social marginalization. This study fills a gap in the literature on Italian social centers, that has been of primary interest in major metropolitan centers and has rarely considered how radical antagonism is developing in smaller provincial areas of Italy (with few exceptions, see Filhol Romain, 2018; Piazza Gianni, 2016; Silvia Aru, 2018). Nevertheless, the interurban areas are fundamental pools of production and economic growth in the context of geographical conurbation and formation of multipolar urban spaces, also a characteristic of the region of Emilia Romagna (Romano & Zullo, 2014).

This research investigates the tensions between the promotion of collective mutual aid and the quest for autonomy and non-hierarchical organizations. By looking at the evolution of social centers from spaces of conflict to commons, I ask how squatting affects the restructuring of indeterminate spaces in the city? What are the limits and successes of squatting in the process of communing? How are coalitions created in the process of seeking for the commons? My hypothesis is that, in order to survive, squatters located in smaller-towns, strategically adapted to the local social-geography and incorporated the tradition of partisans' mutual help, and of social welfare in their day by day practice. By opening the possibilities of alliances with other institutions interested in human well-being, activists in Rimini are putting in practice the process of "communing" and seeking for "common goods". I argue that flexible

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institutionalization and the establishment of coalitions is an opportunity to create conditions in which resistant actors can become power forces in shaping the world we live in, and work to generate micro alternative, "despite" capitalism.

My engagement with this social center is limited to this research and I position myself as an outsider, but I envisage collaborative and transparent research and for this reason, I shared my research proposal with the activists before starting the ethnography and explained my interests and research questions to those who were interested. My own positionality in the field as a white, educated but also working class and migrant woman, was fundamental during the ethnography as it allowed me to engage with different groups inside the social centers. I connected with the activists in Casa Madiba because of a shared background in terms of class and education and because of our common awareness of Italian political culture. For this reason, I was often presented to others as a "comrade", although I was never invited to the more enclosed political collective assembly. I gained my primary knowledge from two gatekeepers, Federica, and from Manila, both long-term activists in the group, who have been involved in the collective since its beginning. Differently, in Casa Gallo, my background of migration appeared to be seen as a guarantee of trust when talking to other migrants. Being both fluent in Italian and English was key in building a connection with some of the migrant residents in Casa Gallo. Most of the activists in the social center are not proficient in English and this often created difficulties in communications, among the Casa Gallers in general. After leaving the field, I kept an open conversation with the activists, having follow- up phone calls in regards to the updates on Casa Gallo's legal status.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. I begin by presenting the practice of squatting in the global context and by explaining the evolution of social centers in Italy, in order to show how

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social centers' repertoires of actions and goals changed in the light of the neoliberal turn (Chapter 1). In Chapter 2, I explain the process through which the activists in Rimini secured a legal space in the city, by implementing both a radical repertoire of actions and by contributing to social care. I then identify the change in the social center's way of operating as a result of growing marginalization, partial citizenship and increasing regulation of public spaces. I argue that squatting, as a temporary use of space, develops a counter-welfare system that has at its core the well-being of those categories who are generally excluded by the institutions, but that, as counter-welfare system, based on temporary use of space, it risks being a site of "salvage accumulation" (Tsing, 2015), rather than a form of "resistance" to capitalism. In Chapter 3, I analyze how the legalization of Casa Madiba triggered the process of communing and of bottom up urban planning in the city of Rimini. I consider its impact on the empowerment of the marginalized individuals and in the creation of alliances with organizations that are external to the movement area. Lastly, in Chapter 4, I look at what communing implies on the everyday life in Casa Gallo and in relation to the concepts of autonomy and self-management on which squatting is based.

Theoretically, this thesis builds on several bodies of literature and it wishes to connect the main discourse in the squatting research with critical urban studies. Firstly, I consider the main debate on the institutionalization of squatting and I connect it to the urbanist debates on indeterminate spaces (Groth & Corijn, 2005) and in particular with the analysis on the commodification of temporary use of spaces (Madanipour, 2017). I then contextualize the role of the social centers in relation to the changes in the regulation of public spaces (Smith, 1996) and in relation to the development of a new category of exclusion under neoliberalism (Sassen, 2014; Wacquant, 2007). Temporary use of space is interpreted in relation to its possibilities of triggering a process of communing and responding to the quest for the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996).

Lastly, I evaluate the concepts of "autonomy" and "self-management" in relation to the urban

commons.

I. Social centers: from spaces of antagonism to the construction of an alternative world

Squatting has always depended to the changes in the macro global political economy: it has spread in a moment of global protest in the '60s, it dealt with the progressive privatization of public assets, with the eventual economic crisis of the 2000s and the consequential implementation of austerity measures in many countries. In Italy, the generational turnover and the changes of political context over the course of the past thirty years, have determined a constant evolution of social centers and today we can identify four main generations of social centers, that differ in goals and in the way they deal with authorities. In this chapter, I provide a general framework on squatting in Europe, to then analyze the evolution of social centers in Italy, from spaces of antagonist politics to places where the construction of an alternative society is sought in practice.

Squatting is the practice of using a building or land in a long-term without the owner's consent. Worldwide diffused, it engages between 600 million to 1 billion people globally, either as a temporary precarious life solution or as means to trigger sociality and cooperation in dwelling. In the Global Northern context, the term "squatting" is not referred to informal settlements such as favelas, camps or slums, but rather to a form of "subaltern politics" that deals with the uneven geographical development and which seeks for makeshift urbanism. Squatting spread in Europe as a result of the presence of vacant buildings and of a growing real estate speculation during the '70s and it is rooted in the politics of '60s and the rise of a New Left (Katsiaficas, 2006). Despite the differences within the urban social movements, squatters across Europe face the similar threat of eviction and criminalization. In many European countries, squatting has been criminalized gradually and it has often been considered, by the judicial system, as a form of

"trespass" with penalties varying from fines to several years of jail (like in Spain with the Article 245) (Vasudevan, 2017). In the Netherlands, the criminalization of squatters led to a reconfiguration of the movement in the 2000s (Dadusc & Dee, 2015). High repression often leads to the need to negotiate with authorities and legalize squatted spaces. This happened, for example, with the housing movement in New York in the 2000s. In 2002, the city sold the squatted buildings for one dollar each, to a non-profit organization called Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, which secured loans on the squatters' behalf to renovate the buildings and bring them up to code, transforming the squatters into indebted homeowners (Starecheski, 2016). Often, legalization of squatters caused strong internal conflicts among activists like in the case of Amsterdam, when some squatters were given the option of legalizing their presence in the space (they could buy the building at a favorable price) while repression was increasing for those who did not undergo a legalization process (Owens, 2008). Moreover, undertaking a legalization path does not necessarily mean stability, because squatters could sometimes be evicted for un-regulations or payments delays as it happened in the social space Brancaleone and in Corto Circuito in Rome (Giannoli, 2016).

Hans Pruijt (2013) affirms that, despite the variety of its outcome, squatting has always had the meaning of a political protest, constantly being driven by social movements. He identifies different forms of squatting. The five types of squatting described by Pruijt are an attempt to clarify the practice of squatting, which in reality appears to be much more flexible, without constraining boundaries, and characterized by overlapping multiple functions. The first type of squatting originated primarily as a response to real estate speculation when activists help homeless to be hosted in squats ("deprivation-based squatting"). For the homeless, the squat becomes a temporary home in the absence of social institutions and for the activists, it represents a way of denouncing and solving a problem. The second type of squatting is called

"alternative housing strategy", and it involves people who were not previously homeless and who want to experience communal living. The third is a tactic employed in the preservation of an area from being destroyed or from changing its function, it is called "conservational squatting". The fourth one is the "political squatting" and it was developed in the '70s within groups such as Autonomen, an "anti-systemic" movement, seeking to make the housing queue system collapse, so that home-seekers would revolt. The fifth form of squatting is the social center, that Prujit calls "entrepreneurial" squat, and which is the category of squats I consider in this thesis.

Social centers take advantage of the possibility of opening any type of facilities without the need for vast resources or without the obligation to comply with bureaucratic rules. Social centers are one type of entrepreneurial squat and they promote different types of activities outside the market and bureaucratic rules. They also give space to the marginalized people such as the unemployed and the poor, to engage in cultural activities and to become part of a community. Their informality facilitates the growth of different types of community spaces that are a fundamental infrastructure for the social movement. Squatted social centers would be open space to gather and organize protests and also raise money for the movement during events and concerts (Martinez, 2012). The self-managed social center (centro sociale autogestito) is described by Membretti and Mudu (2013) as a "network of people characterized by a heterogeneous socio-cultural and generational composition (…) following different leftist ideologies and traditions by participating in a symbolic frame and a repertoire of practices, oriented towards a radical change of society" (77). By occupying an abandoned building, activists develop a collective identity based on non-hierarchical organization and self-management, and they create a network within the social movement. At the same time, they also support the growth of subcultures. Entrepreneurial squats create an opportunity for

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marginalized social groups to exercise and to specialize in their activities. Bars, music venues, workshops, bike repairs, print shops, vegetable gardens, gyms, recording studios, libraries are some of the most common functions present in entrepreneurial squats.

In the European context, it is possible to observe that in the '80s in Central Europe squatting has been primarily a response to housing deprivation while in Southern European Countries, particularly in Spain, UK, and Italy, social centers were the most common form of squatting (Piazza, 2012). Historically speaking, social centers have been characterized by a conflictual way of engaging with authorities and very radical politics (Balestrini, Moroni, & Bianchi, 2015; Wright, 2002) but they have also become "safe places" where activist can find refuge after conflicts (both in terms of practical secure space where to return after a political action, as much as in broader historical terms) (De Sario, 2009).

