

Esquilino: Dynamics of the Centripheria

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Introduction

We start this journey with a question: Did these clouds, these right here, know not to cross the tracks? Did they dwindle in the shadow of the antique grandeur of Porta Maggiore? Did they evaporate under the gravitas of the monumental Aurelian Walls, repelling them from the ancient center?

The Internet says yes. San Lorenzo was the primary target of Allied raids on Rome, as on July 19, 1943, San Lorenzo's railyards and steel factory were decimated while killing thousands of civilians in adjacent residential districts as collateral damage (Broder, 2018). Yet, minimal information can be found about the toll of World War II on Esquilino, an area that is similarly full of transit infrastructure yet tucked just inside the ancient Roman walls. Every aerial picture displays the smoke clouds disappearing just at the edge of the ancient Roman center.



Figure 1.1. Smoke clouds hang over the San Lorenzo railroad yards in Rome, Italy, the result of an Allied bombing raid during World War II. Ca. 1939-1945

Stories tell us otherwise. Conversations with local inhabitants have led us to plastered-over cracks in the walls of 19th and early-20th century residential buildings, telling us of damage from Allied bombings during WWII. Amongst Esquilino's inhabitants, the neighborhood is known to not have been completely spared from the carnage of this era.

The fable of these clouds makes the same theoretical inquiry that reverberates throughout this entire analysis of a truly unique quarter of Rome: **How permeable are those walls?**

Traditionally in Rome, the center is succinctly defined by the Aurelian walls, encircling the ancient hills of the city. The center is what Rome presents to the world: the Colosseum, the Foro Romano, the Vatican, and all of the ancient and renaissance remains that allow Rome to place itself at the heart of Western civilization and attract millions of visitors a year (World Data, 2021). The center is the capital of the Italian nation-state, housing the presidential palace, supreme court, parliament buildings, and numerous ministries. It is an area that exudes affluence and wealth, pressured by tourist development, and coveted because, well, it's the center of Rome. The center is on display, historic and privileged, as the shining light on top of the seven hills of Rome.

Meanwhile, the periphery (traditionally speaking) is everything outside that 19 km wall circuit, with neighborhoods shooting out like tentacles through what was once the Agro Romano. Many neighborhoods outside Rome's center are products of modernity, constructed out of necessity

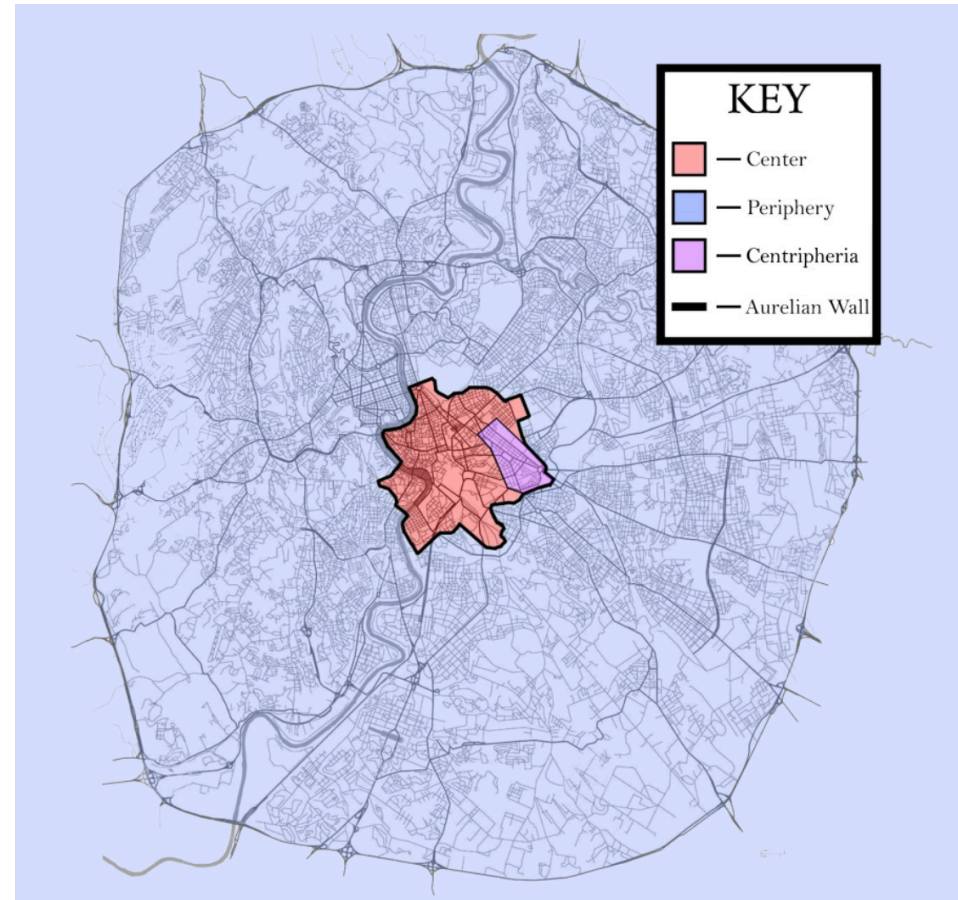


Figure 1.2. Map of Centriperiferia.

for housing as Rome transformed into a national capital and an industrial city. Fascist-built borgate—housing settlements once characterized by high density and poverty—and post-war social housing developments shoot up within the countryside (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022). Historically, these developments were predominantly occupied by Southern Italian migrants (Smith, 2022, p. 66), those displaced from the center during the modernization

of the city, and now also by foreign migrants from across the Global South. The southern and eastern periphery of Rome has a long history of subaltern and underprivileged, touted as the territory of the proletariat (Cremaschi, 2013, p. 332). The Roman borgate is often stigmatized: lacking a refined nature present in the ancient center. Aspects of the periphery, while containing the vast majority of Rome's population, are problematized and often positioned as secondary to the luster of the center of Rome.

These stereotypes stated about the periphery are categorically false. The periphery is diffuse and heterogeneous, with expansive business districts such as EUR, extremely wealthy neighborhoods to the city's north, neighborhoods with high crime and poverty rates especially past the ring roads, and plenty of working-class, popular neighborhoods scattered throughout. As much as narratives have been spun around the Roman

periphery as poor and dangerous, it also embodies the heart of Roman culture, especially as tides of commodification continue to inundate the historic center (Gemmiti, 2008, p. 7). Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italy's renegade filmmaker of the 20th century, depicted the Roman periphery as a sacred beacon to true humanity in the face of rampant modernity, carrying along with values of altruism and community into an individualizing and alienating future (Smith, 2022, p. 20). Insurgent narratives such as Pasolini's cut through negative stereotypes of the periphery, complicating and adding depth to these dynamic spaces.

At least geographically, Esquilino is in the center. Yet, stereotypes commonly mentioned about the center of Rome don't quite seem to fit. When our research team visited Esquilino for the first time, we were made aware of the territory's timelessness and cultural diversity. The neighborhood is situated at the intersection of ancient aqueducts and Roma Termini, the main railway terminus of Rome channeling hundreds of thousands of people from across the city, country, and world through the neighborhood daily. The mystical triangle of three monumental basilicas (San Giovanni di Laterano, Santa Maria Maggiore, and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme) have given Esquilino great spiritual importance for centuries. Furthermore, entering Nuovo Mercato Esquilino is revealing of the neighborhood's multiethnic identity. As we smelled the ocean from seafood stalls located in the center, we noticed shoppers chatting with vendors in Bengali, Mandarin, and a myriad of other languages. Even when we gathered after the market in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, we observed the rhythms of heated ping-pong matches and casual conversations amongst locals. We were in the center geographically, but the interpersonal roots and multicultural connections within the neighborhood symbolized the periphery, creating tension within this spatial binary that defines common understandings of Rome.

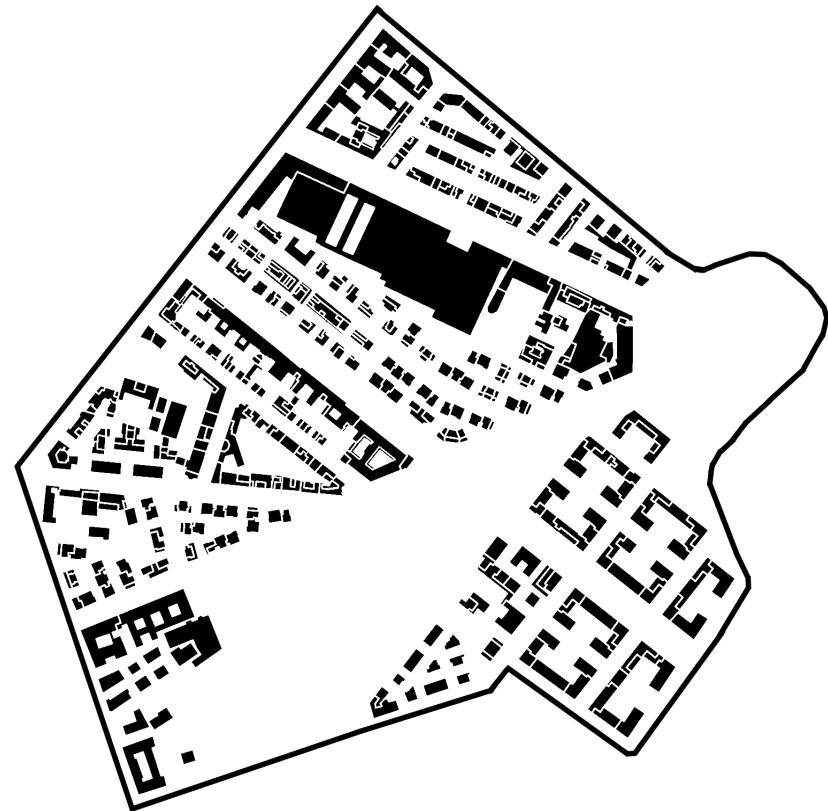


Figure 1.3. Nolli Map of Esquilino.

Our Approach

From January to March of 2022, we conducted comprehensive building, street, and land usage surveys, along with ISTAT statistical analysis to discern the history of Esquilino's development and heterogeneity. The physical and demographic analysis of the neighborhood focused on the eastern portion of the neighborhood, stretching along Via di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, from Viale Manzoni to Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and Porta Maggiore. Later in the spring, our team dove deeper into the intimate stories and experiences of local community members, activists, and organizations. This involved expanding our study to cover the entire Esquilino neighborhood, focusing on site visits, cognitive mapping exercises, informal interviews with community members, and historical research. Physical analysis of Esquilino's transit infrastructure and building fabric demonstrates the neighborhood as a connected and central quarter. Our qualitative study of Esquilino dove beneath the material surface. This personal approach unveiled unique social dynamics involving: multiculturalism, socioeconomics, regeneration, and community cohesion. Said narratives -- as we define them -- straddle tropes of both the center and the periphery. Through this methodological journey, three main foci guided our analysis: the dynamics of public gathering spaces, the prevalence and cooperation of major civil society organizations, and flexible and diverse land usage in the neighborhood. During one meeting at Spin Time and Scomodo, a prominent local activist described their quarter as the "centripheria". While we understand that this term may not be universally accepted as a label for the quarter, our analysis explores this concept of Esquilino as the centripheria, blurring boundaries between the Roman center and periphery, and attracting migrant communities from across the globe.

Figure 1.4. The narrative triangle for our research project.

Dynamics of
Public Space

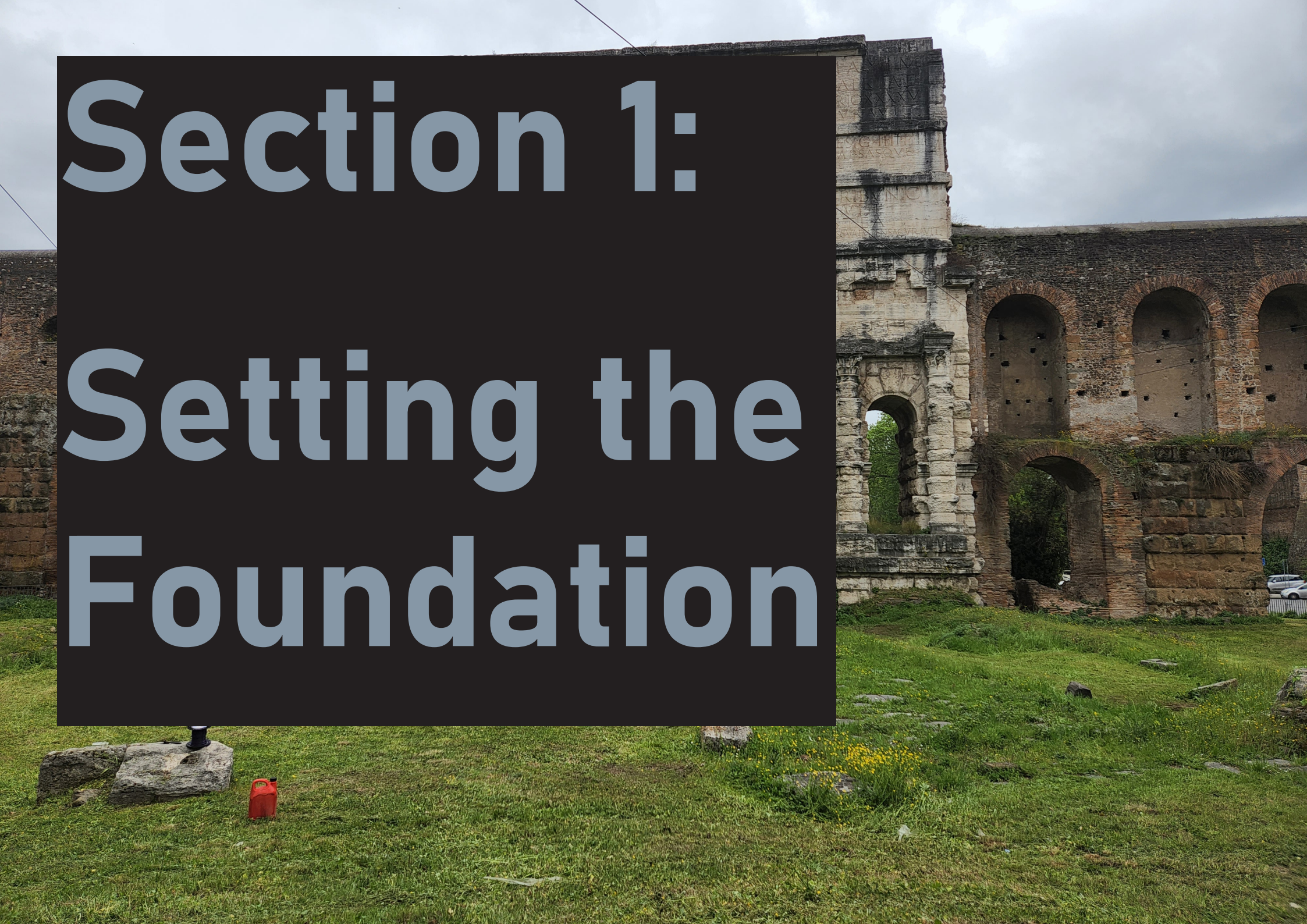
Flexible Usage
of Space

Understanding and
Planning Alongside
Esquilino as the
Centripheria



Relations of Community/
Political Organizations

Section 1: Setting the Foundation



Pre-Unification Esquilino: The Peripheral Hill

**6th Century BCE
- 1st Century CE**

Esquiline Hill long used as the necropolis and dumping ground in antiquity.

5th-15th Century CE

Esquilino part of Roman disabitato, undeveloped and pastoral land within the Aurelian walls

1st Century CE
Aqua Claudio and Aqua Novus built through Porta Maggiore to conduct water from the mountains into Roman center.

Late 16th Century CE
Roads planned by Pope Sixtus IV, linked the three major basiliche of Esquilino, are completed

Esquilino from Antiquity to the Renaissance

Esquilino's history stretches back to the city's founding as one of the seven ancient hills. The Collis Esquilinus (Esquiline Hill) was first inhabited in the 6th Century BCE. While grand villas, and the homes of notable Ancient Roman poets, covered parts of the hill, the Esquiline Hill was largely relegated to use as the burial ground for Republican and Imperial Rome. The hill grew to house the range of Ancient Rome's deceased population, from the most honorable citizens with private plots near the Esquiline Gate, to mass graves for the city's poor and enslaved populations (Roma Segreta, 2021). This reputation as a more secondary area would continue when Rome shrank in political status, economic activity, and population. In the Middle Ages, much of Esquilino became part of the disabitato, a swampy, sparingly developed region filled with ancient ruins within the Aurelian Walls (Figure 1.6).

Near the turn of the first millennium CE, at the far edge of Esquiline Hill, the neighborhood transformed into a prime



Figure 1.5. Map of development in ancient Rome.

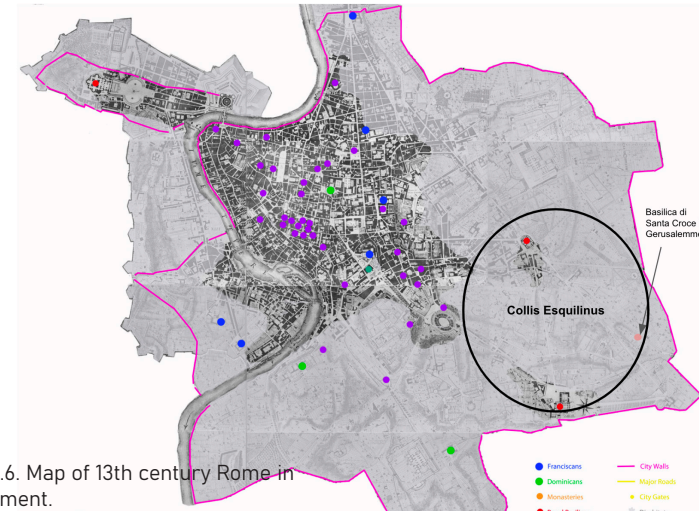


Figure 1.6. Map of 13th century Rome in development.

nexus for the monumental and innovative water infrastructure that enabled Imperial Rome's immense development. At Porta Maggiore, 8 of the 11 ancient aqueducts intersect as they come in from all angles to siphon water from the surrounding springs and reservoirs of the Apennine foothills (Aicher, 2004). In this sense, long before the modern development of the neighborhood, Esquilino served as both an essential connection between the Agro Romano and the city of Rome, and a sector largely preserved from the extensive development of the ancient core of the city.

Alongside this history as a burial ground, three of the most important basilicas of the Catholic Church in Rome were founded on the Esquiline Hill in the 4th and 5th centuries CE: The Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano (the cathedral of the Roman diocese), The Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, and the Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (Roma Segreta, 2021). These basilicas would regularly attract masses and religious elites to Esquilino. The churches continue to define the neighborhood to the present day, as many current inhabitants define the basilicas as a mystical triangle that forms the borders of their neighborhood. In the 16th Century CE, Pope Sixtus V, as a part of his expansive reforms and renovations to Rome's urban infrastructure, completed streets connecting the three basilicas (Roma Segreta, 2021), forming the skeleton of the modern street network that lives to this day.

Risorgimento

**6th Century BCE
– 1st Century CE**

Esquiline Hill long used as the necropolis and dumping ground in antiquity.

5th–15th Century CE

Esquilino part of Roman disabitato, undeveloped and pastoral land within the Aurelian walls

1873

Master Plan of Rome post-Risorgimento created, calls for mass development of modern Esquilino

1880s

Construction of Piazza Vittorio Emanuela and development surrounding blocks for Turinese government employees

1st Century CE

Aqua Claudio and Aqua Novus built through Porta Maggiore to conduct water from the mountains into Roman center.

Late 16th Century CE

Roads planned by Pope Sixtus IV, linked the three major basiliche of Esquilino, are completed

1874

The construction of Termini Station is completed

1890–1920

Porta Maggiore and Piazza Vittorio develop as a hub of Roman tram system, reaching out to growing Roman periphery

The unification of the Kingdom of Italy in 1865, known as the Risorgimento, marks a pivotal turning point for the history and development of Esquiline Hill. As Rome needed to transform itself from the seat of the Papal States and the Catholic Church to the capital of a new nation-state spanning the Italian peninsula, the new government set its eyes on the Esquiline Hill to create the necessary infrastructure and development for this transformation. From the construction of Termini and the vision of connecting the city by rail with the entire country to the development of a new residential neighborhood in Esquilino to the housing of government workers coming from the former capital in Turin, the Risorgimento marked the transformation of Esquilino from the peripheral medieval hill to a central hub and the 15th official rione within a modernizing Rome.

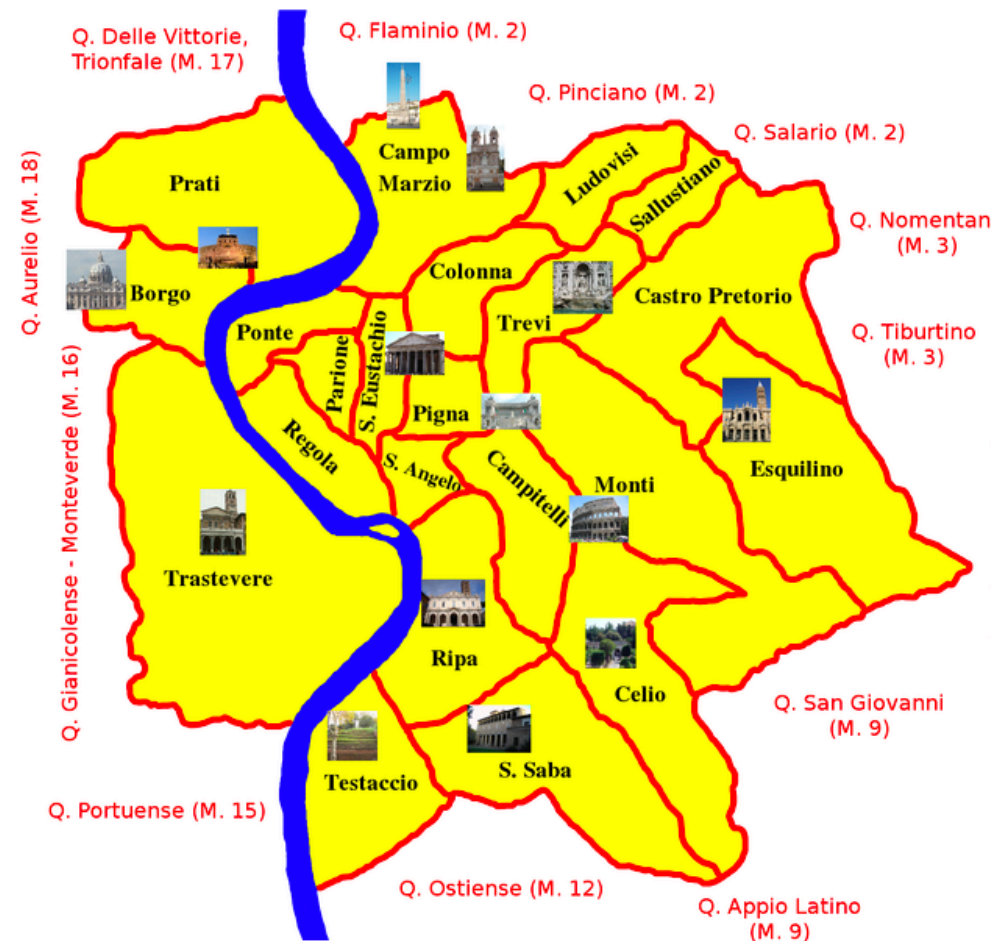


Figure 1.7. A map of the center of Rome with its rioni.

Transit Flows

- i. Birth of Termini
- ii. Historical Tram Connections
- iii. Modern-Day Transit Connections
- iv. Street Typology

Birth of Termini

The development of a temporary central station connecting Rome with the country's growing railway network was commenced by Pope Pius X during the last years of the Papal States' rule of Rome (Brioni, 2017). The permanent railway station, now known as Termini, was completed by the new Italian government in 1874. The development of Termini on Esquiline Hill turned this underdeveloped area largely known for the presence of three historic Catholic Churches into the key transit hub within Rome. Furthermore, the construction and maintenance of Termini and its massive railyard spurred the later development of large public housing blocks for railway workers near Basilica di Santa Croce, which still stand to this day (albeit now privatized housing). Esquilino maintained its status as the core of Rome's transit networks from the 19th to present day.

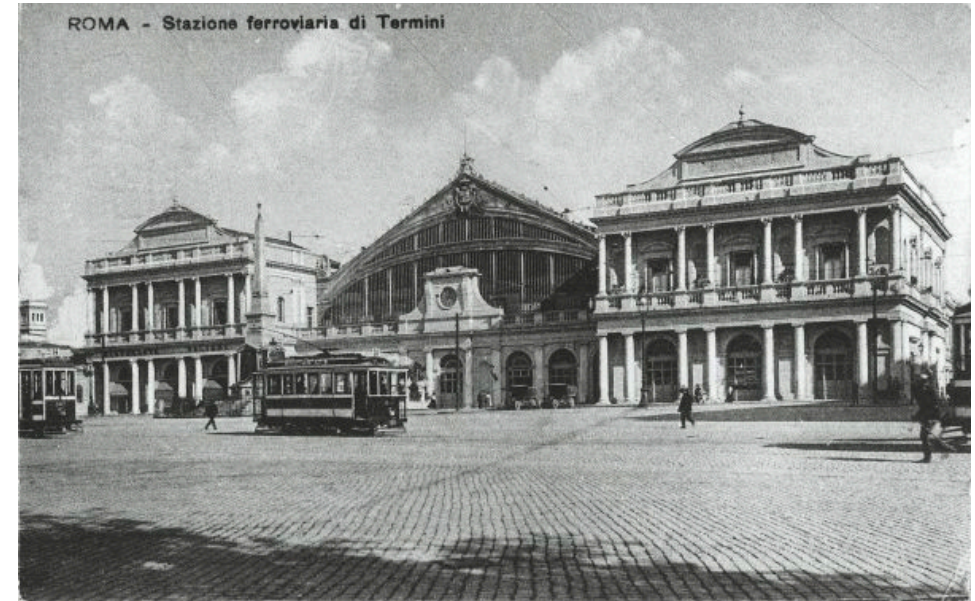


Figure 1.8. Old photograph of Termini Railway Station in 1890.

