



# GIAMBELLINO LORENTEGGIO MASTERPLAN: AN EXAMPLE OF EXPERIMENTAL PLANNING?

Conflictual Practices and Dynamics of a Changing Urban Context

Student: Riccardo Telò 816356

Supervisor: Carolina Pacchi

Course: Urban Planning and Policy Design

AY: 2015/2016



index

## INTRODUCTION

### FIRST CHAPTER

#### SETTING THE GROUND FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD ANALYSIS AND COFLICT ASSESSMENT

##### **1.1. A Question of Scale(s)**

Assessing the Scale: the Neighbourhood

##### **1.2. Framing Social Housing as an Urban Conflict**

The source of Conflict and the Ways to Handle It

Actors as Meeting Point between Ethnography and Conflict Analysis

##### **1.3. Setting a Point of View on Reality: Instruments to Look at Past and Present Reality**

Habitat and Inhabiting: Juxtaposing Ways of Urban Life

The Tension between Inclusion and Exclusion

The City Morphologies: Material and Social Structures

### SECOND CHAPTER

#### GIAMBELLINO: AN EVOLVING NEIGHBOURHOOD IN MILAN METROPOLIAN CENTER

Giambellino Location

##### **2.1. General Perspectives: Milan Urban Dynamics and Projects**

A border-less delimitation

Milan Peripheries in a Metropolitan Context

A New Underground for Milan arriving in Giambellino

Tertiary Urban Developments: the Shape of a New City?

##### **2.2. Circumscribing Giambellino**

The Impression at a First Glance: Raising General Issues

Planning and Political Documents, Official Data

##### **2.3. On-field Analysis**

An Archipelago of Villages

The Decayed Village

A Tell from the Social Housing Compound: Rosalba Story

The Associative Life Around the Village

## THIRD CHAPTER

### DESCRIBING A CONFLICT

#### **3.1. The Peasants of Neighbourhood Habitability, Identity and Appropriation**

Actors and Actions

Casetta Verde: Description and Actions

Dynamoscopio: Description and Actions

#### **3.2. The Conflicting Actor: DRAGO (Dare Risposte al Giambellino Ora)**

The Soul of a Protest and the Requests

Is DRAGO an Actor or a Conflicting Action?

## FOURTH CHAPTER

### AT THE ROOTS OF GIAMBELLINO ASPIRATIONS

#### **4.1. A Photographic Description of the Past**

War resistance and the legacy for the neighbourhood

Industrial past and the workers

Political activism and rioting groups

relation with public and semi-public spaces

#### **4.2. Places from Giambellino Identity**

Piazza Tirana and La Bersagliera

Municipal Market and the Public Library

Convitto Scuola della Rinascita

#### **4.3. DRAGO in Giambellino**

Gaber's character

Nella tana del drago: Renato Vallanzasca

#### **4.4. The 80's and Political Drawbacks**

Born and Rise of Brigade Rosse

Heroin and Political Withdrawal

## FIFTH CHAPTER

### GIAMBELLINO MASTERPLAN, AN ALTERNATIVE PLANNING OPTION?

#### **5.1. General Purposes and Long Term Strategy**

Focus on Illegal Occupied Houses and Social Housing Provision

The Master Plan as a Political Manifesto for Active Policies Integration and Implementation

#### **5.2. Preparatory Works and Master Plan Analysis**

Selective Analysis Focused on the Main Neighbourhood Issues

Development of Properly Made Analysis Tools through Participatory Processes

Policy Integration Exploiting Positive Chain Effects

Two Attachments to Trigger and Orient Possible Outcomes

#### **5.3 Final Comments**

Local Actors Effectiveness on Decision Making Processes

A New Destiny for Giambellino Lorenteggio Social Housing Compound?

Master Plan Preservation and re-Interpretation of Identity Places

## CONCLUSION



# introduction



In the following research a multifaced analysis of Giambellino Lorenteggio's chronicles will be carried. In the first chapter we will review the contributions of several authors to orient our view in ethnographic and policy analysis terms. Concepts as habitat|inhabiting, inclusion|exclusion, social|material structures, the role of actors in the daily life of a neighbourhood and in the structuring of a conflict will be discussed. We will try to go at the core of what is meaningful to explore about urban reality: a scale will be framed and socio-political dynamics enquired on theoretical basis and we will aquire suitable research tools.

In the second chapter we will analyse Giambellino Lorenteggio neighbourhood departing from a metropolitan perspective to narrow down to the life of single inhabitants. The initial large scale will be used to stress current urban development dynamics characterizing Milan as an enlarged entity, i.e. the Metropolitan City. Other factors, altering urban environments, will be taken into consideration such as the construction of the new underground to understand the future of these new metropolitan centres. Social practices and structural reality, instead, will be described with the contribution of Giambellino Lorenteggio inhabitants and official documents in order to have an idea of daily life in this neighbourhood.

The third chapter will be focused on the Actors operating in this environment. A detailed description of their actions on the territory will be fundamental to understand the many ways in which a voice can be built. Firstly, we will deeply explore the various actions of two Actors operating in Giambellino Lorenteggio, namely Casetta Verde and Dynamoscopio. Consequently, we will report the conflictual event acted by DRAGO committee and the reactions provoked in the various public, semi-public and private Actors.

With the intention to reach a even finer view on the neighbourhood, the fourth chapter will be devoted to the reconstruction of Giambellino Lorenteggio past departing from the Second World War. It will be important to highlight if a certain attitude towards conflictual topics, community life and people engagement in every day life were already in place at that time. A collective voice will be gathered and it will allow us to better frame the socio-cultural mileue characterizing Giambellino Lorenteggio.

Lastly in the fifth chapter, we will describe and criticize the master plan published at the end of 2015. Initially the document major topics, prescriptions and projectile intentions will be reported and analysed in depth. Consequently, we will try to link the thesis foundings with the major elements underlined.

# first chapter

## SETTING THE GROUND FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD ANALYSIS AND CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

From Analytical Theories  
to the Development of Empirical Research Tools



In this chapter the fundamentals for an ethnographic and conflict analysis will be settled. We will try to find meaningful matches between the two fields highlighting what are their “points of encounter”. This narrative and analytical way of describing reality should lead us to the answer to the research question: is social housing defence in Giambellino an example of urban conflict producing political innovation?

This first chapter will be used to settle the research’s theoretical basis, this background elements will be then used in a mixed way in the rest of the essay. We will set up our scale of observation trying to frame the most appropriate research level and to adopt it as our working ground. Nonetheless, we will bear in mind and emphasise the necessary multi-level way of analysis these complex issues deserve.

Multi-scalar ways to understand not only social and urban developments but also to systematize the political events, conflicts and claims and the more or less consequent policy orientations. Therefore, the understanding of the various events around Giambellino case will be carried trying to define causal dynamics helping us to draw reasonable explanations of why and how the outcome of the conflict was shaped. Moreover, to accomplish an awareness in the ethnographic and historical views we will define what parts of the urban reality are worth to be explored in-depth during the writing of this essay.

Last but not least, in order to build a bridge between theories and practices we will try to operationalize these concepts, i.e. to make “the several passages through which we can attribute an empirical content to not immediately observable concepts” (A. Bruschi, 1999)”. This operation, although usually implemented for quantitative survey, applied to a qualitative research will allow us to acquire the nodal aspects we will focus on in the drawing of this script, in the construction of our empirical tools, and in the orientation of our point of view on reality. Therefore, at the end of each paragraph we will point out the relevant empirical aspects to look at.

## 1.1. A Question of Scale(s)

Why conducting an analysis in a neighbourhood? What premises should we set to explore its environment? What are the relevant aspects to highlight when we go through its street? With which exploration tools should we describe its structure and population? Where should we look for information about it? These are some preliminary questions on the methodology we should adopt to carry this research. Moreover, as long as this essay wants to match two reasoning on a case of urban conflict, we might add some other questions such as: what is the dynamic of this struggle? What parts have to be taken into account to draw a meaningful description of it? What is the result, or what are the results, of this conflict? On what Institutional and political levels the developments allowing possible outcomes? How can we define them?

### *Assessing the Scale: the Neighbourhood*

Contemporary world have seen a vast array of developments, some traumatic (e.g. the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 or the petrol crisis in the 70's) some slowly accompanied and still developing (Regan and Thatcher's neo-liberal project or the European Union building process, for instance). Not only sociological Institutions such as market, family, and state have changed their role

in the overall configuration of society, but also entire territories have seen impressive evolutions in the aftermath of both outstanding economic growth and fatal economic decline.

Processes such as de-industrialization, post-fordist economic relations, globalization, and the decay of the welfare state have deeply influenced urban realities. A suggestive hint to assess our scale of reference is given by Lefebvre in the famous text "Right to the City" written in 1968 and then published in a collection, "Writings on Cities", by Kofman and Leban. According to the author the city would be embedded between what he calls the "far order" and "near order" (1996, p. 107). The two "orders" can be described as a mixture of socio-economic and political movements modifying one the other, therefore being both interwoven and having a dialectical dynamic. These two complex scales of reality, interpreted in a multi-faced way from Institutional relations to the social (and spatial) division of labour, have indeed changed from the 70's, as many authors well explain (Sassen, Kazepov, Mingione, Kesteloot and others). According to Purcell's interpretation of Lefebvre (2002) the future of the city, especially its government, is deeply entrenched in matters of scales and levels analysis.

As we will see scales are not only a matter for the structural development of the city and its neighbourhoods, but they

are also important for the definitions of conflictual issues, representative questions and the power-related mechanisms. Therefore, we can already affirm that a Democracy question is in place here. To be clear, still following Purcell, in “Urban Democracy and the Local Trap”, this research doesn’t “assume something inherent about the local scale”, i.e. localization is not treated “as an end in itself”. According to author conception of scale, this is a strategy “a way to achieve a particular end. What this end will be will vary according to who is pursuing it” (2005; p. 1928) Consequently, we need to take into consideration this complexity and at the same time reinterpret it in empirical terms, our aim is to understand what is the most affected level by the above mentioned sovralocal processes.

We are looking for a match point witnessing phenomenological effects of various transformations scale both in social and structural terms,. Trying to answer to this question we could easily, and correctly, affirm that this meeting ground is the city it self: its spatial forms, its economic functions and socio-structural configurations. Looking at the city from a strict economic point of view, according to Baldwin (Kesteloot, 2005 for a sociological perspective), market liberalization, changes in the social division of labour, and other macro economic developments indeed influence the urban structure of urban

configurations: the shape of the city. On the other hand, we can assess, with a certain degree of confidence, that important and trans-scalar events (such as Universal Expositions or Olympic Games) or the nestling of Institutional head-quarters (for example the European Union in Brussels, see Demey and Thierry, 2007) tremendously influence the ecology and structures of a city.

Thus, we will pay high attention to this particular scale. Nonetheless, we can affirm that all this macro, top down, evolutions are imposed in a specific territorial place that materializes them also on an architectural and urban point of view. It is not particularly brilliant, but it is particularly true, stating that the above mentioned trans-scalar processes have produced spatially defined effects (the European Union quarter in Brussels, the various Olimpic villages, the Expo sites with usually an undefined future and so on). To make a further step towards urban reality, in our opinion, the neighbourhood is the scale unit that better fits our field of analysis. Indeed, the interconnections between these two orders influences both neighbourhoods’ shape and life. Although mediated by other power levels, Institutional processes, and socio-political developments, our aim in this research should be underlining top-down processes and bottom-up reactions (and vice-versa), intercepting the consequent load of conflicts as an important factor

determining the policy design orientations and the future of the same environment. Moreover, the neighbourhood not only can be defined as a part of the city wide enough to constitute an urban structure influenced by the “far order” in its structural components and functions (for instance the presence of an abandoned industrial area due to the de-industrialization process), but the quarter is also capable to contain the “near order” (local Institutions, political groups, individuals stories...) and the life of people acting and modifying its environment. Conceived as a strategy, as a mean to an end used by the Actors, fixed and fluid over time (Purcell, p. 1928; 2005) this geographical entity perfectly fits our attempt to respond to the research question.

Concerning the temporality of scales it is important underlining that in neighbourhoods every building have a story and some buildings can be seen as a witness and result of conflicts or impositions over scalar conflicts. A political party's or workers union's office, the new head quarter of a multinational company, the presence of a certain kind of service ext. are all fragments of an “historical motion” (2005). They have to be observed and analysed to go further the mere report of current events. Here it comes an other research hint, it will be important to set the historical basis of this environment to understand the past relations between the

neighbourhood and the general political, social and economic developments. These are the grass-root for the current situation and to fully understand the story of our research object. Far from the idea to understand its complexity, nonetheless, we should be able to trace the research lines to test innovative responses to social needs and experimentation of local-based services. We will follow both the bottom up path of social and political claims and the consequent top down responses to these requests and vice versa.

Conscious of the difficult task, we will recognize in Lefebvre thought, thanks to other authors contributions, what are the elements enabling us to describe Giambellino meaningful aspects, its history and nowadays situation. But first let's be clear on the object of analysis: the conflictual topic and the agents around it.

## 1.2. Framing Social Housing as an Urban Conflictual Topic and the Actors Centred Perspective

### *The source of Conflict and the Ways to Handle It*

To develop such an analysis we need a more precise way to observe the dynamics shaping urban questions agenda and policy design. If urban policies and spatial planning are seen as “mediation tools” (Mazza, 2007) for conflict focusing on

space, then grass-root Actors should act on this sphere of decision making. In this respect Melucci reasoning on social movement and conflicting Actors comes to the fore when we want to orient our analysis. According to della Porta and Diani, the “new social movements” theorists (among whom Melucci is one of the founders)

“drew attention to the structural determinants of protest, re-evaluating the importance of conflict, at a time when non-class conflicts were often ignored. Compared with Marxists, new social movement theorists had two specific advantages: *they once again placed Actors at the centre of the stage*; and they captured the innovative characteristics of movements which no longer defined themselves principally in relation to the system of production” (2009, p.8; emphasis mine).

If a conflict on space is there than the Actors involved deserve an insight through the description of socio-political agents, and their actions, in the attempt to create a common voice around a specific topic: social housing management and preservation. What Melucci teaches us is to pay a strong attention on the differences between sporadic events, characterizing many urban protests, and the much more concrete grass-roots organizations and movements.

### *Actors as the Meeting Point between Ethnographic and Political Research*

From this brief analysis we gather a fundamental research focus in the observation of reality i.e. the definition of grass root collective Actors not only as part of a conflict, but also as a component in the daily life of an environment, in our case the neighbourhood. The reflections on local conflicting Actors will be therefore central in the following, we will assess their role as central mediation “bodies” between Giambellino context and the macro-Institutional framework. Their capacity to interpret the questions from the collectivity, to give them a shape and to communicate claims to the upper levels of the administration. Finally, we will see their capacity to formulate aggregative solutions to common problems and their ability to stand for moral and non-negotiable principles in front of the various levels of Institutions.

The importance related to Institutions openness to political change will be taken into consideration all along this essay, here it is finally important highlighting an other Actors’ feature in the structuring of a conflict. According to Vitale and Podestà, we should stress the role of “*learning and reflexivity*” in the political sphere to understand their role of “mediators”, as “experts, who manage the codes of formalized knowledge, who are able



to interpret the law and the technical dimensions of public action instruments”. They can also be called “facilitators, they help the coordination between Actors, promote cooperation, and selectively use informations to foster cooperation in heterogeneous and unstable environments” (2010; pp. 9, 10). Here it becomes evident the Institutional orientation of Actors, in our opinion they are the inter-face between the neighbourhood daily life and the general political environment in which it is included.

The people who act as organized intermediaries among these really different levels trying, on the one hand, to face and solve the neighbourhood problems and, on the other, to communicate with politician and Institutional representative. Therefore, Actors are framed as the match point allowing us to describe Giambellino in a satisfying way. At the end of this work we should ask ourselves how we can assess the result of conflictual action. How to describe the outcomes taking into account the non-linear path of agents interactions? Being aware of the unclear correlation between actions and re-actions, we should be engaged in tracing possible paths allowing innovation in urban policy design.

### 1.3. Setting a Point of View on Reality: Instruments to Look at Past and Present Reality

#### *Habitat and Inhabit: Juxtaposing Ways of Urban Life*

To reach a deeper understanding of the fundamental dynamics involved into the socio-political sphere we will explore the action of associations. As long as any political process takes shape with time and with trust-building among the inhabitants, we might say by building critical mass around one or more topics, it is interesting to see the modalities through which this work is implemented. The distinction between inhabit and habitat (Lefebvre, 1967) becomes central in this regard. Following Stuart Elden, in “Understanding Henri Lefebvre”, these concepts are those that better explicit the influence on the author by Heidegger. In fact, “Lefebvre’s suggestion that ‘inhabiting’ (habiter) has been reduced to the notion of habitat (hàbitat) parallels Heidegger’s notion of crisis in dwelling” (2004, p.190). Moreover, according to Elden it becomes clear that, in Lefebvre thought, the space of dwelling is connected to the urban and social space “habiter is an activity, a situation, habitat is a function, a brutal material reality” (2004; p. 190). Although

Lefebvre’s thought is sometimes difficult to interpret, the author on this

point is clear: social housing estate should be considered as the last step of state's rationality to create the "habitat" of the industrial city. "Certain philosophers will say that large housing estates achieve the concept of habitat, by excluding the notion of inhabit, that is, the plasticity of space, its modelling and the appropriation by groups and individuals of the conditions of their existence" (2004; p.79). This reasoning comes to the fore in this work. Giambellino have passed through different steps of urbanization (following the passage from agricultural, to industrialized and de-industrialized urban reality) and the element of social housing has been of paramount importance since its "beginning". We should see what happened in time to these produced space. Did a socio-spatial evolution happen inside this habitat during time? If the description of social housing condition and its *raison d'être* (i.e. creating habitat), given by Lefebvre in 1968, is still true we should make an effort to test it on the ground. On the other hand lies the concept of inhabit, that we will read as the people's possibility and willingness to be active in the construction of the environment in which a collectivity lives. The quest here is on the use of space, on its daily life and on the opportunity claimed to "enjoy and influence" spaces.

Translated in operational terms: are the association addressing the question of liveability of the neighbourhood

constructing alliances with the people living Giambellino? What are the modalities to be active in the creation and definition of its appropriation and use? Is this immutable, built-for-the-function, space experiencing a process of mutation? We should be able to give an answer to this questions firstly by analysing its current situation analysing data and making on field research with participatory observation, secondly by reporting through pictures the uses of this so called habitat and testing its immutability by focusing on the coherence between the prescriptive use and the actual use. Looking at this topic on the historic motion we should also make an effort to understand if traces of the contemporary attitude towards environment can be detected in the neighbourhood past. Past inhabitants' life, their collective actions, and the historical places hosting them are thus of paramount importance to discover this long-standing attitude toward space.

#### *The Tension between Inclusion-Exclusion*

Central focus of this memoir will be the objects of the contention itself, we will read it simply as the struggle to remain in a certain place. Speaking about social housing and the fight to preserve it, the tension between inclusion and exclusion to a particular space of the city (1996; p. 113) gather particular importance. Any attempts to preserve and renew public housing stock, to improve its accessibility and to

request a more efficient housing-delivery, can be seen as a struggle for inclusion. This might result a trivial statement but one point in this reasoning makes it in some way problematic.

On the social point of view it is not always clear how this request is formulated by Actors trying to meet public administration on the policy design field. The “demand for inclusion” in a certain space will be therefore analysed, looking especially at the level of encounter between Municipality, or any other public or private Actor, and the grass-roots Actors. If the relations in every single meeting event have been co-operative, conflictual or based on bargaining will be highlighted to understand the multi-faced and complex relation between Institutions and conflicting Actors. Here the demand is to maintain spaces “inside the city” where disadvantaged classes can set up their lives. How this request is expressed? What are the tactics to be heard by grass-roots groups? Although the position of the neighbourhood can be regarded as peripheral, in comparison to Milan historical centre, three factors helps us to point his growing positional value (Hirsh, 1980).

Firstly, the change of scale in the analysis is allowed by the, although not really defined yet, introduction of the Metropolitan City last winter. With the new configuration of the city spatial relations (an enlarged geographical

entity) Milan inner-core assumes a different meaning in the definition centre-periphery. Moreover, two other facts help us in understanding the change of role of Giambellino spatial configuration at the city level. The near arrival in the area of the underground number 4, an infrastructure that will increase land values and the attractiveness of this part of the city. Secondly, the recent approval of an 80 million Euros renewal plan for the entire neighbourhood. Both these factors alter either Giambellino accessibility and its attractiveness, triggering uncertain evolutions for the residents. At the core of these concerns there is the document which triggered the conflict: the plan to destroy the 50% of social housing stock in order to build a brand new upper-class residential estate. Here it comes the conflictual dynamics that see the Actors “capitalize” their entrenchment in the neighbourhood building a critical mass able to be a protagonist in the definition of neighbourhood “destiny” and future management.

Those are the questions to measure and test the aftermath of the efforts to raise consciousness into the local society: was there a successful mobilization able to gather part of the population under one or more specific claim(s)? Was the mobilization gathering a network of associations and private citizens? Were the expressed claims valid enough to

reach Public Actors? And to influence its behaviour and decisions? If it is so what were the modalities?

### *The City's Morphologies: Material and Social Structures*

As long as any social process takes shape in an environment, and this framework changes in time, we will be engaged in the examination of material and social morphologies. These two concepts will be used on the ground: they will be inquired to see what is the relation between them in Giambellino as long as “urban life, urban society, in a word, the urban, cannot go without a practico-material base, a morphology” (1996, p.103). As Lefebvre well explains, the relations between this two dimensions are not clear cut. To be sure, in Giambellino a spatial evolution has been socially accompanied by the historical switch from mass protests, union presence and political groups activity, during the 68 revolts, to fragmentation of social reality, loneliness and alienation arriving to the nowadays decay.

The urban life and the neighbourhood structure will be analysed in the perspective of their interconnections. A path including Giambellino historical places, places of daily activities, and of residential uses will be built. Following Aalbers work on neighbourhood decline, we will go in-depth in the description of Giambellino long term process of decay giving “emphasis

on agency bring(ing) people back into the analysis and emphasa(zing) the centrality of social action and conflict in determining the shape of the built environment.” (2006, p. 1064). Therefore, we will give voice to inhabitants and to groups representatives grasping the connection among the neighbourhood structure and the social shape this structure hosts. This connection carries a strong degree of conflictual work, seeing the working of groups to raise attention and consensus about Giambellino problematic status, to find innovative ways of tackling with problems and realities.

Although we will not be able to address the socio-spatial relation, especially looking at the opposition of abstract space maker and social space maker (2006), we will enquire the motivations at the basis of passed decline and the actions taken to improve the situation by a multi-level set of Actors. We will see if there has been a genesis, i.e. fundamental favourable historical witnesses, for the creation of a basic milieu for social and political activities.

To operationalize this concepts we will ask ourselves what are the nodal points for the neighbourhood past and present life: paying attention to what have changed in time in their socio-structural morphologies (e.g. uses of important historical buildings), listing relevant new urban structures modifying the environment (e.g. recent urban developments, interesting case

of re-use), observing public space uses during time (in the long and short turn). The tools we will use to grasp useful elements will be the mapping of important places thanks to the support of historical texts understanding their evolution or regression. Learning and speculating on this elements we could be able to set a series of policy design suggestions and we should make some reflection on the conflicting process outcomes and possible evolutions.

## Notes from the chapter

With this chapter our narrative is set up. We have understood on what scale our research will be settled and the motivations at the basis of this choice. In the neighbourhood, in its environment, a twofold aspect has to be underlined. On the one hand, a set of Actors operate in it and thanks to conflict theories we have understood that these agents are at the basis of our analysis. Moreover, we have defined why some are more important than others. On the other hand, we have framed the neighbourhood as the most suitable reality to conceive daily life of people and trans scalar issues. An historical perspective will be bear in our mind. Nonetheless, Actors are not only present on the very local scale but also at wider scales. Therefore, we will take in consideration that our “protagonists” have relations with Giambellino inhabitants and with other, bigger, Actors. The internal composition of this further Actors, here we will call them Institutions, is differentiated. For example the Region is made by the regional council itself in its political part and by its bureaucracy structures (namely ALER). The neighbourhood Actors are intermediaries in between the bottom and the upper part of society we will pay attention to it during the writing of this essay. Thanks to Lefbvre and other scholars we have also gathered out points of view on reality. We will see what is Giambellino way of life, i.e. the attitude towards its environment detectable in its inhabitants. Is Giambellino, and especially the social housing compound, lived as a habitat or is it inhabited? The fine distinction running in between this two concepts is amenable to the process of its mutation: are the population doing

something to act on its liveability both in social terms and in structural terms? Secondly, as long as this has become a central neighbourhood, especially looking at it in a metropolitan perspective (but also for a quite big investment in infrastructural terms), we will read any attempt to remain inside this quarter as a quest for inclusion. The exclusion and inclusion part will be also detected in the daily life of people: are them trying to avoid social exclusion by being active in including the disadvantaged part of the population? Last but not least, it will be particularly important to describe the neighbourhood it self, also in a historical perspective, pointing put its social and material structures. How have they change during time? How can we describe them? Exploiting the opportunity given by this last questions here it comes the list of our practical tools of observation and analysis. Pictures will be used to give an idea of Giambellino spaces, to document Actors actions, and to witness the historical past of the neighbourhood. Maps will be exploited in order to understand the wideness of changes, their locations and possible influences on the social housing compound. Interviews will be carried both to informed people and to inhabitants in order to understand the various ethnographic dynamics and political developments. Urban plans will be the source of information to have an idea of the Institutional attitude towards Giambellino and to gather data. Historical documents and interview will be used to reconstruct the past of the neighbourhood and to have a more clear idea of nowadays circumstances.



# second chapter

GIAMBELLINO LORENTEGGIO:  
AN EVOLVING NEIGHBOURHOOD  
IN MILAN'S METROPOLITAN CENTER

Matching Scales and the Basis for the Expression of Urban Questions





Si Hpa  
Chaiyachong  
BKK

This second chapter will consist of an analysis of Giambellino's environment in its broadest sense. Firstly, this will be done by drawing up a frame of reference for the reader in order to provide some basic knowledge that is useful for describing some conflicting characteristics of the neighbourhood. This attempt to understand the different ways in which a neighbourhood can be described will give us more details and a deeper understanding of the state of art, allowing us to better appreciate the neighbourhood's daily life and struggles. In order to assess such an imperceptible and undefined topic as the 'character of a neighbourhood' we need to know what is happening in Giambellino in terms of socio-spatial development. Therefore, as well as some particular city dynamics, the neighbourhood as a detached environment will be explored in order to grasp the developmental progress in the area. Therefore, we will start from an overall description of Milan taking into consideration two similar peripheral cases: Milano Rogoredo and Rho Fiera Expo.

