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The Etiology of Dissent

An empirical case study in the neighborhood of San Lorenzo

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INTRODUCTION

“The history of all hitherto existing society, is the history of class struggles”

(Marx, K.; Engels, F. “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (1848), Ch.1)

What an obsolescent concept has become, *class*.

It seems to be particularly uncommon nowadays to engage in sociological or philosophical onanism around the concept of class.

There is a binary opposition between the latter and theoretical abstractness.

As a matter of fact, it is anchored and deeply embedded in cultural constructs produced by a given society, that doubtlessly contribute to the shared perceptions individuals have and more in general to the framing process. Ervin Goffman defined frames as the schemata of interpretation that enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Snow et al. 1986: 464).

The term “specter” used by Marx in the very beginning of his *Manifesto of the Communist party*, written together with Friedrich Engels in 1848, was probably employed to stimulate either fright or *grandeur*. Nevertheless, it suits perfectly for the sake of our discussion.

Class has nowadays become a shadow-concept, a specter.

Still, we need to decontextualize the term from Marxists cogitations; for a full and complete understanding of the concept, the possibility of semantical bias shall be avoided through the abstraction of the signifier, that shall be taken as it is.

The expression “shadow-concept” seems an idiosyncratic one; still it wants to lay emphasis on the concept of class as being scattered in the very definition of whichever society. Deterministic accounts (such as Marxism for instance), explained action as the result of the shared attributes of a given population (whether a class, a nation, or an otherwise defined group) (Della Porta, Diani, 2006:120). Marx and Engels’s classical structuralism

envisioned collective action as being rooted in the social structure and in society's structural development. And class was a part and parcel in this process. Borrowing the Aristotelian expression of *aitia*, class has been targeted by earlier theorists as a causal explanatory variable.

Still, this account gives a rather simplistic explanation of collective action and more in general of contentious politics, overrating their dependence to ascriptive characteristics. Nevertheless, we cannot engage in exacerbating critiques without taking into account the role of context. Marx and Engels' theory was developed during the industrial era, where workers' unions were the unique associationist form. Therefore class was undeniably a categorical trait essential for mutual recognition.

The allegorical value of contention with respect to the broader society, has been challenged by modernity. A modernity where class and identity appear to be juxtaposed. Manuel Castells underlined how class analysis has witnessed a *de facto* shift of priorities: from class relations within the workplace, to social relations within the urban community.

Drawing on the new challenges and theories brought about by postmodernism in the field of social movement studies, the ultimate aim of this paper will be to explore the causes and dynamics of contention in the popular neighborhood of San Lorenzo, situated in the city of Rome.

Moreover, the focus of this empirical analysis converged on a modern urban social movement, the *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*.

For the sake of academic contingency, the following research paper has been structured according to a triadic partition, still and all a quite peculiar one.

Being it an "autopsy" of a phenomenon, the three chapters have been assigned a title that recalls the medical tradition.

The first chapter is the *etiology* of the phenomenon. "Etiology" in medical terms, stands for the investigation or attribution of a set of causes, or manner of causation of a disease or condition. The etymology of the

term comes from the greek term “*aitia*”, that as we previously mentioned in the analysis, was employed by Aristotle to indicate the profound causes of an event or phenomenon. The role of this first subsection will be both introductory and explicative; we will go through the tortuous historical path of the neighborhood of San Lorenzo. Originally a left-oriented/working-class neighborhood, copious factors contributed to the development of severe pathologies.

Like a Dantean downward spiral, the envisioned scenario, seems a quite desolated one: an urban abyss defined by grief, idleness and despair.

We will explore the ever-changing nature of the district, both a decaying popular neighborhood and a focal point of Roman *movida*, with an annexed increase in speculative activities. A periphery in the core.

The second subsection of this chapter will be consecrated to an assertion of methodological choices employed for the sake of the study, being it an empirical research project.

Methodological pluralism seems to dominate the field of social movement studies. Nevertheless, in this particular study the qualitative approach had gained momentum in our theoretical premises since the very beginning.

The “absence of methodological dogmatism” (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002a, xii) did not hindered a conscientious choice of techniques that will be unveiled later on.

The second chapter delves into the symptomatology observed. Being the most consistent body of this analysis, through the various subsections we will try to achieve a rich knowledge in a typical Weberian *verstehen* flavor. If the first chapter was introductory and explicative, the second one can be considered descriptive and explanatory.

A brief excursus will serve as a prologue to present the various cultures of contention, their evolution and development. Contention is endogenous to the very essence of collective action, that is antagonistic *per se*.

We will explore the literature associated with contention, together with its evolution in performativity; the nature of this subsection is necessary and instrumental for comprehension of postliminary issues.

Additionally, a focus will be placed on the nature and evolution of actors and their new challenges. The postmodern revolution, has *bouleversé* the concept of class as we previously mentioned. The nowadays definitions of underclass and middle-class, are contingent and consequential to economic transformations brought about by the global economy and have produced a tangible speculative conundrum.

Howbeit, our first-hand hypothesis can be considered a theoretical guideline for the findings achieved and inferred from the empirical study. Paramount focus will be placed on the genesis and evidence from the *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*, the utmost subject and object of our study.

Local associationism of the district converged in the *Libera*, proclaimed in 2013. In the “who-to-blame-for” section, citizens have addressed not only the negligence of the municipality, but moreover, the increasing speculation activities that are progressively contributing to the degradation of an already decaying neighborhood.

The powerful concern the *Libera* has with collective and nonmaterial goods, has increased mobilization for the development of collective services in urban areas and for urban renewal.

The most profound and elemental aspects of the assembly, like its inner composition or the degree of deliberation, have come to surface with the help of participant observation. Even though mine was a quite sporadic one (and limited to observation), it has proved to be quite useful.

Most importantly, activists revealed during the interviews their objectives, repertoires (whose evolutionary path will be explored according to Tilly’s model), *engagement* and more.

More pragmatically, we will go through their personal assessment of achievements and fiascos. The *encadrement* in a single context, was a

relief, given that multi-sited ethnographic studies require much more commitment from the researcher. At least, my geographical focus was a quite circumscribed one.

At last, we will analyze the perception citizens of the neighborhood have with regard to this new *co-governance* toward which activists aspire.

Either their enthusiasm or their disillusion, can be vital for the survival of the assembly's role in the district. Co-governance is a purposive end, not merely an illusion; in order for this transition towards co-governance and horizontal subsidiarity to be achieved, a paradigm shift from a regulatory Leviathan State to a partner State seems a paramount necessity.

Will "associated citizens" reach a pivotal role in challenging authorities, or at least increasing the enabling capacity of the state?

The last chapter will be the ultimate diagnostic assessment. The metamorphosis of San Lorenzo into a co-neighborhood is a quite peculiar one; still and all the phenomenon is in an embryonic stage, and few can be presaged. Nevertheless, we will try to infer whether its theoretical and practical premises, forecast either an implosion or an explosion, a collateral outburst or a new non-institutional actor.

Reflexive modernity has produced an increasing disillusion with institutional and traditional politics, producing what Ulrich Beck (1997) called "*sub-politics*". The lattermost objective, will be exploring how our movement society is both pathology and completion of our era.

CHAPTER 1

ETIOLOGY

1.1 San Lorenzo: the historical path of a working class neighborhood

“Actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context (...) Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations”. (Granovetter, Mark 1985).

Anthropological discourses can never be carried out in a vacuum, they need a context where to flourish, where to develop. Granovetter neo-substantivist paradigm is functional to capture the concept of social embeddedness. Our society is characterized by *liquidity*, Baumann would have argued. As liquids take the shape of their container, we realize that their very essence is a quite fragile one, easy being decomposed, dispersed. Imagine a bottle of fizzy water. When we buy that bottle of water, we are buying it *because of the water*, not because of the bottle. We rarely attribute any kind of value to the plastic or glass bottle we use. It feels as if they do not even exist. But the very existence of the liquid body is strictly linked and interdependent with the bottle's existence.

Now, the relation of interdependence we observed between the liquid and the container, can be rightfully transposed in our following cogitation.

The idea of *city space* has become a quite redundant one throughout historical narratives. We are used to consider cities as ageless and primordial entities, antecedent to human beings. This statement is, obviously enough, false.

“Before the city, there was a land” (Cronon,1991). In his book, William Cronon recounts how Chicago was formed out of a city-less landscape, by

people who migrated there and crafted the urban scenery through cultural and economic exchanges.

Cities are not structures, cities are people, or better, they are the people who live them. This is why their destinies are so dissimilar one from the other. Assuming the equation *city = people*, in a social Darwinistic perspective cities can be considered to be struggling for survival too. Their success or their failure, their sterility or their blossoming, is strictly dependent on the renewed impulses of its inhabitants. For instance, the Detroit model led to urban decline. The age of the industrial city, of the Fordian assembly line was over, at least in the West. Howbeit, the embeddedness we are referring to in this case, seems to be a circular one.

Cities are primal human settlements, and therefore what they are is what men made of them; still and all with time their essence has been crystallized, so that their apparent dateless and imperishable nature, their *grandeur* inspires a powerful sense of identification in human beings, and therefore of social embeddedness.

Nowadays, cities have become fetishized emotion-sources. Men cherish that sense of wonder, as if they were directly confronted with the awesome.

Something similar to what Edmund Burke defined as the *sublime*, capable of generating both fear and attraction, admiration and terror.

Unfortunately, not all urban landscapes are like either a Turner or a Constable's painting; some of them seem to echo more Dickens's *Coke Town*, an urban *inferno*, squalid and dull.

No place for hedonism.

Massive industrialization brought about an increase in urbanization too, together with its natural counterparts such as overcrowding and contestation over resources and spaces. San Lorenzo, is allegorical in this sense.

In order to avoid any simplistic explanation on a topic of such importance and complexity, we ought to make clarity on the real terms of the discussion; since context is a signifier and source of meaning, we shall start precisely from here.