Historic Tram Connections

Throughout the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Esquilino's importance as a transit hub would expand beyond Termini, as Piazza Vittorio Emanuele and Porta Maggiore would become secondary hubs to the city's tram network. The Roman tram system peaked in the 1920s, when over 59 lines traversed the city, forming the backbone of the city's public transit as new neighborhoods sprawled out from the city center (Formigari, 2021). The trams encircling Piazza Vittorio flowed towards nearly every sector of Rome, and trams exiting Porta Maggiore headed towards San Lorenzo, Pigneto, and Tor Pignattara, foreshadowing further new development neighborhoods and borgate outside of the Aurelian walls.

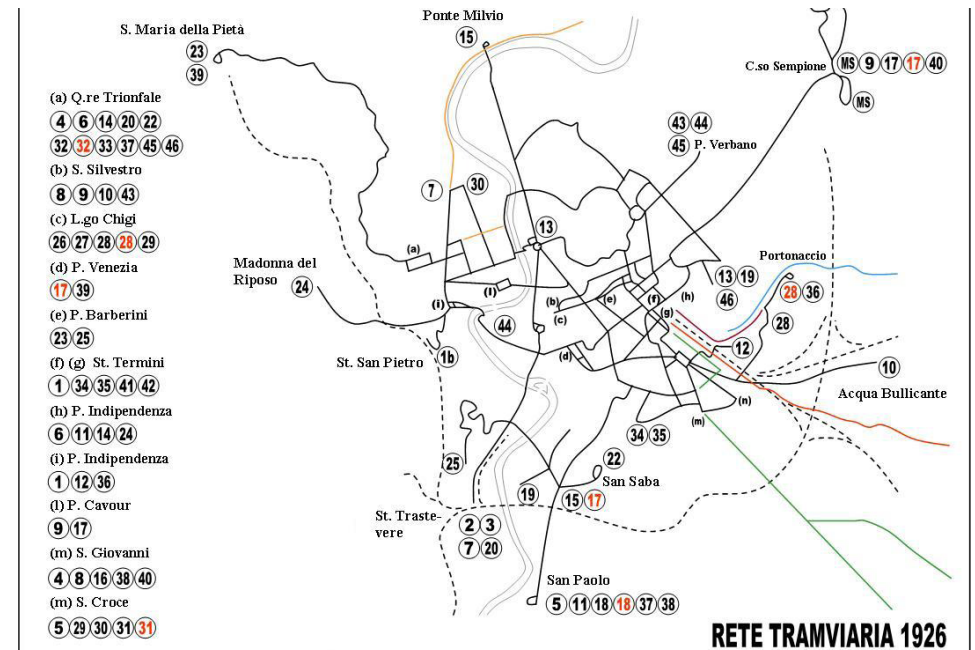


Figure 1.9. Map of Roman Tram Network in 1926.

Modern-Day Transit Connections

At present day, Esquilino has only become more connected to the entirety of Rome and the country at large. High-speed rail lines connect Roma Termini with nearly any corner of the country within a few hours, exemplified in the public transit map produced above, Esquilino has become more interconnected with the rest of the city.

While Rome's tram network has been significantly downsized since its peak in the early 20th century, Porta Maggiore still serves as a hub for trams running out towards Pigneto, Tor Pignattara, Centocelle, San Lorenzo, and other densely populated neighborhoods just outside the geographical center of Rome. The development of the Metro system has also placed Esquilino at the heart of Rome's public transit system. Line A, completed in 1980 (Engineering Rome, 2022) connecting the numerous peripheral neighborhoods lining the Via Appia Nuova and Via Tuscolana with the city center, Campus Martius, Prati, and the western periphery. Additionally, the metro Line C, which first opened in 2014 and is planned to be extended towards the Colosseo by 2024 (RomeToday, 2021), currently has its western terminus just outside the Aurelian walls at San Giovanni. This line stretches through Tor Pignattara, Centocelle, and the eastern periphery out past the ring road towards Tor Bella Monaca and Finocchio. These extensions to the Roman Metro through Esquilino and its edges further emphasize

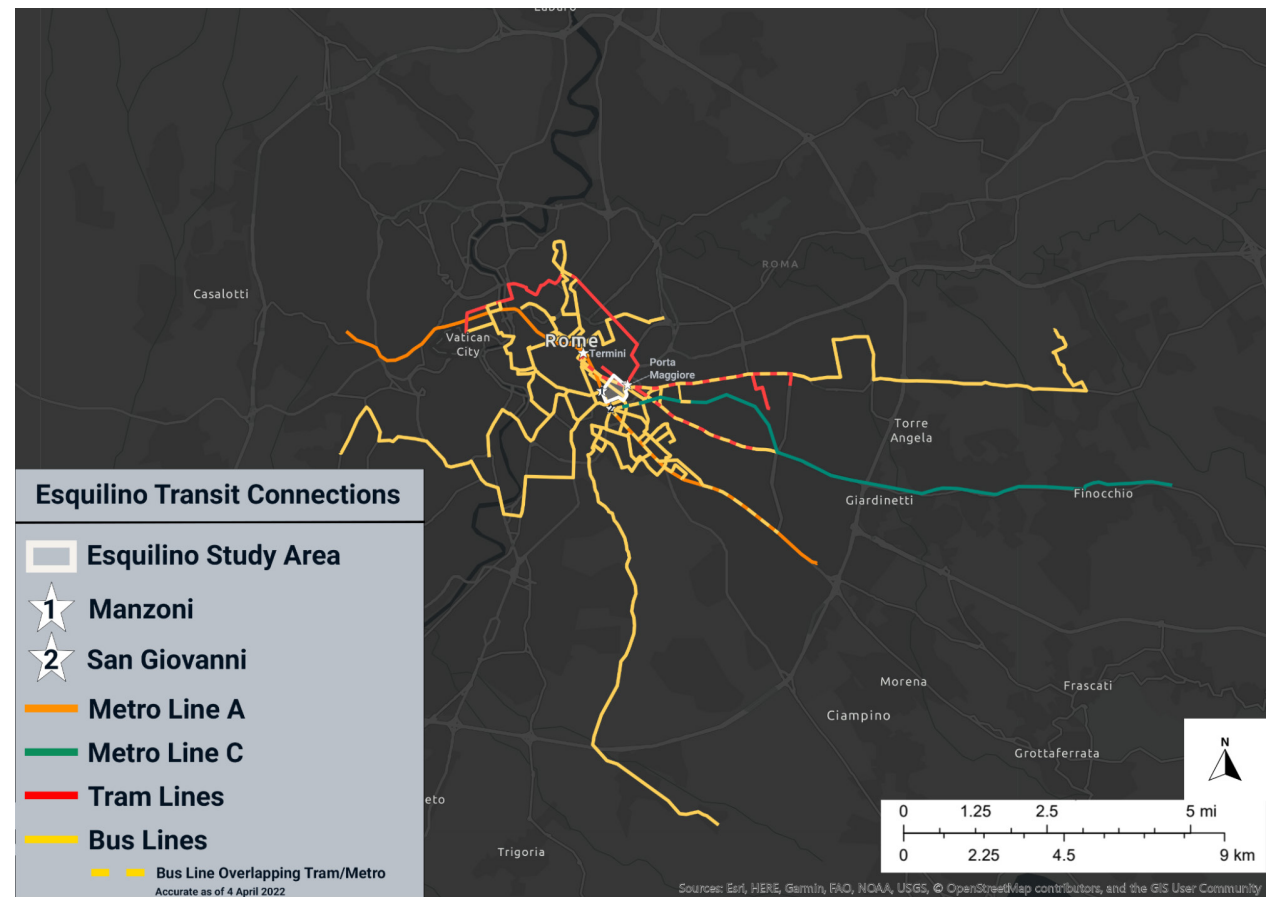


Figure 1.10. Map of contemporary transit connections.

the importance of Esquilino as a center of transit between the city center and peripheral neighborhoods.

Furthermore, Rome's bus system, which largely replaced its tram network in the early-to-mid-20th century, has its core hub at Termini, allowing connections to nearly any quarter of the city. Even from our primary study area, there are seamless connections between hubs like

Porta Maggiore and Porta San Giovanni and the neighborhoods lining the Via Appia Nuova, along with routes flowing deeper into the city center, or towards peripheral neighborhoods in the south, east, and west of the city. With a myriad of the metro, tram, and bus lines flowing through the neighborhood, Esquilino is one of, if not the most centrally-positioned areas of Rome in terms of public transportation.

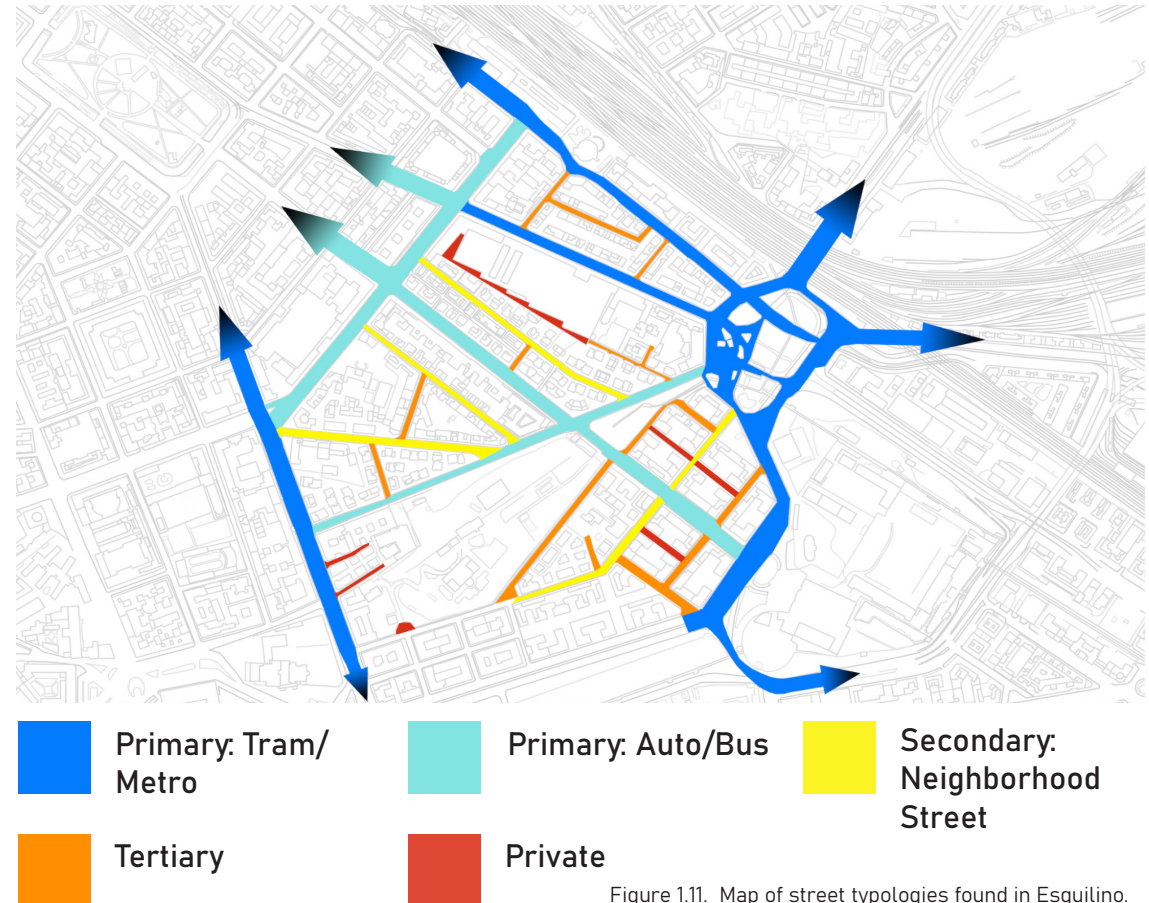
Street Typology

Our Esquilino street typology was developed through observation of our primary study area during visits from February–March 2022: complimented by digital analysis via Google Maps. The streets are categorized based on their traffic flows, their modalities of transport, their interactions with the neighborhood's building fabric, and our perceptions of how the street is utilized and activated by the local community.

Introduction

Within the map, we see heterogeneity in the dynamics of streets within our study area. Primary streets, like *Via Emmanuele Filiberto* and *Porta Maggiore*, funnel auto traffic to national highways and major thoroughfares while carrying public transit and heavy pedestrian traffic. Contrastly, private streets near *Basilica di Santa Croce* act as courtyards and informal piazzas for residents of the adjacent perimeter buildings.

Automobile flows from the center to the periphery and beyond Rome are very heavy in our study area, and even transform secondary streets. This is exemplified by *Via San Quintino*, a single-laned and largely residential street that serves as a link between *Viale Manzoni* and *Via Emanuel Filiberto*. These streets then flow towards the center, and *Tangenziale Est*, a highway flows out towards the ring road. This transformation is further exemplified by the building fabric of *Via San Quintino*, which includes residential palazzi alongside low-rise buildings, creating variation in building height and population density along the street. Beyond automobile flows towards elevated highways, major



thoroughfares connect to Esquilino, such as the *Via Appia Nuova*, connecting the center to the southern periphery, and *Via Prenestina*, which flows towards the eastern periphery. Automobile flows also transform tertiary streets, such as *Via Giuseppe Luigi Passalacqua*, a quiet backstreet off *Via Statilia* lined with palazzine and villini. However, a large gate to the back entrance of the Motorvillage car dealership lies at the end of the street, and massive tractor-trailers often slowly cruise down this residential backstreet to service the dealership.

Beyond car dealerships, public transit infrastructure also covers multiple key thoroughfares that traverse our study areas, such as *Via Giolitti*, *Via di Porta Maggiore*, and both *Via Eleniana* and the *Manzoni* metro station

anchoring the corners of Viale Manzoni and Via Emanuele Filiberto. The first three streets contain grade-separated tram lines divided from traffic, with similar widths to other primary streets but fewer lanes for auto traffic and often fewer opportunities for pedestrian crossings. This lack in pedestrian permeability of the street makes these primary streets with tram infrastructure feel like borders within the neighborhood. Giolitti and Eleniana line the boundaries of the quarter, and Via di Porta Maggiore divides Motorvillage from a small residential and hotel neighborhood on the northern edge of our primary study area. Meanwhile, the Manzoni Metro station consistently releases pedestrian flows into the quarter, especially during the day as students walk to the multiple secondary schools in the quarter. Across all types of streets within our neighborhood, we see this dynamic of the commercial and transit needs of the center transforming residential areas.

Primary: Tram/ Metro

The “Primary - Tram/Metro” streets in Esquilino are characterized by high automobile traffic and public transportation that has a separate right-of-way. This varies from the tram boulevards that spur off of Porta Maggiore, to Via Emanuele Filiberto which carries the underground Metro Line A, where the local metro stop (Manzoni) is located. These streets continue well beyond Esquilino or connect to Porta Maggiore, where auto traffic can flow to the rest of the city. These streets experience varying levels of pedestrian traffic, varying from moderate levels along Via Giovanni Giolitti to extremely-high levels along Via Emanuele Filiberto. The buildings surrounding these streets are largely mixed in use, including large institutions and schools, commercial storefronts, and residential buildings.

- High auto traffic
- Public transit separated from automobile traffic (tram or Metro)
- Moderate to high pedestrian traffic
- Largely mixed-use on street
- Streets continue well beyond study area or connect to Porta Maggiore

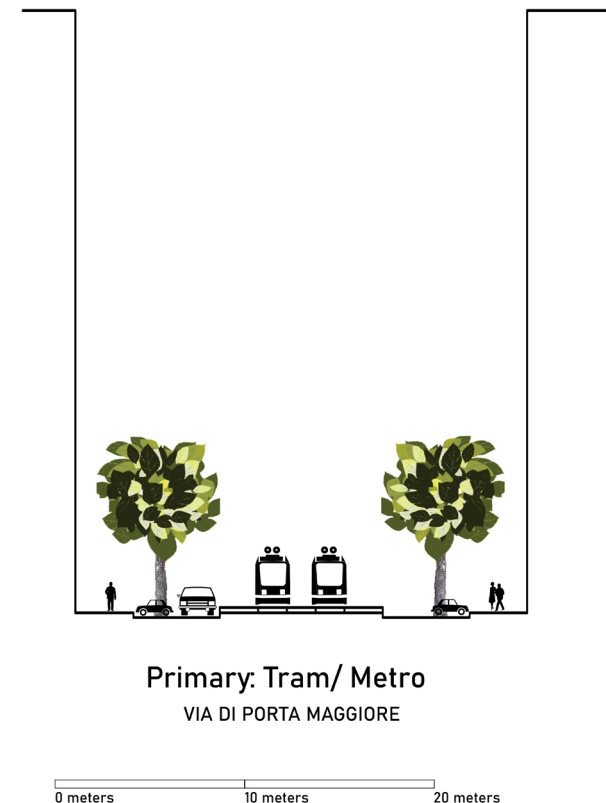


Figure 1.12. Cross-section of Via di Porta Maggiore, primary tram/metro street.

Primary: Auto/Bus

“Primary - Auto/Bus” streets share high auto traffic levels with “Primary - Tram/Metro” streets but have less public transit connectivity, either through bus or no transit at all. While public transit is lacking on these streets, they generally have very high levels of pedestrian traffic, acting as major hubs of community life and activity in the neighborhood, especially along Via di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, the main arterial of community life in our study area, and Viale Manzoni. These streets also continue beyond our study area, connecting to the heart of Esquilino at Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele and beyond to various parts of Rome.

- High auto traffic
- Public transit either not available or bus
- Generally high pedestrian traffic
- Largely mixed-use on street
- Streets continue well beyond study area or connect to Porta Maggiore



Primary: Auto/ Bus

VIA DI S. CROCE IN GERUSALEMME

Figure 1.13. Cross-section of Via di. S. Croce in Gerusalemme, a primary auto/bus street.

Secondary: Neighborhood Street

Secondary streets act as neighborhood corridors, lacking much auto traffic but containing neighborhood services such as schools, open-air markets, and clinics that attract pedestrian traffic and anchor the local community. When these hubs of activity are less active along secondary streets during the day, the streets become primarily residential in character. While most of these streets experience low automobile traffic as pedestrian life is prioritized, Via San Quintino experiences moderate automobile traffic as it is part of a traffic flow connecting the center to the periphery. Regardless, the secondary streets are generally fully contained within the study area.

- Low-moderate auto traffic
- Moderate pedestrian traffic
- Largely residential
- High presence of neighborhood services (e.g. open-air markets, schools, hospitals)
- Streets generally contained fully within study area

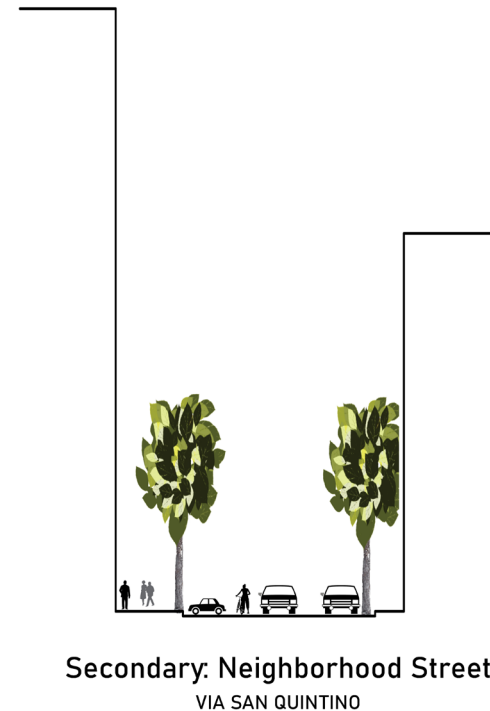


Figure 1.14. Cross-section of Via San Quintino, a secondary neighborhood street.

Tertiary

Tertiary streets are generally the back streets of the study area, defined by low automobile and pedestrian traffic. These streets are near-exclusively residential and are fully contained within the study area. They often make up the quiet residential nooks of our study area, where the pace calms down from the traffic of the primary streets.

- Low auto traffic
- Low pedestrian traffic
- Near-exclusively residential
- Streets fully contained within study area

Private

Private streets within the study area are cordoned-off due to varying usages, from residential courtyards to commercial truck entrances to institutional/governmental security precautions. Key examples include the private streets encapsulated between the massive apartment blocks between Parco di Via Statilia and Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. These spaces are used flexibly, as they are often simultaneously a parking lot, a private entrance to a home, a garden, and a quasi-private piazza all at the same time. Meanwhile, other private streets, such as the entrance to the Villa Wolkonsky, the British ambassador's residence, are cordoned off and lack much communal usage in their heavily securitized state.

- Cordoned off from public access - gate or chain
- Varies between residential, institutional, or commercial usage

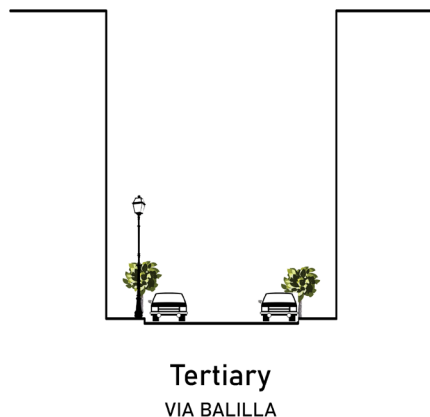


Figure 1.15. Cross-section of Via Balilla, a tertiary street.

Modern Architectural Development

- i. Masterplans, Buildings, and Densification
- ii. Usage in Motion

Masterplans, Buildings, and Densification

Esquilino's buildings are a by-product of Rome's master plans and the alterations made by Esquilino inhabitants. The 1883 and 1873 master plans indicate that Esquilino was an area of new land development and building speculation (Costa, 1991, p. 273); (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). To accommodate the rising population within the city, homeowners and private institutions modified their buildings by adding more floors—sometimes done illegally—to increase the building capacity and profitability (Magliozzi, 2021, p. 104). This phenomenon is recognizable throughout Esquilino as the floor additions are a jarring change to the rest of the building's aesthetics. Nonetheless, floor additions and



Figure 1.17. Map of 1883 Rome Master Plan.



Figure 1.16. Map of 1873 Rome Master Plan.

expansions are emblematic of the increasing migration that was taking place within the neighborhood.

Our group identified seven building typologies in Esquilino: perimeter buildings, light industrial, low/mid rise, villini, palazzine, residential palazzi, and a unique structure. We explore the history and disfigurements of each building type to illustrate how Esquilino has adapted to the housing crisis over the course of the 20th century—a theme of centriperiferia.

First phase: Creating an Organization Map

Before beginning our field data collection, we created a map that systemized the buildings based on the census tract and their assigned numbers. The order of the numbers was based on the assumed path of the surveyor. The map enabled us to locate buildings for further analysis at the Cornell studio and organize our photographs within our shared Google Drive. Additionally, the map delineates our study area: serving as a reference for when we veer off our territory.

Second Phase: Field Data Collection

From February 10th to March 23rd of 2022, we went to Esquilino to take notes on individual buildings. We focused on the mass of the building, its setback, facade, number of floors, materials, and peculiar characteristics.

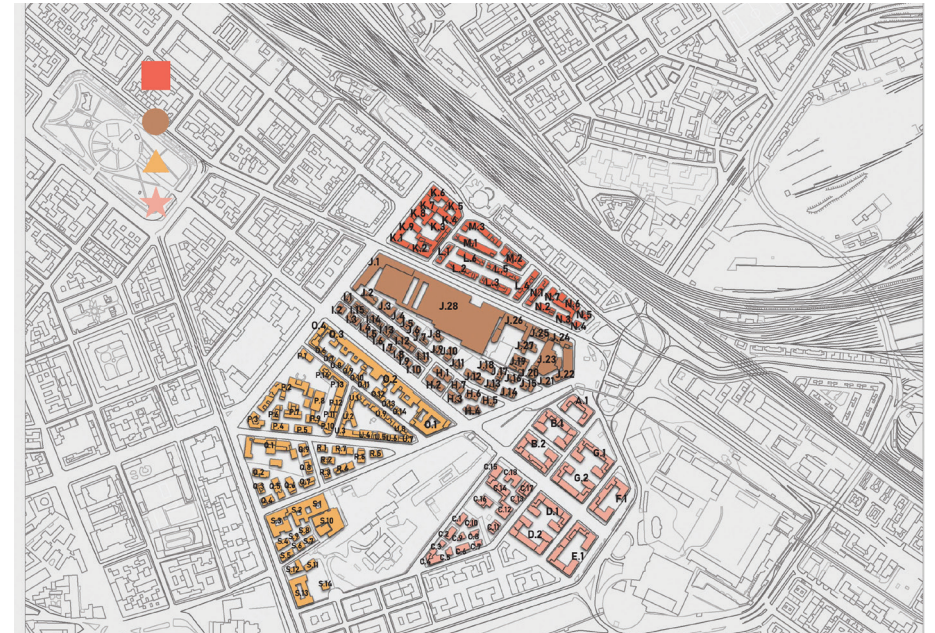


Figure 1.18. Map of our study boundary.



Figure 1.19. Discussing building typologies while eating lunch at Forno Ciabattini Roma.

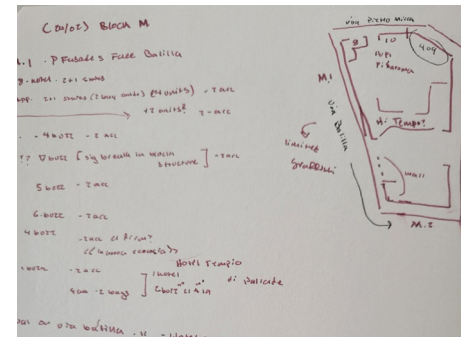


Figure 1.21. Dante's notes.



Figure 1.20. Searching for our neighborhood.



Figure 1.22. Front gate of Scuola Di Donato.

Building Typologies



Figure 1.23. Map of Building typologies.

Perimeter Buildings

Often called a wall building, this structure is large and rectangular. It has one ground floor designated for commercial usage and four to six residential floors. However, floor additions are noticeable because of the changes in ornamentation and shape of the upper floors. They can have a courtyard in the center shared with other perimeter buildings, which are safeguarded by a gate. The building has no setback and the entrance is on the sidewalk or the courtyard. They are found along Via Carlo Emanuele I and Via di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.



Figure 1.25. A perimeter building with added floors.



Figure 1.26. Fiat building.