The second section will consist of a demographic and social description of Giambellino and, in order to provide a background to its social dynamics, we will first give a voice to informed local people regarding their experiences in the neighbourhood. Thus, we will draw a framework, a point of beginning, from which we will be introduced to Giambellino. In the third section we will narrow the analysis down to the technical level, focussing on structural conditions and planning provisions. Data on population, spatial planning and political documents as well as important events and places will be presented. The increasing attractiveness of the area will be explained by reporting the new urban developments that have taken place over the last 20 years. Moreover, a spatial analysis will be carried out in order to give a sense of the environment or, better, what the environment surrounding NIL 49 actually is. Narrowing the focus down to the social housing compound, we will focus on the current situation in Giambellino with the help of two important documents, which facilitate our understanding of major issues in the area.

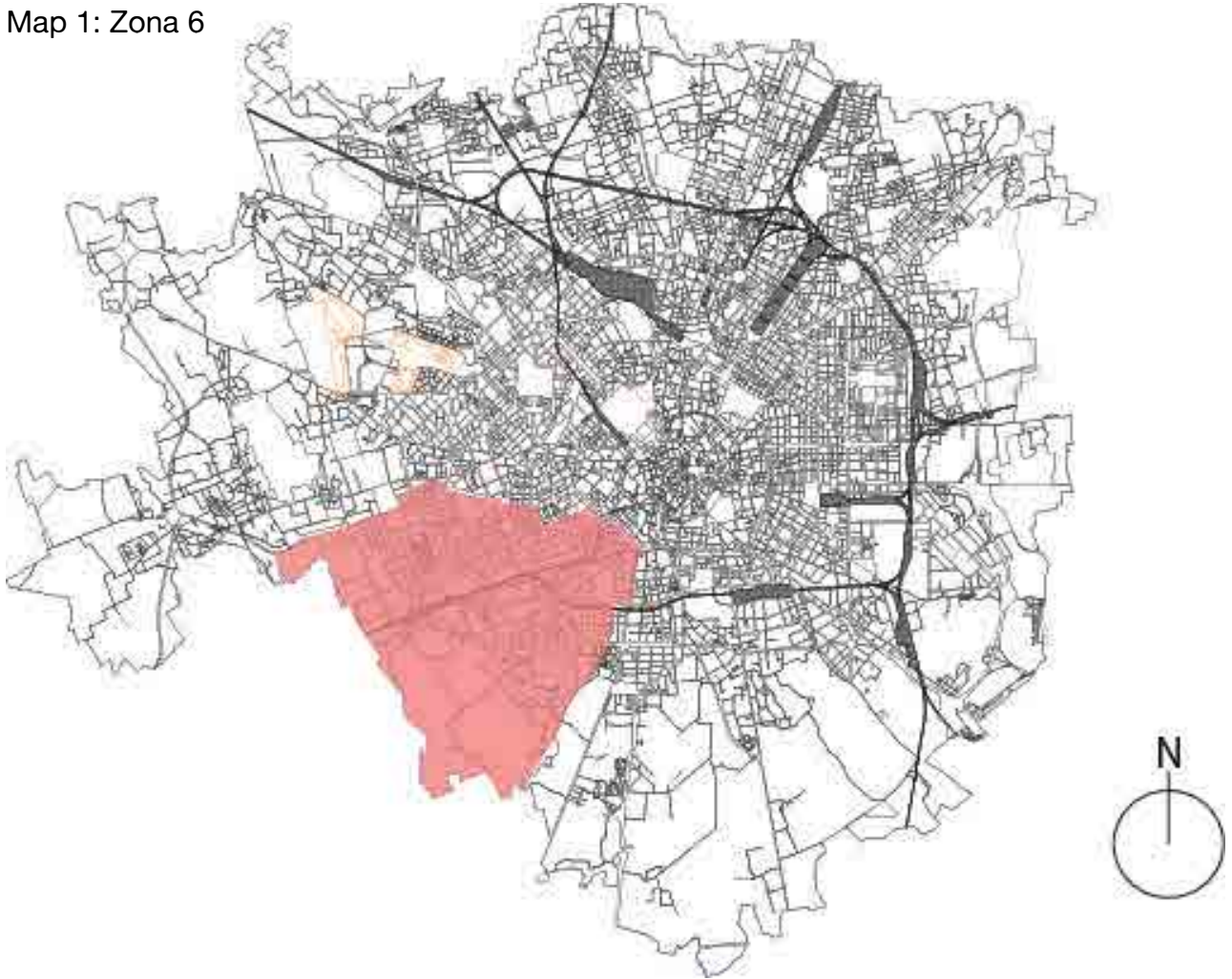
Following this description it will be easier to grasp the main general questions related to the current urban environment in the neighbourhood. From this analysis we will extract the key points, conditions and circumstances that prepare the basis for a demand for a better quality of life and active citizenship participation. In fact, at the root of the conflicting events there are some important factors that will be highlighted and summarized by mapping them in the area. Since our research is not merely a technical review of urban problems and opportunities, an inhabitant of the neighbourhood will describe her life experience in Giambellino. From this, we will try to understand some of the opportunities and threats in the quarter from an inhabitant's perspective.

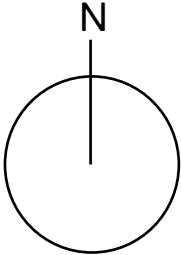
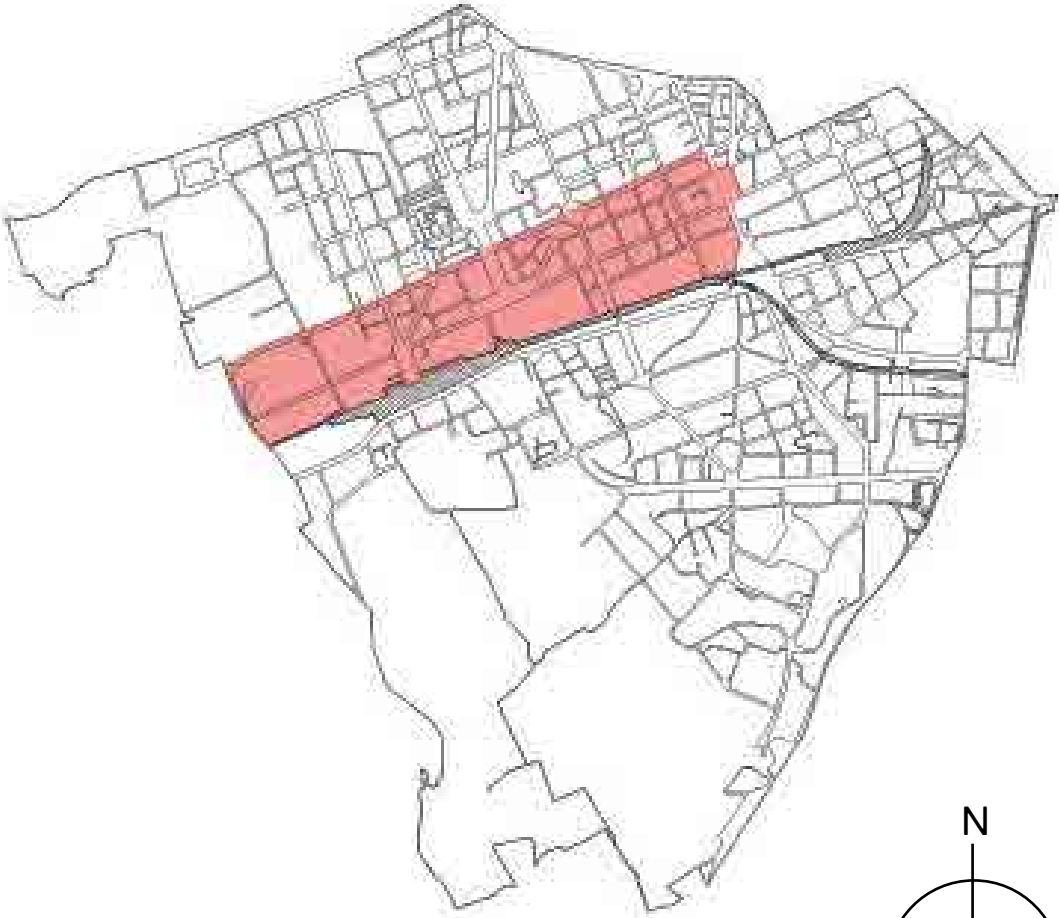
Finally, we will consider various active social Actors, mapping them and describing their major activities in area. Such an insight will give us an indication of the extent of the active population and associative life in this neglected and generally disregarded environment: it is likely thanks to these associations that the population enjoy a better standard of living and more satisfactory daily life.

## Giambellino's location

Giambellino is situated in the south-west of Milan and can be geographically described as the periphery of the Savona-Tortona area. It is part of the sixth local council, headed by Gabriele Rabaiotti, also professor at Politecnico di Milano and expert in social housing issues. Giambellino Lorenteggio local division (taking the name from the two main streets surrounding it) is listed as the 49th Nucleo di Identità Locale (NIL, Local Identity Nucleus). The social housing compound discussed in this essay is in the middle of the NIL 49.

Map 1: Zona 6





Map 3: Social Housing Compound

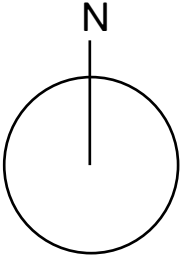
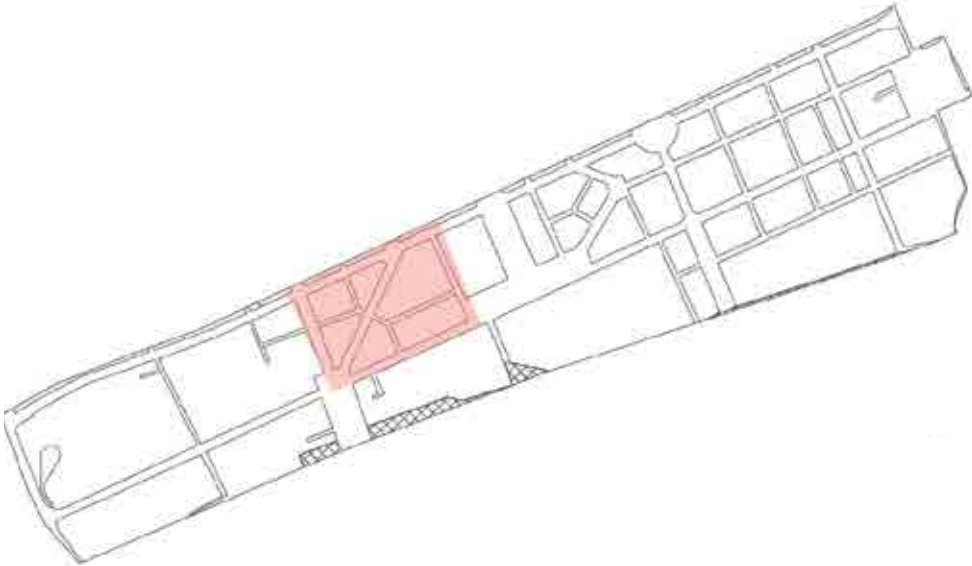


Image 1: Giambellino Lorenteggio Social Housing Compound



## 2.1 General Perspectives: Milan's Urban Dynamics and Projects

### *A Border-Less Delimitation*

From an Institutional point of view, following coded borders, it is not difficult to understand the geographical area named Giambellino Lorenteggio. When we look at the maps above we see what the official documents define as the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, this introductory localization is not enough to understand where and what Giambellino Lorenteggio is.

What we have referred to as the “neighbourhood” in the first chapter of this paper has to be defined in a more specific way by taking into account the flexible borders that come hand in hand with human reality, people’s descriptions, and social events. Consequently, it is useful to avoid rigorous observation of precise geographical or administrative borders, considering our observation field flexible in as much as it will be useful for the scope of our research.

To be sure, the tactical decision to adopt flexible borders does not render Giambellino a broad and undefined entity. Instead, we are trying to understand what the term flexible means to us. In order to better assess this “entity” we can review formal documents and informal resources to find a balance that will best serve our research framework. According to previous

maps there are several definitions for marking a territorial configuration. Zona 6, for example, is comparable to a small, administrative council able to deliberate on local issues. Although without substantial competences, the administrative body called “Zona” has a fairly important role as a mediator between its inhabitants and the municipality. This sub-division serves to define our working ground: it will be used as the nearest administrative area with formal borders.

NIL 49 is another delimitation using the two major streets, Via Giambellino and Viale Lorenteggio, as borders. It is useful to consider the formal definition provided by the municipality’s city plan. According to the Milan municipality, NIL (Nuclei Identità Locale) “can be defined as Milan neighbourhoods where it is possible to recognise historical and projectile areas (...). Each of them is an ensemble of sub-areas connected by infrastructures and mobility services and green areas. They are systems of urban vitality: concentrations of local commercial activities, gardens, gathering points, and services”<sup>1</sup>.

Is this a sufficient definition? Yes and no. On the one hand it works on a technical and statistical level, as long as a NIL contains development areas and a certain population with measurable features. On the other hand, using the two major streets as limits, it is insufficient for a complex description of this urban context.

We will consider three aspects here. Firstly, Via Giambellino and Viale Lorenteggio might be seen as public spaces, contexts of exchange and connection, instead of dividing thresholds. Secondly, when going into greater depth exploring the social housing compound in relation to the surrounding environment on a multi-scalar point of view, NIL territorial delimitation might be “limited”. Thirdly, inhabitants’ mental conception of Giambellino will be taken into consideration and used as an actual ground of exploration to understand the area. This allows us to be free from fixed boundaries. In this way, broad Institutional and formal definitions will be combined with the mental boundaries of individual inhabitants. This is to say that Giambellino is a complex reality and it is impossible to contain it within formally recognized borders. Tales and memories of its present and past should be considered just as much as distant and unrelated city developments as possible boundaries, enriching our research. Far and near borders are thus found and reconciled in this border-less description taking into account structural evolutions and daily life descriptions of the area.

### *Milan Peripheries in a Metropolitan Context*

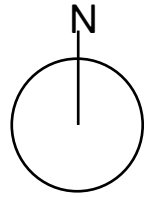
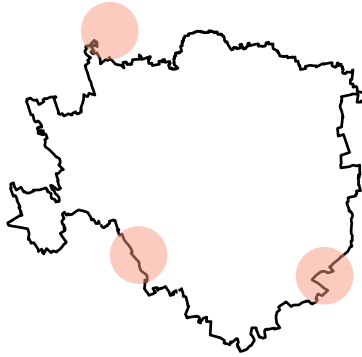
A preliminary observation should be made of the context within which Giambellino is framed through the recent establishment of the metropolitan area: in December

2014 the fundamental chart (Statuto delle Città Metropolitana di Milano) was approved by the 134 municipalities of the Metropolitan City. Although in a somewhat uncertain manner, and following several decades of failed attempts (see “The history of governance in Milan since the 1950s” by Bruno Dente; OECD Territorial Review, 2006), Milan has therefore formally redefined its administrative provincial status. Although it is not yet possible to assess if such a change will be able to tackle present and future issues, we nevertheless can see in this shift of governance an attempt to “re-size” the shape of the city in institutional and geographical terms. This large-scale perspective tells us that some forces are acting in such a way that impinges on some previously neglected parts of the city. Therefore, the territorial context of reference (the shape of the city) has enlarged and what was considered periphery in the past may now be defined as an intermediate area between the inner city core (the historical hegemonic city) and the extended territory of the metropolitan area.

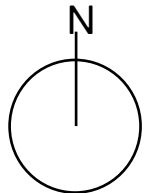
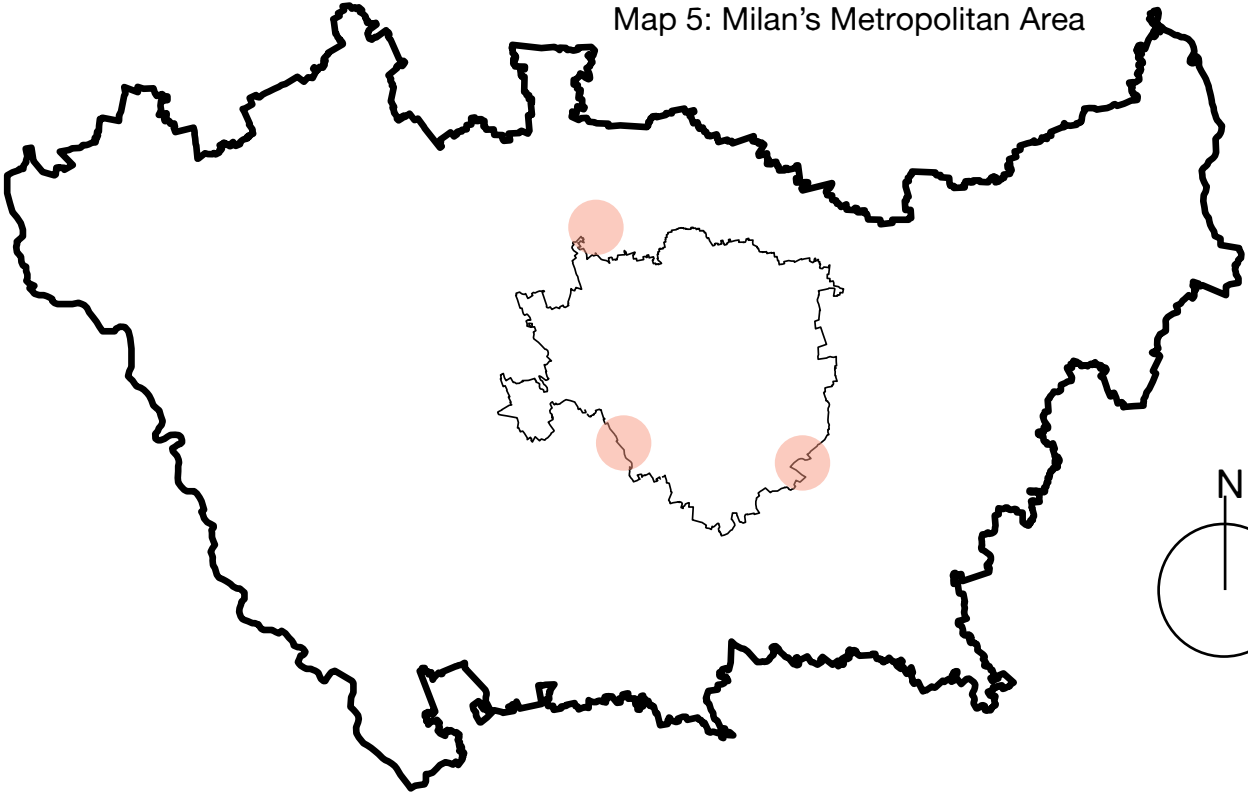
The localization of Giambellino is thus centralized in a metropolitan perspective, as is the case in other formerly peripheral areas in Milan<sup>2,3,4</sup>. Therefore, other neighbourhoods in “centralized contexts” can be seen as fitting examples of a development pattern in urban areas in acquiring the status of metropolitan centres. Some examples will explain the



Map 4: Milan's Historical Core



Map 5: Milan's Metropolitan Area



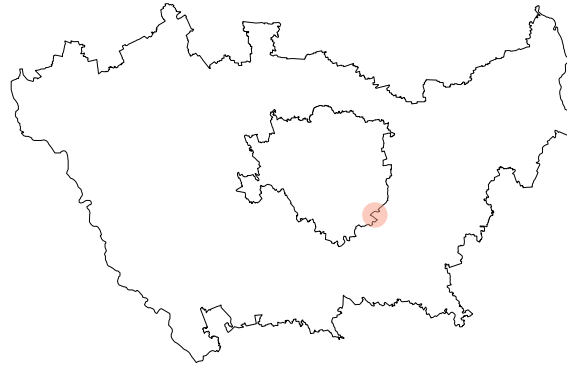
projectile features characterizing these new Milan areas to us, while bearing in mind the important infrastructural network connecting them. Major developments surrounding two important peripheral areas will be described in order to try to grasp meaningful elements for the analysis of Giambellino Lorenteggio. Milano Rogoredo and Rho Fiera Milano transport stations have been chosen as suitable examples of how urban development dynamics take place within concrete structures. Their features, functions, planning methods, and Actors involved might be seen as witnesses of trends influencing the future of these metropolitan, centralized areas (Maps 4, 5). Therefore, we will describe them by highlighting the most important aspects in order to compare them with Giambellino's current and possible future urban modification.

## Features

- Presence of one or more mass transportation lines
- Presence of a multi-national company headquarters
- New buildings with high volumes and luxury/middle-class aesthetic taste

### Milano Rogoredo





The environment surrounding Rogoredo station has been intensively modified by the Santa Giulia project; a residential and tertiary development partially failed because of soil pollution. This neighbourhood is located in the south-east of the city near to a railway station served by high speed trains and the third underground line. The headquarters of the global media and communications company Sky are located just beside the station. There are large numbers of residential buildings and, in the original project, these were considered a mixture of high-class apartments and affordable housing blocks (Board 1).



Nodes in an important infrastructure network



LEGENDA

-  Viabilità a scorrimento veloce
-  Viabilità provinciale e regionale
-  Rete ferroviaria
-  Corsi e specchi d'acqua



Presence of one or more mass transportation lines

		
<p>City Level mass transportation</p>	<p>Metropolitan Level mass transportation</p>	<p>National International Level mass transportation</p>

Injection of a multi-national company head-quarter  
New buildings with high volumes and luxury/middle class aesthetic taste



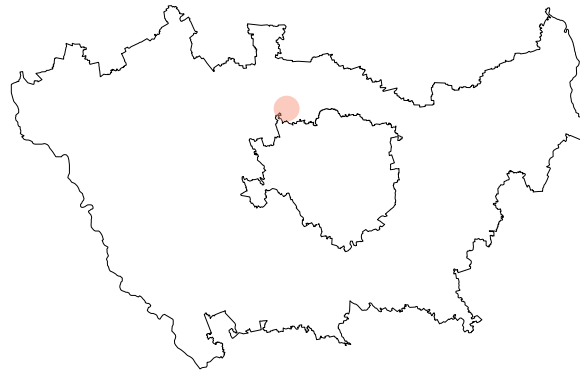
## Rho-Fiera Expo

The area in this new centralized edge has been exploited for different and “extraordinary” purposes. The most famous example is the international exhibition that took place in 2015. The Expo area is located right in the middle of the city’s inner-core and the metropolitan outskirts. It is near to two mass transportation stations: the first line of the underground and an important railway hub, including the high-speed railway line. It is important to highlight that the Expo area has been built near to the main exhibition structure (Rho Fiera) and the headquarters of a third mobile communication company, Wind, is located next to the station. In addition,

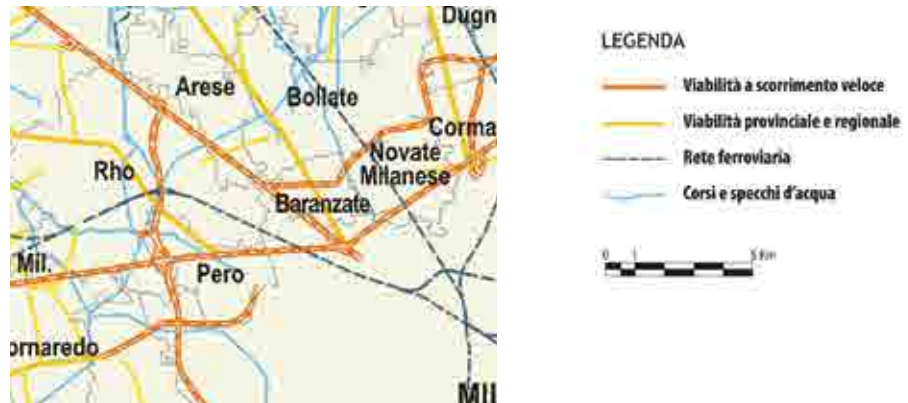
close to the Expo area is a new residential development, Cascina Merlata. Here, social housing and middle class residential buildings are being built. (Board 2)

## Features

- Presence of one or more mass transportation lines
- Presence of a multi-national company headquarters
- Exploitation as a new international and metropolitan centre



Nodes in an important infrastructure network



Presence of one or more mass transportation lines

<p>City Level mass transportation</p>	<p>Metropolitan Level mass transportation</p>	<p>National International Level mass transportation</p>

Injection of a multi-national company head-quarter  
Exploitation as international and metropolitan new centre  
New residential buildings with high density and middle class aesthetic taste



It is not the aim of this essay to make a direct comparison between these realities. Such an explanation would be hindered by the fact that Milano Rogoredo and Rho Fiera Expo are impacted by the presence of the high-speed railway. This strategic and international infrastructure is changing these areas by providing a link to long distance destinations and, therefore, enhancing their accessibility. Giambellino, on the other hand, is situated only near to a local and old railway line: the Vigevanese line.

