The role of collective institutions towards habitability

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ABSTRACT

This paper wants to discuss a theory according to which collective institutions were formed not just for governing particular common pool resources, but to manage them in order to produce habitability, i.e. a set of particular socio − environmental − conditions useful to inhabit a particular area.

While most of the literature on the study of the commons has a specific focus on the management of natural resources, thanks to which these communities could survive along centuries, this paper argues that these institutions are useful in managing socio − economic − environmental instability in general, even in urban contexts and in the nowadays economy.

This paper focuses on the housing issue. Although in the literature on the commons it is still quite unusual to read about this topic, since '70s some authors clearly show the role of self organising communities in producing habitability.

This theme will be discussed in two ways: in the first part of the paper it will be presented the historical evolution of two very old collective institutions located in centre - north of Italy managing common lands, placed one in a mountain and the other one in a rural area. Those institutions faced some major socio − economic changes and evolved an adaptive strategy for surviving till today. In the second part of the paper it'll be presented some new forms of collective institutions (like co-ops, trusts, charities etc.) which use very similar schemes to the previous ones but for governing housing estates.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to present and discuss some theoretical considerations about the role of collective institutions on the basis of empirical evidences that emerged in the context of a research project in progress[2] and on a previous work already concluded[3].

The central idea around which this essay is developed is very simple: collective institutions governed CPRs along centuries till today to ensure the settlement and the living of the communities they represent in areas characterized by high socio-environmental instability, i.e. to make habitable

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[2]   The research is titled "Production of habitability and condition of effectiveness of social housing initiatives" March 2011 – February 2014.

[3]   During author's Phd studies at the Politecnico of Milan (2009).

environments otherwise inaccessible. This paper is focused on land; collective institutions studied here governs parts of territories.

This hypothesis has several implications. Let's focus on the two major one discussed in this paper: first, it can be argued that collective institutions weren't formed just to preserve natural resources, but also to grant goods of general interest, like for instance sustainability, assumed here as the capacity of these institutions to preserve CPRs along centuries. These institutions were born precisely to tackle the goal of habitability and they were able to influence many aspects of communities' life that will be described quickly in this paper.

The second implication is that, if this hypothesis is true, it would be intriguing to think about collective institutions as relevant actors for nowadays life and even in urban contexts generally considered lacking habitability (e.g. slums, squats, suburbs etc.). Dealing with the housing issue, this paper will describe the main forms of governance and the principal housing strategies that imply the direct action of self-organised communities.

This paper is structured in two parts: in the first one (paragraph 3-4) it will be observed the main question from an historical and evolutionary point of view, showing how two collective institutions worked to settle and maintain two communities in their particular areas. The general aim of this first part is to identify the main issues that collective institutions should face and their roles working on habitability.

In the second part (paragraph 5-6-7) the concept of habitability will be discussed from an analytical point of view, with particular reference to the main elements affecting its production, the typical forms of governance used by collective institutions and the housing strategies followed by them.

2. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This paper takes as its methodological basis the IAD framework (Ostrom, 2005) with some adjustments. In particular, the focus of the analysis is the territory, seen here as "the use made of it" (Crosta, 2010), in agreement or in conflict with the regulatory system that usually identifies precisely the functions and uses of land.

This particular concept of territory is substantially similar to the "action arena", but it proposes a specific concept of "action" in the form of "practice", a particular way of looking at interaction. The focus of the analysis are not the choices of the participants according to the position they assume in the process, in relation to the rules, biophysical conditions, the character of the community and the possible trade-offs.

Here "practise" is assumed as an interaction always situated in a specific spatial and historical context. A "community of practise" is considered as a group of people sharing beliefs, interests, information and knowledge about the way to better do something together through regular interaction (Wenger, 1998).

This particular way of considering "action" is because the author doesn't want to underestimate the role that space plays in structuring of the various "action situations" from the cultural point of view: if indeed the biophysical conditions of a given context play a crucial role in affecting the action situations, there is no doubt that the signs left on the land aren't attributable to characteristics of the community (like skills, age etc.), nor to the conformation of the surface or the climate. These signs should be considered separately as cultural evidence of the presence of communities because they have structured territories.

In other words, the methodological effort of this work tends to emphasize the crucial role that the rules have in structuring local systems, not only as devices capable of determining actors' choices, but also as capital and resources used in the evolutionary process of the local system. Dealing with habitability the system under analysis is the socio – settlement one.