The study has been conducted in the city of Rome, but the catchment area is the neighborhood: San Lorenzo. It is highly supposable and likely that almost anyone in Rome knows this historic district for a number of different reasons: youngsters for the chaotic nightlife, elders for the scars and the history lying behind its shabby buildings. Geographically, we can locate San Lorenzo between its two extremes: it occupies roughly the two sides of the early-stretch of via Tiburtina, starting from the Termini train station and ending in the Verano cemetery, where we can find the ancient basilica of *San Lorenzo fuori le Mura*, from which the district takes the name.

A recent study of the *Sapienza University* (2017)¹ has revealed some historic data on the district, of vital importance for the purpose of this study; we shall briefly expose them in order to provide a theoretical framework and deeper knowledge on the urban context.

Traditionally, it had always been depicted as a left-oriented /working-class neighborhood; the Popular Houses Institute (ICP) between 1900-1920, started the first popular houses projects to host the conspicuous number of families. During the Fascist period, at the end of the 20s, the pattern of settlement of the district was clear and defined: the construction area occupied the 13,4% of the total area, squares and streets the 79% and train stations the 6%; this resulted in a massively urbanized district, where only a few and sporadic green areas where children could play, survived.

In the aftermath of WWII, San Lorenzo was already falling to pieces. In July 1943, after the bombing made by the Allies, the district was an ensemble of dilapidated huts.

The damages that resulted, constituted further problems that summed to the overcrowding issue. There was the urgent need for measures of urban renewal and still now we can unfortunately talk only of a “partial recovery”.

Notwithstanding the decaying and run-down image the district gave (and still gives though!) to an external and neutral observer, we shall avoid considering San Lorenzo as some kind of “urban leftover”. Maybe urban renewal is still far

¹ Schirru, M.R. (2017); “*La Sapienza Università di Roma come motore di riqualificazione urbana e sociale*” ; Edizioni Nuova Cultura

from being reached, but the district receives always fresh impetus and its interclass feature makes it a highly dynamic melting pot.

For instance, the crucial role played by the Sapienza University shall be object of analysis. On the one hand it has determined the acquisition of some buildings for obvious and rather contingent reasons, on the other the presence of students coming from abroad and willing to rent an apartment, has increased the renting prices. These factors, together with the real estate speculative activities, have contributed to the expulsion of local residents.

Moreover the presence of the University put the blueprint on a district that is progressively becoming an “entertainment-factory” that attracts youngsters and increases the level of criminal and illegal underground activities. The consequence of this process, is ultimately that the poor and socially vulnerable populations are being displaced by an urban development machine, largely indifferent to creating cities that are both revitalized and inclusive². As Saskia Sassen recently and provocatively queried, “Who owns the city?” in an era of “corporatizing access and control over urban land” and “corporate buying of whole pieces of cities”, which is transforming the “small and/or public” into the “large and private” across so many cities around the world.³

The dubious nature of the ever-changing district of San Lorenzo, shows immediately the endogenous contradictions of this “gentrification *sui generis*”: both a decaying popular neighborhood and a focal point of the Roman *movida*. A periphery in the core.

² Davidson, N.M & Foster, S. , *The Mobility Case for Regionalism* (2013), 47 U.C. Davis L. REV. 63

³ Foster, S., Iaione, C. *The City as a Commons* (2016), p. 283, Yale Law & Policy Rev., vol. 34, n. 2; worth mentioning Sassen, S. *Who Owns Our Cities and Why this Urban Takeover should Concern Us All*, (Nov. 24, 2015), The Guardian, more at <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/24/who-owns-our-cities-and-why-this-urban-takeover-should-concern-us-all> .

1.2 A methodological affair: limits and challenges of methodological choices in the empirical study

Before introducing how the case has been developed throughout this analysis, it is better to make a brief *excursus* on the methodological aspect, a part and parcel of every empirical research.

The literature review has proved to be the first big hindrance to the work: in fact, apart from historical data on the neighborhood and some articles of little significance, the press has proved to be uninterested in local dynamics of contention - apart from sporadic references to underground illegality.

Moreover, in presence of articles found, they were likely to be biased or better with a “partisan” view (precisely because the recognition of the problem is *per se* partial). Notwithstanding the partisanship and bias characterizing documents produced by the movement itself, their programmatic and declaratory nature has been useful to grasp their arch commitments, their targets and prerogatives.

However the “state of art” of the case is fluid and *in fieri*, therefore literature review and desk research do not constitute the methodological cornerstone underpinning our study.

Methodological pluralism seems to dominate the field of social movement studies. Mixed-method strategies have been widely practiced for the purpose, even though triangulation has become more and more common in social research in general, because of its constitutive theoretical flexibility rather than strict dogmatism guiding research practices. Nevertheless, in this particular study the qualitative approach had gained momentum in our theoretical premises since the very beginning. There are copious factors that support this methodological imperative: first and foremost, qualitative approaches deal better with small N samples and are context-bound, so no comparative coding was necessary for the purpose; furthermore and more importantly, the type of data I strived to present are “rich data” (Charmaz, 2006) as being part of a

dense narrative. As a matter of fact, one difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches is the type of knowledge acquired. Qualitative knowledge is more *vertical* oriented, since information acquired has a significant depth and profoundness. In quantitative research on the other hand, the type of data employed are hard and reliable data (more specifically numbers), concepts are operationalized and causation/correlation is preferred to “thick” understanding.

A relevant aspect of this research indeed, is that the analysis is not based on pre-constituted hypothesis and their further putative corroboration.

Induction has been preferred to deduction, just like an empty canvass is preferred to a kids’ coloring book; I started with one or more “sensitizing concepts” to guide my analysis and to suggest directions along which to orient my theoretical intentionality. The heuristic value of methodological choices, is constructivist in flavor: in fact previous knowledge has been put under scrutiny during and after the enquiry in a circular way.

Nevertheless, the “absence of methodological dogmatism” (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002a, xii) did not hindered a conscientious choice of techniques.

Extensive data have been collected through semi-structured interviews.

In-depth interviews are pivotal in qualitative research, since they shed the light on what is defined as *phenomenological* reflection: what actors perceive and feel about the surrounding environment. Likewise, an epistemological interpretation of the case was privileged to achieve the so longed Weberian *verstehen*; actors’ interpretative schemes are constitutive of the action itself as understanding is “participative, conversational and dialogic” (Schwandt, 2003, 302).

Face-to-face interviews have been adopted instead of mail questionnaires.

Even though the latter would have been undeniably time and energy saving tools, they would have contributed to make the interviewee feel as being “under scrutiny”, and therefore to his perception of a bureaucratized research process. Subjects of whichever study, need never to perceive themselves to *be*

objects of enquiry. What we can hazardously define as the “guinea pig complex”, constitutes a major hindrance in research; the most probable envisioned scenario is that interviewees will present only the visible or institutionalized aspect of the movement, the one that can be easily grasped through desk research. What interviews want to explore instead, is the *latent* semblance of the movement. Initiating a progressively empathic interaction between interviewer and interviewee, is fundamentally important to tear down the invisible wall of incommunicability.

There was one trouble spot however that needed to be solved: the problem of “going native”. As a researcher, one of the concerns was that, getting involved in a series of similar and maybe redundant conversations, the interviews and the data collected for the purpose of the study, would have appeared as a realm of empty rhetoric involving the same actors. So, not only the focus of actors was enlarged, but I decided to go and search for a neutral and external observer: me. In order to grasp the endogenous dynamics and organizational aspects of the focus group, the ethnographic method of participant observation seemed the most suitable, and it also gave fortuitous twists.

It is not coincidental that participant observation was employed for the first time by cultural anthropologists, since the urgency of grasping human innermost motives pushed for a systematic methodological exodus from activity done in libraries to scientific research where researchers could “*get the seat of their pants dirty*” (Park, 1915 & Whyte, 1943). Nevertheless, “firsthand” data alone cannot be considered sufficient to bring a research study to any kind of desired theoretical saturation. The need for convergence with existing theories and hypothesis is considered ultimately valuable.

It is clear indeed, that the unpretentiousness of this case study resulted in an absence of dogmatism and rigidity in the use of the methodology. My participant observation has been a quite sporadic one, sketchy, rudimentary. Drawing on the classification ethnographers made of the different roles participant observers assume, I eventually tried to assess mine.

The emergence of overlapping features, revealed a highly hybrid and spurious use of the technique, a quite peculiar one though.

The time spent was undeniably limited, and this reason alone seems to define my role as *complete observer*, or as a *observer-as-participant*. Despite the critical lens through which I filtered my presence in the assembly, I cannot avoid considering my presence as a quite interactive and dialogic one. As a matter of fact, I engaged in informal chitchats with activists - one of which I later on interviewed - and interacted with them as a true *participant-as-observer*.

This *mélange* of techniques was a byproduct of necessity.

It was not commanded by methodological imperatives or theoretical mannerism, and still it has been capable of achieving a quite satisfactory discriminated set of data; a classification along a continuum (dimensional spectrum) ranging from normal to dysfunctional, would have been ideally rational and suitable to grasp even the smallest details.

And this is due to the phenotypic heterogeneity of social phenomena.

Scattered masses and unorganized behaviors are non-isogenic.

In virtue of what just said, we can easily understand why all-embracing approaches are more prone to failure. In most of the cases, because of an erroneous *dialectic*, researchers tend to fix the observation scale at the macro or meso-level of analysis, where the tendency to simplification and emulation appears to be extremely natural.

A de facto laxness with regard to master frames and relics from the past, has ultimately contributed to the (intended) vulnerability of this case-study.

CHAPTER 2

SYMPTOMS

2.1 Cultures of Contention

“The revolution was a religion and a philosophy not merely a conflict concerned with the social and political side of life”⁴.

Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Origins of Russian Communism* (1937).

Russian society undeniably fetishized and commodified the concept of revolution throughout its history.

Until the Emancipation Reform of 1861 advanced by Tsar Alexander II, Russia was an outdated rural country that still recognized serfdom.

A society forged on a schism between the rulers and a dissatisfied mass.

This explains why revolution represented nothing more than a structural expedient to sort out of the *impasse* dictated by historical contingencies.

And history can sometimes appear quite obvious.

There is a deontological perspective in contentious action that can have the audacity of a *simil*- universal law. In any situation, at any time, with any actor, when the knowledge of oppression becomes manifest in the heart and mind of the oppressed, such a knowledge will trigger contention.