Nevertheless, we might suggest that this kind of development is not exclusively related to the important, high-speed connection, but also to increased significance in terms of centrality and improved positional value. New economic activities are filling in the empty areas left by the de-industrialization process. These areas have, in fact, had an important productive role for the city's economy, being the extreme periphery of the old city. It is therefore not surprising that other productive activities now take place here, especially considering their new centrality. Information technology centres need, on the one hand, fast connections (in terms of transportation and technological infrastructure) and, on the other, central locations exploiting agglomeration economies. The new developments and the functions related to them are extremely similar and follow a similar pattern. Nevertheless, other forces have to be taken

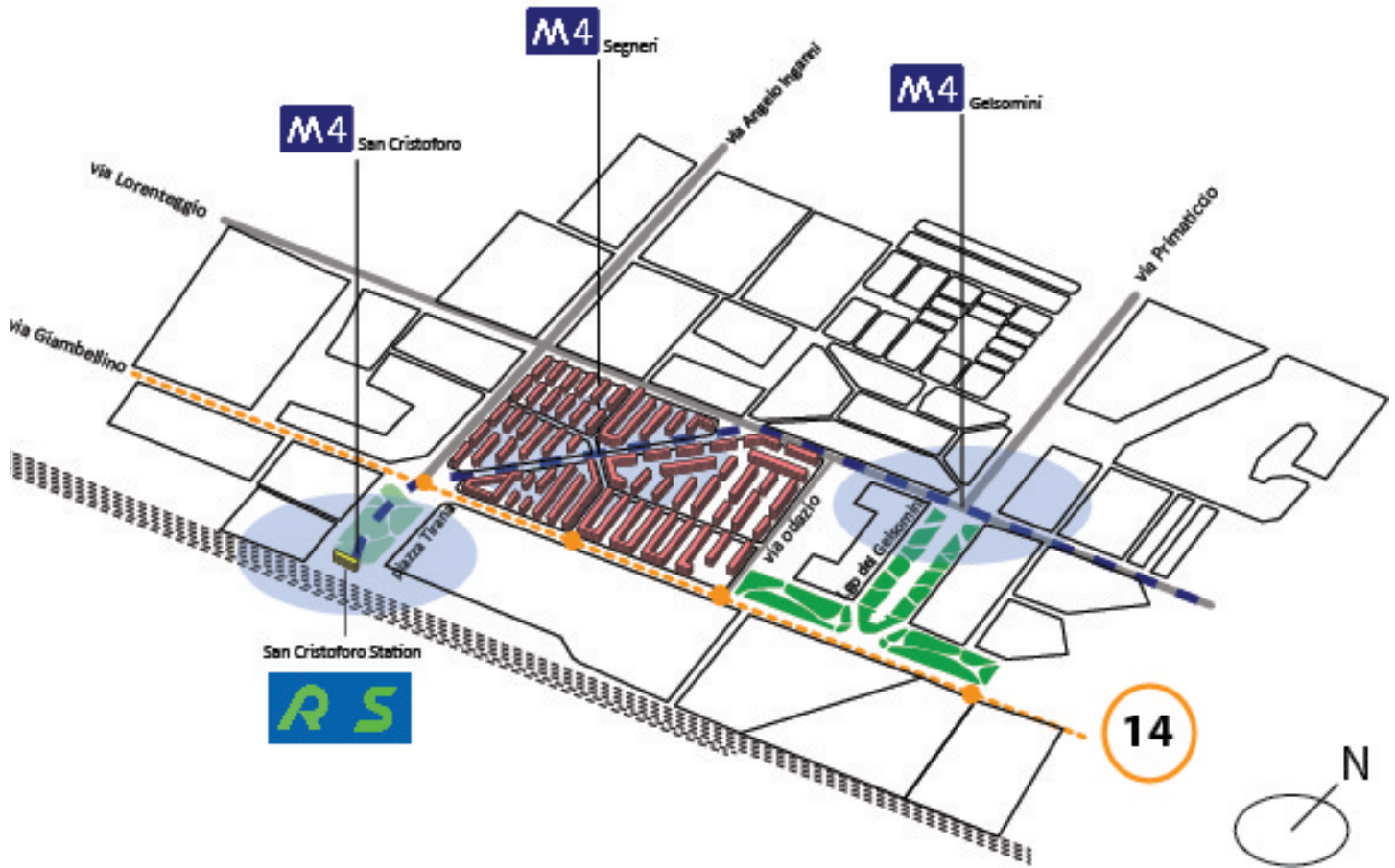
into account to explain possible paths of modification, and the next two sections will explore this.

### *A New Underground for Milan arriving in Giambellino*

“Mettiamo la quarta. Milano più veloce per tutti.” (“Let's accelerate. A Faster Milan for Everybody”) (Image 8). With this slogan the municipality and its public transport company (Azienda Trasporti Milanese) have advertised the new underground in Milan – the fourth line. This new mass transportation infrastructure will be the fifth underground line in the city and will be 15 kilometres long. It will be located in the southern part of the city and will connect the western periphery with the eastern periphery going as far as Linate airport<sup>5</sup>. Milan's southern area has currently just one east-west mass transport connection – the suburban service, made up of just one line, the S9. The new line will have three stations intersecting the neighbourhood: San Cristoforo, Via Segneri and Via dei Gelsomini. The San Cristoforo station in particular will host three different rail transport lines, gaining importance as a connection hub (map 6).

Nevertheless, at the moment connections to the rest of the city are few and not well integrated. In fact, there is just one mass transport connection in the suburban service station and the other near mass connection line is made up of the underground station of the first line, at Piazza Inganni. Moreover, just one tramway connects the district straight to the centre,

Map 6: Giambellino Lorenteggio Transportation Lines



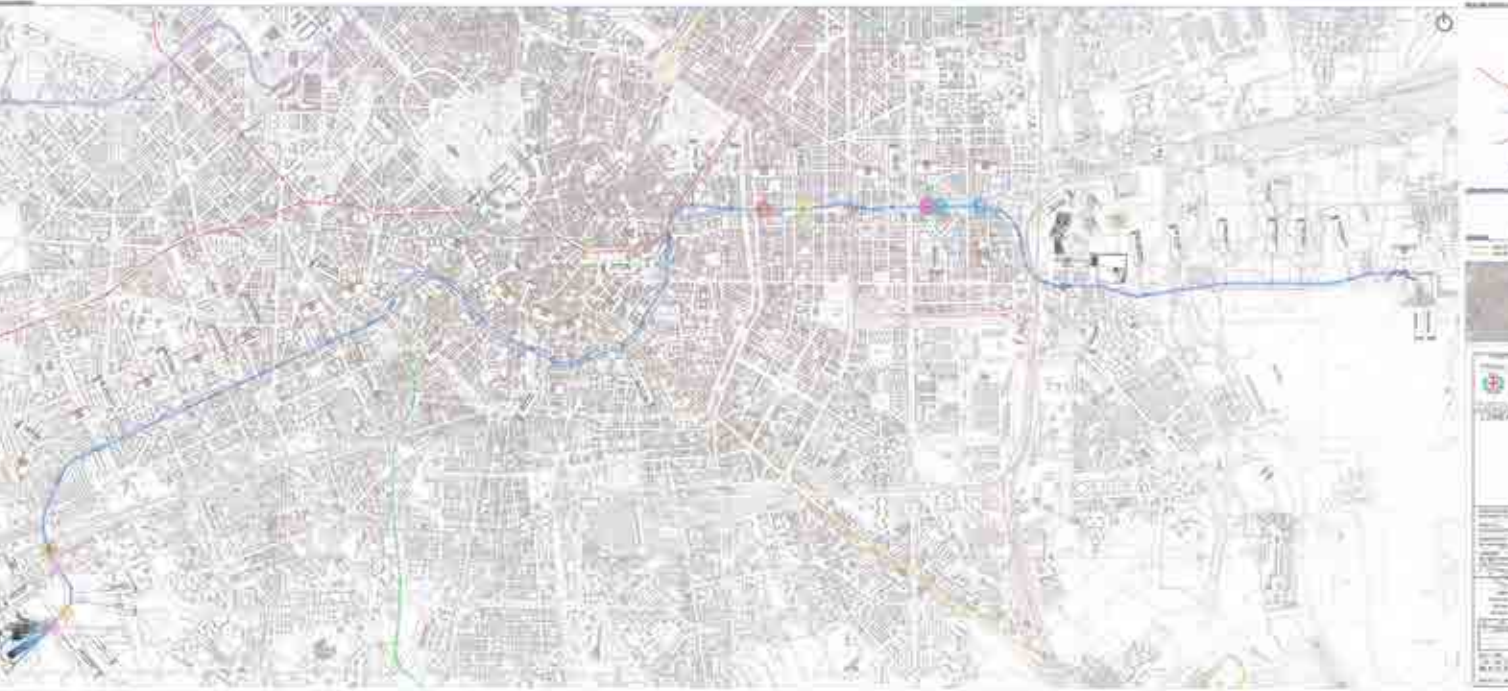






FMC Link-Belt

Images 5, 6, 7 : M4 Official Documents Abstracts



DOCUMENTO DI PIANO - CARTA DI SENSIBILITA' DEL PAESAGGIO -



E METROPOLITANA



A METROPOLITANA 4



The future arrival of the fourth underground line will not only allow direct access to the city centre, but it will also integrate the local-level public transport system with the rest of the metropolitan network at the city level. The new infrastructure will likely represent a strong asset for the positive evolution of the area and might trigger further urban transformation as a result of the enhanced centrality and consequent rise in the value of the land that transportation improvement usually brings. It is reasonable to assume that such urban development will dramatically improve the urban quality of the neighbourhood in general, and of the streets in which they will be located in particular. Following the accessibility urban economy principle, this new development taking shape in the neighbourhood will upgrade Giambellino as long as “accessibility governs the locational choices of each single economic Actor, which in cumulative effects, give shape to the overall structuring of space, both at the micro and macro territorial levels” (Camagni 1993, p. 69). It is therefore not particularly surprising how much attention this area of the city has had recently, and local witnesses should be considered when examining the changing environment caused by the two sovraclocal phenomenons.

Image 8: M4 Advertisement



### *Tertiary Urban Developments: the Shape of a New City?*

Signs of change can already be detected in the areas surrounding Giambellino. It is possible to notice two different kinds of development in the various structures left abandoned after the massive de-industrialization process. The first is the re-use of former industrial buildings, valuable for their cultural heritage and aesthetic features. Meaningful examples are the former Richard Ginori Industrial site reused for studios and office spaces, the ex Breda factories that have been used to host the new multicultural museum of Milan, MUDEC, and former factories located in via Savona hosting the high fashion shop, Fendi.

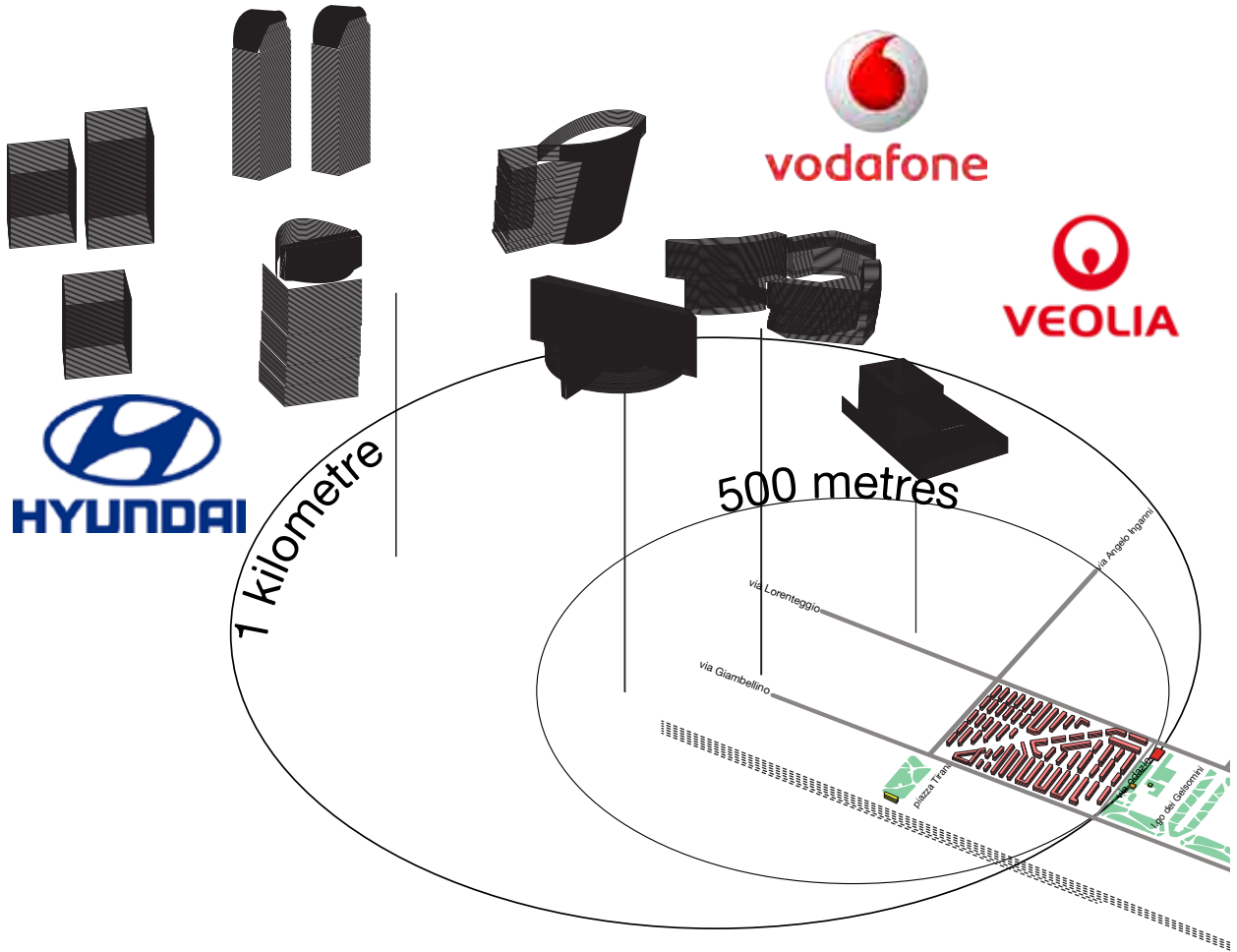
The second kind of development is the injection of new economies and structures that are slowly changing the shape of the peripheral part of NIL 49. In fact, the neighbourhood is near to Corsico district where offices have been built since the 80's triggering a strong, although not exclusive, tertiary destination for the new developments. These aggressive, new urban forms have taken shape on former industrial areas. It is possible to see that the shape of this new city, the "city of the future", strongly contrasts with the existing urban environment and that this allows a meaningful juxtaposition of these two, apparently very different, worlds.

The city built in the early 20th century is

characterized by solid and strong features: it is both long lasting and gives importance to the use-value of the built environment

The strong point of this old way of developing the city lies in its resilience to time, both in terms of the internal life of the buildings and in the external urban atmosphere they create. Therefore, a rigidity of form is combined with vivid and eclectic content and results in a vibrant external environment. Conversely, the "city of the future" shows itself in appealing and aggressive forms being, nonetheless, stuck in its own function. The external environment results in cold and disassociated "elements": the offices, the park, the road, the petrol station, the restaurant, and so on. These two urban atmospheres interact with each other, and are trying to do so in a "peaceful" way.

Map 7: New Developments Distances from Giambellino Lorenteggio

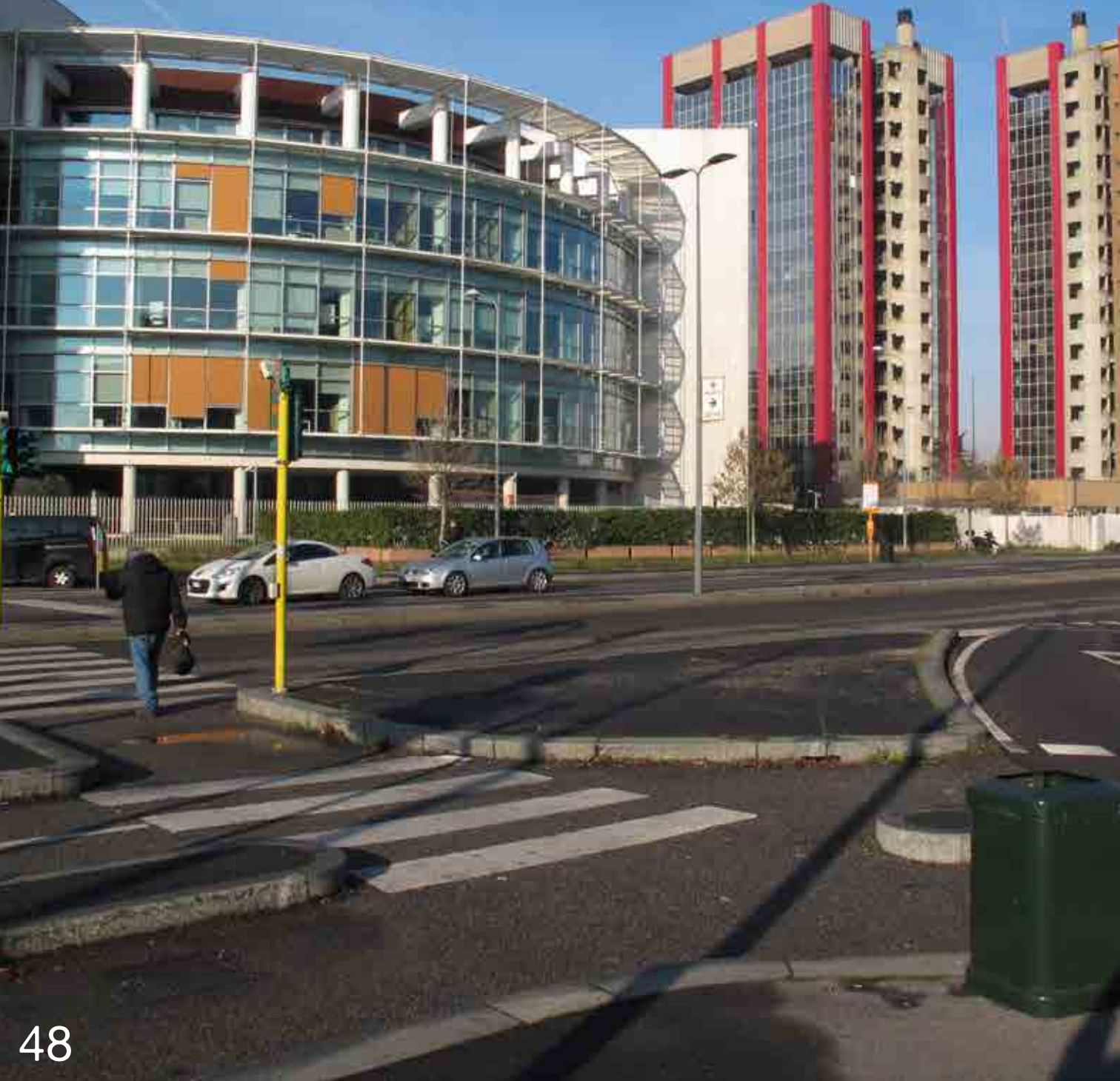


Images 9, 10: Vodafone and Veolia Headquarters





Images 11, 12: 80's, 90's and New Offices







At the end of this review it is possible to affirm with a certain degree of confidence that Giambellino is passing through a modification process with undefined outcomes, but certainly with likely implications for the future of the existing urban structures. Social housing blocks may well be one of the next targets. The examples of Milano Rogoredo and Rho Fiera Milano are more mature examples of the modifications that are taking place in Giambellino. By listing the new developments in the neighbourhood, we are now able to underline the similarities

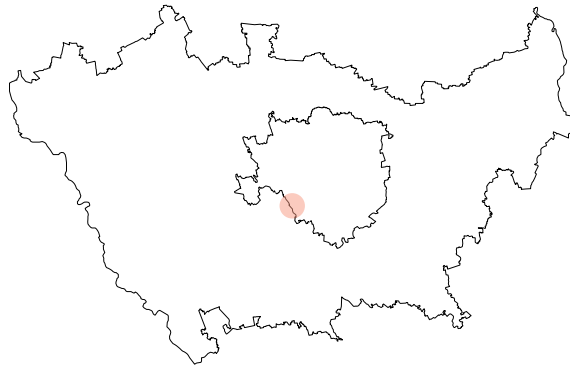
characterizing these metropolitan centres (Board 3).

## Features

Presence of one or more mass transportation lines

Arrival of a multi-national company headquarter





...



Nodes in an important infrastructure network



LEGENDA

-  Viabilità a scorrimento veloce
-  Viabilità provinciale e regionale
-  Rete ferroviaria
-  Corsi e specchi d'acqua



Presence of one or more mass transportation lines



City Level  
mass transportation



Metropolitan Level  
mass transportation



National International Level  
mass transportation

Injection of a multi-national company head-quarter



vodafone

## 2.2. Circumscribing Giambellino

### *First Impressions: Raising General Issues*

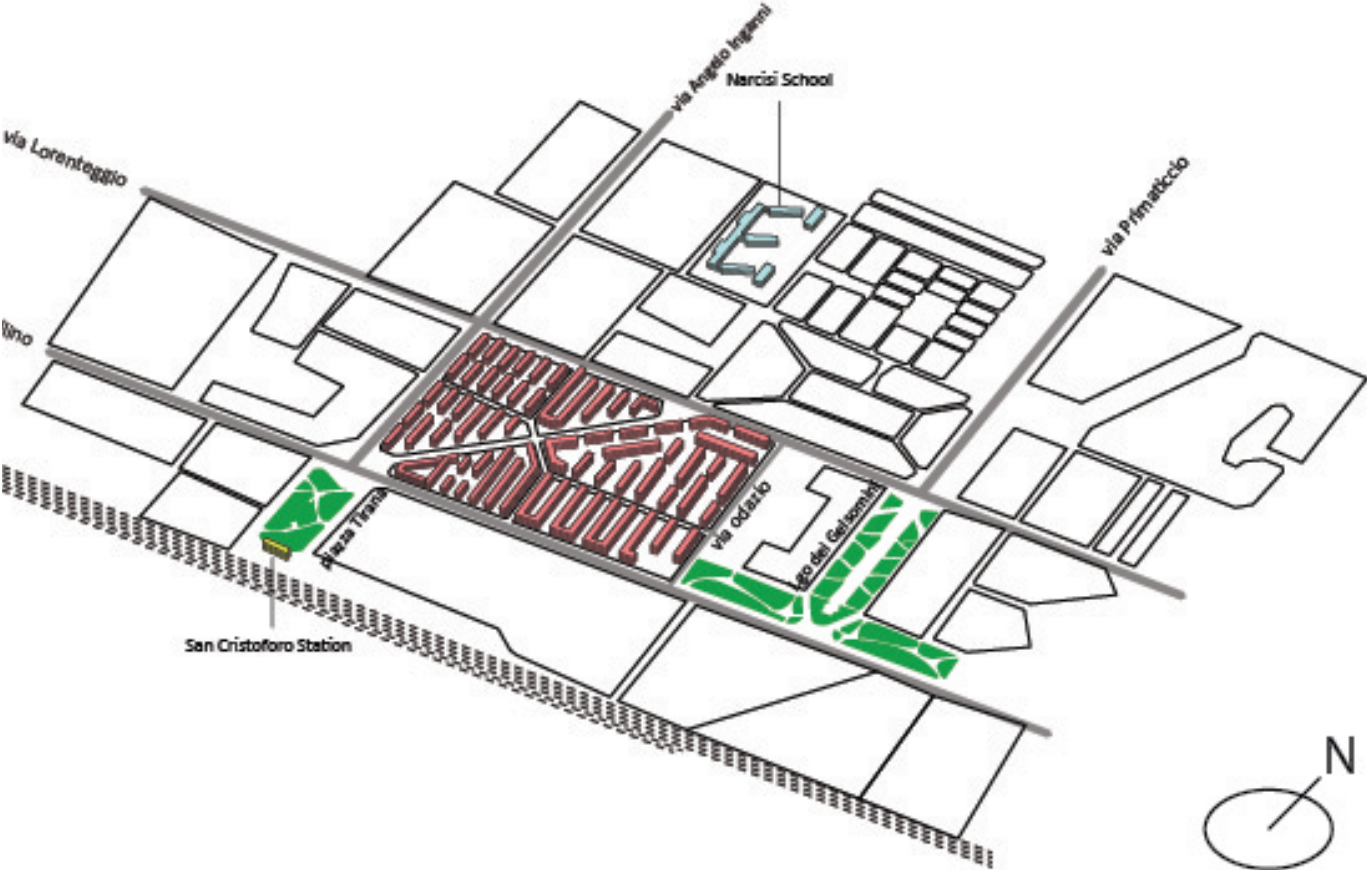
Researching the neighbourhood started with some interviews with informed individuals. The situation described by them was difficult to define. According to Dario, a teacher at Comunità del Giambellino, an oppressive and negative view characterized the environment, social isolation and loneliness, exclusion of minorities and weaker parts of the population, perceived insecurity and a generally bad reputation within the city being key characteristics.

The elementary school, situated at Via dei Narcisi (Map 1), is a paradigmatic example of the social division of different ethnicities. Historically a school for the working class, the school has been experiencing a strong injection of foreign pupils becoming known in the last 15 years as the “Moroccan school” and being avoided by Italian families. According to Dario, this segregation process has been very much fuelled by the liberalization of the catchment area. This gave Italian families the opportunity to avoid the school at via dei Narcisi in preference for other schools, and it also allowed schools in the district to exclude foreign children. Indeed, according to Dario, when another elementary school at via Pisa had to close for renovations and the children were moved to via dei Narcisi, “the teachers

from via Pisa opposed the really basic and logical idea to mix the two schools classes placing them on different floors (the first classes at first floors, the second classes at second floor...) expecting to divide the children of the two schools in two different areas: one wing of the building for via dei Narcisi pupils and the other wing for via Pisa pupils”.

This small but illuminating story helps us to understand the divisive dynamics inside different parts of the neighbourhood. According to Luca, a researcher and social innovator at Dynamoscopio (a cultural association that we will encounter later), the neighbourhood can be described as a “dwelling jungle” in which differentiated and sometimes contrasting ways of living struggle to cohabit together. Living in the area since 2000 he describes a situation of great change both on the social and environmental points of view. Agreeing with Dario, Luca affirmed that the neighbourhood has been neglected for a long time by the public administration. There are various historical and cultural reasons for this. The decay seen today has been triggered by a population switch caused by both a turn-over in land-owners and the changing demographic of Giambellino. This switch has triggered an ageing population as young people leave for other areas and a strong influx of immigrants.

Map 8: Narcisi School







Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that both interviewees mentioned Giambellino's strong social and political grass-roots culture, taking inspiration from a flourishing socio-political past in order to respond to the current decay. A contemporary process being built starting rightly from the energies and knowledge present on the territory. In addition, although not less important, both interviewees explicitly noted the current "representational crisis" as a focal point for many problems examined in this essay. However, let's now have a look at some data in order to have a deeper and more objective idea of the political, ethnographic and urban environment processes taking place.

#### *Planning and Political Documents, Official Data*

NIL 49 has 31,836 inhabitants. Demographically, the population is composed mainly of old people (26% are over 65 years old) and foreigners (25,7%). These constitute more than half of the overall population. The former portion of the population is heterogeneous in two senses: ethnic populations are as follows: Egyptian (1936 people), Philippino (1324 people), and Sri Lankan (662 people) constituting an eclectic group. On the other hand, the immigrant community is largely composed of under-age children (23,7%). Overall, there are insufficient services in

the area and the same document outlines a number of problems in the NIL: "problems related to the social housing compound can be listed as follows: unauthorized dwelling occupation; building decay and social disadvantages". The overall structural development of the neighbourhood is not good.