The definition of institution that is suitable for this paper is the Selznick's one (1957). He identifies "institution" as an "organisation" with human history, adapting itself to environmental context in which it is inserted in both physical and political sense, giving a justification of its existence according to a precise ideology, defining its operating rules from formal and informal, internal and external relations, drawing up its specific codes and symbolic value. Institutions are therefore complex natural systems that develop mechanisms of self promotion and self defence.

A second methodological clarification is related to the use of design principles (Ostrom, 1990) useful for institutional success in tackling social and environmental sustainability. In this paper, in particular in the second part, it is assumed that they do not serve as a checklist (the institution works or does not work), but as elements that can have a decisive influence in the production of habitability, affecting both the institutional and the organizational level of the system.

The experiences shown here were studied according to the methodology of the case study (Yin, 1984). In particular, quali-quantitative information was collected through interviews and direct observation on the field or through documents that trace the history of these institutions. The cases were selected because they show in a clear manner the ability of these institutions to influence and structure the local context in which they are located. Experiences are also placed in different areas, managing land with different function of use (agricultural areas, pastures, woodlands, urban, etc.).

3. HABITABILITY AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Through the examination of two emblematic case studies it can be seen how the question of habitability is deeply related to the nature of collective institutions, from their formation to the present day.

Institutions whose history is summarized here can be defined robust, because they survived to this day along centuries. Moreover they have been able to adapt to changing conditions without losing the capacity of producing socio – environmental sustainability. These institutions governed their resources over the centuries up to the present without compromising the ability to reproduce them.

However it is clear that these institutions tackled this purpose for giving to the communities they represent the possibility to live for a long while in those areas.

In this first part of the paper habitability is considered as the capacity of a collective institution to influence the possibility of a community to settle in a given context and to allow it to remain there through the supply of means and motivations (land to be farmed, a job, a house, a social relation etc.) to individual members so that they inhabit those places.

In fact, although they were born with the specific purpose to combat environmental instability (e.g. flooding, avalanches), that makes uninhabitable the area, these stories shown that it was crucial the role played by collective institutions in activating useful abilities dealing with social and even economic instability.

3.1 The Agrarian Partecipanze of Cento: from a "settling" to a "residential" community

In the territory that today is the municipality of Cento, two collective institutions rose some centuries ago named Agrarian *Partecipanze*[4]. They were born in the XII century with the aim of reclaiming wetlands which at the time were owned by the Church. In particular, the western

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[4] They split in 1376, but in the beginning they were a single institution governing the entire area. The phenomenon is not just confined to the City of Cento, but it is present in all the plain of Emilia Romagna between the Panaro river in the west and Idice river in the east. There are nine Partecipanze know at the moment (besides Cento and Pieve di Cento, there are Nonantola, S. Giovanni in Persiceto, S. Agata, Crevalcore in the western part, Villafontana, Budrio and Medicina in the east) three of which expired (Budrio, Medicina, Crevalcore).

Partecipanze like Cento's ones, managed lands generally leased from the Abbot of *Nonantola* to local communities in order to be improved. These lands were located at the borders of the State of the Church and needed to be guarded and defended. Many of those lands are below the level of the sea. They were subject to periodic flooding of the river Reno. The mission of these institutions was the reclamation of these lands and their progressive farming.

Over time, people from Cento and Pieve di Cento were able to acquire land's freehold[5]. The land was owned collectively, i.e. indivisible and inalienable. This land is still governed according to a nonprofit logic by the *Partecipanza* entrusted by the communities it represents.

In particular, the *Partecipanza* of Cento split the land in plots every twenty years according to a logic of equity[6]. This tradition is still present today and it's at the basis of what is called the "family pact".

The right to crop the plots of land is acquired only by a man householder descending from the original inhabitants of the area. When a father dies, the sons can be eligible to receive the land. Those people are registered in a special book. This rule was introduced in the XVIII century. In addition to the blood ties, it is also essential to live in the area (incolato obligation) or in the city of Cento.

Since XVII century the members of *Partecipanza* showed a propensity to settle away from the town on the land acquired after the final settling of the river Reno. In 1796 Cento was declared a city and a permanent breaking off with the Partecipanza of Cento took place, enphasising the process.

