

Resisting practices against State-led gentrification in San Lorenzo, Rome

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Abstract

The study analyses resistance practices at a neighbourhood level, exploring the anti-gentrification practices and discourse within a specific geographical context, more specifically in San Lorenzo, Rome. Since its beginnings, this area has been inhabited by working class people and featured by great political participation, social activism and anti-fascism movements. The gentrification of San Lorenzo has been policy-led and characterised by a massive privatisation of public spaces, turning them into places of consumption and tourism. A qualitative approach has been used to investigate individuals' perceptions of their own neighbourhood and related challenges caused by gentrification and speculation as well as their needs.

Through discourse analysis, participatory mapping and semi-structured interviews, three sub-questions have been answered and the main research question has thus been met. This study has also been conducted within a participant observation framework since I have been an activist in San Lorenzo for almost three years. The triangulation research methods helped to minimise the risk of generating erroneous findings while strongly increasing the coherence among data.

Keywords:

Gentrification – resistance practices – bottom-up mobilization – Rome – neighbourhood – speculation – discourse analysis – participatory mapping

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Research Question

Nowadays, cities are far more than a ground for production and consumption of commodities; by developing and organising their shape with the aim of enhancing the profit-making capacities of capital, they have become themselves intensively commodified (Brenner et al., 2012). Profit-oriented strategies of urban restructuring and an increasing privatisation of public spaces are intensifying inequalities between urban dwellers, while restricting the access to urban amenities and infrastructures.

In the last decades, governmental policies have started promoting gentrification or, at least, they are certainly playing an important role in boosting this process (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008). Gentrification practices in Europe can be related to tourism development policies, urban regeneration and redesign of public space and commercial plans. These plans are often carried out through privatisation, land grabbing and practices of dispossessions; also challenging the existence of those places, like social centres, which seek to provide an alternative to commodified urban spaces (Annunziata, 2017).

Lees, Slater and Wyly (2008) argued the process of resistance to gentrification could have produced one of the largest literatures in urban studies, however, academic discussions of resistance practices have been few and far between to date. Hackworth and Smith (2001) affirmed that resistance to gentrification since the 1990s is almost dead. As a matter of fact, they argued that during the 1970s there were 'intense political struggles' over the displacements caused by gentrification, with intense citizen mobilisation towards tenants and neighbourhood protection. But after that, there has been 'a palpable decline of community opposition' to the post-recession resurgence of gentrification (in the UK and North America). They believed that in an environment of massive privatisation, featured by larger and corporate developers, the state became more direct in its encouragement of gentrification up to overwhelm community opposition or other land use obstacles. Conversely, Lees and Ferreri (2016) argued it is questionable whether there was a real lack of resistance or more a lack of academic writing about resistance. However, after the financial crisis and the rise of austerity measures, anti-gentrification practices have been growing internationally, as well as the interest of the academic literature on them.

While urban resistance has been debated mainly at a theoretical level through concepts like "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996) or the "right to stay put" (Hartman, 1984), this study wants to fill the gap providing a framework on daily practices of resistance through a participatory, bottom-up and grounded research. The study analyses resistance practices at a neighbourhood level, thus exploring the anti-gentrification practices and discourse within a specific geographical context, more specifically in San Lorenzo, Rome.

Since its beginnings, this area has been inhabited by working class people and featured by great political participation, social activism and anti-fascism movements. The gentrification of San Lorenzo has been policy-led and characterised by a massive privatisation of public spaces,

turning them into places of consumption and tourism. Moreover, the last decade of speculative behaviours, where building companies started developing luxury apartments, produced displacement and evictions but also the rise of unemployment and crime. As a matter of fact, the area is often labelled as "degraded" as a result of neo-liberal policies which turned the neighbourhood in a profitable area, with bars serving alcohol until late while libraries and small shops have been forced to shut down.

What will make this study academically interesting and different from the recent literature is that it does not only investigate the contestation of the last neo-liberal project, but it unpacks the everyday practices of resistance carried out by residents who developed a structured and long-run movement aimed at contesting each speculative action on the area.

The research is relevant first of all for activists and citizens which are provided with a set of bottom-up practices that could be replicable in a context with similar economic and political backgrounds (like Southern European cities). Thus, this study aims at responding to a number of calls for a 'geography of gentrification' (Ley, 1996, p. 81; Lees, 1994, 2000; Carpenter and Lees, 1995), seeking to contextualise the geographically specific manifestation of gentrification processes in different places. Neil Smith's (2002) provocative thesis that gentrification is now a global urban strategy re-emphasises the need for a more careful examination of the geographies of gentrification—the contextuality, spatiality and scale of gentrification.

Secondly, academic discussion can benefit from this research since it investigates on resisting methods against gentrification, thus enlarging the scarce academic literature about resistance practices and it also provide the academics with an in depth analysis of a well-established resistance network, not just with a description of a singular resistance event. This research has several aims. Firstly, it aims to provide insight on bottom-up strategies set up by a structured movement made by residents in a particular neighbourhood. Secondly, it aims to analyse the role resistance can have in challenging gentrification as well as preserving the authentic features of the area, which otherwise will be lost. Lastly, it aims to detect if the needs of various social groups of S.Lorenzo are included in the contestation process but also if they can be combined to come up with an inclusive counter proposal against the governmental renovation plan.

Research Question:

How do the residents of San Lorenzo resist state-led gentrification in their neighbourhood?

Sub-questions:

1. Which resistance strategies do the residents of San Lorenzo employ to prevent state-led gentrification?
2. How are the various social groups represented by the contestation process?
3. How can the needs of the various social groups be combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans?

Chapter 2 - Academic Literature

2.1 Factors predicting gentrification

Academic discussions focused more on causes and consequences of gentrification, rather than on protests and struggles against it. However, after the financial crisis in 2008, resisting practices started growing internationally; thus, several authors tried also to split and list factors (see Dobson and Ley, 2008; Marcuse, 1985) and practices (see Hartman, 1974; Marcuse, 2009; Velasquez Atehortua, 2014; Lees and Ferreri, 2016) that may counter-act gentrification (Lees, Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso, 2017).

The factors that might prevent gentrification concern mainly economic policies and governmental actions; they will be explained briefly since they are not the focus of this research, which emphasizes more the bottom-up practices of resistance. According to Dobson and Ley (2008), even when in a city the demand by the middle class for inner-city residential property is strong, there are also sets of factors that might still impede gentrification: impaired supply, policy responses and community resistance to change. Deficiencies in the supply of property acceptable for gentrification represent a factor which may impede gentrification in a context where demand is moderate; however, if demand is strong, middle-class individuals are likely to accept the low housing quality anyway. The second factor which can prevent gentrification is the political response both at local and national level. This factor was already mentioned during the 1980's by Peter Marcuse (1985) who wrote about policies to address the problems created by gentrification. According to him, rent control was considered one of the solutions to limit increases in the housing price, which is the driving force of displacement caused by gentrification. Zoning was thought to be a tool to limit unnecessary upgrading and unwanted development. However, according to Marcuse, these measures are dependent on how just the democratic process is and how well the governmental agenda regulates the education, social and welfare system.

Coming back to the most recent research of Dobson and Ley (2008), the third factor which can prevent gentrification is the political mobilisation at the neighbourhood level, as previously affirmed by Hartman (1974). The authors argued that a challenging part of the community response to gentrification is the discursive one which aims to demonstrate to a broader public that "the neighbourhood is not a slum that needs renewal but has qualities worth protecting" (Dobson & Ley, 2008). According to the authors, gains by groups resistant to gentrification have been registered particularly during periods of left-liberal or reform government, also one of the factors Marcuse (1985) underlined as crucial to prevent gentrification.

2.2 Bottom-up practices of resistance

The vast majority of studies on resistance against gentrification usually focuses on it in relation to eviction which, according to Desmond (2016), is the most understudied mechanism of reinforcing inequality. One of the first researches describing resistance practices to gentrification-led displacement has been Hartman's. He analysed (1974) the actions of residents

against the urban renewal policies which have spread in American cities in the second half of the twentieth century. His research focused on the decision of the Government of San Francisco to design South of Market (re-named Yerba Buena) as an area requiring slum clearance, displacing social housing dwellers and preparing the way for the gentrification of the district. The community organised itself forming an organisation called "Tenants and Owners in Opposition to Redevelopment", which challenged the Yerba Buena Community plan in court supported by lawyers and academics from the nearby Berkeley University. TOOR succeeded in delaying the huge urban renewal project for a decade through a federal lawsuit. Moreover, the federal court judges forced the planners to come up with an acceptable plan of relocation, otherwise the federal funds would have been cut off, as a consequence, 1800 new units of housing have been built for displaced residents.

A more recent research is the one of Lees and Ferreri (2016) about resistance to gentrification that emerged in and around the Heygate Estate in London. According to them, the state-led gentrification in inner London has been ongoing since the late 1990s, publicly owned and managed council estates have become the key target of this process. The authors discussed three processes of community resistance to the gentrification of Heygate Estate from 2010 to 2013: local networks organising to influence planning, self-organised strategies to try and keep the estate open, and legal challenges to the public interest of the demolition. According to the authors, "all the strategies involved different degrees of active questioning of the dominant discourses of regeneration through critical action and moments of legal challenge to the developers and the local authority" (2016). The Heygate Estate housed more than 3000 people, living in 1212 residential units (council owned and leasehold) and its demolition was proposed as a part of a longer-term plan to regenerate the area around the Elephant and Castle shopping centre. From the early 2000s, the Council postponed all the maintenance activities of the estate and began to push away its residents, promising a new accommodation on the developed site, naming it as "right to return". In a couple of years, the area has been labelled as a crime-ridden sink estate for which demolition (according to the Council) was the only solution (Lees & Ferreri, 2016). Sadly, just 45 former tenants moved into new houses, meanwhile the leaseholders were pushed to negotiate the acquisition of their homes by the Council, with a compensation offered far below the market price. Civil society organising, direct action and legal challenges have been the modes of resistance used by the residents, they succeeded in raising the public visibility of the Heygate Estate as a symbol of the effects of regeneration schemes involving the demolition of council housing. Civil society organising took the form of The Elephant Amenity Network, a coalition of local groups and people, which actively produced and promoted alternative visions for the redevelopment plan while deciding to radicalise the terms of the debate calling it "gentrification". Direct actions have been carried out through the direct appropriation of the open spaces with the final goal of keeping the estate popular over its last three years. Indeed, they promoted self-organised social activities like temporary cinema, open air concerts, community barbeques and exhibitions.

Finally, legal actions have been attempted through a public inquiry to the developers. While unsuccessful in saving the estate from demolition, each form of resistance enabled residents of the Estate to expose the degree to which the regeneration was not in the public interest and to discredit both local authorities involved and developers.

The academic literature on gentrification studies on displacement has been historically focused on the US and the UK, starting from the 1970's with Hartman's research. However, in the last few years there has been a growing literature on successful resistances in the Global South (see Crossa, 2013; Velasquez Atehortua, 2014; Betancur, 2014). Velasquez Atehortua (2014) described the mobilisation of barrio women in Chacao, Venezuela, against elitist urban renewal agenda. Other than describing the development of grass-roots form of urbanism, this research also represents one of the rare outright victories against gentrification (Lees, 2013).

In Venezuela, barrio women took a prominent role in barrio organisations around community-based concerns like struggles for housing, water supply, food security and mobilisation against neoliberalism. By 2007, they mobilised into the Settler's Movement, adopting a manifesto defining their three key struggles. The first one was defending the "Right to Housing"; the second was turning the neoliberal city into a socialist one by contesting the privatisation process; and the third struggle was about the crucial role of community participation in contesting the commodification of housing and urban space.

They asked for a partnership with the socialist state to promote self-construction as a way to counter the power of capitalist elites. The movement succeeded in providing food security, health care (through the development of two health centres adapting empty police offices) and urban renewal, inviting the population to restore their homes and public spaces through self-construction.

Chavez decided to support this resistance and the government allowed the barrio women to build a pioneer's camp to begin the development of a Socialist Community for 600 families. This became a new model of social policy development that involved people contesting neoliberalism in executing government programs. Barrio women succeeded in standing up against elitist urban renewal while fighting off a neoliberal project that was to gentrify the Old Market in Caracas (Lees, Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso, 2017).