The neglected past of the area (denounced by social operators) is evidenced by an exclusion from the so-called 'neighbourhood pacts' (a program of urban renewal interventions launched in 2004 by the Lombardy Region). The improvements - public spaces, green areas and urban conditions - have been left to private initiatives. The urban function of the area is mainly residential (62,9%) which is in line with the overall city percentage (60%). Other functions - services, commerce and tertiary sector - are mostly in line with the city average.

### 2.3. On-field Analysis

#### *An Archipelago of Villages*

On the morphological point of view, the landscape is mixed and many different dwelling types coexist. These structures not only vary from a stylistic-aesthetic point of view, but also the level of building maintenance dramatically differs between different type of block. This eclectic and differentiated mixité might seem to be a positive proximity of differences to a



superficial analysis, instead it constitutes a threshold for the genuine and natural meeting of people. In fact, all the environments are divided with fences and roads.

Metaphorically speaking, the district looks like an archipelago of islands: highly detached. They could also be described as different villages, “constricted” to live next to one another but not really communicating in any meaningful public meeting place. The social fragmentation and isolation described above worsens this detachment, transforming a possible urban melting pot into a mere coexistence of different realities in one area. The unwillingness to live together and integrate found among some families in the via dei Narcisi school is translated and represented by this urban situation. The following section includes short descriptions with comments on the different “villages” that can be found in Giambellino and its surroundings.



Image 16: an Evolving Neighbourhood

## Villaggio dei fiori

This quarter was built during the 1940s. It is made up of single detached and row houses. It is characterized by striking different morphological features in comparison with Giambellino. Being isolated from the rest of the neighbourhood, it is made up of an uneven collection of factors. It is technically located outside NIL 49, lying just on the “border”, and it has its own urban logic in terms of its streets, entrances and external courtyards. Additionally, it has a strong mono-functional

concentration, since its only function is housing. This kind of urban context creates an environment in which isolation and sense of dispersion takes over the walker. The urban “continuity” guaranteed by the surrounding city fabric is here interrupted by the mono-functional elements of non-urban reality. The absence of meeting places, public services, commerce and so on, is compensated by the surrounding city (the school, the market, the park...).

Map 9

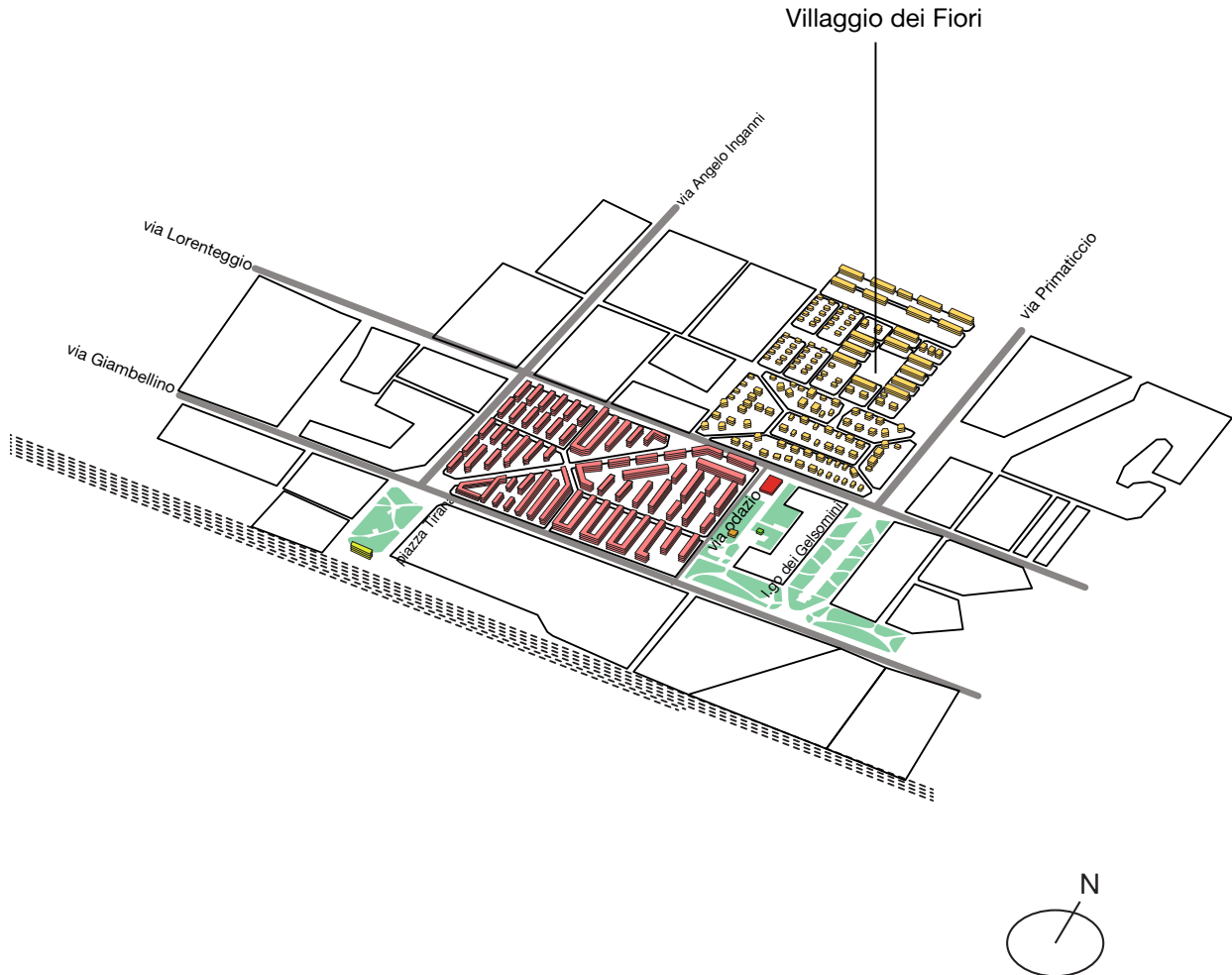


Image 17: Villaggio dei Fiori



Images 18, 19: Villaggio dei Fiori





## 70's and 80's developments

The shape of the city in the aftermath of the Second World War is characterised by buildings of an introspective nature. Surrounded by fences, buildings have their “green supply” in their internal courtyard. Built loosely following modernist criteria these segments of the city do not really give anything back: predominantly of residential use, open-air spaces in these blocks are inaccessible to strangers.

A few buildings face the street that does not receive back any meaningful ground floor. The “functional” dynamics therefore resemble those of the Villaggio dei Fiori: a total dependency on the external city and not much in exchange.

### Map 9

70's 80's developments

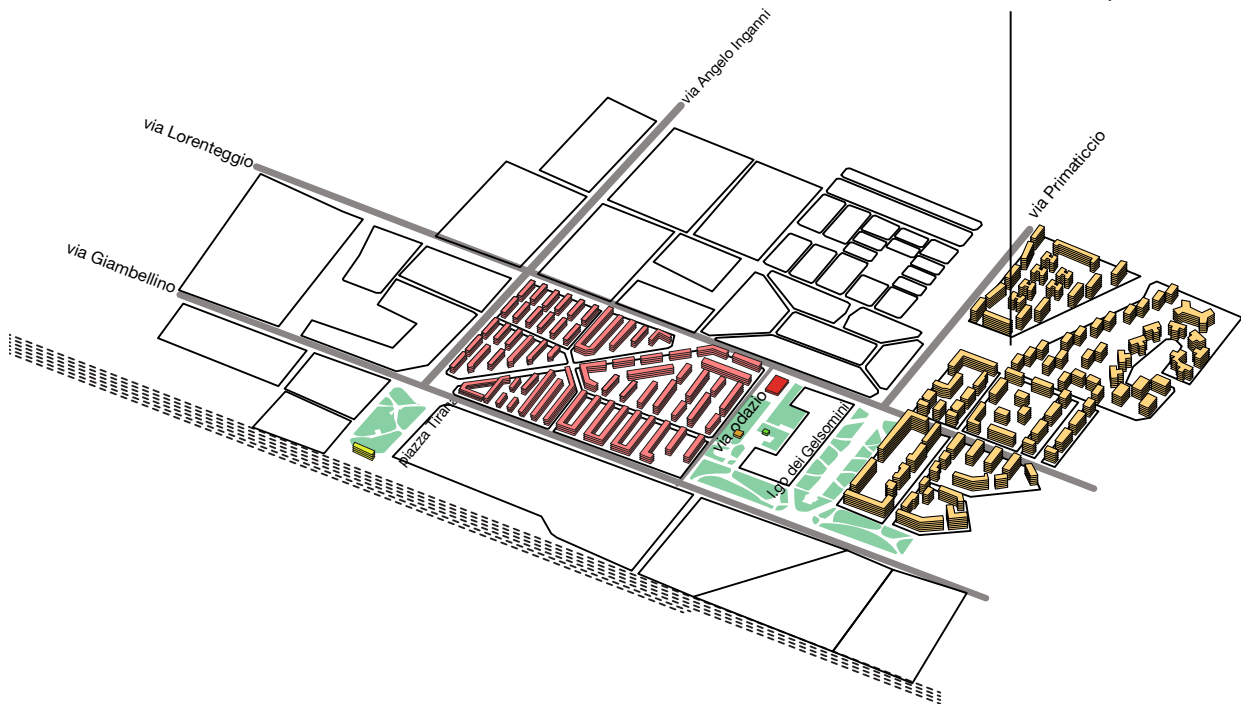




Image 20, 21: 70's 80's developments



## Developments from the 1990s and early 2000s

In the best cases, this stage of almost-new urban development is large-scale with semi-public space provision, usually available only during daytime. Nonetheless, looking at their morphological characteristics, seen as possible occasion of experimentation, those buildings have the usual tower-row shapes and trivial aesthetics. Four tower blocks, all for housing, can be counted surrounding NIL 49, covering a surface of 58,432m<sup>2</sup>.

These new, large blocks are not the only examples of development one can find walking through Giambellino: many other, smaller examples are inserted in the historical structure of the neighbourhood, sometimes matching with it but usually clashing with it. However, these urban developments let us understand that changes started to occur over the last 20 years in Giambellino. The new tertiary buildings constituting a new attitude towards this part of the city confirm this.

Map 10

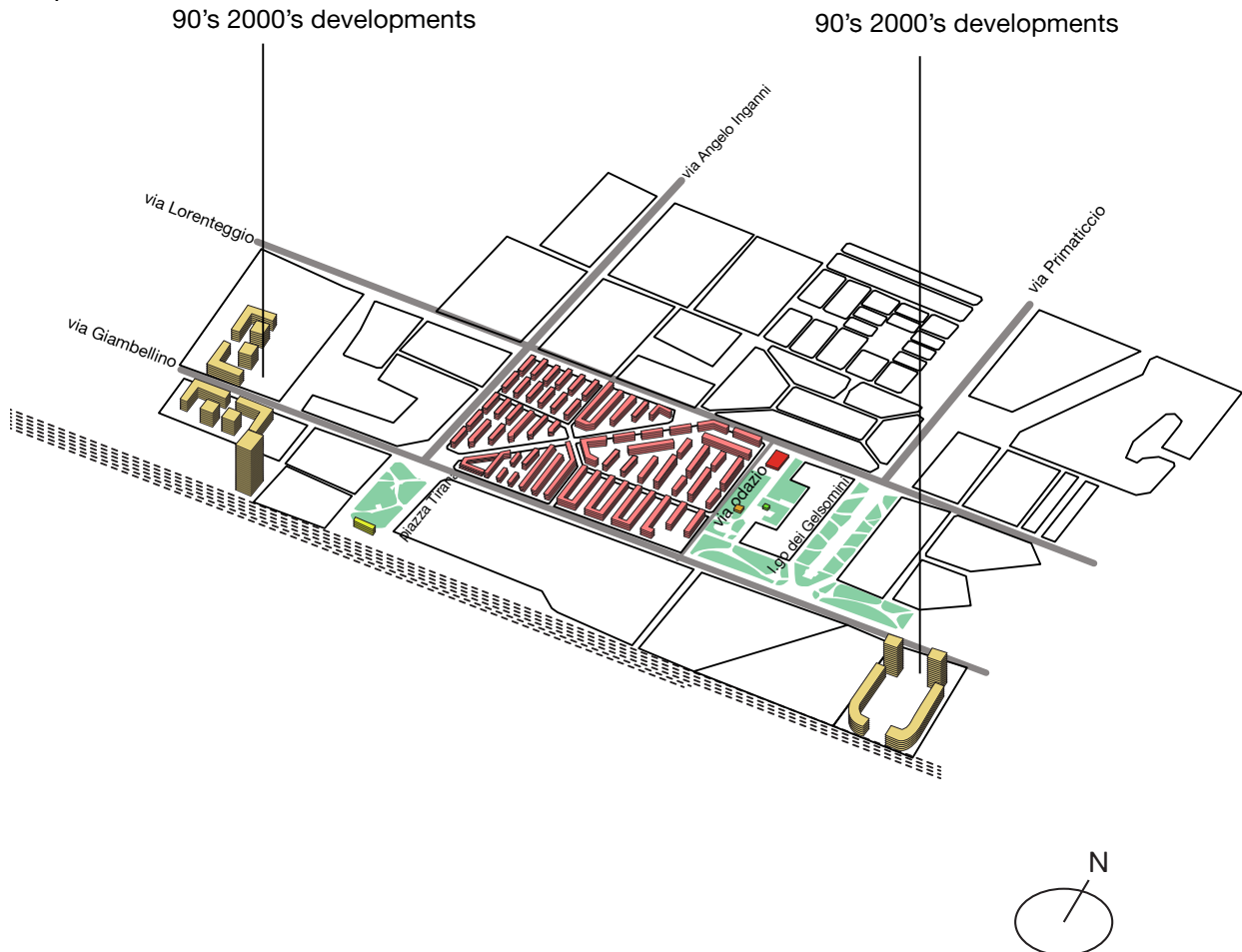






Image 22: 90's 2000's developments

Images 23, 24: 90's 2000's developments





### *The Decayed Village*

In this fragmented and uncertain evolving urban environment, the location of ALER quarter Loreteggio is geographically central, representing another “village” inside this archipelago. Two official documents, one from the municipality calling for projects to renovate and regenerate the social housing unit and the other being the new Masterplan for the restoration of the island, are our main sources of data.

Loreteggio includes 2677 apartments, 2450 of which are owned by ALER, the regional agency for social housing. A small percentage is owned by private owners (227). The general description by the municipality of both the structural and social situation of the neighbourhood is explicitly negative: “highly environmentally and socially decayed” (2010, p. 2).

Moreover, the high density of the environment (135000m<sup>2</sup> for 670000m<sup>3</sup>) is not provided with sufficient services for the number of inhabitants. This state of degradation is reflected by the high number of empty dwellings (716), almost half of which are illegally occupied (320). Translated into practical terms, this unbalanced situation is marked by a quantitative and qualitative lack of space for integration and living support.

The absence of the public city is exacerbated by the evident state of decadence, characterizing the last twenty

years, of the social housing unit “that has seen in the last years (in the surroundings) important urban transformations either residential, commercial and infrastructural” (2015, p. 5). Therefore, this unbalance can be detached also in the juxtaposition social housing unit with the “rest of the district” and this contributes to further isolate the environment. From a social point of view, the document points out how this decay and overall abandonment is marked by difficult inter-generational and inter-cultural relations. Among the most worrying factors, the vulnerability of the population must be highlighted: out of 6000 people, 40% are over 65; a majority of these are lonely; and one third of resident families are under the poverty line. The major themes of the project can be described as aiming to enhance the regeneration of this space in several key ways:

- integrated regeneration of the ERP quarter
- collaboration with on-going initiatives by the municipality (and/or other social bodies) for the promotion of unused spaces at the ground floor
- tackle the isolation and ghettoization of the ERP quarter in contrast with the territorial context next to it

Leaving a description of the Masterplan to the fifth chapter, the competition call launched by the Public Actor can be read

as willingness by the Municipality to give resources and foster the networking of several energies already present in the area. In fact, Giambellino Lorenteggio is in the middle of an environment where different associations are active with the purpose of improving living conditions in the neglected area. This document can be seen to pave the way for a change of approach by the Municipality towards a willingness to discover and systematize processes and actions that could be more effective if structurally supported by the public body. Not surprisingly, the public call was followed by another tender notice for the allocation of a space in the public gardens at via Odazio called Casetta Verde. The condition to obtain the space, for seven years, was to make remunerative activities by a non-profit organization, which would pay reduced rent to the municipality. Of course, this is another example of active participation by the municipal administration to involve associations in the area and draw attention to the social housing located just 200 metres from Casetta Verde. As we will see, the space is being used by a network of associations, exploiting it in order to organize their activities in the neighbourhood.

### *A Tale from the Social Housing Compound: Rosalba's Story*

Rosalba arrived in Giambellino 15 years ago. She is a worker at the Vodafone Village and has lived in the social housing compound since 2009. Her experience in Giambellino can be separated into two periods. During the first years she lived in private housing, and during the second she moved in the social housing compound. Speaking with me she directly gives a description of her experience in her own courtyard, that is, an independently managed courtyard in the social housing compound.

Having a voice within the organization of the internal garden is particularly important for Rosalba in two particular ways. Firstly, thanks to the initiation of the self-management scheme, the space has dramatically changed. For example, a fence to protect the garden from having cars parked in it and preventing strangers entering was put up, and the concierge service was re-established by the inhabitants of the building: "before the fence was put up, the internal courtyard was used as a parking area and the condition of the green space was miserable". Self-management is carried out by 6 volunteers and replaces a service that should be provided by ALER. The regional agency provides money every three years for contracts and various expenses. Rosalba is one of the volunteers

Giambellino Lorenteggio  
Social Housing Compound

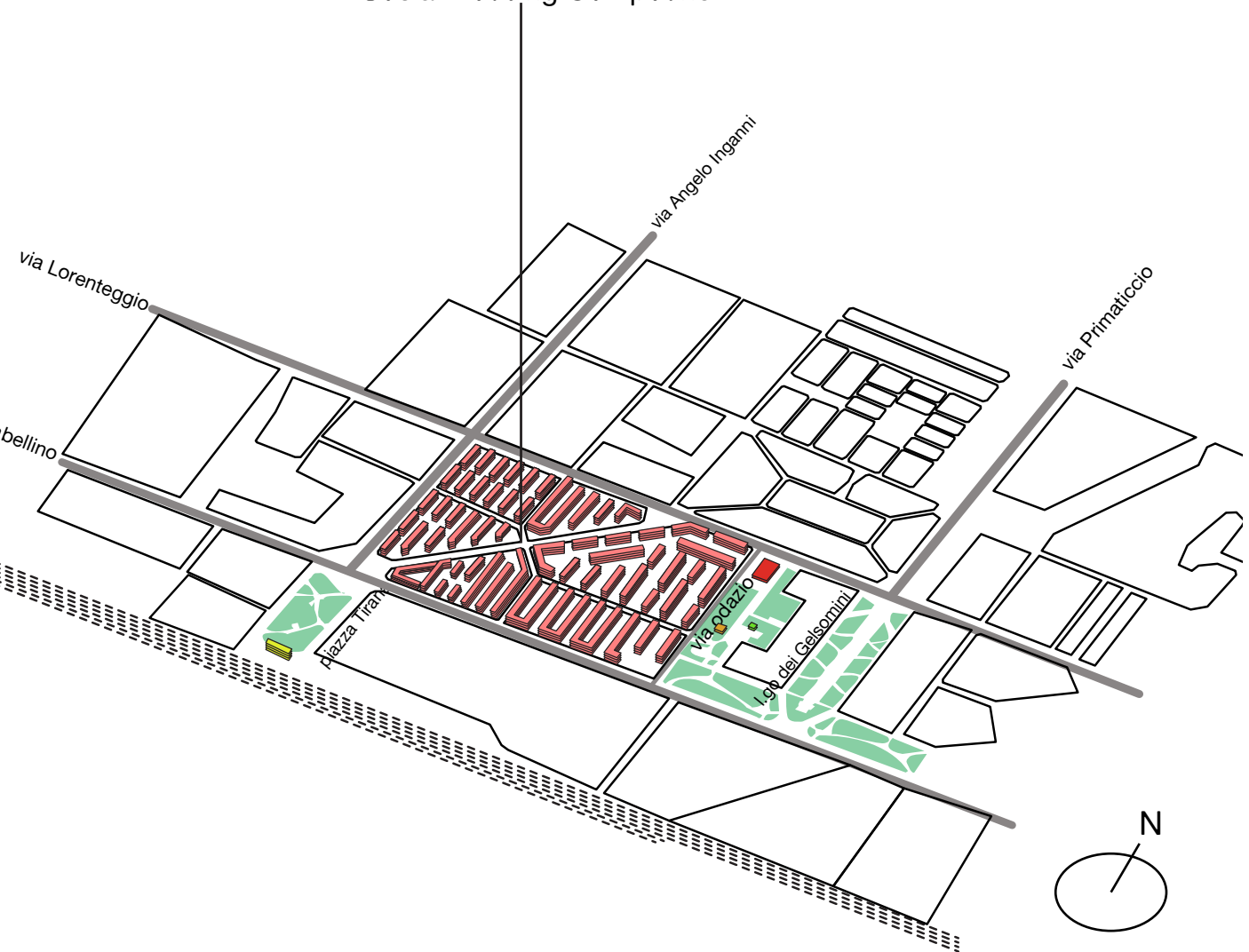




Image 25: Social Housing Courtyard

Images 26, 27: Social Hosuing Environment







for managing the services needed for the maintenance of the building and services. Secondly, with this experience Rosalba was not only able to have voice on issues regarding the communal space, but could also build better relations with other inhabitants in the social housing compound. In fact, her experience in Giambellino is marked by a strong change in her perception of the neighbourhood at the time of her entrance in the social housing compound. Although she remains aware of the bad reputation of this place, as soon as she got a public apartment she became involved in the social and associative life of the entire quarter. The self management scheme opened the door for this: “when I was living the private apartment and I was renting it, not far from here, to be honest with you I did not know the quarter so well and I did not know its sparkling environment. I started to properly know it only when I moved into the social housing quarter: I started to get in touch with all the associations, I started to be associated with Casetta Verde, the neighbourhood workshop, Dynamoscopio”. Even more interesting is the change in her attitude towards Giambellino: “when I was living in the private apartment I was always really afraid, now that I live here (in the social housing compound), which should be a more dangerous place as the general belief goes, actually I have learned how to know the “other” and I am not

afraid any more. I think one has really to live some situations”. From participation in the neighbourhood workshop she started to be a long-term activist in Casetta Verde. Among the various activities she organizes with another activist in the area, the summer open air projection “Scendi c’è il Cinema” will be discussed in the third chapter.

### *Associative Life Around the Village*

Informed by Rosalba’s tale, it is possible to understand the importance of associative life for people in the quarter. Therefore it is worth giving consideration to various active social realities in the area in order to have an idea of this eclectic, hidden world animating every day life for people., This analysis starting with exploratory aims have to be selective at the end. The same aim of this essay suggests that we should look at active citizenship that tries to overcome the above-mentioned shortcomings of the NIL 49 in general, and of the social housing compound in particular. From this list of associations we will then be able to select those that serve our interests of analysis: the building of a critical mass on social housing whereas easing the daily life of people living in Giambellino.

Name	Location	Year of establishment	Activities	Legal status
Le Radici e le Ali	Via Giambellino 150	2006	Providing free courses for immigrants; integration activities	Association
Cultural Association Vasilij Grossman	Via Inganni 12	2007	Educational support for families; cultural activities	Association
Samarcanda Italian school for foreigners	Via Odazio 7	n.f.	Providing free courses for immigrants; integration activities	Association
Comunità del Giambellino	Via Gentile Bellini 6	1979	Assistance for drug addicts; social housing services; after-school support and activities; street education	Social Co-operative
Cormuse	Viale Legioni Romane 54	2013	Inter-cultural integration through choir activities and performance	Non-Profit Organization

Name	Location	Year of establishment	Activities	Legal status
Gruppo Jonathan	via Tito Vignoli 35	1989	Assistance to young adults and disabled people with recreational and working activities	Association
Comunità Nuova	via F. Gonin 8	1973	Youth support and street education; services for families and under-age people in need; assistance for drug addicts; social inclusion activities for immigrants; social housing services	ONLUS
Cooperativa Sociale Cascina Bianca	via delle Primule 5	1996	Health and social services; education, recreational and aggregative activities	Social Co-operative
Associazione Handicap su la testa	largo Antonio Balestra 1	1988	Assistance and activities for handicapped adults and children	ONLUS
GiambellItaly	via Gentile Bellini 6	2005	Providing free study space in the area on Sundays	Association

Name	Location	Year of establishment	Activities	Legal status
Azione Solidale Onlus	via gabetti 15	1993	Organizing activities for the social inclusion of the most vulnerable parts of the population	ONLUS
Seneca Onlus	piazza Napoli 24	1998	Services and home assistance to elderly people in need	ONLUS
Cooperativa sociale Spazio Aperto Servizi	via Gorki 5	1993	Services to the under-age and families in difficulty; at-home services for adults in need	Social Co-operative

## Notes from the chapter

This analysis provides a better understanding of Giambellino's daily-life, problems and struggles. Moreover, we have seen that the context in which the neighbourhood is located, Milan's urban environment, is facing great changes in terms of scale and structure. Overall, we can say that the various issues we have encountered in this analysis constitute the groundwork for a demand for a better quality of life.

The entire neighbourhood is characterised by different dynamics that can be defined as divisive and that fragment the social reality and urban environment. To be sure, the presence of such variation in living situation is not accompanied by an equal inclusive and mixed neighbourhood life. We can see this in the division of pupils inside Narcisi school. The bad reputation of the area infiltrates many levels of life in the quarter: the communal space of children inside schools; the neglect of the social housing compound in Giambellino; and with the various spatial dynamics that we described using the village imagery.

This poor situation has been exacerbated by a lack of municipal attention given to the area, proven by the absence of urban and social policies. There is an Institutional lapse of memory affecting the neighbourhood, which faces large-scale population change with the arrival of new populations and the disappearing of older inhabitants. Giambellino's environment has been affected unevenly. The exclusion from active policies worsen, in particular, conditions within the social housing compound where the absence of structural restructuring and

services to dwelling is strongly felt because of the presence of many people at risk of social exclusion. The situation has become unsustainable in particular for more vulnerable inhabitants, i.e. families, elderly, and disabled people. Social and material structures have followed a parallel path of decay.