This principle of formation of collective institutions is evident in many other situations, including other contexts such as the alpine regions: collective lands' rights of use in the high mountains' pastures were tied to the bottom of the valley (the *Regole* and the *Consortele* in Trentino are good examples). This strong tie is still evident from the fact that the names of the ancient neighbours of the town are still used to define the order of extraction of the plots. All these elements contributes to transform temporary hovels in houses.

In 1611 the *Partecipanza* of Cento regulated the minimum distance between the buildings so that the development happened in an orderly manner. Moreover, the incentive for the resident to occupy the land with a house in a stable form was determined by the fact that every household had the right to farm the overlooking piece of land. Today there are approximately 2,000 buildings and the area shows signs of urbanized countryside. This process denotes the transition to a residential community. The landscape produced is unique and even the typologies and techniques used to realise those buildings are very typical of this small part of the region.

The *Partecipanza* had a strong impact also on the structure of the land property regime. As some historical studies shown (Aa.Vv., 1994), the average size of land ownership in the municipality of Cento is small compared to the large land properties present in all the province. This phenomenon clearly derives from the habits to split the land in small plots in the Partecipanza's collective lands.

When during the XX century agriculture has lost its importance and economic weight in favour of the mechanic industry, this atomisation helped many members of the community to build small warehouses to start businesses in the new economic sector. The pulverization of the productive fabric, combined with strong entrepreneurial mindset caused by the fact that each family had to manage itself in starting its own agricultural enterprise, the availability of land near every house, the

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[5]   According to data collected by Torresani (1998) the overall extent of collective lands of the two institutions of Cento and Pieve di Cento was 2,551 hectars (respectively 1,732 and 819).
[6]   The number of parts were 2,331 for the Partecipanza of Cento and 1,870 for Pieve di Cento. The number of claimants of the first one during the last division in 2001 was 3,084. The extension varies from a minimum of 0.58 hectares a maximum of 0.97. While for the number of parts for the second one is 826 with an extension that goes from a minimum of 0.53 hectares a maximum 0.7.

presence of large companies in the area that led capital and know-how necessary to start up the motor industry, the realisation of infrastructures, like training schools started by the members of the community (Aa.Vv. 1989) generated the socio-settlement that it's possible to observe today.

Given the lack of interest of many *Partecipanti* (i.e. people of the *Partecipanza*) themselves in farming, this institution acquired the status of a symbol of ancient traditions, that is definitely able to move a significant number of votes, but whose weight is modest in the decision process of territorial development. The inalienability of the ancient heritage, its high urban sprawl, the historical and landscape value, its large area, make difficult for local public authority to promote some modern projects (like a motorway).

Moreover the abandonment of agricultural activities also shows a certain detachment of the community from the voluntary care of rural territories that has marked the past centuries, which represented a reduction in the cost of public management. For instance, the canals for wastewater appear to be like open-air sewers and the Municipality helped the *Partecipanza* to encouraged the adoption of phytodepuration systems.

3.2 The Regole of Cortina: from a "people" to an "interest" based community

The *Regole* of Cortina are eleven ancient institutions governing some undivided lands surrounding Cortina d'Ampezzo, a small alpine town in the province of Belluno. Unlike the previous case in which the lands had an agricultural destination, in this case the land is used for pastures and forests.

Those eleven institutions only recently joined themselves in one single one. Each institution, including the general one, has its own statute. The collective ownership is widespread and covers 15,395 hectares, about 60% of the entire Commune's surface.

Similar criteria to Agrarian *Partecipanze*'s rules for having the right to use the land can be found here (incolato and blood ties according to a masculine descent). At the census of 2001 the number of *Regolani* (i.e, people of the *Regole*) was 1,336, about 3% of the town.

On the contrary to previous case the *Regolani* can exploit natural resources and have the right of estovers, herbage, grazing, using water even for producing electricity but they cannot divide the assets in fractions.

Many of the difficulties that had the Centopievesi in asserting their rights, were superseded by the *Regole* in the XII century. The first documentary evidence of ownership of land in fact date back to that period (Richebuono, 2001).