Due to the fact that these tactics are highly interwoven with the cultural and political background of the area where they are carried out (for UK example see Lees 2014) it is not possible to create a handbook of resistance practices worldwide valid. However, it is possible to highlight common features and come up with some conclusions analysing the academic literature on resistance practices. In this research authors from US (Hartman), Latin America (Velasquez) and EU (Lees and Annunziata) have been analysed. According to all of them the first step to prevent gentrification is the civil society organisation or in other words, the bottom-up mobilisation. After that, the real actions of a group of people are strictly related to how resistance has been historically carried out in that geographical context. For instance, in Latin America resistance practices are mainly based on self-construction while in Europe, especially in the southern part, resistance is carried out with reappropriation, squatting and direct actions; which are practices that have characterised European countries for a long time (see Lefebvre, 1970; Mudu, 2004). The last and crucial step for all the authors selected in this research is the legal action, however what is striking analysing the literature is that legal practices carried out by citizens without external support are likely to fail in preventing gentrification, as showed by Lees (2016) with the Heygate example. Conversely, in Hartman's work, the residents of Yerba Buena had the support of the students and lawyers of the near Berkeley University; while in

Velasquez's research, barrio women have been supported by Chavez and in both cases the resistance succeeded. This support usually comes when resistance is already structured because it is seen as less risky to fail, thus worthy to join. However, building coalition should not be taken for granted, indeed not every movement desires to build a coalition with politicians or people who do not join exactly the same political values.

The building coalition issue can determine the success or the failure of a movement. By analysing a resistance movement it is important to consider two factors which may come up. Firstly, the interest that each person has in participating in resistance practices may be related to personal motivation. Indeed, not all forms of mobilisation cannot be automatically assumed to be progressive in the sense of fighting for the increasing welfare, recognition or empowerment of a wide set of individuals or groups: they may be more defensive of the status quo of a small privileged minority (Novy et al., 2012). Secondly, there could be tensions between those who favour a radical stance toward the local state and the politicians and those who favour dialogue and possible cooperation. Uitermark (2004) argued the 'co-optation in some respects is not necessarily antithetical to radicalism in other respects' and showed how Amsterdam's squatters managed this dualism combining both cultural and political activities. Uitermark provided a solution to overcome one aspect of the building coalition issue, underlining that a movement can find a balance between the cooperation with external actors and the observance of political values' integrity.

2.3 Literature on the context of the research

A recent argument which came up in gentrification research is the study of anti-eviction practices and platforms fighting the "austerity gentrification" in Southern Europe cities. Lees and Annunziata (2016) discussed the link between crisis-related eviction and gentrification, detailing also the anti-eviction practices in Athens, Madrid and Rome. Although the economic crisis assumed different forms in the cities, in almost all of them there has been an increased number of evictions and processes of dispossession due to indebtedness and austerity, turning displacement in a crisis in itself. "The impoverished middle classes of Southern European cities, truly tied to the 'property ownership' as a mean of social mobility, are now having to fight eviction too: thus, an interclass coalition to combat the housing crisis and gentrification could emerge" (Lees & Annunziata, 2016).

In Rome contemporary displacement is mainly State-led. During the 1990's, the city became the stage of a neoliberal economic restructuring process that re-shaped the social geography of the city. Indeed, the liberalisation of the housing market with the abolition of rent control and the alienation of public property were enforced by national legislation. These national policies combined with the refuse of rent control in consolidated urban areas resulted in a generalised 'gentrification of the city' (Annunziata, 2014). The government started promoting gentrification policies with the aim of releasing the city from its public debt while boosting its economy. The drawback has been an unregulated rent accumulation producing an increase of private property revenue and a skyrocketing of real estate markets.

According to Annunziata (2014), it is possible to recognise three main geographies of gentrification in Rome: the historic districts of the city centre (e.g. Monti, Trastevere), the neighbourhoods built in post-Unitarian development of the city (e.g. San Lorenzo, Testaccio, San Saba), and the former working-class periphery (e.g. Pigneto, Garbatella).

The gentrification of these areas is based on some common features: it occurs when vacant housing is available at rental tenure, in well-connected and accessible neighbourhoods with easy access to services and in places with an high level of sociability (Annunziata, 2014).

In Rome, pro-gentrification policies and the credit crunch pushed the housing demand towards a prohibitive rental sector causing a massive increase of market rents, evictions and cuts in funds for public housing, thus leading to the creation of one of the largest squatting movements in Europe (Lees & Annunziata, 2016).

Since several squatted buildings in which people have been living for decades are located on gentrified areas, the squatting movement became an anti-gentrification movement resisting practices of gentrification in situ. The housing movements and social centres have recently formed a citywide coalition, DecideRoma (trad. Rome decides) with the slogan "Roma non si vende" (trad. Rome is not for sale) resisting displacement and claiming the right to use and self-manage urban commons (see Image 1).

Image 1: Strike promoted by Decide Roma, 19th March 2016.



Source: author

This research will focus on the area of San Lorenzo, a neighbourhood which has always been considered as popular because it has been built for and by the working class. It has been constructed at the end of the 19th century to meet the housing need of the less well-off. The high concentration of craftsmen and the high level of political participation of the residents contributed to shape its popular feature too. Indeed, San Lorenzo has been the cradle of resistance during the fascism era and place of students' manifestations during the 1970's (Bargagli & Pisati, 2013).

Nowadays, the popular but central neighbourhoods in Rome are no more inhabited by the working class because of a progressive erosion of the lower class in favour of the medium-upper class. The inevitable development of the city has been eroding the “being popular” of some areas (Annunziata, 2008).

Gentrification in San Lorenzo is taking different shapes. Firstly, the studentification, as the vast part of the population is made by students because of the nearby university. This led to an increase in property and rent prices and to a substitution of the permanent population with a temporary one. It also changed the cultural dimension of the neighbourhood through the reproduction of consumption practices and life-style of the younger population, thus transforming the services of the neighbourhood in youth-oriented services. Secondly, gentrification also turned San Lorenzo in an entertainment area where wine-bars and restaurants started spreading while small shops have been forced to close.

Another aspect which can be related to the gentrification of the area is the development of a fashion district. In the “Ex-Dogana”, the past railway yard of the city and nowadays an attractive location hosting several events, took place the annual fashion week, an event completely incoherent with the neighbourhood, once featured by small tailor’s shops and cheap stores. The change is market-driven and is not managed by the population, indeed both dimensions of fashion and entertainment are growing at the expense of the liveability of the neighbourhood (Annunziata, 2008). However, what has never changed is the political activism of the residents which has led to a spreading of social spaces in the area, effectively providing social services to the dwellers.

The research will focus on the practices of resistance carried out by Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo (trad. Free Republic of San Lorenzo). LRSL is born in 2013 with the aim of putting common interests before the speculative ones. The Declaration states “due to the incapacity of the government and related institutions to protect their rights, the residents of San Lorenzo affirm their will in managing in a cooperative and collective manner the resources of the neighbourhood. These resources will not be privatised rather they should be considered “common goods”, among these collective resources there are: water, culture, urban green areas, the political network, squares and public spaces” (Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo, 2013). The organisation is made by students, residents and activists who want to fight against the speculative policies which are plaguing the area, while defending the neighbourhood against gentrification. LRSL is a place where a number of groups have organized to defend their neighbourhood. They develop strategies aimed at both general changes in the institutional conditions, such as efforts to change their regulatory plans, but also they organize protests, meetings, cultural events, petitions, and occupations of public spaces or empty lots at defense against social and spatial displacement.

LRSL is engaged in practices of collective knowledge production, like the creation of a document named “Volontà di sapere” drawn as an alternative response to the current Urban Local Development Plan (Progetto urbano San Lorenzo). The LRSL interprets the current regeneration practices as a way to eradicate historical sites and the materiality of historical memories. The organisation states “the territorial network of LRSL can be capable to ban and countervail the current trends by networking, valorisation of social practices, affirming the

primacy of the common over private interest, claiming democratic public decision of the transformation of the city" (Annunziata, 2017).

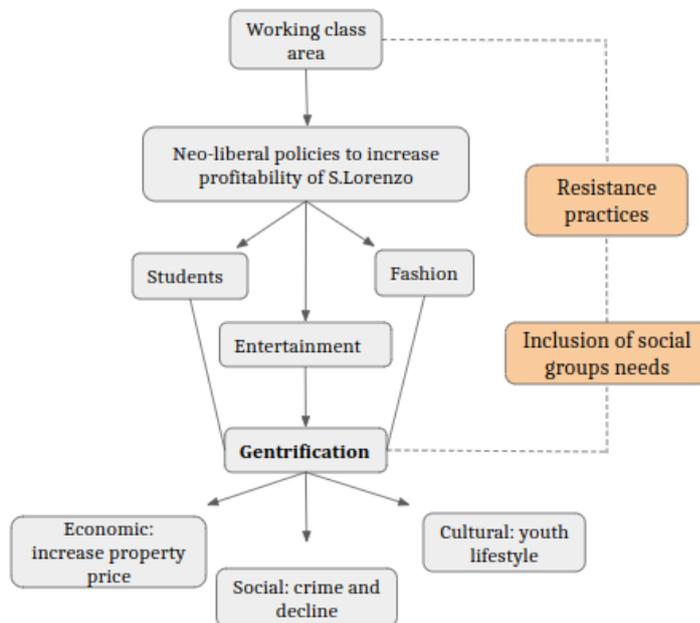
One of the most recent example of speculative action in San Lorenzo regards Ex-Dogana, the previous main railyard of the city built in 1865. The historic value of the place increased during the fascist era since from there the deportation of Jews and anti-fascists towards concentration camps started. Today, the area is at the centre of an urban regeneration plan launched in 2008 (Piano Regolatore) enabling the development of new constructions to regenerate and add value to past railway spots, through the creation of fitness clubs, luxury hotels and malls just to mention some examples (Sotgia, 2016). Even though Ex-Dogana is a state property and it is labelled as unavailable asset, in 2007 it has been sold to a group of multinationals which aim was to realise a residential area with mall, offices and a supermarket. The project has never started thanks to a huge mobilisation of the neighbourhood, supported by LRSL, operating on a double level. From one side, LRSL developed a bottom-up alternative project for the area and discussed it with the city planning assessor; from the other side, the organisation put pressure on the multinationals showing them the disapproval of the residents which could have hampered the construction (LRSL, 2017). However, Ex-Dogana keeps being a place removed by the public usufruct in favour of a private profit, becoming one of the most hip nightlife places in the city. Multinationals keep maintaining the place and rent it out for temporary periods to DJs and event managers. The type of regeneration the government is promoting is based on turning historical and public spots in lucrative and exclusive spaces of consumption. The latest project for the area is to build up The Student Hotel, a Dutch brand for luxury students accommodations.

LRSL and its residents set up resistance practices not just against the latest profitable project in their neighbourhood, they keep protecting the historical features and public spaces of San Lorenzo from a continued State-led process of privatisation and speculation.

LRSL and its resistance strategies put into practice the approach named by Marcuse as Critical Planning (2009). He came up with this approach after an examination of what planning in New Orleans was doing in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina and summarised the approach in three words: Expose, Propose and Politicize. According to Marcuse "expose" refers to making research on the causes of the problem and communicate the analysis to those that can use it. LRSL exposes in the sense that residents and activists are building awareness about the main issues that concern the neighbourhood, like speculation, privatization and gentrification mainly through knowledge-based initiatives. The term "propose" means reaching those affected and formulate responses and strategies to achieve the desired results, indeed what LRSL has done and keeps doing is proposing alternative ways of neighbourhood development. The last step, according to Marcuse, is "politicize", in the sense of clarifying the political action implications of what was exposed and proposed, including attention to issues of organisation strategy and day-today politics as well as supporting organisation directly. LRSL, politicises gentrification and speculative actions as a collective problem, making them visible and claiming collective responsibility and need of immediate action.

Below, there is the descriptive model of the gentrification process in San Lorenzo, with causes, means and consequences. Factors like resistance practices and the inclusion of social groups needs will be studied to understand how they may do justice to the historical features of the area, like being a working class area, which otherwise will be lost in the gentrification process.

Image: 2 - Gentrification process in San Lorenzo



Source: Author

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The type of research design used in this study is the one described by Sayer (1992) as the intensive one. The research analyses resisting practices to gentrification carried out in a specific neighbourhood by the residents' organisation, named Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo (from now on LRSL). The research design is intensive since the study will exhaustively examine the history of LRSL, its produced contents and key actors involved. According to Sayer, it allows defining how the context is structured and how the key agents interact with it or constitute it. Moreover, the research aims to investigate the resistance practices used by residents of San Lorenzo rather than discovering general patterns of resistance used worldwide.