Marx would have argued that only “false consciousness” can hinder this historical and natural process, by shredding worker’s cognition under a shroud of ignorance.

Sydney Tarrow, with his book *Power in Movement*, has provided a masterful synthesis and analysis of the various facets of contentious action and social

⁴ Berdyaev, N., *The Origins of Russian Communism* (1937), pp.124-125; the author examines the forces of national history and character that shaped Russian Communism, providing insights into social and religious currents.

movements; in virtue of what just said, we will notably tap into this masterpiece to shed a light on our subject of analysis.

Contentious politics occurs when ordinary individuals put themselves in a position of antagonism with regard to elites, authorities and opponents; it is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives - material and ideological, partisan and group-based, long-standing and episodic - to take action for actors who lack resources on their own. As Tarrow writes, when contention spreads across an entire society, we witness to a cycle of contention. When such a cycle is organized around opposed or multiple sovereignties, the ultimate product tends to be a revolution.

In Emile Durkheim's epistemology, social movements are described as products of societal dysfunctions; collective action seen as the result of anomie and social disorganization of masses, captured in the phrase "the madding crowd" which seems to echo the apathetic and nihilist mass Hannah Arendt referred to in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Nevertheless, in this analysis conflicts between challengers and authorities will be seen as a normal part of society and not as an aberration from it. We will briefly present some of the most well-known theories of contention.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels have been the prominent theorists who saw conflict inscribed in the very structure of society. They thought that collective action was naturally consequential to the inherent contradictions present in society, more particularly between social classes. Accordingly, it was rather the failure to act, the *non-action*, to be considered as deviance. However, as it was affirmed in the introduction, Marx's theory of conflict was underpinned by a strong underlying classist postulation. Being class its *raison d'être*, we find little room for ideologies that go beyond the knowledge of oppression.

Contradictorily to Marxism's *naturalism*, Vladimir Illych Lenin, the father of the Russian Revolution of 1917, had indeed a *mechanical* historical conception; the latter is best understood with his refusal to wait for objective conditions to ripen alone. Instead of letting events develop throughout their

natural course, Lenin tried to ravish the unforeseen historical conditions proposing the creation of an elite of professional revolutionaries. Substituting itself for Marx's proletariat, this "vanguard" would act as the self-appointed guardian of workers' real interests. (Tarrow, 2011:18). Russia nevertheless, was stuck in a condition of backwardness; and Lenin was aware of this structural deficit in society. Vanguardism took the semblance of an *a posteriori* enlightenment, with the aim of illuminating a quasi- medieval gloomy scenario. If from Marx it was possible to draw even anarchic deductions and an absolute repudiation of the State, Lenin outrightly rebelled against these anarchic deductions, which seems to be obviously unfavorable to the organization of revolutionary power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Following this mechanistic conception of contentious politics, Gramsci explained the role of workers as "collective intellectuals" or "organic intellectuals" to be developed from within the working class to complement the traditional intellectuals in the party leadership⁵. It seems evident how Gramsci overcame the oligarchic notion of leadership as conceived by Lenin, introducing the element of workers' consciousness as to develop a paramount synthesis with Marx. The importance of the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, was precisely the capacity to produce a countercultural consensus among workers, empowering them to take autonomous initiatives. Nevertheless, we mentioned theories for which politics was merely considered as a part of the "superstructure". As Tarrow claims, only the World War II generation would have been able to transcend such a deeply embedded account. Charles Tilly, influenced by the British Marxists E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm⁶ together with the French historian Fernand Braudel, markedly signed a paradigm shift by focusing on state structure and state's strategical

⁵ In 1924, Gramsci wrote: "The error of the party has been to have accorded priority in an abstract fashion to the problem of organization, which in practice has simply meant creating an apparatus of functionaries who could be depended on for their orthodoxy towards the official view";

See Gramsci, A., *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (1971: LXI)

⁶ Tilly was influenced by E.P. Thompson's "moral economy", to which will turn later on in the analysis, and Hobsbawm's *The Age of Revolutions: Europe 1789-1848* (1962), where he advanced the "twin revolution thesis"; namely the French Revolution and the Industrial revolution where recognized by the author as the mid-wives of European history.

imperatives. What he advanced, was a “polity model” that entailed relations among rulers, insiders and outsiders.

Like a Chinese box narrative, this analysis eventually unveils a “nest of stories”, ideally complementary one with the other.

The aforementioned thesis, are nevertheless postliminary from a chronological point of view in the evolution of repertoires. Besides the different forms of repertoires to which will devote attention later on, it is still and all peculiar that neither the effigies and boycotts in America, nor the mass petitioning in England by the 1790s, represented a form of *mobilization*, intended as physical militancy. With the advent of the First Reform Act in England, or the French Revolution, Charles Tilly underlined how mobilization had drastically changed, in the first place semantically (since we are not in a *pièce* of Ionesco, signifiers happen to match with their meanings!) with verbs of movement or “meet” verbs dominating the descriptions of the time.

Contention is dynamic, open to change and apt to progress. But still, we need an anthropological interest to understand it. The next subsection will satisfy this academic urgency.

2.2 The Class Conundrum: evolution and reconceptualization of class in the postmodern era

The declared modesty and unpretentiousness of this study is not intended to be a literary artifice (even if, is rather common to do so), far from Baudelaire's *fleurs malades*⁷.

Nor it is a way to wash one's hands of a sketchy and rudimentary work.

With a more phenomenological than Cartesian flavor, the study on which this thesis is based on took the semblance, at the very first stages, of an observational enquiry. The conflictual nature of this statement you may argue, is that each enquiry needs some hypothesis to verify, or at least to follow as theoretical guidelines; otherwise it is deemed to be sterile.

Notwithstanding the constructivist flavor underlying our premises, the study eventually engendered some hypothesis or preconceptions.

The first hypothesis to be tested here, is an anthropological concern: *who* are the activists that take part in the *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*? Probably because of the redundant Marxist theories in academic textbooks, I imagined the medium activist as a working class man or woman, distressed and frustrated because of his prolonged state of unemployment, threatened by modernization and by change. A dull urban landscape like the one described by Lazarsfeld in the *Marienthal* study⁸. A setting epitomizing the negative effects industrialization had on the community, pervaded by a deeply rooted melancholia. A landscape where it emerges the absence of pleasure or enjoyment of any kind. No place for hedonism. Each member of the community in fact presented a diminution of expectation and activity; a

⁷ In the preface of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), Charles Baudelaire devoted his work to Théophile Gautier, artist and friend, to whom he wrote: "*De la plus profonde humilité, je dédie ces fleurs malades. C.B.*". (*With the most profound humility, I devote you this imperfect flowers*).

⁸ Lazarsfeld, P, Jahoda, M, Zeiseld, H. : *Marienthal: the sociography of an unemployed community* (1933); the study was done in 1930 in the Austrian village, Marienthal, to provide insights on the paralyzing effect of unemployment on the rural community.

community stuck in a social “matrix”, a stagnating pool where idleness, selflessness and deprivation inevitably conflated.

Nevertheless, the socioeconomic structure of a society influences the types of conflict that develop in it and the opportunity structures. As Alexis De Tocqueville has taught,⁹ differences in patterns of state building produced differences in opportunity structures for social movements. Still, this harmonious and synchronic mutation cannot leave unaltered the notion of class and underclass.

The very definition of *under-* has become transitory; the disenfranchisement from ascriptive characteristics has given increasing relevance to new descriptive and fluid characteristics, like consumption processes and social relations within the urban community.

The decanted death of the proletariat is literary fiction though.

Nevertheless the political cleavages that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified as traditional models of collective action and on which the labor movements mobilized, seem pacified.

Three kind of transformations have interested Western societies since the Second World War: in the economy, in the role of the State and in the cultural sphere. The aforementioned events, contributed to a post materialist turn in social movement studies.

To all appearances, the first big economic change hypostatized with the collapse of the Fordist model. The assembly line was not merely a production process, but can be considered illustrative of the industrial era. Mass production, physical proximity and the diacritic urban utopia certainly contributed to the reciprocal identification of workers while reinforcing internal cohesion. Thus, when this model collapsed the subsequent collective solidarity was considerably weakened, together with the affiliation to workers movements. The relevance of productive sector changed as well: the decline in industrial work favored administrative and service occupations, usually related to education, health and social care. The overthrow of the contingent notion of

⁹ De Tocqueville exemplified this theory both in *Democracy in America* (1835-1840) and *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (1856).

underclass, resulted in a new highly qualified tertiary sector. A new (again, contingent) heterogeneous middle class. The logic of liberal capitalism belied the simple dichotomous imagery of the Marxian synthesis¹⁰. Evidence from the *Libera* is confirmative in this sense: activists proved to belong to this middle class, and at least two of them are employed in the educational sector. The high level of education and intellectual skills makes them prone to mobilize in conflicts against technocrats, public and private agencies, and (at least in this case study) against the resulting speculative activities. The manipulative and coercive flow of communication that diverted consciousness and dehumanized spirits, does not constitute a characterizing feature for the middle class. The distinctive intellectual skills foster egalitarian and anti-authoritative set of values, instead of nourishing feelings of frustration resulting from a cultural and atavistic submission.

Next in order, the changing and increasing role of the state. The nineteenth century debate over the foundation of the State can be an hazardous reference to the past, but also a fascinating one. On the one hand we find Locke's social contract theory and Rousseau's general will as opposed to the sum of particular interests, while on the other hand we find the German lawyers' critique of the aforementioned. According to them, French society was in fact characterized by the awkward split between politics and society, conceived as two distinct realms. This feature constituted a trouble spot for the legal scholars. What they posited was in fact a more "dialectical" approach. They conceived society not as a sum of monads, but as a whole, as the "complex and interdependent structure" we are referring to. It is evident indeed, that Europeans inherited the Hegelian notion of State conceived as "the highest articulation of Spirit, or God in the contemporary world"¹¹. This account

¹⁰ Marx dichotomous logic was based on the assumption that capitalism became more and more contrasted and exploitative, capitalist would become richer and more powerful, and intermediate sectors of the population would be forced into the proletariat. (Tarrow, S. *Powers in Movements: Social Movements and contentious politics* (2011 ed. :73)

¹¹ Rothbard, M. N., article excerpted from vol.2 ch. 11 of *An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought* (1995); available at: <https://mises.org/library/hegel-state-gods-will>

contributed to a deification of the concept; a reified entity, unaccountable, untouchable, unquestionable. A totalitarian freedom.