With the Cadastre of Maria Theresa in 1755, it was established that Regolieri owned the pastures, but not the woods. The latter's property was assigned to the local Municipality (called *Magnifica Comunità* of Ampezzo). At that period pastures were not so important and the Regolieri themselves were used to sit even on the board of the local Municipality. Like in the case of Cento there was a substantial assimilation between this collective institution and the one used to govern the entire area.

However, already in the late nineteenth century interests around forests grew and the *Regolani* decided to assert their ancient rights, but they succeeded. Things get even worse during the Fascist period, when it was enacted a national law that would eliminate the collective properties and the municipality itself was ruled by fascist leaders coming from other part of Italy. The legal controversy ended in 1957 and it gave back almost all the ancient lands in the hands of the *Regole*.

Something similar was going to happen in the Ampezzo area. Cortina became a very touristic place and the ancient silvo – pastoral activities were abandoned by the community.

The protagonists of this change were the very same *Regolani* who carried the change selling their private lands at the bottom of the valley and giving the possibility to realise ski slopes on the

common lands, claiming compensation permissions on the developers, like supplying new forests for every hectares used. The local community transformed itself from a "people-based" to an "interest based" community.

The abandonment of traditional activities of grazing and cultivation of vegetables near the *viles*, i.e. the residential areas, in favour of achieving a substantial number of new homes, led to the loss of the original landscape and the merger in one single agglomerate of different neighbourhoods.

The poor management of the phenomenon of land rent has also produced an increase in the cost of homes to the point that young people have to move in the nearby villages where houses are cheaper to continue to work in the Ampezzo area.

Since 1990, the *Regole* were asked by the Veneto Region to manage the Regional Natural Park of the Ampezzo Dolomites located over most of the land collectively owned up to the north. This important recognition has given renewed importance to this institution in the relation with others at the local level. The *Regole* now are recognised as the nature conservation's advocate thanks to the fact they governed natural resources over centuries till today.

The *Regole* of Cortina are now trying to promote young community members' participation in this new idea of preserving nature according to professional skills: the park management in fact requires a certain training. Members of the community had to be formed to learn how to manage the assets according to modern requirements and the current systems of government, which are defined by the Region.

4. COLLECTIVE INSTITUTIONS' ROLES IN THE PRODUCTION OF HABITABILITY

According to the general theory of the commons a key role in the success of collective institutions in producing sustainability, or in this case habitability, is to evolve a capacity of producing appropriate rules to the type of resources governed. In these cases it's not only crucial this aspect, but it is also fundamental to coordinate resources in a local system profoundly changed from an economic and social point of view by forces not directly controlled by the institutions. This phenomenon is particularly evident through the productive conversion of local economies briefly described.

Habitability seems to be the result of the capacity of these institutions in regenerating the value of resources for the community: in the case of Cortina, for example, it's clear the distribution of firewood to rebuilt houses today is of little use if the land costs are disproportionately high. In the Case the Cento farming one hectare or a little more of land is not sufficient to economically support a family, even if a house for the family is guaranteed for its entire life. These collective institutions tried to rethink a new way of using the same resources, albeit they cannot give up their original mission of proving lands for agro-silvo-pastoral activities.

Although the rules enshrined in the tradition appear obsolete or of little meaning today, or attributable to the symbolism of the tradition, the property and the rights still exist and are used in relations with other institutions: think about for example to the role of the location of the property (e.g. any new slopes will necessary have to pass on common lands because they surround the town) or to its dimension (e.g. *Partecipanze*'s common lands cover a very big part of the local municipal area with houses, which in general are not compatible with factories or infrastructures).

The second role usually attributed by the theory of the commons to collective institutions is to reduce transaction and organisational costs, even in urban neighbourhoods (Webster and Lai, 2003). In our cases this was true until the community started to lose the relation with its institution's mission: as mentioned, although the *Regole* manages a regional park, local people cannot afford to live near the place they care, because houses are too expensive. Prices increased because of the *Regolani* themselves, because they sold the land to private investors. Even in Cento the canals

where cleaned all over the centuries by the *Partecipanti* themselves, but now this service should be provided by local municipality, which hasn't enough money to realise sewages in the area.

This element is particularly relevant if we want to discuss the intriguing idea that collective institutions are considered by some authors (Nelson, 2002; 2005) as innovative institutional solutions substituting the State in its functions, like homeowners' associations in the US (Coyle Mccabe, 2011) (Beito, Gordon e Tabarrok 2002).