Qualitative research is needed to investigate individuals' perceptions of their own neighbourhood and related challenges caused by gentrification. According to Philip (1998), qualitative studies are small-scale intensive pieces of research in which everyday life experienced by all sorts of people is explored and the position of the researchers, their perceptions, experiences and expectations are considered important.

The importance of discourse and meaning is central to qualitative approaches, indeed the research methods used in this study are discourse analysis, participatory mapping and semi-structured interviews. However, the study will also benefit of some privileges of participant observation. Indeed, I have been joining activities and meetings of one of the social spaces in San Lorenzo for almost three years. As a consequence, the problem of reactivity, when people change their behaviour and make adjustments of both their speech and actions around outsiders, has been reduced. Furthermore, it becomes also possible to collect data which would have been inaccessible using other data techniques, for instance all strategic decisions of a social space are shared in meetings closed to outsiders. However, the negative side of the coin is the low degree of reliability, indeed, for another researcher it would be almost impossible to repeat the study since it highly relies on the personal experiences and characteristics of the researcher. To conclude, the main drawback of being involved in the research context is the difficulty in being as objective as possible, leaving the role of activist and being the researcher. The risk of going native is that the researcher is sympathetic with the respondents and omit negative analysis. Moreover, the researcher will decide what is significant and worth recording and what's not, therefore, the outcome may depend on the values of the researcher, thus there is the risk of biased data.

The use of triangulation will help minimise the risk of generating erroneous findings and increase coherence among data. .

3.2 Research Methods

The research question is:

How do the residents of San Lorenzo resist state-led gentrification in their neighbourhood?

To answer it, three research questions will be empirically investigated

(1) Which resistance strategies do the residents of San Lorenzo employ to prevent state-led gentrification?

Through discourse analysis the research will investigate not just the strategies carried out by LRSL but also how the several social groups (students, activists, long-time residents and sellers) are represented by the contestation process, thus addressing also the second research question:

(2) How are the various social groups represented by the contestation process?

This question will be met also through semi-structured interviews which will come out after the participatory mapping will be carried out to answer the third sub question.

Resistance to the gentrification of San Lorenzo is the object of study in this discourse analysis. However, the gentrification discourse will be considered as the dominant narrative because is the one carried out by the government, while the resistance one will form the counter-narrative. According to Hajer & Versteeg (2005), a discourse is: "An ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices." (p.175). According to this definition of discourse, resistance to gentrification is the 'social and physical phenomena' to which meaning is given. The values addressed by the actors to resistance practices and gentrification itself will be at the core of this study, as well as the embeddedness of the discourse of gentrification in policy and practice will be of importance. The aim is to illuminate how the discourse of resistance is used by residents as a counter argument to the discourse of gentrification, which instead is institutionalised by policy-makers.

A Foucauldian perspective will be used as lens during this analysis, it considers discourse as something that "extends into the realms of ideology, strategy, language and practice, and is shaped by the relations between power and knowledge." (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). A Foucauldian discourse analysis allows examining how discourses are embedded in local practices. Metaphors, story lines and discourse coalitions are three concepts that help illuminate distinct features of discourse (Hajer, 2006). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980): "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another", a metaphor can be considered as a rhetorical strategy, indeed it can represent an emblematic issue which comes to stand for the understanding of a bigger problem. A metaphor is used as a vehicle for discussing a crisis that is hard to discuss in the round.

A storyline encapsulates the essence of a complex narrative that connects different discourses and thus provides the basis of discourse coalitions (Hajer, 2006). Finally, a discourse coalition refers to a group of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of practices, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines. It could happen that antagonists in many regards, co-produce a discourse and this may influence the strength of a particular way of seeing. According to Hajer, a discourse coalition to become dominant in a given political realm, two conditions should be fulfilled: the condition of discourse structuration and the condition of discourse

institutionalisation. Indeed, central actors should embrace the rhetorical power of the new discourse as well as this discourse should be reflected in the institutional practices of that political domain (policy process developed according the ideas of that discourse).

Hayer (2006) explained the relation between politics and discourse saying that: "The politics of discourse is best seen as a continuous process of giving meaning to the vague and ambiguous socio-physical world by means of story lines and the subsequent structuration of experience through the various social practices that can be found in a given field".

Through an analysis of written and spoken text, but also taking into consideration the role of power in the formation and contestation of discourses or ideas, it will be possible to understand both how the discourse of gentrification becomes institutionalised in policy and how the resistance one has been used by San Lorenzo's residents.

Data collection and data analysis

To answer the main research question and sub-questions 1 and 2, a discourse analysis will be done, gathering qualitative data from multiple sources.

The data collection of the qualitative research has been conducted through desk research and semi-structured interviews. Desk research has been mostly based on Urban Project for San Lorenzo, a governmental redevelopment plan of the area and related sub-documents and, from the other side, analysing "La volonta di sapere" (trad. wish to know), which is Urban Project of San Lorenzo re-made by its residents, as a counter-argument to the governmental one. A recent debate on Ex-Dogana will be used and analysed to provide further and updated information about the area. Secondly, semi-structured interviews will be hold with different types of residents, like students, retailers and activists. This thesis makes also use of semi-structured interviews to answer sub-questions 2 and 3 to enable the participants to answer more freely (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), but also to frame a particular storyline or narrative within a given discourse.

The third research question is:

(3) How can the needs of the various social groups be combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans?

The study ends with this question since it aims to discover whether is possible to combine needs of various social groups to come up with an effective counterproposal against the mainstream regeneration policies. This will be done through participatory mapping. According to Giesecking (2013), participatory mapping gives insights into the way people produce and experience space, forms of spatial intelligence, and dynamics of human environment relations ranging from the experiences of everyday life to larger structural oppressions. According to him, mental mapping is the representation of an individual or group's cognitive map, hand sketched and/or computer-assisted, in drafting and labelling a map or adding to and labelling an already existing map. The idea of using visuals as a qualitative research method in the social sciences is not new and it took origin in the field of visual anthropology (mostly in the 1940's), where researchers used visual methods to document exotic cultures through photographs. However,

this technique was not participatory and it revealed a colonist approach (Scherer, 1992). Ioana Literat (2013) argued with the advent of participatory communication theory in the 1970s, the means of visual production gradually passed into the hands of the “subjects”.

To the residents of San Lorenzo will be asked to draw or/and select the places and services they need or want to preserve in the area as well as their daily path in the neighbourhood. Students, activists, long-time residents and sellers will sketch on an already drawn map with pencils to make them less dependent on their drawing skills while avoiding the uncomfotability the idea of drawing an entire neighbourhood could generate. Maps will be a conversation point for further discussion through which the main motivations of tiedness over some places as well as concerns of loose them could come out. Moreover, it can be considered as a icebreaker which is useful to structure the semi-structured interviews required to respond to the second sub-question, in combination with discourse analysis. Finally, the maps will be compared to each other to see whether the needs of the various social groups can actually overlap without inconsistencies. If that would be possible, the residents of San Lorenzo might define the development of their own neighbourhood in an inclusive, democratic and bottom-up way, unlike the governmental plan over the area is doing.

Participatory mapping has been chosen in this research for several reasons. First of all, it lacks of dependence on linguistic proficiency, thus this method is suitable in an area like San Lorenzo, lived also by people with low education who may not know how to explain the resistance practices they carried out, but they know for sure what they are fighting for. Secondly, although this research method is not the central one in this research because discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews will have a greater place, participatory mapping is crucial because it has a political role, also in line with the concept of resistance practices itself. Indeed, this method is an inclusive one, entitling the participant with more power compared to other types of research strategies. It discourages the sense of hierarchy between researcher and subject, rebalancing the positions during the research process and it is more horizontal and ethical than alternative textual strategies. Moreover, the development of this method has been fuelled by the post-structuralist critique of, in Deleuze's words, “the indignity of speaking for others” (1977), which can be linked to the resistance sentiment externalised by San Lorenzo residents against the governmental plans which are not including the population needs. Furthermore, in her article Literat (2013) mentioned that Rattine-Flaherty and Singhal (2007) defined visual participatory research strategies as an inherently feminist approach, due to their valuing of subjective, emotional, and co-constructed ways of knowing, thus underlining the political role mentioned before.

Participatory drawing has also some limitations, especially in terms of implementation and data interpretation. Due to the highly personal nature of this type of research the samples usually tend to be small affecting the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, concerning the interpretation of data, the validity is difficult to prove because it is a highly interpretative research method (Silverman, 2001), however all qualitative research data must be interpreted by the researcher. Indeed, according to Rose (2001), researchers working with visual evidence

must employ a “critical visual methodology”, paying attention not only to the image itself, but also to the circumstances of its production, circulation, and consumption. To overcome these limits, participatory mapping is used in combination with other research methods, cross validating the findings through triangulation. In this research, the participant observation is, more than discourse analysis, semi-structured interview and participatory mapping, the instrument which can ensure a stronger validity because it is based on a previous and active participation of the researcher in the field under study, thus it is able to get more nuances than an external researcher.

Doing participant observation means being embedded in the actions and context of a social setting, since I am an activist and part of *Communia*, a squat in San Lorenzo, participant observation is the most coherent and natural technique I could have used in this research. I have been spending the last three years in *Communia* and thus, I can easily accomplish the three key elements concerning participant observation outlined by Guest et al. (2013):

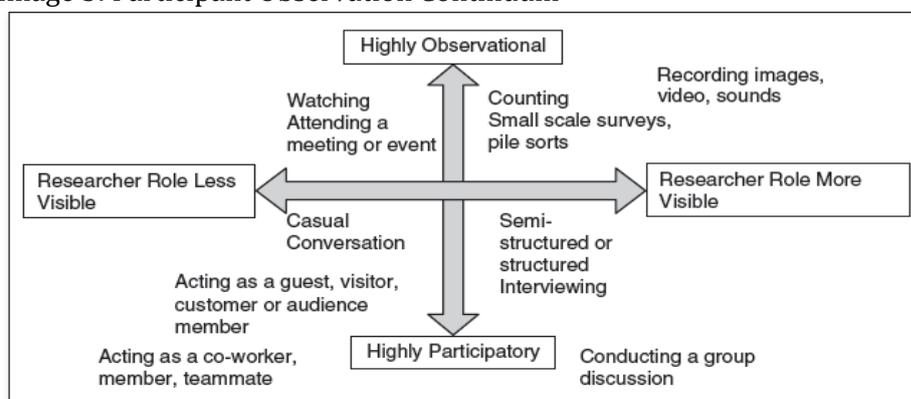
- Getting into the location
- Building rapport with the participants
- Spending enough time interacting to get the needed data.

A struggling part has been the presentation of myself as a researcher, rather than just an activists. Even though I was aware declaring I am carrying out a research could have had important consequences about the types of data I could have collected, I decided to make known my role. If I were an external researcher who wanted to carry out participant observation in resistance groups it would have been more tricky and risky but since I was already an insider I figured out my data would not have changed drastically.

I declared myself as a researcher in *Communia* first and then with some persons of LRSL, however before coming out with them I had a talk with a *Communia*'s guy, the one who is the most involved with LRSL, explaining him my research project and asking for a "goodwill".

By using the figure below as reference, I can describe my role as participant observer as highly participatory since I acted as a member actively participating in debates and events. My researcher role has been visible but not all the time, indeed I carried out semi-structured interview but I tried to use a language as informal as possible since the use of the map was already a strong reference to my researcher role.

Image 3: Participant Observation Continuum



Source: Guest et al. (2013)

Chapter 4 - Analysis

4.1 Resistance Strategies

The first research question that will be answered is:

Which resistance strategies do the residents of San Lorenzo employ to prevent state-led gentrification?

The Urban Development Department defined San Lorenzo as a key area for governmental urban renovation plans. The development path they are following is mainly based on the demolition of empty buildings, construction of new houses and the privatisation of services. Policy makers and developers argue the abandoned buildings contribute to label San Lorenzo as a degraded neighbourhood. Conversely, activists and residents argue those edifices have an historical past and they shape the identity of the area, thus they should not be demolished.