Figure 1.24. Line drawing of a perimeter building on Via di S. Croce in Gerusalemme.

Light Industrial

Unlike other types of buildings in Esquilino, light industrial buildings only have one story with no setback and are wall-like in their appearance. One example is the Fiat building on Via Porta Maggiore. The ornamentation of the buildings is sparse with windows that are heavily barred and gated courtyards with garages on one side. This physical typology of light industrial structures is influenced heavily by industrial usage.



Figure 1.27. Line drawing of Fiat building on Via Porta Maggiore.

Low Rise

Low-rise buildings are medium-density buildings with two to six floors. Contemporary low-rise buildings have a setback with a perimeter gate and a wall. Low-rise buildings are present along Via Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and on Via Giovanni Giolitti. It is clear that through the densification of Esquilino, new floors had to be built on pre-existing structures. However, the vertical development of the low-rise buildings is discordant with the rest of the low-rise structures on the same building or the same street.



Figure 1.28. A villino with an extra floor on Via di S. Croce in Gerusalemme.

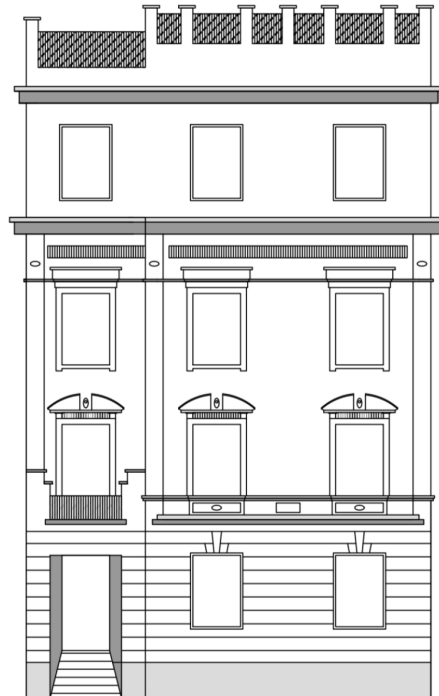


Figure 1.29. Villino with an additional layer on Via Luigi Luzzatti.



Figure 1.30. Line drawing of Hotel Donatello in Via di Porta Maggiore.



Figure 1.31. Hotel Donatello, a low-mid rise building

Villini

According to the 1909 Rome master plan, a villino must have two floors with gardens surrounding the building (Magliozzi, p. 81). However, rapid densification resulted in forces that pushed for more intensive usage of buildings, often resulting in new floors being added to pre-existing villini and giving rise to the palazzine throughout Rome (Magliozzi, p. 82). It is hard to come across an original villino in Esquilino because many villini have been expanded. Adding more floors was popular with other low-mid rise buildings, disregarding the rest of the building style and forming a parasitic floor (Magliozzi, p. 190). Contemporary villini have garages or canopies attached to the side of the house.

Palazzine

Palazzine are one of the most common types of buildings built in Esquilino. A typical palazzina is a widespread, rectangular, medium-density building with one ground floor and three residential floors. Originally, the building was permitted to be about 19 meters and must be at least 5.8 meters from the boundaries of the adjacent lots (Magliozzi, p. 109). It also has a slight front setback of 5 feet and a garden wall along the sidewalk. Palazzine were popularized throughout Rome because they allowed for more intensive use of land. Palazzine are typically higher than the original planned design of 19 meters because of unclear laws and lack of construction enforcement (Magliozzi, p. 87).

Palazzine have varying degrees of the lintel ranging from gothic to flat arches ("piattabanda"). The complexity of window ornamentation decreases as the floor increases. There are usually side gardens, a garage, or courtyards next to the building. This type of building is found on high-pedestrian roads such as Via Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and Via Luigi Luzzatti.

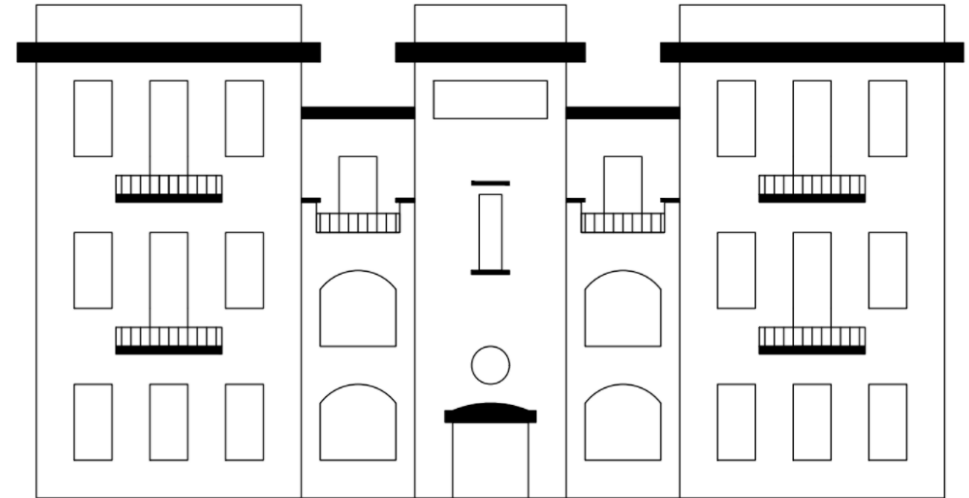


Figure 1.32. Line drawing of a palazzina.



Figure 1.33. Palazzina in Via di S. Croce in Gerusalemme.

Residential Palazzi

A residential palazzo is a large, free-standing square building with four residential floors and one ground floor. It consists of a grand entrance in the front, one or two elaborate cornices, and one or two string courses around the building. The pilasters on the side of the buildings are either bare or ornamented. Although free-standing, courtyards behind the building are shared by adjacent palazzi.

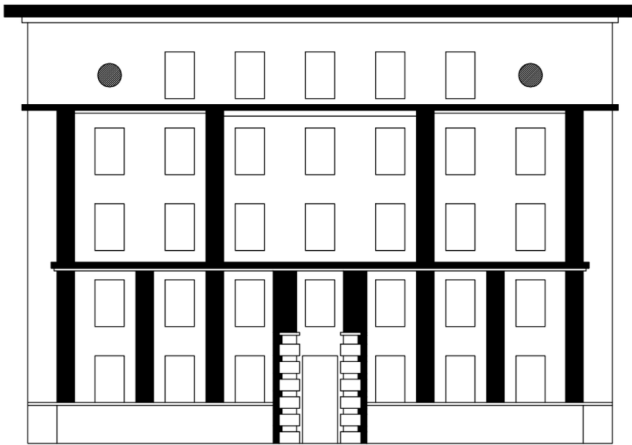


Figure 1.34. Line drawing of a residential palazzo on Via San Quintino.



Figure 1.35. Residential palazzo.

Unique Structures

Unique Structures are buildings that display features that significantly differ from the established character of the neighborhood. Unique structures also do not fit our typology classification, as they have varying physical properties and usages. Our unique structure is the church, or the “castle” on Via Vittorio Amedeo II (figure 1.36); (figure 1.38). The “castle” is a large building with a ground floor and three floors. While the ground floor is rectangular and has no setback, there is a semi-circle curve in its facade, which suggests a courtyard in the front. We describe the building as a castle due to its crenellation: a unique feature in the neighborhood. The ground floor has exposed tufas and peeling paint, reflecting the lack of repair on the structure. The castle does not fit the rest of the neighborhood typology on the streets, all of which are low-rise buildings.

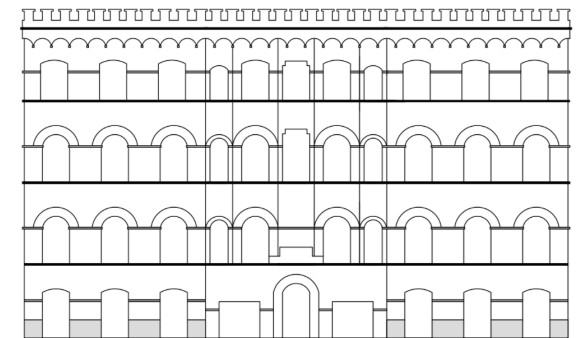


Figure 1.36. Line drawing of the castle on Via Vittorio Amedeo II.



Figure 1.37. The castle on Via Vittorio Amedeo II.

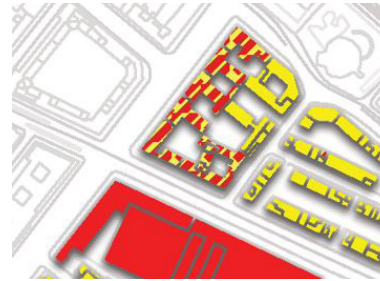
Usage in Motion

How Esquilino's inhabitants utilize buildings in the neighborhood contrasts with their intended use. According to the 1931 masterplan, villini and palazzine made up most of the buildings in Esquilino, the two-building types that functioned solely for residential purposes. Villini were intended to accommodate two families from the lower and middle class, and palazzine were for families of 4-5 people, staff, and guests (Magliozzi, p. 241; p.110). Simply put, the 1931 master plan determined that the Esquilino neighborhood was mainly for housing. When walking around one of Esquilino's main roads today, the buildings are no longer defined by a single use. Instead, the ground floor of a building are often occupied by a cafe while the rest of the floors are residential.



Figure 1.38. Map of Usage Typologies.

A usage map is valuable for understanding the relationship between the urban environment and function. We have loosely applied the American Planning Association (APA)'s Land-Based Classification Standards (LBCS) to make our usage map of Esquilino buildings. We found it helpful to apply the LBSC system because it helped formulate our five criteria: Activity, Function, Structure, Site, and Ownership. However, by choosing to use the APA LBCS we recognize the inherent problems with placing American-based classifications in the Italian urban fabric and the loss of nuance in the process. To counter this bias, we used the LBSC's extensive report to match the Italian usages and building types to the LBCS Color guide. Our data collection is from our site surveys (for more about our methodology see our building typology section), and we noted the visible use of the building. This was done by inspecting the public buzzers, reading posters, and entering private courtyards.



Commercial

Commercial space is a large portion of the urban area. While commercial buildings can be stand-alone, most commercial areas occupy the ground floor within mixed-use residential buildings. These include convenience stores, restaurants, trattorias, cafes, and offices for businesses.



Industrial

Light industrial or artisanal manufacturing is common in mixed-use neighborhoods. We have two cases of light industrial on opposite sides of our focus area: a plastic manufacturer on Via Porta Maggiore and an infilled industrial space on Via Amedeo VIII.



Residential

Residential buildings include apartment buildings, hotels, temporary housing forms, standalone houses, duplexes, and rowhouses. Residential buildings are often mixed-use commercial.





Institutional



This broad category includes religious, municipal, and private institutions. These include public and private schools, a hospital, a historic museum, municipal service headquarters, a police office, an embassy, and a community center.



Parks



Apart from tree-lined streets, and private gardens, green space is limited to one park on the southwest side of the Porta Maggiore interchange. This park's defying feature is its relation to the ancient aqueduct that comes from the SE of the city into Esquilino and to the Lateran Basilica.



Emerging Urban Commons



Emerging urban commons are occupied spaces where we have noticed the efforts made by inhabitants to revitalize a structure for recreational use, education, and paths towards regeneration.

Flexible Usage of Space

REWRITE

The Transient History of Piazza Vittorio

6th Century BCE – 1st Century CE

Esquiline Hill long used as the necropolis and dumping ground in antiquity.

5th–15th Century CE

Esquilino part of Roman disabitato, undeveloped and pastoral land within the Aurelian walls

1873

Master Plan of Rome post-Risorgimento created, calls for mass development of modern Esquilino

1880s

Construction of Piazza Vittorio Emanuela and development surrounding blocks for Turinese government employees

1939

Founding of open-air market at Piazza Vittorio becomes a heart of commerce for working-class Romans

1980s–90s

Start of growth of foreign immigrant communities in Esquilino, continuing to the present day. Shift to indoor Nuovo Mercato Esquilino

1st Century CE

Aqua Claudio and Aqua Novus built through Porta Maggiore to conduct water from the mountains into Roman center.

Late 16th Century CE

Roads planned by Pope Sixtus IV, linked the three major basiliche of Esquilino, are completed

1874

The construction of Termini Station is completed

1890–1920

Porta Maggiore and Piazza Vittorio develop as a hub of Roman tram system, reaching out to growing Roman periphery

Mid-1900s

Further densification of Esquilino, especially along Via di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme

From the inception of Esquilino's modern development, Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II has been the heart of public life in Esquilino. During the turn of the 20th century, vendors began to spontaneously organize around Piazza Vittorio, eventually organizing into a full-blown open-air market in 1939. The market became a key point of commerce and trade for working-class Romans: selling almost anything one could want. This identity was cemented in the famous 1948 film *Ladri di biciclette*, where the main character and his son sift through the maze of Piazza Vittorio, searching to see if their stolen bike is on sale.



Figure 1.51. Bicycle Thieves in the heart of the periphery.

The 1980s would mark a general shift in migration within Italy, as migratory flows from Southern Italy towards metropolises such as Rome slowed as the nation focused more investment on industrial development in the South, and migratory flows from Asia and Africa grew within a globalizing economy. This shift is exemplified in the transformation of the market at Piazza Vittorio, the original Mercato Esquilino, which served much of the population of the Roman periphery (then largely southern Italian), even while the first communities inhabiting Esquilino

were government workers from Turin in the North. In the late 1980s, years of economic crisis and stagflation forced many of the vendors of the open-air market in Piazza Vittorio, and other shops throughout Esquilino, to close. At the same time, waves of foreign immigrants, largely from Bangladesh and China, began to enter the neighborhood.

As Esquilino and Rome at large lost one hub of affordable commerce at Piazza Vittorio that had symbolized working-class life in the city throughout the 20th century, they would also soon gain a new market that would attract droves not just from the periphery of Rome, but from throughout the Global South. In the 1990s, Asian immigrants began to establish businesses and stalls within the same spaces that had been vacated during the economic crisis, and in 2001, the Nuovo Mercato Esquilino would be founded a block north of Piazza Vittorio. This covered market has become

the multicultural market of Rome, with South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and Latin American vendors selling foods and goods from around the world. The market serves as the heart of present-day Esquilino, acting as a primary food source and meeting place for residents, and attracting migrant communities from across the city to shop, converse, and work there. Meanwhile, Piazza Vittorio, even without a bustling market encircling it, serves as the primary meeting place within the neighborhood, bustling with activity at almost any time of day. The transformations of Mercato Esquilino and Piazza Vittorio don't only demonstrate how commercial uses have shapeshifted across the neighborhood, but also how migratory flows have always guided the development of modern Esquilino, especially during its multicultural present and future.



Figure 1.52. The Esquilino market has everything you need.

Section 2: Telling the Story



Introduction

Interviews, Mental Maps, and Privilege

To dive into the human side of Esquilino, we conducted interviews with Esquilino inhabitants and had them draw mental maps of the neighborhood for us. We were fortunate enough to speak with the people whom we got in contact with during our group visit to Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs and Scuola Di Donato. The interviewees are from varying backgrounds of social activism and community engagement. We connected with them at their work or over zoom, and we ran the recordings through a transcription tool to process our interviews. We adjusted the transcriptions to correct the names of places and other information (see Appendix for guiding questions and transcripts).

A person's perception of their neighborhood is based on their attachment to the physical and social characteristics of their environment. As Kevin Lynch, a prominent urban theorist wrote in *The Image of the City*, "Each individual picture is unique, with some content that is rarely or never communicated, yet it approximates the public image, which, in different environments, is more or less compelling, more or less embracing." (Lynch, p. 46) A person's mental picture of their neighborhood is one with powerful influences that illustrates the dynamic of the community. The interviews and the mental maps guided our creation of Esquilino's themes:

We categorized our findings by themes to organize the challenges and perceptions that exist within the neighborhood. However, it is important to note that our research comes from a place of privilege. The themes that we have created for Esquilino are guided by the perspectives of inhabitants who were accessible for interviews; for instance, we were unable to connect with individuals from the Global South, who represent a significant minority of the

neighborhood. Therefore, our themes are not a definitive representation of the entire neighborhood, but rather they highlight the advantages and the limitations of social organizations and municipalities in resolving urban issues.

2.1. Introduction

2.2. What is Space?

i. Space as a Spectrum: Formal, Organic, Public, and Private

ii. A Case of Via Bixio's Tactical Urbanism

2.3. Narratives of Centripheria

2.4. Homelessness and Urban Poverty

i. Careful Look at Rough Sleepers

ii. Wearing Santa Croce/Spin Time

2.5. Migration and Multiculturalism

2.6. Education

i. Di Donato: A Place for Community Dialogue

2.7. Regeneration

2.8. Community Cohesion

i. Community Cohesion Map & Directory

What is Space?

- i. Space as a Spectrum: Formal, Organic,
Public, and Private
- ii. The Case of Via Bixio: Tactical Urbanism

Space as a Spectrum: Formal, Organic, Public, and Private

FORMAL PUBLIC SPACE

Formal public spaces both the areas where people engage with each other, as well as the subjective meanings that define the boundaries of the public sphere. For Esquilino, the main dynamic of formal spaces is between Nuovo Mercato Esquilino, Termini, and Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. Formal spaces like the Nuovo Mercato Esquilino maintain a rigid function based on usage. However, where do formal spaces start and different definitions of public space end? Many community organizations and individuals negotiate space across a spectrum: formal, organic, public, and private.

At the center of the quarter stands Piazza Vittorio: a center of multiculturalism and cultural diffusion. While this built environment remains the vascular heart of the quarter, it isn't the "soul", or sole space that defines the quarter. There are different types of public spaces, and the principal defining factor of these varying typologies is the people: how they spill into the street, how they interact with the built environment, and their dynamic negotiations

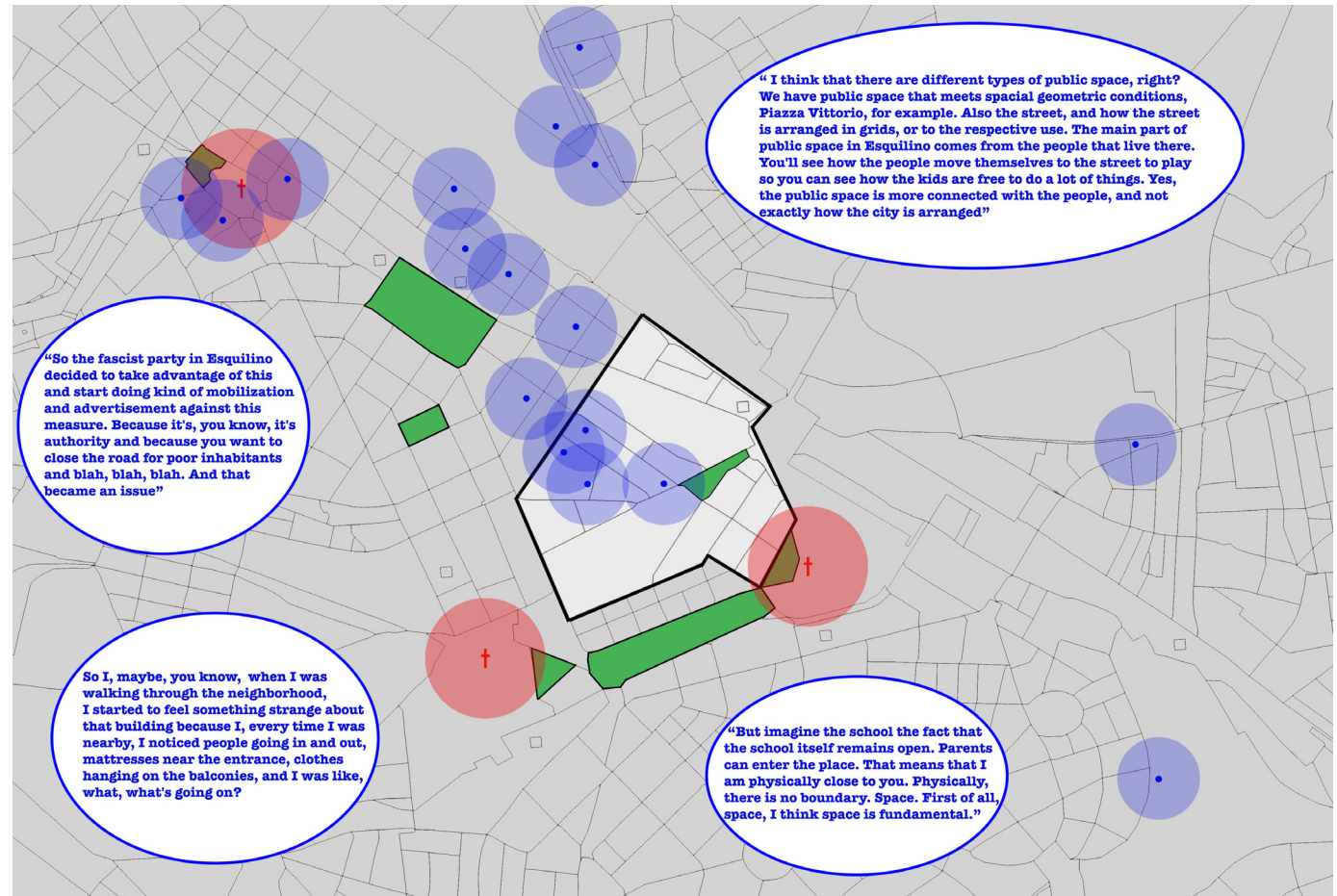


Figure 2.1. A map showing quotes related to community cohesion.

of space-taking- which is often not an easy nor peaceful process.

ORGANIC PUBLIC SPACE

Our definitions of dynamic spaces lie on a continuum with one end being formal and the other being anarchical (we define the continuum as ending before pure anarchy). It is a dynamic between "organic" and "formal", in which spaces often retain characteristics of

both. Organic spaces help define the flexible negotiations of public space, which is a common occurrence in the quarter. Places like Scuola Di Donato, Spin Time Labs, and Via Bixio exemplify this dynamic process. Organic spaces bridge the gap between the limited usage of formal spaces and the needs of the community. Inhabitants in Esquilino realize these gaps and expand upon formal definitions of public space through their active community-based

placemaking process. Co-design, cooperation, and activism enacted by local inhabitants help to create nuanced and codified spatial definitions for the organization of space in Esquilino. For Scuola Di Donato, space becomes a place for defragmentation, economic empowerment, cultural diffusion, and tactical urbanism.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

Many of the public spaces we define in this booklet possess both implicit and explicit boundaries. On one side of the spectrum, there are formal public spaces. These spaces, like Nuovo Mercato Esquilino and Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, are unequivocally public. As a result, they lack many formal rules. However, notions of public spaces cannot be defined solely by explicit rules; public spaces can be defined by the people who inhabit them. This definition-by-users is important to note when discussing the dynamics of public and private spheres. When spaces are defined by users, they either implicitly or explicitly assume the characteristics of said users. This is especially the case in anarchic spaces, be it formal or informal. As a result, the dynamics of public and private spaces have the opportunity to contribute to subjects of inclusion and exclusion.

There is a range of space types in the Esquilino quarter—on one end of the spectrum, formal spaces provide spontaneous interaction for users. Places like Nuovo Mercato Esquilino and Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II regulate these equal spaces through police presence and social bylaws. These spaces act as stages for life; they are equal but do not explicitly account for everyday lived imbalances and injustices. In Esquilino, users and actors have sought to rectify many of the social and economic inequalities that exist, exemplified through the case of Di Donato. They recognize this aspect of user-defined space, and as an

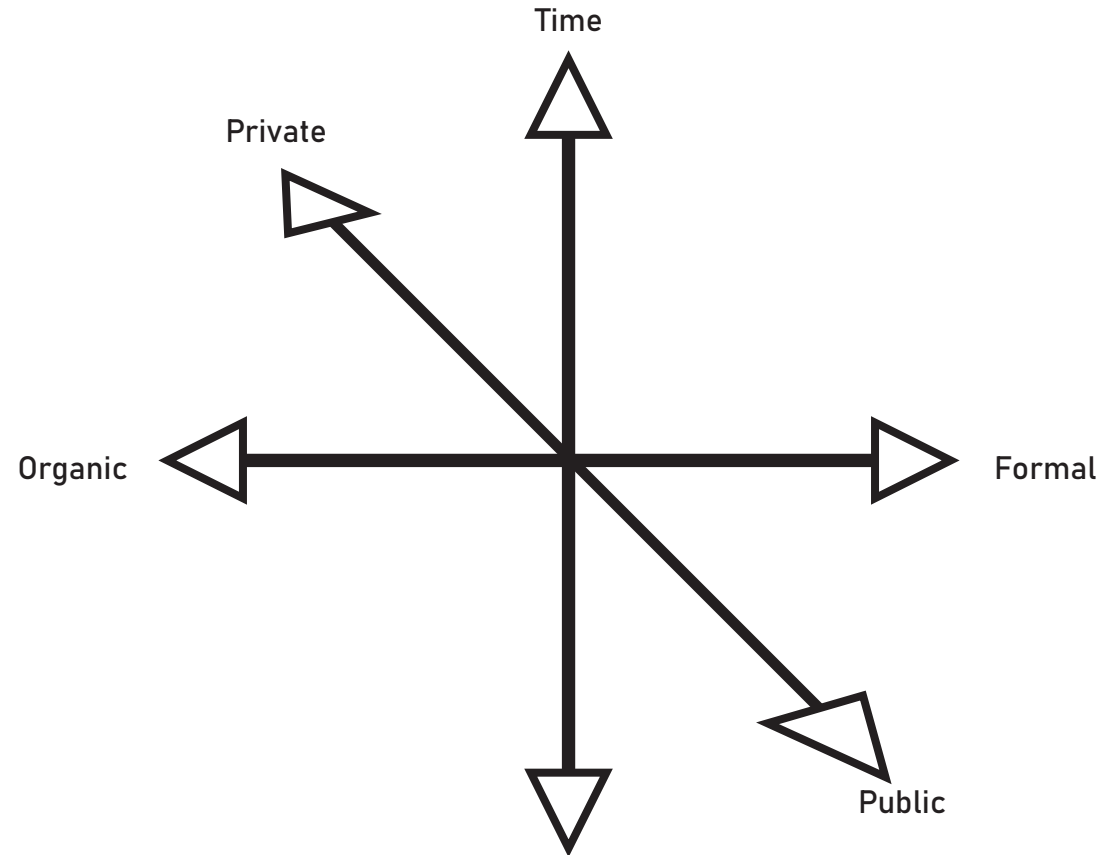


Figure 2.2. Space as an intersection of time, usage of space, and creation.

educational institution, they recognize that prejudice and inequality have the greatest potential for harm at this scale. As a result of the close connection to users, space, and community, the school rectifies who is who is not represented within the community through their parent's association. Migrants, who often lack economic agency or available time to participate in the parents association, can participate in other ways. DiDonato empowers parents and community members by providing jobs based on prior skills: by doing so, they create relationships inside these semi-private spaces (note that the school opens as a community center after classes let out) that we see in the formal-public spaces. Meanwhile, they bring people together, create shared moments, and redefine what community is by creating equity.

