On the Inappropriability of Homelessness: An Experience of Inhabitation of Public Space in St Peter's Square, Rome

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Abstract_ *This article's aim is to engage intellectually the approach to homelessness under the point of view of architectural and urban studies. By taking back Lancione's claim in which the scholar appeals for a rethinking of the approach to homelessness, in which interested practitioners are invited to ask how rather than what homelessness is. By engaging with this topic the paper seeks to move beyond the dichotomy between what and how homelessness is accounted. Through a combination of historical accounts on homelessness in the city of Rome and ethnographical observations carried out in the area around St Peter's Square, the paper will introduce the possibility of intending homeless people as inappropriable bodies. This possibility is intended as an inversion of the modalities with which homelessness is approached both in terms of scholarly and institutional approaches. By accounting this inappropriability, the paper highlights that how and what homelessness is cannot be considered separately. By doing so, the paper offers a critical reading of the modalities with which public spaces in Rome are inhabited by people who are homeless, advancing a request for a renewed ethics towards people experiencing homelessness.*

Keywords_ *Homelessness, Rome, St Peter's Square, charity, public space, inappropriability, Agamben, Urban Studies*

In the book *La Mendicità Proveduta, Nella Città Di Roma Coll'ospizio Publico, Fondato Dalla Pietà, E Benificenza Di Nostro Signore Innocenzo XII Pontefice Massimo: Con Le Risposte All'obiezioni Contro Simili Fondazioni*, Italian writer Carlo Borromeo Piazza described the condition of homeless people and poverty in the city of Rome during the Seventeenth century (Piazza, 1693). The book is interesting for several reasons: One, as argued by Irving Lavin, for the first time the word homeless people (*senzatetto*) was introduced to qualify people who inhabited the streets of Rome as a consequence of their condition of poverty (Lavin, 2007). Second, the book provides a description of what homelessness is: Homelessness is associated with the word *ozio*, which can be translated with idleness or laziness and whose Latin derivation is *otium*. The importance of this aspect will be evidenced soon. Homelessness was described as a condition that surrounds, characterises and determines the disgraced life of the homeless inhabitants of Rome in the Seventeenth Century. Third, to this condition, Pope Innocent XII attempted to provide a remedy with the institution of a hospice or hospital for the poor. The idea of constituting a hospice for the poor in the city of Rome, on the one hand served charitable purposes, which, as Lavin outlines, represented a way of assimilating homeless people's dignity to the Pope's own (Lavin, 2007). The image of the Pope became one of poor among the poor. On the other, the opening of the hospice also followed the request from other dwellers of the city concerning the removal of the homeless people from the streets. This request was based on the fact that homeless people were regarded as an annoying and disturbing presence in the city (Piazza, 1693). This was a display of a disgraced way of living, which resonated in daily annoying interactions between homeless people and other city-dwellers. The institution of this charitable hospice was in fact not only aimed at hosting exclusively homeless people present in the city of Rome. Rather, while hosted inside the hospice, the homeless guests were introduced to working, producing and manufacturing objects, along with carrying out other activities such as praying. In other words, the notion of idleness as a disgrace and a distorted way of living a life was opposed against work, production as a way of liberating these people's lives. While *otium* was utilised to represent homelessness and what the homeless body is, by contrast, work and production, *negotium*, were intended as the only possibility of salvation for these disgraced people (Piazza 1693).

The main reason I decided to introduce and present Piazza's story of homelessness in Rome, as I will also show in the article, is that current approaches to homelessness have not basically changed. This is particularly verified both at the local scale of the city of Rome and at a larger scale.

Hence, the way homelessness is managed in Rome is still largely related to high-profile initiatives led by the Vatican. These initiatives, on the one hand aim to achieve media coverage. On the other hand, they are akin to the same rhetoric mechanisms employed by Innocent XII: to give homeless people the same dignity as the one deserved to the Pope, who is poor among the poor. This mechanism however, I argue, is counter-productive, reifying the condition of people who are homeless as the poor, vagrant and in need people. But above all, this image of homelessness is also reified in the eyes of other housed individuals, to whom the homeless person remains incapable of providing for him/herself.

The account provided by Piazza is also verified when the initiative led by Pope Innocent XII. In this respect, the contrast outlined by Piazza, between idleness/laziness (*otium*) as the representation of homeless people's lives and work/production (*negotium*) as the only possibility of salvation for these people can be included into contemporary debates that question how homelessness is approached. These approaches have appealed for a rethinking of the way homelessness is tackled, proposing a move beyond asking what homeless is to favouring how homeless practices are carried out to inhabit public spaces (Lancione, 2013b). This passage from what to how homelessness is, was remarkably evidenced by the request from Lancione to stop attempting to provide a definition of homelessness (Lancione, 2016).