The projects and strategies that lie behind the governmental urban plan will be analysed as well as the residents' attachments to the area. This research examines what makes up the speculative discourse and two narratives have been distinguished: the dominant narrative, representing the governmental discourse and the counter narrative, standing for the activists' voice. Indeed, the two sides perceive the future urban development of San Lorenzo far differently.

The LRSL - a group of activists, residents and students against the gentrification of the area - is testimony of an ongoing process of gentrification characterised by the eviction of local residents and historical businesses and a tendency toward the development of luxurious (and for temporary uses) apartments in San Lorenzo. LRSL believes its territorial network can be capable to ban and countervail the type of regeneration that currently is eradicating historical sites and the materiality of historical memories. Moreover, LRSL activities are based on the valorisation of social practices in the neighbourhood, the goal of affirming the primacy of the common over private interest with the final objective of reaching a democratic public decision process regarding the transformation of the city.

"In this historic period Rome is plagued by a weak administrative system, LRSL believes self-management and re-appropriation practices could meet the social, housing and urban needs. The aim of LRSL is to protect the resources of the territory from speculation and exploitation and to manage them as Public Good" (Quaderni Urbanistica3, 2017).

Through discourse analysis it has been possible to define which are the main aspects of resistance practices carried out by the residents of San Lorenzo but also how these practices are carried out and which is their link with the territory.

Analysing both web articles and *Volonta di sapere*, the document LRSL submitted to the Urban Development Department of the city of Rome, resistance practices have been analysed.

The dominant discourse is the governmental one and it mainly takes the form of a single decisional and strategic document, named Guidelines, which defines “the potential transformations articulated in different sectors and contexts concerning the neighbourhood” (General Regulatory Plan, 2008). These Guidelines are required to draw up the SAP, a tool that aims to “identify actions and policies to requalify the area, starting from public spaces, services and the upgrading of historical and architectural places which shape the identity of the neighbourhood” (General Regulatory Plan, 2008).

What is striking is that the Guidelines’ chapter on Evaluation Synthesis does not mention the re-appropriated spaces of San Lorenzo even though they exactly meet the SAP goal. Indeed, re-appropriated spaces could be considered as providers of services for dwellers and as a mean to upgrade historical places that otherwise will be demolished or converted in private properties, thus avoiding that those places could be removed by the memory of the neighbourhood.

The studentification story-line

In *Volonta di sapere*, it is interesting that the diversity of the neighbourhood is described before explaining the how's and why's of re-appropriation practices, as it would be one of the driving force of the resistance, and not a consequence.

The studentification of San Lorenzo has emerged in both narratives, thus it can be argued the increase of students in the area is a shared storyline within the gentrification discourse, however shaped differently.

“The increasing share of students in the area is not only enlarging the population but it is also replacing it, forcing the residents to move out of the neighbourhood, thus changing its economic and social features”. (Progetto Urbano San Lorenzo - Governmental document, 2014)

“The temporariness of the students' stay in San Lorenzo creates substantial difficulties since it leads to underestimate the living conditions of the students (high rent fees and crowded conditions), lack of integration between students and residents and students' inability of feeling themselves as dwellers of San Lorenzo”. (Progetto Urbano San Lorenzo - Governmental document, 2014)

“The population of San Lorenzo is becoming more and more complex and articulated: the working class is melting with the student population, the centrality of the neighbourhood and its non-exclusivity attract the creative class but also migrants which are always more integrated in commercial and social fabric” (Volonta di sapere, 2014)

Analysing these quotes comes up the introduction of a new social class is represented as a criticality in the dominant discourse, moreover just the student class is mentioned and there is no reference about artists, activists and migrants, thus flattening the plurality of social classes that live in San Lorenzo. According to the dominant discourse, studentification causes the loss of the neighbourhood identity changing its social features, and even more crucial, it drives displacement. It also recognises insufficient integration between the students and the neighbourhood where they live.

Conversely, the counter narrative not only acknowledges the plurality of social classes in San Lorenzo but it also describes San Lorenzo as a diverse neighbourhood that keeps attracting different types of people and in which classes are melted together. In this view, the studentification does not lead to displacement.

According to Hajer (1993) a discourse can be said to dominate a given political realm only if it fulfils two conditions:

- It dominates the discursive space (discourse structuration) that is, “central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse”
- This is reflected in institutional practices (discourse institutionalisation) that is, the actual policy process is conducted according to the ideas of a given discourse.

Taking into consideration the statements above, the implementation of anti-studentification policies might be expected, however the dominant discourse is not institutionalised, or in other words, the institutional actions are not coherent with it, even though the actors involved in the production of discourse and actions, at the institutional level, are the same.

The truth of the matter is that, even though the government affirms studentification causes displacement in San Lorenzo, it is also promoting the construction of new student houses and a de-regulation of the night-life business.

Looking more deeply it turns out that the governmental aim of increasing the amount of students in the area began in 2014 with the governmental laissez-passer for the mall project in San Lorenzo, at Ex-Dogana. Besides the mall, the plan foresaw to address 42% of the total space to new houses and 18% to new student houses, even though the PRG (General Regulatory Plan) did not foresee student houses at all in that area. This plan failed thanks to a huge citizens' mobilisation, however in 2017 a big state-owned financial institution, CDP, started a joint venture with The Student Hotel to build the Dutch luxury hotel for students.

“We are truly glad to start this urban requalification while restoring the spot to build new houses which are required in a developing neighbourhood”. (Aldo Mazzocco, CDP responsible for Real Estate department, 2017)

Taking the Ex-Dogana projects as example of governmental practice in the area, it clearly appears the studentification discourse and the institutionalised actions are incoherent with each other. The State affirms students are forcing residents to move out of the neighbourhood and at the same time it is promoting a privatisation of public spaces and the development of infrastructures that will attract more students.

Conversely, the counter-narrative has a different perception of the diversity of the neighbourhood, recognising its role in fuelling the political activism of San Lorenzo:

“Even though the complexity of the area brings contradictions, it succeeds in renovating the traditional feature of being a culturally and socially open working class neighbourhood, based on respect and solidarity”. (Volonta di sapere, 2014).

The territoriality storyline

Angelcos (2017) developed the term “territorial disqualification” to describe the urban development that implies a threat both to an individual’s position in the social structure and to the construction of personal and collective identity. In San Lorenzo, territorial disqualification may be triggered by speculative urban policies and large privatization which inevitably lead to gentrification. The values generated by being in a community, like neighbourliness and kinship, are the subjects defended in struggles against territorial disqualification.

In San Lorenzo, the residents do not claim just their working class identity, they also want to defend a lifestyle they have been consolidating in recent decades but that it is losing value. Both the lifestyle and the identity construction are strongly related to the territory and its spaces.

The integrity of the territory and its spaces is what is most endangered in San Lorenzo, indeed a new feature of the gentrification process in the neighbourhood is the demolition of historical industrial sites and related erasure of the materiality of their historical memories. The General Regulatory Plan defines San Lorenzo as “historic neighbourhood”, according to which the developing measures should aim to “valorise existing qualities” to “preserve the typical and historical features of the neighbourhood”. However, once again the governmental discourse is not coherent with its actions.

The re-appropriation activities in the area are carried out through the occupation of those places the government wants to transform in private spots to keep them public and to provide the citizens with places that promotes culture, sociability and solidarity in an affordable way. Thus, more than just explaining the resistance activities carried out by the residents of San Lorenzo, the discourse analysis can be useful to highlight the relations these actions have with the territory where they are embedded.

Esc and Communia are two squat that helped in building relations between the residents and the new social classes, indeed:

“Both places aim to raise the public awareness on the needs of specific classes (migrants, working class and students) and to meet those needs collectively through the implementation of alternative services, inclusive places and sharing knowledge between actors through auto educational activities”. (Volonta di sapere, 2014)

In this statement both the main resistance practices are mentioned: re-appropriation activities and production of knowledge.

Comunia is a project originated in Ex-Fonderie Bastianelli, historic foundries where important monuments have been forged. The activists occupied the foundries when the government decided to build 58 apartments, thus demolishing the industrial archaeological site. After three months of resistance the activists have been evicted and the site demolished, however the plan failed anyway because the Regional Court blocked it. The residents while resisting through squatting to protect the place appealed also to the Regional Court against the City of Rome with the reason that there has not been the approval from Sovrintendenza Capitolina, which is an office that “manage, maintain and upgrade the archaeological, historical and monumental assets

of the City of Rome" and it came out some documents were missing. The activists of *Communia* then occupied *Ex-officine Piaggio* (Italian mopeds' factory) providing some services for the neighbourhood like a library for students, English course, Italian language course for migrants and *Karalo*, a tailor shop where migrants can sell their products (mentioned as best integration practices in 2017 by an Italian national newspaper).

Esc Atelier is the result of a huge student mobilisation against some university reforms and the increasing precariousness of jobs. They occupied an abandoned industrial site in San Lorenzo and nowadays they provide citizens with a legal assistance office for both workers and migrants and cultural festivals and activities cooperating with researcher, publishers and writers.

"Re-appropriation activities are strongly interwoven with the concept of urban public space, more concretely the re-appropriation of urban spaces is truly related to the self-management of the whole urban territory. Even though these activities are consolidated on the territory their social value is still not recognised by the institutions" (*Volonta di sapere, 2014*).

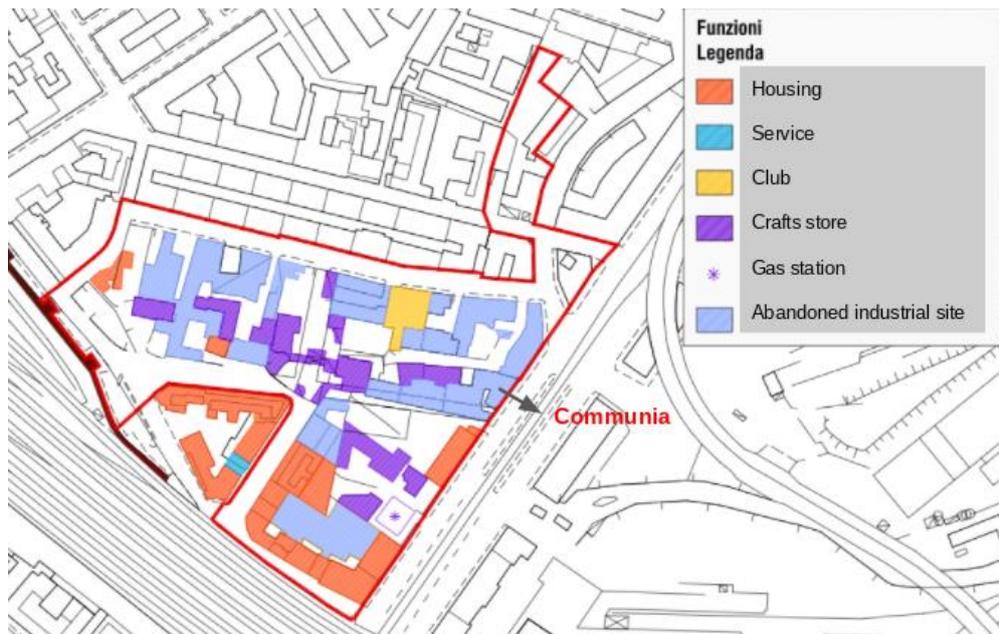
Another re-appropriated place is *Nuovo Cinema Palazzo*, the old cinema of San Lorenzo. In 2011, when the government decided to build a Casino, some residents and activists occupied the place to maintain its cultural and public features. Its occupation has been considered as the symbol of the possibility residents have to change and protect their area against the speculation, that is the reason why *LRS* started having meetings there.

"That occupation aimed at challenging the system of public and private decisions that drive the contemporary urban transformation, which is not considering the needs of the territory neither the social consequences of these decisions" (*Volonta di Sapere, 2014*)

In the counter-narrative, the territoriality story-line reveals the residents' aim to be tied to their neighbourhood and the re-appropriation of abandoned industrial places is a way to turn this aim into practice since it means protecting those place that symbolise the past of the working class area. The counter-narrative argues a territory has its needs that should be considered by the public and private actors, re-appropriation practices could represent a manner to self-manage the urban land and meet its needs.