Ideas of public and private are negotiated across time and space. Santacroce/ Spin Time– an emerging urban commons– is a residential space for families of all cultures and nationalities, while also housing a public museum, community center, office building, and so much more. “What is Spin Time?” This has been an ongoing question throughout the duration of our study, though in reality, it's impossible to answer because it encompasses such a vast network of services. For Santa Croce inhabitants, the answer to this question would be home: a place where foreign-born, first-generation, and native Italians cooperate and coexist to enact their right to housing. At the same time, in the basement, members of the community and from across Rome congregate to hang out, smoke, drink at the bar, and do homework. Here the line between anarchy and urban commons is blurred. Inhabitants from Santa Croce are notably missing from these spaces, regardless of attempts to include them. This is in part due to inaccessibility. Even though these spaces are physically and socially adjacent (Santa Croce inhabitants pledge to partake in housing activism), these communal areas open to the public often don't serve direct inhabitants. This exemplifies the transient nature of public and private spaces in Esquilino. Even though places can be adjacent to each other for users and non-users in the community, accessibility, and as a result, a sense of inclusivity, can become a hybrid.

The Case for Organic Public Space: Via Bixio

After a young boy was killed while crossing Via Bixio from Di Donato, the parents association pedestrianized the stretch of road in front of the school. This space holds many functions—it is an area for children to play with one another, where community meetings take place, where parents wait for their children when school lets out, and most importantly, it is a place without the dangers of cars. Di Donato placed a movable metal barrier where Via Bixio meets Via Conte Verde, and also placed wooden benches and trees near the center of the road (Figure 2.3 and Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.3. Via Bixio



Figure 2.4. Via Bixio, facing Scuola Di Donato.time, usage of space, and creation.

Narratives of the Centripheria

KEY

- Centro
- Periferia
- Centropheria
- Aurelian Wall

The diagram is a hand-drawn sketch titled "GEOGRAPHY CENTRIPHERIA". It features a central rectangular box. Three lines radiate from this central box to three separate circles. Each circle contains a cross symbol. The circles are positioned at the top-left, top-right, and bottom-right of the main diagram's frame. A small, detailed inset map of a city grid is located in the bottom-left corner of the page.

of all types of space in the neighborhood, especially surrounding Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II and the Mercato Esquilino. From historical research to the analysis of the neighborhood's physical environment, Esquilino continues to present itself as caught between conceptions of peripherality and centrality. As we dive deeper into the personal narratives of Esquilino, an example of urban transformation and the accounts of residents help us to define the dynamics and tensions of the centriperipheria.

“They are more like, ‘Yeah, but I live in Torre Angela, so I’m coming from the periphery, and you don’t know what it means to live in the periphery.’ Okay, but what does it mean? I mean, there are still many issues here.”

“Si raga, ma Esquilino e la centripheria. it’s very easy. It’s it means that it’s in the center, but you see scenes and social dynamics that you be not supposed to see in the city center of a European capital.”

“Esquilino has always been a melting pot. People that live in the center always refused the solution to create this type of mixed planning to match the different typologies of citizens.”

“I am an inhabitant of Esquilino, but in Esquilino there are, I mean, it’s a centripheria. So, there are also a lot of complicated issues and complicated families and individuals who have a lot of issues and social and economic problems. But people outside and people who are living in the suburbs, even if [...] they come from middle class families, so they are not experiencing some specific economic problems or stuff like this, they suppose that if you are living in the center, then automatically you are rich, or you don’t have issues.”

Through our team's process of interviewing residents and community actors, the introduction of the DIS (Dipartimento delle Informazioni per la Sicurezza / Department of Information for Security) building to Esquilino's urban landscape emerged as a prime example of the neighborhood's crucial role in mediating between Rome's center and periphery. Simultaneously, this example signals a broader understanding of the term "centriperiphery," through the connection of Rome with the whole of Italy. Previously operating as a postal office, the massive building adjacent to Piazza Dante is now home to this federal government office, which effectively operates comparably to the

"SI RAGA, MA ESQUILINO E LA CENTRIPHERIA"

United States Secret Service. Various governmental services and operations falling under the legislative, executive, and judicial subdivisions that were previously located throughout the country are now consolidated in this single building. While the atmosphere of Esquilino at times feels removed from the centralized governmental structures typical to the center of Rome, the introduction of the DIS building in 2019 has reintroduced an element of centrality to the area that oftentimes operates peripherally. At the same time, it functionally reinforces Rome as the center of Italian power, with external Italian cities operating as the periphery.



Figure 2.7. The DIS building adjacent to Piazza Dante.

Homelessness and Urban Poverty

Partners with Sant'egidio to provide alternative housing for people in precarious situations, and to set up soup kitchens in the area.

"There must have been about 40 people sleeping in the park at the time [...] if you have nowhere to go, you are generally allowed to sit down."

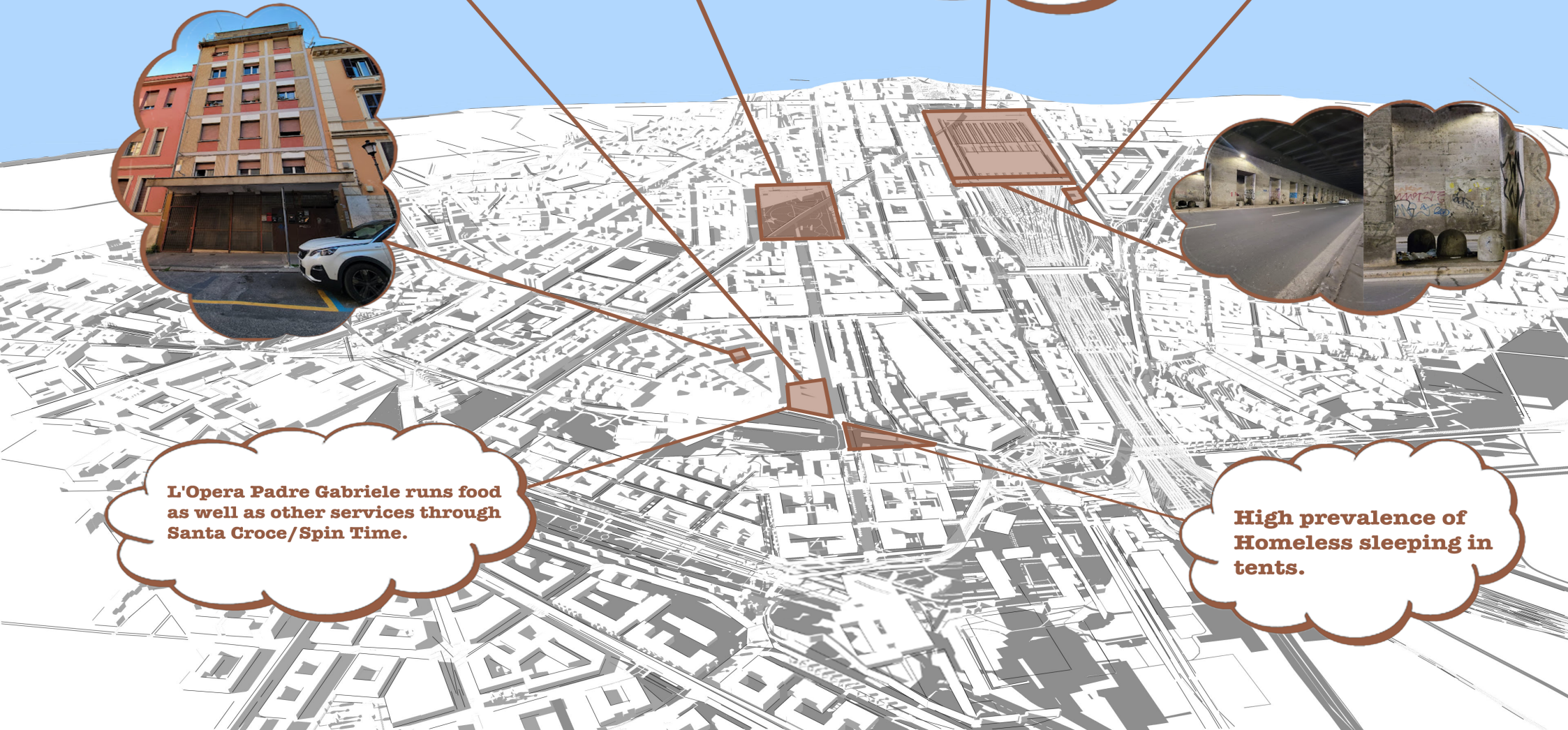
"Central stations are conventionally surrounded by trouble, yes. But at the same time, coming and going, and maybe that makes one feel less lonely. But at the same time, it probably makes one feel more lonely because the more people there are the more invisible [...] you would get."

Binario 95 is a reception center for homeless people, offering material needs and workshops to help create paths towards reintegration for the homeless.



L'Opera Padre Gabriele runs food as well as other services through Santa Croce/Spin Time.

High prevalence of Homeless sleeping in tents.



In this section, we shed light on the presence of urban poverty in the Esquilino neighborhood. First and foremost, writing about homelessness requires utmost sensitivity from the writer, and it is our duty to represent the population with respect. Being homeless has a debilitating effect on an individual, and people have a myriad of personal and external reasons that restrict them to sleeping on the streets. Through our research about urban poverty we learned about the reality of home ownership and homelessness in Esquilino from our interviews with Esquilino inhabitants, and we were made aware of the local organizations and services that assist the homeless in Esquilino. Rough sleepers (people sleeping outside without stable housing) are concentrated in certain areas of Esquilino. In these sites, structures like tents, mattresses, blankets, cardboard, or other materials are used as markers for the presence of homeless people:

Careful Look at Rough Sleepers

Roma Termini. Out of all the sites, Termini station hosts the most rough sleepers. Individuals set up temporary encampments alongside Termini for shelter. “Coming and going...maybe that makes one feel less lonely,” explains Jennie, a long-time inhabitant of Santa Croce/Spin Time. The station services almost 480,000 travelers a day, with many people exiting Termini end up passing by the rough sleepers on the street.

Sottopassaggio Pettinelli. Sottopassaggio Pettinelli, or Termini underpass, hosts many rough sleepers. Almost every alcove between the traffic ways is occupied by a shelter. There are 2-3 blocks that fill the alcoves, possibly designed to prevent individuals from making encampments. However, individuals can occupy the structures (Figure 2.11 and Figure 2.12).

“We tend to help each other, there’s like a common ground... There are lots of shared values and shared approaches to how to promote those values. So that’s what they call cultural activism I think.”
-Jennie



Figure 2.10. A lynch map showing homelessness.

Corner of Spin Time. There are usually a couple of rough sleepers who live along the side of the building with large eaves (Figure 2.13). However, this is also common with other buildings.

Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II and Parco di Via Statilia. Parks in Esquilino is a places for people to sleep. "If you have nowhere to go, you are generally allowed to sit down," says Jennie. In Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, there used to be about 40 people sleeping in the park daily. Now, the park is a center for many recreational activities. There is no presence of homeless individuals during the daytime.



Figure 2.11. Sottopassaggio Pettinelli, underneath Termini.



Figure 2.12. An alcove was inhabited.



Figure 2.13. Beds alongside the corner of Spin Time Via Statilia.



Figure 2.14. Entrance of Binario 95.

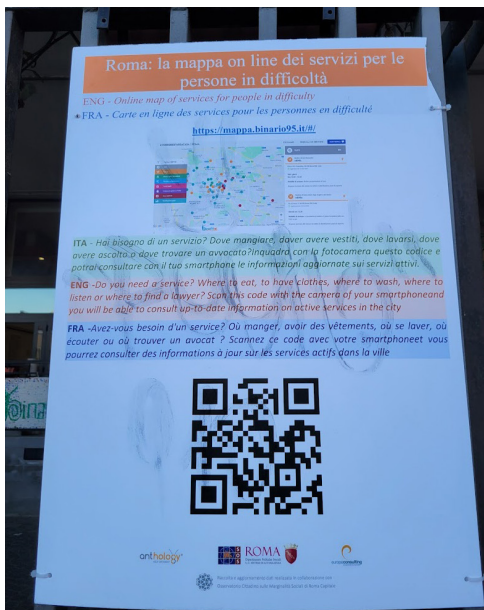


Figure 2.15. A flier with a QR code shows the location of services for people in difficulty.

Over the years, there have been changes in the ethnic makeup of rough-sleepers, suggesting a strong link between migration and urban poverty. Another theme is the existence of women and LGBTQ+ members among the urban poor. It may be that Termini offers a sense of protection because of its official presence, but being a homeless woman or a member of LGTBQ+ means a higher degree of risk for the individual. These are some of the services that are offered for the homeless and the urban poor:

Binario 95. Located underneath Termini station on Via Marsala, Binario 95 is a center that assists disadvantaged people by offering shelter, food, and local services in the neighborhood. Their goal is to support people's recovery and reintegration into society. Owned by Binario 95, Casa Sabotino is a house that welcomes up to 18 women in their journey of social reintegration, which includes a specific focus on providing support for transgender women in the area..

Sant'egidio. Born in the 70s by a group of students, Sant'egidio is a non-profit, Christian organization where the organization members offer food, water, and blankets to the homeless. The organization is not headquartered in Esquilino, but its presence is recognized by Esquilino inhabitants.

Santa Croce/Spin Time Labs. An occupied structure on Via di S. Croce in Gerusalemme, Santa Croce is the residential part of the building. They offer many services for the urban poor by participating in soup kitchens and food distribution.

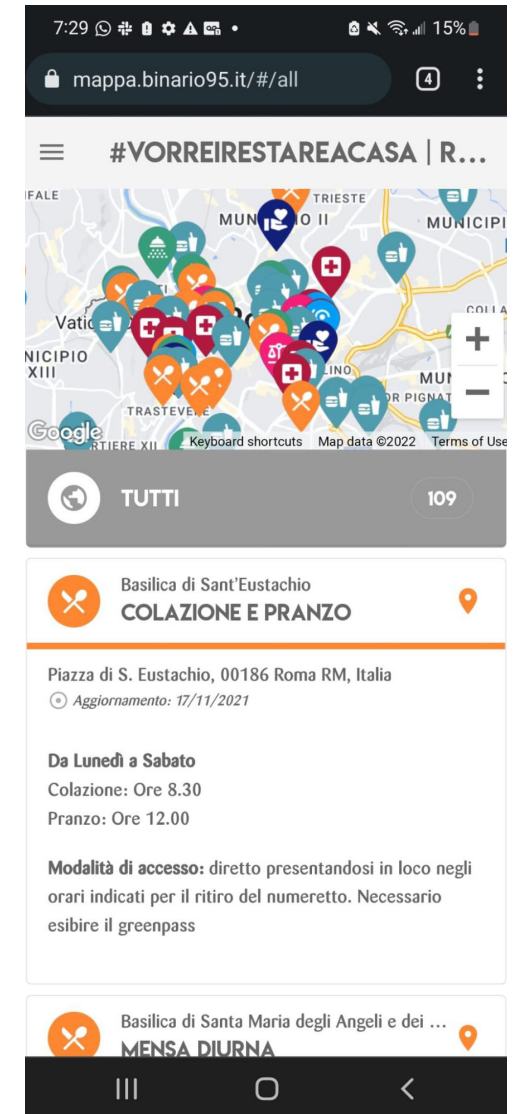


Figure 2.16. The map that shows up when using the QR code.

Building Occupation: Santa Croce/ Spin Time

While there exist many conditions that lead to individuals losing their homes, the illegal occupation of buildings has been an effective method of providing homes for people who are unable to obtain one. Such is the case of Santa Croce/ Spin Time Labs, an occupied building on Via di S. Croce in Gerusalemme. Originally used by the State Social Security Institution (INPDAP), the building was occupied in 2013 by Action, a prominent occupation movement. The building is currently owned by InvestiRE SGR SPA, a real-estate fund (Cacciotti, 2020, p.15). Today, the building hosts roughly 143 families, or 400 inhabitants from 25 different nationalities (p.15).

Inside Santa Croce—the residential section—inhabitants live in proximity to one another. People often share bathrooms and kitchens, which could be psychologically debilitating for people (Jennie, April 4, 2022). The coexistence of many



Figure 2.17. Spin Time Labs.

ethnicities plays a role in creating tensions between individuals, but disputes are often diffused through mediation.

The existence of Santa Croce/ Spin Time Labs is not without backlash. In 2019, Spin Time's electricity was shut down for a week when the occupation's €300,000 electricity bill was unpaid. In response, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski climbed down a manhole to turn on the fuse box so that the inhabitants could receive electricity again, taking full responsibility for his actions (Kington, 2019, May 14). The former prime minister of Italy, Matteo Salvini, disagreed with Krawjewski's actions, tweeting, "Private property is sacred, some cardinal notwithstanding." Santa Croce/ Spin Time is also perceived negatively by the right-wing media, often publishing unsavory photographs inside the buildings to intensify movements against "squatting". Informal occupation of buildings is still a controversial topic in Italy, and Spin Time's survival in Esquilino rests on the generosity of local organizations.

While there are other occupied buildings in Esquilino such as one building on Via Vittorio Amedeo (Figure 2.16), it is important to note that Santa Croce/Spin Time is well known for its hospitality, social nets, and engagement with the Esquilino community.



Figure 2.18. Occupied building on Via Vittorio Amedeo II.

Migration and Multiculturalism

"So I remember DiDonato when I was a child, and it was, you know, was a good school, but at the same time, there were so many Chinese pupils at the time, and the teachers didn't know how to deal with it, because it was the first time they deal with diversity, let's say."

Around 45 to 50% , or 400 out of 700 students are from migrant parents. The school is creative in paying for the tuition of the children. Parents pay a monthly price of 20 to 25 euros per child. If a parent can't pay because of financial reasons, the organization finds another way to pay for the child such as using the donation pool from other parents.

"Here is Chinese, here is African, here is Bangladeshi, here is Chinese, this part is completely Romana. You can find a different topology of ethnicity directly connected with the garden. Here, in Piazza Vittorio, all the people meet together."

Majority of stalls run by Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian. The multicultural market of Rome.

There are now 143 families (up to 400 people) of 25 different nationalities living at Santa Croce [Spin Time].

Migrant parents often work long hours. If they cannot participate in school activities or parents association meetings, then they cook or volunteer in other ways.

One of the most [if not the most] famous Chinese restaurants in Rome.



DiDONATO

“So I remember DiDonato when I was a child, and it was, you know, was a good school, but at the same time, there were so many Chinese pupils at the time, and the teachers didn’t know how to deal with it, because it was the first time they deal with diversity, let’s say.”

Esquilino is championed as Italy’s multicultural neighborhood. The presence of Termini and housing in the quarter has allowed the Esquilino neighborhood to become a multiethnic corridor into the city center. The close relationship between Esquilino and Termini has been championed as a defining factor that transformed Esquilino into one of the most diverse and multicultural neighborhoods in Rome. However, who makes up the migrants and how are they touted as the “others” in the Italian identity creation? How do they negotiate themselves across different spaces?

PIAZZA VITTORIO

“If you go to the garden during the day, from the first part of the morning you can see a lot of Chinese, and then in the middle part of the morning you can see the Bangladeshi that listen to music, and then another part of the day you can see Africans that meet together and eat, and then after the school ends you can see a lot of kids: the Roman part. That’s where everyone comes together, and lives together, and maybe sometimes we hate together.”

It is important to note that within the Italian context, migrants are perceived as a homogenized group regardless of people's diverse origins. This assumption is a result of the transient nature of othering that has existed through globalization throughout the 20th century through today. Esquilino, as the heart of multiculturalism in the Italian capital, has revealed the reality of the foreign-born population.

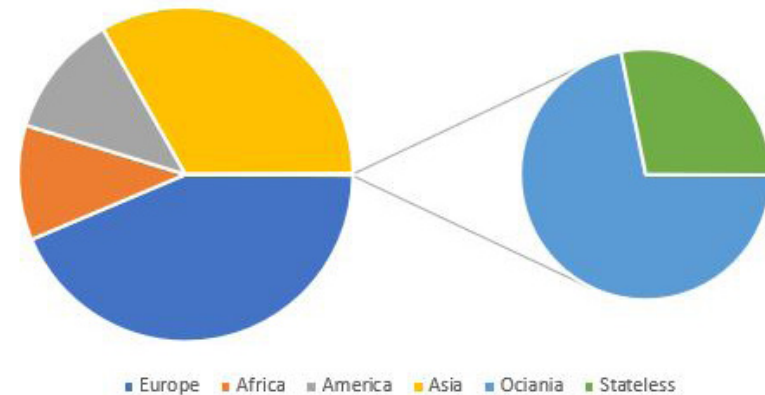
The consequences of fragmentation play across the numerous dynamics of public spaces in the Esquilino quarter. In formal spaces, multiculturalism acts as a powerful magnet that drives economic activity. In hybrid spaces like Di Donato, multiculturalism intersects with cooperation and co-design efforts to empower busy parents. In "organic" spaces, multiculturalism is a fact of life; yet negotiations of private and public spheres that play across the community highlight tensions between defining an urban commons and inhabited space.

FORMAL INTERACTIONS: Nuovo Mercato Esquilino + Piazza Vittorio

Formal spaces act as stages for the interaction of individuals practicing both essential, secondary, and optional activities; the three pillars of public spaces. Nuovo Mercato Esquilino — the bastion of multiculturalism in Esquilino — is indefinitely linked to the character of the quarter due to its proximity to both the central station, as mentioned before, and Piazza Vittorio, the main public park in the quarter.

For residents of Esquilino, this relationship to these formal spaces is etched within ideas of multiculturalism in the neighborhood. "In Piazza Vittorio, all the people meet together," lamented a middle-aged Italian resident. It is in these visible places that fragmentation is dissolved: through stories, interactions, moments of inspiration, and frequent contact. These interactions create a community. They are "where everyone comes together, and

Foreign Born and Stateless Population of Rome (2011)



Foreign Born and Stateless Population of Esquilino (2011)

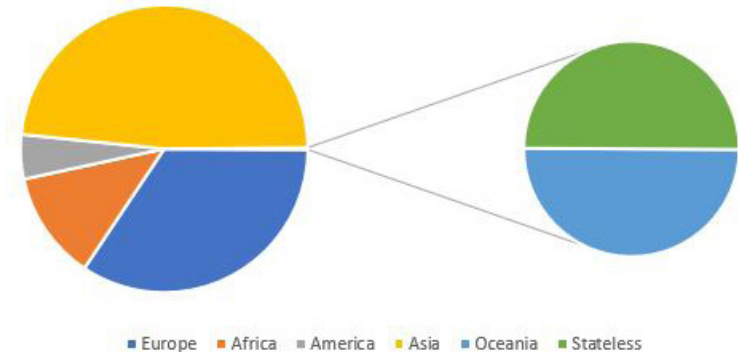


Figure 2.19. Two pie charts showing population proportion of Rome (top) and Esquilino (bottom).

lives together..." (Daniele. 15:23) In the eyes of European residents, the diversity and interaction of people create the life of the quarter.

However, the diversity that comes from this process alternatively shines a light on layers of tension. Throughout the day different groups of users show up and use the park. "...you can see a lot of Chinese... you can see the Bangladeshi that listens to music, and then another part of the day you can see Africans that meet together and eat..." (Daniele. 15:23). Residents relax, eat, and enjoy the city center's few urban green spaces.

Education

"It's strange, because, for example, the Chinese don't want to live together with the Bangladeshi. For example, the school. Before, Di Donato was really crowded with Chinese people. Then, when the Bangladeshi came the Chinese changed school and now prefer Bonghi."

Piazza Vittorio hosts various youth clubs and football games, in collaboration with local educational institutions.

Volunteers come to Santa Croce and take care of the children living there while their parents are at work or in need of personal space.

"Okay, I have something like three or four schools near close to my apartment but I want my child to go there. Because I like that model. I like that you know, political pedagogical and intercultural model."

"This is a language school. We operate as volunteers in the CDS Association (Focus-Casa dei Diritti Sociali) and teach to adult migrants only. Courses are free.

"Yeah, because...it's very difficult to change the culture of the 40/50-year-old person that has been raised in a very traditional environment, it's very difficult. But with kids, you can do whatever you want. You can do everything about that."

Catholic school admits connecting with community has been difficult. Their breakthrough was when they would come together with the local community to sing from nearby rooftops during Covid.

"I went to that school, which, I mean, as I told you, it was a really closed environment. So there wasn't many occasions to leave the neighborhood, the social life of pupils were mostly inside the building, you know."



The types of educational organizations that exist in Esquilino signify the diffusion of multiculturalism, as well as the solutions that inhabitants create in order to fill the social gaps within the neighborhood. Esquilino hosts many educational institutions, including K-12 schools and adult language classes. The neighborhood's diverse socioeconomic and multiethnic makeup enables these institutions to provide a safety net of communal support for children and their families. Some of the educational institutions, formal and informal, include: Cor Jesu, a Catholic school that teaches children from ages 6-19; Santa Croce/Spin Time, which houses a school in which volunteers look after children; Bonghi, a primary school; and Di Donato, a unique school that encapsulates all of Esquilino's themes: multiculturalism, regeneration, urban poverty, public space, community cohesion.



Figure 2.21. Meeting with Cor Jesu Sisters.



Figure 2.22. Artworks by children at Spin Time.

LUNEDI	MARTEDI	MERCOLEDI	GIOVEDI	VENERDI
11,00	11,00	11,00	SOLO DONNE 11,00 WOMEN ONLY	11,00
15,00	15,00	15,00	15,00	15,00
17,00	17,00	17,00	17,00	17,00

Figure 2.23. Poster promoting free Italian language class for migrant adults.