However, changes are happening within our decayed village, and we have tried to describe this as the new shape of the city which is making space within the ruins of the previous productive activities: new tertiary and residential buildings are taking over this urban reality. This has likely been fuelled by the future-arrival of the new underground. An additional mass transportation system has raised the attention of developers and builders. Nevertheless, together with this worrying change in urban structure there are signs of a lively associative life in the neighbourhood: Rosalba tells us that, paradoxically, her life improved when she moved into the social housing compound.

Despite its bad reputation, her story indicates that this reality has potential: multiple possibilities of how to inhabit the space are hidden under the decayed outward appearance of the buildings. In order to assess Giambellino's associative life more broadly, and to make a selection of appropriate Actors for our research, we have carried a review of associations, active groups and social activities from across the neighbourhood. The next chapter will focus on two of them.

# additional notes

# third chapter

## DESCRIBING A CONFLICT

Actors Actions and Chronicle of the events in Giambellino



ARE RISPOSTE AL GIAMBELLINO ORA

DRAGO

PER LA RIFORMAZIONE DEL MOVIMENTO GIAMBELLINO-LORENZETTI



What are we requesting to the Actors to be suitable for our description? Or, in other terms, what makes an Actor, primarily operating on social issues and as a social entrepreneur, a conflicting Actor? Although the answer is not clear-cut we have some ideas from chapter one's discussion.

Firstly, they should be capable of practical intervention regarding day-to-day life of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, will expect from the Actors to own the above mentioned "political ability" to raise voice acting as intermediaries – necessary condition for an Actor to move political claims in a conflictual context. More precisely the same social objectives, pursued by grass roots agents on the territory, can be seen as the glue between them and the inhabitants. This glue is made of a series of actions allowing us to point out their "routine sowing" eventually oriented towards claiming structuring. Consequently, we should value the development of a basic claiming platform through which they build a demand, gather consensus among the population, and engage in the attempt to propose answers through participatory processes. These efforts are done not only to prepare the ground for future claiming, but also to trigger resources mobilization. Identity-building processes and information acquirement, are at the centre of these efforts together with the expansion and consolidation of the solidarity network. In fact, the level of a social solidarity network should facilitate the group to pass from a mere aggregation of people to a community engaged in obtaining something. We will see how people involved in tackling the many social and urban problems of the neighbourhood are trying to "capitalize" these grass-roots local-based energies into bottom-up requests. Explained in more simple terms, we are engaged in finding agents that are both able to say "no", to threatening urban evolutions, whereas being able to say "instead we could...". That means to propose an alternative view of both practical/short-term arrangements and general/long-term visions.

Secondly, from an ethnographic point of view, it is not difficult to understand that, to become real, the passage from habitat to inhabited place, many little steps have to be implemented. We will see what the joined forces of some associations have produced in terms of structural and daily life changes. It does not surprise if, beside many imperceptible relational changes as the one explained by Rodalba, physical changes have also taken place. The re-use of two dilapidated, and partly abandoned, buildings was taken as a pretest and exploited to give start to neighbourhood experimentations. The social action is therefore followed by a concrete and visible renewal, although on little portions of space. In the second case study, for example, the opportunity not only for social forces to emerge has been created, but also for economic activities to develop and re-appropriate a former vital and identitarian place for the very local economy (short-term changing).

Finally, we will go through the claiming results of these "seed-by-seed" little actions to discover what have been their effects in terms of network expansion and reinforcement and the consequent influence on the public Actors' projectile intentions upon the social housing compound (long-term proposal). We are not presuming to establish a directly observable cause-effect explanation, nonetheless we will highlight the points of contact suggesting why and how things have happened. But let's proceed in order and let's see the result of the public call we have described in the second chapter.

### 3.1. The Peasants of Neighbourhood Habitability, Identity and Appropriation

#### *Actors and Actions*

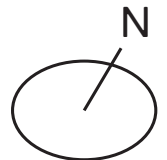
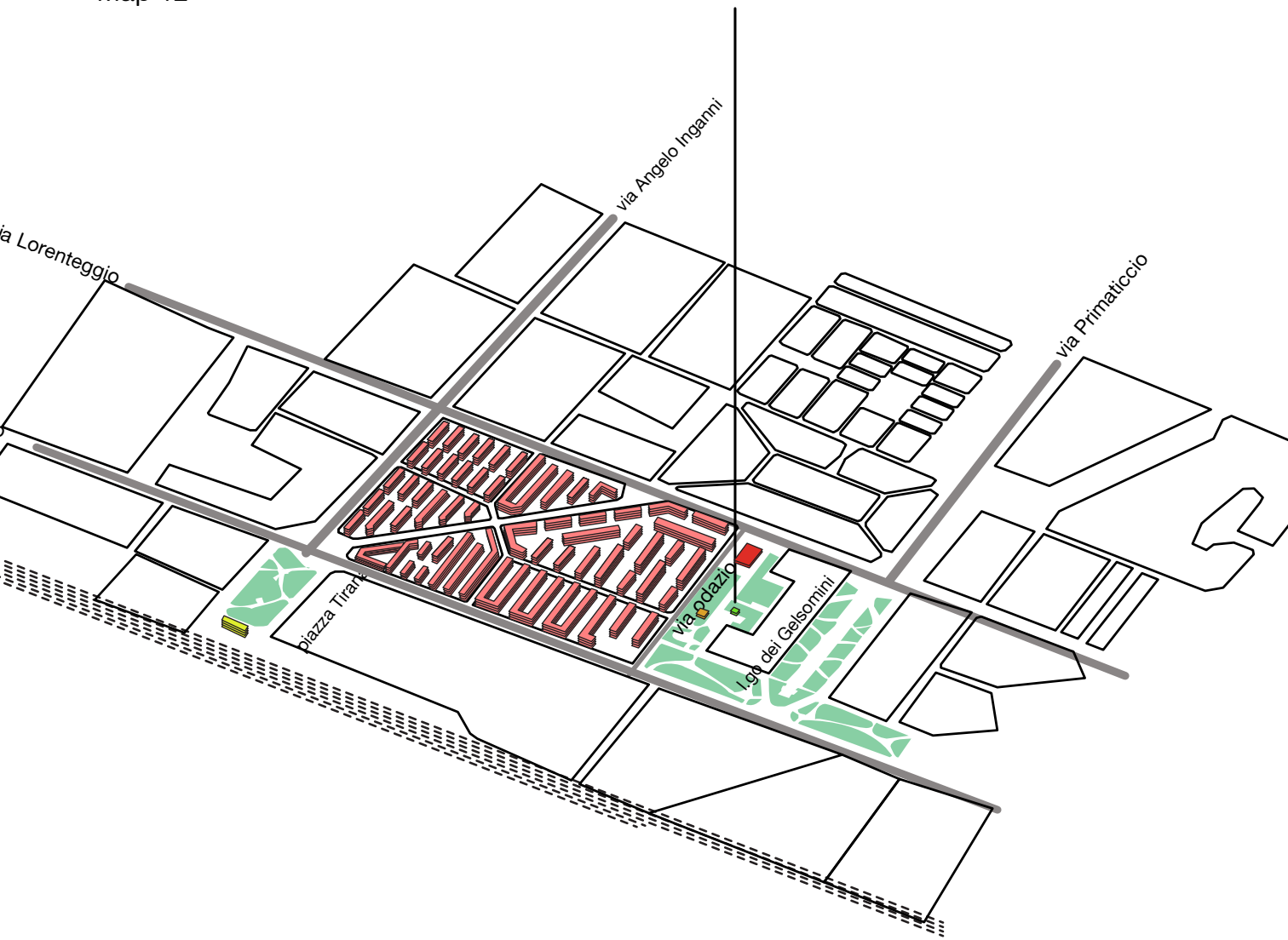
Casetta Verde and Dyanamoscopio have been chosen among the multitude of Actors listed in the second chapter. The basic motivation for this choice is provided by the same aim of this Actors and also by their approach to the territory. Engaging people in activities going beyond their daily needs is the purpose of these two associations. The aim is, on the one hand, to be responsive for a basic but not really expressed and recognised by society need which is sociability and encounters, and, on the other hand, their more subtle and difficult aim can be defined as the will to engage people into participatory processes in the neighbourhood. This participation oriented attitude is what we value as their role of bridges towards public Institutions. It is therefore interesting to see what tools are used and the actions implemented by the Actors to influence their urban reality. As a participatory observer I have followed a number of different activities inside the neighbourhood carried by Casetta Verde and Dynamoscopio. The description of these activities is important to understand what are the means, objectives and modalities used by this network of associations to address the

dwelling issues. Moreover, we may read these daily operations as attempts by activists to tackle the disenfranchisement of the local population towards the place they live: enhancing cooperation and solidarity among the inhabitants. Here we are juxtaposing in ethnographic terms the habitat against the inhabiting, threat of exclusion and claim for inclusion in a certain space, the intersection between social and material structures in a dynamic way. In a conflict analysis perspective, instead, we are trying to understand the little steps taken by associations towards neighbourhood solidarity and population enfranchisement.

# casetta verde

The map of social Actors in the neighbourhood clearly shows the rich presence of social activities taking place in the territory, witnessed by the strong presence of third sector, not-for-profit and for-profit associations operating on basic social needs. Going back to the municipal call, the few funds given in 2006, according to a social operator at Comunità del Giambellino, “as leftover from the neighbourhood agreement program”, have been invested to win the above described public call and to manage what will become the “neighbourhood laboratory” in 2009. The building was previously used as the head quarter of the local Associazione Nazionale Alpini and was left abandoned (Map 12). The idea was to give it back to the community by gathering the forces of several associations operating in the area on different social fields. The attempt developed by a series of social operators was aimed to involve the population in a more meaningful social life and community building. The project aims shared by an eclectic team of social operators – from Italian teachers to foreigners and educators for after-school activities to assistants of old people – was to have enough energies in order to “give a space” to social activities by

organizing events and scheduling the Casetta Verde room to the associations in need. Therefore, in order to tackle the social disintegration taking place in the contemporary life of the neighbourhood, the activities had to be oriented towards social cohesion aiming at two goals: mixing youngsters with old people and Italians with immigrants. Secondly, but no less important, the aim was also to bring Milanese people inside the neighbourhood fighting against Giambellino’s bad reputation and isolation at the city level. The “association of associations”<sup>2</sup> was engaged in a program oriented to reach those purposes, their efforts have been devolved to network-building with other agents at both the local and municipal level. Furthermore, the associations were active in working continuously to gather resources and then invest them into neighbourhood activities. Fund-raising, for example, was carried out not only by organizing attractive events for the inhabitants, but also by reaching bigger Actors to receive funds: for example Cariplo foundation allocated 200,000 Euros to develop Casetta Verde “social cohesion” projects.

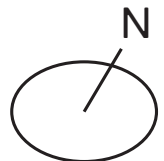
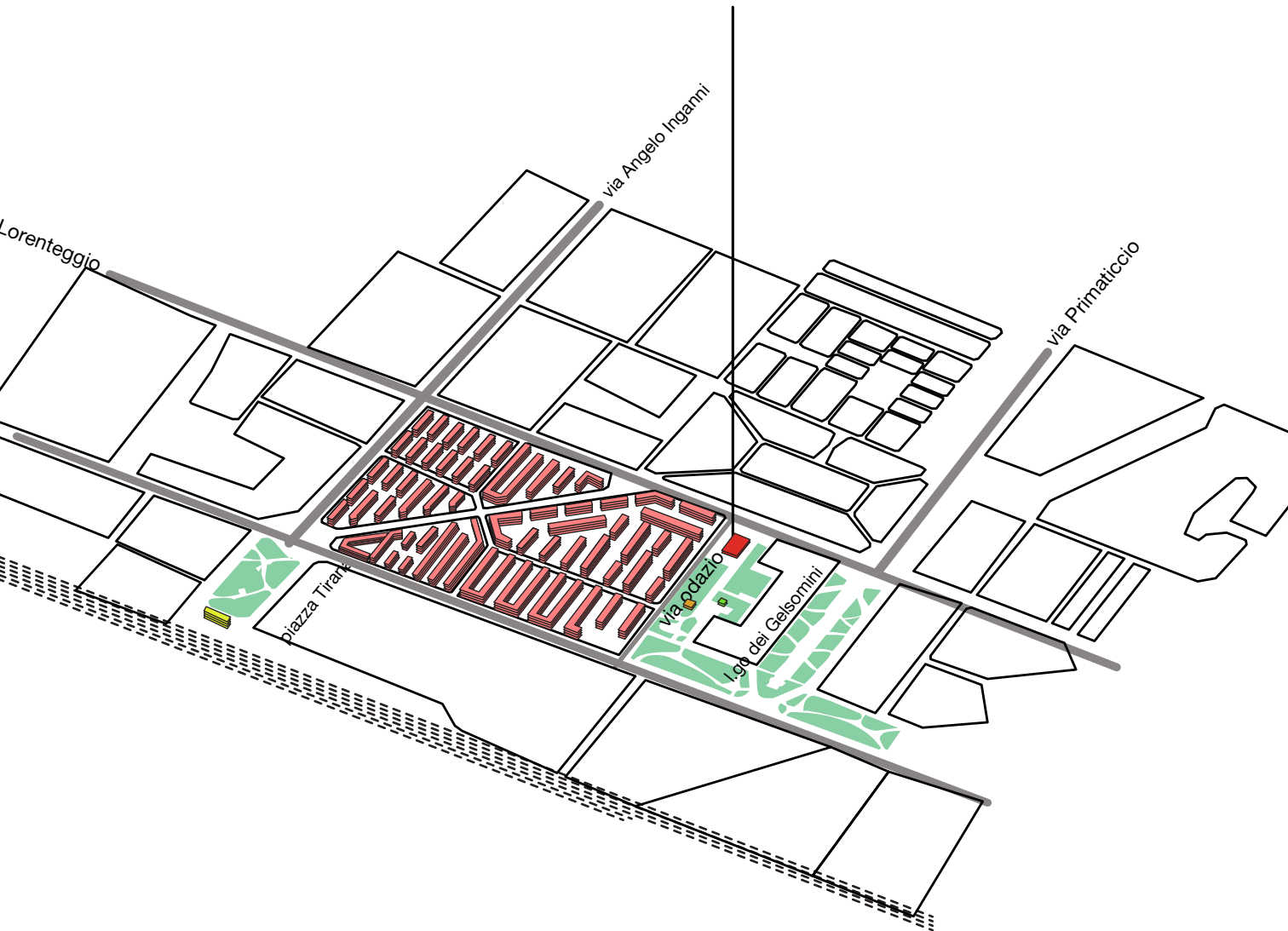




# dynamoscopio

A different, but related, reality can be founded in Dynamoscopio. Active since 2010 in the neighbourhood, Dynamoscopio is constituted by a group of researchers describing themselves as a cultural association treating the city as its major topic under two points of view: ethnographic research and urban policies. As Luca, one of the activists, told me: “working together we have learned that we want to give back signification to the out of border, peripheral places which are instead consistently part of the city”. Really explicitly the theme of housing, together with social activities, reached a central position in the thinking of this group, carried through in collaboration with other Actors. The aim of the association, according to Luca, is to build a collective vision of the future, while giving voice to Giambellino’s needs and trying to realize relevant responses. Therefore, in trying to tackle local issues, the group is also able to gather local resources: it is important to highlight here the strong use of collective memory in the process of building responses. One meaningful point in this “sense construction” is directly related to the social structure of the neighbourhood: that present social life cannot be distinguished and divided by the old social structure

and related memory. They are not only a consequence of the other and vice versa, but they are also related in terms of vivid social resources that are coming from past struggles and social claims. At the same time, the urban structure hosting this society is re-valued in its own importance: neither as the mere witness of a bright past, nor by merely exploiting its contemporary exchange and market value. This really important point will be discussed in-depth. For now it is important to notice that here we are describing an Actor engaged in present daily life issues, trying to understand them and gathering local knowledge from the present and the past. This process is invented in order to tackle problems on a practical and entrepreneurial level, referring to its nowadays sense making to strong background and historical themes. Among the many actions implemented I cannot describe for space shortage (Jambellico an event carried in Carnival festivities for multi-cultural integration and the production of informative materials for reviews) we are now focusing the attention on those that fit into our three main topics inhabiting, inclusion and social material structures.



Cultural Productions: “nella tana del drago” and “entroterra Giambellino”

Two important pieces of memory-based action in *Dynamoscopio* are represented by its cultural production. In 2012, both the documentary “entroterra Giambellino” and the book “nella tana del drago” were published, constituting two explorations of the deep social, historical and ethnographic processes of the neighbourhood.

“Nella tana del Drago” is something more than just a collection of experiences from past and present inhabitants; rather; it constitutes the process of searching and meaning definition of the same research of stories, tells and memories willing to weaving a network of fine senses and imperceptible glances on the world and on Giambellino itself. Better than my trivial explanations are the same words of the text:

“Now, let’s imagine to pose at Giambellino judgement the first question: if we cannot chase the people through the places they cross, would it be possible chasing the places through the persons who inhabit them? How? Exploring Imaginaries

Let’s also pose to Giambellino judgement the second question: how to constitute our selves so to gather forces amplifying the chance to go towards where we would like to go? Imagining Explorations” (2012, p. 14; translation mine)

As the same authors claim, the text, to be elaborated and produced, had to take the form of an “artistic and experimental research project with anthropological approach” therefore, becoming acceptable by academic contexts and entering in scientific languages codification. The multiplicity and flexibility of skills that the group had to acquire and prove are witnessed by the various efforts to take this project to an end, a final production. With the capacity to establish various forms of collaborations, cited by the same introduction with many thanksgiven to collaborators, *Dynamoscopio* proved an other time its ability to move on a multilevel set of realities. Moreover, the direct link with Casetta Verde is explicitly mentioned with these words: “There is a green little house inside via Odazio gardens, hidden between the local library and some light-coloured social housing blocks. A little house looking like a paper-made prefab container that, instead, resisted in Giambellino for several years” (2012, p. 15; translation mine). This connection tells us that the cooperation between the relatively recent group of researchers and the association of associations was established reaching a stronger power of resource mobilization.

The text itself is an incredible source of information and fine reading of neighbourhood reality and will therefore be used to reconstruct Giambellino’s history in



the next chapter.

“Entrotterra Giambellino” is a documentary aimed at describing the life of people inside the quarter, the imaginaries around it, and the various environments within. In this document the theme of dwelling the public, semi-public and private spaces on the one hand and, on the other, the issue represented by the (political) identity of a local reality come to the fore. Furthermore, the strong importance given to memory and its creative possibilities are stressed and valued as the cornerstone of a re-interpretation of the present and the foundation to build a better future. As the same group claims in the written introduction to the documentary:

“if it is true, as Jacques Derrida claims, that the human psyche often adopts analogies to those belonging to the Archive in the perception and building of memory (selection-conservation-censure-verdict) it is necessary to begin with this limit of the memory’s conceptual and physical threshold, trying to imagine it as a space” (2012; translation mine)

Old and new inhabitants, the related identity question, the issue of inner-neighbourhood environments and the rest of the city, and the housing/dwelling problematic, including its changes over time, are explored thanks to the voice of people facing them in their daily life. This

exploration gave vital information to the group, allowing them to have a deeper understanding processes characterizing this “city into the city” dynamics.



agenzia x

immaginarie esplorazioni

# nella tana del drago

anomalie narrative dal Giambellino



**DYNAMOSCOPIO** presenta  
Associazione Culturale

# entroterra **Giambellino**

Collettivo  
un film di **immaginarie esplorazioni**



## Notes from the chapter

This chapter constitutes the core of this research, it tells us that the opposition to the disruptive plan did not arise without grass-roots motivation and in a neutral environment. The Actors have been active in trying to realize all the various concepts we are testing from the beginning of this thesis. This is not only just the two Actors we have described, but a multifaced reality of Actors. One network that has been able to deliver successful action is DRAGO, with their presence and activity in the territory successful in a number of ways.

Firstly, it allowed inhabitants to maintain spaces for their activities, trying to match the routine ones to those definable as extraordinary, creative, and pro-active. Despite the strong changes in Giambellino's social and material structure during time, the neighbourhood was able to keep a degree of human, uncertain, and provocative attitude. The arrival of new populations, the turnover of past inhabitants, and the sad abandonment have been confronted with a strong degree of creativity. The exclusion is tackled in the many layers of reality: not only avoiding the ghettoisation of the social housing compound, but also trying to overcome the bad reputation of the neighbourhood in the city through interesting activities. The inclusion can be detected in the same salvation of the social housing compound. In fact, we have shown that an area that improves habitability and increased urban quality can host the most disadvantaged part of the population. Inclusion can be also detected in the same claiming for the rights of refugees and thanks to the activities of trying to integrate different parts of the population.

Inhabiting is the aim of their plans: making people understand that they can do something based on their own reality, whether it be improvement and modification, or fighting for the right to have a place to stay. Built as a habitat, the social housing compound, as we will see in the next chapter, has never fully been an unmodifiable place. The

population animating it were able to give it a soul, called DRAGO, that remains until today. All in all, these various social actions, fuelled by the associations, have promoted and allowed for a political voice in the discussion and decision-making concerning Giambellino's future. In Aalbers words, the social space makers were, and are, enough conscious of their role in opposing the abstract space maker. Although the many voices heard in this research imply an intentionality in Giambellino's decay, this thesis is not able (and maybe did not ever want) to demonstrate such an obscure plan.

In our view, the evidence gathered so far identifies that the Actors supported by the local society were good enough to oppose, critique, and collaborate with power in a constructive way. This theme of analysis will be central in the next chapter, though now it is important to merely highlight that urban disenfranchisement was avoided and in fact triggered enfranchisement instead. Moreover, Actors were able to avoid the typical representative role in any conflictual question. The episode at the opening of Mercato Lorenteggio is particularly meaningful in this sense: the inhabitants were there "facing" Institutions at the same level. The lower threshold allowed by *Dynamoscopio*, although limited in time, can be seen as the major political point in this research on conflictual relations. Furthermore, thanks to Vitale, the political openness of key municipal figures has to be taken into account when we deal with Actors mobilizing to raise urban questions and problems and with the opportunity for them to be heard. From this final point we can go beyond stating that instead of an urban renewal plan an urban regeneration plan is in place. Although hard to prove in scientific and factual terms, this result is surely inserted in a social and political environment that has allowed for this outcome.

# additional notes

# fourth chapter

## AT THE ROOTS OF GIAMBELLINO ASPIRATIONS

Traces from the History of an Unconventional Neighbourhood



This fourth chapter will be devoted to the historical memoir of Giambellino, tracing the lines of its cultural background. It is important not only to carry out such a documentation with “archive aims”, but it is also central to understand the roots and the invisible heritage of a past that have contributed to the evolutions we have seen in the previous chapters. To clarify, the documenting and analysing undertaken for this essay has so far provided quite a substantial amount of information on the recent conflictual event in Giambellino. Nonetheless, we have looked back on a short time period of chronicles and technical analysis. It was important to see what have been the facts per se. We had to look at the contemporary mechanisms of this peculiar urban conflict through the lenses of an ethnographer and analyse them with an Actor oriented perspective.

So far, Giambellino has been treated as a neutral stage on which Actors have interacted with each other autonomously and with their own peculiar reasons. The elements describing the environment have been listed, the various Actors have been described, the social and structural reality enquired into. Nonetheless, something is missing in this “present-focused” way of looking at reality: although it might represent the core of contemporary developments, it does not say anything about the neighbourhood spirit: Giambellino in se. Following Galimberti, an Italian philosopher, we will not be so naive to think there is one defined Giambellino in se; as he affirms during a talk in 2012 “things do not have a meaning in se, instead they have a meaning produced by the cultural world which generate those meanings”. This point of view will lead us through Giambellino’s historical events. What do we mean by neighbourhood spirit? It is clearly neither metaphysical or invented, nor does it have anything to do with the fantastic and idealistic, attitudes toward reality! Instead, the spirit we are looking for is related to the waves of a complex past which constitute a further, hidden, milieu for social and political activism. Giambellino’s spirit comes from all the footages left in its urban environment by past human actions that still resound today. Put in academic terms: we are searching for the culture of the neighbourhood that has had to be interpreted by the Actors to build aspirations and visions of the future.

We will take our cue from two cultural productions by *Dynamoscopio*, as well as commenting on historical pictures and drawing inspiration from artistic descriptions. *Dynamoscopio*’s production: “*nella tana del drago*” will be central in this analysis as it will allow us to go further into the interpretation of reality. What are we looking for? Traces, small signs from the past, glances and voices of people who can tell us stories of insurgent claims from unexpected times. As Tracy Chapman would put it “our bright future is in our past”. We will look at a history made of struggles, efforts, and errors that have led to the present positive attitude to take risks to oppose threatening urban plans, an attitude that can state “instead we could...”. The past is thus at the service of future possibilities and it should therefore be analysed by this research in its cultural terms, as a glue for contemporary community life,



## 4.1. A Photographic Description of the Past

The first glimpse into Giambellino's memory is seen through a series of pictures depicting it at the end of the Second World War and through the 50's 60's and 70's. Those pictures, provided by Casetta Verde and Dynamoscopio, combined with interviews gathered in "Progetto Memoria Giambellino" and the book "Nella Tana del Drago", are fundamental documents in the reconstruction of the neighbourhood's environment during those years. By linking the different sources, we will be able to witness Giambellino's spirit at that time. Its story is a composite of resistance, community life and political activism, alongside "malavita" businesses, new immigrants settling in barracks, and huge industrial plants with thousands of blue collars. All these elements give a picture of a multi-faceted periphery, hosting a wide set of realities and individual stories that are intertwined with historical events and political mass movements. The far order of the late industrialization and successive de-industrialization processes is therefore meeting with the near order of a modifying neighbourhood created through overcoming urbanization and individual stories. The neighbourhood had to confront all the drawbacks and advantages of its detached environment.

At the edge between the city and the countryside it struggled with the agricultural past, the waves of bigger social, economic and political developments and the uncertainty of the future. We therefore need to know more about the past life of this neighbourhood: the common history must come to the fore in order to understand the present collective conflicting efforts.