First we should consider that although habitability is a public good it is not necessarily produced by the State, a recent institution compared to the ancient collective properties here described. A particular solution offered by the case of the *Regole* shows an entire new public institutions has been created by the State but put in the hands of the local community which has been trusted by the Region. The general idea behind this institutional solution is that local people especially those ones of the *Regole*, knows their lands much better than other people, even expert in forests. So the *Regole* should give a better service to the community managing a park.

In this case the *Regole* don't define the general rules for the management of the quantity and quality of the forests, but ensure the provision of a service of general interest. This experience show us that today collective institutions can be an habitability device when they are asked to supply services to the general community.

It has been argued there's a lack of democracy in collective institutions especially involved in the production of housing (Glasze, 2005), because they're based on the property status. That's way it would be dangerous to consider these institutions replacing the State. If we assume collective institutions as means for enriching the quality of services and for granting to a territory the possibility to have a reserve of resources (like a park), even if in the hands of a small and closed group, this problem should be surpassed.

This is particularly relevant for those populations that in theory have a right to a decent house, while in practise they don't have it or live in very poor conditions. Hence it emerges the idea that communities of inhabitants should have the possibility to self-organise and govern themselves in producing their condition of living and particularly their habitability. The next paragraphs of this paper deepen this point.

5. INSTITUTIONALISING HABITABILITY

Habitability is a concept coming from the past. The movement of modern architecture already defined it between the two wars: the manifesto of the "Athens' Chart" (Le Corbusier, 1965) puts housing as a central issue in modern city and clearly defined it as a private and separate function from the others like manufacturing, leisure, mobility etc. Habitability is determined by the relationship with the surrounding space in a relationship between interior and exterior, built and opened, individual and collective, domestic and urban space (Di Biagi, 1998).

This document had a great influence on the planners' culture of the second post World War, because beyond the technicalities of manuals, it succeeds in becoming popular to a wider audience, with specific reference to some issues (especially in housing) and it becomes a kind of "reference document" for the various administrations of that time.

The contents of the Athens' Chart have been translated into practical form, or rather institutionalized, in a way that perhaps even the writers wouldn't have thought. The rationalism of which it was pervaded, it was later transformed into a bureaucratic and administrative practice, which today is still largely visible in the culture of urban planning.

The idea of home as a private and separated space from the street and from the rest of the city, capable of hosting only domestic and family activities applied in an ubiquitous way has resulted in a

demeaning and a trivialization of the concept of housing itself (Tosi, 1994). Housing should be understood as a process of settlement and inclusion of people in the context in which they live.

This process has taken out inhabitants' opportunity to define their own living standards, which, stated by law, created too expensive housing solutions for the poorest people.

The strong propensity of buying a home by individual families, which was endorsed for example by the political system in Italy since the 60s, has overshadowed the oldest housing solutions based on co-ownership (such as in-stock cooperatives), and strangled many housing spontaneous initiatives aimed to solve the housing demand through modest means.

Housing solutions in collective structures have been downgraded for those who were unable to pay for individual and adequate houses. Inhabitants' views and voice on the housing situation in which they lived were not important anymore. Technicians, like planner, architects and engineers, were key experts useful to define if a house is habitable or not. Housing models have been reduced to a few kinds of options for the inhabitant and these models have not proved appropriate other than for "traditional" family. This process was particularly evident in cities located in developing countries, where, even today, the biggest part of the population is concentrating in urban areas.

The slums of Buenos Aires or in Calcutta can be habitable in the opinion of the people who live there who have spent a lot of time and huge amounts of resources to implement and build their shanties. On the contrary the State doesn't consider habitable this kind of settlement because of lack of hygiene. Habitability can be described through the performance of a territory for hosting certain kinds of activities, which vary depending on the historical period and the institutional context.

Today the concept of habitability didn't lose its relevance and took many other meanings like "liveability". In this paper these two words are not synonymous. Even the role of self organising communities through collective institutions is growing in European countries.

This brings us to formulate the key question of this paper: who produce habitability? Are collective institutions able to produce it? What are the main factors that have an impact in its production process? Until now habitability has been defined as the minimum necessary condition for a community to settle and remain in a given context. Now we need to provide an analytical description of the concept.