Figure 2.24. Zumba class for children on Via Bixio.

Di Donato: A Place for Community Dialogue

Scuola Di Donato operates as a social experiment because the building blends a comprehensive school (I.C. Daniele Manin) with an urban commons model of space utilization. From Mondays through Fridays, the school is open from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, while from 4:30 until 10:00 pm—including the weekends—the school is available as an urban commons for the neighborhood. A written agreement establishes the rules that maintain this unique urban commons. Di Donato's embracing approach to involving parents with the school is seldom practiced in Italy, but thanks to a consistent collaboration between parents, the school manage to operate smoothly. When parents are unable to participate in school activities or parent association meetings, they remain involved in the process of communal support by cooking or volunteering in other ways. Parents also pay a monthly price of 20 to 25 euros per child, but if they are unable to pay due to financial difficulty, the organization finds other ways to pay for the child, such as using the donation pool from other parents.

Just as Di Donato is a microcosm of Esquilino's ethnic diversity, it also reflects the pushes and pulls that exist within this multicultural community. Based on our interviews with residents, in the past, there were large numbers of Chinese migrants enrolling their children in Di Donato. However, when Bangladeshi students began attending the school in greater numbers, many Chinese families relocated their children to Bonghi. This transition from Chinese inhabitants choosing Bonghi over Di Donato could reflect a contention that exists between the two migrant populations via the education system.

Article 118 of the Italian Constitution lays the foundation for the existence of proactive institutions, exemplified in the Esquilino communities' activation of educational spaces in their neighborhood.



Figure 2.25. Courtyard inside Di Donato.

Through this innovative model for primary education and urban commons organization, Di Donato expands upon the rights to citizen activism ingrained into the Italian legal system, while weaving multiculturalism and social equity into the everyday lives of Esquilino families.

Urban Regeneration

"It is a huge ex-postal office building that is now the main headquarters of the Sisde. Sisde for Italians is like the CIA for Americans. Like the Secret Service. All the services created that before were in different parts of Rome are collected all together in this huge building. This is a new building built on top of the old one, and this has changed completely the balancing of how you see a lot of police men, and a lot of people that work there. Also it completely removed all the public parking around the place, and the people lose their parking plots. It seems stupid, but it's not really stupid because you feel the pressure about something that you cannot control."

"Piazza Vittorio, in particular, became the place where the artists choose to live. So we have like Sorrentino, Matteo Garrone, and other famous filmmakers and directors that choose to live there because it's cool, and because it's multicultural."

"Around 4 years ago, the water disabled, and there was about 40 rough sleepers at Piazza Vittorio. The park was cleaned up year and a half ago, especially cleaning bushes covered in human excrement due to lack of public toilets."

"The biggest challenge we have in Rome is to recover and regenerate urban spaces, palaces and buildings that are often industrial and often not, completely abandoned over the years due to the loss of a specific function."

"Five or six years ago, I started to realize that, you know, Esquilino wasn't the same as when I was [...] a little girl, so I realized, for example, that Spin Time was there. And then actually, I have to thank Spin Time for letting me be more involved in the neighborhood. Because Spin Time is the core of a lot of other realities, [and] associations that are very active in the neighborhood. And then once I discovered Spin Time, I said, okay, there is not only Spin Time, there is a lot of other stuff in here. And then at that time, I became, you know, really involved in the local activities."

Hotels and B&Bs come in as disruptors to the neighborhood housing stock.



Expansion of Hotels into the greater Esquilino area

Throughout this analysis, it's been clear how Esquilino is not purely anything, but rather a mixture, a meeting point, and a mosaic of social dynamics and groups. From the Lynch map of cultural districts spreading out from Piazza Vittorio (page 78; Figure 4.5), we see a multicultural neighborhood that includes a large native-born Italian community. From personal accounts, foreign-born communities have been largely described as working-class, while native-born Italians in the neighborhood come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, including many inhabitants from upper-middle classes. From the neighborhood's founding, the Turinese-style mixed-use blocks surrounding Piazza Vittorio were constructed for the middle and upper classes, intended to house government workers moving from the Piedmontese capital to the new capital of the Italian nation-state. The apartment blocks near Santa Croce, on the other hand, were built for workers coming from the nearby railyards. In present-day demographic shifts, we see continued heterogeneity living side-by-side as Esquilino attracts more affluent members of the creative class, including actors like Willem Dafoe and directors such as Paolo Sorrentino and Matteo Garrone. Simultaneously, the neighborhood is growing as a working-class migrant community, largely centered around Piazza Vittorio and Nuovo Mercato Esquilino. This complexity only adds to an understanding of Esquilino as the centripheria. In a socioeconomic and cultural context, by creating a mixture of the affluence attracted by the neighborhood's proximity to the center and its unique multiculturalism and the waves of chain migration that continue to transform the neighborhood.

As the neighborhood's demographics continue to evolve, so have the neighborhood's physical dynamics. Santa Croce/Spin Time was a dilapidated former state office building before being occupied by the Action squatting movement in 2013, transforming the space into a core for communal life in Esquilino. Line C's extension to San Giovanni in 2018 would connect the edge of Esquilino with the eastern periphery and will connect the neighborhood with the Fori Imperiali and Colosseo by 2024. The development of the headquarters of the DIS, the Italian secret service, directly across from Piazza Dante in 2019 has expanded governmental presence in the neighborhood and completely transformed its surrounds, eliminating all street parking encircling the structure to the dismay of the local public. Via Bixio, known in the neighborhood as the Piazza dei Bambini, was pedestrianized in 2021 after years of advocacy by local parents at Scuola Di Donato who desired a safe and open space for their

"The biggest challenge we have in Rome is to recover and regenerate urban spaces, palaces and buildings that are often industrial and often not, completely abandoned over the years due to the loss of a specific function."

Mayor Virginia Raggi on regeneration plan for former mint

"[Growing up] I always felt quite bored when I was in Esquilino, but then as I told you something like five or six years ago, I started to realize that, you know, Esquilino wasn't the same as when I was you know a little girl, so I, I realized, for example, that Spin Time was, was there."

"Gentrification is when you substitute people and working class people that were there with our new Gentry...in Esquilino, I don't think it's gentrification. It's happening presently, because Esquilino was, I mean, it, it was never a popular neighborhood...I don't think that you can call that process gentrification, because the price is the rent prices have always been very high in Esquilino."



Figure 2.26. A man painting over graffiti on Via Giovanni Giolitti.

children and the surrounding communities. The former Mint building had been slated for redevelopment by the Raggi administration in 2019, with plans for the new Polo Civico Esquilino and new museum spaces. Many of the spaces and infrastructure that currently define people's day-to-day lives in Esquilino have only appeared in the last decade, and they signify a neighborhood with deep pressures and movements to transform itself, from local inhabitants and greater municipal and national authorities.

The nature of these different examples of regeneration in Esquilino varies in how they engage and interact with different cultural and socioeconomic groups in the neighborhood. More top-down efforts such as the redevelopment of the former Mint building and DIS's new offices by Piazza Dante signify efforts to wrap Esquilino deeper into the center through developing the neighborhood's artistic and governmental infrastructure. These efforts also signal a desire to attract more affluent people to the neighborhood, whether they are government workers working at the secret service, or elites in the cultural sector connected with the future museums. Meanwhile, more grassroots and bottom-up regeneration efforts, such as Via Bixio/Scuola Di Donato and Spin Time, connect more deeply with the heterogeneous dynamics of the neighborhood. Spin Time has completely transformed the neighborhood, becoming a hub for multiple social services and communal activities that engage with communities across Esquilino and Rome, and national organizations such as Scomodo- the largest youth editorial magazine in Italy. Within the multiple spaces of Santa Croce/Spin Time, migrant communities interlink, contentiously yet productively, with Italian-born communities to create an organic community center. This not only addresses social needs unmet by a neoliberal housing and welfare model in Italy but creates innovative social and artistic projects to engage the community. At the same time, Scuola di Donato also brings children of all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds together, while the organization of parents running the school's urban commons faces difficulties engaging migrant parents who often simply don't have the time to volunteer heavily at the school. As the parent-run urban commons develops and the Piazza dei Bambini continues to serve as an organic center for communal life in Esquilino. Furthermore, the neighborhood's future generation and youth hold the promise of Esquilino's cultural and socioeconomic heterogeneity as a centripheria not just merely existing, but being deeply blended to form stronger ties across social differences in a truly unique quarter of Rome.

Community Cohesion

“There are different types of public space, right? [...]

**The main part of public space in Esquilino
comes from the people that live there. [...]**

**The public space is more connected with the people,
and not exactly how the city is arranged.”**

In understanding how the Esquilino community interacts with and supports its residents, we first come back to the notion of public space. During the development of this study, our understanding of “public space” has shifted and expanded through the process of continued research and surveying of the neighborhood. Originally we viewed the concept more literally, delineating these areas as green spaces or general areas for public gathering. Through developing our understanding of the formal/informal and public/private space matrix, as previously addressed, in conjunction with the valuable input from local residents collected through interviews, we have formulated a new perception of public space. Ultimately, public space in Esquilino entirely revolves around the people and the power of local community initiatives. Community actors and organizations in Esquilino are extremely prevalent and dedicated to serving the various needs of the specific communities that exist in the neighborhood. This vast network of locations that we deem to be public space are detailed in figure 2.27, and this is accompanied by brief descriptions of each numbered community/cultural center labeled on the map.

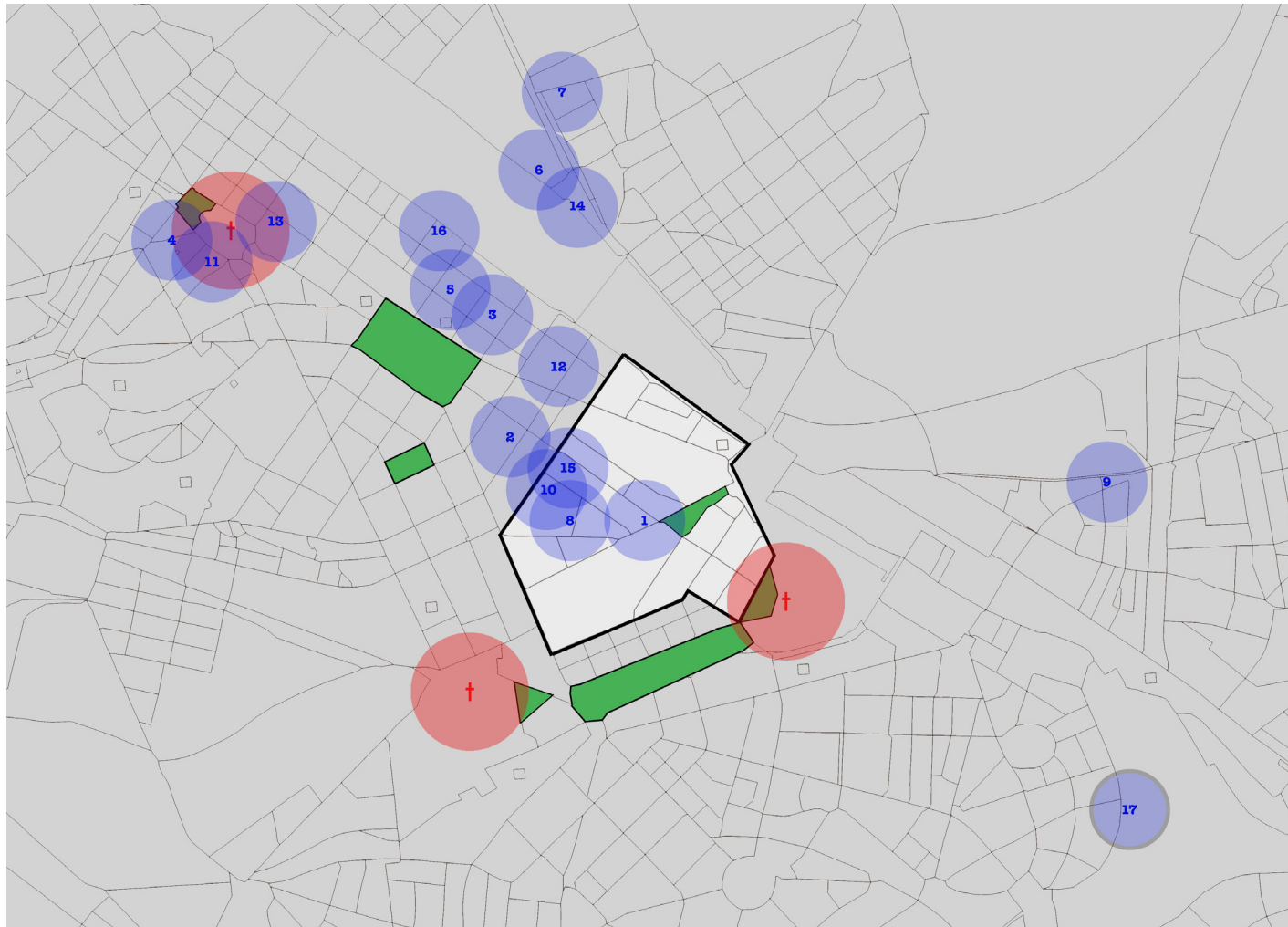
Along with the vast quantity of community and political organizations acting within the neighborhood, Esquilino has a deep and rich culture rooted in collaboration. The neighborhood promotes a strong local moral economy, where relationships exist within a culture of altruism that extends beyond transactional or capitalist motives. This is the true core of Esquilino, and it's this mindset that truly represents the formulation of public spaces, signaling why the process is so deeply ingrained in the actions and presence of local residents as opposed to physical spaces. This collective attitude is a primary enabling factor for all of these local community activism groups and establishments to exist, as Esquilino is a “fertile ground” for community organizations to collaborate and prosper. Many of the groups detailed on figure _ either work collaboratively or at the very least know of one another, being that Esquilino is in many ways a community where everybody knows everybody.

“So, I think that specificity was always Esquilino is the density of the quantity of organization and that they exist since a lot of times, and they all know each other.”

“There's a lot of tough conditions about the urban topography of Rome, and maybe Esquilino keeps the condition to life well because it has a lot of elements about what this society is: relationships, you can be free, you can be busy.”

“There are many squats in Rome, and maybe Esquilino was and is one of the most welcoming places to be because they immediately recognize the importance of...paying your stay and keeping on with the Spin Time experience, and they never criminalized these kinds of transactions.”

Community Cohesion Map & Directory



1. Spin Time/Scomodo
2. Di Donato
3. Esquilino Market
4. CNCA Lazio (Coordinamento Nazionale Comunita' Di Accoglienza)
5. Università degli Studi Roma Tre
6. Binario 95
7. SPI CGIL (Sindacato Pensionati - sede Nazionale)
8. MaTeMù
9. Pensare Migrante
10. Centro Pio Rajna Centro Di Studi Ricerca Lett. Ling. Filolog
11. CSV Lazio (Service Centers for Voluntary Lazio)
12. New Deal Srls
13. Uneba
14. Caritas - Italian Listening Center
15. AREA SOCIALE
16. House Of Social Rights
17. SCuP - Sport e Cultura Popolare

Figure 2.27. Community cohesion map.

1. Spin Time/Scomodo

Via di S. Croce in Gerusalemme, 55, 00185 Roma RM

(For information about Spin Time, look under the Homelessness and Urban Poverty section, page 45–49. For information about Scomodo, refer to the Urban Regeneration section, page 56–58).

2. Scuola Di Donato

Via Bixio, 85, 00185 Roma RM

(For information about Di Donato, look under the Education section, page 55).

3. Nuovo Mercato Esquilino

Via Principe Amedeo, 184, 00185 Roma RM

(For information on Nuovo Mercato Esquilino, look at the Introduction and the Transient History of Piazza Vittorio sections, page 33).

4. CNCA Lazio (Coordinamento Nazionale Comunita' Di Accoglienza)

Via di S. Maria Maggiore, 148, 00185 Roma RM

CNCA Lazio is the regional branch of a federation of care organizations, aiming to promote the legal rights and social well-being of those facing hardship and marginalization, especially those facing drug addiction, homelessness, youth distress, and disability. While individual organizations do much of the work on the ground in communities like Esquilino, the CNCA creates connections between these organizations, and amplifies their positions and needs at the regional, national, and international levels.

5. Università degli Studi Roma Tre

Via Principe Amedeo, 182, 00185 Roma RM

Roma Tre's Department of Education Sciences is located in Esquilino, offering Bachelor's and Master's degrees in education-related fields, including pedagogical and educational sciences, social work, and nursery/child care education. The department also conducts research across the educational sciences, and employs a “Third Mission” of engaging with local communities to promote the economic and social growth of the surrounding neighborhood, and ensure that knowledge is produced and disseminated for the benefit of the surrounding neighborhood.

6. Binario 95

Via Marsala, 95–101, 00185 Roma RM

(For more information about Binario 95, look under the Homelessness and Urban Poverty section, page 47).

7. SPI CGIL (Sindacato Pensionati – sede Nazionale)

Via dei Frentani, 4a, 00185 Roma RM

The SPI CGIL (Sindacato Pensionati Italiani – Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) is the pensioners wing of the CGIL, the largest and most influential trade union in Italy, whose national headquarters are located across the rail tracks from Esquilino in San Lorenzo. The SPI CGIL has over 2.5 million members, and its mission is to organize and protect unionized retirees, advocate for the rights and needs of pensioners and the elderly, negotiate with institutions, and arrange cultural initiatives.

8. MaTeMù

Via Vittorio Amedeo II, 14, 00185 Roma RM

Managed by CIES (Centro Informazioni Educazione allo Sviluppo) Onlus, MaTeMù is a Youth Center and Art School, which encourages the artistic and cultural growth of Roman children. Welcoming to people from all backgrounds, MaTeMù offers a plethora of activities for its participants, including artistic endeavors such as classes on the guitar, drums, urban dance, theater, visual arts, rap, singing, and more. The center also offers vocational training and professional counseling, free rehearsal rooms, free study spaces that additionally offer assistance with homework, and free Italian lessons for students ages 11 to 25.

9. Pensare Migrante

Via Prenestina, 90, 00176 Roma RM

Pensare Migrante is a community space dedicated to addressing the crisis affecting human rights of migrants in Italy. The program has built a strong sense of community amongst migrants through solidarity, and promotes the self-determination and social emancipation of its members through a long list of services and activities. These programs include orientations to local social and health services, legal help, assistance in navigating the job market and finding work, helping to source housing, providing professional training, and working to communicate and denounce the unjust rhetoric placed upon migrants as propagated by widespread disinformation and prejudice.

10. Centro Pio Rajna Centro Di Studi Ricerca Lett. Ling. Filolog

Viale Manzoni, 47, 00185 Roma RM

Centro Pio Rajna is a “Study Center for Literary, Linguistic and Philological Research.” Established in 1988, the project aims to promote initiatives that foster the development of scientific research relevant to the organization’s focus on literary, linguistic, and philological advancements. The site provides access to an expansive library for those interested in research, archival artwork and photographs, or films and vintage manuscripts. Much of the work performed by this cultural center revolves around the legacy of Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet from the 13th-14th century.

11. CSV Lazio (Service Centers for Voluntary Lazio)

Via Liberiana, 17, 00185 Roma RM

CSV Lazio was created in January 2019 through the merging of two other organizations– CESV (Centro di Servizi per il Volontariato) and SPES (Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio). The actions of this organization are broad, including the promotion of other social services or events to the public, providing technical-logistic support for other volunteer organizations, offering training services to improve the skills of volunteers, and supplying juridical, administrative, and legal advice. The organization is dedicated to not only addressing current issues faced by residents, but also challenges that may arrive in the future.

12. New Deal Srls

Via Bixio, 39, 00185 Roma RM

New Deal Srls is a social services organization in Rome primarily geared towards listening to residents' needs regarding documentation and providing them with appropriate services. This documentation could be pertinent to immigration, municipal issues, taxes, education, etc. New Deal Srls offers the following specific programs: tax assistance, services for undocumented citizens, civil-criminal legal services, and financial services.

13. Uneba

Via Gioberti, 60, 00185 Roma RM

Uneba is an “almost all non-profit” organization with Christian origins, and is one of the longest lasting trade organizations in the social health, welfare and education sectors; the project has been operating since 1950 and now has nearly 1000 associated entities throughout Italy. The organization's aim is to provide moral, material and social improvements to disadvantaged families and individuals, and it does this through the promotion of free local assistance initiatives, supporting trade unions, organizing training initiatives for social workers, and developing welfare initiatives by addressing legislative, governmental and administrative bodies.

14. Caritas – Italian Listening Center

Via di Porta S. Lorenzo, 7, 00185 Roma RM

Caritas Italiana is a church-affiliated initiative that was founded in 1971, in the spirit of renewal as promoted by the Second Vatican Council. With nearly 200 locations scattered throughout Italy, the organization has a vast array of services. In order to foster a welcoming and supportive environment they offer free meals to the public and their constituents. They additionally address issues of housing, which becomes a primary focus particularly in the colder months, and includes housing communities available to political and international refugees, family homes for AIDS patients, and rapid reception centers for minors. The particular focus for this specific branch of Caritas, though, is the listening center. Here, local residents who are experiencing any form of difficulty can meet with volunteers who are trained to listen and help them find a solution to their problems by connecting them with a sustainable aid project that would be capable of providing the most assistance to their specific needs.

15. AREA SOCIALE

Via Carlo Emanuele I, 49, 00185 Roma RM

Area Sociale is a type A non-profit organization founded in 2008, consisting of a primarily female team of activists and community organizers dedicated to promoting social integration, access to educational activities, and the provision of social-welfare services. The program focuses on catering towards disabled adults and minors, children, and families. Through Area Sociale's multidisciplinary approach to community integration, they provide the community access to experts in various fields, including professional educators, psychologists, social workers, cultural assistants, and social health operators. The primary themes addressed through this organization are equality, impartiality, continuity, right of choice, participation, effectiveness and efficiency.

16. House Of Social Rights

Via Giovanni Giolitti, 225, 00185 Roma RM

The House of Social Rights is a hub for numerous community-based projects, and is both self-financed and funded by public and private bodies. The organization promotes interventions in the form of protecting the rights, health, and social inclusion of the area's most vulnerable populations, including both Italian and foreign-born residents. These broad fields of focus include active projects such as Italian language courses for migrants, providing the homeless with food and basic necessities, legal and health advice, combatting the act of human trafficking in the greater Lazio region, and addressing the prevalence of educational poverty. This organization presents a vast network of methods to help the community, including specific courses available only to women to address specific issues that they may face in their daily lives.

17. SCuP - Sport e Cultura Popolare

Via della Stazione Tuscolana, 84, 00182 Roma RM

Born from the occupation of via Nola 5 in 2012, SCuP is a self-managed mixed-use center of community welfare. This project focuses on occupying abandoned spaces to build community in the form of sport and culture for young, unemployed, precarious, and non-local residents. Events hosted by SCuP include community discussions on urban regeneration, film screenings, live music and dance performances, as well as sports courses. SCuP hosts public management meetings every Monday, and encourages community input regarding new activism proposals.

Figure 2.28. Triangle of
Basilicas surrounding the
Esquilino quarter.

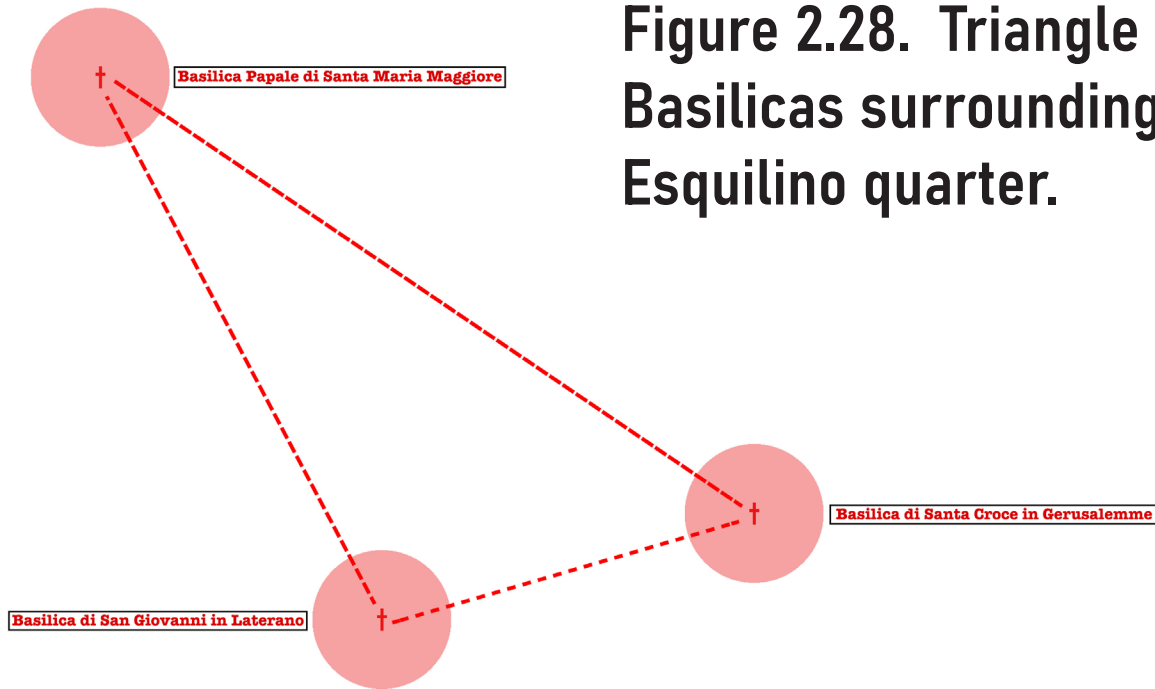
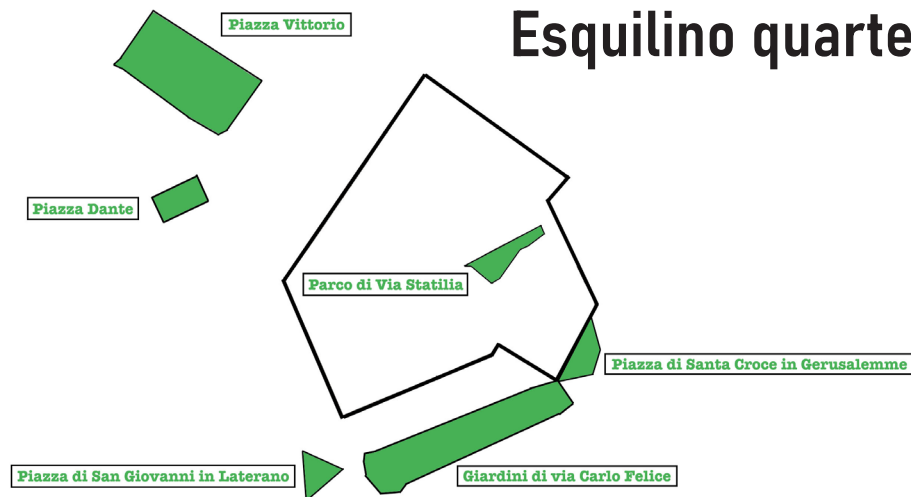


Figure 2.29. Formal
parks and piazzas in the
Esquilino quarter.