## War Resistance and its Legacy for the Neighbourhood

According to the book “From Milan to Barona. Stories, Places and People of these Lands”, after the armistice between the Italian Government and the Allies on the 8th of September 1943, several groups around Milan began an uncoordinated attack against the Nazis and Fascists until February 1944. During this period, the 113th Brigata Garibaldi was created in order to unite the various cells operating in the area. In an interview released for the “Progetto Memoria Giambellino”(Memory Project Giambellino), an elderly inhabitant named Paola, 84 years old, remembers her capture and interrogation by Fascists seeking information about her husband, a

partisan of the Brigata Garibaldi. Not only did she refuse to denounce any of the group’s activities that was causing many problems to the so called “Salò Republic”, but she also collaborated in carrying weapons to San Cristoforo station<sup>11</sup>.

This resistance was central in the formation of Giambellino’s identity, it became a strong foundational stone in its heritage and future developments. One witness of this important protection service is Marco, an old resident of Giambellino, who states that after the armistice many cellars and basements hosted partisans and deserters. This informal pact will have great consequences for the neighbourhood as we will see in the following paragraphs: the partisans would not forget Giambellino’s protection.





## The industrial past and workers

After the Second World War, since it was an industrial neighbourhood of Milan, many blue collars sprung up in Giambellino. Paola remembers the inhabitants' high propensity to demonstrate and strike in the 50's and 60's. The marches, such as the one done barefoot to welcome refugees, started from the periphery and arrived at the centre. Luciano, another former inhabitant of the area, has a childhood memory of a warm and sunny summer

afternoon. Suddenly everywhere became silent as a huge demonstration of thousands of workers took to the streets. The demonstrators started to whistle to get the inhabitants to participate in the march. The various factories around Giambellino populated its residential buildings with working class families. There you could find a strong class-based identity with a common vocabulary, a shared vision of reality, and the will to struggle for a better life condition<sup>12</sup>.



A black and white photograph showing a person in a dark coat standing in front of a wall. The wall has graffiti that reads "I LAVORATORI" on the top line and "d'GOVERNO!" on the bottom line. The person is out of focus, and the graffiti is the central focus of the image.

I LAVORATORI  
d'GOVERNO!





SCIOPERO

DIREZIONE

DEL

GIOCO

FA IL

LATTE

## Political activism and riot groups

Renata, a former political activist in the “Lotta Continua” riot group, lived in the neighbourhood in the 70’s and 80’s. Starting her political activism at the age of 17, Renata describes Giambellino’s political situation and associative life as truly sparkling and active: a strong working class neighbourhood where the activists, from different left wing communist groups, were engaged within the worker community to gather consent among the population. Amongst the various factories around the neighbourhood (Osram, Loro Parisini, Ponteggio

Dalmine) there were some really political oriented ones, such as the Ferrotubi, in which almost all the workers had joined the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI). Ferrotubi’s blue collars were the exceptionally hostile towards students who had also joined the party, revealing an ancient rivalry between the various Italian left wing movements and the Institutional communist party. Nonetheless, according to Renata’s report “Giambellino was a favourable place for a certain anti-system fighting spirit” (2012, p. 115). If someone had seen activists writing on the walls, they wouldn’t have denounced them to the police.







CONDIZIONI  
ECONOMICHE  
POPOLARE

CITIZ

**SUNIA ZONA 1**  
**CENTRO STORICO**  
**SINDACATO UNITA RIO NAZIONALE INQUILINI ASSEGNATARI**

**S.U.M.I.A.**  
NO ALLE RENTE PIGNONE E ALLE  
SPECULAZIONI IMMOBILIARI

**S.U.M.I.A.**  
NO ALLE RENTE PIGNONE E ALLE  
SPECULAZIONI IMMOBILIARI

DIFENDIAMO IL DIRITTO ALLA CASA

al comitato  
di via...



Madre mia che dolore,  
ci trattengono 2 ore,  
alle 2 fanno pastro  
Noi lambricelliamo  
e Barbera diventa Matte  
Tolam fuori gli artigie  
uamo uomini non Conigli.



IO SCIOPERERO  
TU..MULTI?  
TU..MULTI  
IO SCIOPERERO

## Relations towards public and semi-public spaces

Renata also tells us about an episode concerning the relationship between the locals and the public space, affirming that what we have seen in this research has been long rooted in the past. In 1976 an abandoned field situated in via Bavona, originally destined to become a little park, was then to be converted into luxury buildings. There was of course resistance to this plan: “a comrade, Maurizio C., living in that street, decided to squat the field with other fellows. They set up tents and slept over there. They organised propaganda in the neighbourhood and collected signatures to counter the plan for the

construction of buildings. They resisted for some weeks and organised political assemblies and other such initiatives” (2012, p. 121). The construction company owner gave up on the development project and after some years only half the field was sold. Within the contract for the construction of these new buildings, the municipality inserted compulsory terms for the provision of a public park, an achievement which the neighbourhood still enjoys to this day. It is particularly important to highlight that Renata emphasised the cognitive terms of this experience by both parties: the activists learnt how to realize in concrete terms their thoughts; Giambellino’s locals understood the importance of being involved in a spatial protest.



LA PETIZIONE DI 1000 CITTADINI, L'AZIONE DEL COMITATO  
TO DI QUARTIERE E IL CONSIGLIO DI ZONA HANNO IM-  
PERITO FINORA LA VENDITA DI QUESTA AREA COMUNA-  
LE  
LA POPOLAZIONE HA INIZIATO LA RIPULITURA E LA  
RECINZIONE CON IL PROPRIO LAVORO E A PROPRIE  
SPENSE  
L'AZIONE CONTINUERA FINO A QUANDO IL COMUNE  
NON FARA IL SUO DOVERE  
COMITATO QUARTIERE GIAMBELLINI







## 4.2. Places from Giambellino's Identity

The human landscape depicted up to this point moved within a florid social environment. In the words of Marco Philopat, editor of "Nella tana del Drago", the social fabric allowing this kind of dynamic was originally composed of different waves of immigrants: the so called bifolchi. These included peasants moving to fertile lands in search of better life condition, enforced repatriates from foreign colonies or countries hostile to fascism, and the post-war working class established in Giambellino because of the number of factories. This multi layered and eclectic society lived in social housing and was able to animate a vibrant social activity. This mixture "was crucial for the formation of an attitudinal anomaly among Giambellino inhabitants" (2012, pp 23, 24).

We have seen how each of the various stories told by those interviewed have had their roots, their "stage", in various locations around Giambellino: each action, be it individually or collectively made, needs a place. The places of Giambellino are therefore worth describing because they are witnesses of what happened and are the legacy left by the people's culture. In some senses they were the product of that time. We are looking for the spirit of the neighbourhood and these places reveal more of its multi-faceted composition.

Moreover, we will give voice to the people who have seen these locations in their hey-day and can describe them in the most meaningful way. Framed in this manner, some places have been the centres, nodes, of a relational network constituting the historical fabric and identity of Giambellino: to gain an insight into it we must make an effort to match stories with spaces. Only this link will give us a clear picture of the daily life of that time. To do that we will unpack the interviews collected in the book "Nella Tana del Drago" in order to reconstruct the memory of places. Places of encounter, war, and reunion; spaces that have been the theatre to people of different social realities, and who had to share each other's space with their different practices.

### **Piazza Tirana and La Bersagliera**

According to Antonio, former PCI activist and worker at the former communist newspaper "l'Unità", in his childhood Piazza Tirana and La Bersagliera were friendly places used for a wide range of activities. He remembers how just in front of Bersagliera restaurant, when his father forgot the car keys inside, a guy swiftly helped them open the car's door with a special trick. Alongside these kinds of characters, activists from the various left-wing movements were gathering at the Bersagliera and at the Cooperative (another nearby gathering place). Renata, recalling the times of her adolescence, affirms



how “in the early 70’s (Bersagliera) was a landmark, one could go there without any problem and feel good. You could meet with other comrades and chat and argue about any topic” (2012, p.114). She also said how even places dedicated to the elderly, such as the social centre in via Odazio, were used as meeting places by the young and were great fulcrums for intergenerational relations.

Side-by-side to this political combative soul, many interviewees testify to another society: an underworld dominated by the “ligera”, the organized crime cell, that had its gambling headquarters just in Piazza Tirana. Here we see, for the first time in this memory enquiry, the incredible proximity, in spatial and metaphorical terms, of these different worlds. They had to coexist together, to share a space. Moreover, using once again Renata’s memories, Piazza Tirana was used as a political assembly by the Brigade Rosse (BR) activists. They were known by the entire neighbourhood and everybody could meet them on the streets or where they lived. That part of Giambellino is defined by Renata as a “freed space”, a freedom made evident by the possibility to gather and organize against power both legally and illegally.

Far from supporting this kind of social composition, it should be noted how the attitude towards power contrasted and conflicted even in its spatial terms.

The manifestation of the criticality of this meeting point of political and illegal social life had, at times, a dark side. When a group of young immigrants from southern Italy for example, unaware of the risks, cheated the “ligera” by stealing a large amount of money, one was found burnt in a car at Idroscalo Park while the other two disappeared forever. The social fabric is therefore not an easily defined “object”, the tactics of coexistence sometimes were successful while others could fail with terrible consequences. The environment of the neighbourhood was “particular, there were subjects involving both legal and illegal affairs with the same ease” (2012, p. 114). There is a question of balance in this dynamic. As long as Giambellino’s different souls were able to coexist together they could gain strength from the other. The neighbourhood provided the right space and cover to carry out a desperate number of activities that were neither matching nor contrasting: their same relations was the balance.

### **Municipal Market and the Public Library**

Two venues that reveal the past dynamics as well as gathering particular importance in the present day efforts of conflictual mobilization, are the Public Library and the Municipal Market. Those two apparently standard functions of the neighbourhood were used in a very unconventional sense when hosting fervid political and social

activities.

Renata started her military life participating in reunions held in the library located in via Odazio. Here the different generations of Giambellino could meet to discuss general or local issues. Students were therefore socializing with those already active in a place usually used for studying and reading, this crossroads of purpose within the library helped the students become engaged. Meetings between comrades and students are also remembered by Antonio; he usually participated in the organizational reunions and then invited the participants at his place to have dinner together. The Municipal Market in via Odazio was also the scene of an unusual gathering of people. The more combative women used it as their meeting point, whilst still going there to shop and share their concerns about various local events. Groceries and politics, studying and activist meetings: this way of living common spaces suggests the presence of an active participation of the everyday life that was entering into normal activities.

Another important practice within the Giambellino community was the “anti- eviction” service operated by elderly people. According to Renata, “the judicial officers in charge of confiscating the debt of those behind on payment were known by the inhabitants, and when one of them came to the area, the tam-tam started

and all the valuables were hidden. When the official arrived there was nothing to be taken” (2012, p.215). What this albeit irregular community network teaches us can be described as the diffused sensation that “the power”, represented by the police, had to be overlooked, cheated and fought with through collaboration.

Once again, however, we must study the fine line dividing legal actions and illegal habits. At times these two attitudes towards power aligned within the neighbourhood. The above example highlights how an irregular practice was justified and accepted as an instrument to guarantee everybody’s “well-being”. A local (near) power, of uncertain definition, against a general (far) power: a local order trying to be as strong as, or at least confront, the unknown order through various empowering instruments, practices, and habits.

### **Convitto Scuola della Rinascita**

The lengthy interview with Angela Persice, President of Istituto Pedagogico della Resistenza, constitutes a fundamental key to understanding this important place. She describes how the resistance played yet another role in Giambellino’s life, although indirectly. In 1944, when the partisans escaped from the Ossola valley to Switzerland in search for asylum, they did not find a favourable place waiting for them. Quite the reverse, among the various

partisan divisions the Brigade Garibaldi, considered as a communist group, were forcibly imprisoned and guarded.

This situation catalysed the various groups, all forced together in the same place, to jointly start planning post-war actions. Most notably it was the 10th Brigata Garibaldi, comprised of students and professors, who questioned how knowledge was to be transferred, and realized how important education was as the first post-war step. In 1948 the first school was established in Affori, however various events forced it to relocate (via Padova, via Zeccha vecchia). In 1955 the school was finally moved to via Giambellino 115 in a former train coach factory, Tallero, which was half destroyed by bombs. The students themselves therefore had to re-design and reconstruct the building. The school was dedicated to Amleto Livi, a young partisan who had died just 10 years earlier at the age of 16. From its inception the school was just for partisans in need but during the 50's, the decision was taken to open up the lessons to non-partisans. Some of the school's activities distinguished it from other educational Institutions. Firstly, its weak Institutional character was reflected in the quite open degree of independent activities carried out alongside its educational role. Its social canteen, for example, was open to the most disadvantaged as well as the normal workers around the neighbourhood. The

Rinascita school also managed the social tram service, called "Gioconda", for funeral services catering to the poorest. Moreover, the school organized sport activities dedicated to the entire neighbourhood as entrainment activities for everyone.

According to Angela, "the school, between 1970 and 1975, developed itself in other fields beside scholastic activity and contributed in creating the sector that nowadays is defined as social cohesion. The idea was that citizen rights derive from the awareness of the place in which someone lives and works. In this sense a series of initiatives were promoted to allow people to become full citizens" (2012, p. 68 Translation and Italics mine). Although financed by public investments, the Convitto Scuola della Rinascita was recognized as a formal public school only in 1974. In the same period the school had to move again because the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL) obtained the building in via Giambellino 115.

The constructive Socialist administration led by Aldo Aniasi, a former partisan in Ossola valley, understood the school's need for a proper space and so financed the construction of a new building in via Rosalba Carrera: the institute was finally named a middle school and called "Rinascita - Amleto Livi". An additional symbolic and substantial presence within the school was formed by the Istituto

Pedagogico della Resistenza, founded in 1975 by all the supporters of the school: teachers, students, and citizens.

From the start, the school adopted democratic practices such as student assemblies during class hours, where they would elect student representative and discuss the claims and proposals to bring to the teachers and parents. Furthermore, in face of a ministerial restriction on the number of pupils enrolled in the school, they had to develop a democratic way of selecting their students. Three of the many criteria adopted were: the complete openness to handicapped people; the complete parity of female and male enrolment; and most importantly the “protected share” of children coming from social housing and migrant families.

This school is still active and is the beating heart of the area. Many social practices probably started in this place; in metaphorical terms Amleto Livi school was the home of a social and human spirit that is still present in Giambellino.



## 4.3 DRAGO in Giambellino

### Gaber's Character

Resuming what we have seen in the previous chapter, the same name DRAGO, given to the conflicting Actors opposing the demolition of the Lorenteggio social housing compound, was not conjured out of the blue. It is related to a memory, a song by Gaber, which have given a meaning, starting a fil rouge that now connects a particular past with a famous present. It is not a connection that can be defined in scientific terms, it cannot be proved with data and statistics, yet it can be perceived by the current inhabitants. If not, then how would we still understand why the conflictual Actors were called "DRAGO". Here it comes down to the role of art to create figures, characters, and to give imaginary shapes to the facts of an otherwise imperceptible reality. The title of the book "Nella Tana del Drago" was also inspired by this song. Tana, nest, is intended as a hosting identitarian environment, whilst drago, dragon, represents the "anomaly of a population able to transform the disadvantages of urban expansion into the practices and poetry of social inclusion" (2012, p. 25). Gaber's opening lyrics make a comparison between two other ballads, those of Tom Dooley and David Crocket. These two, both from the United States, both underwent incredible adventures; one entering and

dominating the wild nature, the other committing terrible assassins in desolate landscapes. Two legendary figures. Gaber, however, wanted simply to report the story of a character living in Milan, a Milanese story in its essence and dimensions: extraordinary adventures are not available. Nonetheless, a peaceful life is a struggle to find for Cerruti Gino. As the artist explains before singing, the location has been chosen, it is not anywhere in Milan, the song is about a man "staying in Milan at Giambellino", it is in this peculiar context that the events take shape.

vent'anni biondo mai una lira  
per non passare guai  
fiutava intorno che aria tira  
e non sgobbava mai

twenty years old, always broke  
in order to avoid troubles  
was looking around to understand the situation  
he never worked  
(...)

una sera in una strada scura  
occhio c'e' una lambretta  
fingendo di non aver paura  
il Cerutti monta in fretta  
ma che rognà nera quella sera  
qualcuno vede e chiama  
veloce arriva la pantera  
e lo vede la madama

a night in a dark street

look there is a Lambretta  
acting as if he was not afraid  
Cerutti quickly mounted  
but what an unfortunate night!  
Somebody sees him and calls the police  
quickly arrives the police car  
and he is caught by the madama  
(...)

s'e' beccato un bel tre mesi il Gino  
ma il giudice è stato buono  
gli ha fatto un lungo verborino  
è uscito col condono

three months of jail Gino got  
but the judge was pitiful  
he made a long exhortation  
and Gino got out with the remission  
(...)

Gino is not a positive character and he does not even want to be considered so. He is just a young guy neither looking for big recognition, nor trying to settle into normality. Cerruti is an example of one of the many guys found on the periphery of Italian society during the sixties, when the economic boom was at its height but some were left behind, or else did not want to take part in the better life promised. The rising middle class way of life did not attract them. Moreover, we should read the illegal deed, described in the song, as a further intention by Gaber to avoid any

mystification of his character, to skip the easy idolisation we could expect from a ballad.

It is not a glorious deed, nor is it positive or negative, it is something done with other basic motives. There is a question of respect, a peculiar kind of respect, witnessed by the sentence “quando parleran del Gino diran che è un tipo duro” (when they will speak about Gino, they will say he is a tough guy). This recognition does not spring from the typical reputation that inspires hopes, this is not someone who wants to create something for the good of the community and gain respect. Conversely, this search for recognition belongs to a much more human necessity of gathering power, to “make a name”, and to distinguish one self from the collective. Although invented, this character synthesizes issues found within the city’s neighbourhood dynamics. For instance, when a young man in the documentary “Entroterra Giambellino” describes the difference between the Tortona Savona district and Giambellino he immediately points out that the former is “beautiful and for rich people” while the latter “sucks”. Nevertheless, still according to the young skater, when someone comes from Giambellino there is a degree of respect that has to be paid to him or her. Where does this respect come from? From the very same as that of the neighbourhood that, being seen as dangerous and “out of

the norm”, deserves special recognition.

### **Nella Tana del Drago: Renato Vallanzasca**

Despite the various social and political activities developed within the neighbourhood, there was clearly another society, one on the edge of legality, ill defined and nebulous, not framed by the standard work market definitions. According to Renata, this blurred society was “fighting” for left wing ideas and class struggles; as she says: “they were comrades”. We are not here interested in testing the consistency of this affirmation; instead it is their individual revolt, as described by Gaber song, that we will focus on.

The best way to pass from an imaginary description to a real experience of this desire of recognition is to give voice to a story resembling Cerruti’s. Drawing the social relations in the neighbourhood from a real story will help us grasp what was Giambellino’s attitude towards power and irregular actions in the aftermath of the Second World War. Renato Vallanzasca is a well known Milanese criminal, originally born in Lambrate, another Milanese periphery, and was subsequently forcibly moved to Giambellino with his father’s first wife. His interview, reported in Entroterra Giambellino, reveals incredibly in-depth aspects of life in Giambellino after the Second World War. “It was the ideal place

for a young boy who wanted ehm... to affirm... his independence, for someone who wanted to be a bolster; to make a long story short: one could easily find someone else to scramble with” (2012, p.51). The neighbourhood life he describes can be defined as one united against the state’s power. When the police wanted to punish him and his friends for robbery, for example, the shop owners were the first to protect him and his friends, although it was they who called the police. According to Vallanzasca, the shop owners probably perceived the police as the emissary of the ancient Austrian invaders.

Referring to his experiences in Giambellino as a young boy, the necessity to be recognised was successfully accomplished through the games carried out within the neighbourhood. The carellot contest, for example, consisted in being dragged by a tram whilst seated on a handmade bicycle: the aim was to be the last on the track, despite passing through dangerous streets. Or else you could also gain respect and power by owning the most sought after football cards (all rigorously stolen from the newspapers shop).

These experiences, both innocent and on-the-edge, are signs of a childhood lived in an environment offering opportunities for identity affirmation. Was this unique to Giambellino? Yes and no. On the one hand Vallanzasca’s relation

with the neighbourhood was clearly strong and identitarian, performing these actions was somehow affirming: “I’m doing it this way because I live in Giambellino therefore you have to pay me respect”. The visceral attachment to the environment is witnessed by the fact that every single place had a meaning for him. Via Apuli, Piazza Tirana, Piazza Napoli, Via Odazio, the creamery, the grocery store, are all places cited in the interview as theatres for adventure. Those places, and the people animating them, were an integral part of Vallanzasca’s life. People and places were references for protection as well as revolt, for the mundane and the extraordinary. In Vallanzasca worlds: “It was, I don’t know, it was a neighbourhood life, and it was not bad, it was various and lively” (p. 57). The key as to why Giambellino, could host this identity question is found in the comparison that one respondent makes between Giambellino and Via Porpora. The latter was defined as “not a neighbourhood. Let’s say, a mere street in between Loreto square and Lambrate station” (p. 52). The “corridor” status of this street probably weakened its community life and the relations within it. Other neighbourhoods, however, were also described in the interview as environments where this identity affirmation and recognition quest thrived. Quarters such as Quarto Oggiaro, Opera, Baggio, Comasina (all of them on the periphery of Milan) are places where individuals perceive their self

as both detached and linked to the city life, where singular and collective stories are enriched and, at the same time, suffer by this asymmetric relation.

Lastly, Vallanzasca speaks about how the waves of immigration grew and became increasingly visible during the 60’s and 70’s: “Milan was a destination for those migrating from the south and in Giambellino there were many migrants”. Children became vital to the integration of these new peoples, they were the first agents and facilitators of meetings and hybridizations between newcomers and locals. “If racism was overcome quickly it was because of kids, they were the first to fraternize, and so stopped the adults behaving like “children”, and differentiating just because one would have come from Puglia or Lombardy or Trentino. I think that the Milanese peripheries have been excellent integration laboratories, especially Giambellino” (p.58). This testimony reveals how, alongside the desire of identity recognition and affirmation, Giambellino had the capacity to welcome and host the “stranger”, the newcomer, regardless of their origins. To do so a strong social background is needed: just who knows who he or she is can take the challenge and react positively to the arrival of others. We return again to the philosopher Galimberti, who describes how the “stranger” puts us in a situation of crisis and challenges our identity, just who knows his or her belonging can tackle



the imminent questions of the “others”. This embrace of the other could be one of the driving factors of the barefoot march engaged in by local associations and supported by the rest of the inhabitants.

This question of recognition could be considered as the individual’s actualization of the inclusion/exclusion question: if the overall city excludes me and my identity I need to engage in the building of a name; regardless of the positive or negative actions this will lead to.

#### 4.4. The 80’s and political drawbacks

##### *Birth and Rise of the Brigade Rosse*

The complexity of Giambellino is interesting since its description reveals a blurred delimitation of the “illegal” and “legal”. Between the 50’s and the 70’s there had been an environment allowing this area of the city to be, in Renata’s words, “freed”. This freedom, although related to the people who lived there, had a certain degree of risk. However, as long as this unconventional freedom was contained and incorporated within the actions of the inhabitants, into their daily routines, in the resealable balance between their aspirations, concerns and propositions, freedom was realised.

Certain spaces, indeed the neighbourhood in general, that came to represent a stronghold were built through

this blend of community involvement way of life. The fall out once this equilibrium was broken, however, was harsh and unpredictable. Giambellino’s propensity, as the various tales have shown, to host restless movements and counter-movements probably started to be waved when the first violent extreme left wing infiltrated the neighbourhood. As Nella tana del drago’s editor Marco Philopat explains: “the contrasts between students and workers were stark, however convergences sprang up on the most radical points which lead to the birth of the first Brigade Rosse historical cell”.

At that time the social and associative life was undeniably at its peak: “the various political headquarters, and the numerous secular and catholic associations drove the fight against social marginalization” (2012, p.25). In those years Giambellino was still able to contain and to host these problematic forces; forces that were growing and becoming dangerous because of the unheeded desire of recognition so important to a part of the population. Antonio Morlacchi reports that the first pioneer reunions were held in his apartment, shared also by a printing machine. He was unfortunately excluded from those reunions as his brother, one of the BR heads, wanted to protect him from this dangerous information. We are probably assisting at one of the cornerstone moments when the

political fight becomes violent and lethal. The danger was very real, its bloody proof being in 1975 when Mara, one of the most peaceful and legally oriented Brigate Rosse activists, an advocate for restraint, was killed during a freedom operation and thus further exacerbated the violence of the fight. Here we see the turning point when political fight and opposition to state forces started to make way for the senseless use of force. Antonio asked himself “Why kill? What does this mean? Everybody is able to use these methods. I could just go out during the night and kill the first passer by and then I’ll write it on a flyer. This does not mean anything”. (2012, p. 107). Giambellino was not the only place in Milan (or Italy) where this kind of violence occurred. A general, “far order”, process was happening across Italian society, something obscure was taking over certain minds whilst the societal structure was beginning to unexpectedly and dramatically evolve. The sense of political actions started to fade away.

### *Heroin and Political Withdrawal*

“Heroin for Giambellino was a disastrous drago” (2012, p. 25) is how Marco Philopat graphically explains the powerful effects of drugs. It’s toll was seen greatest on the youngest of society, those who had once been the fuel for social and political action. “In 1979 Giambellino’s unsettled youngsters had two choices: either

repudiate the dreams of our older brothers or escape into heroin” (2012, p. 21). Due to the dramatic changes that the society had already undergone, as explained in the first chapter, the quarter keenly felt the blow of this new era of liberalism. The take over of the tertiary sector coupled with the factories’ dismantlement inevitably hastened the disappearance of the places sense and identity. “Circles, bars and traditional gathering points started disappearing with the 80’s (political) withdrawing” (2012, p.25). The changes to the social structural described in the second chapter started at this very point, when luxury residential buildings were on the rise and the generational turn-over is the final trigger for the emptying of Giambellino.

Renata points to 1977 as the year in which heroin aggressively took to the stage. The theatre was found on the corner of Via Odazio and Via Giambellino: the drug traffic hub of the time. “The neighbourhood paid a high price in terms of heroin”, the biggest sacrifices coming from those places marked out in previous chapters. The Via Odazio library had to close during night due to solvent abuse in its bathrooms while the park on the same street was riddled with drug addicts and fell into negligence, the other locals giving it a wide berth.