Habitability is here assumed as the outcome of the interaction of collective institutions within their local context. More specifically, habitability is defined as "the complex property and performance of a territory" (Aa.Vv. pag. 90; 2006) (Balducci, Fedeli and Pasqui, 2011). The term "property" can be understood both as the ability of an area to respond to a certain type of stress and to offer some kind of opportunities, and as a set of rules within which institutional actors play their roles. Habitability is complex because it affects the way people perceive their environment in which they live according to the set of physical and environmental characteristics that distinguish the context and according to the set of rules that are used to live and to govern the area. Habitability is considered as the outcome of the interaction of all these elements together.

To do this, however, it is essential to limit a specific field of analysis, given the complexity of the issue. In particular, the discussion here will be developed with specific reference to the housing issue. Few studies on the commons are focused on urban or rural settlements (Ingerson 1997) as well as not many deepen the housing issue (Tang 1986) (Bengtsson 1998) (Scott, Derrick e Kolbre 1999) (Webster e Lai 2003) (Vihavainen 2009), while the literature on housing studies (Turner, 1977) (Ward 2002) since the '70s has emphasised the role of self organising communities in producing houses for themselves.

In this paper it's interesting to adopt part of the theory of the commons to read the housing issue. Using the design principles (Ostrom, 1990), it can be listed here a set of elements affecting the production of habitability:

- "clearly defined boundaries" or "accessibility": one of the characteristics of collective institutions is to control the degree of social homogeneity within the community; they limit the number of members in a few units, in order to control the costs associated with the organization of the group. Accessibility of the system can be analysed in many ways: defining a set of architectural features that gives to people the possibility to control the access through a better visibility. Favouring accessibility means also producing housing solutions that make people familiar with living spaces, but also enhancing the provision of a particular type of housing that the public or private market is lacking;

- "congruence between appropriation and provision rule and local conditions" or "congruence": collective institutions define function of use of housing spaces (with particular reference to the common ones) for avoiding the problem of overexploitation or a behavioural correspondence to the expected use. In fact congruence is also a problem of matching inhabitants' expectations, about how daily life should be or the image the building (especially if public) should have on the media.

- "collective choice arrangements" or "participation": collective institutions provide mechanisms for collective decision that includes participation of the residents in the definition of the rules of exploitation of housing spaces and services; communities can reduce these costs by establishing a series of organizational moments of coordination.

- "monitoring" and "graduated sanctions" or the "degree of control": collective institutions are expected for monitoring and controlling the activities involving directly the inhabitants, defining also progressive intensity and credible sanctions against those who do not respect the rules for using common spaces. This function is crucial to avoid legal expenses.

- "conflict resolution mechanism" or "social relation management": collective institutions can provide tools and services for the resolution and conflict prevention, but they can promote opportunities for people to socialise, encouraging behaviour that is designed for the care and maintenance of common areas, supervising and promoting the establishment of channels of information and communication. It's interesting to analyse also how institutions promote different ways to cooperate (Nowak, 2012): proximity and reciprocity ("*do ut des*" principle) can be used as a first lever to approach the needs of social inclusion of disadvantaged people (solidarity). Institutions can promote the social networks with the neighbourhood, or it can develop a system of incentives to change the reputation of the area or, as a fourth option, it can use familistic lever like in the case of Cento and Cortina d'Ampezzo.

- "minimal recognition of rights to organise" or "institutional legitimisation": collective institutions obtain a minimal recognition of self-organization by over-ordered institutions, managing issues related to building design and urban planning, granting adequate housing standards defined by the rules above, through self-financing and not burdening the State.

- "nested enterprises" inside the institution as "integrated management": collective institutions can integrate all the previous aspects each other through the creation of organizational functions or the provision of housing services ad hoc appointed for that purpose;

- "nested enterprises" outside the institution as means for infrastructuring the area: collective institutions promote initiatives complementing the infrastructures of the neighbourhood and the city in which they work. Dealing with housing, the free riders are those who own the land because anytime a new infrastructure is produced they acquire the rent without paying for it (Foldvary, 1994). Collective institutions working as non profit organisations can mitigate this phenomenon.

6. FORMS OF GOVERNANCE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF HABITABILITY

Some studies (Moroni e Brunetta 2011) (Glasze, 2005) have identified at least three institutional models that occur in any residential situation where a community uses a contract to organize itself. The two main discriminating factors are represented by the property regime and by the manner in which decisions are made. They are here described according to their capacity in influencing habitability.