What is striking is that the governmental discourse does not describe the territory as a place lived and experienced by its residents and it does not mention any activities or services provided by the activists. The image below is the representation done by the Urban Planning Department of a portion of San Lorenzo. As it is possible to note, even though *Communia* meets exactly the SAP goal of "identify actions and policies to requalify the area, starting from public spaces, services and the upgrading of historical and architectural places which shape the identity of the neighbourhood", it is represented just as an abandoned industrial site.

Image 4: Representation of a portion of San Lorenzo and its functionalities



Source: Guidelines, Urban Planning Department, 2015.

The metaphor of “the holes” in the territoriality storyline

“This area appears as a huge urban hole. Currently, the land is entirely occupied by industrial and artisanal sheds, mostly abandoned. Since this area is completely degraded it urgently needs a requalification based on a functional mix” (Evaluation Synthesis, 2015 - governmental document).

The governmental proposal foresees the demolition of the industrial sites and the development of a functional mix based on: minimum 50% of housing, minimum 20% of commercial or touristic activities, maximum 10% of productive activities, 20% is the flexible share.

Firstly, the demolition of the industrial sites is not in line with the desires of the residents. Indeed, the citizens through re-appropriation activities, are actually carrying out the opposite strategy consisting in preserving the previous industrial buildings.

Secondly, the governmental actions once again show incoherence with the studentification discourse they promote, which defines the increase of students in San Lorenzo as the cause of displacement. As a matter of fact, the proposal reveals they want to increase the amount of houses in that area, thus boosting the housing prices of the existing stock.

Thirdly, the dominant discourse by defining the area as a huge urban hole is not only ignoring the role Communia has in the neighbourhood but also the historic value those holes have for San Lorenzo.

Indeed, these holes represents the link between the territoriality storyline and the concept of memory. The holes represent the most tragic event that the neighbourhood experienced: the bombing attack of Rome during the World War II. In 1943, 500 American bombers dropped

1.168 tons of bombs destroying the entire working class district and killing 3,000 Italian civilians. The main target was the freight yard (Dogana), the place where 1022 Jews have been crammed in 18 freight wagons to be deported to Auschwitz. These holes represent not just that day but also the resistance the residents did against the fascists and related loss of lives.

LRS� believes the protection of the neighbourhood's past and the materiality of its historical memories is crucial. The residents of San Lorenzo would like to create the first example of "dispersed museum" or "scattered museum", not a museum in a single block but split out in various historical buildings in the neighbourhood. The goal is to create a shared database of the collective memory, both a real and a virtual space to preserve the historical past.

"It is the tool we chose to narrate the city and our living through the upgrading of the past of our neighbourhood. The empty spaces left by the bombarded building will be lived as yard without walls, places of memory and of cultural and social identity to show the living that the bombs did not delete". (Volonta di sapere, 2014).

The second main strategy carried out by the residents of San Lorenzo to challenge the gentrification of the neighbourhood is the politicisation of the residents through practices of collective knowledge production to share knowledge and ideas about what is going on in the area.

The Nuovo Cinema Palazzo hosted several seminars. The Dutch-American sociologist, Saskia Sassen, did a lecture in San Lorenzo and she defined the occupation of the Nuovo Cinema Palazzo a territory in itself. Indeed, according to her, is not the density to create the city but its complexity.

"The street becomes the most significant space, the people's bodies create the territory". (S. Sassen, 2013)

In San Lorenzo studies have been carried out about the temporality and spatiality of the neighbourhood, starting from the perceptions and needs of its residents. This research has been done by l'École Nationale Supérieure d'architecture de Paris-la Villette. Including the residents in this project led them to start thinking about the functionalities of their neighbourhood.

In collaboration with the Open University, LRS� organised also a week of workshops and seminars led by international researchers like David Harvey, Engin Isin and Costas Douzinas debating on the right to the city.

The latest event has been "Staying put! An anti-gentrification toolkit for the Southern Europe". The workshop has been organised by Sandra Annunziata and Loretta Lees (Department of Geography, University of Leicester, UK). The workshop aimed to engage collectively in an exploration of the potential and limits of anti-gentrification discourses and practices in facing the regimes of expulsion that characterises Southern European cities in the current period of austerity. It has been given voice to anti-eviction platforms, housing activists, housing scholars and neighbourhood committees struggling against gentrification (both new-build gentrification and tourism gentrification).

Discussion

The sub-question answered in this paragraph is:

Which resistance strategies do the residents of San Lorenzo employ to prevent state-led gentrification?

Carrying out discourse analysis came out the resistance practices used by the residents of San Lorenzo are mainly two:

- Re-appropriation, through squatting, of those places which were public but become private in a second stage (Communia, Esc, Nuovo Cinema Palazzo).
- Politicisation of the residents through practices of collective knowledge production with the aim of sharing information and ideas about what is going on in the neighbourhood.

Through discourse analysis it has been possible also to analyse how and why the residents of San Lorenzo carry out resistance practices. Indeed, it emerged a strong attachment with the past of the neighbourhood which explains the re-appropriation as a way to protect and keep alive the previous industrial sites. At the same time, the production of knowledge aims to increase the awareness about issues that plagued the neighbourhood, like gentrification and displacement. The how's and why's of both types of resistance practices will be further explained by the participants of the interviews. Finally, it is possible to affirm the social categories of San Lorenzo follow the three steps approach of resistance defined in Chapter 2: bottom-up mobilizations, resistance actions and legal actions. How this three steps approach is applied in San Lorenzo will be further described in Chapter 5.

4.2 Representation of various social groups

The second research question is:

How are the various social groups represented by the contestation process?

The question will be first answered through discourse analysis to understand how much the social groups are included at the narrative level, and then through semi-structured interviews carried out with participatory mapping. Combining these two techniques will emerge if what LRSL expresses in its discourses is also perceived by the social groups that live in San Lorenzo, contradictions may come up. Analysing the resistance discourse made by LRSL it will be also possible to find out which social groups are included in their present and future resistance practices and which are not but also whether these groups feel to be represented by LRSL practices.

LRS� can be described as a resistance hub, a forum where persons of different squats or projects but also residents, students and retailers can gather to carry out more structured resistance practices which can also have different goals as a result of the plurality of persons involved. As a way of explanation, what has not yet emerged in the analysis carried out by far is the interest that LRS� has for the children and teenager wellbeing. Residents, students and activists started a project named "Atletico San Lorenzo" in an existent and rarely used sport complex located in the neighbourhood. The project started in 2013 with the aim of providing the citizens with free sporting facilities and courses while promoting a participatory management model based on self-funding and self-management. The place where the project is located is managed by Knights of Columbus (they built the place after the war) but there is an agreement with them according to which Atletico San Lorenzo can use the sporting complex in some time slots during the day. The project Atletico started with the participation of just a football team, nowadays there are male and female football teams, male and female basket teams and a mixed volleyball team.

"This way of shared management could be extended to other structures in the neighbourhood that need to be recovered to keep the service affordable and the place lived by its residents" (Volonta di sapere).

"Atletico San Lorenzo is not just a sport centre. It aims to be a tool of social transformation, a reference point for the neighbourhood growth and development with the final goal of promoting social and ethical value, like respect and antiracism. For this reason, besides sport activities Atletico organises many social, cultural and musical events in the neighbourhood and for the neighbourhood with particular focus on public spaces" (Atletico San Lorenzo).

The way they manage the place can truly represent the legal way (without squatting) of providing the residents with a public service while maintaining the bottom up participation and thus, the affordability. The two goals of Atletico are the affordability of sport and the added social value. They do resistance against gentrification and speculative activities counteracting the profitable business of sporting clubs by keeping sport affordable and public. Regarding the added social value, this project aims to strengthen the link with the territory while promoting ethical and social values like anti-racism and solidarity through their activities. For the past four years, Atletico has been also managing a small green area in San Lorenzo organising recreational activities for children and neighbourhood bbq's.

The children and teenagers of San Lorenzo are also protagonists of another resistant project. Since 1992, an association named *Il Grande Cocomero* (the big watermelon) occupied a building in San Lorenzo. This association deals with the child neuropsychiatry and it is based on the voluntary work of doctors and psychologists. They organise writing and musical workshops trying always to keep the relation between the children and the neighbourhood strong. The association would need a bigger space to expand their activities and keep strengthening the resilience of the young generations.

“Urban planning should combine the built space with the social and cultural space, it should make a city genuine and it should provide spaces that can become places. That is our claim for space”. (Il Grande Cocomero)

“We imagine a lab where it is possible to recycle, to do woodworking, to repair bike, to sew clothes, a place where the young patients could learn a profession. This would help them to re-activate their capability, to be more confident but also to get an alternative opportunity for the university one, which often is inaccessible, also humanising the recovering period ” (Volonta di Sapere)

The project Il Grande Cocomero brought the inclusion of children in resistance practices a step further including also those children that have more difficulties in living the everyday life while trying to reinforce their relationship with the neighbourhood and its residents. The resistance practice is once again based on the affordability of the service and on the added social value that the inclusion of those children and their increased wellbeing gives to the neighbourhood.

Students and migrants have their own place in Communia. There is a students-managed library open until late to fill the gap produced by the University’s services which cannot provide the students with libraries open until evening. The library in Communia is named Sharewood and it is managed by students for other students, they have a file sharing spot and the opportunity to join free English courses. While Karalo, the migrant tailor shop, is another Communia’s project. The aim is to promote an alternative way of welcoming which enable the migrants to be self-sufficient, teaching them a profession and providing them with a place where they can sell their products.

Analysing Volonta di Sapere it comes out LRSL wants to include more the local retailers in their resistance practices. This is in line with the territoriality storyline and the metaphor of memory since the presence of craftsmen is a traditional feature of the neighbourhood, which has always been lived by artisans, carpenters, marble workers and local food retailers. Even if the commercial activities have always been the dominant economy in San Lorenzo, a new type of businesses recently started taking the place of the historical ones, thus changing also the type of people visiting San Lorenzo. The visitors of the neighbourhood are always more attracted to the new commercial supply: mostly based on food and alcohol consumption. LRSL takes as example the gradual increase in unpopularity of the historical street food market in San Lorenzo, they suggest the implementation of some biological and 0km food stores since in Rome there have already been several successful examples of market renovation based on changes of the supplied type of food. According LRSL, the market could also reflect the neighbourhood’s interests, including for example a library, a bike repair shop and a temporary stand for local shops to promote their own activity.

“The local residents do not get benefits from the new economic opportunities related to the alcohol business rather we suffer the consequently decrease of liveability in the neighbourhood. We would like to implement an ethic code of conduct which will ensure the survivability of our local businesses”.

Even though LRSL does not affirm new businesses are not welcome, they ask for a more rigid commercial regulation. They suggested implementing an ethic code of conduct that should be based on the respect of the opening time, the respect of external spaces, no noise, no slot machines and no informal work. As a way of explanation, the respect of the opening time would be essential to influence the type of persons, and thus the users, that live San Lorenzo. Indeed, local businesses are mainly based on daytime consumptions while nowadays the neighbourhood is mostly lived during the night time, thus increasing the economic crisis of the local businesses which are becoming increasingly unpopular and are more and more forced to move out of their neighbourhood.

Analysing Volonta di Sapere it comes out LRSL has in mind several plans for the renovation of the Ex Dogana, which according to them could be an emblematic case of the wished neighbourhood's development. Considering its historical and social value, that space could be a place for all the social groups present in San Lorenzo, LRSL believes the Dogana's renovation should promote education activities, research and knowledge production in all its forms but also inclusion, integration and welcoming. They image a place of Memory (migrants' memory and neighbourhood's memory), a library, a meeting place for young and elderly, a theatre, an agricultural market, an handicraft lab, but also affordable housing rooms.

In LRSL's plans the renovation of the Ex-Dogana would consider the main storylines of the counter-narrative. Indeed, the memory of neighbourhood would be assured avoiding the privatisation of the place and it would be boosted through the construction of the Memory Museum. In addition, among the services pictured by LRSL there is affordable housing for students too, thus remarking that students are not considered a burden for the neighbourhood rather a category to protect. Moreover, by promoting a participatory and bottom-up type of management of the place while putting efforts to keep it public, the speculation activities would be rejected from the area.