Section 3: Conclusion

i. Embodying Esquilino's Centripheral Network of
Community Support and Solidarity

ii. Looking Forward

Embodying Esquilino's Centripheral Network of Community Support and Solidarity

On Sunday, April 24th, members from our team attended La Festa Dell'Esquilino—a festival that takes place in the neighborhood every year, except for a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic. The event was ten days long, starting from the 21st of April to the 30th. The Italian Liberation Day bisects the two weeks of celebration, which commemorates the day when the Italian resistance movement toppled Nazi Germany. By attending the event, we were no longer observers, but rather actively engaged within the community.

The schedule was jam-packed. An intense children's football tournament at Piazza Vittorio kicked off the morning, followed by a debate between journalists, a feminist self-defense instructor, and a mental coach for paralympic athletes, which focused on the intersection of sport, media, and politics. As the debate progressed, volunteers began setting up a social lunch of porchetta, prosciutto, sausage, cheese, and bread for anyone to take, with an encouragement to leave a donation. After everyone was full, our group members had to run back to the studio, but not before watching the children's chorus. The children of Di Donato sang a passionate rendition of Italy's signature resistance song— "Bella Ciao"— with such quality that it will likely be stuck in all of our group's heads long past our time in Rome. It was a beautiful day, complete with crystal clear skies and thought-provoking conversations with some of Esquilino's inhabitants, and from the quality and the organization of each event we understood that the community members put immense effort into the celebration. However, the festival was not only for celebrating Liberation Day, but also to bring the neighborhood together through sport, music, debate, food, and a deep sense of care and connection between community members.



Figure 3-1. Children playing in P.za Vittorio Emanuele II

At La Festa Dell'Esquilino, the joy and dynamism of the centriperheria were on full display, uniting the community through play, song, dance, discussion, and deliberation. The ten days of La Festa Dell'Esquilino expand far beyond the events seen on our one Sunday, including movie screenings, a multicultural lunch, live performances spanning from rap to classical music, and more debates on political and social issues. Most notably, POLEIS (Polo dell'Esquilino per l'innovazione sociale - Esquilino Center for Social Innovation), which organized the festival alongside CSV Lazio, would have its debut public presentation to the neighborhood, and a general assembly for the neighborhood would be held in the company of Rome's Mayor, Roberto Gualtieri. Through this festival, Esquilino claims its identity as the centriperheria, embracing its sociocultural and economic heterogeneity, inviting deep political discourse on local and global social issues, and capitalizing on its central position to draw the attention of municipal power.

Meanwhile, POLEIS exemplifies the desire to water Esquilino's "fertile ground" of community cohesion and strengthen ties between the myriad social hubs and socio-cultural communities of the neighborhood. We even saw the roots of these ties beginning to spread and intertwine on our visit on Sunday. As we walked across the basketball courts of Di Donato with an inhabitant of Santa Croce who also teaches classes to children at Spin Time, we noticed a massive pile of school supplies, furniture, and electronics spanning an entire wall of the courtyard. A volunteer at the Festa involved with Di Donato, and a friend of our guide, greeted us warmly and shared how the school was clearing classrooms to prep for anti-seismic rehabilitation of the building and was planning on sending the massive pile to the landfill. Our guide furrowed her eyebrows, shocked by the notion that this pile of so much value would go to waste, and excited by the possibility of free supplies for her classroom and students. She asked the volunteer if she could take a look at her class at Spin Time, and after his shrug of approval, we began sifting through piles of completely-usable chalkboards and textbooks. Our guide was now occupied and had to leave to fetch enough able-bodied people to carry the heavy supplies down Via Santa Croce in Gerusalemme to her classroom. Our group members knew it

was time to go, but we also knew we had seen one more connection strengthen between two of the most impactful social hubs in Esquilino, hinting at a future of more seamless cooperation between local inhabitants simply seeking to make the neighborhood a better place.



Figure 3.2. Poster for Esquilino's La Festa Dell'Esquilino.



Figure 3.3. Children singing on Via Bixio.

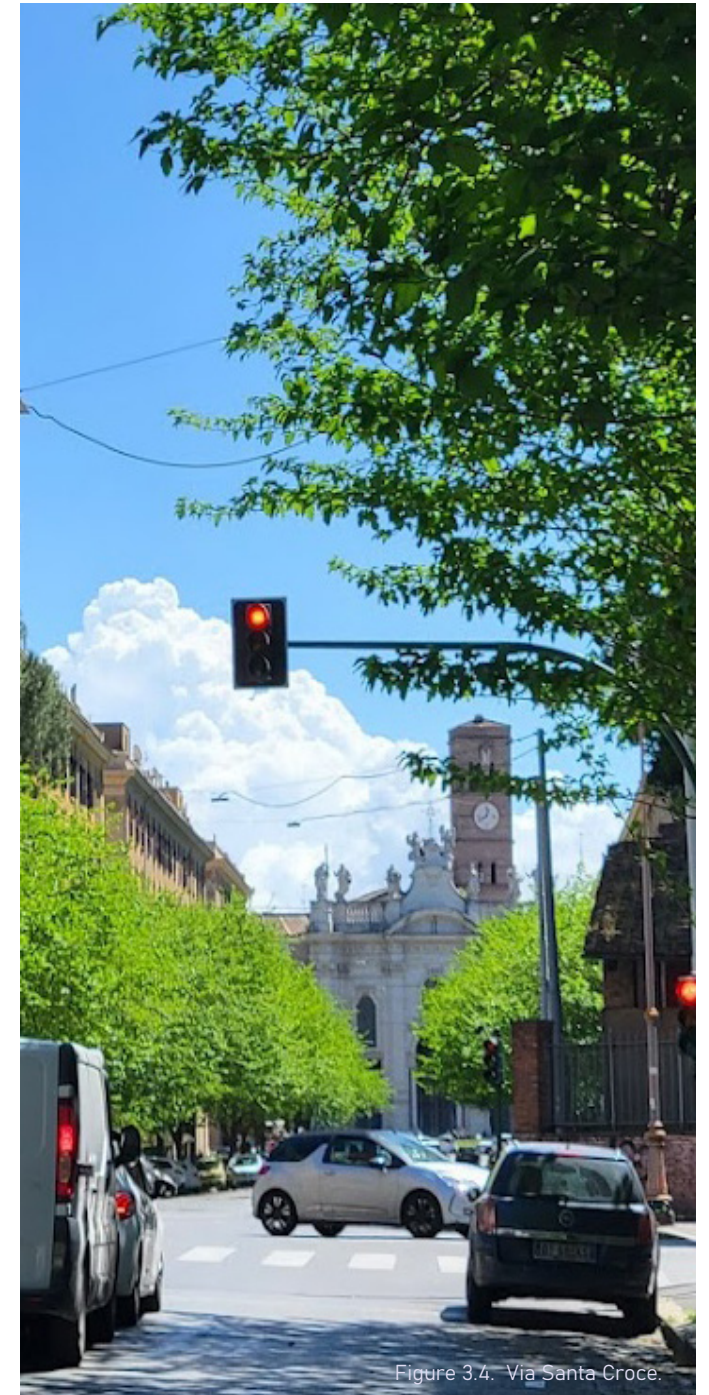


Figure 3.4. Via Santa Croce.

Looking Forward

INTRODUCTION

Our idea of space is formed through the objective and the subjective meaning we associate it with. To understand the definition of space, Madanipour (2015) differentiates the objective (brute) and the subjective (institutional) concepts of space (pp. 879-880). To elaborate, Piazza Vittorio Emanuele's gates are used to explain the two concepts. From a brute perspective, the gates of Piazza Vittorio Emanuele park are over 10 feet tall, made of metal, border the park, and separate the green space from the road. From an institutional perspective, the fence signals how one should enter the park and who has access to the space. It also shows the spatial hierarchy of the park by isolating the space from the rest of the built environment (see Figure 1). The institutional perspective of the gate is formed through the collective imagination of the inhabitant. This is vital for understanding the fluidity of physical borders in defining space. Institutional meaning highlights the narratives of individuals and raises awareness about how they exclude or include certain people.

The rituals—local actions we form around space—reflect the community's desires for space-making. While levels of space-making vary between Rome's center and the periphery, organic spaces elevate rituals. At Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, one can observe ping-pong matches between friends, couples listening to music, and elderly people basking in the sun. These rituals show that the flexibility of organic spaces helps people redefine space. Rituals also form the sacrality of space through how it is used.

Sacrality within a city depends on the peripheral and central dynamics of the districts. In Rome's historical city center, rituals are often formed by two commodifying forces: tourism and state power. This is illustrated by the lively commuters, the ministry buildings, the rolling of suitcases destined for flats-turned Airbnb, and the public events

that are held at Piazza Venezia. Rome's center constitutes the codes of normative behavior, which maintain these spaces as nuclei of profit and state power. On the other hand, the sacred periphery encompasses residential and commercial life. It is flexible in terms of how space follows both necessary and optional usages (Gehl, 2005 pp. 9-11). In the periphery, rituals involve commuting, shopping, and attending local events. Because the periphery is often at the edge of the center's control, it allows for a broader range of social activities to form (Gehl, 2005 p. 11). As the centripetia, Esquilino is positioned as the center and periphery; it coexists between commodifying rituals of Esquilino and the freedom of the periphery.

Because of its high levels of ethnic diversity, urban poverty, and extensive local action, the urban characteristics of the Esquilino quarter behave similarly to the peripheral districts in Rome. Esquilino maintains residential characteristics similar to the city center in terms of spatial commodification, Airbnbs, and tourism. The idea of the sacred in Esquilino shares deep connections with the quarter's public spaces. As we have indicated, these negotiations of space become codified within the individual and collective imaginations of the users of space. Therefore, the definition of space is not limited purely to a brute or institutional facts. Rather, both create hybridity of spatial functions in Esquilino. In Esquilino, organic spaces are abundant, including Via Bixio, Piazza Vittorio, Spin Time, and Nuovo Mercato Esquilino. Yet, organic spaces also form in places that we perceive as strictly public. Termini, although it holds an established function as a center of public transportation and travel, hosts many rough sleepers who congregate alongside it.

HOUSING CRISIS AND HOMELESSNESS IN ESQUILINO

While many forces in Rome blur the bounds of the geographical center and the periphery, the housing crisis maintains a dominant position in stimulating bottom-up movements. From these movements, the definition of space is transformed. The Italian nation-state has attempted to tackle homelessness and housing



Figure 3.5 Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. The gate divides the park from the street.

precarity by implementing nationwide homelessness policies. For instance, Housing First is a set of guidelines that places the provision of housing as the priority for homeless people (Lancione et al., 2017, p. 3). However, with almost 8,000 municipalities in Italy acting independently and the lack of national funds to catalyze nationwide intervention on housing, these municipalities, districts, and local activists have taken it upon themselves to remediate housing precarity. With a heavy presence of visible and invisible homelessness, Esquilino has many organizations that bridge the gap between what the municipality of Rome offers and what homeless individuals need. Based on our neighborhood study, we identified Binario 95, Sant'Egidio, and Spin Time, among other groups, as prominent organizations that tackle housing precarity and homelessness.

Urban commons and building occupations (squatting) are bottom-up movements that aim to meet the needs of their inhabitants; "Occupazioni (occupations) involve the squatting of property without the consent of the legal owner" (Mudu & Rossini, 2018 p. 100). However, a flagrant problem is that the public administration does not recognize housing occupation as a legitimate space-making process. In 2022, the prefect of Rome, Matteo Piantedosi, called for mass eviction of 29 occupied buildings in the city; this included three occupied buildings in Esquilino: Spin Time, Casapound, and Via Vittorio Amedeo II 16 (see Figure 2). These developments follow previous attempts of eviction in 2017–2019 by Rome's center-left mayor, Virginia Raggi. Starting from April 4th, 2022, they have 90 days to leave the building (Monforte, 2022). This development of hostility against the housing occupation movement highlights a history of "selective neglect" and domination from Rome's municipal government against bottom-up movements (Mudu & Rossini, 2018, p.109). These bottom-up movements satisfy housing precarity and must be recognized by the municipality of Rome as a justifiable means of tackling homelessness. However, attempts to institutionalize bottom-up occupational movements have caused the mutilation of key dynamics of participation and the space-making process. Lack of nuances in the definitions of homelessness & housing insecurity limit the effectiveness of institutionalization, and as a result, act as a form of domination by the center (Mudu & Rossini, 2018, pp. 107–116).

CONCLUSION

Space-making is not new to Esquilino. A history of community activism and illegal building occupations have helped define a spectrum of formal-organic public spaces within the quarter. Through negotiations of the sacred, inhabitants have created organic spaces to fill gaps in housing precarity left by government and institutional actors. Housing precarity in Esquilino exists due to the dynamism of migration, homelessness, and proximity to Termini. Institutions that have attempted to address housing precarity in the quarter must be equally inclusive to create equitable results. Existing bottom-up movements provide excellent points of departure for municipal intervention. Yet, to ensure equitable action everyone will have to be at the table. Spin Time and Scomodo, to the quarter's various migrant communities, to the quarter's hotel industry and government ministries must be present to implement a homelessness policy that is in synergy with the entirety of the quarter.

Fragmentation between bottom-up movements remains a key hurdle in creating a comprehensive approach to solving housing insecurity in Esquilino. Therefore, the centripheria must facilitate discourse by weaving underrepresented voices when addressing homelessness and housing precarity. At the same time, government and institutional actors must weave urban commons and community organizations– which create organic space– into visions of how homelessness policy may be implemented in Esquilino. Yet, occupied buildings including Spin Time are under threat of eviction at the same time that the Mayor is coming to speak at Piazza Vittorio. Comprehensive participatory planning processes between bottom-up and top-down actors can both address homelessness and housing insecurity, and open up these organic spaces towards the entire community. We view this potential connection as vital towards protecting, improving, and decriminalizing these communal spaces and organizations, which present a significant opportunity to address problems of homelessness within Esquilino and Rome-at-large. If the government has any desire to address the city's housing and homelessness crisis, there is a need for increased respect and legitimization of informal organic spaces like Spin Time from the municipal government.



Figure 3.6 The occupied building on Via Vittorio Amedeo II, ordered to be evicted along with 28 other buildings.

Section 4: Appendix

- i. Guiding Questions
- ii. Lynch Maps
- iii. Interview Transcriptions and Notes
- iv. ISTAT
- v. References

Guiding Questions

These are the guiding questions that helped us form our themes for Esquilino. While these main ideas were touched upon in the questions, they yielded open-ended answers:

Community interaction with Esquilino

Accessibility

Usage for those who occupy the space residentially and those who don't

Function and impact of parks

Immediate landmarks

Indicative of community perception or individual perception

What do people exclude from their maps?

Revealing differences in our understanding of the neighborhood versus a local perspective.

Primary focus: streets, landmarks, residential spaces, commercial spaces, etc.

What are the indicated borders of Esquilino?

Where do specific groups of people congregate?

What are these groups?

Areas where usage shifts significantly

Homelessness in relation to the squat and hotels

Areas where you'd like to see change?

Contrast in usage between permanent residents versus day workers.

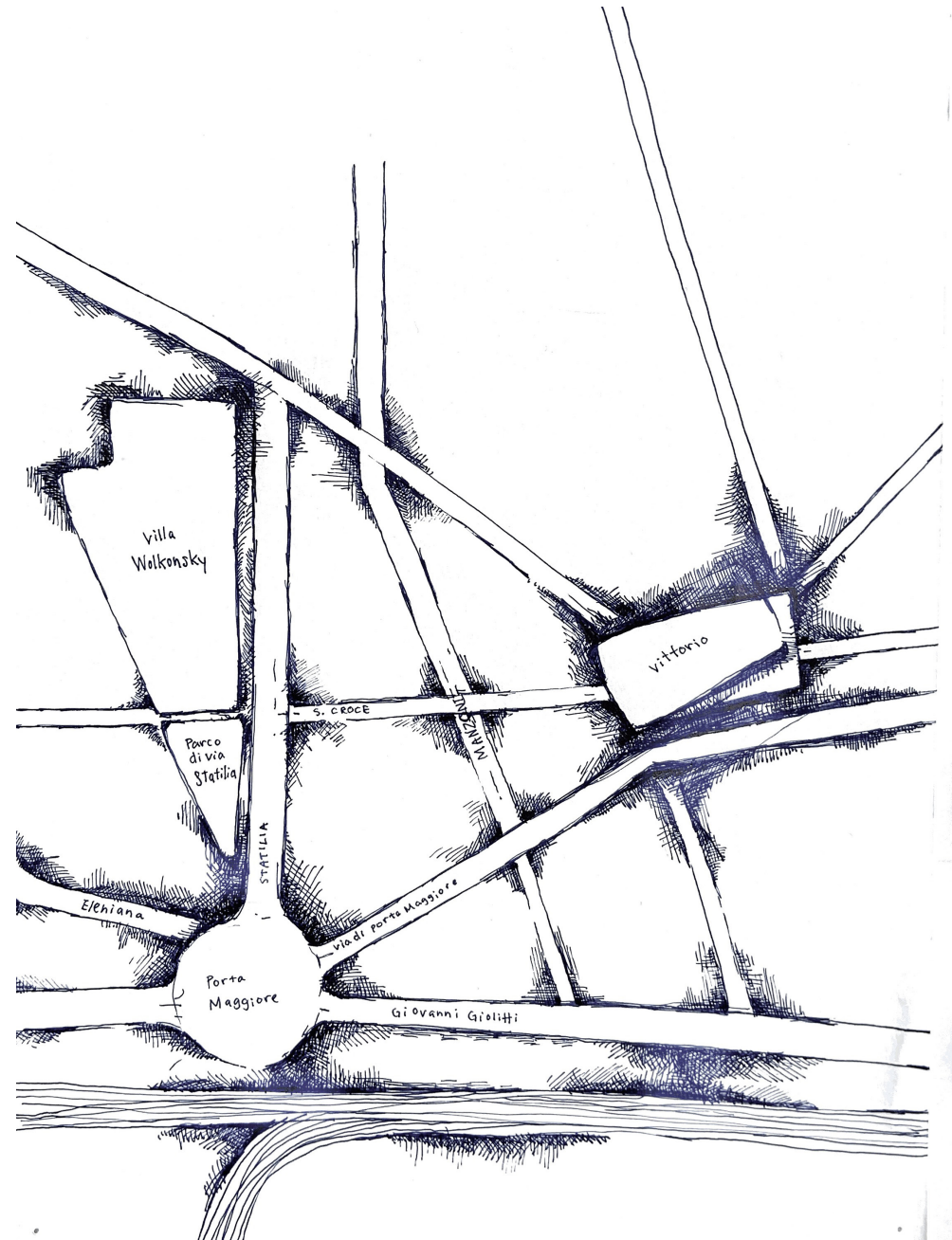


Figure 4.1. Lynch map produced by F. Ranaldo

Lynch/Mental Maps: Extras

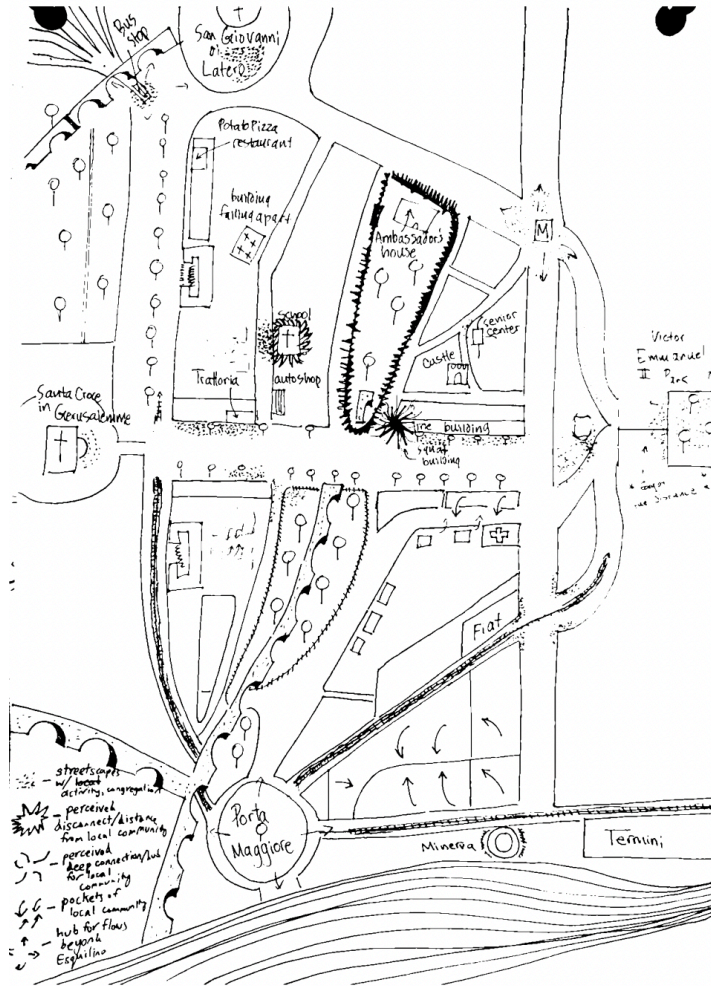


Figure 4.2. Group lynch map.

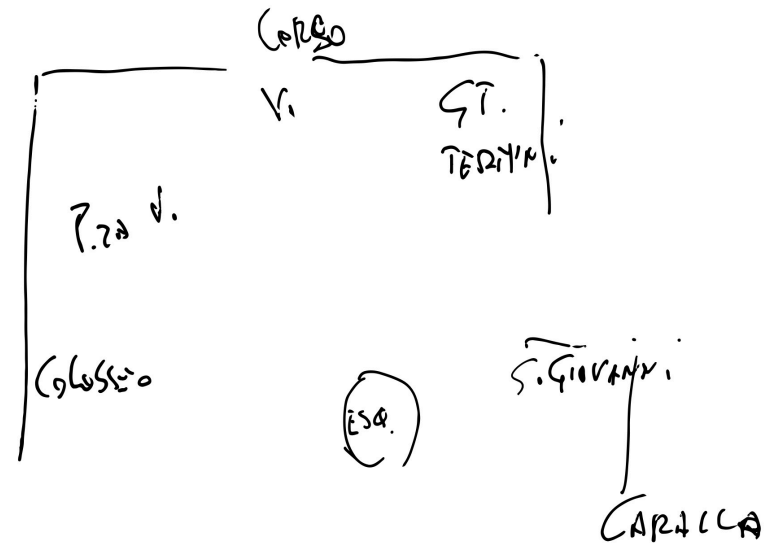
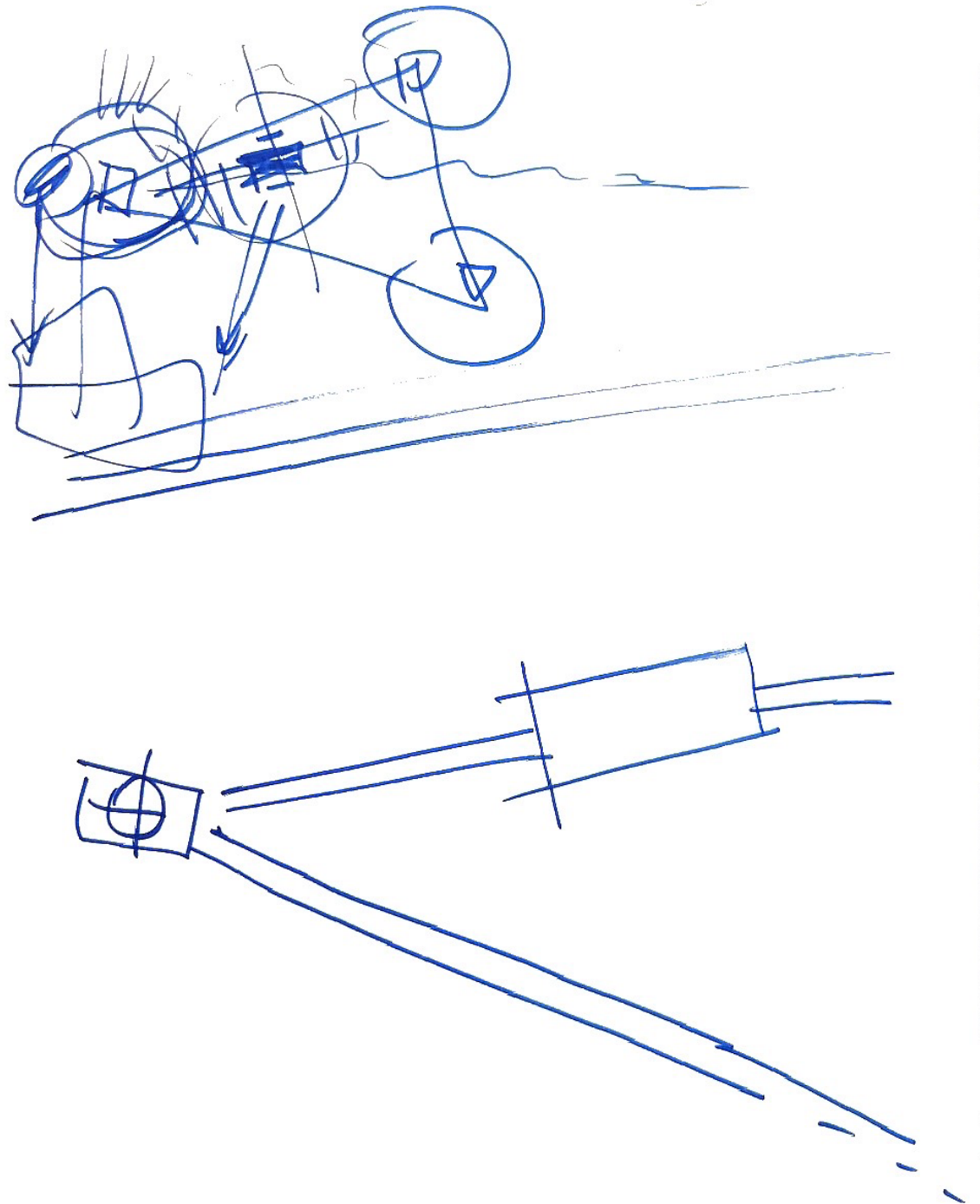


Figure 4.3. Gianfranco's lynch map.