The first model can be seen in the historical cases of Cento and Cortina: it is a "community of co-owners", in which all eligible members of the community, make decisions collectively. With specific reference to housing, the in-stock cooperative recall this model. The capacity of collective institutions in this case to affect conditions of habitability is undoubtedly greatest compared to the following models because they have direct control over many of the elements described (accessibility, participation, congruence, control, sanction etc.). One of the most problematic element of this model is related to its ability to integrate these areas with what is around, especially if the community has the ownership of assets strategic for the entire community.

The second model, on the contrary, requires the presence of a single owner (private or public) in which community members are tenants. The single homeowner decides conditions of life to which members of the community will have to adapt. This model is used for public buildings, but also in some forms of private buildings (shopping malls, tourist villages). It is the "hotel" model. Even in this situation, as in others, the inhabitants voluntarily decide to adhere to the contract that defines the relationship between people and assets, but they have less possibility to affect directly habitability. Inhabitants can contribute to the management of social relations (good neighborhood). The option that can be used if the homeowner is in default for example in managing the assets is to leave the house or to squat it. Another option is to use a contract: there are some collective institutions like Tenants Management Organisations (TMOs) in UK that replace homeowners for maintaining the building from a social and a physical point of view.

A mixed form of governance is the one in which each member has ownership of parts of the area (a house for example), but he or she shares spaces and services. The homeowners' associations in US represent this model at the scale of the neighbourhood, while in Italy it is quite common to live in an condominium, in which the spaces appurtenant are collectively owned. Decisions are taken only by the homeowners and in accordance with the portions of the property. The community doesn't have the possibility to decide about the criteria for accessing the building or the neighbourhood. The presence of people who do not own and excluded from decision may contribute to the formation of low congruence and conflict. In this model the impact on habitability is realised through control and sanction of the common parts. The integration of the various functions, especially among those of the management of social relations and the maintenance of the buildings it's something to be achieved. Habitability is essentially based on proximity.

7. HOUSING STRATEGIES THROUGH COLLECTIVE INSTITUTIONS

During the research on the field the author has identified six different housing strategies that implies the presence of communities bound by contracts. Three of them are not relevant here because they don't expect a direct role of inhabitants so there's no possibility to find collective institutions. Let's focus on the other three that on the contrary are based on direct action.

The first strategy is used essentially to provide homes for the group of people that promote the housing initiative. It could be defined as a strategy for "housing ourselves" or "Community housing". there are several type of institutions that can be included in this whole: CLTs (Swann 1972), cohousing and co-flats, self help housing, self building, kibbutz, eco-villages etc. In these initiatives a community of people with common interests directly realizes housing projects aimed at satisfying their specific housing needs.

Rarely this strategy is promoted by an external subject for a group of people, but it can be incentivised by local municipalities. In fact this category includes both self help housing and self-building, which sometimes can have a social value. In this type of initiative the people gathered spontaneously or encouraged to join in the community through a single promoter have a relevant role. The inhabitants are generally directly providing for the housing process. If they are involved in a project promoted by an external subject they can be asked to care about other inhabitants.

If the initiative is recognized to have a social value, the public sector, is required to support the initiative by providing tools and resources, sometimes customizing the existing legislation (think to special planning and building permission). However, most of these initiative are not based on public support, but instead act in a completely private way realising economy of scale and the sharing of space and services which is the main reason for joining the community.

According to who has promoted the initiative, inhabitants have different degrees of autonomy: it is directly proportional to the function that the inhabitants have during the process of implementation. If in fact the community has taken the initiative, it also has the ability to define constitutional and collective management rules, while in the case the action is supported by an external subject, or it has a public relevance, the degree of autonomy will be limited even at the operational level.

The focus of this type of strategy is to realise a strong community of residents and hence it crucial the reason that drives these people to live in the same residential area and in the same building. The degree of social homogeneity is determined according to the type of project (a community based on a religion faith, or a community of elderly and students useful to support the socio – physical autonomy of the formers and the economic autonomy of the latter). These initiatives are usually very small in scales, developed in a single building, although sometimes may also involve the construction of several buildings (a village for example).