On the one side, this article certainly agrees and seconds this move, which as asserted by Lancione enables learning from the homeless body more than just trying to ask what this body means (Lancione, 2013b). On the other side, I would argue these current approaches to homelessness present certain problematic issues. The first is that they create a dichotomy between what and how homelessness is (See Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2020); second, as I will show later, the way homelessness is managed in Rome still depends on showing what homeless people are. In other words, both institutional and charitable bodies including the Vatican are mostly interested in exploiting a presumable representation of what homelessness is to support charitable initiatives. Third, the dichotomy between what and how homelessness is eludes the views of people experiencing homelessness. These, by contrast, are akin to logics of preferences and convenience. These logics reveal that what and how homelessness is cannot be considered separately. In this respect, by taking back Lancione's appeal to stop defining homelessness, this article aims to advance the hypothesis of considering homeless people as *inappropriable*.[1]

In order to argue homeless people's *inappropriablity* and what this implies, I will use the ethnographical experience I had with a group of homeless people in the modern city of Rome. By describing how public space near St Peter's Square in Rome is inhabited, it is possible to highlight how the representation of poverty in Rome becomes a means to carry out charitable initiatives by the Vatican, which at

1 The concept of inappropriability was developed by Agamben in several of his books. Camillo Boano has recently developed some of Agamben's concepts, arguing about a 'Whatever Urbanism' which can be somehow assimilated to the concept of inappropriability presented in this paper.

a level of public perception of homelessness remains ephemeral. The modalities with which public space is inhabited will also evidence how, from the side of charitable bodies and public authorities, homeless practices are regarded as passive and tolerated.. However, it is precisely from a closer look at these practices that it is possible to reveal how homeless people in St Peter's Square oscillate consciously between the representation of what they are and how they inhabit public space. Finally, by looking at how public space is inhabited, it is possible to learn how people who experience forms of chronic homelessness remain *inappropriable*, revealing a possible ethics concerning the approach to homelessness and also advancing a nuanced knowledge concerning how the management of precarity may be intended by current scholarly approaches on the theme.

In the next section, I will introduce the theoretical context within which the analysis and ethnographical observations have been carried out.

Between And Beyond What And How Homelessness Is

By abstracting the description made by Piazza from the religious and spiritual context in which Pope Innocent XII promoted the institution of the hospice for the poor, it is possible to frame the difference between idleness/laziness and work/production into a more contemporary framework. This contrast seems to be evidently connected with a series of recent criticism coming from academic and more activist contexts, concerning approaches to homelessness (Cloke *et al*., 2008; Lancione, 2013b, Lancione, 2016; Duff, 2017). These approaches have brought to light the necessity of moving beyond asking what homelessness means, to focussing instead on how homeless practices are carried out. In other words, these scholarly accounts have appealed for a move from asking what the homeless body means to how this body does what it does (Duff, 2017).

The reason behind this move lies in the fact that by asking what homelessness means implies the presence of an *a-priori* frame that limits the definition of homeless people within common notions: the poor, vagrant, displaced, rough sleeper and so on (Lancione, 2013b). Consequently, if the approach to homelessness is based on these *a-priori* definitions, the latter function as a constraint. This constraint influences the accuracy of the analysis or worse, it may contribute to reifying pre-assumptions concerning what homelessness is. To make a concrete example of this sort, we can frame this aspect into my profession – architecture. If as an architect I start from the pre-assumption that homelessness means only sleeping rough as the consequence of a lack of permanent housing, then my approach to the topic of homelessness will look at it only in terms of rough sleeping. Perhaps, the obvious conclusion from my pre-assumption will lead me to design tiny little shelters; or to appeal for a policy-centric approach that demands the provision of permanent housing conditions to end the experience of being chronically homeless people. However, by doing so, I may lose track of aspects that matter, concerning how people who are rough sleepers inhabit the city. These modalities may include, but are absolutely not limited to, aspects related to sharing spaces with other homeless comrades (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009; Parsell, 2011), to cognitive processes of creative re-invention of the fabric of architectural spaces (Lancione, 2013a; Lancione, 2013b; Lenhard, 2018); to the way cardboard or duvets are utilised but also the way they are collected; or how urban spaces change from day to night time and so on (Doron, 2000, Doron, 2002; Gesuelli, 2018).

By contrast, by looking at how the homeless person, who eventually experiences forms of chronic homelessness and inhabits the city, I may be able to unveil and disclose aspects relating to how the city is inhabited. This last aspect, as scholars have also suggested, concur to form a performative map of the homeless city (Cloke *et al*., 2008). The formation of this map may help nuance new modes of cohabitation of the city, questioning the relationship between housed and unhoused individuals (Duff, 2017). Additionally, this map evidences how places in the city may acquire new meanings through practices of inhabitation of public space, highlighting how homeless actions are enacted against precarity (Duff, 2017). However, as I mentioned in the introduction, accounting for how homelessness is carried out, which is further channelled by performative scholarships, is problematic for at least two reasons. The first reason lies in the self-intuitive aspect that the request to move from what to how homelessness is enacted may be intended, as a way of saving the homeless person. In other words, the homeless person can be saved from the stigma of common pre-assumptions perpetrated by scholarships that aim to account what homelessness is. The second reason lies in the dichotomy established between accounting what homelessness is and how it is enacted. This dichotomy, which resonates with the contrast between Piazza's notion of *otium* and *negotium*, may risk depriving the homeless person of self-reliance and autonomy.[2]

