



A Hidden Informality? Informal Occupation in Milan: The Housing Needs and the Events of Protest

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Abstract: Over the last decade, the growing dynamic of housing needs, experiences of instability, crumbling welfare system, real estate crisis and the seeming intricacies of socio-economic policies have made the issue of informal occupation quite a hidden phenomenon in Milan city. A city in which homeownership is increasingly unobtainable and high disproportion of overall economic incomes strongly affect housing choices and opportunities. The scarce resources and management difficulties in the public administration of social housing in Milan and the high migration flows have contributed to the lack of building maintenance, process and manifestation of informal occupation and the generation of housing evictions. People who are not eligible to enter in the lists for public housing, but they neither cannot afford to rent at market prices are also included in this issue, such younger people. In addition, this issue has become a trigger for strong social tension and conflict concerning the public institution, formal residents and informal ones. The generation of "without" have the feeling that their voices have not been heard, even through radical protest. The great mass movements, around the social housing issues, the collectivization of the protest have been passed. Now, in Milan remains disaggregated social mobilizations and atomized, those who protest have to deal always with unsustainable housing market prices and find adaptive housing strategies.

The essence of this study is therefore to show the critical issue of informal occupation in Milan, through a qualitative approach to deduce successes and weaknesses from housing policies that deal with this phenomenon, encourage unused resources as well as stipulating important hints for professionals. Through a desk study attempt primarily based on literature and secondary data, but also an informant data collection based on interviews. The findings from the study revealed the need of changing welfare mechanisms, fragmented and isolated approaches to deal informal occupation, and lack of preventive measures. The study proposes the need for new housing policies that considered sustainable funding, community interaction and private partnership, coalitions for economic and social development programs, and provision of flexible housing alternatives that recognize the demands of the territory and implement innovative forms over the limits of living in Milan.

Keywords: Informality, formalization, titling, land tenure, upgrading.

1. Introduction

Cases such a father and mother with three children, who occupy illegally in public housing because of necessity for eight years; an elderly lady, sick, "default" in rent payment for 15 years because she used to live thanks to the husband's pension; a pensioner who earns 260 euros per month and have to pay 350 euros for rent, and other many more, are dramatic stories that happen every day in the informal occupations of social housing in Milan, in which Municipality of Milan and ALER¹ are the main responsible. There are about 50,000 social housing units owned by ALER, and are approximately 35,000 social housing units owned by the Municipality of Milan managed by ALER. The houses that are illegally occupied constitute almost 7% of all public housing. The most popular neighbourhoods are also the most targeted by informal occupations (e.g San Siro neighbourhood). The delay of payment in the social homes of the municipality is about 40%. Almost 30% of the houses are being renovated for degradation maintenance. The waiting list for public housing is very long: in 2012, the applicants were about 25,000 and about 22,000 in 2011. Most of the 50% of those applying for public housing are immigrants (Eastern Europe and the Middle East), however most informal occupations came from people of Southern Italy. In addition to the situation of public housing, people evicted from private homes are also included. These are people who are not eligible to enter the lists for public housing (you have to have an income of no more than 16,000 euro), but they neither cannot afford to rent at market prices (www.ilgiornale.it, 2013). The general secretary of National Union of Tenants and Assignees in Milan (SUNIA), indicated that "social

¹ ALER (Lombardy Institution of Public Housing) took that denomination in implementation of the law of the Lombardy Region n.13 in 1996. The company that used to be the Autonomous Institute of Social Housing, has as main objectives: planning, implementation and management of social housing in neighbourhoods with infrastructure and services.

housing must be managed by only one public entity because it can ensure efficiency and effectiveness and to better address the problems of a social nature". The other issues are occupations that involve crime (when the old tenant dies or just stay in hospital, then somebody take advantage of the situation and changed the lock of the house) and maintenance of the houses (www.milano.cinque.hive.it, 2012).

Under this perspective, this study aims to highlight a hidden issue of informal occupation in Milan through the analysis of real estate crisis, an unsustainable of this issue in the socio-spatial dimension and policy actions. Therefore, the intention is to focus on the performance on those public institutions responsible for the land use regulations and urban planning in the treatment of this hidden phenomenon of informal occupation. It is particular significant because still remains a persistent tendency of a clear post-intervention. The intention is to define what are the successes and weaknesses of the policies have been adopted or implemented in dealing with the informal occupation; and to seek what are the lessons and implications of the process of informal occupation.

Within this context, the first part of the study makes a theoretical framework referring to informal occupation in Milan which is strictly related to the real estate problems, crisis of social housing policies and the support of the private actors. The second part is focused on the exploration of the actors involved in the issue, trough semi-structured interviews that show that informal occupation issues combines adaptable housing strategies and ambiguous policies. We also highlight some local government policies that deal with the problem, such evictions. Finally, we have a closer look of the social movements that involved some voices. The last part is dedicated to looking at the future besides the public institution responsibilities, having new perspectives and responses. For this, the study shows some results after the exploration of the actors involved.

2. Understanding housing market in Milan

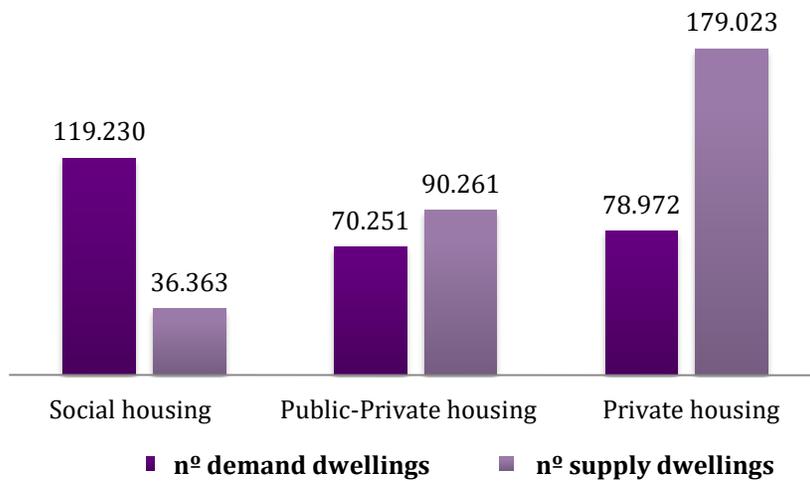
2.1 A new housing market

New residential construction in Italy have had an increase of 5.8% over the past decade. More than a million homes, which tend to increase faster than the total population and the majority are to be sold on the open market. Especially in the region of Milan, it has built an excessive amount of housing, without which this would encounter the emerging demand from the population, and in many ways exacerbating the housing issue as well as the environmental aspects. The Italian territory is among the most urbanized in Europe and is subject of attention from researchers, citizens, environmentalists, politicians. The Milan urban region has reached the highest levels in Europe. In Lombardy, as reported by a study of DIAP Milan Polytechnic on housing needs², the 75% of the housing between 2002 and 2008 consists of building free, compared to 7.5% for social housing, when 42% of the total demand for housing is social housing. Continuing with this trend, which is a strong discrepancy between supply, oriented more towards high-class private building, is related to the question addressed to social housing. In 2018, is expected to be in the region 168, 374.0 empty dwellings, including unsold and vacant to the free market. The dynamic that tend to favour the supply construction for the free market creates a surplus, which is not intercepted by the relative demand and its feeds by the unsold stock. In addition, Conversely, the shortage of public housing supply eaves a large proportion of the population with an unsatisfied housing need

(See Figure 1).

² BOATTI A., QUARANTA F., TRIPODI M.R., *L'offerta e il fabbisogno di abitazioni al 2018 nella Regione Lombardia-Compendio*, DiAP Cisl, March 2012

Figure 1. Housing Need Milan and Province 2002-2008



Source: Data from Boatti, Quaranta, Tripodi, 2012

2.2 The unsold and empty housing situation

The amount of unsold housing stock placed on the free market, provides and evidence of the broken investment production through social housing and the path of private and public actor's responsibilities, that make it possible the merged point of supply and demand. The overproduction of housing related to the free market has increased the amount of empty houses in Milan, which is including the empty houses with 70 and 80 thousand units: an estimation that is even more significant when compared with the total number of apartments (650 thousand units) and the total number of public apartments (around 70 thousand units).³ The empty housing units are divided between those of private and public property. The first one is greater in number and has a sprawl character into the city. Moreover, there is no precise data or maps that locate them, only basic data estimations from policy makers. In relation of the empty public property owned by the municipality and ALER (Lombardy Institution of

³ DC Casa Document, ERP: Supply offer adaptability in relation to the housing demand, December 2007

Public Housing), the number is less. However according to Central House Department's information in 2007, the percentage of empty apartments reached 3.7%, while those illegally occupied were 6.6%⁴ of the total amount of public property (70 thousand units).

Until today, there is no mapping or updated official data of the public housing units in the Municipality or in ALER. In addition, the inappropriate distribution of these accommodations in the Milan territory, because in some neighborhoods have higher concentration of occupied accommodations, such San Siro, Ticinese, or Corvetto districts and on the others do not have the same repartition. Rental properties are mostly owned by private sector, while for the public sector is only 11% of the urban housing building (already above of the national parameter of 4.5%⁵). These are two sides of a coin that shows the polarization of rental supply: an inaccessible private sector and the other hand, an extreme welfare public sector, because it is only reserved to the most disadvantaged people. Someone who arrived in the city of Milan to study or work faces a scarcity of housing choices and the consequent increase of housing market prices for rent. The abandoned Milan city is not only empty apartments, also entire uninhabited office buildings, enormous millions of square meters of disused railway yards, and hundreds of thousands of square meters of abandoned industrial areas which are still no reconverted. The characteristics and the situation of occupation of the housing units have a significant importance on the determination of housing needs.

⁴ Milan Municipality, A look of the public housing property. ERP, October 2007.

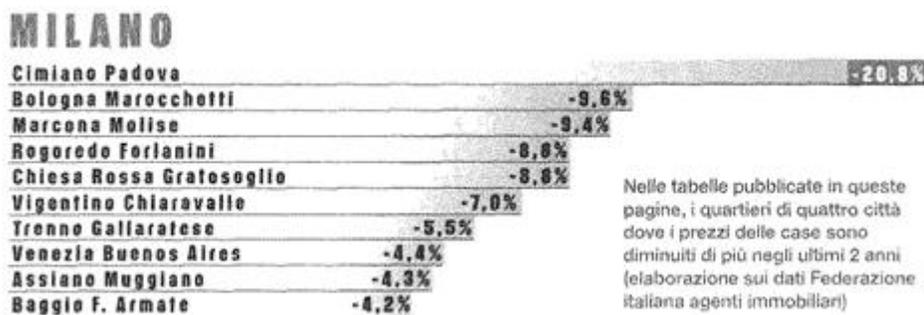
⁵ BOATTI A., Fabbisogno di abitazioni a Milano e nella Provincia. Quale futuro per la città?, DiAP Politecnico di Milano, 2011.