Finally, to confirm the thesis that the governmental discourse is not inclusive, the words "inclusion" and "participation" have been counted in both Volonta di Sapere and Progetto Urbano San Lorenzo, the resistance and governmental documents respectively. In the governmental discourse the word "inclusion" is not used at all, however "participation" has been used three times to refer to the participation phase it should be done before the content of the Guidelines became effective (SAP). However, analysing the resistance discourse there is actually a quote about this participation phase, describing it as "*lesson made by the planner to show, more than debate, the projects that in the meantime are falling down in the neighbourhood*". (Volonta di Sapere)

While, in the resistance discourse the term "inclusion" has been used 7 times and "participation" 17 times. Observing the framework in which these words are included it appears both the concepts of inclusion and participation are considered crucial in the resistance discourse. Indeed, in the first page of Volonta di sapere the principles on which the document is based are listed and the social inclusion is among these principles. Social inclusion is also one of the functions the future development plans for the area should include according to LRSL: "*The renovation of the Ex Dogana should promote research....integration, welcoming and social*

inclusion" (Volonta di Sapere). Participation is also used to describe one of the outcomes of the re-appropriation activities, indeed "the self-management activities had a great role in raising the citizen participation in the neighbourhood's life while re-appropriation strategies enabled some empty buildings to be public and "participated" again". (Volonta di sapere).

Interviews have been done to see whether the inclusivity discourse made by LRSL actually fits in its resistance practices. Participatory mapping has been used as icebreaker for further discussion to collect the required data to answer the second and third research questions, which are:

2. How (to what extent) are the various social groups represented by the contestation process?

3. How can the needs of the various social groups be combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans?

The participants were 20 persons consisting of students, long-time residents, activists and retailers.

I made contact with students in La Sapienza University, I got in touch with residents and retailers just hanging out in the main piazza of San Lorenzo. While it has been more complex organising interviews with activists since I wanted to interview persons I barely met. I will briefly list and explain the main challenges as following:

- At the beginning I planned to interview migrants too, however it turned out more difficult than expected. The migrants that hang out in Communia through the project Karalo would have speak as Communia's activists but generally speaking migrants have been living in Rome less than two years and they cannot recognize any change in the area. However, I interviewed Khan, a Bangladeshi food store owner, since his name came out in one of the previous interview as owner of a place that should be protected by gentrification since it is affordable.
- I also planned to interview a fixed amount of persons per category (5 retailers, 5 activists and so on) however it turned out most of the participants could identify themselves in a single category because most of the students are also residents and most of residents are also activists.
- In my draft plan I thought it could have been possible to arrange three interviews per day but I have been invited to lunches, bbqs, reunions and activities by the participants to carry out participatory mapping. It has been delightful of course but time-expensive.

To those who have participated in my research activity, I first briefly explained my thesis using a semi-structured discourse which is the following:

"The general aim of the research is to analyse the resistance practices against gentrification and speculation carried out by the residents of San Lorenzo. What I have already done is a discourse analysis which compare the governmental discourse about the regeneration of San Lorenzo and the resistance one, mainly carried out by LRSL and its main document: Volonta di Sapere. What I

would like to know now is whether the several social groups that live in San Lorenzo like students, activists, residents, migrants and sellers feel to be included in the resistance activities carried out in their territory, as knowledge production and re-appropriation activities. Finally, I would like to analyse whether the needs of the several social groups can actually fit with each other and combined to come up with an effective, bottom-up and inclusive counter-proposal respect the governmental one”.

Then, I provided the participants with three colours, the following map and I asked them if I could record the interview for research’ purposes. I explained the map I provided them just saying:

“This is a map of San Lorenzo, I labelled some of the main places like the church, the square, the cemetery and the University, and some of the resistance places of the neighbourhood just to help you orienteering”.

Image 5: Map of San Lorenzo provided to the participants



Source: Author

This is what I explained to most of the participants, however some of them were already aware I was doing research on the area (informed by persons I previously interviewed) and it was their initiative to get in contact with me to “express their own opinion”. It was unexpected, or at least not organised, that with most of the elderly residents and activists the participatory mapping had a marginal role respect the whole story they wanted to tell me about the neighbourhood. Conversely, it has been an useful icebreaker with the youngest participants and with people which were not politically involved in the area.

The list of questions was fixed however, sometimes it worked just as starting point for further discussions. The questions were the following:

With the black colour draw your daily path in San Lorenzo, explaining me where you are used to passing by.

- a) *Do you feel yourself included and represented by some of the places of the neighbourhood? Which one and why?*
- b) *To what extent do you feel to be represented by both bottom up practices and governmental ones?*

With the green colour make a circle in the places that according to you is crucial to preserve from gentrification-related threats like demolition, privatisation and speculation. Please do not indicate more than 5 places!

- c) *Which will be the impact if gentrification will win over these places?*

With the blue colour cross the places where you would change the intended use, or in other words which services you would need and image in San Lorenzo which are absent now and where you would set them.

Generally, the first part of the conversation aimed at providing an understanding about the degree of inclusion experienced by the participants in relation to both governmental and resistance practices and related places. In a second stage I tried to come up with some services and places the participants want to be preserved by any type of change because of their value for the territory. The last part of the conversation focused on what the participants would imagine and need in the neighbourhood to analyse if it is truly possible to come up with an alternative solution that include the needs of all the social groups living in the area.

To understand how the several social groups are represented by the contestation process the participants' feelings of participation and inclusion in the governmental and resistance processes will be analysed as well as their attachment to San Lorenzo's places.

"I am a worker in a precarious condition, governmental policies with regard to youth working conditions are absent or they suck while just also carrying out bottom up politic is a way to activate the people which are completely distrusted. Bottom up resistance practices represent a way to express themselves and to get rescued" (Claudia, workers, resident and activist, 7 July)

"Regarding the governmental policies, I am interested in gender issues...do you know what they are doing about it? Closing the social consulting rooms in the poorest neighbourhoods of Rome!"
(Federica, activist, 27 May)

"The only governmental presence is represented by the University, otherwise there are just some police cars hanging around the neighbourhood. The State abandoned S. Lorenzo that is why i cannot feel being represented by the governmental policies. Regarding the resistance practices i

would say places like Communia and Nuovo Cinema Palazzo took the place of the State trying to renovate the area, however they also have some limitation. The biggest one is maybe that, unlike the State which could do it but it does not, they cannot fight the organised crime, one of the most challenging problem of the neighbourhood” (Giulia, resident and student, 27May)

A student, a worker and an activist gave their opinions about how much they feel to be represented by governmental and resistance actions. It clearly comes out that according to all of them the State has withdrawn from the area. Firstly, Claudia gave voice to the youth unemployment issue that has been plaguing Italy during the past 10 years. She feels to be represented by resistance practices since at least they can be used as a way of expressing needs and opinions. While considering the local dimension, Federica mentioned a gender issues in relation to the lack of consulting rooms while Giulia explained the State is not fighting the crime in San Lorenzo, indeed “there are just some police cars hanging around”, thus referring to safety issue. The consulting rooms issue has been an hot topic in these past few months in the Italian political debate. Their use is regulated by the law 194/1978 which define these places as “crucial to guarantee the women’s wellbeing, in particular in relation to sexual and reproductive health” (GU n. 140 del 22-5-1978). However, the government is closing down these services, especially in Rome and what is striking is that they are shutting down the consulting rooms in the most needed and popular neighbourhoods like Centocelle, Pigneto and San Lorenzo. Pigneto is a neighbourhood close to San Lorenzo which has been gentrified ten years ago mainly through the commercial and artistic sectors and where the consulting room has been closed for renovation purposes when gentrification started and it never opened again. While in San Lorenzo, the service could have had a central role in the sexual education of young adults that live the neighbourhood but also in this case the consulting room has been closed one year ago. The global feminist movement *Ni una menos*, also active in San Lorenzo, is claiming the need of these places in the neighbourhood, proposing a re-appropriation and self-management of them while stressing on their political, cultural, social values besides the health one. Even though it was not mentioned in this research, the conversation with Federica helped this issue coming out since it also affects the neighbourhood, it has been also mentioned while interviewing Saveria, a student and not an activist, thus less involved in the political debate about the consulting rooms:

“I would like a women’s space in San Lorenzo, a place that can be both a consulting room and a meeting spot for women, i know that there is a feminist movement in Communia but there should have an independent space in the neighbourhood to attract not just the activists but all the residents and students, since the gender issue has not just a political value but also a societal one” (Saveria, student, 2 June).

According to Giulia, a resident, the declining presence of the police is another example of the retreat of the State from San Lorenzo. She explained the State abandoned the area thus enabling the rise of crime which has also been indirectly favoured by the liberalisation of the alcohol licences that enabled an increase of bars and breweries in San Lorenzo, thus turning the neighbourhood just in a night-time space.

Patrick, an Italo-American elderly resident and activist of San Lorenzo (he is part of ANPI, the Italian Partisans Association) gave also his opinion about the crime and the related state actions:

“the police station is the most dangerous place in the neighbourhood, Stefano Cucchi’s case (a guy that has been beaten to death by the policemen) can teach you what they do, they spy the activists instead of checking upon the drug business in the piazza” (Patrick, resident and partisan, 15th June).

Thus, from the interviews came up the main limits the governmental action is facing in the area represent the reasons why some activists, students and residents feel more represented by the resistance practices. Indeed, Giulia stressed out places like Communia and Nuovo Cinema Palazzo take over the State in renovating the neighbourhood, while Federica as an activist appreciates the opportunity resistance activities give to people to decide, participate and be included in the neighbourhood’s change.

“I feel represented by the reappropriation practices cause their aim is to protect our neighbourhood from being just a profit-base area. Both Communia and Esc indeed renovated a space and give it back to the neighbourhood as a public space also carrying out services which enable the development of self management practices. I also appreciate they always keep an eye on the gentrification and speculation processes that are going on in the area which otherwise will be something that nobody will speak about” (Emiliano, student, resident and activist, 5 June).

Both Giulia and Emiliano affirmed that resistance practices are taking over the State in renovating the neighbourhood, in protecting its public spaces and spreading the knowledge about the changes that occur in the area.

More than just explaining whether the participants feel represented or not by resistance practices, some of them also explained why bottom-up actions are more inclusive than governmental one, also helping me go a step further my personal knowledge about them. The first lesson came by Gigliola, an 80 years old woman and long-time resident of San Lorenzo which explained me the importance of knowledge production as a resistance practice. While the second lesson came by Emiliano, a resident, student and activist of San Lorenzo which explained me the differences between the governmental and the resistance practices.

“The knowledge identity allows you to be aware of the challenges present in your neighbourhood against which is important to resist but it also gives you the opportunity to change it in a positive manner. Indeed, it is not just re-appropriation of an empty place but it is also filling that space with culture, demonstrating that a space can become a place that meet the residents’ needs.....the fact that Cinema Palazzo is lived by two Palm D’Or (Golden Palm): Elio Germano e Marcello Fonte which have both done a lot to protect the place against speculation, it means the knowledge production is succeeding” (Gigliola, resident, 30 May).

“ What is different between the governmental action and the resistance one is the process used to meet the neighbourhood’s needs. When you find out the needs of a population you can meet those

needs in two ways: making profit of them, or in other words solving the problem while obtaining working or economical gains, that is fine I mean that is how the market-based economy works. Or giving also a political value to those needs trying to create a community around the need's response. As a way of explanation Atletico san Lorenzo promotes the right to sport, particularly crucial for San Lorenzo's children which do not have access to sporting facilities anymore since they have been moved out of the area after gentrification caught on. By creating a community to meet a need you are providing the residents with antibodies to a neighbourhood which is losing its identity as a consequence of individualism" (Emiliano, student, resident and activist, 5 June).

So far the knowledge production has been described as a strategy used to increase the awareness of the people about what is going on in the area, however thanks to Gigliola's interview it comes out a more complex explanation. Indeed, the production of knowledge can help residents not just to figure out how and where gentrification and speculation are having an impact on their neighbourhood so that people know what to make resistance for, but the creation of knowledge itself can represent the alternative to that speculation. That is what happened in Nuovo Cinema Palazzo, residents resisted against the creation of a Casino to create a knowledge producer place.

In Emiliano's interview the difference between the two political sides has been clearly explained: the governmental strategies rely on the economic return while the resistance actions on the social one. He also stressed out twice the importance of creating a community while meeting the neighbourhood's needs, or in other words the importance of self-management practices. Indeed, if it is the community itself to meet a need (like the right to do sport of San Lorenzo's children) this can increase the sense of belonging and union among the residents besides of course the deeply comprehension of each other's needs.

