

Scendi c'è il Cinema

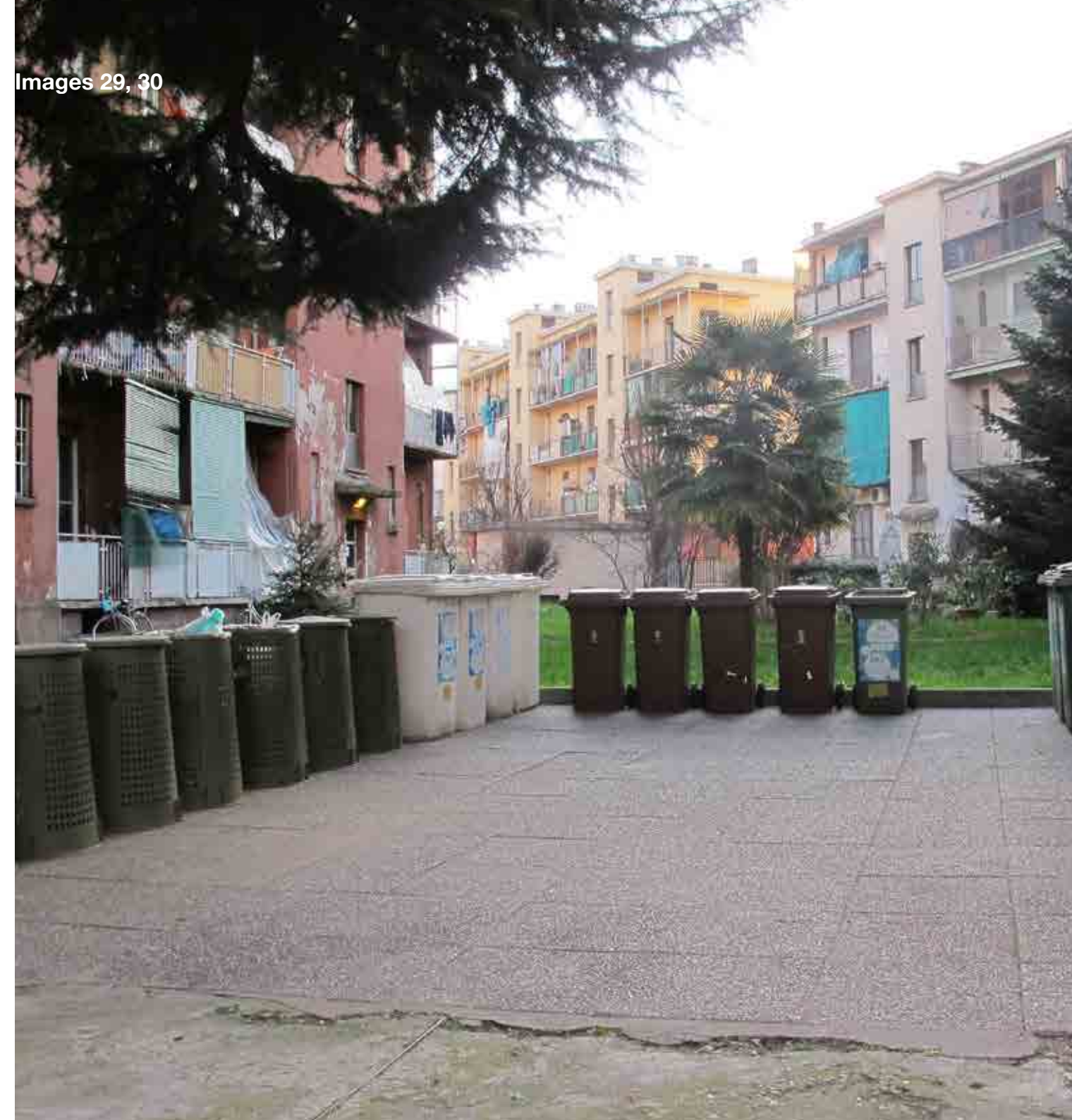
One of the most representative examples I have gathered to witness this engagement is the temporarily changing of spaces with a consolidated bad reputation and banal use. A relevant example are the internal courtyards that are used as space for cinema in summertime: gathering people in an internal courtyard is not as trivial as it might seem. Thought to be the place for the displacement of garbage, and for the green areas of the building block, internal courtyards have become mere passages for people to reach their houses or to leave the buildings. With the event "Scendi c'è il Cinema", documented by the pictures above, internal courtyards become the meeting place for a cultural activity in a usually neglected space. The idea is really simple: some watermelons and a good film, but the effect is far more sophisticated: the courtyard in the pictures is one of the most neglected and "dangerous" of the social housing quarter and nobody would ever think to stay there alone or spending time in any sort of activities (Image 29, 30).