3. The real estate market

3.1 Milan's transactions

The data of the real estate market in Milan and Province shows that the object of study is strongly influenced by the national dynamics of credits, the building investment and families loans for families that want to buy a house from residential transactions. The average of selling prices in big cities in Italy has decreased 1.4%, from September to March 2012, while in Milan + 0.4% with 4,340 €/ sqm. on average, Roma takes +4,9%, and Napoli -5.7%⁶. Over the year, the real estate prices were down 12%, while the situation in Milan, prices were down between 4 and 20%, with different values depending on the neighbourhood (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Housing prices in Milan from 2010-2013



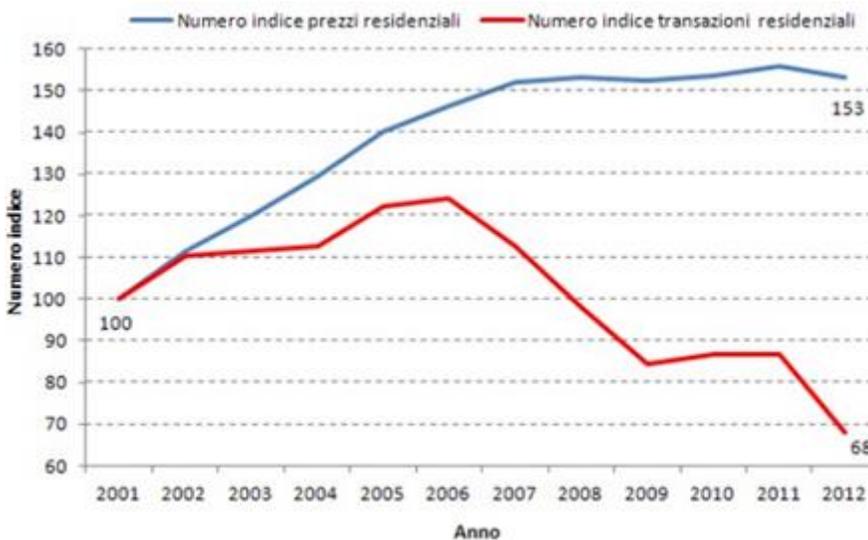
Source: Federcasa, Quaranta, June 2013

The increasingly impossibility to access bank loans, the insensible housing prices and polarized supply, have become rapidly in Milan a crucial and current housing need. The trends of the market distortion affect the housing practices of Milan people, which, as shown, more and more difficulty for the housing property. The data of Territory agency related to housing market transactions show a negative variation of

⁶ immobiliare.it

21.7% in the capital, which is almost similar to the national level trend (-23.9%). Crossing transactions and prices in Milan (see Figure 3), we see the gap between the two trends is growing, which reveals an increase of the separation by the housing demand and supply.

Figure 3. Transaction and prices in Milan from 2001-2012



Source: OSMI Borsa Immobiliare, FIMAA elaboration data

3.2 The unsustainability of the rent prices

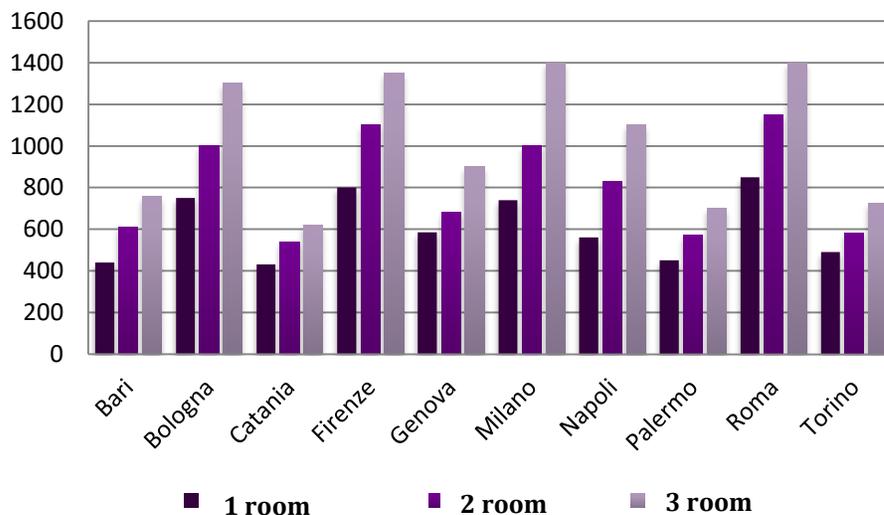
The unsustainability of rent prices reports almost daily events of evictions for delay payment or illegal occupation, tangible signs of the crisis effect of the real estate system. The rental market is now accessible and economically sustainable only if the disposable income exceeds € 22,500 (or € 1,875 per month⁷) due to the high amount of monthly payments, which are equivalent to 9.7 times the value of the cadastral for rent in Lombardy. It has already been mentioned that the average fee for rent, arrives to €1694.70⁸.

⁷ Sunia, Sicut, Uniat e Unione inquilini analysis. "Abbassare gli affitti per fermare gli sfratti", 2012.

⁸ <http://www.federconsumatori.it/ShowDoc.asp?nid=20130130164125>

In Figure 4, shows the rent prices according to the three typologies of apartments, from one-single room to three-room apartment. It is clear from the analysis what are the economic rent indicators: Milan is one of the most expensive cities, with an average monthly cost of 750 euro for one-single room, Rome and Florence exceed 800 euro. In these capitals are also recorded the highest rates of housing evictions, with the presence of the police and law officials⁹. A strong majority of families, close to the 66%, has as its target a main permanent accommodations, while another 30% of groups of population such young people, need temporary accommodations for study or work (see Figure 5).

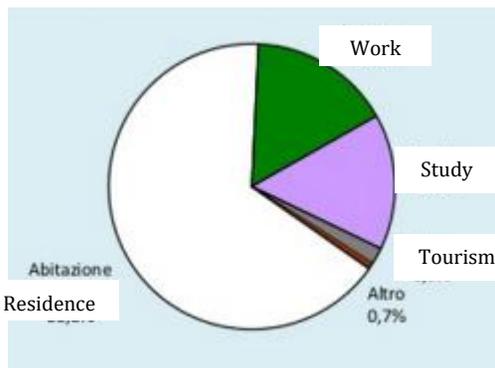
Figure 4. Average prices for rent apartment



Source: Sunia, Sictet, Uniat, Uiltrasporti elaboration data.

⁹ Interior Minister "Crisi & Sfratti, i numeri del disagio abitativo", Roma 2012 .

Figure 5. Uses for rent apartment



Source: Nomisma elaboration data.

It now seems over time the increasing trend of the rent cost: in the nineties, for young people under thirty years old, the monthly payment was 12% of income, in 2002, to 21% and, in 2003, increased to 52%¹⁰. The 66% of the families that use the rent accommodation as a permanent house have the risk of losing it, because they take a mayor dimension of discomfort than those in a situation of temporary rent. In addition, it reinforces the risk of the formation of new forms of poverty, caused by an increasingly number of evictions for non-payment rent, which drift from the change of the economic family situation and then by the impossibility of being able to pay high rates of rent.

In favour of rent supply to be enforced, for years by academics and citizen of Milan, there is still reflections on the presence of tens of thousands of empty apartments, both private and public property. It is urgent the need of investment in order to open and use these closed apartments (sometimes used by illegal occupants) which contrast with the restriction of supply and increasingly unsustainable levels of rent prices.

¹⁰ RABAIOTTI, Ritorno a casa, Città Aperta Edizioni/Il Buongoverno, 2007.

4. The crisis of the public housing supply in Milan

A slow deterioration of the housing supply, in the face of social housing demand to which it addresses the last paragraphs. The public building is "downward", because today is suffering from a condition that shows carelessness from many points of views, from structural and maintenance aspect, then moved to the social and political dimension. After years of complaint, by various actors, the degradation and the need for restoration and restructuring are still widespread in the public housing property of Milan. Situations of overcrowding or underuse persist over time, as well as cases of isolation of fragile people such elderly people living alone, self-sufficient, with serious illnesses or with foreign families. Apartments that are handed down by inheritance, but also apartments that remain with closed walls for years, waiting to be recovered. It gets to the paradox that some apartments are free, pending for redevelopment, are walled, in a way to make disappeared from view of the needy people, especially those who are illegally occupiers. Moreover, those apartments got frozen, in a condition that will endure over time with walls made of bricks, metal or concrete. Also, when you it is reactivated the waiting list for assignment of those accommodations, after broke the walls, the apartments are still closed instead of being open: are sealed by a metal sheet, sheet, again waiting for the work maintenance work and the real assignment. This seems to be a clear example of waste of resources and time, revealing also the ways of managing from the public operator, Municipality or ALER (see Picture 1).

Picture 1: A public apartment with metal walls

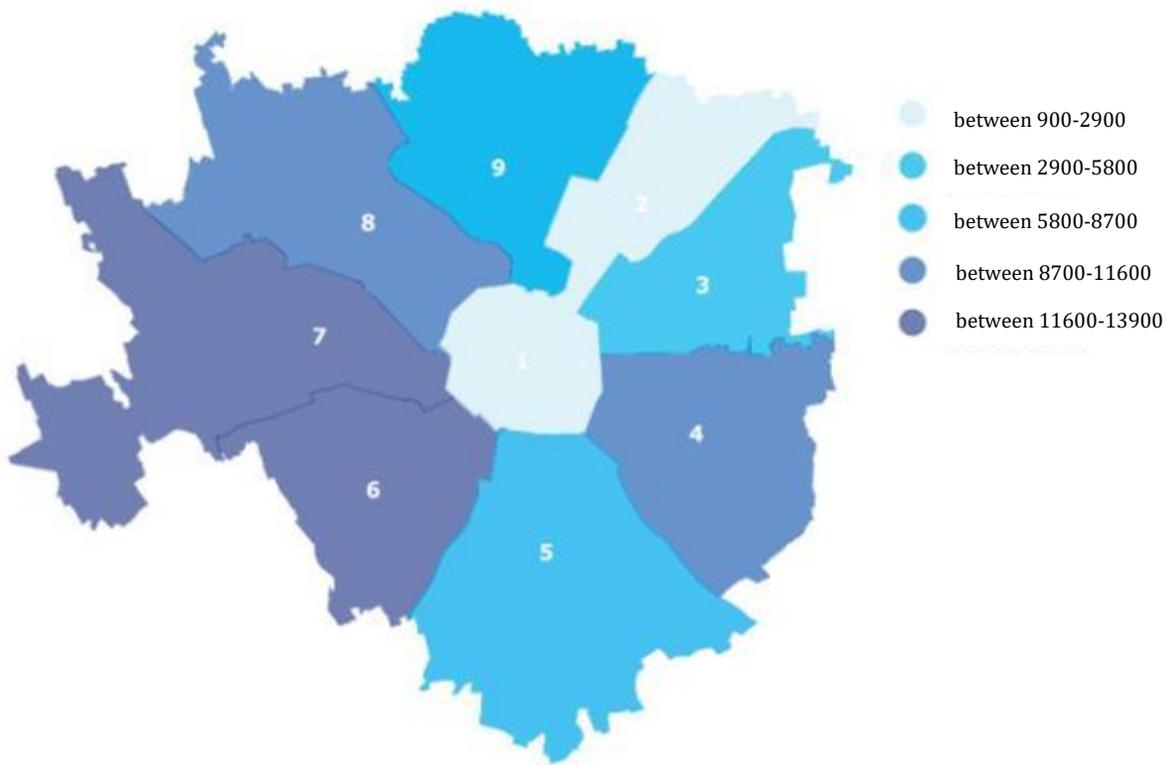


Source: Author's picture, 2013

4.1 The social housing supply in numbers

The social housing supply in Milan today is around 60 to 70 thousand apartments, before it was promulgated the Regional Law No. 27 in 2007, which allowed the sale of 20% of the properties, it came to a total of 72,240 accommodations Milan Municipality and Aler (law of 1993), equivalent to 11% of all total residential construction in the city. Of the total of public properties, more than half was owned by ALER Milano (41,500 apartments) while the Municipality property is around 30,740. From this subdivision, there is a heterogeneous distribution of public housing between the areas of Milan territory (see Figure 6), which ranged from the highest zones 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (between 13% and 15%) to the lowest zones 1, 2 and 3 (between 2% and 5.4% of total properties). A categorization on the types of revealed a major

payment up to 89%, the public housing supply is assigned by ranking at reduced rent than the rental market.