Still, since the 1960s social scientists began to see the state as an autonomous *actor* in social conflict, no longer as an *entity*. The growth of the role of the state has multiplied the number of social actors whose experience and opportunities seem to be linked at least partially to political decision-making mechanisms. As a result, this process has promoted the multiplication of collective identities and of mobilized interests.

Finally, changes in the value system and in culture in general changed the *discursive opportunities* for movements.

Inglehart's seminal article, *The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies* (1971) is in many ways a microcosm of his entire career. The functional dependency of political priorities on economic security, is conducive to a new "post-bourgeois" set of values that reframed the notion of class and cleavages. The post-industrial or post-class politics he envisions, seems to be polarized on a new axis based on cultural values and quality of life issues. With a cross-cultural and historical perspective, he was able to grasp the mobilizing issues of this new extra-parliamentary politics; he observed that the most massive political demonstrations that have taken place have not been directed against unemployment or declining real income; on the contrary, they have been aimed at preventing the construction of nuclear power plants, highways, military installations, hydroelectric dams, and other projects that might reduce unemployment.

Labour rhetorics are and were concerned with unemployment, wages, and inflation, but political activism continues to reflect mainly postmaterialist concerns. As Pierre Bourdieu has observed, each society elaborates a contingent set of social problems worthy of being debated in a particular historical moment, being the cultural sphere the field where to exercise domination. On the other hand, Alan Touraine conceives social movements as *struggling to* influence this cultural realm.

Deterministic account are now deemed to be particularly unfashionable.

This paradigm shift produced an ahistorical and analytical (Melucci, 1995) notion of class, concerned with the production of symbolic goods and mutual recognition as part of a distinctive social group.

Where social stratification needs to be redefined, the big social aggregates of the industrial era are barely relics from the past shredded in vagueness.

2.3 The “Liberia Repubblica di San Lorenzo”: genesis and evidence of a deliberative assembly

“Resentment is the most precious flower of poverty” (Mc Cullers, 1940).

There is no aesthetic in despair.

No general principles or canons of judgement as the eighteenth century philosophers were trying to grasp.

The aesthetic judgement is nevertheless deprived of rationality, and we can hazardously define it as an “emotional by-product”. If *per absurdum* we imagine this complex process as a Fordian assembly line endowed with subjectivity, taste would be to raw materials what the “aesthetic ideal” is to the final product.

Despair, like anger, is one of those inherently human features that remains helpless with respect to time. Those feelings are distinctive of humanity. Like a secular tree that resists aging, that resists time.

And when these feelings are gregariously experienced, transcending the chasm between the individual and the society, they become cumulative.

This kinetic movement, that swings from disillusion to anger, is responsible for the genesis of social movements.

Social movements can be defined using at least four variables (Rucht 2003; 2006). The first is *organization*: in this framework, the movements are studied and defined on the basis of how they are organized and their own specific capacity to mobilize (De Blasio, Sorice, 2014:15).

The second variable is *interactions*: the specificity of a movement is represented by how well organized and efficient its processes are and, therefore, by its ability "to challenge power." As Claus Offe (1985) notably underlined, movements (especially “new” movements) develop a metapolitical critique of the social order and of representative democracy by the means of their critical ideology.

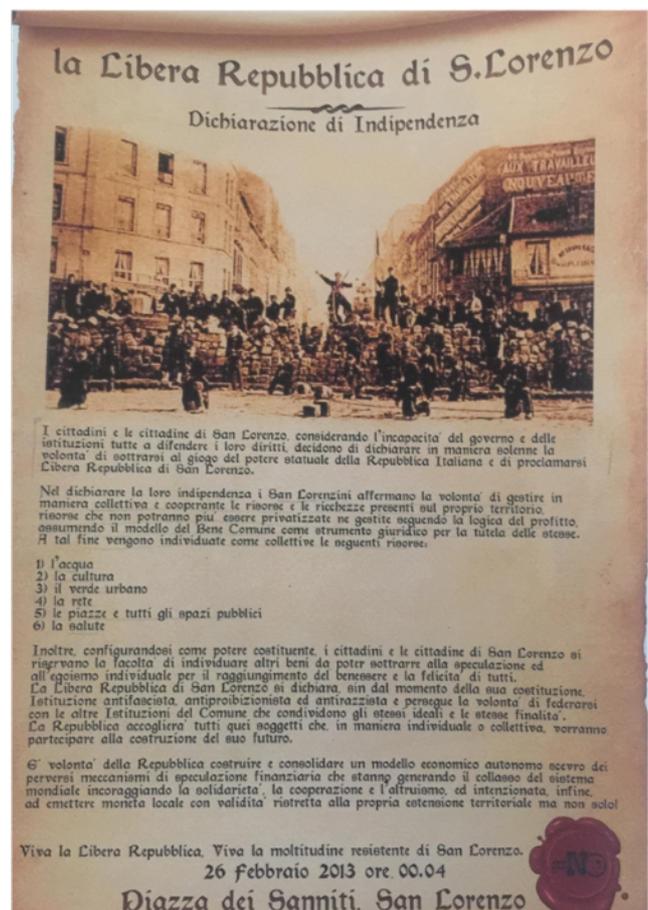
The third variable is *symbolic* and, specifically, is a movement's ability to present itself as a *collective identity*, strongly with the recognition and creation of connectedness (Pizzorno, 1996). From Alberto Melucci's (1988) pioneering work on, scholars have increasingly seen identities as a set of boundary mechanisms that define who "we" are, and who "they" are.

Lastly, the fourth variable lies in its *ideological narrative*; differently from what can be the popular wisdom, the ideological substratum of movements does not circulate freely and unchecked as Joyce's stream of consciousness. That is to say, culture postulates the cognitive apparatus which masses need to orient themselves, and that relates to a specific political content with a particular goal.

A plethoric pluralism, would inevitably lead to a Tower of Babel scenario. This is why movements try to suppress multiple identities, to create what Mische calls "provisional homogeneity along a reduced identity dimension" (2008: Chapter 10).

We will further develop and untangle these features in the case study to which this section is devoted.

The "Declaration of Independence"
of the *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*



The “*Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*” is a free assembly of citizens, workers and students proclaimed in 2013. As an activist revealed, local associationism had always been present in the neighborhood, with an already foreseeable collaboration:

“With ‘San Lorenzo Cambia, Cambia San Lorenzo’ in 2010, all the small associations present at the time joined in Piazza dell’Immacolata; we wanted to become local engines of change. Still, it was an abortive attempt”.

(M., 49 years-old)

As a matter of fact, patterns of behavior rejuvenate and flourish throughout history. Notwithstanding this eternal recurrence cherished by many, contention faithfully explodes when people gain access to external resources that can considerably end injustices and find opportunities in which to use this resources (Tarrow, 2011:160).

The physical occupation of the *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo* happened to be in April 2011, and we can consistently assume it to be our *casus belli*. The occupation of the building was aimed at hindering the transformation of the already ramshackle cinema into a game room. As one interviewee revealed:

“The occupation was not triggered by hedonism or personal gains, or glory. It represented a common good; the foreseeable future of the Cinema Palazzo, was to become a place of cultural degeneracy. Moreover, the Court discovered they had illicit permission”.

(M., 77 years-old)

In October 2017, six years after the seizure of the building, the Court put to trial part of those who participated in the occupation of the building. We find also the names of the Italian satirist Sabina Guzzanti (whose blog has been a reference and a collective “e-assembly” where the organizational details of the occupation had been decided and coordinated), the Pd deputy Marco Miccoli, Andrea Alzetta (Sel) and Nunzio D’Erme, head of the main community centers in the city.

With regards to the membership, it is quite heterogeneous since it collects people that have nothing in common apart from the concern for their neighborhood. As previously mentioned in the analysis, my interviewees belonged to the new postmodern middle class, either employed in education or in the administrative sector. The assembly presents that social-structural change Castells recalled: a focus shift from capitalist relations within the workplace to social relations within the urban community (Castells, 1983). As traditional assemblies, they have fixed meetings organized as public assemblies and held every Tuesday at 7 PM inside the *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo*, occupied as we just said, since the 15th of April 2011. The participant observation technique has proved useful to gain deeper insights on the inner composition of the assembly, the “repertoire” of action and internal dynamics. First and foremost, we can hazardously consider it a “catch-all” assembly, since it collects people that have nothing in common one with the other: different cultures, age and traditions. The participants in the assembly are only a few - around 10 - and are all representatives of the associations involved in the fight against real estate speculative projects¹². *Per contra*, this “willingness to do” is not pure rhetorical fiction. As a matter of fact, all these associations (voluntary associations or only recreational ones) are currently occupied or self administered. Just mentioning only the most relevant realities for the purpose of our study, we can identify:

- *ESC atelier*: ESC (Eccedi Sottrai Crea) is a recreational and voluntary association, self-administered and occupied by a collective “interclass” assembly of university students (born from the group “Sapienza Pirata”) in December 2004. However, we will turn later in the analysis to the internal dynamics and commitments of ESC atelier, given the pivotal position occupied in the “*Libera*”
- *Communia*, whose aim is to put together books, notes and resources for students (this project takes the name of “*Shareword*”, ironically paraphrasing Robin Hood’s *Sherwood* forest).

¹² Howbeit, an interviewee revealed the first assemblies witnessed an unprecedented participation, around 150 people. The data observed and reported in this research paper indeed, date back to March 2018

- *Il Grande Cocomero*, a voluntary association engaged in psychiatric research for the developmental age located in Via dei Sabelli. The will of its founder, the psychiatrist Marco Lombardo Radice, was that of providing support through recreational activities to youngsters with psychiatric problems, to those with family issues or other types of concerns.



All the aforementioned local realities (together with others like the *Ex Fonderie Bastianelli* and the *Palestra Popolare*) are currently occupied, self-administered and engaged in contentious activities against the negligent municipality, the obvious scapegoat.