As I will account in the next section, the way public space is inhabited by the community of homeless people near St Peter's Square shows that how and what homelessness is, are not separate terms. Rather, they form part of a modality of inhabitation of public space that seconds logics of preference and convenience, which even challenge a description of homeless practice as a form of performative language (Cloke *et al*., 2008; Duff, 2017). There are circumstances in which practices that may be ascribed into how homelessness is enacted are employed to secure a

2 A similar concept is developed by Deleuze with the use of the term logic of preference, which according to the French Philosopher undermines notions of prerformativity and pre-determination (See Delueze and Agamben, 2012).

permanence underneath the portico near St Peter's Square. However, having granted this possibility, the application of a logic of preference made this group of homeless individuals prefer to show what they are, poor and homeless people, in order to augment their possibility of getting donations from passers-by (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). It must be noted then that the way homelessness is managed by both the Vatican City, through the Papal Almoner, as much as the way homelessness is intended by other charitable bodies in the city of Rome evidence a convenience of showing what homelessness is. The reason is self intuitively that, the description of the homeless person as the poor and in need is simply more functional to the necessity to carry out charitable projects that may have media impact on the public.

On the contrary, if I were asked what I could learn from the observations I carried out, the reply would be that, to me, people who experience homelessness are *inappropriable* bodies. In this respect, I would like to claim that *inappropriability* is an invitation to look at homelessness as a form of self-reflexive experience of poverty. Poverty, as Agamben writes, is the relation with something *inappropriable (inappropriabile*) (Agamben 2011; Agamben, 2017, p.68): "being poor means: being kept in a relation with [something or somebody who] is *inappropriable"*. In this sense, this article aims at advancing a critical position towards a rhetoric idea of poor among the poor, which although it is pursued with good intentions, does not seem to produce significant social changes. Likewise, the idea of poverty in relation to inappropriability represents a critical stance towards the idea of asking how rather than what homelessness is. As a thought-provoking claim I would argue this is a way of saving homelessness. However, on a more basic level I would argue that asking how rather than what represents simply an alternative way of looking at homelessness. The latter, as Awan *et al.* (2011) argue concerning alternative ways of doing architecture, implies the presence of two distinct poles in which the centre remains substantially untroubled. Rather, I would like to open the possibility of inverting the approach to homelessness: to invite the reader to take seriously into consideration the fact homeless people are *inappropriable*. This implies to start considering the fact that in front of homeless people, we, researchers, scholars, policy makers, Papal almoners, may be effectively the poor. And that together with these other poor people we can start learning but also constructing the space of our cities.

With this in mind, the best way to start presenting the ethnographical observations I carried out, is to begin by accounting on poverty in St Peter's Square.

Poverty in St Peter’s Square

Around the area that circumscribes St Peter’s Square, a number of chronic homeless people use the spots near the Square as sheltering spaces to sleep rough overnight. These spaces comprise the two porticoes that prompt the Square directly, the Bernini’s colonnade but also the numerous entry doorways of shops and churches along Via della Conciliazione and also the streets behind, which are included in the area known as Borgo Pio. Within this area, just a few years back, Pope Francis, who has given poverty high importance, putting it at the top of his agenda, decided to open a series of services dedicated to the homeless people orbiting the area of St Peter’s Square (Gasparroni, 2015; Santambrogio, 2015). One of the last initiatives took place last November 2019, when Pope Francis organised a lunch with poor and indigent people in Rome (Ceraso, 2019).

The observations that I carried out were focused on the group of chronic homeless people that use the portico area next to St Peter’s Square as a congregational area to sleep rough at night. During the day, some of the homeless inhabitants, such as Maurizio (a fictionalised name), leave the portico. Maurizio in particular works as a car valet in the squares and streets near the Vatican area. Hence, this is a modality for him to socialise with other housed individuals, but above all, to contrast precarity related to his personal life conditions. As he told me, the activity of valet, although it is carried out in the black market, enables him to make some money during the day. Additionally, he could also make himself known to clients who work in the area and that, eventually, even cared about his life conditions. Maurizio went from sharing an occupied flat with a friend, to being evicted, ending up sleeping rough on the street. On that occasion, one of his daily clients donated a camping stove to him. Hence, although he wanted to overcome the experience of homelessness, finding a regular job and house, the donation of that camping stove was told with enthusiasm, which echoed with the story of his staying in the park next to Saint Angel’s Castle (not far from St Peter’s Square). Thanks to that donation, Maurizio could make his own food, small and simple things, nothing really sophisticated. However, he felt cooking for himself was a way of not depending on charitable services. A condition that gave him a sense of freedom and control of the self. Maurizio was in fact very sceptical about the charitable services that the city of Rome affords to the community of people who are homeless. This, according to what Maurizio told me, which was also supported by the report released by Michela Braga on poverty and homelessness in the city of Rome, may bring about forms of addiction to such charitable services, failing to provide emancipative measures to chronically homeless individuals (Braga, 2014).