Source: Milan Municipality, "The housing public need ERP", 2007.

4.2 The sale

In April 2008, the Region with the Province and the Municipality established the criteria and procedures for the sale, by signing the agreement for the redevelopment and safety in neighbourhoods of ERP. According to a publication in the journal *Aler* "The Roof" in 2008, the sale would be mainly directed to mixed public and private buildings, and would cover 8,400 housing units in Milan, starting with prices equal to 928 euro per square meter, wandered in Vatican Council St. (Aldini in Fourth Quarter Oggiaro) to 1,616 euro per square meter in Aselli St. (Citta Studi area).

The sale of housing does not begin in 2007, as already highlighted the 1993 Act was the precursor to this, but this has always been the possibility of alienation, through redemption, since the time INA Casa. A policy of divestment that has changed over the decades, INA Casa built public housing with the express purpose of selling it, now the trend, especially Aler, is to put it up for auction for the state of advanced decay and for lack of funds that implement recovery operations. On the website of Aler Milan we can find many appeals for auctions, for example in the last year has launched seven (the first 8 marzo2012, last March 1, 2013). Given the poor conditions faced by these properties, and the investment of money that would face for the redevelopment, this hypothetical auctions are almost completely empty. Over 285 apartments auctioned in the sessions above, only 70 were sold, with an amount of eight million euro. A further auction of huge proportions has been called in March 27th, 2013, that involved 60 apartments with a total value of 5.7 million euro. The difficulty of selling them is a symptom of not convenience from the buyer, to invest money in the apartment, which then will need additional expenses for restructuring. Milan has always remained away from large interventions as those in Europe, with this regional law N° 27 in 2007 only aggravate the problem of the public property, allowing not only the 20% for sale of the property, but to raise rents unequally for tenants who paid different fees.

4.3 The public property management

From an overview of the number of public properties in Milan and sale mechanisms, it is anticipated the significant role of Aler Milano (Lombardy housing company-ex autonomous institution for housing related to the law N° 13/ 1996) on the question of housing public. More than half of the total number of public properties in Milan are owned by ALER, and also the entire management of public housing properties.

The visibility of the ranking for housing availability in E.R.P., is blocked with more than 20,000 pending applications, but also through the news stories of abandonment apartments and people, stories of serious scandals in socio-economic aspects, stories of housing mafias and criminal groups for illegal occupation and the arrests of some main officers of Aler (case of Zambetti Assessor¹¹) and the presence of empty or walled apartments. Given the lack of management resources, the Municipality of Milan gave Aler the administration, but until now the company has not proved to be efficient, which implies a lack of trust by the Municipality to Ale, however besides some scandals the Municipality has extended the contract with Aler at the end of 2012¹³. The status of the management of public properties is reflected in the empty apartments, in situations of permanent degradation and auction sales at prices over the value of the property. The logic behind to the sale of public properties in order to have the funds to recover or build another apartment, implies a second mechanism. The accommodation that were for rent or restoration, but insufficient in quantity, follow a logic of filtering, whereby a greater number of new homes produced would be enough to provide the housing demand: specifically apartments with lower income groups of families that can put into place in those existing apartments already released. The line of strategic and implementation through the support of the sale of public properties, however, leaves in shadows a series of steps to be modulated to achieve the intent of assigning housing to those who really need it, such as: acquired methods, forms and ways of allocation, access links. A quantitative policy that seeks to solve the problem in an osmotic way, does not change the situation of problem of public housing need, and require the presence of policies, the

¹¹

http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/10/10/news/regione_arrestato_zambetti_pag_i_voti_alla_ndrangheta

management of housing processes with a long look long and not only as a building tool. In addition, it appears much more significant the presence of empty and illegally occupied housing, that include the creation of a new perspective and new opportunities that could be open even more the unsatisfied demand for public housing.

4.4 The social demand

In the study of Boatti, with some projection to 2018, we see that the demand for social housing in Milan constitutes more than 58% of the overall housing building construction, while the private it represents only 15%. Just look at the ranking of ERP, which contains more housing demand. It goes from 12,820 in the second period of 2006 to 18,236 in the first period of 2010, with a

growth trend of two thousand social housing requests per semester. The ranking for the first semester of 2012 has more than 37,000, without excluding those not accepted¹². Then, it is clear an increase of emergency, which is revealed in the increase of social housing demands, given that also a large part of the population do not choose the local authority as a channel for their housing needs. More people try to solve the problem by their own, with the economic support of family networks and friendships, or in other cases they choose informal channels in order to fulfil their housing needs, such the issue of illegal occupations in empty or walled public apartments (see Figure 7).

¹² Milan Municipality, data 2012

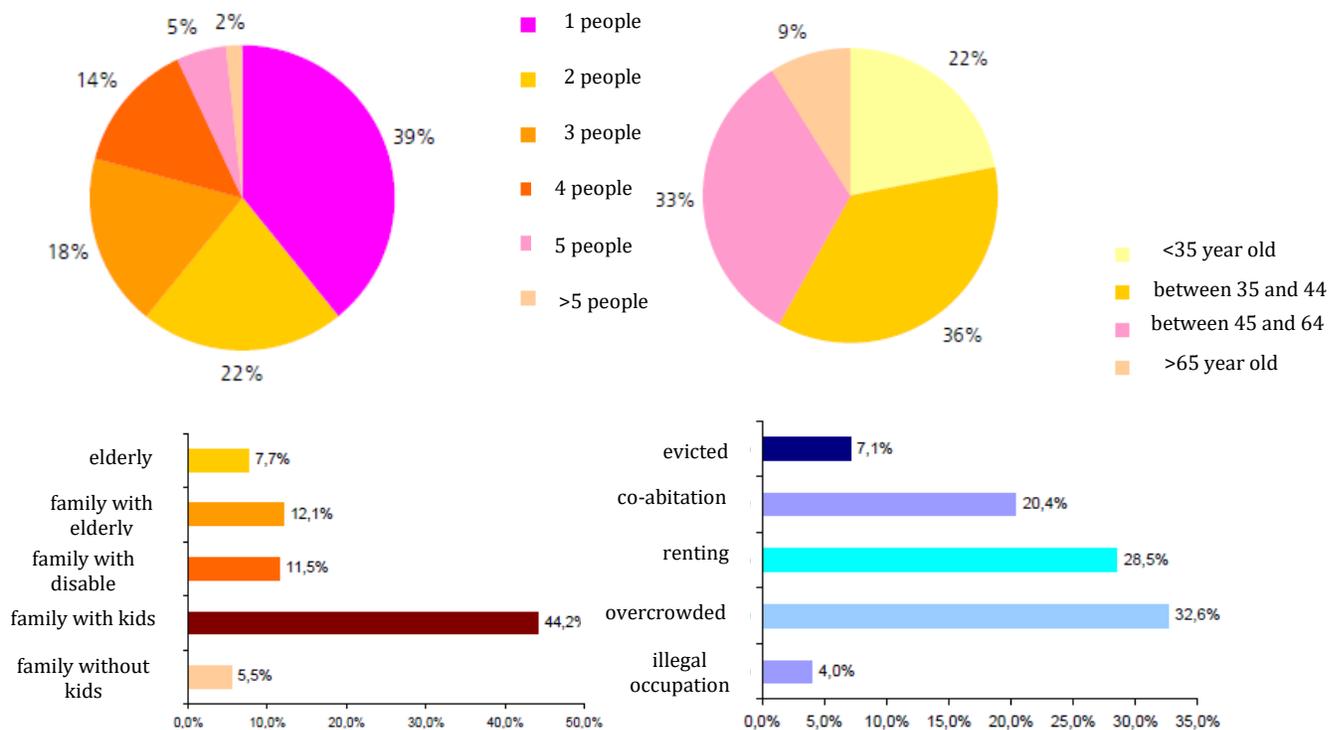
Figure 7. Total amount of social housing demand in Milan Province 2009-2018

	Comune di Milano	Provincia di Milano escluso capoluogo	Provincia di Milano
Low-income Social housing demand 2009-2018	133.724	147.342	281.066
Middle-income Social housing demand 2009-2018	59.896	83.301	143.197
Private housing demand 2009-2018	34.799	102.228	137.027
Totale	228.419	332.871	561.290

Source: Boatti, 2007 elaboration data.

The technical document of Milan Municipality : "a look at the demand for housing in Milan" in 2007, shows some analysis, qualitative as well as quantitative, that categorizes the various types of residents that request the social housing apartments. The analysis is related to the number of members of households, the applicants age, the presence of vulnerable people in the family or housing conditions, shows also an overview characterized primarily by the presence of family components, but also families with young children, who often asking the Municipality a home for special conditions. The following figures illustrates with the situation of social demand. The scarcity of public offer also affects the mobility and replacement of housing, which should be the main features of the public housing characteristics, by definition for rent and low cost (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. ERP Demand 2007, number of family components, age and typology of nuclear family.



Source: Milan Municipality, 2007.

The social demand in conclusion emerges as exclusion in structural, the poor families are associated to a social and housing problem and this issue its persistent over time, which is not only structural, but also related to social disaggregation, which for many converged reasons represent a housing problem, especially for migrant people with large families who are illegally occupied the housing public properties¹³.

5. The public housing policies

The approaches of housing policies have been ineffective in responding to a substantial demand and are often experimental that contribute to postpone the

¹³ TOSI A., The housing: the risk and exclusion, 1994, F. Angeli

housing need solutions, characterized by heterogeneity and temporality. It shows the absence of a clear comprehensive policy strategy with long-term. Over twenty years we are witnessing the retraction of the public administration, that

always put as an excuse the cut of the public funds in order to get out of the housing problem. The lack of economical resources has moved the public administration to turn to private support as participants in the housing interventions since the nineties, when the mechanisms of production of public housing have undergone a deteriorated process.

5.1 An alliance with the private sector

The preferential way that the administration deal with public housing, in a period of degradation, sale and scarce resources given by funding cuts to local levels, seems to be the policy based on the controversial "social housing". The instrument is characterized by the participation of the private sector in the urban transformations (public private partnership - PPP), as the only actor who can take the charge of building residential housing agreement, under the absence of public resources. The controversial results are being discussed in the academic world¹⁴, but the public opinion still believes that this is the instrument to pursue for a revitalization of housing policies. The social housing in practice translates into the participation of public and private actors, already existing in the PII of the nineties: the public sector provides the land, that will be constructed for private sector, that some of building residences will be for low rent than the market. Comes into play here the private sector: the construction of standard residences with high quality, offers accommodations close to the prices of free market and identifies specific categories of beneficiaries, out of the

¹⁴ TOSI A., *The housing: the risk and exclusion*, 1994, F. Angeli

ranking of ERP. The Projects of "Living in Milan 1", a housing program based on a workshop of Urban Planning and Policy, held at the Politecnico di Milano, have been analyzed in detail by the students, from the design, to its criticality, from implementation to the final work in 2012. During the implementation phase and completion of the project and the allocation of the tenants, the tower and the available apartments have been inhabited with enormous sacrifice, even after many months of the final work of the project. The criticality lies both in the fact that this category does not appear to be for social housing, and the lack of one of the main principles of the project "Living in Milan 1", which was supposed to be the "social mix".