The size of the building and the quality of the materials is linked to the specific needs of the inhabitants. This dimension is relevant if the initiative is carried out by only one private developer, since it must have the need to meet high quality standards to make them desirable on the market. But generally the physical aspect of the project is relevant in creating a stronger community, because many of the negotiations between people passes through this type of discussion. This strategy gives a lot of importance to design the house as vehicle to internal cohesion. In the case of self help housing instead this issue is not really central, because what is relevant is the ability of the project to socially integrate people marginalised. Therefore the use of materials and techniques of high quality is not really important and can create affordability problems.

The developers are required to realise infrastructures by themselves. Collective institutions using this strategy can be the ones co-owned by the inhabitants themselves.

The second strategy is not focused on the production of houses or physical assets, but it is based on the activation of inhabitants for the production of residential services (e.g. TMOs in UK). In this strategy, the residents themselves or people interested in the regeneration of a residential area are interested in creating directly new economic value on the area producing housing services. These services can be either social or physical ones for maintaining the building functionality.

This type of initiative implies the active involvement of residents in the affected area. The inhabitants are not necessarily landlords. This factor determines the limits of community action with respect to the residential context. To enable these initiatives it is not necessary that the residents are homeowners, but at least they inhabit for a certain period of time in the neighbourhood and they are interested in living in a residential area better served.

Depending on the type of agreement with the homeowner, the community will enjoy a certain kind of independence from management decisions and operational on board, up to the definition of collective choice and constitutional if the community itself becomes the owner of accommodation.

Since the purpose is to activate the resident for the production of goods and housing services, the degree of homogeneity is variable. The access criteria are defined by exogenous factors.

The scale of the interventions that follow this strategy is variable, from a group of some apartment, to thousands, and may affect appurtenance open spaces such as gardens, parks, roads, etc.

Usually the purpose of these communities is to improve housing conditions and living spaces simplifying administration and reducing it in terms of cost, through volunteers' work.

The degree of territorialisation of these initiatives is determined by the extent to which they increase housing services and or upgrade the existing contexts previously realised. These initiatives aim to make residents feel better at home and not to build new buildings. Therefore it is especially important the theme of architectural quality and materials used.

Typically, these initiatives are developed on long periods of time and provide a stable housing by developers at least. The collective institutions that are used here are the ones developed within the second model of governance described above.

The last housing stategy has a focus on a specific area, and it can be defined as a local and integrated approach (e.g. Asset Based Community development, Foundation Cassoni in the Villaggio Barona in Milan, The Gate non profit association project in Turin). The aim is to define a housing project of very social connotations, tailored to the specific needs of the inhabitants of the residential area that shows a variety and interconnected social problems. This strategy will work on the socio-physical resources of the area in an integrated manner.

This strategy assigns a key role to the involvement of inhabitants in the definition of the project. The promoters have the role of identify and coordinate the local resources in terms of social (social capital), economic (financial investment) and urban (areas to be regenerated). The involvement in the choice of transformation gives the possibility for people to take part in action on important issues. In general this type of work requires a commitment of public actors. The public has the function of facilitator, supporter and it ensures consistency of the initiative in housing policy more generally.

The initiative, however, is promoted by collective institutions working in a certain neighbourhood. These projects are focused not so much on a specific target population, but to those who are resident or live in that particular area. The neighbourhoods are usually characterized by conditions of multi problematic nature and the degree of territorialisation needed is maximum, since the focus of the action regards a particular local context. Housing, therefore, is integrated with other functions such as the work and training. Those projects are very complex initiatives that aim a general rethinking of how living in a neighbourhood and time extension is one of the determining factors: who do you want to attract and how long to live in the neighbourhood are crucial issues to this type of initiative.

Collective institutions working on this strategy can be the third types described above, because they work in contexts like a neighbourhood or in a block of flats where there's a presence of commonly owned spaces and private (or public) houses.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The information collected on the field since now doesn't give the opportunity to define precisely which kind of effective conditions make collective institutions able to produce habitability. It is clear any single example can hardly be confined in a single strategy, and it's possible to see one form of collective institution working on each of these strategies.

In any case this paper offers a general and analytic view on the potential recourse and the specific roles that collective institutions can play in producing habitability. If we consider the biggest part of the human being in the world is going to live in urbanised context, habitability issue needs to be

deepened and it would be interesting for people involved in the study of the commons in proceeding on this field of research.

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