Inhabitation of the portico in St Peter's Square

The portico area near St Peter's Square hosts a variable number of people who are homeless. The number changes from day to night time and from winter to summer. Self intuitively, over summer time, as the season is very mild, many homeless inhabitants prefer to sleep rough in the park that Maurizio once attended, which is located around a kilometre from St Peter's Square, next to the Tiber river. The majority of homeless inhabitants of the portico are originally from Poland. This has a particular relation with the Papacy of John Paul II leading me to question the duration of the experience of being homeless. John Paul II's papacy lasted for about thirty years and finished only in 2005, nonetheless it is not significant that the Papal almoner, who is in charge of the organisation and management of charitable services towards the poor of Rome, is himself Polish.

Illustration 1: Images and references to Pope John Paul II made by a homeless person nearby St Peter's Square, Rome

The Papal almoner, Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, was appointed by Pope Francis to run charitable projects for the poor in the city of Rome.[3] His activities have also embraced recent activist actions to support poor people who occupy a building in Rome (Allegri, 2019). When encountering the community of people who are homeless in St Peter's Square, all the members of this group of people knew the Papal almoner very well. The impression I got is that this group of people regarded 'Father Konrad' (as they use to call him), as the only person who could help them, alleviating the condition of being homeless. Once, Maria (a fictionalised name) showed me a hand-sewn portrait of the Papal almoner. This, according to her, was a means of a gift exchange for the help Archbishop Konrad Krajewski had given to her.

In recent years, there were also a series of high-profile initiatives led by the Vatican. These comprised the opening of the Sistine Chapel to the homeless inhabitants that orbit the Vatican area; or the opening of a brand new service near Bernini's colonnade, which hosts toilet and barber services and is specifically dedicated to homeless people (Gasparroni, 2015). Hence, when I went to present my research to the Papal almoner, he was particularly honest about describing the aims of these initiatives. While my issue with people who are homeless concerned an acknowledgement of their practices and presence in public space, he clearly admitted that the Vatican agenda for the poor was rather different. It mostly aimed at carrying out projects that may have had impact on the media rather than pursuing low-profile projects. He was also particularly aware of the situation with homeless people near the Vatican. Likewise, he was also aware that the situation concerning the presence of people who are homeless was somehow tolerated: During the observations, on only one occasion I personally witnessed policemen demanding the group of homeless inhabitants of the portico to leave the space temporarily. The reason for this was that a press conference was to be held in the office underneath the portico.

When framing the portico in an architectural analysis, this becomes a type of changeable architectural space. It completely changes from day to night time. The nightly usage is one of a congregational area, which is relatively safe and sheltered, for rough sleeping. This is a 'safe refuge' as Maurizio once told me. This, according to Maurizio did not just imply that the portico area was perceived as a stable place, to spend the night among homeless fellows with whom Maurizio felt he had established friendship relations. Rather, the perception of the portico as a safe refuge

3 As stated in the website, "The Office of Papal Charities is the department of the Holy See charged with exercising charity to the poor in the name of the Holy Father". See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/institutions_connected/elem_apost/documents/rc_elemosi neria_pro_20121106_profile_en.html

was also due to its proximity with St Peter's Square, a highly patrolled area of the city in which the constant presence of police but also the Vatican contribute to a feeling of safety.

This last aspect is only one of the numerous codes that are broken by people who are homeless in order to utilise architectural spaces in ways that may be described as emancipative (Lancione, 2013b). The literature and press coverage may have made us used to reading stories of police confiscating, charging with fines and even arresting people who are homeless (Bergamaschi *et al*., 2014; Quinn, 2014; Petty, 2016; Sparks, 2017; Speer, 2019), and, in this respect also, Piazza reported how, as a consequence of the opening of the hospice for the poor in Rome, begging was consequently banned from the streets of Rome (Piazza, 1693). On the contrary, in this case, which is similar to what happens in other areas of Rome, (i.e. the two main train stations), the presence of police most of the time is not regarded as an obstacle, a threatening presence or a constraint. Rather, this patrolling presence is exploited for rough sleeping safely and relatively safeguarded from potential harms deriving from malicious individuals.

In contrast to the activities that are carried out at night, during the day the portico area becomes a type of multi-faceted space, hosting a multitude of practices and city-dwellers: tourists, pilgrims or clergy people, who pay a visit to the Cathedral. There are also people who work in the shops nearby, police officers and other passers-by who go by the area to reach other destinations. The portico itself, then, hosts the entrance to the Vatican press offices. Within this context, the negotiation of space in the daytime by people who are homeless is enacted through a series of procedures and tactics, which at a first glance may be described as disguising.