The second question I asked is to circle the places that need to be preserved by speculation or gentrification and think about which would be the impact over the area if those places had been changed or demolished as a consequence of gentrification. The aim of the question was to get an understanding about people's opinion and sense of belonging to resistance places of San Lorenzo and to those places LRSL aims to protect. However, this type of question help me also to realise how much LRSL's activities actually represent the residents' view about the neighbourhood.

It is surprising that almost all participants, thus not just activists, recognised Cinema Palazzo and Communia as a crucial place in the neighbourhood, affirming that:

"It is the type of place where you can feel a sense of belonging to, it seems to be at home, it represents my idea of San Lorenzo" (Giulia, resident)

"If Nuovo Cinema Palazzo and Communia would be demolished it would miss the discourse about the protection of the neighbourhood cause it is not carried out somewhere else, San Lorenzo would become a dormitory suburb close to the University" (Stefano, student)

“ESC and Communia are not just places to study but also where you can confront yourself with other people and create an alternative knowledge...there are also assistance points for migrants and workers, direct supporting spots in the territory” (Silvia, activist)

..

Even though the participants could have easily highlighted the resistance spots as places that need to be protected by any change, since they have been labelled in the map and because the discourse focussed on them, many respondents came up with very different places which are actually under attack by gentrification, thus demonstrating a wider political awareness about their neighbourhood.

“The piazza is crucial, i do not want to see an hotel over there, if they change that place there would be a further commercialisation of the neighbourhood and loss of memory” (Stefano, student)

“The Bangladeshi is risking to close down, the police already stopped its activity for couple of days in the past few months, i want to tell this to the Dutch people, it is the most affordable Bangladeshi shop in Rome, I am wondering if he will survive in this neighbourhood” (Priscilla, student).

“I would like the gentrification of the businesses could be arrested, San Lorenzo is becoming a place where you can just eat and drink alcohol, it is not easy for a daily-time shop to stay open, it is a pity to say but the best of San Lorenzo is illegal, I would protect it and the tradition shops here”. (Anna, book shop owner)

“The market is a place where the neighbourhood identity still comes out, you can meet and chat the elderly men, your neighbours, the baker otherwise we will have just carrefour and in’s. Speaking about Social spaces of San Lorenzo without them the area would lose places of alternative sociality and value’s promotion” (Giulio, student).

What is interesting is that the students recognise the historical and typical places of the neighbourhood, like the market and the piazza, as crucial, thus contrasting the governmental discourse which accuse them as the only perpetrators of gentrification and poorly integrated in the neighbourhood. Stefano mentioned both the threats of commercialisation and loss of memory, thus showing his attachment to San Lorenzo and its history. Giulio explained me the high value of the market, thus showing the same concern expressed by Volonta di Sapere and LRSL’s activists to keep the food market alive.

“It should not be a masonry and closed market but made with pop up and temporary stands where farmers can sell their product daily and during the night there could be youth associations with street food trucks. In this way the market would be more crowded both in the day but especially during the night, cause now it is just an empty and out of sight structure which attract just drug dealers” (Patrick, long-time resident, activists).

Priscilla, a student, told me she would like the grocery shop managed by Khan, a Bangladeshi man, would be protected by eviction since it is truly affordable. This view seems to confirm again the students are against gentrification, not only by recognising the historical value of some buildings but also the importance the affordability more than “fancyness” has for them.

Discussion

The sub-question answered in this paragraph is:

How are the various social groups represented by the contestation process?

The question has been answered through discourse analysis to understand how much the social groups are included in the resistance discourse, and through semi-structured interviews carried out with participatory mapping. By combining these two techniques has emerged that what LRSL expresses in its discourses is also perceived by the social groups that live in San Lorenzo.

From a discourse analysis it can be affirmed both resistance dialogue and practices (as well as future plans) seem to include all the social categories like retailers, migrants and children. Conversely, the governmental discourse, represented in this analysis by “San Lorenzo Urban Project”, mentions just the students as further social category that live in the neighbourhood, apart from the long-time residents. Through interviews have been possible to get an understanding about how much people feel to be represented by LRSL’s discourse and it comes out there is coherence between the resistance view and the one of residents, students and retailers.

4.3 Collective alternative to urban plans

The third research question is:

How can the needs of the various social groups be combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans?

Since at a theoretical level LRSL promotes an alternative plan for the area including all social segments present in San Lorenzo, this research aims to find out if its plan is elitist, like the governmental one or not. In other words, keeping in mind that at least both at the narrative and practical levels the resistance practices tend to include the several social groups it is important to understand whether these practices and related future plans over the area represent just the activists’ view or they actually take into consideration the other categories’ need.

This sub-question has been answered during the interviews carried out through participatory mapping, asking the participants to define their needs in relation to what is missing in San Lorenzo but also what they would change in their area.

What participants need		What participant do not need	
Green areas	10	Ex-Dogana	12
Affordable students services	9	Shacks	4
Traditional neighbourhood places	8	Cafes and Pubs	4
Self-management practices	7		
Women spaces	4		
Sporting facilities	3		
Cultural activities	3		

It comes out the major request of the participants is to change the functionality of the Ex-Dogana.

Priscilla: "I would like to see the EX-Dogana as a big squat and social centre like the ex OPG in Naples organising many activities including all social categories of the neighbourhood"

Giulio: "I agree with her about the Ex-Dogana, there should be a community meeting to discuss about that space, to understand how to keep it public and at the service of the neighbourhood in relation to its needs." (Giulio & Priscilla, students)

Even though the Ex-Dogana is a highly popular place it truly seems people that live in San Lorenzo do not like hanging around there. In fact most of the participants would image a different service and, as Giulio and Priscilla explained, a different type of management. Some people argued there should be an affordable student dorm while others would see a place that actually represent the neighbourhood consisting of services for migrants, women, children, students and residents. This is an emblematic case representing how much the residents' need fit with the LRSL action which projected a public Ex-Dogana with libraries, co-working space, an auditorium and a meeting piazza for everyone. Participants expressed their disappointment for the amount of pubs and shacks in the area since both of them contribute to the rise of decay and crime in San Lorenzo. However, what is striking is that all the needs have been indicated by the participants are in line and included in LRSL' view. The most frequently mentioned are green areas and affordable students services, considering both libraries and houses.

"I would like to see a green ring around San Lorenzo, i image it like the Caracalla's one with the archaeological route, I like the idea of a long space where you can take a stroll or run, a place for people of all ages, it would remind me the idea of an open space cause often San Lorenzo is represented with a closed shape. A green ring could be like a breath for the neighbourhood but also for the residents. Moreover, Rome is the only European city which has maintained its original city walls, in San Lorenzo we have that wall and we should invest more on it maybe with the green ring". (Gigliola- old time resident and activist)

Gigliola, an activist of LRSL, explained the green ring project and her feelings about it, however it comes out that is the most compelling need for other participants too.

"I would like to see the Bastianelli foundry as they were before. It was a stunning and historical place, there were the Roman photographic school and a theatre that is why is important to give it back to its neighbourhood. The same is true for the small shacks close to Communia where recently the crime has found a spot in the area, however they actually have a symbolic value for San Lorenzo cause they were part of the industrial area and i would like those shacks would be renovated and turned again in handicraft' studios". (Claudia, worker-activist-resident).

Some participants, 8 out of 20, expressed their desire to give back to the neighbourhood and its residents the traditional and historical places that have always characterised the area. It is surprising to see the persons living San Lorenzo, not just the residents that have been living there for a long time, want to preserve it by any change. This feeling is represented by the negative opinion about Ex-Dogana and the big amount of pubs but it is also expressed in the overall aim of protecting the traditional and historical spots like the market (often mentioned) and the piazza.

By and large, the participants' needs and views appear coherent with each other. However, there are two outliers represented by two shopkeepers. Their point of view may perfectly explain and represent what is going on in San Lorenzo. They both have a shop close to Communia and in front of Ex-Dogana. Ercole is a low educated man, living in the periphery of the city, with a strong accent, completely uninformed about politics and owner of a bar. Even though he has been working in San Lorenzo for 9 years he could not understand the map and circle his shop thus I adapted the interview and just asked him what has changed in the area while taking a coffee in his bar. Since the interview is significant, several parts have been reported here.

"I saw many changes here, when I arrived the business was in a slump cause the Dogana and its workers were just moved out of Rome. After some years you guys occupied Communia and my business started rising again cause more people hung around here during the day, however since Ex-Dogana has been turned in a popular nightlife place I can actually survive even though I had to adapt my opening hours until 5 AM during the weekend..."

... I receive a penalty because i sell alcohol during the night when it is not allowed but he (an Indian food place) did not even though we are Italian and he is a migrant!!...

... I just hope you (Communia) can stay there cause you did a lot for that place, it was a junkyard, lived by mice and heroin addicts..

... All i want is to work, our needs won't be met by the government, nothing will change, i just want you (Communia) and them (Ex-Dogana) will keep being here to makes the area lived by people, i also hope your thesis will be fine". (Ercole, shopkeeper)

Even though Ercole knew I am an activist in Communia (he used the word “you” to speak about Communia) one of his main message is both Communia and Ex-Dogana are important for his business and to keep it smoothly, even though he is doing many sacrifices especially in terms of opening hours. He recognised what Communia did for the neighbourhood through the regeneration of the place and, even though he did not say it during the interview he is used to helping Communia out calling the activists when the police hangs around. However, he does not acknowledge the political values of Communia. He expressed a racist concept against his competitor and at the same time he support Communia which has a project based on migrants' inclusion.

As already explained he is uninformed about politics, thus it is even more interesting to see that by asking him about his need the first answer was related to the concept of distrust towards the governmental action that should aim to meet the population needs, but it does not. What came out is that he does not care about any social and cultural change of the area since he just wants to keep his business growing, however what he does not know is that when the gentrification of San Lorenzo will be completed his shop will never survive since it is truly shabby and grotty.

Khan is a Bangladeshi shop-owner, he has a food shop close to Communia, Ercole's shop and in front of Ex-Dogana. He cannot speak Italian very well, he does not know anything about gentrification, speculation and Italian politics but he perfectly explain the inequality in San Lorenzo. I explained him what is gentrification and what is happening in San Lorenzo, asking him if he would have more benefit or drawbacks from a rise of wealthier residents.

“Ex-Dogana is good for me cause it brings people here....without Ex-Dogana there would not be enough work cause there are many food shops in this street” ...

... Poor people arrive here not rich one, the rich guys go to Ex-Dogana, they get out of their big cars and they go there to have fun, dance and waste money, while poor people come here There is no way we become rich, wealthiness is in that side of the street, poverty is in this one. ... Dogana cannot close, cause it provide 20-30 persons with work opportunities, persons like me, and i need to pay water, energy and waste bills and i have to help out my brother too and my family, Dogana help me in this, that is how it works”. (Khan, Bangladeshi shop-owner)

Even though Khan is completely out of the political and local debate of San Lorenzo and its resistance activities, he localised the inequality of the neighbourhood by linking the sides of the street with the socio-economic status of the users. “Poor” people hang around his side, the same of Ercole's bar and Communia, all places with a clear working-class target. However, Khan also explained, even more clearly than Ercole, his livelihood and the one of his family highly rely on Ex-Dogana activities.

Discussion

The sub-question answered in this paragraph is:

How can the needs of the various social groups be combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans?

The interviews carried out through participatory mapping revealed the needs of the several social groups are actually coherent with each other. What is interesting to see is they are coherent not just with LRSL actions but also with the activities and projects carried out by the resistance places of San Lorenzo. Just to mention some of them, the needs of women spaces and affordable students services are included in Communia's activities while the needs of protecting the traditional neighbourhood places and the promotion of cultural activities are covered by Cinema Palazzo. Moreover, the most mentioned need is to change the functionality of the Ex-Dogana and debate with the neighbourhood which would be its best function; this issue is also one of the most mentioned topic in LRSL plan.

Thus, it can be affirmed the needs of the various social groups are already combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans, and this alternative may take the form of LRSL discourse.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

This research analyses how the residents of San Lorenzo resist state-led gentrification in their neighbourhood. A qualitative approach has been used to investigate individuals' perceptions of their own neighbourhood and related challenges caused by gentrification and speculation as well as their needs.