1.1 Squatting during the Creeping May

The years 1968-1977 are generally referred to in Italy as the 'creeping May' ('maggio strisciante'), in relation to the French May 1968, but which in Italy protracted for over a decade. These years of global agitation, were, as far as Italy is concerned, grounded on a rejection of the Communist Party (PCI) and of the established parties. Mobilization was also influenced by the neo-Marxist research on operaismo (literary, "workerism"), carried by Raniero Panzieri and spread through the journals *Mondo Operaio*, *Quaderni Rossi* and *Classe Operaia* in the '50s and '60s. The focus of these journals was class struggle in the factories, the refusal of the party and of the labor unions (Wright, 2002). Panzieri believed in the improvement of production conditions and in a "careful ideological schooling of a working class which (…) had apparently lost all real class consciousness" (Müller, 2011, p. 92). In the beginning of the '60s, massive agitation was growing in the factories in Northern Italy, reaching a climax in 1962 in Turin,

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during a strike launched by the principal Italian workers' unions on July 7th, but which was extended independently until July 9th, and resulted into a violent conflict between the workers and the police (Lowry, 2018). Convinced of the possibility of an immediate revolution, and in disagreement with Panzieri, Mario Tronti and Antonio Negri developed the concept of *autonomia*. For them, worker's autonomy was understood as "autonomy from capital (the refusal of workers to define their needs and demands according to the capital's need for labour power subordinated to the rhythms of the production process), and autonomy from external organizations (workers' independence from the parties and unions which were seen to be subservient to capital)" (Lumley, 1990, p. 29). Tronti and Negri also affirmed "that the revolutionary experience and its theoretical formulation could proceed together" (Müller, 2011, p. 91) and they created a new extra-parliamentary group called Potere Operaio. Other more radical groups such as Lotta Continua and Avanguardia Operaia were also formed and they eventually merged into a federation called Autonomia Opera (Wright, 2002). Great emphasis on the need of local committees and networks (*comitati di base*) and on the "immediate appropriation of wealth" was expressed by the workers, through a refusal to pay transport fairs and rent (ibid). Moreover, the radical struggle became a form of life that was questioning all social relationships in terms of "autonomy of the social agent form the domination of the State and capital" (Hardt & Virno, 2006, p. 23).

By 1969, this antagonist movement spread outside the factories, among students, feminists, unemployed people. The repertoire of actions used by the movement in these years included the occupation of universities, blockage of exam sessions, collective free shopping in supermarkets, self-reduction of charges for bus fares or school canteen, strikes and protests. The first generation of social centers was established precisely as meeting places for workers, where to organize resistance practices and self-management in the factories (Mudu, 2004).

Another form of illegal appropriation developed in these years is the "radio wave". Radio frequency has just been liberalized[1] and this allowed the growth of independent "free" radios within the sphere of the movement. These radios were uncontrolled, self-managed and were broadcasting experimental music, discussions on political theory, poetry reading and reporting news through on-air phone calls. Radio Alice, in Bologna, for example, was run by Autonomist and Maoist ideology, and it was violently repressed because accused of coordination of the student rioting in Bologna. Yet, both the free radios and squatting did not long. By the end of the '70s, the growing radicalization of some extra-parliamentarian groups and the "strategy of tension" resulted into terrorist actions all across the country. This led to a strong State repression that eventually tore the movement apart. Non-parliamentary groups were attacked by reactionary forces and many of them were in jail, on trial for terrorism or were in exile abroad (Balestrini et al., 2015).

1.2 The growth of countercultures

The second generation of social centers dates to the mid '80s and derives from the encounter of autonomist with anarchists. While during the Sixties and Seventies, the dissatisfaction of autonomous groups emerged into a violent political movement against the status quo, differently during the Eighties, the movement started to seek for space at the boundaries of the system, where to discuss politics and to experiment alternative forms of living based on leftist or anarchist principles. Simultaneously, given the transformation of the form of socialization, young people started to participate in the city's cultural events such as film, music, poetry

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[1] On July, 29 1979, the Italian Constitutional Court affirms (verdict 202/1976) the legitimacy of private local radio transmissions and it interrupts state radio monopoly. This verdict triggered the phenomenon of the "free radios". A national plan on radio and television broadcasting was only introduced on February 4th, 1985 (Orrico, 2006).

festivals and they started to developed subcultures such as punk and hip-hop, meeting on streets and in public parks (Mudu, 2004).

From 1985 on, the second generation of social centers spread rapidly especially in the big cities as Milan, Rome, Bologna, Padua, and Naples so that a complete mapping of Italian social centers, active during those years, is not easy to be made. Squatters were former militants of autonomists and anarchists' groups joined by the younger generation involved into punk music and subculture (Mudu, 2012). Production of culture was pivotal to this social centers and it appeared as a continuation of the what had been started in the independent radios (Grande Raccordo per l'Autoproduzione, 1996). In Rome for example, the Posse Hip Hop subculture was spread through the *Radio Onda Rossa*, where musicians were rapping on air during the program "Onda Rossa Posse". In 1990 they recorded the first album *Batti il tuo tempo* ("Beat to Your Own Rhythm") that became the soundtrack of the Pantera students' movement and of the mobilization against the war in Baghdad, one of the issues addressed in those years in social centers. Later on, members of Onda Rossa Posse established other Posse crews and they started to record their albums in the studio of the squatted social centers Forte Prenestino, in Rome (Militant A, 2007; Wright, 2000). In Northern Italy, Punk music was predominant. Punk followed a similar path to the Hip Hop in Southern cities and it was essential in the identity formation of activists in social centers such as Virus in Milan and CSOA Askatasuna in Turin (Philopat, 2006). Music bands were turning to perform live in social centers across the country, and this traveling helped also the circulation of ideas about ways of squatting from city to city (Owens, Katzeff, Lorenzi & Colin, 2013). Self-produced book, records, and journals were easy to find in social centers' infoshops and cyberculture became core to the movements (Mudu & Rossini, 2018). Particularly interesting, for example, is the relationship between the CSAO Cox 18 in Milan and Primo Moroni's bookstore Calusca, that was publishing and circulating

independent publications. The bookstore eventually moved inside the squatted social centers and later, after Moroni's death, became a cultural heritage archive, and it is contributing to stabilize the presence of the squat in the Ticinese area of Milan and to prevent its eviction (Calabrò, 2009).

1.3 Social centers in the time of neoliberal globalization

While in the beginning, social centers were still isolated, by the end of the '80s they managed to open to other groups and particularly to the students, who were organizing a movement against university privatization called *La Pantera (The Panther).* Between 1992 and 1993, political mobilization moved again from social centers to the squares and to the occupation of schools and universities. Students were protesting against the Ruberti university reform and expressing a more general dissatisfaction of the status quo, anti-war, anti-nuke, environmentalist beliefs. By the '90s social centers networks developed in multifold ways and in connection with diverse sides of the left ideology. As Membretti and Mudu (2013) explain:

> in the 1980s a famous slogan circulating within Centri Sociali was "smash the ghettos", an indicator of the gated social conditions surrounding past struggles. In less than a dedicated another famous slogan - "Another world is possible" - certified the re-scaling of vision and action (88).

The numerous groups involved in anti-neoliberal globalization movements developed a network of organizations connected also through independent media and often inspired by Autonomist ideals and by the Zapatistas struggle (ibid).

The Genova G8 summit in 2001 was a motivation to establish a dialogue among the various political organizations in Italy and gave them more visibility. Among the groups involved into the G8 protests, there were the Partito di Rifondazione Comunista (The Communist Refoundation Party), the Cobas independent workers union and the Tute Bianche (White Overalls). After the dismissal of the Genova mobilization, many of the collective formed around

the issue of anti-globalization, such as the Tute Bianche, later known with the name Disobbedienti (Disobedients), flew into local mobilization and triggered the third phase of social centers (Mudu & Rossini, 2018). They were particularly present in Northern-Eastern Italy and well-known are the social centers OSC Rivolta in Venice and TPO in Bologna (Montagna, 2006). Pivotal to the Disobbedienti is the creation of a different "reality" in which social security for the marginalized become the primary political tool for social change. In their view

> the poor, the migrant, the marginalized are seen as mythopoetic figures engaging into a path of liberation that passes through collective mobilization and self-management. It goes without saying, however, that neither the poor nor the migrant as such can be understood as bearers of a revolutionary charge, capable of subverting the established order. If anything, as the sociological literature highlights, those who mobilize or emigrate, in reality, have specific resources that are not accessible to everyone. Ultimately, the poorer and marginalized the more difficult it is to be able to take action politically (Becucci, 2003, translation by the author).

For the Disobbedienti, illegal actions are justified by the impossibility of accepting inequality and are used as a strategy that aims to push the legal norms into a more progressive direction and to overcome the status quo. The Disobbedienti distinguish themselves for preferring performative actions to more radical repertoire of protests and for never aiming to generate direct conflict with the police. For example, the white overall that gave them their former name *Tute Bianche* (White Overalls), was supposed to symbolize the "invisibility of individuals in the post-fordist era (ibid).

1.4 Reformism and resource-driven social centers

For the past decade, the governments' tendency to establish austerity measures provoked a series of street demonstrations all over Europe. People were denouncing politicians' responsibilities for the economic crisis and lamenting their inability to protect citizens from the economic recession (Klandermans & van Stekelenburg, 2016). In Italy, between 2008 and 2011, collectives of researchers, precarious workers, high school and university students took

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to the streets shouting the slogan "we won't pay for your crisis" and protesting against the increase of privatization of public services and market-driven policies (Zamponi, 2012). Moreover, the referendum of 2011, on maintaining water as a public resource was also a trigger to discuss the issue of "beni comuni", "common goods". In this context, a new type of squatting has evolved: it was intended to create "citywide commons provision" and as opposition, the privatization of public facilities and they increased on the wave of the Anomalous Wave movement (Mudu & Rossini, 2018). This movement, composed by categories who never squatted before such as precarious workers and artists, students, high school students, found into squatting a solution to their livelihood problems.

Italian social centers have been detached from housing issues. Squatting for housing have been primarily managed by specific groups (in Rome, for example, *Blocchi Precari Metropolitani* and *Movimento per il Diritto al'Abitare)* who were coordinating the squatting and the process of inhabiting the occupied building. However, we can see how in later years, squatting has become a fundamental tool in providing "livelihood critical resources" (Califati, 2018). Luca Califati suggests to introduce a new set of paradigms to squatting and he developed the broader definition of "economic squats", that looks at the essential role of squatting in giving access to resources that are critical for livelihoods, such as housing, work and access to food.

In this fourth phase of social centers, squatting became much more diverse: the theater *Teatro Valle* in Rome was squatted in order to prevent its closure and to give a working space to precarious artists; the squatted *Macao* in Milan became an independent center for art, culture and research, *Rimaflow*, a factory also in Milan's province, was squatted and reopened by its workers after its bankruptcy; the squatting of a natural lake (*Lago Sandro Pertini* in the Prenestino area in Rome) compelled the local administration to labels the park as heritage and to

open a public park on the former industrial site of the *Snia Viscosa* factory. Moreover, high school students, whose traditional form of protests is the occupation of school[2], squatted for the first time a vacant cinema in Trastevere, Rome, (*Cinema America Occupato*) that was on the verge of being demolished. University students also opened self-managed study rooms (*Communia* in Rome, Manituana *in* Turin) and self-managed student residencies (*Studentato 95100* in Catania, *Point Break* and *Puzzle Lab* in Rome).