The goal of creating low-cost in the program of social housing "Living in Milan 1", takes the controversial aspects especially related of the "social mix" subject and the supply of low-cost housing to solve the emergency of housing need. On the other hand, the collaboration with the private actors allows the implementation of new housing projects with high quality of urban planning, such as the design of "Living in Milan 1" project has shown, with the collaboration of the Politecnico di Milano University and an international design competition. The crisis in the residential construction sector puts companies in a position to ask the Milan Municipality some incentives that until today are not guaranteed, such as the free transfer of the land to be built by the private sector, in order to reduce the cost of construction and to support the intervention. For the program "Living in Milan 1", the problem is different, as the areas of intervention are not for residential but dedicated to standards, services, but also is registered the difficulty of completing the interventions for a lack of funds. If the Municipality of Milan grant for free of charge the land to the private actors for residential construction, signing an agreement with the developer, the prices will be lower than those of the market, resulting an increase of the supply, while the private would have more chances of economic support in the project interventions. In the current situation, in

order to build, a company faces more expenditure items: the cost of land, the cost of remediation, the cost of materials and workers. The first appears to them as the one to be eliminated, given the high mortgages to pay to the banks and given the crisis that leads to a large amount of unsold apartments.

Social actors of the third sector for years now collaborate with the Milan Municipality in housing policies, in different forms and contributions, especially in urban regeneration projects at the neighbourhood level. They are cooperatives and non-profit organizations whose requirements and basic features of commitment, for a large part of voluntary, are social issues (psycho-physical discomfort, immigration, social exclusion, drug addiction, large and new types of families) related to the broader theme of living: it is of research interest to understand what role the social actors play in social housing policies, after years of experience¹⁵.

6. Approach and Method

In the first place, it is important to observe that the field research has been an indispensable step because we noticed, for instance, the scarcity of specific scientific publications, especially related to informal occupation in Milan. The approach for this research was basically oriented towards a qualitative dimension. The study involved preliminary investigation, theoretical discussion and literature on secondary information, data collection and analysis. Field data and desktop research was obtained from adequate photographic portfolio, from semi-structured interviews directed to key informants chosen in relation to their direct past and present involvement in the public housing issue, who given their knowledge that would enable us to better understand

¹⁵ CELA M.C., CORADI L., TRAVAGLINI S., The housing policies for the urban and social riqualfication in the neighbourhoods.

the situation of informal occupation and to test the perception and degree of attention paid to the phenomena, from local authorities as well as information and important data in the field work. The interviews' purpose was to use conversation, discussion, as well questioning, to provide insight on the investigation themes. It was also of interest to find out in what ways a participant's "voice" might questioning assumptions, about the impact of informality in public housing properties. The informants to be interviewed were chosen purposively. This was based on their past and present involvement in the issue, on their different context and workplace, besides their willingness to be interviewed.

7. Shadow occupations in Milan

The houses that are illegally occupied constitute almost 7% of all public housing. The most popular neighbourhoods are also the most targeted by shadow occupations (see Picture 12). The delay of payment in the social homes of the municipality is about 40%. Almost 30% of the houses are being renovated for degradation maintenance. The phenomenon of illegal occupation in public housing (hybrid-informality) can become a trigger for strong social tension and conflict concerning both the public institution and the formal residents (which can be forced to guard their own house or cover the costs of service charges for those people who illegally occupy the accommodation), the conflict can also cover even people in the waiting list for public housing, who try to access housing on formal procedures and because of informal occupations they are unable to secure access. These tensions, together, can therefore be an element of negativity for the safety of the public housing environment, that involves families in informal conditions, with serious economic and social difficulties.

Another cases of shadow occupations in Milan, are informal spontaneous occupations in problematic areas. According to Paulo Cottino (2003), he indentified some shadow

occupation in abandoned industries, residual gardens, dismissed public buildings, isolated shantytown areas, street informal markets, etc (see Picture 2). In relation to illegal occupation in abandoned industries or deteriorated buildings in Milan, he detected that most occupants are immigrants people (East Europe, South America, North Africa and Middle East). They try to create some collective association and strategies within them as a resilient strategy under adverse situations, that help in the improvement of their living condition and organization of their tasks in the abandoned building. It is a kind of solid and structured relationship network in which everybody supports each other. Major old buildings are targeted by these occupants, as Cottino (2003:32) observed: "we stay in Isonzo street, we found a garden and then we saw an old building of huge dimensions, obviously it is abandoned and used as a habitable shelter for immigrants". Shadow occupations in Milan is also located in residual and dismissed areas. For example, older neighbours occupied for many years dismissed areas close to their place of living in order to use the space as urban gardens ("orti urbani") with some additional informal settlers. After the Municipality of Milan denominated them "illegal occupants", they wanted to remove the historic urban garden in order to use for another building purposes (real estate development) with the cooperation of some new neighbours. Another example is when some immigrants took an isolated area (case of via Bofandini), and they transformed it for living. They built their own homes, worked on informal markets and formed social places for meeting in and outside of the occupied area.

On the other hand, the Municipality of Milan and police officers wanted to play roles of controller and administrator of the public apartment after the occupation happened. Diversity, reciprocity between occupiers (who are from different countries) and cultural exchange are the characteristics of this phenomena.

Picture 2. An illegal occupation in the storage area of a building



Source: Author's picture, 2014

Picture 3. An illegal occupation in a deteriorated "portineria" (control area).



Source: Author's picture, 2014

However, the situation elicits informal mechanisms that is vulnerable to police interventions anytime. In a situation obviously precarious (see Picture 3), uncertain and constantly at risk, as it is considered an illegal occupation in a public housing, the life in these buildings of these people is short and always involves informal procedures and many social conflicts in the area, especially with the formal residents. Public authorities cannot handle the uncontrolled growth of the informal occupation, consequently they are forced to relocated or completely evict the informal occupants (Cottino, 2003). Most of the cases, the Municipality of Milan was never interested in recovering dismissed areas, until they realize about the potentiality of these places. It is clear that this kind of occupations in residual areas for living purposes involves the internal solidarity and spontaneous exchange of the informal occupants, an internal social organization is formed in order to solve the conflicts of tenancy. Spontaneous formations of settlements in residual areas of the city are developed because of the lack of public order and inaction of policies by authorities. There is a difficulty of finding answers through regulatory channels in the city of Milan. Residual spaces, marginal areas, abandoned areas, unresolved spaces, border areas, and also ordinary places in the public housing apartments (see Picture 4, 5, 6) are problematic areas that can be considered as potential areas for shadow occupations in Milan, which is a complex problem that authorities must be considered if they want to study the actual territory.

Picture 4. The serious condition of living for an illegal occupier.



Source: Author's picture, 2014

Picture 5. Some remains of the illegal occupation.



Source: Author's picture, 2014

Picture 6. A door was forced by the illegal occupiers in Turchino neighbourhood



Source: Author's picture, 2014

7.1 The story of Nicola Pirola

Pensioner (retired), living in Via Demonte 8A, int 1 (Zona 9-Milan)

Public Housing in Ca' Granda Nord area (Via Demonte 8, Milan), December 2014

Picture 7. Nicola Pirrota, Pensioner



Source: Author's picture, 2013

Since what time have you been living in Demonte Public Housing? Why and how you decide to move in this specific Public Housing?

I have been living here since the 2000, thirteen years ago. I left my house located in via Largo, close to this neighbourhood, after my wife passed away. Then my friends who lived in this public housing (illegal occupants came from Southern Italy) told me that there were some available apartments, but this place in particular was completely empty. I told myself: "Let's move to this place!". While this building was in the process of restructuration, I took advantage and I decided to move here. I was convinced that living here, I would find a most suited place where I could live the rest of my living days.

What is your current situation?

I am an illegal occupier of this place. From 2000 to 2009 I used to pay 25 euros per month to the official manager at that time for my occupation, but from 2009 until now I do not pay anything because I cannot afford the monthly cost of 290 euros that ALER

ordered me. My income is just 430 euros per month. Since I lived here, I keep very clean, organized and maintain not only my apartment, also this public building.

What is the attitude of the Municipality or Aler in related to your situation?

After one year of my occupation, the older manager of public housing (Romeo) with some police officers notified me that I could not stay here, and I have to move to another place. Fortunately, thanks to the intervention of the social assistance at that time, they decided not to come again. When ALER was the manager, a controller came here and he was surprised about the good maintenance of my house, then he indicated to me that I have to pay more for my occupation, he left and never come again. I keep contact with all the Aler administrators that came to this public housing, they know me, because I am the only one who take charge of the improvements and reforms of this building.

How do you imagine yourself in the next 5 years?

That my current situation will change, I do not like to be an illegal occupant of this public housing, especially because I am like the "guardian" of this building. All the people that live in this public housing know me, and they try to contact me if there are problems of maintenance. I am the mediator between these people and ALER. I would like to spend my final days of my life here, already regularized my housing situation and will pay "what it is right" for renting this place.

Picture 8. Nicola Pirrota's apartment seems such another formal occupation.



Source: Author's picture, 2014

Picture 9. Nicola Pirrota's living room area



Source: Author's picture, 2014

7.2. The story of Rosina Pianta

Rossina Pianta, Administrative officer of Housing Policy Sector at the Municipality of Milan (Settore Politiche per la Casa). Milan, December 2013

Picture 10. Rossina Pianta Administrative officer of Municipality of Milan



Source: Author's picture, 2014

In the field of public housing, what are the types of situations can be defined as irregularities in the use of the Property of E.R.P (Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica)?

One case is related to the illegal occupation in E.R.P, but I think this phenomenon is most caused by problems in the administrative and political domain of E.R.P. On the other hand, we have a phenomenon that there are no established regulations yet about the relationship between the Municipality of Milan and the private sector that intervenes in the field of public housing such management of allocation (accreditation) and other domains. Also, the last phenomenon beyond regulations is related to families that rented a social housing dwelling for many years, and their economic condition have improve considerably (they should not have live within public housing, they are supposed to leave since their economic condition exceed the maximum

income parameters) yet they still occupy public housing.

What are the official data relating to illegal occupation in public housing?

Until 2010, we have 2,000 dwellings that are occupied illegally in the public housing of ALER, and 5,000 informal dwellings of 80,000 that belongs to Municipality of Milan and ALER. Most of the people came from the South of Italy, then Morocco, Egyptians and Romanians as the most important groups, mostly families with little children, people less than 35 years old and single people between 35 to 75 years. Not all cases of occupiers are in bad economic conditions, we found cases related to the "mafia", taking advantages of the poor administration and management of the public housing.

In your opinion, what are the problems related to illegal occupation?

Well, this phenomenon creates a conflict in the neighbourhood that the public housing is located. There is a sense of insecurity not only for the people who live in those conditions but also for people within the neighbourhood who find such existence of illegal occupation as a sign of weak administrative control with respect to rules and regulations. Hence neighbours feel a sense of ambiguity and instability about the execution of the law.

What kind of measures have been taken to deal with illegal occupation in E.R.P?