Hence, on the one side, the occupation of this space by people who are homeless is made tangible over night by the presence of cardboard layers, duvets, voices, the presence of pets and more generally convivial practices but also discussions among the homeless inhabitants that temper the atmosphere of this space (Duff, 2017). In the daytime, this presence is made less tangible and more discrete, described by the presence of few signs that determine and reveal the multiple uses that the portico has. Some of these signs are more tangible than others; a hat placed on the ground utilised to collect donations from passers-by, whose presence is highlighted by means of a stuffed panda bear next to the hat. Conversely, some of the most characterising elements of the nightly occupation such as cardboard layers and duvets are hidden inside black rubbish bags, which are then left at the corner of the portico.[4] Of this stack of objects enclosed into anonymous black plastic bags, which to the eyes of unwitting city-dwellers may contain anything and

4 Likewise, also their voices are somehow hidden, kept silent and made docile during the day.

come from anywhere, what struck me the most was the presence of a broom. I have enquired the community of homeless inhabitants of the portico about the use and reason for the presence of that object.

Illustration 2: Homeless people's belonging collected at the corner of the portico in St Peter's Square

Although the explanation they gave me may seem obvious: this community of people provide the cleaning of the space of the portico every morning before the arrival of street cleaners, the implication of this practice is paramount in the possible understanding of how the portico is inhabited. Hence, at a first glance, the discrete occupation of the portico area in the morning frames this space within the description provided by Steven Vertovec of a particular type of public space, *a room without walls*. The portico is a type of particular space where the negotiation of it takes place by means of practices of occupation. These practices enable the community of people who are homeless to interact with other housed city-dwellers (Vertovec, 2015). However, on a closer inspection, it must be noted that practices of cleaning and tidying up of the space of the portico are, per se, very controversial. Hence, on the one hand this practice aims to distance the community of people who are homeless from the stigma of being characterised as just homeless people (Perry, 2013). In other words, these practices are intended to contrast against a series of pre-assumptions that intend describing people who are homeless as, following Lancione's article, poor, disgraced and vagrant or simply rough sleepers (2013b). On the other hand, as I will show later, the community of people who are homeless is also not interested in letting housed individuals be aware of this practice, preferring to show the fact they are poor through the activity of begging (Parsell and Parsell, 2012). In this sense, it urges to highlight and evidence that by describing how the portico area is inhabited by this community of homeless individuals, complicates and contradicts common pre-assumptions concerning what homeless is. Rather, by accounting how homeless practices are enacted, it is possible to learn how the inhabitation of the portico gives nuanced meanings to public space and accounts to emancipative modalities through which public space is inhabited.

Dis-closure

At this point of the article, I would like to come back to the aspects mentioned in the previous sections concerning the difference between idleness and work (*otium* and *negotium*), to start delineating a line of possible research that frames people who are homeless as *inappropriable*.

In this respect, idleness/laziness *(otium)* was assumed as the consequence of a life in disgrace, up to the point in which Piazza describes this as a pejorative and decaying aspect accompanying the life of homeless people in Rome (Piazza, 1693). Lavin accounts this situation by describing how the disgraced presence of homeless people reached the point of preventing the possibility of nurturing the spiritual life of other Roman city-dwellers (Lavin, 2007). The entrance to the numerous churches in the city was made impossible by the large number of poor homeless individuals, shouting blasphemies and begging both outside and inside these places. In other words, homeless people became a problem and an upsetting presence in the streets of Rome. Although, words such as laziness *(otium*) are no longer utilised to depict people who are homeless, at least not as a pejorative term in the context of the Church and most of the homeless studies I worked on, certainly the presence of poor people in public space is still regarded as a sign of decay of certain areas. The contemporary city of Rome makes no difference in this respect.

The presence of people who are homeless in the city has been prevented through the use of tactics and policies such as the removal of city benches as happened inside the two main train stations of the city, Rome Termini and Tiburtina. As much as the portico area in St Peter's Square, these areas change completely from day to night. In other cases, city benches, even those in the areas near St Peter's Square, were turned into anti-homeless items of furniture. Through the introduction of an armrest in the middle of the bench, the possibility of laying down is thus prevented. In other cases, there was the adoption of more tangible tools akin to anti-homeless architecture such as the use of urban bollards to prevent people who are homeless from sleeping rough (without success).