We can see how in this phase, squatting is considered as a solution to a tangible problem and, for this reason, legitimization is often sought. The new social centers are using the grey zone of informality to trigger a change in the processes through which decisions upon the urban space are made and to include into these decisions those people who are directly using the space. They propose a model of organization that has been developed among the lines of the urban social movements and which involves practice of self-management and of non-hierarchal organization, in order to develop common strategies of resistance to the growing social and economic instability they are facing. By mixing the ideological framework of the Disobbedienti and the new claim for common goods, Casa Madiba appears as a pioneer of this new phase of social centers. Here, squatting is a livelihood resource for local homeless in Rimini but also a strategy to trigger the growth of a local community that would eventually contribute to push the normative on urban development.

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[2] The occupation of a school is not a felony as long as it does not obstruct class lessons, it does not create damage, and if it only involves students attending the same school they are occupying (article 340 of penal code).

II. Casa Madiba Network: the process of securing a space in Rimini

As the squatting repression is becoming much more systematized, forms of temporary use of space have been harnessed into the official urban development and in the city marketing. For this reason, considering which are the consequences of the institutionalization of temporary use has become important both for the activities performed in the space and for their users. In this chapter, by looking at the history of Casa Madiba Network, I will reflect on how this radical temporary use of space has been legalized on the territory of Rimini. Secondly, I will address the risks of the commodification of indeterminate spaces considering the specificity of squatting activism and its role in a context of higher stigmatization of the poor.

2.1 Building resistance under the pressure of eviction

Casa Madiba Network is a social center, formerly squatted in 2014, it was institutionalized two years later when the need to secure a space that would not be subject to repression appeared unpostponable. Casa Madiba Network's history is rooted in a longer activist presence in Rimini. This militant collective, originally known by the name Lab Paz Project, was formed during the Genoa 2001 Social Forum and it was inspired by the No Global and Ya Basta movements. In Rimini, Lab Paz Project has been dealing with legal controversies regarding labor and migration issues, advocacy campaigns, political demonstrations and has been developing campaigns in to help migrant workers in the touristic summer infrastructure on the Adriatic Coast. Between 2004 and 2008, they were based in the squatted social center Lab Paz, a former school in the countryside, few kilometers outside of Rimini. After the eviction from Lab Paz, the collective continued its work using the facilities of the Casa Per la Pace (House For Peace) and it squatted other buildings in Rimini, but only for short-term as they would get evicted rather quickly.

Squatting is much more complicated in the interurban area of Emilia Romagna than in the bigger cities. Rimini is a provincial town of about 340.000 inhabitants on the Adriatic coast, with an economy based mostly on seasonal seaboard tourism (Istat, 2017). Higher social stigmatization, the absence of a cohesive activists' network, that is scattered in the region and the lack of an involved student body are all factors that have been indicated as unfavorable for social centers to exist (Dee, 2017; Mudu, 2014). The consequence is that in the city of Rimini squatters would be fastly evicted, as it happens in many smaller and provincial cities (Filhol, 2018). Casa Madiba Network searched for the possibility of overcoming repression and consolidating a position of strength in Rimini by asking for public legitimization of their activities and claims. It eventually managed to secure a space in the city through a partial institutionalization.

Figure 1: Plenary assembly inside the "network" space in Casa Madiba, January 2018

Overcoming the high level of authority repression was a long process for the activists in Casa Madiba. In 2013, Lab Paz collective was contacted by a group of migrants who were spontaneously mobilizing to accelerate their documents' application process that was overextended by the legal schedule. The activists collaborated with the migrants in organizing a mobilization and they maintained contacts with many of them afterwards. At the same time, the "Piano Emergenza Nord Africa" (North Africa Emergency Plan) was also finishing and many of the migrants who were beneficiary of this program were about to lose the opportunity of being hosted in the distribution centers provided by the SPRAR (Central Service of the Asylum Seekers Protection) infrastructure and they became homeless. In December 2013, Paz activists together with some of these migrants in need of housing, squatted the firehouse in via Dario Campana, in Rimini, opening Casa Madiba. The aim of the squat was twofold: providing temporary accommodation for three homeless of migrant origins as well as for finding an office for the activists. The squat operated with this dual function of housing and social center, organizing fundraising concerts and happy hours, and following various cases, in Italian "vertenze, of migrants' citizenship issues, housing, and labor. This occupation appears therefore at the intersections of two struggles - migrations and radical squatting - which is also subject to a "double repressive device" of criminalization (Mudu & Chattopadhyay, 2016) that forced the activists to the reconsideration of collaborative strategies and of the conception of radical spatiality.

Given the increasing number of homeless people asking for accommodation, in May 2015 the activists squatted a second house that they named *Villa Florentina ed Eva*. This was an empty building bought in 2008 by private investors and left empty since. The activists were blaming the owners for real estate speculation and for the consequent high rent price in Rimini. Shortly after this second squatting, both Casa Madiba and Villa Florentina ed Eva were evicted. The

response to the evictions was a big mobilization, and during one of the demonstrations, the activists squatted another a vacant house in Rimini, that they called *Villino Ricci.* This was a building inherited by the municipality in 2006 from a poet, Teresa Ricci, who wanted the house to be used for social and cultural development. In Villino Ricci, the activists started to develop a series of projects of social care, such as a clothing collection, social lunches, and language classes. For six months, Villino Ricci hosted about 17 homeless, both Italians, and foreigners. This occupation also gained the support of citizens non-affiliated to the movement, who contributed with food and clothes donations, that became available to all those in need in Rimini, and not only to Villino Ricci's occupants. Nevertheless, they were also evicted in November 2015.

2.2 Seeking legitimization

Martínez, Azozomox and Gil (2014) underline that when the movement appears to be strong and the flow of evictions and new occupations continues, "squatters can gain legitimacy that stems from their practices, political networks and the balance of local power relationships" (213). In Rimini, after Casa Madiba's eviction, the municipality launched a public tender to assign the building on via Dario Campana, for community use. Casa Madiba activists participated and won the tender, reopening Casa Madiba on December 24th, 2015. The return to Casa Madiba is remembered with great emotion by the squatters. Daniel is one of the homeless-migrants to occupy Casa Madiba. He says that:

> over the course of my activism, the best moment was when they gave us back the keys of Casa Madiba, after its sequestration. It was a special day for me. We show that we made history in the city, and we try again by doing beautiful things and not war (Daniel).

Winning a public grant and entering legally in the formerly squatted space is proudly seen as an important milestone in the collective history as it is seen as a form of legitimization of their

presence on the territory and a semi-official entitling of being actors in the decision upon the specific territory.

Casa Madiba's institutionalization follows a common trend of social centers' authority negotiation process in Europe, but, in order to survive, squatters located in smaller towns, such as Rimini, strategically adapted to local social-geography and incorporated volunteerism work in their day by day political practice. Institutionalization and the social centers' negotiation with authorities is one of the most discussed issues in the contemporary debates surrounding squatting (Dee, 2017; Martínez, 2014; Pruijt, 2003; Uitermark, 2004). Always under the threat of eviction, squatters are called to establish a dialogue with whoever has the power to evict them. The interaction with these stakeholders is delicate and can compromise a squat, but it can also allow squatters to preserve or improve their status. One of the processes through which squatted space is "fixed" by capital is institutionalization. Different forms of negotiation with city governments can occur and the specificity of the situations determine how activists perceive this process. Far from considering it a form of selling out, the activists in Casa Madiba consider their use of public tender in the terms of what Hodkinson and Chatterton (2006) called "tactical compromise" that allow them to ensure a degree of stability within the movement and that allow them to continue providing services for the community.

The activists in Casa Madiba are still engaging in resistance to the authorities, trying to secure a "set of power relations" (Pickerill & Chatterton, 2006), through which they constantly negotiate their desire for autonomy with the pragmatic reality constituted by the authorities representatives, local organizations and a hostile social landscape. At the time when Casa Madiba was officially reopened as a community space, the high number of homeless was still alarming the activists. Because of the upcoming cold season, the administration in Rimini

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opened a call for projects that would allow hosting homeless from the former Villino Ricci and from the city for the winter period. The activists from Casa Madiba developed a successful project and gained temporary access (from December 2015 to April 2016) to a close by warehouse, that they transformed into a shelter for homeless people, named *Casa don Gallo*. The activists continued the project after its official closure, and, today, Casa Don Gallo is still open but under threat for eviction. Certainly, the flexibility of their institutionalization (Pruijt, 2013) enables to still combine non-disruptive and disruptive forms of actions, and does not necessarily entails a loss of identity for squatters. Among the activists, there is the general belief that a collaboration with the established local organization is fundamental in reaching a wider goal and that there was a need to adapt to the social-geographical local landscape in order to carry on the project. In the words of one of them:

> Casa Madiba succeeds in seeing a goal instead of an ideal…. maybe the ideal could have been good, but in fact, we need to understand how to put it in practice and for this, we need to know where we are and what we have around us. Our strength is exactly to avoid maintaining an ideal purism and to take decisions that can move us forward (Maria[3]).

As illustrated in the literature (Martinez, 2014) the more favorable condition acquired through the negotiation with authorities allows the activists to ensure a safe space that supports ongoing oppositional struggles and allows them to continue developing welfare services in favor of people marginalized and excluded from official support systems, such as homeless, migrants and the poor in general. As a result, 71 people have lived in Casa Gallo and left the structure and among them, 16 were Italians homeless staying in Casa Gallo for a longer time and who only left Casa Gallo when they found an alternative housing. Among the migrants, the most consistent group of people who lived in Casa Gallo is of Somalian nationality, a group which

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3 For confidentiality, all names are pseudonymous, with the exception of publicly known people from the collective.

have been usually in transit across the country. Today Casa Gallo hosts 45 people, 39 men, and 6 women. Some people are here from the shelter's opening, others were here for a shorter term.

2.3 Dealing with neoliberal urban marginality

> Luca Traini, 28 years, shoots and injures six migrants of African origins, in the city center in Macerata, in Marche region. He is arrested immediately after the gunfire. Before the arrest, he makes the fascist salute, showcasing an Italian flag on his shoulders. In the evening I am at the Casa Madiba Welcome Party, the monthly event organized by Madiba Sound Family. Activists and Casa Gallers are very affected by this event, and one member of Madiba Sound Family talks from the dub about the importance of anti-fascism. The dance floor becomes a collective hug where to externalize the fears and shock of what happened during the day and the gravity of which directly affects the Casa Gallers (Fieldnotes, February 3rd, 2018).