Figure 4.4. Daniele lynch map #1



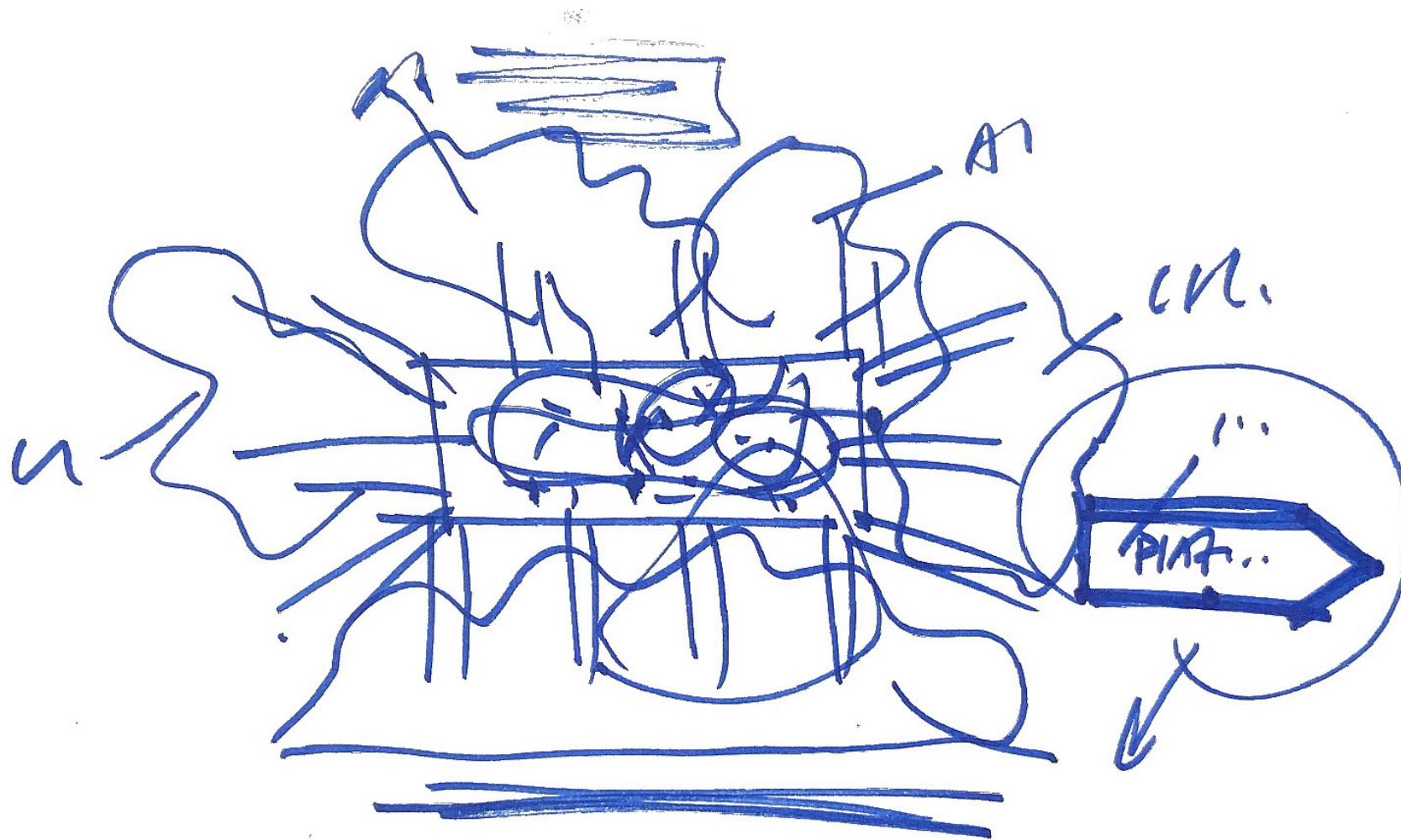


Figure 4.5. Daniele lynch map #2

Interview Transcriptions & Notes

For an in-depth exploration of Esquilino, we conducted interviews ranging from 45 to 60 minutes. Some interviews relied on an Italian translator, which added an extra layer of interpretation. After recording the interview, we processed our recordings through a transcription tool (otter.ai). For some participants, we adjusted the names for privacy reasons.

Some interviews were recorded by note-taking.

Jennie

Originally from Britain, Jennie is a long-time resident of Santa Croce/Spin Time and works at the museum of the act of hospitality (MAd'O) within the building.

Geena Baber 00:00

So my first question is, what is the role of spend time in Esquilino?

Jennie 00:14

Oh my gosh, that's that's the big question, isn't it? What's the role of Spin Time? From a personal point of view, I would say it was like an inspiration. An inspiration for urban regeneration, yes.

Geena Baber 00:49

Who started spin time? I know that you created the term spin time.

Jennie 00:54

It was it was a, it was a brainstorming. I did play my part, but I don't know. The origins interest us particularly, I think what's happening now might happen in the future, which is more interesting. Spin Time is a name which maybe suggest different things to different people. What would it suggest to you?

Geena Baber 01:22

I think when we were at the tour, it just was an instant click when you said that it's a way for it to be like a spinning, it's like a thread. It's like a thread of life. That's how I understood it. I guess when you thought about it as like a thread that's exactly what I thought of just like life and how it just revolves around and I would just weave together creates this beautiful urban fabric

Jennie 01:54

To see as a social fabric is probably the same phenomena.

Geena Baber 02:08

Also, thank you so much for answering that really big question. Probably wasn't the best to start out with, but my next one is: for the stakeholders for Spin Time or Santa Croce, would you happen to know who finances...?

Jennie 02:22

That's not the kind of question I can answer Geena. You really ought to ask Chiara, because I don't have that kind of head on. I'm more artistically inclined Yes. So the banks basically when it comes down to everything when it comes down to justice the banks I suppose. I cannot say more than that, there's so much going on. Yes. Sorry, I worried about this. If you might ask me some technical questions of this nature. Yes. Because this is financial, finance politics. Yes.

Geena Baber 03:19

No worries. Any technical questions I can probably find by just emailing someone. I would like to go back to the map that you drew, if you remember. We are going to

showcase it if that's all right with you. We are going to put it in a booklet and a poster about our neighborhood study in Esquilino...and how people view the neighborhood from you know, living here and then possibly highlighting places that are of their importance. And in your map I saw that you...drew beds to showcase, like where people would rough sleep...sleeping rough. Could you tell me more about that?

Jennie 03:34

All I can say turn a corner and that's this thing as Mr. or Mrs. sleeping on the streets and it's very common phenomenon underneath the Termini Station. We have Sant'Edgidio which...the Italian railway gave them premises to set up I think what's Bignario 95 I can't remember this is my memory. Don't quote me on that okay? It comes down to technical things [inaudible] all major cities where the homeless people accumulate, they accumulate around central stations. Yes. Must be various reasons for that. Yes. One is maybe you feel safer, contradictorily because I saw an article in the paper that so many, so many areas have become one of the most dangerous areas in Rome. I don't know whether this article was speaking rubbish or not. There are a couple of soup kitchens in the area. This could be another reason. Oh, maybe. I don't know if I tried to put myself in somebody else's shoes. I would I think I'd be leaving an enormous contradiction because central stations are conventionally surrounded by trouble, yes. But at the same time, coming and going, and maybe that makes one feel less lonely. But at the same time probably makes one feel more lonely because the more people there are, the more invisible....you would get. Termini Station has always been...I remember in 1995 there was a woman, a poetess, yes, Non Kikas and she was, although her real name is quite different. She wrote a book of poetry called [inaudible] 15. So she was she was living in Termini Station. I think for a woman, yes, one would feel much more protected sleeping in an area which there is some kind of official presence. Yes. And once again, that's a contradiction, because that same presence could tell you to move along and tell you to [inaudible] I think of being a woman sleeping on the streets is rather a frightening prospect, yes? Which is probably why a lot of us prefer to choose the reality we're living in. I don't know, it just makes me shudder to think of it. But but the same for a moment, yes. And obviously, what's happening now with the, the migration emergency, so we'll call it a refugee emergency. Obviously, we see more, more non Italians sleeping on the streets that we would have some years ago. Or maybe more colored people, basically. In '95, there were a lot of Polish, Japanese, Romanians, etc, etc. But obviously, the shape of Europe has changed and so various nations within the European community. And so there's a different kind of...I can't think of the word in English, receival [inaudible] that's why I gravitate towards....obviously one wants to be at the nerve center as well. There's always a possibility where there are people [inaudible]. These are the things that I juggle around in my head continuously. I'm trying to write about it as well as these contradictions.

Geena Baber 04:11

Oh, do you write? Are you a writer?

Jennie 09:31

I am a writer even though I've never been published, but oh yes.

Geena Baber 09:37

Oh, what do you usually write about? Would you say that inside Santa Croce it reflects the multi ethnic dimension of Esquilino as well?

Jennie 09:55

Up to a certain point it does. Yes, in the housing side of things. What's missing is the Asian community. Although we have had, in the past, a couple of Asian families in difficulty, it didn't last very long. It's a cultural thing for people to tend to stick together and keep to themselves. So that's what's missing. So no Chinese. This area is full of, you've probably noticed, Bangladeshis and Chinese. But there are neither there [in Santa Croce]. I think....that both communities...tend to kind of have a self help attitudes to things. Yeah.

Geena Baber 10:59

Seems like they have families that help each other out.

Jennie 11:03

Yes, exactly. Even to get over here, yeah. You know I think that's the case all over the world. Do you if you want to cross a border in which [inaudible] come under the wing of a protector who you then pay back gradually working for that person? Yes. I think this is a general idea.

Geena Baber 11:30

Well, there's there's a term for it, but I forgot about it. We've definitely learned about it in class before.

Jennie 11:36

Yes, it's probably in negative terms.

Geena Baber 11:41

it's true, but I think that with migration, it's also a search for a better life...I guess it's like a more like a transitory phrase. You either look at it bad or you can look at a great, it really depends.

Jennie 11:54

It probably depends on your protector.

Geena Baber 12:00

Yeah, pretty much the protector could definitely [inaudible] have you at some point...So going back to Santa Croce, have you ever had to...be the great equalizer? If there was like a feud happening? Are there are fights happening at the Santa Croce in a meeting, like racist terms? Because I know that racism exists in Italy, as so does every part of the world. Have you ever had to like insert yourself in those situations?

Jennie 12:40

I think the answer is yes. The answer is yes. I think the injustices move me visually, yes. I don't know if this is the case or not, but I grew up with the second generation as well. I grew up in England, once a multi ethnic area, so I went to school with Indians, Pakistanis, and people from the West Indies and various African countries. Although at that point, I never even thought of the origins, whether they work Kenyans Nigerian, etc, etc. After the after the Second World War, there was no more manpower because a lot of British men obviously lost their lives. So the two big phenomenon came out of that. One was that women went to work in factories, and the other one was the common Britain go to the Commonwealth and said okay, if you want to come here you have a passport, you have a house, a citizenship. Excuse me: citizenship, a house, and work. So as I grew up, yeah, you have Asian bus drivers etc, etc, etc. The problem there was that then, or the problem I saw, I did not see it obviously as a problem, but the negative side of society was that the problem arose when these people started having children. Help [sarcastically]. So that the children have to be integrated in schools etc. And I went I went to a school just an overstate school. And I I suffered racism secondhand, yes. So secondhand in the sense that when the white kids started mocking the black kids to tears, yeah. It would disturb me terribly. And so it comes from that experience with what's happening in Italy. Because, okay, before in that period of '95 there was a lot of Moroccans, North Africans, then waves of refugees now. There were Kurdish people, etc, etc. But I don't think Rome is particularly used to black, black people. Yeah. It's strange to be saying that, but I think that is actually the case, because I am particularly hypersensitive. So yes, when I think about that, that somebody is being victimized, out of my pure ignorance. Yes. I understand that. This has been the case in the past. Yes. I've tried to show the other side of the story. Yeah. Santa Croce itself, this kind of thing. doesn't necessarily happen. But you remember that we have a story which is [inaudible] various occupations around different areas. Different types of consciousness. I know that in the past, I've tried to, for example, I remember a case where this guy was Nigerian, and that guy and his family were being kind of like mocked? Yes. Like the daily kind of mocking? Yes.

Geena Baber 17:08

The family was mobbed?

Jennie 17:10

mocking in the sense that he punched someone in the corridor, and they may mumble under their breath and everything that he did was wrong. And yeah, this

whole, yes, but maybe even slightly aggressiveness. And at a certain point this guy retaliated. And very, very lightly. Yes, I think all he did was raise a hand, but that was enough to get rid of him. And so I used the example of the Australian aborigines. Yes, in order to defend him, because Australian Aborigines. When somebody loses a head, in social context...the whole community sits in a circle. And they ask themselves a question and they say, what have we done to make this person mad? Yeah, so they take the responsibility on themselves. It's not that this person has gone mad. All on his or her own, yes? They sit down to [inaudible] and I thought that was very earlier example I can think of, which that's an intelligent example. Because I think that's what was happening. The poor guy was, I know [inaudible] you know, free life now that I've always lived in shared housing situations and when you're living or with students or with, you know, maybe even renting, even your co-nationals and somebody doesn't like you vice versa, there's friction between people. The worst thing is when you share a bathroom and a kitchen, and you have two people having to tolerate each other. Yes. And it's very psychologically very debilitating. I think that's what was happening to him. I felt and that, and I tried to defend. Because, you know, we actually say from the beginning: no violence. If you raise your hand, yes; even as a symbol of violence, as if you're going to hit somebody, yes. That could be seen as that you've reached or passed the limit, in which case you can be expelled from the community. But then if you're living day to day situation where people are treating you badly in the end, maybe blow your fuse, or you just snap like he did, yes, it was just a small snap. I don't know. Maybe that was happening too, because this person didn't integrate. But then how can you integrate with people that don't want you? This is very difficult, isn't it? It's full of contradictions.

Geena Baber 20:36

Wow, you know, you're putting words into thoughts that I've had, and walk around Esquilino doing building surveys and seeing how multicultural this neighborhood is, and at the same time, you would think that because it's multi ethnic people would get along, but it's, that's not the case. That's usually because this is an attraction of the periphery, like that's this is what our group came up with and describing Esquilino which is, it is the center for the periphery. It's for the people who you wouldn't quite see all the time in Rome, but here this is a center for a lot of people who, I don't know, it's it's more of the kind of people that you wouldn't see on a poster board. It's more of like the day to day...life.

Jennie 21:26

But I feel absolutely perfectly at home. In fact, in my map I tried to give like an extreme attention to modern...contemporary as we like to say, just around the corner and then something on the streets. It's modern reality in there again, you see you have water, because what happened about four years ago, this Vittorio Square, as you know, it's dotted with fountains. Yes. And what they actually did is

they closed the fountains. They closed the fountains, and I never knew officially the reason for them closing them, but in my heart, I knew they were doing it to discourage people from coming and drinking. Because when it's 40 degrees in the middle of a metropolis, what do you need most of all, you need to drink. If you haven't got a penny, you need to drink water. It's an absolute necessity. So this is another reason maybe why in Esquilino now you notice, it's full of housing and other reasons particularly quite horrific. Which run through Esquilino a historical intersect. So people...so that's one thing that really pissed me off with that was four years ago, the fountains around Vittorio Square.

Geena Baber 23:24

Were there like a huge population of people who would sleep outside there? Or was it because they wanted people to drink more water?

Jennie 23:34

A lot of people [were] sleeping in the park. Okay, and it was...what you call it...I can't remember my English was that reimagine yes and you can say rebuild, replan. Yes. And then presented as...

Geena Baber 24:04

Regeneration?

Jennie 24:05

When they did that, there must have been about 40 people sleeping in the park at the time. I didn't mean they were living on a day to day person. You know, going where the [inaudible] hang out. If you have nowhere to go, you are generally allowed to sit down. Whereas, for example, in the north of Italy in a place called Padova, one of the mayors took away all the public seating...and this was openly to discourage the homeless from sitting in groups. Yes...Anyway so they clean up Esquilino's parks because you know because public toilets, many people were going into the bushes, doing their business in the bushes so that displaced...it was kind of like a homeless ghetto situation at this place. The real problem is the public toilets now in the area when you find human feces around us which is quite common....speaking to people in the area, I was very happy the other day...I was walking with my dog--and another day a lady walking her dog who I've always said hello to but never spoken to--I was really happy when we came across like what was obviously a huge human excrement and their reaction was, oh my gosh, it must be so difficult to do business when there are no public toilets. That was a real relief to me actually because there's a lot of people: it's disgusting, people shitting all over the city! And that's the other side of the story. I was very pleased.

Geena Baber 27:20

And that's another contradiction isn't it? Like...it's so normal for people to just walk

by like a dog excrement and just be like, Why didn't they clean up after it? But we never think about...whether they didn't have a bag with them or they were in a hurry. And also common in New York City. I l definitely like a human element by thinking about why they did it. It goes back to...the aboriginals like this thing the circle what do

Jennie 27:54

we doing to reduce some things

Geena Baber 27:58

Would you say that you bring that up a lot....actually I have a question about what your presence is in Santa Croce. Would you say that you interact with a lot of people there?

Jennie 28:11

On a certain level yes. I haven't actually got any very close friends, but yes, I tend to be friendly especially [with] families where I've helped my teachers, helped various, various kids for periods yes. And obviously then you get to know the family a little bit better. Obviously you pass the kids. That kind of level, I don't have a particularly deep friendship with anybody. I didn't occupy the place to find friends.

Geena Baber 29:03

But yeah, it seems that with your insight, it seems that...from my perspective, I feel that you have a very big presence at Santa Croce just the way that you receive like group dynamic and just helping each other. Would you say that like people take on your, what's the word, people...take on your wisdom?

Jennie 29:39

I think of myself as terribly ignorant because when I think of when I think of what the people that are moving it on a political level...social, political, administrative level, etc etc party politics and all this business, I feel myself to be terribly ignorant on a human level. I have a different idea of myself. I think there are only four or five of us who are completely isolated, as far as our nationality is concerned. So we don't have co-nationals, and that can be a little lonely because for co-nationals it's perfectly normal, yes, we were talking about it before. We tend to help each other, there's like a common ground. However, I can say that we're working on MAD'O projects, working with the Esquilino groups and Di Donato groups. I find myself more on on a friendship level, on a feeling level. There are lots of shared values and shared approaches to how to promote those values. So that's what they call cultural activism I think.

Geena Baber 31:36

Which other organizations would you say you're part of? You mentioned Di Donato.

Jennie 31:43

I am a part of MAd'O, the museum of the act of hospitality. The MAd'O project I found myself...I actually fell in love with the project. I thought that it was perfectly for me. My role is being someone from Spin Time who...

Geena Baber 33:15

like the mediator.

Jennie 33:16

I suppose, I try to be. Somebody who is taking responsibility for the project within the context of Spin Time. That's my role. My role is to try and find ways of inviting the internal community to participate in a much wider project without being pushy. And I think that there, we have to be spinning time very, very slowly because I don't think you can push culture. I think culture needs to...you can give it, you can offer the opportunity for something to happen. You know, it's like they say, you can take the horse to water but you can't make it drink. Yeah. So you can [inaudible] you can offer the various physical and protectoral possibilities for something to happen. But you cannot push people to participate. Rather, yes. Stop pushing people on a cultural level, you are insulting them in a way because everybody has their own pace. So what we have there is basically, obviously educational didactic sense and that's my [inaudible] of teaching children. You can invite them in a certain direction, but the moment you start to push them, you're interfering with a sense of [inaudible]. Make something feel interesting. This will be slow. And I think it's the kids, the children who will be more attracted to this in the future.

Geena Baber 36:00

What kind of changes would you like to see in the future regarding the homeless here, the Spin Time/Santa Croce, the culture?

Jennie 36:22

A practical, positive, and inspirational response to the problems that exist in the area. We go back to education, having premises, facilities in order to host certain activities.

Geena Baber 36:53

Like more activities for the children here, or for the newcomers who are from a different country for better integration?

Jennie 37:03

Yes, yes. I would only be dreaming utopian stuff. So the difficulty is that politics move so fast here in Rome. It swings from one extreme to another in the space of days, yes. You can get new laws and bylaws which contradict each other continually. Yeah. So it's very difficult to actually materially--and this is probably the problem--but actually

to materially find, like an island and ignore this political chaos. I don't know, what the case is in other countries. On the other hand, that kind of also gives room for maneuver. Yeah, so there's another contradiction, because when you have a very, very deep set political tradition and its expression, as we're talking about Padova is famous for having a quite right wing, but that doesn't mean that all Padovans are right wing. It just means institutionally, yes. It has a tradition of being more to the right than the left. Mentalities get institutionalized in that kind of situation. Yes, it's much easier to exclude and expose et cetera, et cetera. when moving around. And obviously the presence of the church...Papa Francesco, a different Pope in this period would have been a disaster, a right wing pope yes? Pope Francis is, I don't know, is like a miracle in this particular period in time. Great. So that is everything seems to swing round and round. Yes, it allows for little spaces and pockets for movement as well where there is movement where everything is still in traffic, you can think of the Nazi movement like that you know, any kind of regime. What it wants to do is keep things static and monumental and etc, etc, etc.

Geena Baber 40:18

Everything you say is a reflection...I mean, because I don't live in Esquilino so I don't really know what it's like to live here and the people I interact with it's very more...there's definitely a wall of you know the customer like if I go into a Trattoria I don't experience was so talking to you is definitely a lens through....Yea, would you say that Santa Croce is like, like an oasis in a way of people that are able to communicate well, interact like...is it more of a place that's real? Like people are more authentic?

Jennie 41:21

I think of it as a honeycomb.

Geena Baber 41:26

I do remember you mentioning a honeypot? Yes, and that's why...

Jennie 41:34

An oasis seems very distant, like something you see when you're in the middle of a desert and there's this ocean. Whereas what's happening here is very real. We have organized the carnival every year. We've done a Carnival parade. That's always been another excuse for getting together with local communities.

Geena Baber 42:15

Could you tell me more about the carnival?

Jennie 42:16

If I remember rightly don't quote me on this I think it's the month before Easter. It lasts for about a week. It's quite normal to see the kids running around in

costumes of various types, and each little area will have its own Carnival parade, yes? Which includes the floats, carnival floats. There's usually a theme. This year the theme is ecology, for example, and next year the theme is...I don't know whatever, whatever. Could be anything. But yes, we've had we've organized a Carnival parade, which starts at the front entrance, and then goes round...If I can remember right, because obviously we've had locked down. We haven't been able to do that. What we've done I think three or four times is open up the whole of the ground floor and the basement floors to the public with food and music and our community cooking for guests. With maybe clowns and jugglers and things for the children, yes.

Geena Baber 44:17

wow, this is actually the first time I heard about a carnival happening in Esquilino you know, it's like it's it's often the entrance and it goes down here to the church?

Jennie 44:35

It goes around Corso Vittorio. That's the route we've taken. Yes.

Geena Baber 44:47

And everything is made in Spin Time, from volunteers? All that sounds fun. Sounds like a lot of fun.

Jennie 45:01

We had a float with these big facades made [out] of wood of houses, and adorned them with windows. They are around somewhere, they're still around the premises adorning them with flowers and pictures. In the carnival, it's normal for kids to dance around in their costumes and go to school even and throwing confetti everywhere and stuff.

Geena Baber 45:34

The children are from the neighborhood right?

Jennie 45:40

Yes. We have the local schools and things are important.

Geena Baber 45:49

So this is definitely like an example of community engagement.

Jennie 45:52

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. This the most positive expression.

Geena Baber 46:07

What other examples...of community engagement does Santa Croce / Spin Time deal with? Because Santa Croce is more like residency area. Or are they both linked

together?

Jennie 46:25

Spin Time is consciously a social cultural association. However, we have the two church-orientated organizations inside Santa Croce. So we have Sister [inaudible] who is an association called Santiari verso l'altro, Paths Towards the Other.

Geena Baber 47:20

And this is the church oriented...

Jennie 47:23

This is what's called...do you remember the story of Cardinal Konrad who came to...so she's part of his groups. She has a certain autonomy anyway. She works together with the church Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and various organizations [inaudible] there are various laboratoires which have been fixed entities inside Santa Croce like tailors, laboratory restoration, art restoration, to name but a few. Yes. And it's she who has promoted a lot of activities with children like taking them on school trips, vacation trips, summer schools, and loads of various [inaudible] and then she too has...what you call it...food, food redistribution...which is destined for the poor of the European community. But that's an internal redistribution whereas the other association which is called L'Opera PASI Gabriella, okay is like [inaudible] and their food is redistributed to poor people in areas. So every Monday, we see a lot of old and bedraggled people lining up, of all origins. There are lots of Italians who come and receive their food package. It could be pasta and various other things. Is this a physical location where people line up? Or is it right out of here where the organization's Inside Santa Croce. They have a storeroom and an office.

Geena Baber 51:12

So this is all for Santa Croce.

Jennie 51:16

There are lots of other situations, like if you think of the theater or music you think at Spin Time, all kinds of music and theater and performance. Anything to do with the arts has attracted people from outside. So it was like pumping culture for a huge period and then boom, lockdown, yeah. Spinning culture, a very, very complex, interweaving of artistic, social, cultural activities. So the lucky thing is to have all this space. The other thing is coordinating it in time. Yes. We have a very tight program. We have some very, very good heads. Yes. Organizational heads. We can make these things work. Yes. Make them go tik tok. Spin Time has attracted people from all over Rome. Whereas, I know you're concentrating on Esquilino, it has attracted young people from all over.