A different situation however, is that of *Parco Villa Mercedes*, a public park and library, whose administration and care has been entrusted to the voluntary association of “Park & Forest Rangers” from the Municipality itself. This kind of self-administration is a *sui generis* one, since it has not been actively claimed, but officially entrusted. This singular case shows probably the sole experiment with the presence of an enabling state; therefore it is still considered a successful “devolution” of powers to locally engaged citizens. After this brief excursus on the current status of the most active associations and local realities, we shall turn again to the *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*.

2.3.1 The movement’s manifesto: ideology and discontent

The definition of social problem is far from being a phenomenological reflection. Social problems do exist only when certain events are *interpreted* as such by the collectivity. There is usually a generous hiatus between perception/knowledge of injustice and the programmatic assessment of a problem.

Within the diagnostic dimension of framing identified by Snow and Benford (1988)¹³, the identification of a target occupies a pivotal role. The abstractness of targets inhibits the process of legitimization of a perceived social problem. Being able to attribute malicious or selfish acts to an identifiable scapegoat is fundamental to canalize the libidinal energy of movements, otherwise repressed.

With respect to the case study, in the “who-to-blame-for” section, citizens have addressed not only the negligence of the municipality, but moreover, the increasing speculation activities that are progressively contributing to the degradation of an already decaying neighborhood.

The powerful concern the *Libera* has with collective and nonmaterial goods, has increased mobilization for the development of collective services in urban areas and for urban renewal.

Notwithstanding the decaying and run-down image the district gave (and still gives though!) to an external and neutral observer, we shall avoid considering San Lorenzo as some kind of “urban leftover”. Maybe urban renewal is still far from being reached, but the district receives always fresh impetus and its interclass feature makes it a highly dynamic melting pot.

Using the tools and the models of direct democracy, they aim at the collectivization of spaces and resources, thus empowering citizens with a “repertoire” of action still quite traditional though, mainly the revendication of public buildings or public areas.

It was incredibly easy to find immediate information about some of the “*Ws*” (who, where, why, when); the members of the *Libera* have all access to e-platforms, they communicate and coordinate actions through social networks, they occasionally publish an online newspaper and have a website that exposes clearly their objectives, beliefs and commitments.

Undeterred by their consequentialist flavor, some considerations ought to be made. What has emerged from the preliminary desk research and the postliminary empirical observation, is the *nature* of the ideological frames.

¹³ Snow and Benford (1988) identified three steps in frame analysis: “*the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational dimension of framing*”.

Movements simil-*Libera* are peculiarly marked by a tendency towards *preservation* and *defense* (against parochial barbarism) rather than *active seizure*.

In a cross-historical parallelism, this intuition seem to recall the English Glorious Revolution (1688-89); the latter represents a *unicum* in the literature because of its native conservatory and reactionary character. Not a revolutionary breakthrough, but indeed a “going back” to the old paths. This appears to lexically undermine the notion of rebellion itself.

Calling it revolution, appears counterintuitive.

Skepticism is part of the approach though: we will explore if this urban restoration has been curtailed merely to ideological posturing.

2.4 *Repertoires of action and “rhetorical tropes”*

The symbolic value of action in social movements, has been portrayed by collective imaginary as “*ignī ferrōque*” (through iron and fire). Despite this powerful narrative construct, social movements act and perform in a very organized way. “New” social movements’ leaders in particular, not necessarily had risen from the dregs of society like Hannah Arendt (1951) powerfully depicted the “mob”, as a ramshackle and chaotic ensemble of gangsterism, conspiracy and revolutionary activism¹⁴.

In 1995 Charles Tilly published *Popular Contention in Great Britain*, where he defined and developed the concept of “repertoire of contention”.

The notion of repertoire embraces not only “what people *do*” when they are engaged in conflictual activities, but also “*what they know how to do*” and what others *expect* them to do.

Tilly described the evolution of repertoires throughout the historical timeline epitomizing the differences between “traditional” repertoires and “modern” repertoires, with a triadic partition of characteristics each.

The traditional repertoire presented the following features:

- *Parochial*, since interests and actions involved a single community
- *Segmented*, because of the different *façon* movements addressed issue; for local ones they impressively took direct actions, while for national ones they recurrently addressed either the local patron or competent authorities
- *Particular*, because of the different modes of actions that varied from locality to locality (Tilly, 1995b: 45).

As compared to their forebears, the modern repertoires take the following shape:

¹⁴ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Part III ch. 1, Hannah Arendt underlines the different features of what she defines the “masses” and the “mob” in order to explain the rise of totalitarian movements and the fascination exerted on individuals: “*Totalitarianism aims and succeeds in organizing masses- not classes*”.

- *Cosmopolitan*, because of the inter geographical character of interests and issues that span many localities
- *Modular*, thus easy transferrable from one setting or circumstance to another (“one-size-fits all”)
- *Autonomous*, since it envisions a direct contact between claimants and nationally significant centers of power (Tilly, 1995b :46).

Notwithstanding this evolution, changes in the repertoire did not appear fully blown at once, nor did the old forms of collective action ever completely disappear.

This blurred boundaries are to be found in the *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*.

An unorthodox repertoire of action, notably spurious and hybrid. For instance, the strong local dimension can be enough to consider it “*parochial*”, nevertheless we can provide some counterfactual arguments.

An interview has been carried out with an activist, remarkably engaged in the safeguard of the community centre ESC atelier. The interviewee (F, 28 years-old) talks of ESC atelier as a “*2.0 community centre*” pioneer of a model, exported elsewhere in the neighborhood and not only. As a matter of fact, there is an increasing willingness of exporting their appeals and methodologies to other similar activities, sharing ideas, concerns and networking. Just to mention one of these shared projects: CLAP (Camere lavoro autonomo e precario) has been thought ex-novo with ASTRA (a community centre in the popular neighborhood of Tufello). With CLAP the aim was experimenting an autonomous and social trade-unionism; at the moment the association counts more than 1000 members and has local venues in different cities around Italy. Moreover they engage in voluntary activities for migrants, offering them facilities and services. “*Info-Migrante*” for instance, offers free consultation with lawyers and an information point called “*orientamento alla città*” (counseling for integration in the urban context) that helps migrants with curricula and offers a free internet point. ESC atelier, as most of the

aforementioned associations, has a good degree of tech justice, necessary and sufficient standard to assess its *cosmopolitan* character. Besides providing internet access to migrants, their online newspaper called “Dinamo Press” can be assessed not only as the channel through which they communicate, but also as a bridging tool. Since 2012, it has a “*young, precarious and international*” newsroom (its slogan is in fact “*Roma, Europa, Mondo*”). They self-finance their activities and for this purpose, recently they collected through a crowdfunding 11.283 euros.

Still, what has emerged to be a quite traditional form of militancy is their *modus* of protesting, namely through the physical occupation of buildings. With regard to the aforementioned ESC atelier case, an interclass student aggregate together occupied the area in December 2004. Apropos of the genesis of the occupation, the interviewee reveals that:

“The response from authorities was harsh and immediate: they vacated the area a few weeks later. Nevertheless, our response was even sharper: with a parade starting from Piazzale Aldo Moro, we occupied once again what belonged to us”.

(F, 28 years-old)

ESC’s occupation is archetypal. First and foremost, it is antecedent to the *Libera Repubblica* itself and to most of its affiliated associations. In addition, its “repertoire” of action - traditional and involving physical militancy - will be emulated by following occupations simil-ESC (e.g. the “Angelo Mai” centre) and more importantly the *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo*’s symbolical seizure. Worth mentioning is also the didactic and educational role they occasionally assume. It seems reasonable to report the battle they did against the construction of an “Eco-monster” (a 12 stories building) in via De Lollis, designated to become a garage for *Sapienza University*’s professors.

“We had the duty to shed a light on this massive urbanization process, since it would have been constructed on notable archeological sites. Therefore, in collaboration with the department of Archeology we held public lectures in the courtyard of the University”.

(M, 77 years-old)

As Claus Offe would have probably concurred, the *Libera* presents three broad features: decentralized and participatory organizational structure; a defense on interpersonal solidarity as opposed to the great bureaucracies; and the reclamation of autonomous spaces rather than material advantages.

It may appear as sociological essentialism, indeed it constitutes the *ratio essendi* of the movement as empirically derived from inductivist premises.

2.5 *Activists' reflexive evaluation: achievements and fiascos*

The sheer force of numbers can be extremely relevant for the success of a movement and the achievement of its objectives.

Still and all, numbers alone are not enough. The preliminary excerpt was instrumental in outlining the “know how” of movements in general and more particularly with reference to the *Libera*; what this paragraph will present indeed, is the activists' subjective evaluation of their performance, thus their estimate of achievements and fiascos.

Ideally we will first refer to one category (e.g. achievements) and afterwards to the other (e.g. fiascos) to avoid conflation where in truth, difference is endorsed.

For “achievements”, we particularly refer to situations in which the movements' instances have been endorsed by the local authorities and the public community. First and foremost, the seizure of the *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo*; truly antagonistic in its nature rather than being a Kantian “end in itself”, their will to hinder the construction of a dull playroom became the rule. The Court sanctioned the end of the project after further enquiry found out illicit permissions of the construction agency. As mentioned previously in the analysis, many activists are now on trial with the municipality; nevertheless this occupation triggered lethargic consciousness and spanned awareness in the neighborhood.

A second triumph worth mentioning is the urban contestation against the so-called “Eco-Monster” ideally situated in via De Lollis. We disclosed in a nutshell why this dispute has emerged: the space which would have been built, would become a garage for professors of the *Sapienza University*, disrespectful of the archeological site underneath. Through the said lectures held in the University's courtyard, the objective was to sensitize both adults and youngsters to the preservation of a common good.