Well, there are two measures to follow: The first one, follows an administrative procedure in order to regulate and evaluate cases that are under really critical conditions, in especially family with little child or rent contract with irregularities. The second one, follow a penalty and judicial procedure, with the cooperation of the Municipality of Milan, ALER, Police Officer and Social Assistance institution in order to relocate (at best case) or evict (at worst case with criminal penalties). Most cases for relocation of informal families have been done because they have been living in serious bad conditions, in which the court decide to bring social assistance and

housing to them. However, Municipality of Milan have been in an unsustainable situation to support these cases, because they on one hand have to attend to families that follow the formal procedures (waiting list) and in the other have to attend or receive informal families to allocate them in one of the social housing.

What do you think could be the possible solutions to deal with illegal occupation in E.R.P?

I think regularization of illegal occupiers is not permitted, because there is strict regulation against informality and also because it is unfair for people who follow rules. What is important is try to prevent the phenomenon, and intervene in the exact moment of occurrence of the illegal occupation in public housing of Milan's Municipality and ALER.

7.3 The policies adopted

In terms of legal recognition; the Regional Regulation 27/2009 and n.3/2011, art. 15 (Lombardia Region) deals with cases of irregular administration (those who have failed to comply promptly with all the bureaucratic steps required for a public housing) concerning situations of established living in the housing unit through the definition of new contracts of tenancy (temporary rent) and the personal evaluation for a fee that takes into account the economic conditions of the family and the characteristics of the property. ALER has already identified 350 dwellings by activating the concrete process of regularization, and the Municipality of Milan for another 150 dwellings. However, this regularization process is only for people who play by the rules, waiting for their turn in the ranking municipal, not for people who occupy illegally a public housing unit which is the majority of shadow occupations in Milan (www.comune.milano.it). There are no regulations that deals deeply with the situation of illegal occupation, because of the strictly norms such as the article 633 of the Italian Criminal Code, which

states: "whoever arbitrarily invade other people's land or buildings, public or private, in order to occupy or otherwise draw profit, is punishable, upon complaint of the offense, with imprisonment up to two years or a fine ranging from 103 to 1,032 euros. The penalties apply jointly and proceed to the office if the offense is committed by more than 5 people armed, or by more than 10 people without arms". Exception such as the case of "illegal occupants for need", is under evaluation by a commission which will consist of municipal leaders, trade unions and experts, contrary to the case of the "mafia illegal occupiers", in which they will lose the right to housing and will be evicted and punished (www.repubblica.it). In terms of urban redevelopment; ALER has an obligation to protect their own public buildings and the others buildings of the Municipality of Milan. However, ALER verified some "soft" illegal occupations. If ALER is unable to reach the most problematic illegal occupations, it returns with the police or the Municipality of Milan, but if some social protection institution for the occupants are involved (as often happens), the situation is passed into the hands of the State Police and Court. There are two types of evictions: the eviction as soon as the home is occupied, and the eviction when the occupation is consolidated. In addition, a security door, made of concrete (see Picture 11) instead of the usual metal plate (see Picture 12) which has always been, and often in vain, is walled up at the entrance; which is the new strategy to combat the illegal occupation. Then, the apartment is assigned to the prospective tenant from the beginning of the work of renovation of the house that has just been released. These are the new rules of the Municipality of Milan for public housing managed by ALER against illegal occupation and, in general, in order to expedite the processing for the allocation of social housing to those who qualify in the waiting list. The meaning of the operation is to accelerate the assignments to those who are on the list, perhaps for years (www.cronacamilano.it). In planning terms; the Region of Lombardy works on certain strategies for prevention and management of the problem of illegal occupation. For prevention, an alarm

system is created (ALERTA) for those who force the entrance of a public accommodation and reduction of the number of free accommodations in the public housing. In addition, organized evictions and daily inspections have been done (Regione of Lombardia, 2013).

Picture 11. A concrete door were built for prevention



Source: Author's picture, 2014

Picture 12. A metallic door was built for prevention

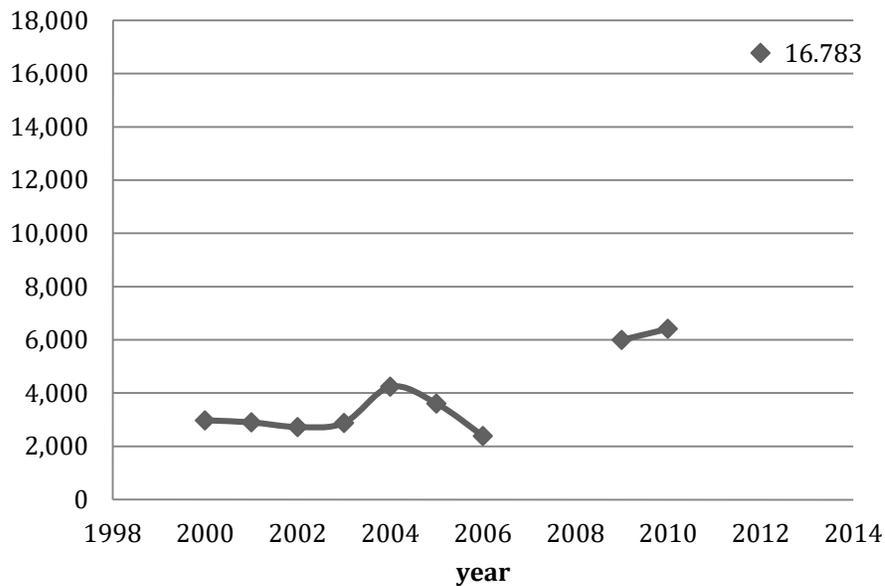


Source: Author's picture, 2014

7.4 The evicted

In 2012, has reached an increased number of families in Milan that lost their public apartments because of the condition of delay rent payments (see Figure 9). There are 10,372 evictions and 16,783 evictions with pending resolution. In order to make a comparison with the numbers of 2010, we observed a clear difference, the data indicated 6416 evictions with pending resolution and 1,159 evictions. Fifteen years ago, in the late 90s, the evicted for rent were just one of ten families, while today this is considered as a primary problem, that characterized the 90% of the total families, and is defined technically as an "innocent" delay payment, that comes from a sudden change in economic conditions, because of job loss, which became the impossibility of paying the rent.

Figure 9. Data of evicted in Milan from 2000-2012



Source: Interior Ministry and Milan Municipality; Sunia-Sicet elaboration data

In addition to this high numbers with an increase tendency in recent months, of thousands of homeless families, the supply public apartments for emergencies only offers few hundred houses per year, however its exceeding by more than double for public assignments. From a thousand apartments of E.R.P. per year, almost 300 apartments are given according to the rank list and around 700 are reserved for evicted emergency list. Furthermore, according to this situation, the issue is the accumulation in the list of emergency with unanswered resolution, consequently many families usually do not have another option than to sleep in the car or in a tent: these cases were registered in the local daily news (see Figure 10)

Figure 10. Homeless family new

A due passi dalla Milano del lusso, una famiglia è costretta a vivere in auto

Sono in quattro e da oltre un anno, 22 settembre 2011, sopravvivono dentro una grigia Nissan Primera in attesa di un alloggio popolare

Source: "Milano Today" - 25.09.2012

It is clear, the presence of an extreme condition of living precariousness, which is increasingly exacerbating in a situation of economic crisis and demographic change. The retirement, a precarious work, separation or divorce and decrease of the components of a family, the income cut, the fragmentation of social networks: typical ingredients of a metropolitan society that carry more and more 'instability, to the housing metamorphosis housing with a lack of available emergencies apartments. In borderline cases, these dynamic lead to the increase of the waiting list of the homeless, who are estimated to be 13.1151 in Milan, or even in illegal occupation (there is an estimation of 4,000 in public housing) or those who depend of Milan Municipality accommodation list according to the structural system of payment. Moreover, it is a situation of widespread impoverishment, that counts in 2011 an increase of the needy people who have turned to the Red Cross, approximately 12% per year¹⁶. The demographic dynamics are an element that contributes in creating the need for housing and often the same discomfort that leads to eviction. A big challenge is to accommodate a growing number of families with very particular characteristics such young children as a head of the members of the family but no longer able to support the fee of the private rent. Half of all families living in Milan are composed by a single person (not a couple), whether young or elder person (about a third of the total

¹⁶ <http://www.cronacamilano.it/cronaca/18145-allarme-poveri-a-milano-per-la-cri-gli-indigenti-sono-oltre-50mila>.

amount), or single professionals living in the city for work, or immigrants with no family in search for a better life. These new family composition has more percentage than married couples or families with children, which means that the city of Milan is the "city of singles." These revelations, were reported in the local news (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. A single family in Milan

Milano si conferma capitale dei single

Il numero dei single è in continua crescita: ora supera il 50% dei cittadini milanesi. Si tratta di giovani, separati e anziani

Sono giovani professionisti che pensano solo alla carriera
anziani rimasti soli, adulti separati

La città delle persone che vivono da sole A Milano una famiglia su 2 è un single

La sociologa: fenomeno svuotamento. Il demografo: effetti anche da sanatoria stranieri
di TERESA MONESTIROLI

Source: "Aciclico.com"- 11.08.2012/

A housing condition and the type of the components of a family must be analyzed and taken into consideration by the public administration especially because of their fragility: marginal individuals in the labour market, such as working students, temporary workers, pensioners or immigrants. Under the conditions of delay payment and then cases more extreme that arrive to eviction, usually in private apartments, because is the market most widespread for rent in the city, but also the public operator is not exempt of the phenomenon: there are in Milan more than 700 evictions in 2011 in the public housing¹⁷, which increasingly reflect the intrinsic meaning of the word "public", to take private actions. The eviction reflects the loss of the right to stay in an apartment and reflects the presence of a person who can decide the use of the

¹⁷ Data of habitants of San Siro neighborhood.

apartment. Instead of solve the problem related to delay payment, the Milan Municipality or Aler see the problem in the tenant, which is evacuate the illegal occupation with the support of police officers.

The public building administration, always deteriorated, assumes typical features of private assets rather than perform the function of the service, as an housing tool to tackle the housing and social issues for which it was created. Then, it is creating a case in which citizens are evicted because of their economic or social situation, and on the other hand, the "public" apartments still remain empty. In addition to the composition of a family, the problem of the risk of eviction remains in families with only one income who have lost their jobs. In Figure 12, indicates a series of cases for evictions brought to public attention through newspapers, due to the type of eviction and act of resistances act, resulted by radical protests or social movements with security forces in case of public damages. The evicted were performed in part as a motivation for illegal occupation, even as risk the connotation of eviction.