The power of this social occasion not only brings people to a disregarded space, but also helps the inhabitants to see it in an alternative way, to rethink a space originally conceived for another purpose. Trivial spaces can be inhabited in an unusual, out of order, way, and everybody can enjoy them, in fact the event is free and everybody welcome, both from the neighbourhood and outsiders. In the same space different cultures and generations meet and have the chance to familiarize or, at least, starting seeing each other out of normal stereotypes.

Image 28: Event's Flyer



Images 29, 30



Barefooted Walk

The public space, of course, is used as a place for people to gather and act together in public events, not only a meeting point but a recognizable place used as starting point for identity building. The example comes from the demonstration against racism and welcoming refugees that took place on September 11th called 'barefooted walk'. The associations, operating in the neighbourhood workshop, used this occasion to give a witness, from Giambellino, of local awareness toward the immigration question: starting from a different point (Casatta Verde itself), than the rest of the city-procession and going toward the centre (Images 31, 32, 33). The message was clear. As also stated by the organizers: the periphery has a consciousness and lives this situation as a frontrunner being united in stating "welcome refugees and welcome differences".

Encouraging social action and taking people on the street to claim for multiculturalism and peaceful cohabitation of differences can be read in a twofold way. Meanwhile, being a request for foreigners rights and for international solidarity, at the same time it is an action in the name of local cohesion trying to trigger Giambellino positive and peaceful forces to co-operate and act together towards local and broad issues. We can also read this action in a more symbolic way by referring

to the inclusion/exclusion juxtaposition: Giambellino is on periphery of the city centre and is able to accept and coexist with the excluded ones and, furthermore, to include them bringing something from the neglected outskirts. Lastly, in terms of identity-building, this kind of action is significant. It symbolically affirms that the neighbourhood has such a strong identity to be able to both welcome the others and to be contaminated by them. Surely these discourses, having not been explicitly mentioned on any public occasion, are important to highlight community building and identity approaches.

Images 31, 32, 33



Social Activities Invention and Implementation

The most meaningful example of gathering forces to influence neighbourhood habitability and to push towards inhabiting (in the name of social cohesion and cultural integration) are the monthly open and public reunions to discuss the Giambellino situation. During these assemblies the laboratory takes its most concrete dimension: it openly involves whoever wants to contribute to the improvement of the area. Problems, possible solutions, and proposals for the future developments of social actions, as well as the testing of previous actions consistency and efficiency are the main themes of the agenda. The meeting takes place in an open space where everybody is seated in a circle, a time-line showing the life of the initiative is placed in the middle of the circle, everybody can edit it with information about his or her involvement in the project.

After a short presentation of Casetta Verde and its purposes, the group splits into sub-groups to propose and discuss (in detail) ideas about future actions to be implemented in the neighbourhood. The discussion is facilitated by moderators who encourage people to be active and participate with proposals and ideas. Every single contribution is taken into consideration and, if accepted by the sub-group, it is written down on paper and showed to the reunited assembly. The ideas

that receive more support will constitute further tables of discussion and inclusion in future meetings (Images 34, 35). The building of this little project, inside the general picture provided by Casetta Verde, is a collective effort to gather knowledge and possible action constituting a grass-roots attempt to implement a common idea in a flexible way.