Now, I will consider Casa Madiba Network within the context of increased racism and of the exclusion of marginalized social groups from the urban space. In order to do this, I am following Loïc Wacquant (2007) concept of "advance marginality". According to Wacquant, neoliberalism has caused the formation of a new category of marginalization which differs from previous forms of urban marginalities because it grows in the most developed economies in the West and it is creating a "broader context of class decomposition" (244) characterized by the fragmentation of the marginalized groups, who fail in creating a unified form of resistance. Advanced marginalization is triggered by the social instability and life insecurity, that is created by the wage instability and the increase of flexible and precarious labor forms. According to Wacquant, "advanced marginality is increasingly disconnected from cyclical fluctuations and global trends in the economy, so that expansionary phases in aggregate employment and income have little beneficial effect upon it" (236) and, for this reasons, it appears as the future of Western capitalist society.

Rimini is a provincial town of about 340.000 inhabitants on the Adriatic coast, with an economy based mostly on seasonal seaboard tourism (Istat, 2017). A Caritas' recent report (2018) shows

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that between 2005 and 2015, the number of population in absolute poverty increased from 3,3%

in 2005 (2,4 million people) to 7,6% in 2015. In Emilia-Romagna, the relative poverty rate has

doubled from 2,2% in 2009, to 4,5% 2016 while 3,3% of families (65.000) are beyond the

poverty threshold. In Emilia Romagna, Caritas found 4000 homeless people, for most of them

homelessness is caused by long-term unemployment and by the absence of informal networks

of care. Many current residents of Casa Gallo, have been suffering from urban marginalization.

For example, Sara, an Italian woman in her fifties, who has been homeless for some years, tells

about receiving fines for sleeping in the train station of Rimini or on actual trains:

> Among friends we sometimes used to squat houses so that we didn't have to always
> be on the streets or on trains where the police would come to fine us. Why are you
> giving me a fine if I am sleeping on a train? (Sara)

The marginalization of the poor occurs also at a policy level and it is very connected with the

"stigmatization" of spaces, where the advance marginality tends to concentrate (Wacquant,

2007). In Italy, in February 2017, an administrative emergency order on urban security and

public order, generally known as *daspo urbano* (D.L. 20 February 2017 n.14 – converted in law

April 18, 2017 n.48) gave mayors direct power in taking action regarding situations that could

compromise public safety, urban decency or that could neglect or downgrade the use of urban

spaces. This law, implemented by the left wing government (Matteo Renzi, Partito

Democratico), can result in the criminalization of marginalized people and into their removal

from the public space because, as Catone and Maestri (2018) point out, the definition of urban

security has a broad-spectrum that makes the application of this law arbitrary. For example, the

daspo urbano allows the local police to give sanctions or remove perpetrators form the violated

space, directly on the spot of the infractions. It was officially recognized as a "cleaning

operation" (80) and it targets homeless people, street vendors or housing squatting. Last August,

for example, the daspo urbano was used to remove homeless migrants from Piazza

Indipendenza, public square close to the central train station in Rome. These were mostly

families under international protection who, just few days before, have been evicted from a nearby housing squat and were temporarily camping in the square because of the unexpected homelessness. The concept of "revanchist city" (Smith, 1996) well illustrates the changes in Italian regulations. This term indicates the reaction against the "'theft' of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security (207). According to Smith, the increasing regulation of public space use is pushing marginalized groups far from the city center and it is motivated by the increasing fear of the middle class to be confronted with minorities, homeless, the unemployed.

In the process of increased neoliberalization of the state, Sassen (1996) affirms that the city has gathered a variety of multiculturalism and multiple forms of national and subnational identities which are not equally integrated into legal citizenship. Sassen (2005) says that "global city is reconfigured as a partly denationalized space that enables a partial reinvention of citizenship. This reinvention takes the institution away from questions of nationality narrowly defined, and towards the enactment of a large array of particular interests from protests against police brutality and globalization to sexual-preference politics and house-squatting by anarchists" (Sassen, 2005, p. 44). Migrants are one of the social group who mostly suffer from partial citizenship. In Italy, the governmental response to migration has always been one of emergency, but in recent years, we can also notice that it has resulted into a segregation of migrants that aims to their removal from the city center and, if possible, from the national territory (Assemblea della Statale, Calusca, No Borders, 2017). The Minniti-Orlando (D.L February 17, 2017 n 13, converted in Law April 13 2017, n 46), also issued by the Renzi government, has accelerated the evaluation of international protection applications, by abolishing the possibility of appeal. In fact, this is a suspension of citizenships rights, since an appeal is granted by law

to all citizens. As Catone and Maestri (2018) underline, the excuse of gaining an accelerate administrative and judiciary procedure for the requests of international protections allows to "sacrifices the right to asylum that is written in the fundamental principles of the Constitutions and it is "violating the right to defense of asylum seekers, and it makes it unequal in comparison to the rights of other citizens" (77).

Migrants' marginalization it is also revealed through the increased racism and opened fair right discourses in the political debates on national media. In this context, the Luca Traini attack to which I refer in my opening note, was not surprising and, in the media discussion that followed, it was always referred to in terms of crime news and not racism (Caccia and Morosi, 2018). There has been a constant tension between far-right militants and activists from Casa Madiba[4], and for example, militants of the far right party *Forza Nuova* have intimidated Casa Gallo' by taking videos of the shelter and threatening the inhabitants with dogs. They justified their presence in proximity of Casa Gallo as a "security check", but, in the view of the activists, this security checks very much resembled "fascist patrols". Casa Gallo is located in one of those "penalized spaces" Wacquant (ibid) talks about. Situated on a former industrial site, in the proximity of the public park April 25th, this indeterminate space has become temporary bivouac for various marginalized groups, and therefore it was stigmatized.

This increase marginalization, partial citizenship and increasing regulations of public space, all together determine an alteration in the function of the social center. Casa Madiba Networks uses the temporary occupation of space to oppose the exploitation of the marginalized groups such as undocumented migrants, precarious workers, homeless people. By establishing an

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[4] Degrado, incuria e delinquenza. Parco Marecchia nel caos, Forza Nuova: 'Non possiamo più tollerare'. (29/11/17). Retrieved from https://www.altarimini.it/News103871-degrado-incuria-e-delinquenza-parco-marecchia-nel-caos-forza-nuova-non-possiamo-piu-tollerare.php

organization that is based on principles of self-management and non-hierarchy, this "liberated space" becomes a safer zone where to try to rebalance the *crisis of social reproduction* and the *crisis of care* that is rooted in the structural dynamics of financialized capitalism (Fraser, 2016). In Europe, temporary space use appeared in moments of weak urban planning when areas were neglected and not redeveloped, due to either to the weak property market, to the lack of a financial means or because neglected by developers. Recently, this temporary use has become one of the tools for urban week planning and non-politicized groups have been favorable inscribed into master planning. Ali Madanipour (2017) explains that temporary use of space is part of the "material processes of urban development, as these processes have been adjusted to neoliberal globalization, economic restructuring and recurring crises" (2). According to Madanipour, the cyclical crisis of overproduction has become more frequent due to globalization and has increased also vacant spaces and made necessary a flexible method of spatial production. Madanipour affirms that "the crisis went far beyond the periodic economic cycles, as the global reach of capitalism exposed localities to frequent global crises of much higher magnitudes. In deep economic crisis and a combination of overproduction, inequality, and maldistribution, the demand for, and the exchange value of, fixed goods, such as space had severely contracted, which demanded flexibility not only in price and functions but also in time" (7).

Because of the informality of the social services provided, Casa Madiba and Casa Gallo remain outside of capitalist economy but at the same time, they are also unwillingly contributing to the accumulation of capital, by solving a problem that the state is not addressing. In this context, squatting risks to be progressively institutionalized by the local authorities and to fill a gap into the city infrastructures and social services. In this bottom up welfare we can see interesting nuances of what Tsing (2015) calls "peri-capitalism". Tsing calls "peri-capitalist" those

production sites that are outside capitalist economy but that, unwillingly, contribute to the accumulation of capital. This process of capitalist accumulation, *salvage accumulation* and she affirms that "through salvage accumulation, lives and products move back and forth between non-capitalist and capitalist forms; these forms shape each other and interpenetrate" (65). In other words, salvage accumulation incorporates within its capitalistic productive gain those circuits of production that would normally be outside its control. In Rimini, by providing a service outsourced by the state through public tenders and grants, the activists' risks to become a site of salvage accumulation. Nevertheless, remaining in between formal and informal, and in this grey zone, allows them to continue creating an autonomous geography.

In this chapter, I explained how the collective Casa Madiba evolved over the course of the past sixteen years, and progressively became a direct interlocutor of governmental institutions in the city of Rimini. The appropriation of the empty areas of the city can be seen as a claim for the "just city" and for a welfare, and it can be inscribed into a broad discourse regarding access to public space and to resources that are not owned by antagonist groups but created through equality, cultural difference and democratic processes (Fainstein, 2010). In this sense, it is possible to affirm that urban mobilization, in fact, starts precisely when communities started to seek for more active participation in state operation, to demand a better access to goods and to oppose top-down urban renewal in specific areas (Susan S. Fainstein & Fainstein, 1985). The institutionalization of Casa Madiba and the partial legalization of Casa Gallo are motivated by the need for a stable place where to establish social relationships that resist advanced marginalization and in which those who are normally pushed away from the city can start claiming their rights and building a community.

III. Casa (don) Gallo and the Network: the ambition of communing

Having found a stability in the institutionalized Casa Madiba, this collective of activists is now invested into implementing self-management in the community and developing a bottom-up system of social care. They follow social movements discourses of "right to the city" and of "urban commons". Having explained in the previous chapter, how the institutionalization of Casa Madiba was motivated by the social center's function against social marginalization, in this chapter I consider how the ambiguity of the boundaries between formal and informal play a significant role in determining urban change and in allowing major experimentation. At the same time, it also represents an important liability for the actors involved in the urban regeneration project, who can easily be closed down due to frequent irregularities as well as to conform to the requests of the market and of hostile local administrations.

The discourse on the "right to the city" (Bodnar, 2013; Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1996; Purcell, 2002) and on the "commons" (Foster & Iaione, 2016; Ostrom, 2015) are central to social urban movements. Historically, the term "commons" derives from the term "common land", and it refers to a system where natural resources such as agricultural fields, grazing lands and forests used to be accessible to the community. The privatization of such proprieties, which became known with the term "enclosures", represented an appropriation of the commons by capitalist forces (Foster and Iaione, 2016). Today, there is not a univocal definition of commons, but I would suggest to think at about it as a system in which communities manage resources without the intervention of the market or of the state. This term often appears as a somehow idealized notion of not-yet-privatized resources or spaces, that used to be in place before capitalism and of witch communities want to regain control. As Stavrides (2016) argues, the process of

enclosure was not only a capitalist appropriation of resources, but it also locked the possibilities of people to come together in space.