Figure 12. Evicted in Milan, examples cases from 2011 to 2013

Area	Date	Habitants	Type Accomodation	Against illegal occupation	Presence of police officers	Protest
Borsi 10	25 october 2011	5 families	Aler	Comitato di Lotta Casa e Territorio Ticinese	yes	yes
Pascarella 20	8 november 2011	5 families	Community apartments	Public administrator	yes	yes
Neera chiesa rossa	12 july 2012	50 people	due scale Aler	Social center Cantiere, Comission of S.Siro	yes	yes
Preneste, San Siro	22 october 2012	Family	Aler	Social center Cantiere, Comission of S.Siro	yes	yes
Lope de Vega 15	6 november 2012	Family with 3 kids	Municipality	Vigilance and control system to illegal occupation	yes	no
Cavezzali 11	17-28 january 2013	4 evicted	Private	Comitato di Lotta Casa e Territorio Ticinese	no	yes
Salomone, Mecenate	19 february 2013	2 evicted	Aler		yes	yes
Lorenteggio	21 february 2013	Family with 3 kids	Aler		yes	

Source: Local news data from the San Siro and Ticinese neighborhoods, 2011

The individuals found in the public apartments under this condition are increasingly composed by entire families, which can hardly be identified as criminals who illegally occupy the house as an escape of life responsibilities, or as a purpose of breaking the law and steal the place to those who are waiting under formal channels for a public home. Often those involved in the illegal occupation are recorded in the ranking of ERP and they are waiting for years for a formal housing solution with no any answers by the public administration, and not being able to pay a rent: are defined for this "occupants for necessity." The newspaper Cronacamilano.it¹⁸ brings some news of how it evolved the public debate around the issue since the last administration, but still is not very clear the housing policies that will be adopted. One more tool in the meantime has been added to address this issue, which was established in 2012, a Commission with the task of judging which are actually the real state and condition of these "occupants" in which the public administration should take charge of the public management in a more housing perspective than a public policy transgression.

The evicted persons are an indicator of an increasing signal of housing emergency issues, in the sense of an exponentially problem intensified in recent months with significant relevance¹⁹. On the other hand, this is takes into consideration as a category that assumes a structural characterization and not more as an emergency. By young people who make the transition to adulthood, leaving the house temporally, and students or temporary workers who live outside the home by paying an unsustainable

¹⁸ <http://www.cronacamilano.it/cronaca/18289-sgombero-abusivi-milano-case-popolari-pisapia-corregge-il-tiro-delle-dichiarazioni-dell-assessore-alla-casa-occupare-e-reato-commenti.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.cronacamilano.it/cronaca/15395-emergenza-sfratti-milano-unione-inquilini-chiede-l-intervento-immediato-del-comune-dettagli.html>

http://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/2012/10/19/news/sfratti-44856857/?inchiesta=%2Fit%2Frepubblica%2Frep-it%2F2012%2F10%2F19%2Fnews%2Fitalia_sotto_sfratto-44857241%2F

rent with the economical support of the family, you cannot now speak more as a temporary condition, it takes a more permanent approach over time and in need of radical responses of housing policies.

7.5 The story of Ermanno Tritto

Ermanno Tritto, Staff Coucillor of Municipality of Milan House and State Property of Milan Municipality, Charge of illegal occupations in ERP. December 2014

Picture 13. Ermanno Tritto, Coucillor of Municipality of Milan



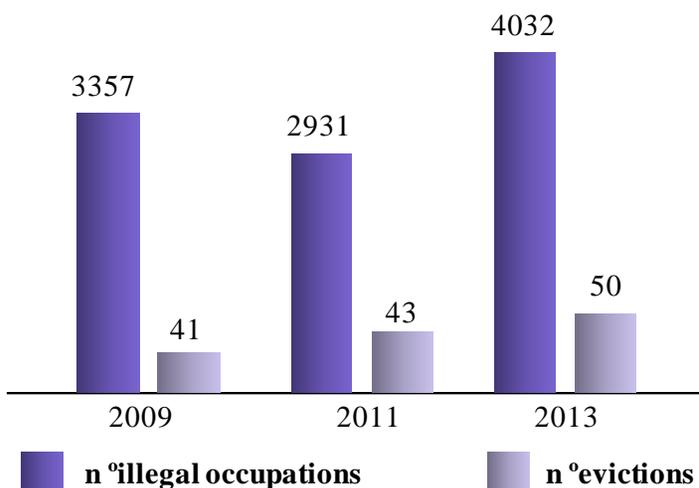
Source: Author's picture, 2014

What are the official data relating to illegal occupation in public housing? What are the profiles of the majority of illegal occupiers?

According to our recent elaboration data which included the information of Aler, I in 2013, we have 4032 dwellings that are occupied illegally in the public housing of ALER and Municipality of Milan, in 2011, we have 2931 and in 2009 we have 3357 illegal occupied dwellings, which we can said that the number of occupation have been increased. However in relation to evictions, we have 100 officially evicted dwellings,

20 more than 2011 (see Figure 13). The majority of the people who illegally occupied a dwelling do not have an established employment, they lose their jobs. People who have families with children. Most people came from South Italy (65%) and the rest foreigners (35%).

Figure 13. Number of illegal occupations and evictions in Milan E.RP from 2009-2013



Source: Municipality of Milan - Department of House and State Property (2013)

What type of approach has been used to deal with the problem of illegal occupation in E.R.P (Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica)?

In general, most of these people who have illegally occupied can regularize through the Law 27/2009, only if they have the requirements of income to apply for public housing. The other approach is when we found criminals groups within the illegal occupations, people who create mafias in order to get an empty dwelling and provided it to needy people (after they pay to the mafias). The State Police took action about that in order to evict and punish after we notify them, and also to the social assistance. For cases that the illegal occupation was recent, there a call line, known as "ALERTA" through which the neighbours can call if they saw somebody occupied an

empty dwelling. Then, the inspectors will verify the illegal act and even if they manage to throw them out, (with an exception of pregnant women or families with little children, in which the inspectors call the social assistance and verify that they are in really precarious conditions).

What are the legal tools to take action in this context?

As I said, we have the Regional Law 27/2009 art 34,8, illegal occupiers can be regularize only if they have the income requirements that E.R.P established. There is a Commission (Tribunale) that evaluates the documents through an administrative procedure and decide if it is possible to regularize. Most people came from a very fragile social profile.

What kind of planning strategies will Municipality of Milan use for illegal occupations?

Ok, the first thing is to prevent free accommodations in the public housing. In other words, all of them have to be occupied (formal channels). Moreover, the Municipality of Milan with this administration is doing a planning operation of organization and reorder to almost 2, 500 existing empty accommodations. In some cases, we have resistant doors made of concrete or metal to avoid illegal occupations. In addition to this, ALER, has implemented an alarm system that linked with the door, when somebody tries to force the entrance, immediately the alarm is activated and connected with the State Police. On the other hand, in cases of consolidated occupations, our plan is try to go through the channels of formalization of illegal situation only in cases that are outside of criminal mafias. Otherwise, they have to be evicted and sanctioned drastically.

Looking ahead, what kind of approach would you want to take for the same problem?

Personally, the situation is very fragile now because of broader cases where people are

unemployed and living in precarious conditions on one hand, while there are also other people that take advantage of the necessity of the others. The illegal occupation will be a difficult phenomenon to manage, the welfare mechanisms have to be changed, in the sense that under a state of necessity, the state must act immediately. For me, is better to prevent the phenomenon, by replying as soon as possible when the phenomenon occurred. In the political level, I think the state should modify their paternalistic and patronage role.

8. The social movement for housing in Milan

8.1 The occupation was a right in 70's

In the years of protest and social consciousness awakening, which is symbolically started in 1968, had as protagonists the young generations, which aimed to revolutionize profoundly the society structure starting from students and then with the workers out of national borders. These were the years of emancipation and validation of the rights for all: from the labour movement to the student movement, the feminist movement to the housing issue antifascism. The level of social conflict around the housing issues was very high, and even academic circles were in solidarity with the illegal occupiers: the faculty of Architecture at the Milan Polytechnic was occupied for a long time, developing forms of teaching self-managed, based on the importance reasons of social aspects in the architecture as well as in the urbanism²⁰. These were the years of class struggles against power, manifestations and collective occupations for residential purposes, which was preceded the creation of social centers. As an exemplary symbol of the struggles in Milan, is the historical Leoncavallo,

²⁰ AGUSTONI A., Housing policies, conflict and urban transformations, Ancona 2008.

ASCARI G., GUARNACCIA M., Milano. Story, legend, mystery and variety, Milano, RCS, 2010.

occupied in 1974, and even before, in 1969 took place the first general strike for housing which was followed by numerous occupations²¹. Those were years when even the representation of political parties and trade unions took an essential value and unavoidable in shaping a certain type of claims. Those were the years of ideology and state massacres, which in Milan, militants of left and right, members of the social anti-fascism against neo-fascist anti-fascism were debated in Piazza Fontana. The objectives and the claims were brought in themes about housing issues: more than truly improve the living conditions of the social members, meant to use them as a political way and transform the house issues in a universal right. The Milan of the seventies offered various testimonies for the right to housing, which had heard because of radicalism in the conflict as a very incisive perspective on both the urban landscape and the political aspect. The characteristics of illegal occupations in Milan since the 60's and 70's were related to mass claims, characterized politically proclamations, etc. From a phase very intense by students and workers, were continued by popular houses in peripheral areas in which played an important role, the extra-parliamentary group "Lotta Continua" but also "Proletarian Left", while in the central areas of Ticino and nearby "University degli Studi" were stabilized the place for the new left, in which the protagonists were "Workers Vanguard", "Workers Movement for Socialism" and the anarchists, as well as others related to the house issues such "Tenants Union" or the "Committee of Struggle for Housing and Territories" in the Ticinese neighbourhood (see Picture 14). In the late seventies, the movement for illegal occupation of houses united with the "Circles of the Youth Proletariat". A decline of the phenomenon occurred since the 80's, characterized by a dark period of terrorism in Milan, with all the repression actions that stopped any attempts of occupation and also of evictions, a profoundly struggle was happened in the two historical social centers Conchetta and

²¹ DI BATTISTA V., Building environment: a secon paradigma, Alinea Editrice, 2006.

Leoncavallo in 1989. However, another wave of student and social center occupations as places for artistic experimentation and music, alternative culture and self-production, arrived with the collective group "Panther", concentrated in another working-class popular neighbourhood in the area of Garibaldi, characterized by building speculation and large redevelopment and gentrification process. The organization for occupation self-management was necessary and should have been effective. During the 90's, the occupation movement in the neighbourhood of Ticinese was not stopped. The protest for a housing right continued to be pursued vigorously in this central area, but over time it becomes less and less popular: the number of evictions were increased in order to make place for bars, pubs and students who rent rooms for 700 euro to month.

Picture 14. Ticinese social movement



Source: <http://www.anarca-bolo.ch/a-rivista/337/27.htm>

8.2 The mobilization now

The 90's in Milan was the end of the movement for social housing understood as the demand of housing right for all people. It was not verified anymore massive illegal occupations behind the leadership of political organizations, as it had been in the

previous two decades. The fall of ideologies, social demographic changes, the conscious pressure about the impossibility of changing the world with their own hands, along with the disillusionment of political parties representation, were the main causes of the disappearance of mobilization. The movements from the 70's were able to bring their claims and rights on the public agenda²². In order to tackle the housing issues that still will continue in the follow years, the public administration take as a strategy the adoptions of public-private partnerships. The evidence of housing issues that still not resolved can be summarized in two data: the number of evictions in 1993 was 22,000, in which were performed 4 or 5 per day; and the number of public housing apartments occupied by squatters in 1989 reached closed to 3,500²³. Two other factors seem important to emphasize, in the transition from a wider conflict phase to a latent conflict phase (Melucci, 1996) and also weak which seems perpetuate during twenty years in Milan. The first factor is the split within the movement, which directly followed the fall of ideologies, leading to the creation of more extremist fringes and other more moderated. The second factor concerns to repressions, which began first with the attempted eviction of Leoncavallo in 1989, with an organized guerrilla without exclusion of penal antecedents, then was the evacuation and re-occupation of the social center of Conchetta, and the whole repressive series with self-management actions, often at the cost of compromises that change the line path objectives and the progressive separation of the social groups to a more autonomous perspective.