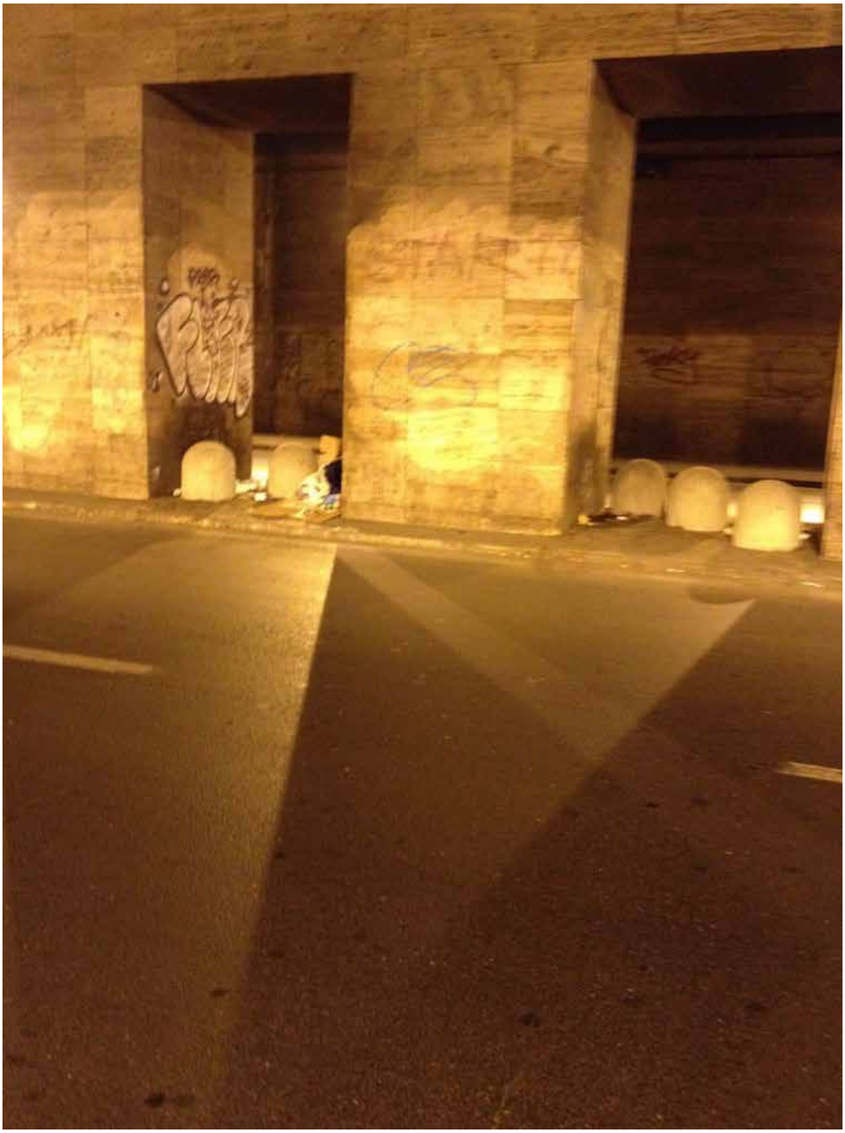

Illustration 3: Bollards are used to prevent homeless people from using an underway passage nearby Termini Station

Additionally, it is possible to note the perception of the presence of homeless people in the city of Rome has not changed also in its more positive aspects. Hence, Piazza's book describes how the aim of opening a homeless hospice in Rome was one of liberating the streets from this upsetting presence; in fact, homeless people where given hospitality in one of the most, if not the most, prestigious and luxurious palace of Rome at that time: the palace of St John at the

Lateran (Piazza, 1693; Lavin, 2007). The goal underlying this operation was and is still crystal clear. It is not just concerned with giving back dignity to people who are homeless. Rather to make these individuals have the same dignity as the Pope himself, who used to live in that same Palace before St Peter's Square's restoration. The rhetoric mechanism that accompanied this operation is self-evident as much as, I would argue, genuine: giving back dignity to the poor. However, the same symbolical mechanism also applies to the Pope, who was himself assimilated to a poor among the poor (Lavin, 2007).

By maintaining the same interpretation, it is thus possible to read what the current Pope is doing towards the poor in St Peter's Square and more generally in Rome. Earlier I mentioned the opening of the Sistine Chapel exclusively to people who are homeless in St Peter's Square or the opening of services for the homeless person. These initiatives were also corroborated by other actions such as the celebration of a public lunch in the occasion of the world day against poverty alongside other initiatives. However, the main risk inherent in patronising these high-profile projects is that they may remain ephemeral in terms of impact on the social fabric of our cities. These initiatives seem not to have exchange value in the modality with which homelessness is regarded in the realm of our cities. In other words, as it was reported to me during my ethnographical fieldwork, these types of charitable operations enable housed individuals to have a teleological perception of homelessness: I am allowed to ignore the presence of people who are homeless because there will always be someone else taking care of them.[5] By doing so, the common pre-assumption of people who are homeless as simply people who are in need, poor or incapable of providing for themselves is reified and perpetrated throughout (Lancione, 2013b). Additionally, as the particular case mentioned of the Papal almoner, these patronising initiatives may risk to emphasise addiction and co-dependance, tending to diminish individuals who face homelessness' self-reliance and dignity (Braga, 2014).

This last aspect also resonates with daily patterns of utilisation of the city, which may contribute to render a representation of chronic homeless people whose presence is merely tolerated simply because they are less visible in the daytime. This is not simply the case of media coverage that seldom describes homelessness in Rome as happening only at night, when homeless individuals sleep rough, forgetting or ignoring how these same spaces change completely at day. Rather, as it was reported to me during the meetings I had with charitable bodies that operate in

5 This is the summarisation of the responses received when interviewing housed individuals who are not involved in charitable projects nor part of charitable bodies on aspects concerning the perception of homelessness in public space.