When talking about social centers, I find more pertinent to use of the term "communing" which indicates not simply the idea of a shared space, but it refers to "a set of practices and inventive imaginaries which explore the emancipating potentialities of sharing" (Stavrides, 2006, p 7). In other words, the term communing suggests the relational set of practices that are, every day, adapted to the characteristics of the place and to the people involved (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2014). Communing focuses on the process rather than on an ultimate goal but it entails a quest for life in common. As a strategy of resistance to urban enclosures, squatting is often considered as the "ultimately alternative forms of sociality that protect us against enclosure and market forces, enabling us to survive independently or with degrees of independence from wage labor" (Hodkinson 2015, 516). The "claim to the commons" has many points of contacts with the "right to the city", that was developed by Henri Lefebvre (1996) and made famous by David Harvey (2012). The "right to the city" is collective right to exercise power on the city and to reshape the process of urbanization. It also indicates a "radical urban imagination that goes beyond the urban, an imagination that strives for the impossible to achieve the possible" (Bodnar, 2013, p. 87). Both terms implicate a reconsideration of the notions of public and private space.

Casa (don) Gallo is probably the most ambitious project developed by the activists in Casa Madiba. Named after the anarchist priest Don Andrea Gallo, it was opened on December 24, 2015, when the municipality launched an invitation to tender for the creation of temporary homeless shelter. The city of Rimini was granting 15000 euros and the use of a warehouse Warthema street for 6 months (between December 2015 and April 2018). Casa Madiba

collective proposed a shelter that would be active both during the day and at night, and whose network of organizations and a set of activities would favor the social integration of those in need. Officially, they were represented by two associations: the *Onlus Rumori Sinistri* (Sinister Noises) that deals with citizenship issues (migration, documents) and labor exploitation, and the *NGO No Borders*, involved with housing issues. Since winning the grant, Casa Gallo has provided about 40 beds, hosting 71 people for short terms, and with 16 people living in Casa Gallo continuously, for the past two years. On 30 April 2016, Rumori Sinistri and No Borders officially returned the keys of the building, and formally recognized the contract termination of the program; meanwhile Casa Gallo residents and the activists decided to remain in the warehouse and transformed the project into a squat. They were suited and received an eviction notice, with the request of payment for the utilities during the time in which the facility was illegally used. In December 2017, the eviction procedure resulted into a new temporary contract for the two associations, that allows them to legally use the warehouse for other six months, and it is due to expire on April 30, 2018. Yet, by launching this tender, the municipality publicly acknowledged both the presence of a vacant space in Via de Warthema in Rimini and of the increased homelessness, and it triggered *temporary use of space* (Patti & Polyak, 2015). Temporary planning offers an opportunity for public authorities to maintain credibility, and for the activists to access low-cost or free spaces. While the short-term user operates under the eyes of temporality and precariat, the long-term owners use the system of temporary use model to reduce their risks of having a property vacant, while waiting for a secure market. In the following sections, I will analyze how temporality has been used by activists in Casa Madiba for bottom up urban redevelopment and to establish alliances in their community.

3.1 Envisioning space

Temporality is used by the activists to get more time to reinforce their position on the territory by establishing a familiar interaction with the neighbors and by implementing a set of beneficial changes in this area of the city. The participatory urban renewal project called *Madi Marecchia* invited the local residents to participate in the urban development. Madi Marecchia (*Laboratorio sociale di civismo, solidarietà e rigenerazione urbana* - Social workshop of civic-mindedness, solidarity and urban renewal) was launched in Casa Gallo immediately after the structure was open. It involved the participation of an architect, an urban planner, Casa Gallo's residents, activists and the neighborhoods and it used the charette method of planning in order to trigger a collaborative planning process. Entering into a completely empty space, the network of homeless people and activists managed to furnish the space and to progressively create a division between day and night spaces and some private spaces between the single beds.
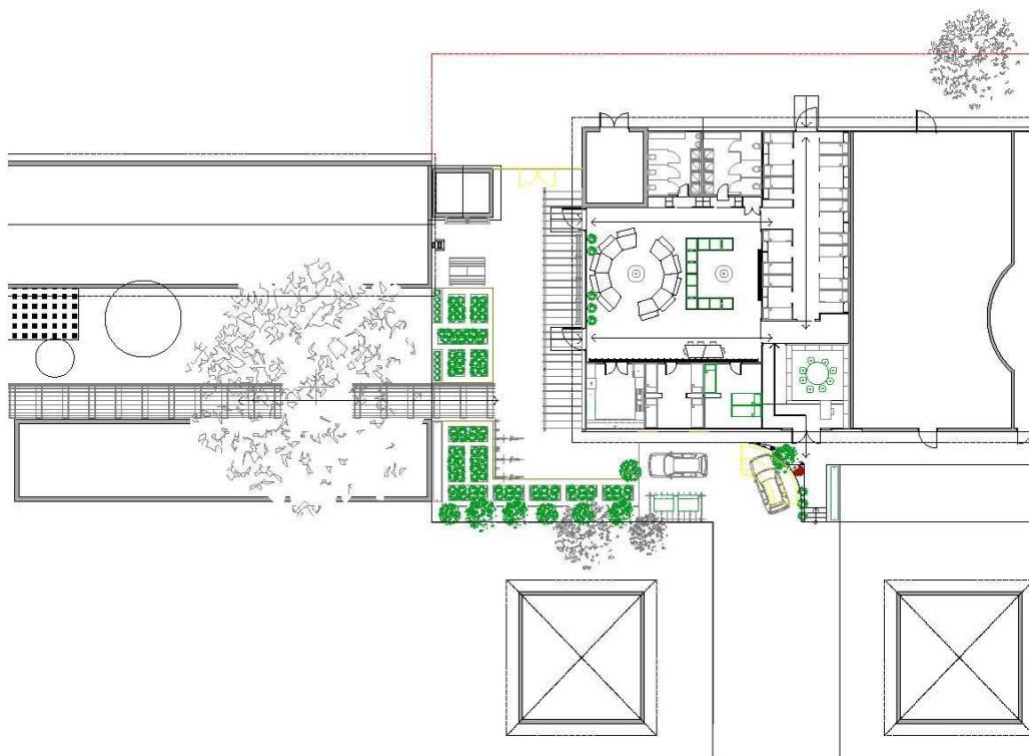
Figure 2 Casa Gallo planimetry and astrometry, developed during Madi Marecchia. The final realization closely resembles this initial project. (Source: Madi Marecchia coordinator)

During the workshop, the participants reflected on how to improve the internal space of the warehouse in order to separate the living room from the sleeping area and to also give to each resident a small closet and some private space. Moreover, during this workshop, the residents and Casa Gallers expressed the desire for sports space and praying area (Fig 2). Despite the temporality of the project, the limited space available and the lack of budget, recycled wardrobes have been added to create a wall between the night and day area, also to delimit each resident bed.

Squatting for the establishment of social centers enables a "cognitive liberation (Nepstad 1997, 471) by letting people see empty buildings as opportunities, and imagine that collective support for occupying those buildings can be organized" (Pruijt 2013, 1). It is both as a form of protest and a reclaim for better living conditions, as well as a strategy of "self-help", a practical solution to deprivation. Hodkinson and Chatterton (2006) noticed that social centers are in direct opposition to neoliberalism and "constitute a new claim to the city - a demand that land and property can be used to meet social needs, a no to service global, or extra-local, capital" (310). According to the activists, Casa Gallo was opened with the intention of overcoming a dependency culture and to favor individuals in their path towards "self-determination".

> We immediately said that we don't want charity [in Casa Gallo]. But the empowerment of people, of the city, of the poor. It is not that if one is poor, it must have charity or a piece of bread and a bed to sleep in. Poor people are also skillful and we must reactivate them, for instance by making them aware of their condition. Very often the condition is also generated by this model of liberal capitalist development which tramples people's rights, everywhere around. (Federica, interview).

One tool of empowerment was, for example, the construction of a baked clay oven. This oven is now used in the summer as part of the Casa Madiba restaurant offers, and residents in Casa Gallo have been trained to bake pizza so that they could work in the Casa Madiba restaurant. In the future, they could use these skills to find a job during the touristic season. We can see

then that social centers, as Ruggero (2000) affirms, referring to Balibar's (1998) framework, are places where utopia was replaced with imagination that overcome the individuals' needs by inventing their way of living. The temporal space also gives the possibility to imagine visions of space and to put it into practice. Because temporal use leaves a grey area where legality - illegality, formal organizations - informal networks often overlap.
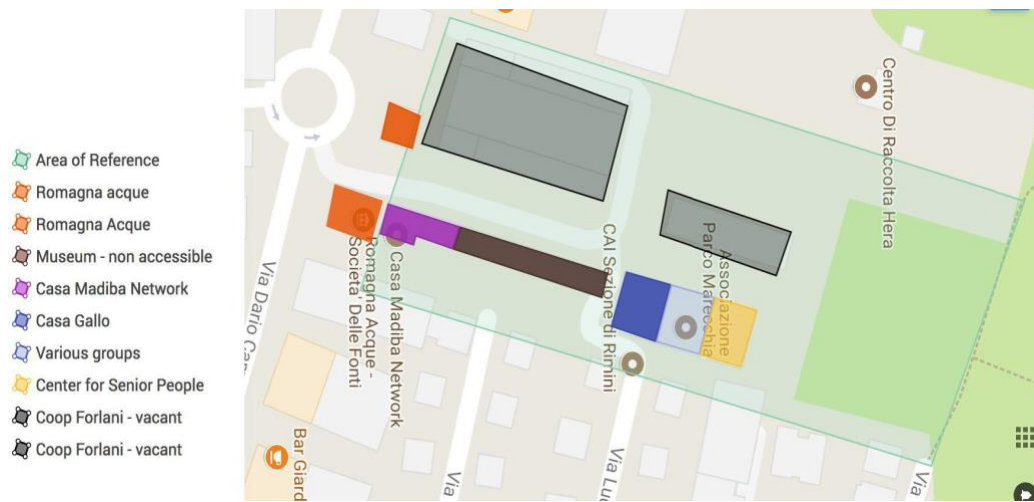

Figure 3 Map of the Made Marecchia area of intervention (Source: author).

Madi Marecchia also triggered different interventions in the surrounding space around Casa Gallo. The warehouse on via De Warthema is a state-owned property that also hosts a diurnal senior center, and (the part in the middle) a Romanian Orthodox congregation. In its proximity, there are several buildings in disuse: the Hera site (a public utility services cooperation), that is now owned by *Coop. Forlani,* and which has been empty for decades, and it is site of various informal settlements; the former civil registry office that has today a document archival (sometimes called also "museum") and which is not accessable, and the former firehouse (occupied by Casa Madiba). This area has also direct access to the city park *Aprile 25* (Figure 3). Part of the Madi Marecchia project was to make the walking passage between Casa Madiba to Casa Gallo again accessible. This passage, called *il Varco* (the breach), is used by residents

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to fastly reach the park and to create a walking itinerary in the neighborhood that would connect various social related projects (Fig.4).