Through discourse analysis, participatory mapping and semi-structured interviews, three sub-questions have been answered and the main research question has thus been met. This study has also been conducted within a participant observation framework since I have been an activist in San Lorenzo for almost three years. The triangulation research methods helped to minimise the risk of generating erroneous findings while strongly increasing the coherence among data.

The first sub-question answered is:

Which resistance strategies do the residents of San Lorenzo employ to prevent state-led gentrification?

Carrying out discourse analysis comes out that the resistance practices used by the residents of San Lorenzo are mainly two:

- Re-appropriation, through squatting, of those places which were public but become private in a second stage (Communia, Esc, Nuovo Cinema Palazzo).
- Politicisation of the residents through practices of collective knowledge production with the aim of sharing information and ideas about what is going on in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, what clearly emerged analysing the gentrification discourse in San Lorenzo is the difference between the governmental discourse and the one of the activists.

Even though the dominant and counter narrative clash on mostly story-lines and metaphors, they do agree on the storyline of increased amount of students in the area. Indeed, both narratives perceive an increase in the amount of students that live in San Lorenzo and agree it should be acted upon. However, the way in which it should be dealt with differs. The counter narrative believes it is crucial to strengthen the relationship between students and residents and it can be done joining shared activities and spaces on the territory. The governmental narrative believes in a studentification storyline whereby the newcomers are the cause of displacement. However, the fact that the governmental actions and policies are not just incoherent but truly contrary with the governmental discourse promoted by themselves can be emblematic of the crisis the urban development in Rome is experiencing. Indeed, comparing the governmental studentification story-line with the governmental practices it emerges their discourse is not institutionalised.

According to Schmidt (2011), the discursive institutionalists put ideas and discourse into institutional context. The 'sentient agents' are thinking and speaking agents, who produce and

discuss ideas through discursive interaction, which may eventually lead to a certain policy action. However, in relation to the requalification of San Lorenzo, these agents produce discourse which do not lead to a certain policy. Indeed, theoretically they complain the studentification is drastically changing the social balance of the neighbourhood but practically, they also promote private developments which actually attract new students in the area.

Lees (2003) described the transformation of an already gentrified and prosperous neighbourhood into a much more exclusive and expensive enclave using the term super-gentrification. It can be argued the students have been part of the gentrification process in San Lorenzo, however the truth of the matter is they are not guilty for it, nor they turned San Lorenzo into a prosperous neighbourhood since they do not represent a wealthy category (richer students are used to go to private universities, not to La Sapienza). However, what can be associated to Lees' definition is the status San Lorenzo is likely to reach: exclusive and expensive enclave. Indeed, the upper middle class is the main target of the municipality, building companies and retailers in San Lorenzo.

It can also be argued there are tensions between first wave (students) and second wave (upper middle class) gentrifiers, the latter are perceived as something of a disruption to the established gentrified community. As a matter of fact in interviews it came out students strongly recognise the historical and traditional values and places of San Lorenzo as long-time residents do. The studentification influenced mostly the demographic structure of the neighbourhood and it favoured the shift of businesses into entertainment places, however the affordability and the working class features of San Lorenzo had not been changed by the studentification. Indeed, the students have been cooperating with activists and long-time residents to create a sense of community and to resist against radical changes in the neighbourhood. The resistance represents what will mostly miss when upper middle class residents will start living the neighbourhood. Carrying out resistance practices is an historical feature of San Lorenzo's residents and it has always been done to meet the population needs and ideals (anti-fascism before and anti-speculation today). However, resistance activities have been carried out by working class people, thus if S.Lorenzo turn in a high income area it will lose its main feature.

Apart from the role of students in the area, there are further differences between the dominant and the resistance narrative, like the diversity concept. Indeed, the dominant discourse does not recognise the diversity of the residents nor the plurality of bottom up activities carried out in the neighbourhood. How differently the two narratives consider the plurality of social classes in San Lorenzo will be further analysed answering the second sub-question, through discourse analysis and interviews.

Another focal point is that, even though the General Regulatory Plan defines San Lorenzo as historical neighbourhood, the governmental practices is far more oriented to the demolition of previous industrial buildings. The metaphor of "the holes" shows exactly how divergent residents and planners see the future development of San Lorenzo. The former want to protect these holes since they symbolise the materiality of the past of the neighbourhood, the bombing attack and the resistance the residents did against the fascists. The latter see these holes as

something increasing the degradation of the area and need to be covered. Through the discourse analysis, the territoriality story-line emerged and it has been possible to define it is actually one of the main driving force of the resistance practices. Indeed, both re-appropriation activities and production of knowledge are strategies based on the residents' aim to maintain the integrity of San Lorenzo's identity.

The first sub-question did not verify whether this neighbourhood's diversity can actually lead to a common and participated counter proposal, in actions and not just at the discourse level, thus overcoming the possible building coalition issue (Novy, J. & Colomb, C., 2013), or in other words, if it is truly possible to put together the needs and the interests of the several social groups that live in San Lorenzo. This issue is object of the third sub-question and it has been answered through interviews and participatory mapping.

It is possible to affirm the residents of San Lorenzo follow the three steps approach defined in Chapter 2 to challenge gentrification: bottom-up mobilisation, resistance actions and legal actions.

Bottom up mobilisation usually comes out when the government decides to privatise a public space, that is what happened with Esc, Communia and Nuovo Cinema Palazzo. Resistance actions are mainly re-appropriation activities, through squatting, and knowledge production. Legal actions, which - according the theoretical framework in this research - are what define the success or failure of an anti-gentrification movement depending on whether they have or do not have external support, are carried out through appeal to the Regional Administrative Tribunal.

The legal activities carried out by LRSL have been two by far and even though LRSL did not completely obtain what they asked, both the legal actions have had success.

As already explained, when the government decided to build 58 apartments demolishing the industrial archaeological site, named Ex Fonderie Bastianelli (ex - foundries), Communia occupied the place. However, the illegal action operated alongside the legal one: LRSL appealed to the Regional Court against the City of Rome asking for greater clarity about the building approval documents. The TAR is the Regional Administrative Tribunal where citizens can appeal to ask the withdrawal or amendment of an administrative act, believed to be damaging for a legitimate interest. In the meantime Communia has been evicted and the building company demolished the foundries and started building the houses. However, the Tribunal recognised irregularities in the permit procedures, as LRSL previously supposed. Indeed, the missing documents were the one coming from Sovrintendenza Capitolina, the body that should protect and manage the historical and archaeological places of Rome. The developers tried to pretend the foundries had been built in the 1944 thus they were not under the responsibility of the aforementioned body, whereas in reality they are from the 1908 and an approval should have been required. The second missing document was a detailed impact analysis of the housing project, a mandatory document for every areas labelled by the PRG (General Regulatory Plan) as a historical area. LRSL won the court case thus preventing the neighbourhood from a speculative plan but they did not succeed in their aim of safeguarding the foundries because they have been demolished before the court sentence. However, while I was terminating the research a new building company asked permission for the area.

Another legal action has been carried out to protect a small green area in San Lorenzo, named Particella 26 (trad. Parcel 26). The history besides this action is complex, it started when a building contractor won a court case against the City of Rome and the latter gave some land parcels to him as a compromise solution. However, these land parcels were not buildable and above all, they were public spaces (one of them was a green public space in a neighbourhood in which the cemetery is considered by the PRG as the only green area). He obtained Parco dei Galli (trad. Roosters' park), a meeting place for all the children and families in San Lorenzo. He then asked for a trade-off, he would have given back Parco dei Galli in exchange of another small green area of the neighbourhood which was buildable, Particella 26. As soon as the builder started fencing the park, LRSL appealed to TAR again to halt this exchange and they succeeded. However, also in this case the legal victory does not correspond to a complete moral victory since LRSL prevented the construction new buildings in a green area but they did not succeed in protecting both parks from the speculative behaviour of the developer.

"LRSL will keep building networks and resistance patterns more and more strong, promoting mutual aid and solidarity, asking for social justice and neighbourhood wellbeing, building culture and knowledge sharing places. LRSL will keep organising activities and living spaces and streets that public and private speculative interests would like to be empty, all together we will build this project so that the transformation of the city can belong to whom is living it" (Quaderni Urbanistica3, 2017)

The second sub-question answered is:

How are the various social groups represented by the contestation process?

The question has been answered through discourse analysis to understand how much the social groups are included in the resistance discourse, and through semi-structured interviews carried out with participatory mapping. By combining these two techniques emerged that what LRSL expresses in its discourses is also perceived by the social groups living in San Lorenzo.

From a discourse analysis it can be affirmed both resistance dialogue and practices (as well as future plans) seem to include all the social categories living in San Lorenzo, like retailers, migrants and children. Conversely, the governmental project mentions just the students as further social categories that live in the neighbourhood, apart from the long-time residents. Through discourse analysis it emerges resistance discourse is more inclusive than the governmental one and this has also been confirmed by counting the words "inclusion" and "participation" in both resistance and governmental discourse.

Through interviews has been possible to get an understanding about how much people feel represented by LRSL' discourse and it comes out there is coherence between the resistance view and the one of residents, students and retailers. What is striking is that nobody feel to be represented by governmental practices, many participants mentioned the feeling of

abandonment at the hands of the State. This is in line with the feeling of mistrust and disillusionment felt by most Italians with regard to politicians and bureaucracy. Silvia, a resident, student and activist, clearly explained the link between the feeling of mistrust in relation to the governmental action and the representativeness of contestation practices:

"Resistance places represent for me environments of solidarity where i grew up both humanly and politically. Often people feel to be alone and abandoned by institutions that is why is important to create aggregation and politicisation places... The added value of these places is that they create a direct recognition of the other individuals which otherwise would be just shapeless humans wandering in isolating paths experiencing distractions for their own sake." (Silvia, student, resident and activist)

Through participatory mapping has been also possible to verify whether the participants' favourite stomping grounds match with San Lorenzo resistance places to check if residents actually feel represented by them. What came out is that not only all participants recognised the importance of *Communia* and *Cinema Palazzo* but they also expressed interest for those places that LRS� aim to protect, thus confirming the resistance discourse is inclusive, participated and representative of residents' needs.

The third sub-question answered is:

How can the needs of the various social groups be combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans?

By interviews carried out through participatory mapping came out the needs of the several social groups are actually coherent with each other. The difference between resistance practices and governmental one, as Emiliano explained, it has been actually confirmed. He argued resistance actions aim to identify the population's needs, give them a political value while trying to create a community around the need's response. What came out is that at least resistance places of San Lorenzo succeed in identifying the needs of the residents since all the needs expressed by the participants during the interview sessions completely match with the resistance discourse. They are coherent not just with LRS� actions but also with the activities and projects carried out by the resistance places of San Lorenzo. Just to mention some of them, the needs of women spaces and affordable students services are included in *Communia's* activities, while the needs of protecting the traditional neighbourhood places and the promotion of cultural activities are covered by *Cinema Palazzo*. Moreover, the most mentioned need is to change the functionality of the *Ex-Dogana* and debate with the neighbourhood which would be its best function; this issue is also one of the most mentioned topic in LRS� plan.

To conclude, it can be affirmed the needs of the various social groups are already combined to form a collective alternative to speculative urban plans, and this alternative may take the form

of LRSL discourse. Not only the activists make resistance in San Lorenzo, indeed it is worth to mention Khan' interview again.

"I do not think rich people will come in the neighbourhood however I won't raise the prices anyway. You know why? Cause for me all people are the same and I want everybody can have his food. I can't raise the prices cause here many poor people come like students, they cannot afford to pay a beer for 10 euros like at Ex Dogana, also people working in the street come here, especially women working in the street...you know what i mean right?... I keep the price low so that everyone can buy and if someone cannot I make them discount the important thing is that it is cheap so they won't steal" (Khan, Bangladeshi food-store owner)

The Khan's way of action can be defined as a resistance practice. He actually makes resistance against gentrification and the related speculation process by keeping the price of his products affordable. He does exactly the same that Atletico San Lorenzo is doing in relation to affordable sport or what Communia is doing with affordable language courses. It seems Khan has been politicised even though he is completely out the political debate of San Lorenzo and uninformed about Italian politics. The contention of whether communities can make residents resistant or if is the residents' role to make communities resistant may be the subject of further research. The inhabitants of San Lorenzo are mainly students, old partisans and people on the left political spectrum. Thus, one could pose the question of whether the resistance of the neighbourhood lies on its high concentration of activists or on its historical working-class and multicultural features.

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