8.2.1 The public housing project

The first category includes self-managed housing projects that are embedded in a broader meaning of "house living": residences reserved primarily to individuals who

²² AGUSTONI A., Housing policies, conflict and urban transformations, Ancona 2008.

²³ TOSI, The house, the risk and the exclusion, 1994.

have been restructured abandoned buildings and according to their experiences, these spaces have been started from the solid base concept of a community, in which it is engaged a program based on places of common life. These are two cases that represent this aspect: "The Artists' House" and "Casa Morigi", who were included in a kaleidoscope of different reality, different groups and housing issues have been taken into consideration thanks to the existence of a "liberated" space (means a recovered space) and returned to self-managed initiatives. Two cases are taken as examples for their ability to continue their activities during the last decades, with a recipe of neighbourhood services offer and then opening to the outside, forming at the same time a meeting center of energy that produce culture, political theories, thoughts of living in the city. Two demonstrations that show the ability of self-organization from zero to influence in the liveability of the city and to recover buildings that were abandoned. Two public buildings, the "Artists House" and "Casa Morigi", have been transformed into open places to anyone who wanted to contribute to the life of the building that the administration had left empty and abandoned: from being abandoned by the public sector to a place that embody the meaning of public, in the sense of belonging to all, to the community (see Picture 15).

Picture 15. Casa Morigi



Source: www.milanox.eu, 2012

8.2.2 The commission for housing accommodation

The experiences in the commission for housing accommodation through a large period of time, are covering different historical phases in Milan, and still seem to be based on typical claims of the 70's, "the universal right to housing", with a minimum character of mass mobilization, and assuming different shades depending on events and housing policies have occurred over the years. The committees for the housing right facing housing issues shaped by the policy dynamics, housing heritage management and residential real estate market and also opposing responses outlined by adopting practices that mutate over time. In this period of mutation based on attention and action seem to play an important role of new generations, that arise with new areas of language, practices and imagination, contaminated from past experiences but also from national and international aspects. For example, the case of the Committee "Habitants of San Siro" (see Picture 16), has shown self-management of activities

related to housing, including, illegal occupation, with massive collaboration of young people in social center "Cantiere" and inhabitants of Aler's houses in San Siro neighbourhood.

Picture 16. Committee of House and Territory's claims



Source: www.coordinamento.info , 2012

8.2.3 The collective occupation

The organization of collective occupations collective is based on self-management of hostels and dormitories by students or people in their twenties in which their age of transition towards housing autonomy, away from family life to another solution (see Picture 17, 18). The practice of illegal occupation is supported not only by the claim of the housing right: differs from the experiences of the house committees, going in a direction that wants to bring attention about the problem to youth population most eminently target. Become a housing need those associated with student mobility and sociability that goes to make up a piece in the path of growth and empowerment that now seems to miss in the majority of young people, who cannot get out of the family's home. Far from wanting to be a closed and exclusive solution for activists, these experiences offered temporary housing services and liberated energies that active on

various topics. As examples of this collective occupations were "Metropolix" (from 1998 to 2000), "il postello self-management" (from 2004 to 2009), "Lab zero" (from 2009 to 2011) and "Collectivo Lambretta" (from 2012 until now).

Picture 17. Colletivo Lambreta



Source: www.coordinamento.info , 2012

Picture 18. Il postello



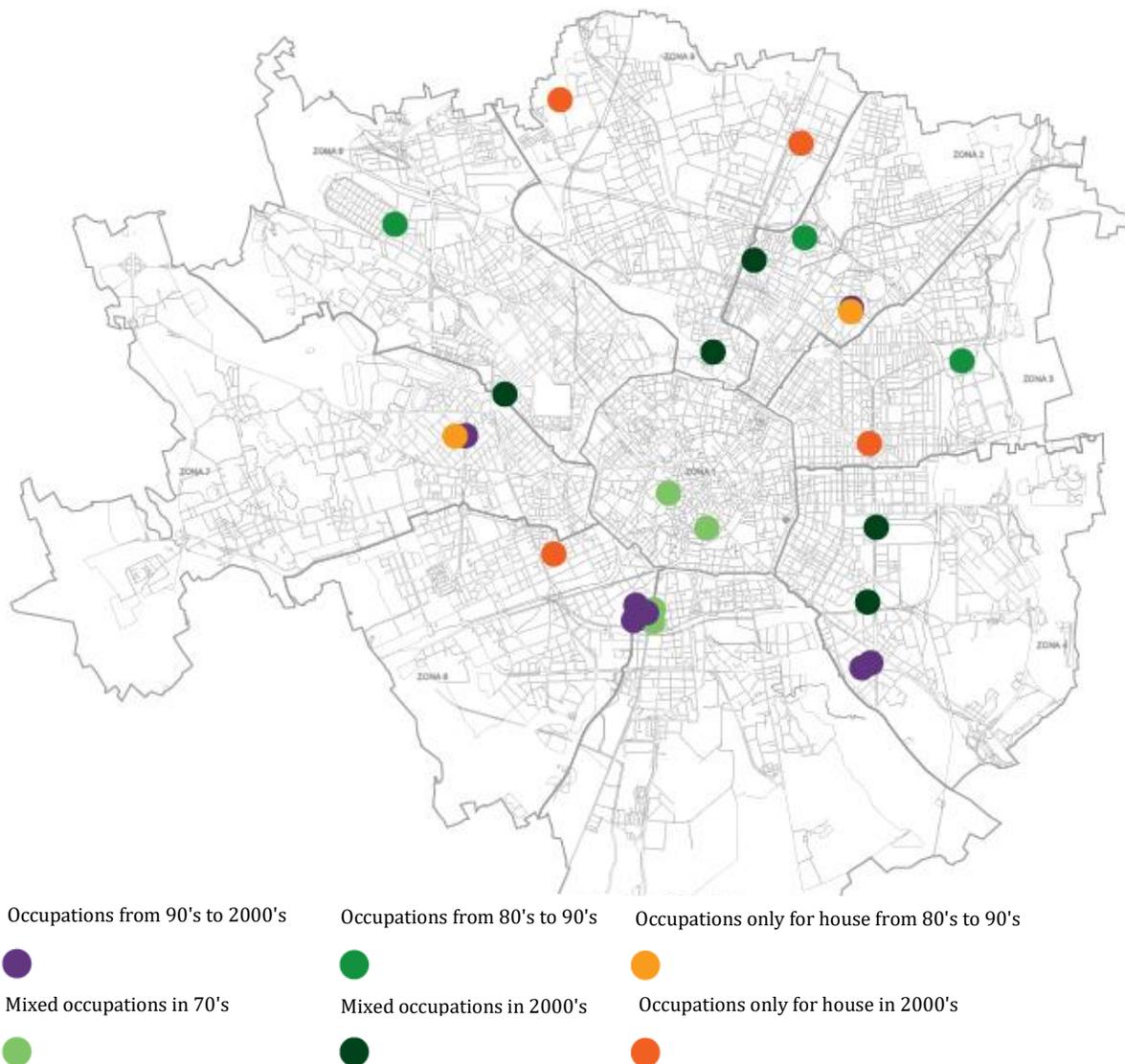
Source: www.postello.realityhacking.org , 2014

8.2.4 Occupation Map

In this section, we present some of the mayor organizations that were mobilized in order to occupy some abandoned buildings in the city of Milan, which also include a variety of experiences that focus on different frames of actions and strategies. In the

following Figure 14, it is observed the different and most important mobilizations of occupation that still exist, which have as their central theme the "public house living", in different scales. In addition, the total amount of actual collective occupations is approximately 116 occupations: an estimation that does not calculate the occupation situation for single apartments with less than three months of permanence. In the same way it is possible that there have been mixed cases, for example in areas such as Ticinese and Corvetto neighbourhoods, the data is summarized as a one neighbourhood (Ascari, 2010).

Figure 14. Collective occupations in Milan



8.3 The voices

Although different forms of creation of the committee: the collective way of living in an occupied building, the creation of a hostel or an student place or the merely live in an occupied apartment, each of these forms constitute a different variation of protest and externalization to the public attention about housing needs. The choice of these modes of living is intrinsically linked to a very clear position that is opposed to the standard models for rent or for property and the proponents of this type of standardized offer. The ability to aggregate a mobilization depends on three factors: the social structure, the political context and the strategy frames and actions (Tarrow, 1998). The capacity of a mobilization to bring an issue on the public agenda is directly connected to its aggregative forces, which depend both on external and internal factors. As the first objective, the protagonists of these experiences are oriented to bring their claims on the public agenda and get the attention of the Milan Municipality and Aler in the housing problem dimensions, which are not sufficiently taken into account and treated by the policies. Bring an issue on the public agenda is a goal of the mobilization. The strength and the challenge are related to put in the table the housing issues to the directors and managers of the housing stock, to oppose to them, trying to get a response, reaction and charges, between their responsibility to hear the voices and solve the housing problems. The first mode to get the public attention about housing issues on the political agenda is through forms of mass protest, as marches and occupations. These modes are more extreme and does not provide any kind of debate or search for dialogue with the institutions, rarely with owners. It is a frame of action that aims to influence in the public opinion, especially in the press, with people who are representatives in the neighbourhood and could join the mobilization. The active Committee of House and Territory of Ticinese since the 70's, has granted an obvious weakness: in the past there were in the neighborhood entire buildings occupied, the population living there was participating in rent strikes, and the reasons were, besides

the presence of the committee as a promoter of the protests, the common basis on which rested the social claims. The public opinion was the same mobilization in which the committee became part of the movement. Today, the same committee, those who have collected the legacy, continues with the same methods, but in mutated social and political conditions. The fragmentation of society no longer allows individuals to share the same goals and interests to be pursued for a house; therefore the Committee of Ticinese, mobilized always the same population, who are now reduced, heterogeneous, and with different issues within them. They live in the homes of public housing, under poverty, in the limits of the eviction, but no influential at the city level, while they are connecting to an existing network, with a long tradition of mobilization. In addition to the fragmentation of social movements, there is also political institutions issues: this government is no longer a clear enemy to face, because it is represented by many forms of coalitions, that get weak the movements (Della Porta, 2013). Also according to Della Porta, the movements are stronger if they have a system to access to the institutions.

