The silenced paradoxes of urban renewal: morality, welfare reconfiguration and precarious labour in Collective Food Procurement in Turin
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Conclusion

In this final part of the dissertation, I aimed at adding to the previous analyses of civic engagement and urban transformations with a more detailed immersion into the examination of welfare (in the form of poverty alleviation and food aid). I did not aim at proposing a definition of welfare but at unpacking contemporary trends such as the growing role of the non-profit sector and the popularization of the notion of "community care" (e.g. Rimoldi and Pozzi 2022; Hyatt, 2001). Following a diachronic approach to the analysis of welfare, I retraced the history of a neighbourhood community centre situated in Barriera di Milano. I discussed its role as a broker (Koster and Van Leynseele 2018) between citizens, non-profit organisations, private and public institutions, but also as the active promoter of the culture of active citizenship (see also de Wilde and Duyvendak 2016) and volunteerism. The centre also functioned as a mitigation body to flatten social conflict as well as the requests for and debate around public intervention in the area.

Such configuration of welfare as community care set the ground for the response that was put in place during the COVID-19 emergency. I examined how a food aid initiative was organised at the centre and I argued that this response represented a natural continuation of long-term processes of welfare reconfiguration in the area. This was particularly visible in relation to the role of private foundations and the responsibility left in the hands of the non-profit sector and citizens themselves. Delving into the materiality and morality around the composition and distribution of food aid packages, I described the structural weaknesses of these contemporary forms of welfare, including the lack of adequate food for all and their high reliance on volunteerism. I stressed how the more critical outlooks did not find a space for expression at the hub and little debate emerged around the way in which aid was being carried out, making it also a depoliticized form of intervention.

I examined how the "postwelfarist morality" (Muehlebach 2012) reconfigured local inhabitants' right to food into social needs necessitating only partial responses, which were deemed good enough. Through the food packages, local inhabitants experienced their relation

to institutions, and I argued that the use of food surplus should be problematised in relation to the issue of dignity (e.g. Kenny and Sage 2019) and to the reproduction of a stratification of citizens. In terms of the dynamics within the community centre, I underlined how the construction of the idea of a community of volunteers held essential functions in the representation of such initiatives as a form of social cohesion and solidarity which does not question the status quo but, on the contrary, can coexist with austerity and neoliberal reforms. I juxtaposed several of my observations at the Via Agliè community centre with the case of the Rete Zona Aurora Solidale grassroots food aid distribution to point to some of these mechanisms more clearly, including the lack of space for debate, social critique and anger at the centre.

Finally, I questioned the presence of the municipality (and the quality of such presence) giving more complexity to the analysis of welfare state retrenchment. The different organisational stages of the food aid hub revealed the various forms of engagement and retrenchment of the municipality. While it kept control of the list of food recipients and related selection criteria, its limited contribution remained inseparable from the one of non-profit organisations and the work of volunteers. Overall, I argue that this example is revealing of a process of invisibilisation of the public administration behind the non-profit apparatus, which make it always more complex for citizens to voice their claims and make anyone accountable for their rights.