With regard to the latter concept, a turning point comes in 2016. The *giunta* of commissaries guided by the prefect Tronca implemented the **Deliberation 140**

(issued and claimed by the antecedent mayor Ignazio Marino): the destiny of 860 community centers, ateliers and simil-associations where put in the hands of the housing market. This factors escalated tension and gave birth to the movement “*Roma Non si Vende*” and subsequently to “*Decide Roma*”. The latter engaged in drafting a “*Charter of the Commons*”, claiming that public properties cannot be alienated according to art.42-45 of the Italian Constitution. From what has been told us by the interviewee, the *Charter* represents a singular experiment of devolution of power and “bottom-up” governance approach; moreover it has been drafted with the aid of two “*dissident architects*”. The symbolic value attributed to the *Charter* is vitally important since it reinforces the ideological commitments in the movement that prove their *otherness*, germane to epiphenomena and volatile commitments.

Lastly, another victory pertains to the future of the *Ex Dogana*.

“Three years ago, it was meant to become a huge supermarket, part of the Esselunga franchising, notably known for its anti-trade unionist stances.”

(M, 77 years old)

In an era saturated by consumerism, the activists brought about a wholehearted campaign whose motto was “*Sdoganiamoci*”; they engaged in a campaign with some local shop owners, affirming that “*my shopping mall is here*” (“*il mio centro commercial è qui*”). The process has come to halt, but the future of *Ex Dogana* is still object of hawkish speculation of privates, ravaging the commons like hungry vultures.



Now we need to consecrate our time to disclose the other side of the coin, thus the perceived fiascos.

To begin with, the aforementioned “Eco-Monster” issue - attested as a victory- left behind a high degree of uncertainty. Uncertainty, as lack of control.

The destiny of that area is not one of vacuousness or incorruption.

Still, the issue is: what will they make out of it?

An attested lack of control that nullifies any attempt of co-governance or devolution of powers. A state that is far from being *enabling*, locked in a vertical/ top-heavy bureaucracy.

Parco dei Galli has an analogous situation. The ownership of the park is a contentious one, since it belongs half to privates and half to the municipality; still the state in which it is left is one of complete abandon. Negligence is not collateral; from mere omission it become action.

To solve this precarious stalemate, some activists from the *Palestra Popolare* have decided to put a little kiosk for drinks and snacks, so that all the proceeds would have been devoted to the maintenance of the green area. The argument

that activists advance, is that the municipality needed to use its pre-emption right to legitimize it as a public green area, a park. They did not.

The defeat here is embodied by a significant lack of funds for the maintenance of the park, in spite of the laudable efforts.

Ultimately, the Ex Fonderie have been another rivalrous and contested space. In the early 2000 the historic fabric relinquished for longtime, became object of speculation by privates, whose project was to build mini apartments in lieu of preserving the preexistent buildings and the archeological industrial warehouse at the moment disused. In the meanwhile, activists were advancing alternative ways to use the area, like the creation of a library, of co-working spaces and so on. In other words, an authentic revitalization. Ideas sometimes, have short in life though. The rapid demolition and eviction from the area, represents a failure from the part of the activists. And a symbolic failure of the urban public administration, where the presumed urban “regeneration” muddles with the denial of local identity. .

Activists are generally socialized as “care-takers” of the urban area, but we do not have the same expectations from the part of the municipality.

An incredible logical blunder, a dialectical fallacy.

2.5.1 The movement and the urban collectivity: convergence or polarization?

Being a citizen does not necessarily mean being a bearer of needs.

Citizens can turn into bearers of solutions instead. If rightly assisted and incentivized, citizen can canalize their libidinal strength and energy, their time and their resources, in this evolutionary process.

The fourth paragraph of art. 118 of the Italian Constitution, stimulates this revolution from below; a silent revolution which can only be truly enduring if underpinned by the praiseworthy collaboration of “associated citizens”, with the aim of providing answers to collective issues - a function that normally should have been accomplished by public institutions alone.

Still, Albert Otto Hirschman¹⁵ reasonably understood the value that citizens attribute to *public happiness*.

An *engagement* for public happiness duly explained only from the moment when it became a source of *private happiness*. The *borderless* world Ohmae (1990) had theorized, with blurred divisions between private and public, can be found also in small-scales urban experiment.

This premise aims (and hopefully succeeds) at indicating the importance of active citizenship in an urban social movement like the *Libera*. Someone may argue for the banal nature of the statement since citizens *are* the movement. The kind of citizens whose support is necessary indeed, are those who *live* the neighborhood without being part of the movement. In the first place, they are fundamentally pivotal for the legitimation of the movement since they are the majority, the sheer force of numbers.

Moreover, they are pigeonholed in a transitory stage. Their status can uniquely be assimilated to puberty. Two stages in precarious equilibrium, with sketchy and undefined identities.

Any move, is an *astasia*. Any movement is a stance, accidental or not.

As it has emerged from an interview to an historical citizen of the neighborhood, the community is not mistrustful *vis-à-vis* this “urban-commons-approach”; it is widespread around the citizens of the neighborhood, the belief that the municipality’s action is insufficient to administer such an heterogeneous and complex district as San Lorenzo.

The “degree” of insufficiency is not assessed through any kind of threshold, but is an overall subjective perception: “*to each according to his needs*” someone would have said.¹⁶

Liveability and governability are two imperatives not only for the institutional actors involved in its management, but over and above for citizens.

¹⁵ Cfr. A. O. Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements: Public Interest and Public Action* (1982); Princeton University Press, Princeton (NJ); Cfr. anche da S. Bartolini, *Manifesto per la felicità. Come passare dalla società del ben-avere a quella del ben-essere* (2010), Donzelli, Roma

¹⁶ K. Marx, “*from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs*” (1875, Critique of the Gotha Program)

A gentrification conceived not as the proliferation of “Ex Dogane” - boosting both acoustic and environmental pollution together with speculative opportunities - but rather as the proliferation of services. As an old lady we interviewed pointed out:

“A San Lorenzo o si mangia, o si beve” (“In San Lorenzo, either you eat or you drink”).

(F, 82 years old)

The situation is caught in a stalemate, probably due to a problem of differential priorities. There is a big hiatus dividing what is perceived as a need according to each of these groups, and what is perceived as a need according to public actors. Maybe there is a point of convergence though: the fight against massive urbanization and urban decay.

San Lorenzo needs to gentrify the other way around; it must gentrify “going back”, offering answers to citizens’ claims, the most basic ones. It must gentrify dismantling the obtrusive “superstructure” that withholds deficiencies and inadequacies.

CHAPTER 3

DIAGNOSIS

3.1 A transitioning co-neighborhood: implosion or explosion?

Nonconformity dwells in the thoughts and dispositions of people who changed history. The very existence of contrariness explains the insurgence of unorthodox thoughts - with regard to the mainstream hegemonic ones - that are capable of fueling change. The latter refers to any field of knowledge or culture that has been bouleversé by a deviant actor, constantly engaged in the symbolic production and reproduction of meanings or cultural codes.

This deviant actor withal, generally resembles what the traditional economics paradigm defines as *homo oeconomicus*. Who is he?

The *homo oeconomicus* is an individual whose thoughts, dispositions and actions are guided by a self-interested egotism. A metonymy of how the market works (and has worked since now). This mainstream economic doctrine has always been regarded as the best instrument to reach the so longed social benefit; the result of decentralized decisions and exchanges aimed at personal maximization, so far seems having produced an optimal allocation of costs and benefits in society.

Per contra, this archetypal individual collides with the model of collective governance we have exemplified. A model that would ideally alleviate the burden from the *tragedy* caused by the rivalrous and non excludable goods, namely the commons. Moreover, Elinor Ostrom has shown that one big hindrance for cooperation is the degree of inequalities between citizens. The *homo oeconomicus* and his unchecked driven for mastery finds no place in our cogitations.

Time itself, privileged the anti-archetype; a model of individual that nullifies personal hedonism if the latter is not reinforced by collective responsibility, by

a “confluence of forces”¹⁷. This anti-archetype is the *mulier activa*; a relational individual with a relational autonomy.

The elective affinity between the *mulier activa* and the general principle of “civic collaboration”¹⁸ stands in an harmonious equilibrium; nevertheless it flourishes seeds of discord too.

Marcuse contrasts the affluent consumer society with a previous situation of “two-dimensional” existence, that for Marcuse express a single facet: the coexistence of the present (hegemonic and self-affirming) system with its negation. A *mulier activa* subject, values negation to reinforce the system, values culture as critique of the prevailing order.

Society is made of those who uncritically accept it, those who challenge it and those who reject it. Very recklessly, I find an incredible parallel of these three modalities of action with Kierkegaard’s aesthetic, ethical and religious diacritical dimensions.

Beginning with those who reject the system, they are outcasts who completely jettisoned society and act *outside* of it. An unbounded freedom, which in truth is meaningless.

Freedom is a positive status which is dependent from the existence of an opposite and complementary negative one.

Borrowing the Derridean theory of the supplement, meanings are organized through difference.

But anarchy is existentialist. Those who hate everyone, hate no one.

Like Kierkegaard’s *Don Giovanni*, highest representation of the *aesthetic* stage, who loves everyone because in fact he loves no one.

Furthermore, we have those who accept unconditionally society and *identify* with it. These “one-dimensional” men, live in a state of “happy

¹⁷ From Alexis de Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (1835):

"Furthermore, when citizens are all almost equal (...) the only guarantee of liberty is for everyone to combine forces. But such a combination is not always in evidence".

¹⁸ Costantino Mortati issued in 1970 a sentence that affirmed the existence of a “general principle of civic collaboration” according to which every citizen seems to have a “duty to act in the general interests”.

consciousness” which accepts the parameters of the system and produces only a superficial happiness. Just like Kierkegaard’s *religious* stage, this is the dominion of solitude characterized by the absence of critical connotations, where individuality is maximized but still becomes descriptive, deceptive and operationalized.

Lastly, those who challenge society but act *inside* it, are ultimately assimilable to the *mulier activa*. For the activists we have interviewed, protest and contrariness are incredibly valuable since they fuel change. According to Kierkegaard, the choice of despair leads to the *ethical* stage, which implicates stability and continuity - differently from the aesthetic stage for instance. The *Libera* perfectly suits the ethical dimension, where knowledge of injustice is affirmative of the self and leads to a genuine notion of freedom.

A brief excursus both *per se* and instrumental to understand the value of solidarity and dissent, both with an existentialist turn.

Is this civic collaboration conceivable?