In fact, facing the difficulties to mobilize resources – among which, time, is one of the less available – these social Actors are forced to find innovative ways to keep people in the process of inhabiting the same environment. It is probably here that the connection between inhabiting and disenfranchisement comes to the fore: the former is a way to fight the latter, the only way in which a population can be enfranchised to its own place is by inhabiting it. How to inhabit it? By tempting to change it through social co-operation and repeated meetings and extra efforts to remain connected to the neighbours involving them.

Images 34, 35



Mercato Lorenteggio

The seventh of November 2015 the group finally celebrated the inauguration of the project Mercato Lorenteggio described, by the same brochure, as the “transformation of the covered Municipal market at via Lorenteggio 177 into a City Hub for culture, arts and critical shopping”. The renewal of an old Municipal Market (Map 13) was the case to invent a new entrepreneur practice, to produce a space of exchange both at the social level and at the commercial level. The question represented by Lorenteggio market was discovered thanks to a series of interviews and informal chats inside the neighbourhood, where the components of Dynamoscopio live.

In the first instance, we need to highlight the meaning of Municipal Market in Milan: these structures, built at the beginning of 1950, have a strong importance for the areas where they are placed: during the past they were used by the Municipality to provide food and basic goods at a lower price than those founded on the free-market. As stated in the documentary “Entrotterra Giambellino”, and witnessed by the newspaper in 2010⁷;⁸, Lorenteggio Municipal Market was planned to be transformed either into a normal supermarket or to make way for expensive housing dwellings. The previous municipality plan was to give the management of those spaces to the private sector in a trivial project financing agreement framework. Only a change of municipality establishment allowed for a more creative and “out of order” re-use of those spaces: new

resources emerged due to a transformation of the Institutional environment.

The group used the situation to implement a new idea of the future market, fuelled by relations built with shop owners inside the structure, with a consortium eventually established. This action avoided the structure being closed and gave life to a successful (and delicious) restaurant born from a butcher’s shop, called Da Vito, that was able to re-invent itself in a new activity mixing a restaurant with food commerce. The commercial aspect of this action was enriched by two added values with important consequences for our research. Firstly, as we have seen for Casetta Verde, another neglected area of the neighbourhood, has been given back to the community. The intention is also clear according to the same statements of the group: “Mercato Lorenteggio is lived and self-made: it is a free space, an on-going container of projects, proposals and visions. Everyone can propose a participate to the cultural program”.

A little, but important, part of the neighbourhood’s past is saved by a mere commodification and privatization being instead valued for its possibilities of future social development (Images 36, 37). This success resulted in an additional provision of social space to Giambellino. Secondly, the collaboration of the group with both other social Actors and the Municipality is established in a co-operative way: the dynamics through which reaching other aims are settled.

Images 36, 37



Relations with Institutions

A side, although not accidental, effect of this socio-entrepreneurial construction is the connection established with Public Actors. At the event launching Mercato Lorenteggio, for example, a series of Municipality figures were present to discuss both the success of the project itself and about the situation of Giambellino Lorenteggio social housing compound.

Not only has Dynamoscopio encountered Social Housing and Urban Planner deputy majors, but also the merchants and inhabitants dealing with the market renewal were allowed to come into contact with public Institutions and could express their concerns about the future of the neighbourhood in general, and of the the social housing compound in particulars. Bringing Institutions to the Municipal Market is a good example of how this Actor was able to establish fruitful relations with the Municipality, while also being the connection point between policy makers and the population.

This “bridging role” is understandable, and can be interpreted, as the fundamental mediation process an Actor has to trigger in order to bring the claims towards the attention of the Public Institution (Images, 38,39, 40). Furthermore, if we look at the Municipality political orientation, and degree of openness, the meeting with inhabitants and associations can be seen as a clear good and open attitude towards

this process. Not an electoral tactic, but the recognition of a well-structured bottom-up process realized by a group of youngsters dealing with the neighbourhood problems.

Images 38, 39, 40