> The passage (il Varco) connects the parts of the neighborhood where we would like to implement a stronger interaction so that we could become more inclusive. This itinerary should be of interest to the city, because it ends at the bridge, in the city center, while going through the public park and encountering various associations and groups that could become coordinated among each other (Bernard, informal conversation).

This passage has been for years obstructed by school furniture and by as a museum storage. By cleaning and putting lights, this area becomes usable by those who are visiting the Senior Center or by those who wish to reach the park quicker. Moreover, because Casa Gallo and Casa Madiba are part of this itinerary, they become more visible, and this visibility, can, in time, facilitate the interaction between the groups who inhabit this area.
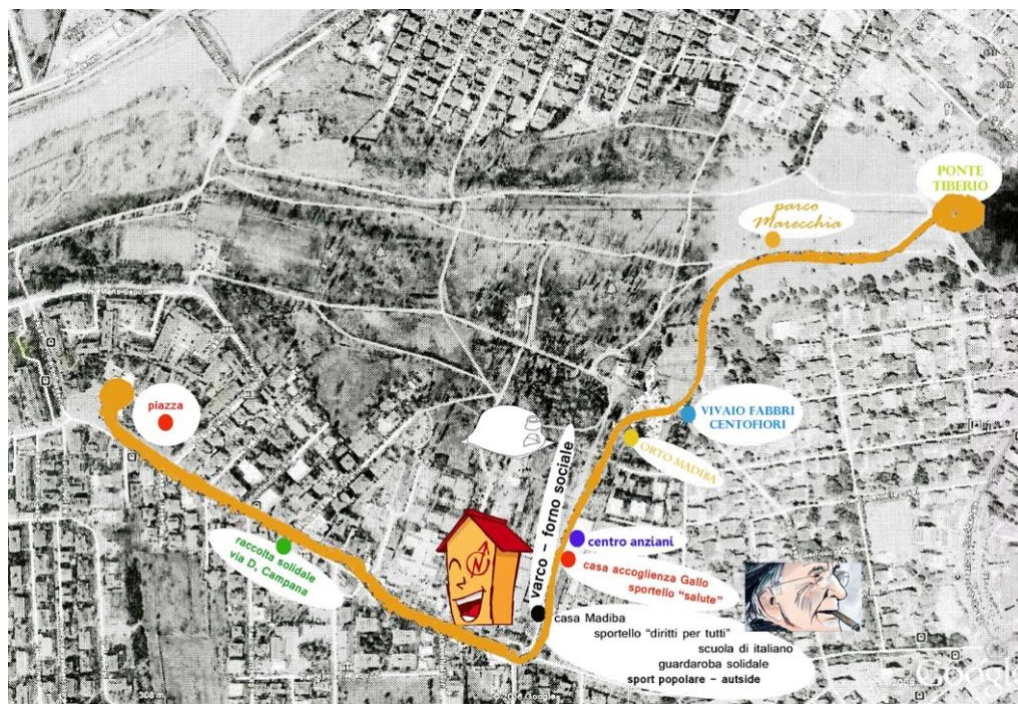

Figure 4 The envisioned path that connects community-based activities in this area of Rimini (Source: Madi Marecchia coordinator)

This temporary planning of space (all the changes in Casa Gallo are removable) is also a weak form of planning. As Lauren Andres (2012) explains, because the power relation of those involved is unclear, temporary users are given for a short-period of time the power to shape the

space without the need to conform to strict – or any, in the case of squatting – regulation and without following bureaucratic and financial standardized procedures. Local authorities and market operations are in standby position waiting for more favorable moments in which to intervene by starting a negotiation with the temporary occupants or by directly evicting them. According to Andres, during this "meanwhile", temporary occupants can acquire the position that would later help them to sustain this place-making process, as the integration to master-planning is, nevertheless, inevitable. While it is impossible to foresee the future of Casa Gallo, and although the activists' commitment to anti-capitalist agenda it is unquestionable, we can see in the recent evolvement of Casa Gallo's struggle there has been an increasing debate regarding it and the activist has been trying to appeal to the public discourse for support. As we speak, Casa Gallo situation is uncertain and there is an ongoing discussion about its future and activists are soliciting a municipality intervention to safeguard their work.

The grounded envisioning triggered by Madi Marecchia is rooted into the recent critical urban theory, that has directly been reflecting on the possible ways in which we can create a vision of urban life that points beyond capitalism and which asks "how this crisis has provoked or constrained alternative visions of urban life that point beyond capitalism as a structuring principle of political-economic and spatial organization" (Brenner, Marcuse, Mayer, 2012, 14). Urbanists argue that cities should not only be seen as "sites for strategies of capital accumulation; they are also areas in which the conflicts and contradictions associated with historically and geographically specific accumulation strategies are expressed and fought out. As such, capitalist cities have long served as spaces for envisioning, and indeed mobilizing towards alternatives to capitalism itself, its associated process of profit-driven urbanization, and its relentless commodification and re-commodification of urban spaces" (ibid). The claim for participation in planning and for public recognition entails also a set of collaboration,

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compromises, legalization, institutionalizations. The Madi Marecchia project is to be understood not just as a functional system to furnish Casa Gallo and to improve the outside spaces, but it is also a project of envisioning the space through which independent groups of individuals take upon themselves the right and the responsibility of planning a space and of opening it to the wider community. In this sense activists and citizens become actors for the urban planning and the development of a "just city" (Fainstein, 2010), by proposing a model of organization that has been developed among the lines of the urban social movements and in relation to the autonomist or the anarchists' ideological frameworks.

3.2 Creating a network

To understand the process of communing implemented by this collective, it is important to look at the choice of naming and definitions. Casa Madiba Network is labeled by its activists as a "social space" (spazio sociale) rather than as a "social center" (centro sociale), and this choice of name distances them from a label that, in the local public discourse, is connected in the local public discourse to drug abuses and micro criminality. For clarity, in this paper, I am using the classical definition of "social center", term widely used in the literature and which transversally considers the various forms of, squatted or non-squatted, "autonomous spaces", without a derogatory connotation. Moreover, this social project is defined as a "network" of different projects that aim to create a grassroots solution "to every type of problem". In this sense, Casa Madiba activists are proud of their holistic approach to what an individual need in order to have "dignity".

The concept of the "network" is present also in Hardt and Negri (20015) and it identifies "an open and expansive network in which all differences can be express freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common" (XIV).

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For Hardt and Negri, "the global cycle of struggle develop in the form of a distributed network. Each local struggle functions as a node that communicates with all the others notes without any hub or center of intelligence. This form of organization is the most fully realized political example we have of the concept of the multitude" (ibid). The creation of a network interdependence with other organizations and power players, including Christian organizations[5] and European funding, is a response to Casa Gallo's instability, and it improves the quality of services provided in Casa Madiba and reinforces their position on the territory.

During the plenary assembly held on January 28, 2018, all the various groups which constitute Casa Madiba Network, met for the first time. This was an open meeting, held on a Sunday afternoon, and was attended by around 50 people. Among them, there were the representatives of the Casa Madiba political collective, volunteers, and sympathizers of the movements, as well as parents of the younger members of the collective. This assembly, interviews and field observations allow me to discuss Casa Madiba Network organization. The network is composed by around 10 people, who are members of the political collective and who meet every Monday evening and discuss the political agenda of the group. Usually, members of the political collective are directly involved in one or more projects of the group. There are several projects and each of them is managed in a smaller assembly composed by the activists and the volunteers. In regards to class, gender and nationality, the group is very multi-colored: the age varies between high school students (14-19 years old) and pensioners but the most active

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[5] Last February for example, Rimini bishop, Francesco Lambiasi, visited Casa Madiba and Casa Gallo (Retrieved on 19/04/2018 from www.newsrimini.it/2018/03/il-vescovo-lambiasi-in-visita-a-casa-andrea-gallo) and Casa Gallo was featured on the recent Caritas Report as one professional organization giving "support to the poor" (Ricci and Carletti (2018). "Associazione Rumori Sinistri" in 14° Rapporto sulle povertà 2014. 40 anni con i poveri". Retrieved on 19/04/2018 from http://rp2017.caritas.rimini.it/)

members of the political collective are between 35-45 years old. It is hard to categorize the group in classes, many of the activists are highly educated and have various professions: some of them are unemployed, precarious workers, optician, factory worker, educators, herbalist's shop assistants, university students, seasonal workers.

The need for a plenary assembly arose because people involved in specific voluntarist activities were not always familiar with the services provided by other groups, nor have they ever got to know all the members of the group. For this reason, the assembly started with a round of presentations and it was followed by the presentation of all the activities and collectives active in Casa Madiba. Manila, one of the group political leader, specified that:

> Casa Madiba cannot be attributed only to those active in the political collective, but that militancy belongs to everybody. All the various activities that transform our reality and our present, and show us individualism and several layers of violence and subjugation (Manila, January 28, 2018 - Assembly)

Over the course of the past years, this network developed several intersectional activities, which address individuals' pragmatic needs as much as the human need for socialization and companionship and are a source of sustenance for the social center. Casa Madiba Network is composed by the following subprojects:

- Guardaroba Solidale: clothing collection with hot showers, run by six volunteers, opened three times a week, it meets an average of 10 people per week, most of them are men between 19-30 years old or women with children

- Italian school: opened 3 afternoons a week; it has 9 teachers and about 50 students

- High school Student Collective: composed by about 10 students

- Casa Gallo: homeless shelter hosting an average of 40 people

- Madi Marecchia: urban renewal project, run by an urbanist and an architect, it involved Casa Gallo and all the people who wanted to participate.

- Orto Madiba: vegetable garden, developed during Madi Marecchia

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- Ristorante e Pizzeria Il Varco: restaurant and pizzeria

- Mercato "I custodi del cibo" – "Food Keepers": weekly local producers' market

- ADL Cobas: info center for migration, labor and housing issues supported by the independent union Cobas

- Autside Social Football: football team

- Madiba Sound System: reggae music band

- Non Una di Meno: network of feminist mobilization

Although Casa Madiba Network is an autonomous collective, many of the project relay on donations and on professionals' spontaneous participation especially in regards to Casa Gallo. For example, a doctor comes occasionally in Casa Gallo and visits those in need, a bakery and a vegetable shop regularly donate food for Casa Gallo. Casa Gallo is also registered to more formal donation systems such The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) that provides material assistance to the most deprived, and also to the Fondazione Banco Alimentare, organization that collects food from various sources and redistributes it to those in need and which is connected to Catholic organizations such as Communion and Liberation. The formation of these series of local alliances, both formal and informal, give access to a wider sources of resources that are accessible not only to the residents of Casa Gallo and to all the people in the area that need help.