Both private and semi-private spaces suffered because of this silent and

disastrous invasion. Renata tells of how a concierge of a social housing building, although she knew about a drug dealer operating inside the building, “couldn’t denounce anything because she had to live there” (2012, pp. 122, 123). Is it surprising that the places once so important for the neighbourhood activity were then the most affected by the devastating effects of drugs and de-industrialization? If you look within these places, their internal life depended on the energy of the young blue collars; once they were struck by the blight of drugs and production swap, then it is a logical step that their whole environment collapsed. Casetta Verde and Dyanamoscopio have been chosen among the multitude of Actors listed in the second chapter. The basic motivation for this choice is provided by the same aim of this Actors and also by their approach to the territory. Engaging people in activities going beyond their daily needs is the purpose of these two associations. The aim is, on the one hand, to be responsive for a basic but not really expressed and recognised by society need which is sociability and encounters, and, on the other hand, their more subtle and difficult aim can be defined as the will to engage people into participatory processes in the neighbourhood. This participation oriented attitude is what we value as their role of bridges towards public Institutions. It is therefore interesting to see what tools are used and the actions implemented by

the Actors to influence their urban reality. As a participatory observer I have followed a number of different activities inside the neighbourhood carried by Casetta Verde and Dyanamoscopio. The description of these activities is important to understand what are the means, objectives and modalities used by this network of associations to address the dwelling issues. Moreover, we may read these daily operations as attempts by activists to tackle the disenfranchisement of the local population towards the place they live: enhancing cooperation and solidarity among the inhabitants. Here we are juxtaposing in ethnographic terms the habitat against the inhabiting, threat of exclusion and claim for inclusion in a certain space, the intersection between social and material structures in a dynamic way. In a conflict analysis perspective, instead, we are trying to understand the little steps taken by associations towards neighbourhood solidarity and population enfranchisement.

## Notes from the chapter

This historical perspective has revealed some of the major points regarding Giambellino after the Second World War. This chapter was not written to celebrate its glorious past. However, many of Giambellino's dynamics seen today are inextricably linked to this history.

Firstly, the area's relation to power, witnessed in the various interview, displays many of the same features in both the past and the present. It is a relation that has now evolved into a more peaceful and constructive model, an interaction that has an increasingly legal and non-violent form of expression. There still remains, however, some of the past's attitude today. If we go back to the occupation of the abandoned field and its results, we can see an active attitude towards public and valuable space for community life, now seen today in the social housing compound. Both the past and present used protest to modify the original, and socially detrimental, plan.

The occupation of space, the meaning given to it by the presence of humans, is at the centre of this attitude. The relationships between the inhabitants, their sense of belonging, their surrounding environment and its identitarian value, are all convincing explanations for this. Just as all relationships evolve with time, so too do the relations humans have with their space: if in the past fight for space was pursued in an aggressive and illegal manner; modern times now champion dialogue with Institutions as their weapon of choice in this fight.

Something was learned and something was lost.

Giambellino has learned how to be recognized and

valued by the authority thanks to legal means. Yet Giambellino has lost a particular spontaneity in the meeting of "the other" in daily life. The library and the market will be renovated, the park in Via Odazio will be revalued by this regeneration process, Piazza Tirana will have a new underground station; but the ordinary, constant, and invaluable relations amongst people speaking the same vocabulary might never return.

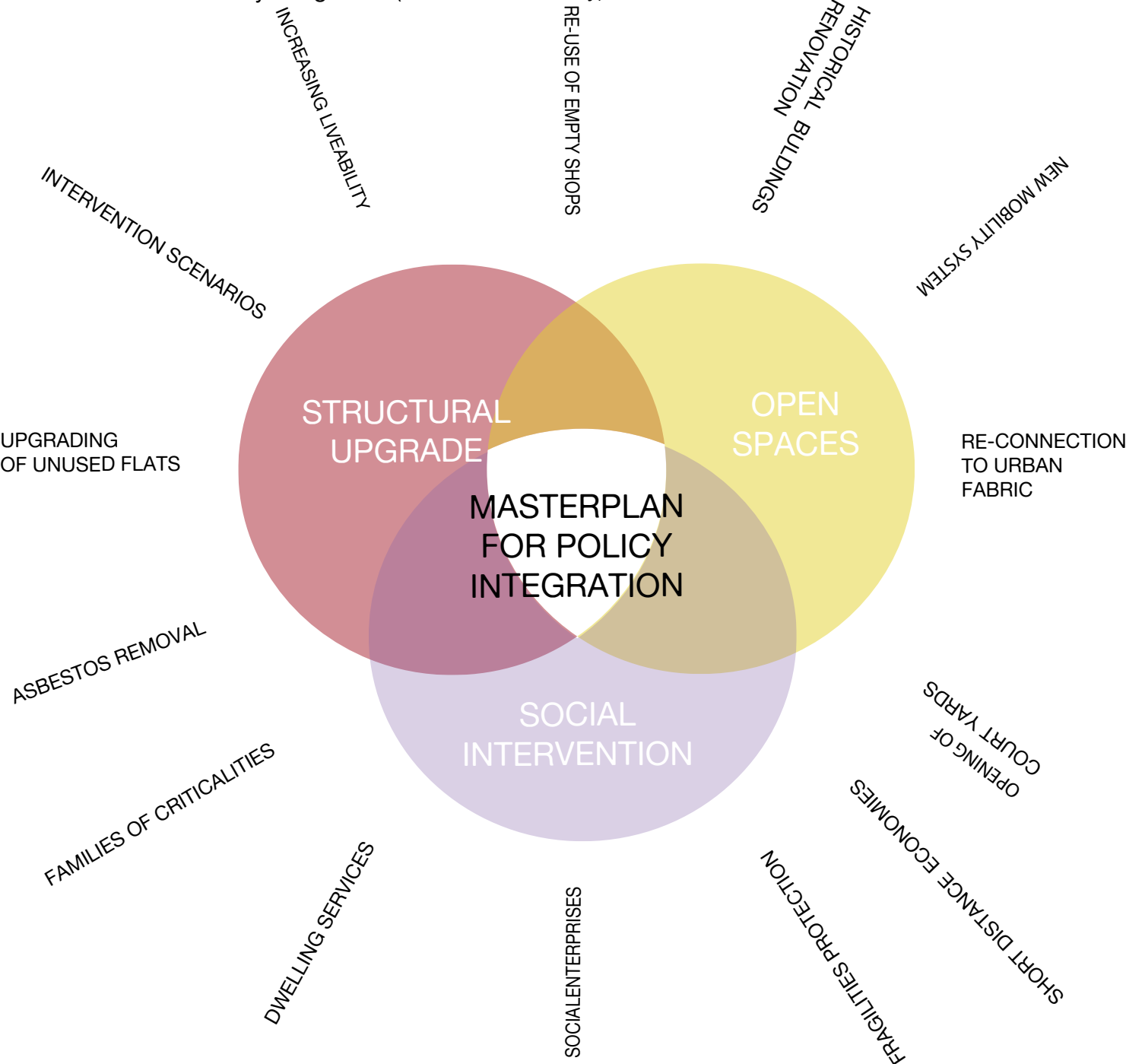
Society and the far order have changed irreparably. This is not necessarily a bad evolution but it is caused by social fragmentation and the loss of a common way of life. An empty space is there to be filled; probably not by such figures as Cerutti Gino or Vallanzasca, nor by habits such as the anti-eviction watch. But fresh problems have come and yet more are in store for the future. Heroin and political violence were just two, they were the first phenomenological consequences of emptiness and of the depression left by a past full of hopes and inevitable betrayal. Far from giving possible forecast we might only state that the activity of local associations is probably the only one able to propose something with which we might fill the emptiness of current social relations and contemporary life.

additional notes

# fifth chapter

## GIAMBELLINO MASTER PLAN, AN ALTERNATIVE PLANNING OPTION?

From Opposition to Proposals and Results: the Master Plan for Policy  
Integration



This last part of the essay will be focused on the analysis and critique of the master plan, published in December 2015, regarding Lorenteggio neighbourhood regeneration. As affirmed in the third chapter, we can assess that this new plan is the result of a conflict and that the associations involved in its redaction, at least on the formal point of view, were the same groups acting the conflict. Although this hypothesis has been tested we need to inquire other master plan features. We want to test a set of points listed all along the entire research. Firstly, we want to inquire if the actual and operative prescriptions written in the master plan were defined with the substantial contribution of the described Actors. This is the most methodological test: it does not say much about the final results in terms of distribution of resources and technical decisions. Conversely, this way of reading the plan wants to understand the procedures used to build up the plan. Were the public Actors open to requests? Were local Actors effective? If a co-operation was there how did it improve the overall document? Secondly, as explained in the second chapter, some multi level dynamics can be described both at the city (metropolitan) level and at the neighbourhood level: are those tackled by the plan? In what sense and with what resource provisions? Is the plan itself a witness of a different way of developing the city? Thirdly, according to our historical perspective and the ethnographic analysis some parts of the neighbourhood have gathered particular importance with time. The meanings and values attached to them are well explained in all the various stories collected by Actors. Therefore, we are going to see if this fundamental places are at least protected and re-valued by the documents. Is the plan giving space to their re-appropriation and re-interpretation? What are the prescriptions and future scenarios provided? In order to give an answer to all these questions we need to explore in details the master plan itself. The first part of this chapter will be dedicated to an analysis of its structure, general purposes, operative prescriptions and methodological procedures. We will make a description trying to understand the basic dynamics drawn by the plan, the policy design inscribed, and the strategies adopted to be effective and to tackle various issues. The second part of this chapter will be dedicated to the answers of our questions referring to what was reported in the entire essay and relating it to the description of the master plan. To be sure, we are not pretending to forecast the future of Giambellino Lorenteggio social housing compound by merely reading a technical document. We are more substantially understanding if the paper's prescription have any consistency with the complex narration carried so far. This will suggest us if the Institutional document satisfies, at least in theoretical terms, the variegated and multilevel set of problems experiences by the neighbourhood.



## 5.1. General Purposes and Long Term Strategy

### *Focus on Illegal Occupied Houses and Social Housing Provision*

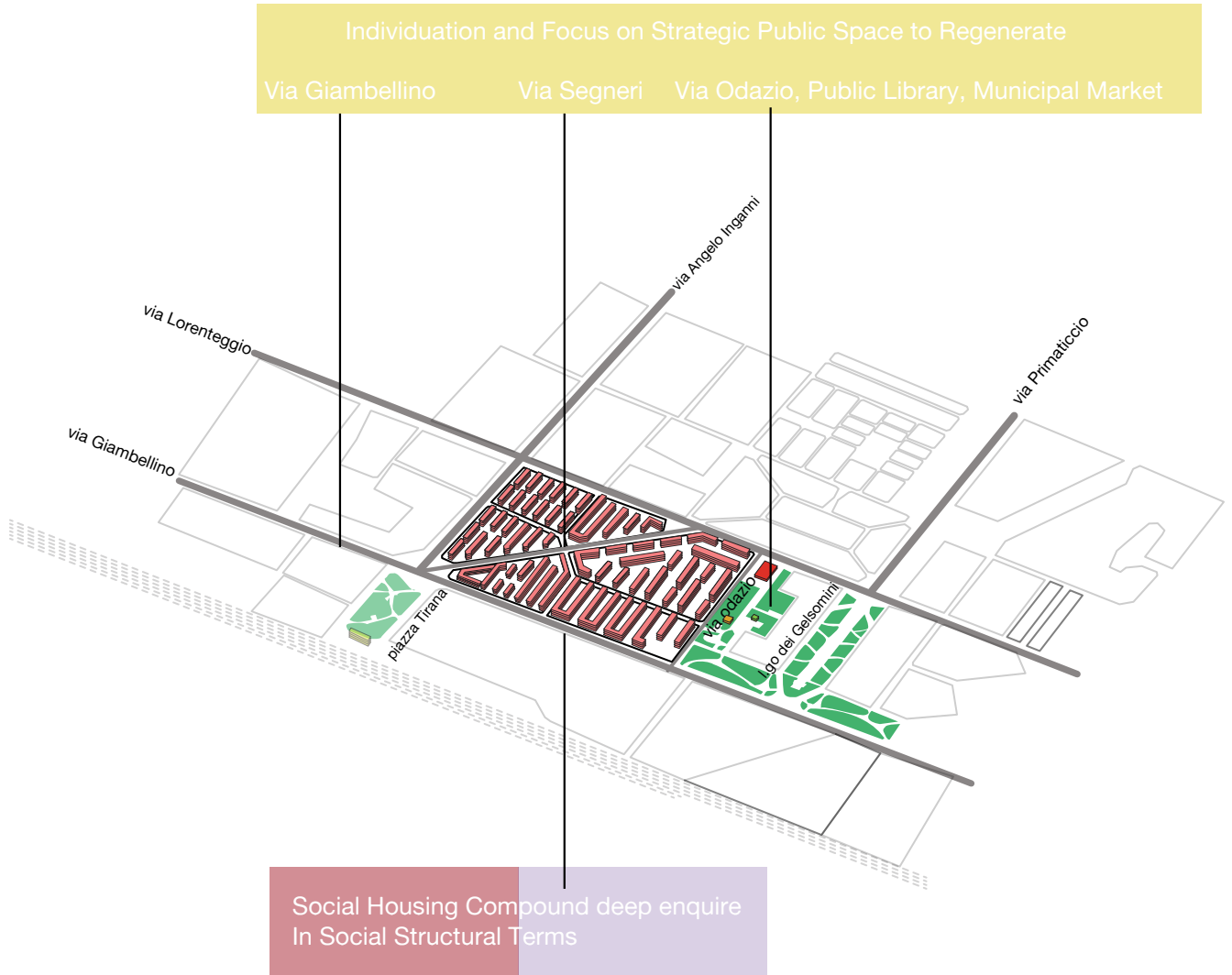
The first feature we have to observe about the master plan is detected in the strong orientation towards social inclusion and in the consequent policy integration needed. According to the introduction “shared goals, and the agreement on expected results, first of all have to be researched on the most general level of the objectives ruling public politics satisfying a social inclusion demand” (p. 5). Departing from this strong political claim the document follows in a double declination of inclusion stating both its social character as well as its structural component. It follows that to satisfy the demand of “social dwelling” the plan prescribes not only the conservation of the existing public residential patrimony, but also the “substantial incrementation of its actual use”. Consequently, the document states an “improvement of the neighbourhood liveability decreasing – until eliminating – the enclaves of illegality and violence which find space in the illicitly occupied patrimony” (p. 5). Therefore, in this passage the master plan definitely links the structural component of its policy prescription with the social components determining the degradation of the area. The former should be used instrumentally to reduce the latter. Nonetheless, avoiding

simplistic lectures, the plan also claims the necessity to decrease the fragility cases, as the concentration of weak inhabitants, with properly made policies aimed at solving peculiar problems of the social housing compound (p. 5). The master plan also prescribes further solutions to trigger positive chain effects pointing at reactivating Giambellino social life with an injection of new elements. Therefore, facing the problem caused by unused flats (too little to be used by families and out of law to be used as social housing unit) the plan imagine their use as students houses. Meanwhile, new functions could be settled in the empty commercial spaces along Via Segneri assigning them preferentially to social enterprises.

The Master Plan as a Political Manifesto for Active Policies Integration and Implementation

Finally, the master plan wants to exploit the regeneration process itself by activating short distance economies and maintenance services. “Considered the system of expected purposes, goals and results the master plan has to provide an intelligent localization which has to convey the intervention rationality and coherence” (p. 5) i.e. the plan has to be used as a spatial configuration of structural, social and economic provisions trying to maximise positive side effects in a virtuous circle. Particularly important it is the configuration of this document as “a

Selective Analysis Focused on the Main Neighbourhood Issues (Author's Summary)



communicative tool, a manifesto for urban re-qualification actions which have to be oriented, expression of the project for the future that the local community elaborates departing from its own needs". Thus, the introduction results as a political strategical claim, aimed at clarifying the fundamental purposes of entire document making them public and debatable in public arenas.

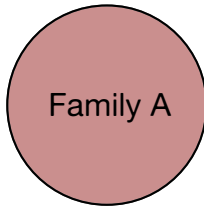
## 5.2. Preparatory Works and Master Plan Analysis

### *Selective Analysis Focused on the Main Neighbourhood Issues*

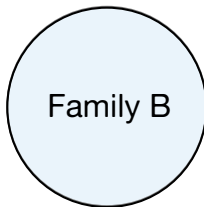
Among the various technical considerations, stated in the initial enquiry, it is worth to mention the really detailed analysis of empty and illegally occupied houses, their locations and structural conditions. Together with a description of public spaces such as parks, squares and streets, their weakness and opportunities, a social analysis of the social housing compound is carried with an extended explanation of social services efficiency and deficiencies. Moreover, from this socio-spatial investigation further policy considerations are designed in projectile terms. For example the delineation of Via Segneri as "the only real possibility of public urban space" inside the social housing compound. In order to fight against the perceived detachment of the compound Via Segneri is mentioned as

a "pass through, it allows a view through the block" "a real breach towards the city" defining a theme of integrated policy intervention for the operative part. Development of Properly Made Analysis Tools through Participatory Processes The plan uses six groups of criticality defined thanks to an extensive preparatory work carried by VALE (Vivere e Abitare il Lorenteggio ERP) composed by Milan Municipality, Dynamoscopio, Comunità del Giambellino, Fondazione Politecnico and Spazio aperto servizi. The preparatory work consisted in a mapping process and social structural inquires in the neighbourhood aimed at promoting the social housing compound liveability. This families are used to match the structural analysis with a social evaluation assessing the presence of "social garrison". They allow to give priorities to the most degraded situations and they define thematic projectile interventions for each group localizing them into the social housing compound. We should highlight this fine lecture of each family in terms of opportunity and criticality. Every building and courtyard is therefore analysed and interpreted taking into account its internal and external environment and designing ad hoc solutions to improve its structural and social situation. An other problem faced in the analysis is the presence of privately owned apartments that could hinder a smooth implementation of the plan.

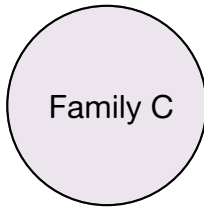
Social Housing Compound deep enquiry in Social Structural Terms  
Families of Criticalities Description (Authors Summary)



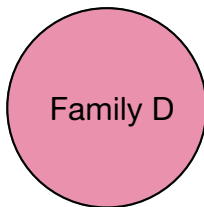
Multi Problematic Situations:  
Severe Structural Decay and Absence of Social Garrisons  
Main Interventions:  
Strong Structural Upgrade and Injection of Social Garrisons  
Pilot Project on Empty, Illegally Occupied and Out of law Houses



Specific Structural Criticalities and Good Social Garrisons  
Main Interventions:  
Precise Structural Interventions Exploiting and Reinforcing already  
Active Good Social Practices  
Pilot Project on Empty, Illegally Occupied and Out of law Houses

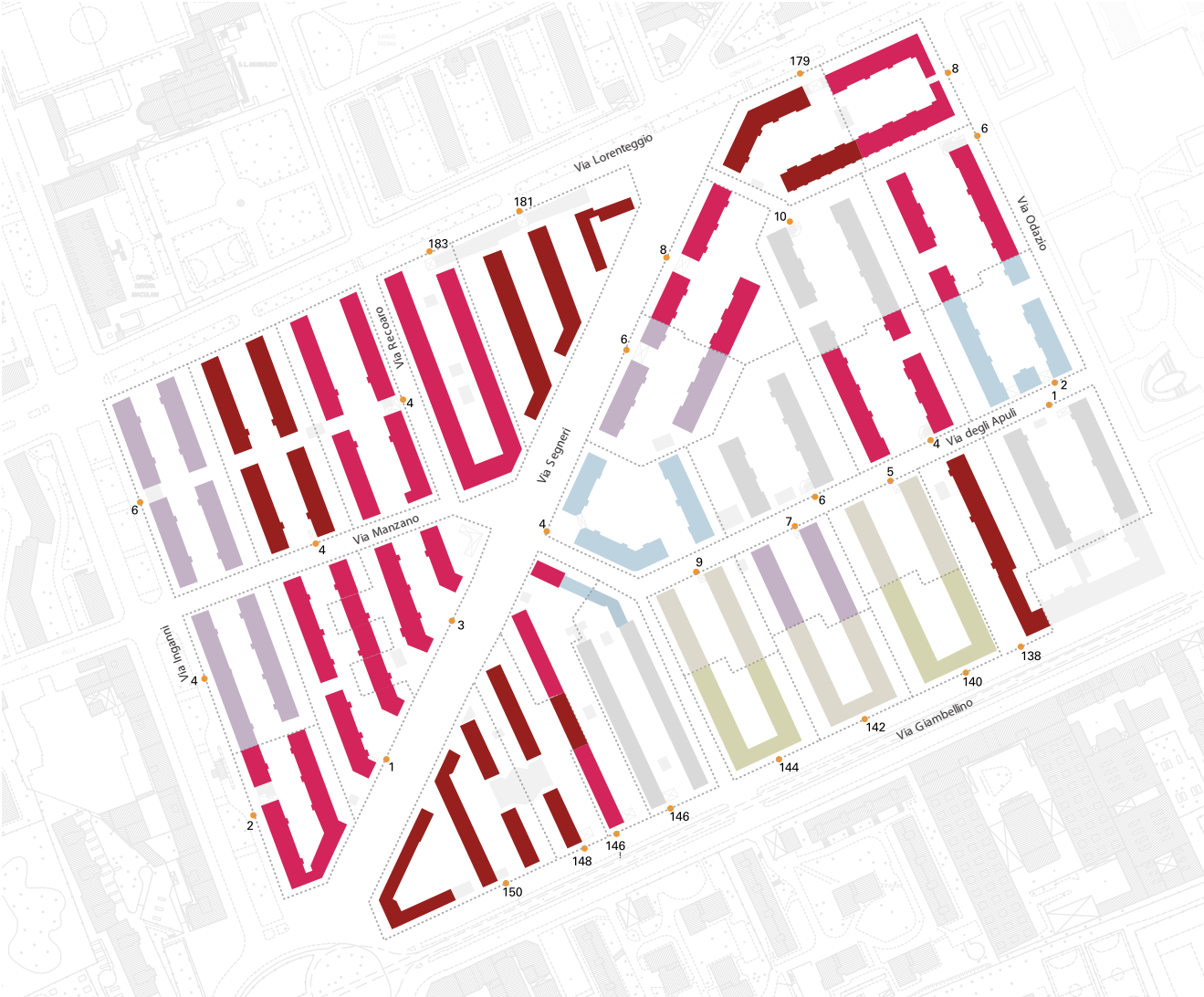


Diffused Structural Decay and Good of Social Garrisons  
Main Interventions:  
Diffused Structural Upgrade and Pilot Project on Empty, Illegally  
Occupied and Out of law Houses



Diffused Structural Decay and Scarce Social Garrisons  
Main Interventions:  
Diffused Structural Intervention and Injection of Social Garrisons  
Allowing Internal Social Cohesion  
Pilot Project on Empty, Illegally Occupied and Out of law Houses

Families of Criticalities Location (MP Abstract)



### *Policy Integration Exploiting Positive Chain Effects*

The plan is strongly based on policy Integration and we can notice it through the entire document. An intervention proposal considering three main aspects: structural restoration, public spaces improvements, and social issues. A peculiar mapping method is developed to help visualizing the strategy with an initial complex visualization matching the different projectile aims in a unitary plan. Therefore we learn how the three lines of action integrate in a unitary scheme giving the first imprinting to the rest of the plan. (Show Maps pages 25 26 27.) This summary description is then “unpacked” with an extensive and in-depth exploration of each field of action. In the following we will summarize the main aspect regarding the various policies. The Structural Upgrade Part: a Transparent and Strategic Distribution of Economic Resources

Starting with a realistic assessment of the average expenses needed per square meter (1200 Euros for renewal intervention and 1100 Euros for restoration) matching them with the economic resources provided by the POR-FESR funds (31,5 millions Euros). The final assessment is then calculated in the intervention on one third of the entire social housing compound. Nonetheless, it is not only this initial compute giving us the idea of the future improvements, but also the

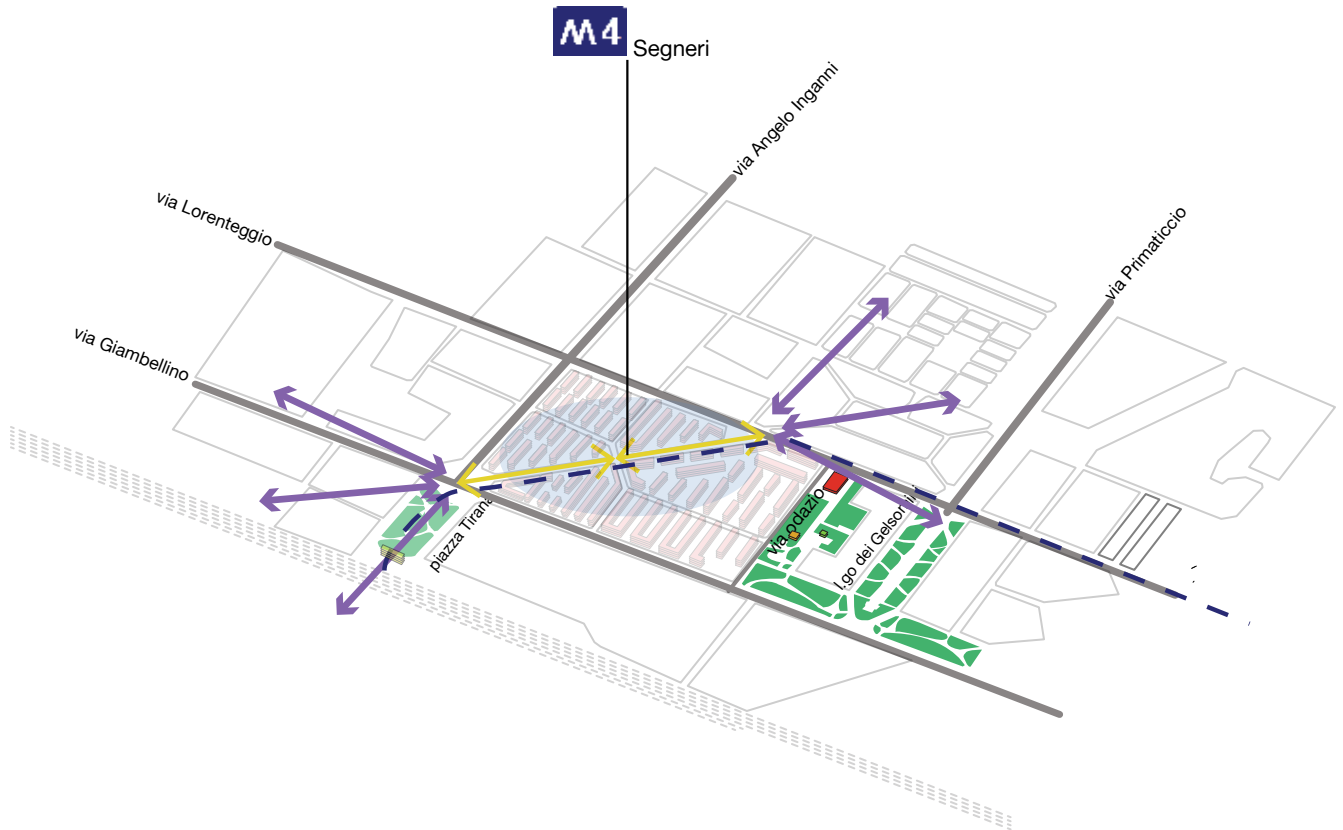
use of the criticality families, overlaid with the priorities given to the renewal of public spaces, becomes central to settle a hierarchy of actions localized in certain buildings. According to the master plan: “the overlap of the two maps allows the detection of those interventions combining a high criticality with a strategic location for the public spaces upgrading” (p. 28). An other important feature of the master plan, regarding the structural improvement of the social housing compound, consists in the provision of different scenarios taking into consideration several opportunities and the consequent amount of illegally occupied, privately owned, and unused apartments. Each scenario is then sectioned with a description and analysis of the state of art providing detailed information on structural problems. It is then worth to underline the strategical decision to keep the renovation of some buildings, those facing on Via Segneri, in all scenarios to enhance the second field of action i.e. open spaces.