In our particular case, the critical issue for the survival of these local resistance realities is the recognition from public authorities. The “**Deliberazione 26/95**”¹⁹ issued by the Municipal council, opens the way to the acknowledgement and acceptance of these local realities, allowing activists to pursue their programs and activities, together with forms of ad hoc regulation and subsidized rents (only 20% of the total amount). A policy started with the Giunta Veltroni and continued by the Giunta Alemanno. But as a respondent revealed us immediately, after a while problems arose once again:

“What we ironically call the ‘letterine’, started to arrive; by this ridiculous name, we mean requests of outstanding payments around 6 millions of euros. The reason of this unbearable requests was that they considered within the payments also the sum that according to the Deliberation 26/95 wasn’t expected to be payed by us; they saddled us the 100%, while we took responsibility only for the 20%”. (F, 28 years old)

¹⁹ For more information:

https://www.comune.roma.it/PCR/resources/cms/documents/Concessioni_SpaziSocialiW.pdf

The ensuing *Charter of the Commons* (“*Roma Comune*”) we mentioned earlier in the analysis, represents a singular experiment of bottom-up lawmaking, with a claim of “co-governance”. San Lorenzo personifies this transition: activists, citizens together to preserve the urban space, to preserve the commons from the threat of “enclosure” by economic elites.

Human efforts to avoid a Hardy’s *Tragedy* scenario, where uncoordinated actors over consume and overexploit the available resources. Since cities and therefore neighborhoods are open access, they are commons too.

If the morphology of public institutions is redefined and turned into *enabling* platforms for both single and associated citizens, San Lorenzo will follow suit as a small scale experiment of co-governance.

A transitioning co-neighborhood.

3.2 *A movement society: pathologies and risks*

Theories of “simple” modernization, from Habermas to Marx to Parsonian sociology, share a certain utopic evolutionism, which can be attributed either to communicative rationality, to the development of means of production or to structural differentiation and functional integration.

Howbeit, Ulrich Beck sees a different and more obscure dimension to this development; the industrial, scientific, technocratic society (the “first modernity”) has succumbed to its own success; the consequences of this development is a “risk society” based on an acute awareness of risks and loss of faith in progress (Drake, 2010:158).

Differently from postmodernism, Beck argues that risk society is not a metonymy for either modernity or the end of it. He presents a “second modernity” and “reflexive modernization”. Even more interesting, is how this reflexive modernity embodies the exegesis of the progressive disillusion with institutional and traditional politics. According to Beck this detachment from traditional rhetorics produces a “*sub-politics*”, concerned with issues such as consumption and lifestyle.

A movement society best understood as a byproduct of de-traditionalization and individualization rather than as an explanatory for the collapse of ideologies.

Still, modernity seems to be remarkably permeated by abstract systems and symbolic tokens as abstractions of value (e.g. money) propelled by the media, which saturate us with visual contents and disembed experience from place and time. The disembeddedness from traditional forms, causes issues to take a fundamentally ethical aspect; a shift from what Giddens defined as emancipatory politics to *life politics*.

As Zygmunt Bauman has observed, “*at the heart of life politics, lies an unquenchable desire for security*” (Bauman 1999: 23). Thus, as evidence from our case study suggests, this individual insecurity is easily appealed to an

electoralist ploy by post-ideological political elites laying claim to the function of protecting public safety (Drake 2010: 165).

A world of chronic uncertainty poses several questions.

One of those, is deemed particularly stimulating; namely, the evolution of movements, their cyclicity.

Sydney Tarrow was notably interested in what he defined “cycles of contention” given the redundancy of dissent throughout history.

Contention can be conjoined with the propagation of sound in physics. Just as mechanical waves diffuse, transporting their energy from one location to another, movements do the same. The 1848 revolutionary wave is archetypal of the high diffusion of a phenomenon with highly different outcomes.

Men will always experience oppression, when the latter is present. This endemic knowledge of injustice can be defined with a Nietzschean spirit as anti “*amor fati*”, the denial of one’s own of faith. The “*one-dimensionality*” attributed to modern subjects, is transitory though.

Human beings tend to transcend the obvious, for there is an inherent driven to mastery, a driven to create meanings. A sempiternal Zarathustra.

This analysis of dissent discloses the significance of a study that is far from being mutually exclusive or contingent, indeed it reveals to be wide and general in its scope.

In a *genesis-exodus* approach, movements’ cyclicity states their circular rise and fall. What is ultimately questioned thus, is not their existence but their *persistence*. Someone may push towards an interpretation which views them as collateral outbursts or pathological aspects of society. Still, this hypothesis is false. Collective action is synchronously nemesis and exegesis, pathology and completion of our era.

For Polanyi, history was made up of movement-counter-movement interaction that was circular rather than linear as if the historical timeline was pre-fabricated with a planned obsolescence.

Like a phoenix, contention dies and rises again from its ashes, in a dulcet eternal recurrence.

CONCLUSION

What an obsolescent concept has become, *class*.

This concept has purposively become redundant in this analysis, both an incipit and a finale. Still, it is purely provocative in nature.

The research project I engaged in the neighborhood of San Lorenzo began, for academic contingencies, in January 2018. The initial premises, were aimed at discussing and inferring the degree of co-governance of a self-administered neighborhood which was actively challenging its *status quo*, proclaiming itself *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo* in 2013.

Initially, my analysis was bounded by an urban (small-scale) perspective.

The *Libera* became the unique focus of the analysis, ghettoizing alternative views. My evidence indeed, was denoting that the absence of background theories and comparative perspectives constituted a fundamental hindrance and canalized *de trop* my staunchest cogitations.

Contention exercises a fascination which allegedly no one is immune.

Moreover, I am used to be very “context friendly”; better, I am fancy underscoring the importance of context and time. Social analysis of whichever phenomena cannot be carried out in a vacuum.

For the sake of what has been said, this research paper has ideally aspired to provide all the necessary tools to frame the case-study and acquire preliminary knowledge. Just as information on the neighborhood have been disclosed, contention has been approached in an *evolutionary* perspective, presenting its most elemental theories with annexed criticality.

In some point in the analysis, it was useful to rip the Rawlsian veil of ignorance that shredded knowledge in vagueness.

Not really Cartesian in flavor, *cogito* not necessarily assumes the *ergo sum*.

Facing the findings of the research during the drafting of the paper, reshaped and gave new life to my initial hypothesis.

Just to mention one, I speculated to be dealing with a movement whose members came from the urban underclass, with gray-haired and 68 inspired

rhetorics; indeed desk research shed a light on the postmodern evolution of a fluid and descriptive notion such as class, unveiling instead the presence of a new “middle class”, where ascriptive features become descriptive and whose different degrees range on a ideal dimensional spectrum.

This inquiry in fact, overtly jettisoned lapidarian avowals.

We inspected the crisis of liberal democracy and its fortuitous appeal to a Machiavellian “prince” (De Blasio, Sorice 2014); James Mahoney would have hypothesized an underlying path-dependency sustained by self-reinforcing sequences, in the manner of a long-term reproduction of institutional patterns. The *Libera* has retained some of those contingent traits of movements formed after the 2008 crisis, namely the adoption of a *deliberative-participatory democracy* model, not comparable in any way to direct democracy.

Interviews, participant observation were useful to dig into each activist’s claims; and yet, I observed the homogeneity along identity lines in between the affiliated members.

Also ideological patterns are less stringent than I imagined; the underlying socialism thinking appeared heuristic in value and recalls Carlo Rosselli: “*Socialism is a tendency towards an end*”.

A liberal socialism, in as much as Giuseppe Saragat underlined: “*an idea of freedom which did not flourish with the proletariat, but with the origin of humanity*”.

Still and all, we are confronted with a movement which has resisted the desublimation of desires, which indeed find a social expression but not in a *Marcusian* repressive way apt to eliminate desires for liberation.

Hence, in order for this transition towards co-governance and horizontal subsidiarity to be achieved, a paradigm shift from a regulatory Leviathan State to a partner State seems a paramount necessity.

Co-governance is a purposive end, not an abstract idea; it can be progressively achieved even in contexts where it is still in a primitive and experimental stage, such as the one we have observed in this analysis. In this case particularly, the stress shall be placed not on a simil-Christiania transition. Not

“self-governance”, but co-governance. Besides being more conceivable, compromise may reveal a successful convergence of different interests (or perchance, just an “armed peace”). A process whose charge can be taken only by those who really fathom its internal dynamics, its struggles and its demands.

What the *Libera* probably fails to consider though, is that antagonism alone cannot be the solution to the stalemate. Civil society actors and individual citizens have unquestionably different repertoires of action, one institutionalized the other contentious, but they have similar concerns. The “deus ex machina” disentangling the impasse perhaps, is simply finding a common enemy. According to the Machiavellian realism, apart from coalescing, the ultimate endeavor is to “divide and rule” (*divide et impera*). The rationale behind is that breaking existing power structures, by causing rivalries and fomenting discord, makes them weaker. Private businesses are predators trashing out, tearing down, destroying, ravaging and plundering the neighborhood. Being these modern barbarians the target assessed, the way out the vacuum is doubling the strengths, underpinned by the same rhetoric: liveability for the citizens and governability for institutions.

Rosi Braidotti (1994) offered her own postmodern definition of political agency with the concept of “nomadic subjects”. The nomad is a gypsy between societal roles. An agent that relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. An identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity.

“Like a flood tide which loosens up much of the soil but leaves alluvial deposits in its wake” wrote Aristide Zolberg (1972: 206) of the 1960s movements.

The patterns we have observed will come to halt and reproduce themselves under other forms, at first ferocious and diffused but ultimately ephemeral and institutionalized: *“Post coitum, omnia animal triste”*²⁰.

²⁰ Aristide Zolberg (1972: 205-206) quotes the old adage to express the disillusionment following waves of contention

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* Last accessed at each website from March and June 2018

ABSTRACT

“La storia di ogni società esistita fino a questo momento, è storia di lotte di classi”

(Marx, K. Engels, F. (1848) *Manifesto del Partito Comunista*, Cap.1)

Quello che rimane dell'idea di *classe*, è una *rêverie* obsoleta.

Risulta infatti particolarmente desueto avvicinarsi in speculazioni sociologiche o filosofiche che siano, intorno a questa nozione così ridondante, così corporea, così tangibile, eppure così assente.