The social demographic change and diversification of the situations for housing needs are disperse and fragmented. The living is fragmented as well as the objectives of the population. Move, adapt, or occupy, hiding under the eye of the controlled institutions. A pull of different situations of living, nomads, united from precarious situations, and their resources and energy, but not for externalize and raise their voices related to housing difficulties (La Varra, 2007), but for surviving, they are adapting quietly, not expecting anything more from a housing situation that tends to normalize towards low quality profiles. The adaptive strategies of living together and shared spaces in order to deal with unsustainability of rent, or illegally occupied a house that is left abandoned, are entered into logical output to solve immediately housing problems, reflecting the need to find an immediate answer to a context that, poses severe

limitations of housing choice²⁴. Adapting has become the main strategy in order to face social and economic constraints imposed by a number of trends, such as the fragmentation of society, ideologies and territorial policies. Demographic change, the increase of families and at the same time the spread of families with a reduced number of components with one or two people, allow more individualized housing models. Moreover, the lack of traditional representation in today's society has been widely studied by researchers as Donatella Della Porta, Mario Diani, Tommaso Vitale in research of social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 1997) and other committees of citizens (Della Porta, 2004) and local mobilizations (Vitale, 2007). In Milan, as discussed in the examples of the collective protest, as a result of inability, there are still actors catalysing large collective identities, the reality from the bottom suffer from a lack of follow-up by the population that does not feel their own voices. The housing problems in this city is not shown as a valid motivation only underground mobilizations, as it is supported in social mobilizations (Tarrow, 1989; Tilly, 1982; Melucci, 1996, and others). The most common response to the housing problems is the atomized adaptation which is dispersed in the city of Milan, where every collective expression remains confined behind outdated ideals, such as resilient committees for housing, or remains behind the radical nature of occasional protests from most oppositional actors. The majority of the population with housing risk, still living with hesitation in order to reclaim their reasons and needs, crystallizing into furious that still remains weak in the shadows, with no public expressions at all, but absorbed by the mechanisms of the city. Today the youth category suffers housing problems that they do not mobilize according to the reference frames of the protest, with struggles of the past and unable to see the reality of the current housing issues and fragmentation.

²⁴ LANZANI A., GRANATA E., COLOGNA D., NOVAK C., Experiences and housing situations.

It seems to externalize their own needs or adhere to some form of mobilization, they choose an alternative way to protest into streets: this tool is the use of internet or social networks. From the pure relief, the organization "flash mob" (the network rather than aggregate allows individuals to mobilize and disintegrate very quickly in manifestation) prevents the creation of large and permanent mobilizations that in a certain way bring an issue on the public agenda. It is still a social fragmentation that is reflected in the instruments used, while giving the illusion that the virtual participation can turn into reality, and accelerating processes of mobilization and demobilization. The population that does not mobilize in the streets, uses the internet, which actually favors the permanence of a state of protest atomization, absorbing the best cases of anger that remains weak and unexpressed. It seems that the lack of public position from a sector of the population is the mirror of a latent conflict in which at the same time protest weaknesses, influence the recognition of the current housing problems by the institutions ²⁵.

8.3.1 The radicalization

The most radical methods of protest, are those who try to put the housing problem on the public agenda of the government and who do not undertake a way of dialogue with institutions, suffer repression by the institutions, which is derived primarily from an absence of recognition between the two parties in conflict and the ability to be open to dialogue or to a process of negotiation with actors involved, which results that the focus of attention is changed from a housing problem to a problem of public order. The committees that defend the right for housing, such as the Committee of House Ticinese and Inhabitants of San Siro, apply radical practices, going to the limits

²⁵ ...protests seem to be rather well accepted as established ways of making conflicts observable and of influencing political decisions by the citizens." (Mössner, del Romero).

imposed by the legal and institutional system. In their strategies are not including the request for an opening dialogue, but rather a claim to the institutions in which face of a widespread housing crisis, responsible of activate and provide solutions not necessarily discriminating and adapted to the needs diversity of the area. The intensity level of the methods result in forms of protest materialized in: opposition to evictions with physical presence, to prevent the police forces; appropriation of vacant apartments owned by Aler or Milan Municipality; stop individuals against to protest. These are forms of radicals protest that break the order rules in which is established upon today. The principle in which the actors move to a protest is defined by slogans such as: "The house is for who live" and "Stop houses without people, stop people without home" and "The rent is a robbery." The radicalization of the conflict occurs in Milan as a sporadic episode. The Committee of Inhabitants of San Siro, acts immediately when an eviction occurred specially when law enforcement increases in intensity, the response can turns few days with an occupancy of the apartment. Another case is when an eviction still generates an escalation that takes few hours of conflict in Palazzo Marino, with the interruption of a commission between the Milan Municipality and Aler. The radicalization require another concept, for etymological derivation, which is the possession, to take a territory: in Milan and elsewhere, the occupations will continue to succeed, have become practices of living in a certain institutionalized way, even if we discuss the theories made by this mode of life, its often alongside the presence of an unused public property²⁶.

8.3.2 The legality: a tool of two faces

The displacement of the housing problem in the plan of policy management and planning at the legal level of public order has as a direct consequence the lack of

²⁶ MULTIPLICITY, Milan and housing crisis stories, Mondadori, Milano, 2007

responsibility towards the institutions to find appropriate solutions to the housing issue. After some actions of evictions under the protection of the law, the practice of this institutions is to make the buildings fall into a situation of abandonment. In addition, the management of public housing is still in a state of severe inefficiency due to dysfunction by the Aler administration. The lack of political will to confront and radically change the housing situation with different policies, is according also with the lack of economical resources, then it is clear a renewal of the delegation of Aler management. In addition, it emerges also an element of controversy related to restore legality through eviction, besides some empty apartments of public housing that could offer to some families in the waiting list or the irregularly distributions of those apartments by the same manager with little transparent methods²⁷. The police control practices on public apartments, with legalistic reasons, often reveal purposes that have nothing to do with the actual management of the housing issue, it has consequences on the mobilizations for the house. Some works from the police control seek to go beyond legalistic aspect, but as far as the reality shows, there is precarious attempt to build as an autonomous solution. The activation of an apartment, sometimes moves in patterns that do not understand, while requesting it at times, the presence of the institutions, instead are inserted deeply into legal patterns that increase the abandonment and degradation of the public buildings.

8.3.3 The micro actions for marginal groups

Generally the actors who mobilize around the theme of housing, try to support people who turn to them with concrete services through some instruments that came from union committee traditions rather than the actual 'movement'. The committees, since

²⁷ <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/10/10/ndrangheta-in-lombardia-in-pizzino-patto-dei-clan-con-lassessore-zambetti/378263/>

the 70's, have a support base in which they continue to coordinate to some struggles and demands, when is not get too extreme. In these organizations the fundamental component consists in tenants from public housings, with regular or complete illegal occupation, or from families under risk of eviction, or immigrants: all them are related to housing problems in which they can solve by themselves, for example, they are no longer be able to pay for the rent, an increasingly common condition in the city. Comes into play, the help of social activists, with their knowledge resources about the topic and support networks, through some tools such as "sportello casa", which provide information about legal actions that can pursue in order to deal with evictions, and check that whoever requests are not jumping some legal step and look for the most effective ways to postpone or cancel it. It is very helpful the support of "sportello casa", specially related to legal procedures and regulations. The reality of the self-managed services for marginalized groups provide other tools, which for years have been part of the action methods²⁸, for example, the creation of lists of popular assignment for housing, self-management, which provide the self-allocation of vacant public apartments. The practice involves the insertion of families who comes to the committee for empty houses that are occupied.

These services are implemented with illegal practices, which aim to solve existing family's housing needs, services that try to avoid the increasing number of discomfort of families. The purpose of these services also are not limited to legal, related to illegal occupation, beyond this, aggregate people who question their condition and like to live in a collective organization trough sharing problems and resources. This is how is work the practice of mutual support, the free trade of food and clothing for the neighbourhood, which take the form of a local market among the inhabitants. In San

²⁸ DELLA PORTA, ANDRETTA, MOSCA, Social movement and global protest: policy, antipolicy and new policy after September 11th.

Siro's neighbourhood, the committee occupied some public areas in order to open the "C-rise market", a free market of food, clothing, and various articles, where everyone gives what they want and who needs takes also something. In Ticinese's neighbourhood instead, there is a widespread practice among those around the "Committee of House and Territory", which is the collection and sharing of food.

9. Looking at the future

Efforts to solve the problem of illegal occupation in Milan are still in the agenda of policy makers and substantially a core of urban planning measures in Milan. For this reason, after considering the notion of many factors that informal occupation occurred, especially in public housing, and its process of manifestation and protest to informal channels, combined with semi-structured interviews, it is important to indicate some conclusive notes. These notes can make us formulate new codes and considerations to improve the efforts in tackling the phenomenon of informal occupation in Milan.

9.1 Some conclusive remarks

1. Milan, a city of complexity and diversity: there are problematic cases of informal occupation that are widespread and fragmented in the city of Milan, particularly emerging new trends of collective occupation and new typologies of families that access to this channel, such as young people, single parents and extended families. In addition, the majority of illegal occupiers in Milan are Italians (south regions), which totally break the stereotypes that most illegal occupiers are immigrant people (Middle East and East European countries).

2. The social tension: strong social tension, protest and conflict between public

institutions, formal residents, and social-collective mobilizations related to evictions. Over time this patterns continue to change to a for fragmented groups and also the use of new tools, such the internet, especially according to the economic and political transformations of the city. However, there is collective association and resilient strategy within illegal occupants nowadays than in the past.

3. Disassociation in the interventions: between housing policies, there are clear ruptures and isolations, especially between preventing and management, new planning strategies during every administration, that intervene in the informal occupation areas plays quite a little role. In addition, there is disassociation between monitoring the interventions: after evictions, there are useless empty apartments that became more deteriorated since there is no monitoring and evaluating process after restoration works, especially related to maintenance of the infrastructure and public services.

4. Rigidity over flexible alternatives: it is undeniable that the housing policies implemented by the Milan Municipality decisively contribute mainly to deteriorated the public buildings and to increase the number of informal occupiers. There is too much rigidity in the public administration, especially related to housing regulations, for example, after some actions of evictions under the protection of the law, the practice of this institutions is to make the buildings fall into a situation of abandonment, instead of provide those empty apartments to families who really need it. Then, it is clear the two faces of a policy, protection against illegal occupation trough the implementation of armoured doors in the entrance without taking in consideration an increase number of families in the waiting list of Aler that reflect a high demand for social housing. Moreover, Regional regulations allow some illegal occupiers to be formalized only if they are consolidated long time or have a fragile socio-economic

profile while at the same time criminals groups or incipient occupations are detected, evicted and then punished.

5. Little economic resources: the limited economic resources fail to improve social housing market efficiency and public housing participation, but generally fail to find an action in a direction to the real public interest that answer the well-established and emerging housing needs. In addition, the lack of economic resources produce palliative mechanisms that tackle the problem of illegal occupation in public housing properties.

9.2 Some notes to take into consideration

In this last part of the study, and in light of the analysis examined before, these notes try to provide new perspectives to the approaches that can be adopted and translated into virtual practices and experiences of public, and government action in the urban planning domain.

1. Comprehensive understanding of the needy people: cases of illegal occupation show that not only vulnerable basic families with fragile socio-economic profile are participants of an emerging housing need in public properties. There are also fragmented families, one-single parent families and young people that are also vulnerable.

2. Coalitions: the public administration should be open to dialogue, and enable collective groups that are involved with the issue of illegal occupation. Also, Aler and Milan Municipality must be coordinated and work at the same time, an involvement of the private sector and exploitation of the latent energies of people and spaces, in

order to really improve living conditions of public housing properties in social and economic terms.

3. Taking into account flexibility: rigidity in the institutions to tackle the problem of occupations, especially in terms of legal aspects and regulations, tend to aggravate the issue of informality. There are free resources unutilized in the field that can be taking into consideration for a better comprehensive approach.

4. Evaluating performance over time: evaluation about the direction and management of the public housing properties according to statistical and social data. Also, according to an innovative public agenda which allows Milan's voices.

5. Sustainability with our limitations and affordability of the approaches: the lack of economic resources produce difficulties in the provision of administrative operations. It is important to take in consideration the existence of a more fair and sustainable housing market based on informal experiences within vulnerable people and contemplate the payment capacity of informal occupiers in order to cut the temporal situations of them.

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