### *The Open Space Section: Accessibility Improvements and Integration in the Urban Context*

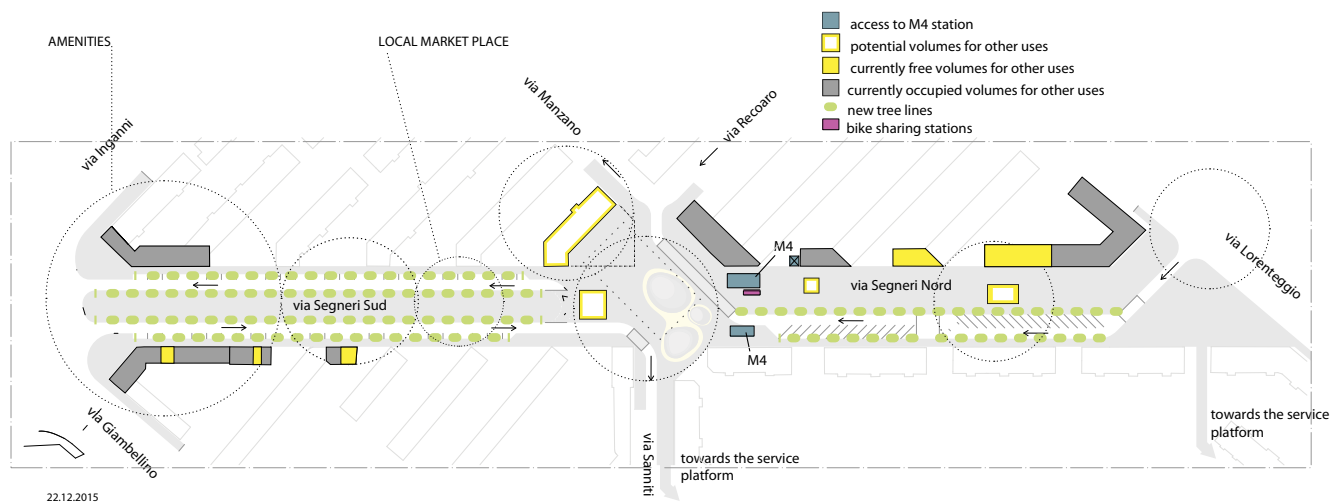
This part defines a series of goals designed to reach an overall improvement of the neighbourhood’s urban quality. It primarily affirms three cornerstones orienting improvements: connections, quality of public spaces, and urban context. Via Segneri would become a linear square

Individuation and Focus on Strategic Public Space to Regenerate  
Via Segneri New Centrality (Author's Interpretation)

Exploitation of M4 Station New Arrival  
New Functions Injection: Commercial and Social Activities  
New Mobility System with Reduced Hard Mobility  
Used as a "Breach" into the Curtain



# Via Segneri Renewal Technical Details (MP Abstract)





strengthening its local role as meeting point, the buildings facing Via Giambellino would improve their façades and new urban equipments would be added to the street. Really important would be the creation of a green platform to improve Via Odazio and the municipal garden beside acting on public facilities such as the Library, the Municipal Market and Casetta Verde. Furthermore, to improve and spread the perception of safety, the master plan prescribes new street illumination and a stronger connection with the urban context using cycle paths, green facilities, and allowing the internal courtyards permeability.

This list of interventions are interlocked to reach an improvement thought to be bigger than the summary of single indications. The goals are then specified with proper maps taking into account a multiplicity of scenarios to better orient future actions. As a preliminary step a complete new mobility system is designed in order to facilitate the actual use of the improvements. Avoiding a complete report of the master plan, and bearing in mind its organic nature, we have to underline two main prescriptions: Via Segneri complete renewal tight with the regeneration of the social housing compound internal streets and the complete renewal of Via Odazio together with the Municipal Park beside it. The first project purpose wants to give a new shape to this usually neglected public

spaces. It exploits the opportunity given by the arrival of the M4 not only in accessibility terms but also as an urban quality factor. The new design injects new public and private functions, such as new pedestrian areas or social activities in the unused stores, trying to enhance the streets attractiveness.

The second complex of intervention, explicitly stated as one of the most relevant, aims at redesign the public space and tries to trigger the potentiality of historical components. Casetta Verde would be demolished and its functions will be moved into the renewed public library becoming a space for public and neighbourhood services. A new public library would be built, with innovative and extraordinary functions going further the typical uses as book loan and reading activities. The municipal market structure would have a complete new style with energy saving improvements and reshaped external design. Lastly, with the provision of a new playground and the new design of green areas, this pole of public activities would have a renewed connection with Via Odazio. The street will finally become a hinge between the social housing compound and the municipal park.

### *Social Policies Integration: Mobilizing Local Resources from the Base*

What may be the most innovative element of this plan it is the inclusion of an entire

Individuation and Focus on Strategic Public Space to Regenerate  
Via Odazio and Municipal Park Service Platform

Protection and Restoration of Important Historical Places  
Via Odazio Regenerated as an Urban String  
Exploitation of Existing Public Facilities  
Strengthening of the New Connection Positive Effects on Urban Reality



section dedicated to social issues and possible solutions. In fact, this chapter tries to mix the opportunities detected in the neighbourhood, in terms of competences and resources, with a fundamental package of dwelling services financed by the POR FSE funds. With three thematic boards focusing on services and economic opportunities the master plan lunches hypothesis for entrepreneurial activities, social business and community involvement. The macro-fields are services to community and dwelling, community multi-service start-up, culture and economic development, service to fragile people. Each topic has a board with several suggestions aimed at activating possible social and standard entrepreneurs to exploit either the opportunities given by the same process of transformation or by the issues left unsolved in the neighbourhood. For example, among the various proposal there are some directly related to the urban regeneration project for example the “Technical and Social Accompaniment” or the “Community Empowerment”. They are aimed at involving the community inside the decisional process developing functions as local garrison, consultation and participation in the decisional making process, individual competences detection, creation and promotion of connections with external inhabitants... Other proposal instead focus more on the features characterizing Giambellino such as its

multicultural identity, the high presence of fragile, lonely and isolated people or the development of new economic activities linked to the knowledge of the territory. Two Attachments to Trigger and Orient Possible Outcomes  
Finally, the master plan provides two other documents explaining how to integrate the different dimensions of the plan. Although we are not going to read them in details, it is important to underline the participatory nature at the basis of these two documents. Through VALE workshop all the Actors were involved in the writing of the master plan. They have contributed to draw these informatory and technical supports framed as “preparatory activities for the accompaniment service aimed at the master plan redaction for Lorenteggio neighbourhood”. With an even deeper description of the problems and opportunities concerning the internal courtyards, streets, and public spaces, the documents draw possible evolutions of entrepreneurial agencies aimed at triggering both spatial and social evolutions. Their aim is to frame policy implementation in operative terms, giving micro-economic sustainability of the entire projectile idea.

### 5.3. Final Comments

#### *Local Actors Effectiveness on Decision Making Processes*

The master plan constitutes a complex document taking into account various neighbourhood's features and policy's layers. The same way it was developed tells us, with a high degree of certainty, that the associations involved in the conflict were substantially able to influence the decision making at the back of this document. They were not only cited on the recognition section but they also developed tools to understand urban reality and, consequently, influence the Institutional prescriptions. To test this statement we have to take in consideration the workshop VALE where all the Actors participated in an effort to build the basis for an effective and consistent master plan. For example, the "families of criticality" used in the analysis, and in the consequent drawing of different scenarios of action, together with the two attachments to describe in details the operative part of social services provisions. Those two enriching tools are the proves of an interpretative work which had to be carried through the neighbourhood for a long time on an informed perspective. Nonetheless, we are not able to assess if the conflict played a substantial part in the recognition of local associations for the master plan redaction; however,

it is not an accidental coincidence that the same people known in the research were discussing with Institutions during the preparation process. Moreover, the requests listed in the open petition published on internet were accomplished at least on a formal point of view: the conflict played some role in the discussion of the master plan.

Can we, nevertheless, affirm that this effort have definitely blocked some of the administrative path dependence mechanisms and the logic of political and bureaucratic bodies? The definitive answer to this question could be given just with the observation of the master plan implementation. It should be however underlined how the associations have tried to frame possible setbacks. In fact, thanks to both the preparatory participation process, and the attached documents for the activation of control mechanisms and operative enterprises there should be little space for dramatic changes in the plan's guidelines. Nonetheless, the operative phase will deserve a further effort by the local Actors, in terms of activities and control, to assure the actual implementation of the wide range of prescriptions arranged by the document.

#### *Master Plan Preservation and re-Interpretation of Identity Places*

We have seen how some parts of the document are focused on particular

places such as Via Segneri, the Public Library, or the Municipal Market which are preserved and valued. Their reinterpretation is attached to their past history although trying to give space to new activities. For example, Via Segneri would be a central public space allowing the entire neighbourhood to have a “centre” with public as well as private provisions. Injection of new activities and a strong orientation towards soft mobility will allow the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to enjoy an otherwise neglected street. These kind of actions let us understand the orientation of the plan not only towards social housing provision and public spaces improvements but also towards the central role played by meaningful places. Via Segneri is a strategic place both on the technical point of view (as the only brench allowing an entrance into the social housing block) and on the historical point of view starting from Piazza Tirana. An other attempt to re-value historical places it is the co-ordinated renewal of Via Odazio, the Municipal Market, and the Public Library which constitute, together with the Municipal Park, a valuable junction of public and semi-public services. Beyond their importance as neighbourhood facilities and urban equipments it is worth to underline their historical and identity role for the entire area. The Public Library, as described in the fourth chapter, in the sixties and seventies was a meeting

point hosting both political activists and ordinary costumers, allowing people to socialise with daily life experiences. With the new configuration provided by the master plan this place gather innovative functions currently reserved to Casetta Verde. Moreover, the Municipal Market will be renewed respecting and revaluing the current functions and economic activities carried inside it. Perhaps the trivialization of these urban facilities can be avoided reserving them to social activities. Consequently, the document tries to defend and upgrade some places regarded as central for neighbourhood life by the associations and the represented inhabitants. Although the ensemble of these prescriptions theoretically leave possibility for re-appropriation and re-interpretation by inhabitants we, nevertheless, have to raise doubts on their immediate and automatic application. On the one hand, founds have been provided by the public Actors but, on the other, the past social and political life enriching those places seems to have faded away: will money and policy prescriptions be effective enough to reach the proposed objectives? Probably the associations will have to make extra efforts to bring social life back triggering their vibrant and consistent use in a bottom up perspective.

### *A New Destiny for Giambellino Lorenteggio Social Housing Compound?*

Is it realistic to frame Giambellino into the urban development Milan's dynamics? To answer this question some proves of the possible destiny reserved to the entire neighbourhood were detected on the ground taking into account Rho Fiera Expo and Rogoredo stations as recent examples of new urban developments. The common traits with San Cristoforo station are evident: hubs of mass transportation lines, the arrival of important media and communication companies, and the injection of new residential buildings in the surroundings. In a metropolitan perspective and taking into consideration both, the near arrival of the fourth underground, and the tertiary developments around NIL 49, Giambellino Lorenteggio gained an improved positional value with higher accessibility. Speculative dynamics, able to exploit the consequent increased land value, could be present threatening the future of the social housing compound. Was the master plan able to affect these mechanisms? On the one hand, we can positively affirm it: if we look at the document itself the only substitutions provided are prescribed for really critical buildings (although they still need to be operationally identified). The master plan is, therefore, theoretically able to avoid massive structural substitutions at present time. On the other hand, we can not yet

affirm the punctual application of this document. Time is needed to observe what will happen in the future although, formally, the social housing compound is preserved and revalued. In fact, all the resources allocated by the multi level set of public Actors are distributed to implement re-use actions, regeneration purposes, and social policies. Policy integration is, therefore, one of the strongest characteristic of this master plan and, compared to the main projects appeared (and appearing) in Milan, constitutes its peculiar trait. Moreover, this effort to integrate different fields of policies it aims to tackle the various social, structural and reputation problems that Giambellino Lorenteggio social housing block is experiencing since the eighties political drawback. Although it can be considered a site-specific master plan it will be useful to distinguish between two different kind of methodological features characterizing the document. A more general, "universal", value witnessing a successful example of participated urban policy making for the redaction of the master plan has to be underlined following these points:

- the collection and re-interpretation of information in open and participatory processes with operational intents
- the consequent lowering of threshold between political, bureaucratic, and civil

society's active citizenship allowing the exchange of knowledge and information

- the evaluation of a decaying and neglected structure of the city as an urban valuable "object" to regenerate for present inhabitants and future generations
- the individuation of meaningful and historical places to be protected and re-invented assessing current necessities and economic|human resources
- the development of possible entrepreneurial ideas exploiting the regeneration process it self and transforming nowadays problems into economic opportunities
- the weaving of all these purposes inside a selective master plan oriented towards policy integration

Each of these passages and actions was necessary to build a tool resulting the most effective possible and able to avoid the process of speculation characterizing Milan metropolitan peripheries. Peculiar aspects can be highlighted following this points:

- the associative milieu at the basis of the gathering of social, political, and information resources for mobilization
- the presence of an ancient memory, not

only contained into archives, but also lived by the inhabitants in their daily life

- the development by the Actors of ad hoc participative tools being attached to the neighbourhood circumstances and dynamics
- the special relation of Giambellino's inhabitants with public space in general and social housing in particular
- the remaining of a certain feeling of proudness towards the neighbourhood per se allowing extra-efforts to defend it

These elements represent the site-specific part of both the Giambellino essence, with its history, identity, attitude toward "power", and the consequent outcome represented by the master plan. The unique sum of many small actions departing from the same reality. To be sure, we are not excluding any possibility for this features to be detected in other neighbourhoods, we are just pointing at their function as change facilitators not manageable and reproducible by any administration or municipality. The above listed "points of uniqueness", therefore, allow it to be the most effective possible but lead us to question its pertinence to other urban situations. The master plan is innovative, detailed, consistent with reality and proactive in finding solutions to actual

problems. If it cannot be defined as a “political innovation”, it can definitely be assessed as an incomparable innovative instrument to tackle Giambellino’s future questions. Would it be implemented in all its parts? We cannot know it yet. What we can say is that as long as the population organise and negotiate through associations it will not leave space for the master plan to be imposed on the neighbourhood in any top-down procedure. A follow up is needed.



additional notes

# conclusion

This research have tried to report the conflictual facts and the fundamental mechanisms at the basis of the new master plan for the regeneration of the social housing compound commonly called Giambellino Lorenteggio. The development of this essay was not a linear process. Many talks, rethinking, unexpected news characterized its writing and still additional work would be needed in either the short and the long turns. Two major points can be highlighted, nonetheless, as meaningful findings of this essay: the relation between the various scales influencing the neighbourhood and its local reality and, on the other hand, the relation between the conflictual dynamics and the generation of the master plan. In both cases it is important to stress their “relational factor” intended as an ongoing movement among various agents, motivations, and reactions. Sometimes unpredictable, they can be explained by urban land values principles and on field observation. Some other times these relations have a direct and formal outcome, such as the masterplan as a codified way of policy implementation. Let’s now interpret these two macro-fields as we have explained them all along this review.

## Multi-Scalar Origins and Local Results

We have extensively criticized both the use of fixed borders and the conception of the local scale as an intrinsic added value either in conflict analysis terms and in urban dynamics logics. We nevertheless have to point out the very local dynamics of the neighbourhood playing an essential part in this story. Clearly, Giambellino is embedded in a specific reality that is not only Milan, with its consolidated urban development practices, but also the Italian context constituting a further layer we did not have the space to explore. In our analysis we have tried to draw a common path characterising the new “metropolitan centralities” underlining their common traits. Speculative dynamics are in place. They are allowed by infrastructural improvements and the strategic location of these territories. Areas previously devoted to material production of goods are now converted into hubs for the new IT companies. The post industrial wave have taken shape leaving empty industrial buildings and replacing them with brand new tertiary headquarters. Moreover, this is a process taking different level of intensity and extension depending on the area: in Rho Fiera Milano the internationalisation allowed the raising of an entire new neighbourhood (EXPO area) with the injection of WIND company and the

construction of a residential development. In Giambellino Lorenteggio, instead, the process is still at its beginning although we can underline common traits such as the injection of Vodafone headquarter and the construction of residential buildings matching a peculiar taste. In this evolving context the social housing compound results as a “leftover” of a previous age. A part of the public city built for workers in particular and disadvantages in general. It is in this frame that we can understand the action of local Actors as a bucking way of operating on the territory: in front of apparently fatal developments they decided to act for the improvement of a neglected and “out of fashion” infrastructure. Was this enough to go against speculative dynamics? We can not affirm it based on solid prove. What is certain it is that the daily seeding of these association helped not only the life of the social housing compound inhabitants but also of the entire neighbourhood as Rosaria teaches us. Moreover, the conflictual relation with negligent part of the public bodies and the constructive collaboration with the pro-active municipality helped them to be recognised and to reach important results. The most important is the activation of resources on a multilevel base, gathering money and projectile inputs by a variegated set of Actors (from the Politecnico University to the European Union). Nonetheless, path dependency was

not defeated as we do not see any stable modification in the institutional bodies allowing us to affirm a generalised change in social housing treatment. Probably some space for innovation was open and the opportunity might be there to be exploited.

## The conflict and the master plan: what kind of innovation?

Although the fragmentation of collective protest has probably come to its highest point in recent history, urban questions are still able to mobilize claims and to obtain valuable results. Giambellino Lorenteggio history might explain us that the unity of many voices still remains a possible and convenient path to follow in order to reach collective results. It was extensively proven that the various logics, dynamics, tools, actions, vocabularies, and so on were extrapolated and taken to an effective point on site specific terms. Does this mean that such a process can only happen in Giambellino? Yes and no. It could happen only there within that context with specific spatial forms, allowed by the presence of certain persons. At the same time it could happen in other parts of the city (or of the country) with a systematised effort of public bodies. What is important to stress are the ways to build modalities of expression for an identity already present on the territory. Modalities constructed on specific features of the local reality favouring a positive

circle of reinforcement. In the case of our neighbourhood this expansive movement was able to gather and release energies to reach the Institutional and non-local Actors. When it was clear that something was happening in Giambellino Lorenteggio the attention was consequently raised to attract further resources. A favourable Municipal Administration, an indefeasible bureaucratic structure as ALER, the near arrival of the underground are additional elements helping us to describe the exceptionality of what have happened in this neighbourhood.

On the political point of view we might be disappointed by the contained effect (in terms of territorial extension) of this conflict. So far, a local uprising have provoked local outcomes. Does this mean that it will remain only a spatially limited result? To simplify, the answer to this question is embedded into two determining factors: a bottom-up demand has to be built at the city level paying attention to the local needs of each different neighbourhood. On the other hand, the top-down process might have to be questioned from the basis in terms of political decisions, policy implementation, and bureaucratic procedures . Centralized policies might lack of consistency to such an extend to result useless. In our opinion the central administration (in its various level) has the duty to create favourable conditions to allow stable modifications in the

management of social housing various issues. This attitude toward such a complex issue would probably have several outcomes. Among the others the most important innovation would be a radical re-thinking of social housing treatment reaching either political decisions, in terms of resources distribution, and procedural policy implementation. Those two evolutions would lower the threshold in the management of this public good.

## Bibliography

Aalbers M. B. (2006). When the Banks Withdraw, Slum Landlords Take Over': The Structuration of Neighbourhood Decline through Redlining, Drug Dealing, Speculation and Immigrant Exploitation. *Urban Stud*, vol. 43 No. 71: 061-1086

Camagni. R. (1993). *Principi di Economia Urbana e Territoriale*. Carrocci: Roma

Della Porta D. Diani M. (2009). *Social Movements an Introduction*. Blackwell: Oxford.

Demey, Thierry (2007). *Brussels, capital of Europe*. Badaeux: Brussels.

Elden S. (2004). *Understanding Henri Lefebvre. Theory and the Possible*. Continuum: New York, London.

Hirsh F., (2001). *I Limiti Sociali allo Sviluppo*. Bompiani: Milano.

Lefebvre H., (1967). *Right to the City in Writings on Cities* (first edition 1996). Edited by Kofman, E. Leban, E. Blackwell, Oxford. pp. 63-177

Kazepov Y. and others, (2005). *Cities of Europe: Changing Contexts, Local Arrangements, and the Challenge to Urban Cohesion*. Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford.

Mazza G., (2007). *Redesigning Citizenship*. 43rd ISOCARP Congress – Urban Dialogues – Antwerp

Melucci A. (1996). *Challenging Codes. Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge University Press.

Philopat M. (edited by) (2012). *Nella Tana del Drago*. AgenziaX: Milano.

Purcell M., (2002). *Excavating Lefebvre: The right to the city and its urban politics of the inhabitant*. Kluwer Academic Publishers. *GeoJournal*, No. 58, pp. 99-108.

Purcell M., (2005). *Urban Democracy and the Local Trap*. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 11, pp. 1921-1941.

Sartori E. (2013). Milano: i Limiti dell’Abitare: Bisogno abitativo, mobilitazioni sociali e ripresa del pubblico. Politecnico di Milano.

Vitale T., Podestà M. (2011). Dalla Proposta alla Protesta e Ritorno. Mondadori: Milano.

## Filmography

Dynamoscopio Production (2012). Entroterra Giambellino.

## Technical Documents

OECD (2006), Territorial Reviews Milan, Italy

ARUP (2013), Smart Actions in Italian Metropolitan Cities

Comune di Milano, Regione Lombardia, ALER (2015). Masterplan: Progetti di Sviluppo Urbano Sostenibile in Attuazione del por fesr e fse ed in Coordinamento con il Pon Metro  
Comune di Milano (2011). Avviso pubblico di selezione per l’assegnazione in concessione della casetta verde di via Odazio 7 di proprietà comunale

Comune di Milano (2009). Piano di Governo del Territorio, Piano dei Servizi

Comune di Milano (2015). Relazione Generale e Catalogo dell’Offerta dei servizi. Allegato 3: Le 88 schede NIL

Comune di Milano (2013-14). Focus on Milano: Le Statistiche Fondamentali per Conoscere la Città

## Web References

- 1 <http://dati.comune.milano.it/dato/item/61-61-nil-nuclei-didentita-locale.html>
- 2 [https://centrostudipim.cartodb.com/viz/8aa53d44-86d1-11e5-9541-0e787de82d45/embed\\_map](https://centrostudipim.cartodb.com/viz/8aa53d44-86d1-11e5-9541-0e787de82d45/embed_map)
- 3 <http://www.cittametropolitana.mi.it/portale/territorio/index.html>
- 4 [http://www.cittametropolitana.milano.it/export/sites/default/mappe2/doc/Provincia\\_MI\\_alta\\_risoluzione.pdf](http://www.cittametropolitana.milano.it/export/sites/default/mappe2/doc/Provincia_MI_alta_risoluzione.pdf)
- 5 <http://www.metro4milano.it/index.php>
- 6 <http://www.progettopuntoelina.it/giambellino/index.php/i-soggetti.html>
- 7 [http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/11\\_luglio\\_18/stop-piano-moratti-mercati-coperti-comunali-1901112760838.shtml?refresh\\_ce-cp](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/11_luglio_18/stop-piano-moratti-mercati-coperti-comunali-1901112760838.shtml?refresh_ce-cp)
- 8 <http://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2011/11/19/addio-al-piano-moratti-pisapia-rilancia-i-mercati-comunali-coperti/2414/>
- 9 <http://www.giorgiogaber.it/discografia-album/la-ballata-del-cerrutti-testo>
- 10 <https://comitatodrago.wordpress.com/>
- 11 <http://memoriagiambellino.org/delinquenza/quelle-sere-li-non-finivi-piu-di-lavorare/>
- 12 <http://memoriagiambellino.org/delinquenza/ci-saranno-stati-mille-operai/>



## Images references

<http://www.giorgiogaber.it/discografia-album/giorgio-gaber-disco>

<http://www.metro4milano.it/documenti/documenti-progetto.html>

[http://www.urbanfile.org/project/europe/italy/milano/linea-metropolitana-4?Image\\_page=4](http://www.urbanfile.org/project/europe/italy/milano/linea-metropolitana-4?Image_page=4)

[www.rimanflow.it/index.php/tag/giambellino/](http://www.rimanflow.it/index.php/tag/giambellino/)

<http://www.italiapost.info/78987-milano-giambellino-in-piazza-i-cittadini-hanno-manifestato-per-la-riqualificazione-del-quartiere/>

<http://www.vinoecibo.it/commenti/attualita/pellegrini-la-solidarieta-di-gioca-su-un-euro.html>

<http://www.shareradio.it/tag/regione/>