Rome[6], the fact that urban spaces, which are utilised at night by homeless people, change during the day is included into a logic of tolerance towards the presence of homeless people in the city. In other words, as a means of 'merciful totalitarianism' (Žižek, 2008), homeless people's presence is tolerated because the perception that city-dwellers and public authorities have of places that are inhabited only at night is completely different during day.

In this sense, I certainly would like to fully embrace Lancione's opening to stop asking what homelessness is. Hence, telling how the space of the portico is inhabited by the community of homeless individuals in St Peter's Square evidenced a contrast between the way public space is inhabited and its perception by housed individuals and charitable institutions. However, I must somehow assume that in order to carry out charitable projects, which are also accompanied by certain rhetoric mechanisms, the easiest way is to frame homelessness into common pre-assumptions related to poverty, displacement, rough sleeping and so on.

Nevertheless, I would like to argue that the neutralisation of homeless people from the stigma of pre-assumptions (which may be provocatively intended as their salvation) does not come to pass solely through a discussion of how homeless practices are enacted, nor how public space is inhabited. Rather, I would like to argue how these accounts underlie a series of issues, which depend on the assumption of the practice into a form of work; k; what I previously mentioned as *negotium*.

The telling of the *negotium*, of how public space is inhabited certainly contributes to a nuanced knowledge concerning local tactics of negotiation and transformation of public space (Cloke *et al*., 2008). Likewise, it may highlight how homeless practices are enacted as forms of resistance to precarity (Duff, 2017), aiming to define an agency that people who are homeless surely posses. However, it is possible to argue that even the description of how public space is inhabited risks to remain ephemeral. Additionally, accounts concerning how homeless practices are carried out seem to neglect the fact that both how and what homelessness is cannot be discerned.

For what concerns the first aspect, even by telling how the space of the portico is inhabited by the community of homeless people, e.g. the fact it is cleaned up everyday, may be said to remain ephemeral. The first obvious reason for this claim is that the 99% of other city-dwellers that step-by the portico area, including the Papal almoner, more or less voluntarily ignore such practices. The use of the expression 99% is, in this case, voluntarily provoking. It is aimed to give the same meaning of legitimation utilised during recent protest movements. Numbers matter

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6 I had a personal meeting with Caritas and Comunita' di Sant' Egidio along with Focus Casa dei Diritti Sociali, Cotrad and Il Cigno.

as accounted by eminent scholars to highlight how these protest actions were legitimated (Butler, 2011). This aspect should resonate with scholarly accounts concerning a presumable claim towards a right to a just city, which as accounted by Duff, cannot be granted but must be invented (Duff, 2017). Secondly, as mentioned before, the fact that practices of cleaning and tidying up the space of the portico are unnoticed should invite the reader to question whether this followed a particular choice, i.e. the homeless individual's main interest may be not one of letting other housed individuals be aware of this practice. Though one may claim how the cleaning up of the portico may be regarded as a modality of making that space more welcoming for the housed individuals in the daytime. Conversely, it must be noted that the aim the homeless people inhabiting the portico pursue in the day time is to show precisely what they are: homeless and poor people in order to augment their possibility, by begging near St Peter's Square, of getting donations in form of coins (Parsell and Parsell, 2012).

Hence, we must treat this aspect carefully as it is paramount in understanding what I intend by *inappropriablity* of homelessness. This attitude shows that both how homelessness is carried out and what homelessness is are not contrasting aspects. Rather they are mutual factors, resulting from creative processes enacted by people who are homeless. In this specific case, cleaning and tidying up the portico as much as begging should not be regarded as passive attitudes, as it seemed to emerge from the meeting I had with charitable bodies operating in Rome. Conversely, these attitudes signal a rupture of codes, to employ the same term suggested by Lancione (Lancione, 2013b). Codes are constraints, which depict the homeless person as a tolerated presence up to the point s/he does not show up in the morning. The other code sees the homeless person not just as the poor who is in need. Rather, as the patronising initiatives led by the Vatican seem to indicate, homeless people in St Peter's Square are still incapable of taking care of themselves. These constraining conditions are, by contrast, re-worked creatively, and I would add, actively, opening themselves up into the possibility of staying underneath the portico over the day. This operation has the twofold implication of allowing the homeless inhabitants of disguising the traces of their nightly presence and to receive donations from passers-by. These attitudes underlay a logic of preference in which what they are and how they do what they do coincide and cannot be regarded separately. Rather, they participate in the processes of home-making enacted by people who are homeless in public space. Finally, these logics contradict both the way homelessness is managed locally in the city of Rome and at the general level of possible approach to homeless practices.

By taking back Lancione's opening to stop asking what homelessness is, I would like to look at it by recalling the feeling of frustration and how I felt ineffectual when I carried out my observations. By observing the homeless inhabitants of the portico in St Peter's Square, what they taught me and what I could learn from them is that to me they are *inappropriable*.