Un abisso intervalla questo e l'astrazione teorica; due concetti posti in opposizione binaria. Tale antitesi, è forse spiegata dal forte radicamento dell'idea di classe nei costrutti culturali prodotti da una qualsivoglia società; una caratteristica strutturale responsabile dell'influenza e della fascinazione silente esercitata nei processi di *framing*. Il *frame* (o cornice) viene definito da Erving Goffman (1974) come un messaggio metacomunicativo che descrive l'interazione in corso e la definisce, rendendo così il processo comunicativo un'esperienza stratificata.

L'uso della parola “spettro” nel *Manifesto del Partito Comunista* (1848), risulta essere congeniale ai fini della nostra discussione.

Quello di “classe”, è diventato un concetto-ombra, uno spettro.

Bisogna però decontestualizzarlo dalle cogitazioni Marxiste, bisogna astrarre il significante per evitare interpretazioni fuorvianti e *context-bound*.

L'espressione “concetto-ombra” sembra alquanto idiosincratica, tuttavia indica quanto l'idea di classe sia disseminata nella definizione stessa di società.

Il determinismo dottrinale (come il Marxismo, per intenderci) spiega l'*azione* come processo ultimo e risultato finale rispetto alla pletora di caratteristiche condivise da una particolare popolazione (razza, nazione ecc.) (Della Porta, Diani 2006: 120); un materialismo che vede l'azione collettiva ancorata alla struttura sociale e allo sviluppo di una società.

Prendendo in prestito l'espressione aristotelica *aitia*, possiamo dunque constatare quanto i pensatori di una volta abbiano identificato il concetto di classe come variabile *esplicativo-causale*.

E' evidente però, quanto la serie di concetti esposti risulti particolarmente semplicistica come spiegazione di un agire collettivo e di politiche conflittuali, sopravvalutando la presenza e comorbidità di uno status ascritto.

Ciò nonostante, l'importanza del contesto e del periodo storico non può rimanere nell'oblio. La dottrina materialista Marxista ad esempio, è stata teorizzata durante l'età industriale dove la prossimità fisica caratterizzante l'allegorico modello Ford della catena di montaggio e la feticizzazione della grande metropoli, faceva del sindacato l'unica forma di associazionismo possibile. L'appartenenza ad una determinata classe sociale, era dunque un tratto categorico ed essenziale al mutuo riconoscimento.

Il valore simbolico di lotta, di conflitto, continua ad essere sfidato dalla modernità. Una modernità che giustappone le idee di *classe* ed *identità*.

Manuel Castells evidenzia come lo studio delle classi sociali abbia subito una *de facto* transizione paradigmatica: dall'interazione nel posto di lavoro, all'interazione sociale all'interno del contesto urbano.

Facendo riferimento ai nuovi impulsi apportati dalle teorie postmoderne nel campo dei movimenti sociali, questa tesi assume un valore euristico.

Il caso studio si pone l'obiettivo di individuare le cause e le dinamiche di conflitto nel quartiere popolare di San Lorenzo, situato a Roma.

Contingenze di natura accademica hanno portato questo progetto di ricerca ad avere una struttura triadica, eppure alquanto insolita.

Essendo la ricerca stessa un'autopsia di un fenomeno sociale, ai tre capitoli è stato assegnato un titolo che richiama il mondo medico.

Il primo capitolo è *l'eziologia* del fenomeno. In campo sanitario, il termine "eziologia" si riferisce al complesso sistematico delle cause di una patologia.

L'etimologia riconduce proprio al termine aristotelico *aitia* a cui si faceva

riferimento precedentemente nel testo, per indicare le cause profonde di un evento (diverse invece dal cosiddetto *casus belli*, la causa contingente).

Il primo paragrafo sarà contemporaneamente introduttivo ed esplicativo; percorreremo dunque il percorso bizantino del quartiere di San Lorenzo. Di matrice partigiana e proletaria, copiosi fattori hanno contribuito allo sviluppo di diversi fattori patologici.

Uno scenario squallido, una spirale infernale dantesca, verso il basso: un abisso urbano pervaso da angoscia, accidia e disperazione.

Esamineremo i mutamenti di San Lorenzo, metonimia di decadenza e punto focale della *movida* romana, quest'ultima causa dell'aumento delle attività speculative nel quartiere. Una periferia nel centro.

Il secondo paragrafo verte invece su considerazioni di carattere metodologico, data la natura empirica dello studio.

Il pluralismo metodologico fa da padrone nello studio dei movimenti sociali. Eppure, la scelta di un approccio qualitativo sembra essere stata automatica, dettata probabilmente dalle esigenze teoriche esplicitate nelle nostre premesse. Ho indirizzato da subito la ricerca in senso antropologico; con un uso della metodologia "spurio" ed "ibrido", tra interviste semi-strutturate e osservazione partecipante (seppur sporadica), sono riuscita a catturare le caratteristiche *latenti* del movimento, inafferrabili dalla lettura di qualsivoglia testo. Tuttavia "*l'assenza di dogmatismo metodologico*" (Klandermans e Staggenborg 2002a, xii), non ha ostacolato la scelta cosciente delle tecniche di ricerca utilizzate ai fini dello studio.

Il secondo capitolo riguarda la *sintomatologia* del caso. Le varie sottosezioni saranno strumentali ai fini del raggiungimento di un *verstehen* in stile tipicamente Weberiano. Se il primo capitolo è introduttivo ed esplicativo, il secondo risulta descrittivo e risolutivo.

Un breve excursus servirà come prologo, presentando le varie teorie del conflitto e la loro evoluzione, da Marx a Lenin, da Gramsci a Tilly. Il conflitto

è endogeno all'idea di azione collettiva, antagonistica *per se*. Esploreremo la letteratura associata, rilevante alla comprensione postliminare.

Peraltro, l'introduzione ha svelato uno dei focus principali della ricerca. La rivoluzione postmoderna, ha *bouleversé* il concetto di classe; le definizioni attuali di proletariato e classe media, risultano dunque contingenti e consequenziali alle trasformazioni economiche reduci della globalizzazione, producendo così un reale dilemma speculativo. Le nostre ipotesi rudimentali, possono ciò nonostante essere considerate delle linee guida teoriche.

L'energia libidinale della ricerca, sarà dunque convogliata nello studio della *Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo*, oggetto e soggetto ultimo del nostro studio. Preceduta *ex ante* dall'occupazione simbolo del *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo* nel 2011, la *Libera* nasce nel febbraio 2013 dalla comunanza d'intenti dei vari micro associazionismi presenti da anni nel quartiere, dall'intenzionalità giusta ma dai risultati abortivi. Essa si pone come forza emancipatoria di un quartiere nelle mani dei privati e di un Comune disinteressato e volutamente cieco.

La connotazione dell'uomo come *uti socius*, è posta dalla Costituzione tra i valori fondanti dell'ordinamento giuridico; la cinesi tra due estremi, la "collaborazione civica" e la "sussidiarietà quotidiana" citando l'art. 118 comma 4 della Costituzione.

Gli aspetti più elementali dell'assemblea, quali la composizione od il grado di deliberazione interna, sono emersi grazie all'osservazione partecipante, sporadica ma utile. Le interviste con gli attivisti risultano ancora più importanti, facendo emergere gli obiettivi, i repertori d'azione utilizzati (dei quali percorreremo la storia secondo il modello di Tilly), il livello di *engagement* e molto altro.

Seguirà inoltre una valutazione dei successi e disfatte dal punto di vista degli attivisti. Bisogna ammettere come in questo caso, l'*encadrement* in un singolo luogo abbia salvato energie, diversamente da una ricerca etnografica multisituata.

Infine, analizzeremo il coinvolgimento dei cittadini del quartiere nel progetto di *co-governance* portato avanti dalla *Libera*. Il loro entusiasmo o la loro disillusione possono essere vitali per la sopravvivenza del movimento.

Riusciranno a mettere in discussione gli attori istituzionali, o almeno ad incrementare la capacità abilitante dello stato?

E se dunque esiste un qualche rapporto di dipendenza tra felicità privata e felicità pubblica, Albert Otto Hirschman (1982) direbbe che siamo entrati in un ciclo in cui le persone sono sempre più disposte ad impegnarsi per la felicità pubblica perché hanno capito l'incidenza che essa ha su quella privata.

L'ultimo capitolo è invece la valutazione *diagnostica*. La metamorfosi di San Lorenzo in un co-quartiere (e.g. collettivo) risulta peculiare; tuttavia il processo è ancora in uno stato embrionale, e poco si può dire rispetto agli sviluppi futuri. Dopo lo Stato Leviatano, lo Stato produttore di servizi (Welfare State) e lo Stato regolatore che arbitra il libero gioco della concorrenza, si inizia a parlare di "Stato catalitico", "Stato relazionale" o meglio, "Stato partner", capace di coinvolgere l'individuo *mulier activa* in una governance orizzontale lungo le linee della sussidiarietà.

Quella che Ulrich Beck (1997) definisce *modernità riflessiva*, stimola considerazioni sulla crescente disillusione con la politica tradizionale ed istituzionale, producendo così una "*sub-politica*", risultante dal processo di de-tradizionalizzazione e atomizzazione progressiva dell'uomo. Quella che secondo Giddens (1991) prende il nome di *politica della vita*, si sostituisce alla political emancipatoria.

Queste considerazioni di carattere generale, tenteranno di spiegare come questa cultura del rischio iscritta in una società caratterizzata dal conflitto, sia sincronicamente patologia ed espletamento della nostra epoca.

Come in un eterno ritorno Nietzscheano, la ciclicità osservata nella ricorrenza dei movimenti sociali esprime quanto infondo l'apparente ferocia iniziale risulti poi tanto effimera quanto collaterale.

*“Like a flood tide which loosens up much of the soil but leaves alluvial deposits in its wake”*²¹ (Zolberg 1972: 205-206)

²¹ Così Aristide Zolberg scriveva a proposito delle sommosse degli anni 60 del XX secolo.

“Come l’alta marea, che allenta gran parte del terreno, lasciando ciò che resta dell’alluvione nella sua scia”.