3.3 Pushing the boundaries of law

The acquisition of a legal status of homeless people in the municipality of Rimini has been a focal quest for Casa Madiba activists. For this reason, homeless squatters' declared to the authorities as domicile, first the squatted Villino Ricci and later Casa Gallo. The domicile is fundamental in the process of asylum seeking as it serves as a unique medium of

communications between the asylum seekers and the commission deciding upon it. But what is more important, many of the homeless people are not officially residents of the city and therefore they cannot access a whole set of public services such as education, healthcare, unemployment support. For this reason, after declaring the domicile, the request of the actual residence in Casa Gallo has been in process for months and it was in the final stages in March 2018: the police came to hold the inspection, that is a norm when declaring a residence, and some of the people in Casa Gallo already received a residence certificate. Unexpectedly, at the beginning of April, the Demographic Office rejected the request to sign Casa Gallo as actual "residence", also justifying this rejection because of the imminent contract expiration on April 30th. This bureaucratic interruption highlights the continuous tension between the radical temporary users and the state.

The repression or the integration into the system of projects of temporary use project depends on various factor: the question of the ownership of the establishment - private or public propriety - the type of activities implemented there as well as the actors involved - artists tend to find more favorable deals than more politicized activists who directly challenge authorities' power (Pruijt, 2003). For this reasons, squats are often co-opted into permanent urban planning and they are used for city branding and requalification. The positive social impact of Casa Gallo and of the general Casa Madiba Network is recognized publicly and at the end of April 2018, the mayor of Rimini, declared that the administration wants to renovate the current building in order to adjust it for its function. He declared:

> It is not possible to postpone any longer the maintenance work that is necessary to make the structure suitable to continue this shelter and its project of integration. This project that has brought positive results, and it involved the active and proactive involvement of the neighborhood, and that allows us to strengthen and expand the network of support for the weakest sections of the population, which is based on a close and virtuous cooperation between third sector organizations, voluntary associations, private individuals and public administration. This is a system made up of people and projects, sometimes even innovative and experimental, which on our

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territory is strong but can still be developed. Finally, it is good to emphasize the intention of the municipal administration to involve more and more positive experiences and proposals for social, cultural and sporting volunteer work in projects serving the community through the provision of public buildings (Comune di Rimini, 13 April 2018, translation by the author).

The municipality was supposed to regain access to the building at the end of the April, but it agreed to maintain Casa Gallo open for some extra months. The municipality also commit to fund the renovation of the building in summer 20018. After the renovation, the building will be re-assign through a public tender to an organization that would manage the homeless shelter on a permanent basis and the associations No Borders and Rumori Sinistri can again participate in the public tender, if they wish. Casa Madiba Network activist are negotiating with the authorities the possibility to supervise the building renovation, and they insisted on following the Madi Marecchia project and in involving in the work Casa Gallo's residents. The progressive change of attitude of the local government towards Casa Madiba collective suggests that the negotiation between the municipality and the activist will continue. In the following months, we will see how this governmental commitment to renovate the building of Casa Gallo will result into practical actions; if and how the relationship between the local administration and the inhabitants who claim the right to the decision on this area will evolve into a collaborative planning.

In this chapter, I explain how, after formalizing the role of its social center, using the legal representation of two organizations (the NGO No Borders and the Onlus Rumori Sinistri) I, Casa Madiba Network has established a set of alliances that eventually led to the public acknowledgment of its value as urban common. In time, this power force can lead to an institutional change in regards to the ways in which decisions upon space are made.

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IV. Autonomy as self-management

In this chapter, I consider how, at a micro-level, the political ethos of Casa Madiba Network is manifested in its everyday life. Specifically, I reflect on how the concept of autonomy is perceived and implemented by the residents of Casa Gallo, explaining the complexity of interaction between activists and homeless people hosted in the squat. This analysis allows a better understanding of the internal structure of the homeless shelters and reveals how the tension between the internal role of providing infrastructure for anti-systemic politics and the desire of connecting to a local community is solved.

4.1 Autonomy as a path to liberation

In the official project, written for the public tender application, Casa Gallo was envisioned as a challenge to the traditional homeless shelters' system[6] and it was officially proposed as a reception structure where homeless people would not only be hosted for the night but where, after solving their more urgent needs (for a shelter, food, clothing, health support), they could start building up a better living. As stated in the project plan "the goal of the project will not be to only provide a night shelter, but also to promote social inclusion through projects that complement each other; to trigger relations with other spaces and associations in the neighborhood and in the city of Rimini; to offer social, cultural and sport activities for the personal growth and the general improvement of life" (Casa Gallo Project Plan). Living in Casa Gallo is, in the words of activists, an "itinerary of liberation" that aims to the emancipation from a subjugation position, and from poverty and homelessness, and leads to becoming active citizens, aware of the society and able to seek change for themselves and for the broader

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[6] Usually, homeless shelters in Rimini host homeless people for a limited number of nights per month (see for example Caritas in Rimini http://www.caritas.rimini.it/?page_id=117)

community. This looks like an attempt at politicization and of the creation of class consciousness that resembles the operaisti's view on the figure of the "worker" in the '50s and '60s (Wright, 2002). Homeless and migrants might appear as new revolutionary subjects, and in some sense, this category appears to be based on "forms and languages of conflict very distant from migrants' everyday experiences" (Antonelli & Perrotta, 2016, p. 150). However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Casa Madiba activism is grounded in the political agenda of the Disobbedienti. This movement has stepped away from the classical idea of a revolution that would substitute the state apparatuses, and have embraced the concept of *exodus* which indicates a model of revolutionary process that aims to establish a new state power but to extinguish it through acts of civil disobedience (Hardt & Virno, 2006). Exodus "summarizes the process of liberation and expresses it in religious terms, where the end is nothing like the beginning, the 'promised land'" (Becucci, 2003). In the Disobbedienti view, there is not an idea of 'workers' centrality' but they affirm that society's transformation is a quotidian problem of everybody. Therefore, the squatted place cannot be seen as "promised land", but it is constructed every day by putting together resources, time, knowledge, and skills (Montagna, 2005, p 182).

During my fieldwork, I observed how Casa Gallo's societal project is actually translated into practice. First of all, the key factor to be accepted in Casa Gallo is the firm motivation to get integrated into the city of Rimini. As stated in the first application documents of Casa Gallo, "it will be possible to be hosted in the shelter for the long-medium term, if there is the intention of integrating into the city of Rimini. Otherwise, we would contact other organizations to help and provide a proper and dignified reception on the territory where the person wants to live" (Casa Gallo Project Plan). Residents of this center become also part of the Casa Madiba Network and they can directly engage in political activism and participate in various social and cultural

activities promoted by the group. Generally, they are helped in dealing with bureaucracy and in getting access to social security system or formalizing their migration or residency papers. Moreover, they can participate in programs that are outside the logic of the market and embedded in the local community; through these activities it is possible to acquire new skills and eventually find a source of sustainment.

The *Pizzeria and Restaurant Il Varco*, maintained as part of Casa Gallo's everyday activity, is a great example of how the activists conceive the process of "empowerment", in practice. The restaurant is open every Wednesday during the Casa Madiba market, and occasionally during the weekends when there are events in the social centers. The pizzeria uses the oven that was built during the Madi Marecchia project to make pizza in the summer and it is also located in one of the spaces that were cleaned and made accessible during the same project (see Chapter 3). During the winter, the meals are prepared in the kitchen on the first floor of Casa Madiba. Luisa, activist and member of the political collective, is the restaurant's chef and she is helped by two Casa Gallo residents. She designs a weekly vegan menu, prepared with seasonal and local products: vegetables are bought directly from the producers who participate in the Wednesday market, and the rest of the ingredients are bought from a mill in Rimini's countryside. When I was following how the restaurant works at the winter time, I noticed that this provides the social center with a little source of income during the winter, but the profit only covers the costs and a small salary for those who work in the kitchen. Nevertheless, working in the restaurant has positive impacts on workers' as it teaching them skills and attention to details, and it is also a medium for sharing ethics regarding food. Luisa is very strict in guiding her apprentices, as she expects them to be punctual, not to consume alcohol during work, and to perform each small task with care. For example, on one Wednesday last January she decided to make a falafel plate consisting of 3 falafels, hummus, pita, cabbage salad with

yogurt: each falafel was exactly 50 grams, she asked for each falafel ball to be measured exactly and she also insisted on putting effort to make perfectly round shaped falafels. Although very strict, she is also ready to compliment the small progress of the trainees and to motivate them to improve their skills. The example of the *Pizzeria il Varco*, showcases the role of social centers in the "production of capital" of those involved with it who through their participation to the social center not only discover new possibilities of employment (or self-employment) on the market. The social center appears as an "apprenticeship" where participants acquire skills that they can use on the market (Ruggero, 2000), and which contributes in the diffusion of the work ethics of Italian society in combination with the movement's ethics regarding anti-capitalist food production and consumption. The activists proudly say that some former Casa Gallers who worked in the social center's restaurant actually did find a job in similar positions.

Casa Madiba's activist defines apprenticeship in Casa Gallo as a form of "empowerment of people" that can lead them to "autonomy" and "self-determination". Their view follows Cuninghame (2010) definition of autonomy as "class determination and self-management within capitalism, thus taking the form of a counter-power and 'exodus' rather that entrenched, static, resistance to capitalism" (454). Among the 40 people who live in Casa Gallo, I had the chance to interact on regular basis with about 10 people. These were the people who are also more engaged in the activities in Casa Madiba and who are actively involved in political actions and other laboratories in Casa Madiba such as the restaurant, the music club, the clothing collection. I noticed that the political ethos is not understood by everybody univocally, but that each person understands this political ethos differently. One of the homeless activists, explains that he was already familiar with the concept of self-management, but that he didn't have the terms to translate this quest into the social center political terminology, he says:

> I already knew from my country to self-managed, but the idea of squatting was new
> to me. At first I was afraid, but slowly, getting to know the law, and knowing our

rights, human rights, I understood that squatting a house, even if it is illegal, it is not a crime, because we didn't kill anyone, we only tried to stay in that place because at that time we were having problems with work (Daniel).

For others, participating in political actions is also a form of socialization and of maintenance of relational bonds. Squatting also appears as a "collective response to loneliness" of the city (Ruggero, 2000). In the case of Casa Gallo, sharing a communal space enables both border sharing of goods and emotional care, and the importance of "togetherness" is manifested by frequently used expressions such as "family", "brother". One of theme explain that he gained his nickname of "President" as he remembers the morning of December 25, 2015 - the first night of Casa Gallo – when waking up on the sofa in Casa Gallo, and being asked how he feels, he responded: "I feel like a president" because he woke up and there were people around him, for the first time after being alone on the streets for 3 years.