Closure

In light of this claim, homeless practices must be intended as a continuous oscillation between what, their representation as such, and how they are enacted, their existence. In other words, by observing how homelessness is carried out, the feeling one may get is more or less the same as happening in quantum mechanics where the descriptions of waves and particles are mutually exclusive and yet equally valid for a full description.[7] To mention another account, this time from philosophy, when observing how homeless people inhabit the portico area in St Peter's Square, this reminded me of the description that Badiou makes of the excrescence (Badiou, 2005). Although, the sound of the word does not recall anything pleasant, excrescence is instead used to describe elements that are represented into a system without belonging to it (Hallward and Badiou, 2003; Adkins, 2012). This particular condition enables the excrescence with the possibility of assuming multiple forms according to logics of preference and convenience. Is it maybe this aspect of multiplicity within one that frames the homeless body as a monstrous body, which runs against and must be moved away from public space? Is it this monstrous body that must be moved away from the sight of the idealised body of the housed individual intended as unity within one (Dorrian, 2000)? And perhaps, it is by virtue of this constant possibility of being removed that homeless practices are enacted as a means to resist against precarity (Duff, 2017)? But if this is the case, then, it must be noted that precarity has been mis-recognised. Precarity does not seem to be intended as a particular form of reality, which depending on probability, accidentally happens (Agamben and Chiesa, 2018). Rather, precarity is intended as a form of disgraced yet stable reality that has to be governed through homeless actions and practices. And this reasoning must be also included into the governance of precarity offered by the various charitable projects to support the homeless person.

Inappropriability is thus an invitation to consider the encounter with homelessness as a particular form of experience, a form of poverty which should nuance the approach to homelessness beyond scholar and academic studies. However, from

7 I invite the reader to intend this example as a metaphor of the relationship between two complementary factors, resulting in a contrasting relationship. See Holzhey (2014).

the point of view of scholarly research and approaches to homelessness, it seems there is a difficulty in deliberating and acknowledging this aspect. Recently, Watts and Fitzpatrick (2020) warned about approaches to homelessness that may tend to regard homeless people as "exotic outsiders, in essence different to the rest of us, with fundamentally distinct needs, desires and life goals". What I aimed to highlight in this paper was precisely to affirm that the homeless person is not simply the other. Rather, during my observations I was often confronted with claims from the group of homeless people referring to a quality of life defined as 'slumdog', to which a political, social and ethical answer is mandatory. On the other hand, inappropriability is also meant to highlight the necessity of not considering the homeless person as simply the same as another housed individual. This paper evidenced that meaningful processes of social inclusion cannot involve initiatives and policies that reveal themselves to be akin to rhetoric mechanisms. These approaches seem to work as a sort of cold fusion process, e.g. being poor among the poor, as accounted throughout this paper, in which an alleged social status of homeless people remains, at a larger scale, untroubled. However, this reasoning should also resonate with its counter-part, being housed among the housed (see Lancione, 2020). Hence, as accounted by Lancione, social differences matter. However, to effectively matter, this paper advances the hypotheses that social differences may be turned into a differential process of social inclusion. One possible way to enact this differential process is to look at the possibility offered by the contamination between so called 'exoteric strands' (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2020) from urban studies and disciplines akin to design and architecture in questioning the role of urban intermediaries, e.g. street furniture, in processes of social inclusion (Amin and Thrift, 2002; Thrift, 2005; Amin, 2008). In the specific case of this article, inappropriability has influenced the development of a design intervention, whose theoretical and practical implications I reserve for further development and discussions (Gesuelli, 2018). The intervention, by virtue of its precarious nature remains inappropriable, involving both housed and unhoused individuals into a self-reflexive logic of acknowledgement of alterity in the realm of public space.[8] I believe this approach conveys with the accounts on urban home-making mentioned by Fitzpatrick and Watts, without regarding homeless people as exotic outsiders. Rather, homeless people are inserted into a context of concrete and emancipative dialogue in the formation of publics. Likewise, I argue that inappropriability, properly understood and enacted does not prevent nor criticise the possibility of developing housing policies. These are nurtured and accompanied by a differential process of social inclusion of homeless people that should also start from the public realm of our cities.

8 See also the positional paper "Decentralising Social Inclusion: tʌɪt, Homelessness and St Peter's Square" presented at DIS 2017, Edinburgh available at: https://designingdaos.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/gesuelli-decentralising-social-inclusion.pdf

In this regard, inappropriability stands as an in-between position that aims to nurture an ethics of self-reflexivity in the encounter with homelessness involving scholars, policy makers but also a wider audience formed by city-dwellers in their daily interactions with people who are homeless. The risk inherent in attempting to codify homeless actions and practices, into either normative approaches or forms of 'radical housing' is to tear them off a threshold of inappropriability that needs to be first acknowledged and properly understood, principally beyond academic studies. Following this perspective, however, the article also acknowledges Fitzpatrick and Watts' (2020) opening to the necessity of including and questioning an ethics concerned with approaches to homelessness. It is precisely upon this ethics, which entails a complete inversion of the gaze through which homelessness is observed and accounted, that I believe it is possible to nurture new modalities of sharing the city and to delineate more socially inclusive policies.

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