Chatterton (2010) refers to social center's work as "the impure, messy politics of the possible" where the political identities are not defined but they are radiated on the diversity of the background of the residents. An example of this is the use of music in Casa Madiba. Others, express their beliefs through music. In Rimini, reggae music took the space of the Hip Hop and the Sound System became the modern Posse. The reggae crew *Madiba Sound Family* interestingly combines the tradition of Rastafari culture, that was born in Jamaica and traveled back to Kenya, with the struggles of migration path and local activism, and it shows the complexity of identities of the homeless migrants in Rimini. The musicians of Madiba Sound Family mixed the sounds and lyrics of the social center's Posse's crew from Southern Italy, they talk about squatting, anti-fascism, and racism as well as their journey and their nostalgia of "Africa". Migrant homeless people indeed are subject to multiscale marginality, that is given both by lack of economic resources but also because threatened by social and institutional racism.

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4.2 Leadership in Casa Gallo: between militantism and need to survive

The organizational structure of Casa Gallo reflects the practice or organization implemented within social centers and in the former-Disobbedienti spheres. They use a deliberative method during assembly where consensus and unanimity are sought (Piazza, 2011). The Casa Gallo's charter, written in the assembly by residents and activists, determines the expulsion of members who won't comply with the rules, for shorter or permanent terms: for example, physical violence would determine the removal of the person for the night, but in case of a bigger infraction, the permanent removal from Casa Gallo. Moreover, these documents regulate the everyday life inside Casa Gallo: cleaning schedule and timing are set, the time in which lights are switched off and in which activities starts in the morning, each individual's daily responsibilities are also stated here. Casa Gallo aims to be a self-managed house and free from hierarchy, however often the need for authority figures is expressed as well.

Most of my fieldwork revolved around Casa Gallo. I participated to the weekly Tuesday internal assembly and joined the lunch that follows it, where I had the chance to ask questions while cooking with the residents, setting the table and eating. During my ethnography, I observed several moments of de-responsibilization, in which residents in Casa Gallo wouldn't take initiative without consulting the "leaders" in regards to very little choices of the quotidian. This issue is very visible during the Tuesday "social lunch" in Casa Gallo, that was officially presented on social media and to me as well, as a moment in which "the resident of Casa Gallo cook some traditional dishes for guests". Every Tuesday morning, Casa Gallo has a weekly general assembly where residents and some activists discuss everyday domestic organization, future plans, resolve conflicts. Despite the fact that the Tuesday lunch is supposed to be an established tradition, that started during the occupation of Villino Ricci in May 2015. During my participatory research I attended three lunches and I observed how little coordination there

is in preparing the Tuesday meal. Every time, Manila interrupts the assembly and reminds the participants to "get the water ready for the pasta". Usually, deciding what to cook and the quantities of food are the same people such as throwing away over expired bags of pasta, deciding the quantities of food. Generally, the intervention of the activists' is needed in coordinating this lunch.

Leadership is one of the most controversial themes in Casa Gallo and it reflects the complexity of the relationship that is created when radical activists meet people in need. In Casa Gallo there are people who want a more hierarchical structure and search for authority. Others are not interested in politics at all and they are simply in need of housing. Because of the nature of the political repertoire of actions, activist relationships are based on trust and for this reason they require a long-term emotional and practical investment. In a social center "roles are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted and relationships based on reciprocity are promoted rather than exploitative ones" (Membretti, 2007). Nevertheless, the activists who are more involved with Casa Gallo often suffer from the complexity of their relationships with some of the residents, and would wish to return to a more idealistic idea of Casa Gallo as a pure political space, in their words "a place for political struggle". They do recognize that the nature of their work is based on a controversy and Manila, for example, explains:

> In the end, this relation is based on affection. This is why sometimes it is hard to make sure rules are respected because us the "activists" are actually "friends". It is hard to establish an equal dynamic, often they are looking for an authority figure, they ask for an inspector or a cop. (Manila)

The search for an authority figure directly contradicts the concept of emancipation from power, yet it is motivated by the different understanding of what "liberation" means for each individual. As pointed out by Mudu and Chattopadyay (2016), "migrants are not usually anti-capitalist or autonomous. The intersection of migrants, radical struggles and squatting reveal an incredible set of multiscalar mechanisms that call into question the manufactured consensus of 'who

belongs where', as well as the prevailing configuration of housing and cultural rights. Questioning belonging mechanisms aims at building explicit politics of scale to contest and reconfigure the particular differentiations and hierarchies that shape citizenship and prevent the intersection of migrants and squatters (Smith 1996)" (9). The consensus decision practice allows overcoming such contradictions, as it does not necessarily involve a "compromise" because it is based on "an underlying convergence of values" (Gutmann and Thompson, 2013).

Others studies on the meaning of autonomy in social centers have underlined similar tensions created by the complexity of solving pragmatic individual necessities while resisting capitalism. As there is not a univocal definition of "autonomy" in the context of squatting, nor a tool for evaluating success and failures of being anti-capitalist, I suggest to follow definition by Pickerill and Chatterton it is very relevant to Casa Gallo because it considers autonomy as a relational tendency rather than a possession, that does not then have "clear boundaries between autonomous and non-autonomous processes and space exist. Rather there is a constant negotiation between competing tendencies toward autonomy and non-autonomy (or heteronomy). Autonomy is necessary for an emergent, and in many cases residual, property within - and often against - a dominant order, a desire rather than existing state of being. (p 737). Moreover, as Cuninghame points out, "autonomy is not independence, rather it is interdependence of the various sectors of the multitude inside, against and beyond capitalism. Thus, independence is intended primarily for autarchic forms of life, completely separated from the community, while the autonomous deals with life within society but under self-government" (p 451). Finally, for the Casa Madiba Network, searching autonomy mean also acquire the ability to make a change to the status quo and to become a player in local decision processes. The interactions in Casa Gallo depict a continues tensions between the political goal of autonomy and anti-capitalist struggle and the actually need of finding resources and living

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together. As Stavrides (2016), remembers, communing "do not simply produce or distribute goods but essentially creates new forms of social life, forms of life-in-common" (2). Autonomy therefore it is also not a static concept but it is rather a way of organizing life on an everyday basis.

Conclusion

The studies on capitalism and globalization have paid much attention to the logic of neoliberalism, seeking to reveal which factors undermined it in the past and which could possibly endanger capitalist accumulation regime in the future. Scholars have been also focusing on understanding how capitalism systematically managed to survive crises, to regenerate and to expand. The goal of this thesis was to follow an opposite trajectory, and to investigate how radical social movements can navigate the limits of capitalism and develop alternatives. By analyzing the case of Casa Madiba Network in Rimini, I argued that anti-capitalist struggle cannot be separated from the desire of reaching out to the local community and of engaging in practices of self-sustainment. However, the complexity of these goals appears to be also source of a series of internal tensions and compromises that represent a liability for activists and for the movement.

In this thesis, I explored the relationships between contentious politics and the urban sphere. Specifically, I examined a series of situations in which the ideal of anti-capitalist resistance confronts the pragmatic needs of the locality in which squatters are grounded. The flexible institutionalization of Casa Madiba interrupted the radical repertoire of action of the squatters, who have been illegally appropriating spaces in Rimini for years and who have been highly repressed and stigmatized. Institutionalization appears to be a strategy for the stabilization of the social center and it is justified by the increased social marginalization and poverty in Italy. Casa Madiba provides a series of services using a combination of formal and informal structures. Informality is not necessarily preferred by the activists but it allows structural change into the system. As Susser & Tonnelat (2013) have suggested, the urban social movement organized collective actions to reclaim the commons in the so-called "regime of property

management" (107). For communities, the commons manifest a principle of belongingness, that is "neither private nor public" but which is "located within the bounds of a given community, it manifests the belonging of its members through a sharing principle" (107). They emphasize how "many urban social movements cohere around issues not only of production, but also of collective consumption (Castells, 1983), or as we would rather put it, of collective use and needs" (110). In the case of Casa Madiba Network, we can see how they established a collaborative relationship with organizations that do not necessarily share the same political ethos but who are involved in providing services to the marginalized individuals. The stability of Casa Madiba, gives the activists the opportunity to develop a strategy of housing for homeless people in the city of Rimini, that is not constituted by the radical action of squatting, but which has in itself "an important role in the re-thinking and re-making 'citizenship' by bringing people together in spaces whose very raison d'être to question and confront the rampant individualism of everyday life" (Hodkinson and Chatterton, 2006, p. 311).

Municipalities' tendency of activating temporary forms of space use gives activists the possibility to reinforce their position on the territory of Rimini and to develop a set of alliances that would become fundamental in maintaining Casa Gallo active, after its official closure. The urban renewal laboratory Madi Marecchia was central to trigger of a process of communing that has connected a variety of individuals who are interested in the area were Casa Gallo and Casa Madiba are located, and who directly benefit from the outcomes of the project. The commoners are gaining access to livelihood resources that enable them to improve their life status. Moreover, engaging into urban development is for them also a process of liberation from the stigma they have been suffering and a tool for re-gaining citizenship. People who have been suffering from advanced marginalization are finally becoming part of a community. Nevertheless, the informality of spaces, being an opportunity to envision space, it can

transformed the commoners into "pioneers of the city restructuring" (Colomb, 2012), and it can be used by both local authorities and by private investors in order to push the frontiers of urban development. Casa Madiba Network also risks becoming instrumental force for place-making.

The process of communing and the pragmatic need of being locally grounded often challenges the activists' ethos and pushes to reconsider the meaning of autonomy and self -management. Far from being a fixed formula, the desire of autonomy confronts the reality of the everyday life practice, that is messy, imperfect and full of overlapping and multi-scalar identities and worldviews. "Anti-capitalism" cannot ever equal to "non-capitalism" but rather resistance groups must develop strategies of subversion to capitalism that are inherent to the environment in which communities operate.

In this study, I try to connect literature of urban social movements and critical urban studies and, the overlap between recent urban redevelopment and radical use of space. I suggest that future research should investigate more the process of inclusion of bottom-up planning into master urban development. Moreover, since Casa Gallo is ongoing a process of legalization, further research should consider the negotiation process between activists and the municipality in Rimini and evaluate the successes and failures of this collaboration. While on one hand, the transformation of Casa Gallo into a permanent homeless reception structure has long-awaited, on the other, the creative power of planning was precisely given by its temporality, and, its legalization may substantially transform its organizational structures and goals.

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