Geena Baber 52:59

Like Aris. He's also one of the people that we're trying to get an interview with.

Jennie 53:12

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Real high flyer but very down to earth at the same time.

Geena Baber 53:21

We actually saw him at Di Donato school...teaching soccer for children, or football. His presence is really dominating, like I feel like he's all over the place.

Jennie 53:37

The kids love him. I remember one time we done something with MAd'O where we were with the children in the park on Saturdays--we have this other project--and when we were returning home, the kids were here, and they saw Aris. He was coming out of the main entrance and they all started shouting "Aris, Aris, Aris!" It must have been very moving.

Geena Baber 54:13

Do you also have children chanting for you?

Jennie 54:14

In periods in the past, more in the other place where I was, where I think my presence was important in that place. Because one thing I think is really important is that little colored--I don't even like using that word, what's more politically correct anymore--but even a very small black child, yes, there is a white face with a big smile and things like that. I think is really important because I think some people don't realize the other side of the coin. Yes, you can get like a nasty look from someone, even if you're a little child. You kind of have to redress the unbalance. You asked me if I thought Spin Time was an oasis. So, yeah. What I said in the past and I think it's still true, is a compensatory dream. Oh, all the things I lived through as a child on an intellectual level, yes. And that was even, you know, like... I remember even at school, the Gypsy children just being treated so, so badly. So, what, what is the compensatory dream? It is when you have a really, really shitty experience, life experience, and then you dream castles in the sky, yes? So it's like a way of your psychological, psychic self redressing a terrible wrong. So for me, wanting to make this work on an intercultural level is kind of like to make up for some of the rubbishes from childhood, although I also saw some lovely things in my childhood because I came from an upbeat area...yeah, so I saw both sides of the coin. They're both the possibility because I was also young, and what would you call it? Illuminated community. All the good things. The other side of it was also true. We had a different mentality. And that side I live by, the other side of the experience of these two possible ways. And floating in between. There are people that...don't really know where they stand when it comes to questions: let's just simplify things as questions of black and white, they

don't know where they stand. And that's one of, that's one of the things which I hope should come out of the MAd'O project is that when you have examples of people from different...Okay, when you have a photo of a white woman embracing an old black man, yes. Maybe if you have one of these floating people with no real identity [inaudible] yeah. As in your unconscious, maybe. So it's okay to do that. Yes. And so it kind of invites you to take a stand. Yes, very subtly, without manipulating anything that's just showing or is another another way of being, yes. Gratifying like being. I probably explained myself where we were talking about Black and White, doesn't sound politically correct, but I'm talking to you personally. We're simplifying things. We have the movement, Black Lives Matter. We do talk about black and white. And what's politically correct and what isn't? The mass media changes from day to day? Yes. Remember? There was a period, I think, in the United States where they talked about Afro Americans, but then that came to be considered politically incorrect. Yeah. So they changed it again. Yes. Yeah, we're just we're talking about the same souls. Yes. Yeah, the same people, but just words.

Geena Baber 59:55

What would you say is um, I guess like Italian media probably, it's different for each region. What would you say is kind of like the media's perception? Also, you know, I got like, let them right wing media but what's like the general population of Rome like?

Jennie 1:00:13

Well, we have the terrible misfortune of the most popular newspaper that you are gonna find in all the bars in Rome is the same newspaper which attacked us relentlessly, even before Spin Time existed. We talked about the [inaudible] yes, we talked about these wave of occupations in in 2012, yes.

Geena Baber 1:00:43

So you're telling me that there was...a media company that was attacking you guys?

Jennie 1:00:49

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Trying to [inaudible] and this is because--I'm gonna have to really simplify, you really need to ask our intellectuals--but simplifying once again, the owner of this newspaper, yes, is also into [inaudible] is in one of the biggest construction businesses in Rome. Yes. And so we have the construction businesses, as in the whole of the Western world yes. And no good. Yes. It's just about making money. And which means [inaudible] anyway, we actually occupied one of his houses.

Geena Baber 1:02:01

Personal house?

Jennie 1:02:01

No, no, he constructed a whole area...in what you call the peripheries. And these houses were, I don't even know even if to this day they're inhabited or not. We occupied one of these, a visual provocation, like a little one. Yes. Or maybe we could call it a poetic move, yes?

Geena Baber 1:02:15

A poetic provocation?

Jennie 1:02:35

Poetic provocation. What we actually found is: nothing worked in these houses. The whole area had been [inaudible] up with [inaudible] facilities. The hydraulics didn't work, the sewage systems didn't work. It was just spending money. Yeah, just were spending money. It was a construction business in all over the place six more sites, you know about this. Yes. Speculation, real estate speculation. So this guy continued to attack us, a barrage, on the front page against Spin time blah blah, blah Spin Time a massive delinquents and stuff like that.

Geena Baber 1:03:41

What's the guy's name in the probably the newspapers? Kind of like you have a negative view of as [inaudible].

Jennie 1:03:58

All together Gerald. Okay, but if you see the film on Spin Time, yes. Che Fatica La Democrazia, this is all explained. You need to see that film. There we have our our spokesman Paolo and Andrea together with Sister Andreanna, talking about precisely about this problem here. Yes. Then I feel myself. I don't feel myself to be ignorant because structurally I know what's in play. Yes. But when it comes down to the the ins and outs, the ins and outs of it, it's all above my head, because these more very, very complicated games that's being played on social political. Yeah. I don't even really feel easy about talking about it for the extent of my ignorance. Yes, but I haven't...I have an idea of what's happening. Yes, but it's a very abstract idea. And I prefer to keep it like that, because it gives my, my brain space to accommodate other things. A different way. Yes, you need to see that film.

Geena Baber 1:05:50

And I would be able to find this online. Just...

Jennie 1:05:54

Okay. Well, I'll let you know. And I'll also keep you...I think we have a period in the near future, where we'll we will be because, you know, we we have been threatened

with eviction, yes. In fact, one occupation from each of the three main housing rights movements has been threatened with eviction and another 30 different entities working on us on a social-cultural level, yes, what used to be called social centers [inaudible] various other grassroots organizations. So, there are more than 30 grassroots organizations, associations on the on the blacklist, yes. We actually work with eviction quite recently and the way we have been the political perspective of Spin Time of action in general, Spin Time in particular, is to open out in order to protect ourselves and not to close off in order to protect ourselves. Not to barricade ourselves in to protect ourselves, but to open out. So, that will be in the near future. Lots of movements, which you are more than welcome to participate as a more than a week of activities. Within the local area geared towards putting Spin Time/Santa Croce on the map in a positive sense, yes.

Geena Baber 1:08:00

It is ultimately our work to really showcase...Well, I mean, urban planning is a new term. I feel like it's relatively a new subject. It's about being the mediators between the people who don't have a lot of voice, and the people who are in charge of making changes. We're trying to connect. That's pretty much the process of change making. And, I mean, I'm so happy to...pursue this major of mine, to be able to talk to people like you, and to actually make change, and to actually accommodate for the people who don't have voices to make changes for themselves.

Jennie 1:08:51

What's I didn't put on the map, sadly, because it is the place towards which I gravitate every morning with my little doggies, is the Esquilino market. Now that too, there's been pressure from the right wing to close the market because it's full of these bloody foreigners [sarcasm] Yeah,

Geena Baber 1:09:12

The Bangladeshis.

Jennie 1:09:15

Not only, yes. Plenty of Bangladesh. I love going there and...just lightens up my life to go there. There are all these different smells and colors and fruit and vegetables, which seem like they've come from another planet. Yeah. I go there every morning so I can eventually just get a couple of bananas. And it just kind of lifts my mood. Yeah. It makes me feel at home in the area. Yeah. So another one is that there's the occupation just behind us in the adjacent street, which is another [inaudible]. We can take a walk.

Aris

On April 12, 2022, Aris was interviewed by Kellen Cooks and Dante del Vecchio at La Redazione di Scomodo in Esquilino, Roma, IT. Aris is deeply involved within the local Esquilino community. He is affiliated with Scuola Di Donato, Spin Time Labs, and Scomodo—the largest youth editorial magazine in Italy, which has an office and space within Spin Time. Aris grew up in Parma, and came to Rome in 2015 as a student and researcher of international development and politics, studying at Sapienza Università di Roma and LUISS Guido Carli. He has lived in Esquilino since 2018.

Dante del Vecchio 00:01

So, to start, could you tell us who you are, where are you from, what you do and where are you at?

Aris Tufexis 00:11

My name is Aris Tufexis. My name is Greek because my father is Greek. My mother is from South Italy in Apulia, but I was born and raised in Parma, which is a tiny city in Emilia Romagna, and I stayed there until I finished high school. I moved to Rome in 2019 to study. I graduated with my Bachelor of International Cooperation and Development, I did Erasmus with the Humboldt University in Berlin, and then I studied Global Studies at LUISS University, and I made an online double degree from China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing. I should have spent one year there but because of COVID, I had to do it online. I moved to the Esquilino quarter in 2018, after I obtained my Bachelor's, and the cool stuff is that after three weeks of living in Esquilino, I found a job in Esquilino, in the school that you've seen. It was a project of Associazione Genitori Di Donato, and I started working as an educator. Since then, because I had this background in international cooperation and bottom-up projects, I started to work in bottom-up social innovation and innovative teaching. This is where I am right now, working with mostly three organizations: Scomodo, where I am a Program Manager of education; Associazione Genitori Di Donato, where I am a project manager of a project within Spin Time where, together with Federico, we organized an after school [program] for kids and I'm also working as a manager as a part of the whole project. Also with Associazione Genitori Di Donato, I'm a trainer for kids from six and ten years old, I also manage the economical development of the [soccer] team. I write down projects, I organize tournaments for the quarter. With Spin Time, it's not a real job--let's say, it's high professional activism. With Spin Time, I'm actually now focusing on two important projects. The first one is a research project with OpenImpact, which is a specific research center at Tor Vergata, and with other guys, we are trying to do the integrated impact evaluation of the whole building. [We are] figuring out how many associations are here, how many events, how many people. There is a huge impact framework, that the research center is building and we are having them interface with the people and gather data. And the other project that I have followed since the beginning, and that I find very interesting, is the attempt which started from Spin Time to build, what I think in English, is like a local ecosystem, and in Italy, we say rete territoriale. This would be called a territorial network, but I studied that in OECD language, it is more called an ecosystem. This is what we're trying to do so from Spin Time, we gathered more than 40 organizations of Esquilino, and we made this project, which started six months ago, where we met with all the organizations that participate in each meeting to build up this ecosystem or network. I work mostly as the facilitator of the meetings and help to organize all the digital parts. Now, we are launching this network/ecosystem at the end of April will be this

huge festival organized by this ecosystem which named itself POLEIS, like an ancient “Polis”, which is Polo Innovazione Sociale dell’Esquilino, so the Esquilino hub of social innovation. Also, I do other stuff as an educator and project manager, and project designer mostly, so I design projects in order to survive.

Kellen Cooks 02:34

Can you talk a little bit about like, how did you first decide to move to Esquilino? And then how did you get involved so quickly with Di Donato?

Aris Tufexis 04:51

I moved here because I used to live in another part of Rome. I left my home to go to Berlin, and when he came back I had no apartment. All the friends of my Roman friends, all live here. It was like, “okay, friends of mine told me that there is this girl. She needs a housemate because she has an empty room.” I really needed a house, and I already knew the quarter because I hung out here a lot. I said, “Okay, let’s go”. On how I [got involved so quickly with Di Donato], I am a kind of proactive person, but this was completely randomly because with a friend of mine, he told me, “Okay, do you want to come to my house to see the Roma-Chievo football match?” Then I said, “Okay, let’s go.” It was January 2018. Then, his mother entered the room and said, “Eli, (this is the name of my friend) we need help at the school because we need an educator and we can’t find one. Come on, do you want to come? [Eli said], “No, mother, come on, I really don’t give a shit about this kind of thing.” And then I was like, “I need a job. I’m very interested in this kind of stuff.” This woman, Francesca, she was the project manager of a quite big project to fight educational poverty. It was a project financed by an Italian Foundation, which worked with the school and Roma Tre University on slow food. It was a territorial network around education. And I started with a really simple job, I had to take care of children at the place where children played up after school. Two weeks afterward, she told me “Okay, I think you are quite good at this job. Do you want to take classrooms in the school in the morning to teach Italian as a foreign language?” I said, “Okay, let’s go.” I started doing this. She is also a 60-year-old woman that has a lot of problems with digital technology, so I started helping them with all the payments and with the general coordination. There, I figured out that I like to work as an educator, but also, I could, I could work as a project designer/manager because designing projects and creating networks was very fun, so this is how we started.

Kellen Cooks 07:41

That is really cool because we came to Di Donato for a different class, the class that you’re that [Dante is] enrolled in, and it was not for our neighborhood analysis. We just kind of happened to come. It was really interesting to see you there coaching soccer, and then come here to [Spin Time], like “Oh, who’s that?! What’s he doing here again?” I know you personally connect between different groups in the neighborhood in general. How did you expand and connect with groups beyond Di Donato? And then in general, how do groups connect?

Aris Tufexis 08:32

I started doing a lot of networking because I started designing and managing projects and social projects, our network projects, and our partnership program. This is the thing that I really appreciate the most because you need to cooperate in order to survive. For each project, if you want to write down a good project, you need a broad partnership. This story is also about how I was connected to Scomodo and SpinTime, because I was working mostly with Di Donato, and then they asked me, “Do you want to take part of this project to manage these after school and sports activities?” I said, “Yes, okay, let’s go.” This project is a project whose partnership is between DiDonato, Scomodo, and Spin Time. This is how I met Scomodo. Also, I think it’s an attitude I have because you have to have a systemic perspective if you want to really act. So, I started working with multiple organizations and because of this attitude I had, people kept on giving me network projects. Also from Spin Time, a lot of bottom-up public processes started, such as POLEIS, the network/ecosystem I just told you about. For example, this is why I decided to take a really active part because I liked this. I really like a community gatherings, because I think this is the way you should solve social problems. I mean, there is a territory, and there are multiple organizations trying to solve that problem, but if you connect that in an ecosystem, you solve the problem that much better. I think it’s something of an attitude and something of the job I have as product designer/manager. I think it’s both substance and shape.

Dante del Vecchio 10:48

Can you tell us a little bit more about Esquilino as a neighborhood and the social problems that you are dealing with right now, and maybe in the past?

Aris Tufexis 10:58

I have lived in Esquilino for three years and a half, and I’ve worked a lot on territorial activity, so I have my perspective, but of course, this can be holistic. I think Esquilino is a very particular quarter, because, first of all, together with Tor Pignattara, it is the quarter where there is the highest percentage of foreign inhabitants, at 22.3 or 22.4% or something like that. There is a very strong Chinese community, Bengali community, Nigerian, South American, Arabic, Moroccan, Korean, and Filipino. Meanwhile, that is mixed with a wealthy Italian population, because we are in the city center. There is this particular mixture that is quite interesting, that I think somehow creates very fertile land because there are a lot of social problems, but also, wealthy people without those kinds of problems are willing to work to solve them. This is what I perceive. And so one of the biggest social problems that the quarter has, but honestly I haven’t worked much on, is homeless people, because it is very close to the train station. For example, there is a specific organization called Binario 95, do you know them? You’ve been there?

Kellen Cooks 12:45

Yes. Geena has been trying to talk to them.

Aris Tufexis 12:48

I've been there today, because of my work as a trainer. I think what I see is the capability of migration and multicultural inclusion starting from schools because in Di Donato, 43% of the students are foreigners.

Kellen Cooks 13:14

So the future is going to be even more that way.

Aris Tufexis 13:17

That's the future of Italian education, and this brings a lot of problems. I could speak for an entire hour or two hours in the field of education because this is what I see. So, there are a lot of problems in the context and methods of education itself. Also, especially for children or for young people, you have to be able to give the opportunity to kids to have activities after school, [including] sports, [and] every kind of activity that somehow can have them spending good free time developing some kind of talents they have. I see that for example, Di Donato does this a lot, and Matemu, which is close to here, does this a lot again, so I think that somehow the population of young people until 16, 17, it's quite well covered. Also, the inclusion of the parents [is important], because [migrants] tend to stay very close in their communities, and with all the social dynamics that we know, they are a much more patriarchal community, per se the Islamic one. Chinese are very closed. They don't do it. They just say among themselves, and Nigerians as well. For example, we see that Bengali don't have real substantial economical problems because of how they have their activities organized [but], I mean, there is the problem of how Bengali mothers are treated. Meanwhile, for Nigerians, there are much more problems of finding economic subsistence or bases, and therefore, providing activities like being able to let their kids have an activity they don't have to pay for [is important]. This is why in DiDonato we have, for example, a football team with 100 people enrolled, and 20 or more are there free of charge. This is what I mean. If you really want to develop your community, you have to figure out that you have to find an equitable social economy. I think another problem is, is that because Esquilino is in the city center, of course, prices are starting to wake up a lot. So when you have a poor population that lives in a rich quarter we're prices are getting higher and higher. Is that the dynamic of gentrification? That could be very risky. So from what I've seen so far, there could be a lot of problems. But I think that the main challenges of Esquilino so far are: the challenge of connecting these strong bottom-up social innovation actors that exist, Migration and multiculturalism, multicultural health, homeless people, and gentrification. These are the five problems that I see concretely so far. Of course, there will be others. But this is what is important.

Kellen Cooks 17:03

Speaking of gentrification, and thinking about how you have so many working-class immigrant communities mixed in with middle-class, intellectual, Italian communities, do these different communities often live in the same buildings and blocks? Could you say that this over here is the area with more immigrants, and this is an area with more...[native-born Italians]?

Aris Tufexis 17:38

No, no, no, no, actually, no. No, I can't really answer. But what I see is that actually, they're quite spread around the whole quarter. What I see, because I've entered some houses of Bengalese families [when] they invite me to have lunch, is the dimension of their apartment. It's incredibly small. They live in the city center, but they are four in a house, that could be nothing for two people. I think that it's better to live in a small house in the city center wrong than to live in a bigger house in the suburb, but this is my own perspective, and you should ask for theirs.

Dante del Vecchio 18:40

I was gonna ask about when we met you at Scomodo a couple of weeks ago, you had talked about trying to facilitate the connections between these grassroots organizations. My question is, it seems like there's a very strong organization, so is this really typical of many neighborhoods in Rome? If not, why is Esquilino special in this case?

Aris Tufexis 19:09

Okay, again, I can't really answer because I worked a lot on Esquilino, and I can't make any real comparison. I can make maybe only a comparison with Garbatella, but I don't have real data on that. It is only the perception I have working in this environment. So, I think that [what's specific] to Esquilino is the density and the number of organizations and they have existed for a long time and they all know each other. Maybe sometimes they can also be competitors for some targets and activities, but they all know each other by face. They know each other in person. So if Scomodo or Di Donato has to call Matemu, I don't call Matemu, I call Gianluca, because I know Gianluca. I have to call Res. I don't call Res, I call Maria because... Everybody knows everybody. What I've seen is that maybe people, don't organize themselves, because first of all, there is not a high cultural organization of ecosystem development, which is something new, and because they just work on their stuff and add extra work, it's heavy. But, I've seen that every time that someone tries to say, "Okay, guys, let's meet all together to organize this", they answer to the stimulus. Am I answering your question?

Dante del Vecchio 21:00

Can you clarify, so when there are attempts to create sort of a pupil to collect their reserves? They don't want to come in? Or do you say that

Aris Tufexis 21:09

No, no, no, they do. They do, but I think that maybe they have seen so many of these processes, that they feel a bit of disillusion. They are like, “okay, this is the 10th attempt of creating this kind of collaborative platform, and blah blah blah”, but, I’ve seen that this time things worked, and the more that things work, the more people are willing to cooperate. I think it’s more laziness that they’re not willing to [collaborate] because it’s a platform that is basically a win-win. If you really think about it, it’s a win-win.

Dante del Vecchio 21:57

Might I ask about these organizations, do they go across all sectors?

Aris Tufexis 22:05

Yeah. I could take a list

Dante del Vecchio 22:10

Sure, if you would like to.

Aris Tufexis 22:11

Yeah, no, I can read that. I can read the whole list. This is one of the works I did at the very beginning. As a facilitator, when we did the first, second, and third meeting altogether everybody signed and said “Okay, I am Luca from Binario 95”, “I am Aris from Scomodo”, “I am Maria from Di Donato”. So, I actually mapped everything, because I’m a nerd for this kind of thing.

Kellen Cooks 22:50

We all are, we all are!

Aris Tufexis 22:52

We were asked to somehow categorize organizations... Okay, here we have a list of 33 [groups] plus another 15 that had joint [involvement] so let’s say 45 in total. For example, we have DiDonato: Sport Education; ForOps for Rome: Politics and citizenship; Action: Right to housing; [untranscribed]: Health; Binario 95: Accoglienza, which is like first care to homeless people. Then, we have the Capo del Municipio: This is an office of the municipality so it’s institutional. CNCA Lazio: always homeless people and accoglienza. Howw do you translate accoglienza? Wait. It’s like hospitality. When migrants come, you do accoglienza, so you give them houses, food... I see. I understand. I don’t know if there’s an English term for that. Then we have the focus on social activity. Gasquilino: a mutual group where they gather (I don’t know) food, clothes, and stuff in order to resell them at a very low price or zero price for people needing them; Link Roma Tre: youth university. Matemu: education for migration; Mado: Arts and culture; Mide Sartoria Sociale, it’s social Sarto, a sarto is the person who makes the clothes.

Kellen Cooks 25:20

Like a designer, or like actual like a textile worker?

Aris Tufexis 25:24

Yeah. Social: Parrocchia Sant’Eusebio: it’s the church; Pensare Migrante: migration, refugees, food; Res: grassroots organization network; Roma Tre: university; Roma Tre Lab: university research; Sabis, health; Scomodo: journalism, youth, culture, space; Slow Food: food and environment; SOLID: mutual network; SPI CGIL: sindacato, trade union; Spin Time: space, culture; Tuteria Spin Time: migration; [untranscribed]: social innovation; Via Bixio Partecipato : urban regeneration; Volontari. app: digital; Arco di Gallieno: arts and culture; Associazione Abitanti via Giolitti: active citizenship; Associazione Amici del Parco Carlo Felice: urban regeneration and environment. This is very cool. This is a regenerated park where we did a lot of activities. It’s where we organized our social football tournament.

Dante del Vecchio 26:44

Where’s that?

Aris Tufexis 26:51

It’s very close to here. It’s in-between San Giovanni and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. [untranscribed], football. Esquilino basket sport: basketball; Lunaria: third sector networks and migration; Respiro Verde: environment, urban generation; Scout CNGEI: youth; UNHCR; Apollo 11: Cultural cinema. So these are just the ones I’ve met. Yeah.

Kellen Cooks 27:25

Would you mind sharing that document?

Aris Tufexis 27:27

Yeah, of course, I can share with you the whole database of the Polo Civico, POLEIS. I can give you everything. If you want to join the group, I can also put one of you in the group, so you see everything that happens. There is also this huge week of events, that we’re doing on 23-30 April.

Kellen Cooks 27:50

Awesome, awesome.

Aris Tufexis 27:51

So before you go, you have to go [to that week’s events]. Let’s see how it works, ya know, it’s a mess, it’s pure creativity, it’s brainstorming altogether. And that’s it.

Kellen Cooks 28:03

I know Scomodo is not just Rome but national with connections across the country, but then Di Donato is a school serving the neighborhood?

Aris Tufexis 28:12
Yeah.

Kellen Cooks 28:12
What's the balance amongst these different community organizations in the neighborhood, and how do they serve beyond Esquilino?

Aris Tufexis 28:21
So I will talk for Di Donato, Scomodo, and Spin Time because these are the three I can speak for. So, Di Donato, first of all, has become a model, a model of an open school and a multicultural school. [They are] acting locally, but thinking very globally, so it's a model, it's definitely a model so it can be taken as a case study to be copied elsewhere in Italy. Also, it is one of the most engaged [between] the school and parents association, because all the activities you see, they are accepted by the school but they are organized by the Associazione Genitori. Okay, do you understand the difference between the school and the Association?

Kellen Cooks 28:34
The school is considered as the public institution

Aris Tufexis 29:16
Yeah.

Kellen Cooks 29:16
The after school is like a parent's association.

Aris Tufexis 29:18
Yeah, but all the activities you see this afternoon are organized by the parents of the association, not by the school. Okay, and all the projects I'm involved with, are products of the association. Of course, I work within the school, and I could also work during classroom time, but it's always the Associazione, working with the school. I was telling you that the Associazione Genitori, together with the school, is one of the promotore, it's like one of the associations that started the network of Roman open schools. Schools like DiDonato stay open after the end of the regular timeline of school, and they do activities for the neighborhood. So this is the stuff. Scomodo is the most complex one. We are based in Rome, and we have this important space here that is at the heart of our community. And we are very integrated into Spin Time, so we take part in neighborhood activities, but Scomodo is incredibly broader. We have a community in Turin and in Naples. We also have a community spread all over Italy and Europe because with the journal, you can just participate online, and with the

model of collecting journalism, they do everything online. I've never written for a journal, I know how it works, and we have started doing European projects. For example, we've just closed the European project in December, and I think it will be very interesting for you. It was a European project with some organizations from France, Belgium, Latvia, Romania, and Italy. It was about the gentrification processes in Europe and the temporary use of vacant spaces. And so we were connected to these kinds of organizations in Europe, and we were invited to join a European network called Degentrify Europe. So, we are working on that, but for Scomodo it is easier because we do much more activities. We have a territorial matrix, but with every kind of activity so basically, we cover policy. It's a mess, but it's so cool.

Kellen Cooks 31:57
I follow you guys on Instagram, @leggiscomodo, and read the different articles that are always interesting. Chusid, our professor for our class, picked up on Nuove Periferia article, and that's been a bit of an inspiration for how we've been trying to approach the analysis for the neighborhood, especially when we came... When was that, like a month ago?

Dante del Vecchio 32:24
I think it was three, three weeks ago.

Kellen Cooks 32:26
Yeah. around when you were talking about you talked about Esquilino as like the Centriperia.

Aris Tufexis 32:34
Yeah: centripheria.

Kellen Cooks 32:35
As a kind of like a term for explaining the dynamics of the neighborhood, right. That stuck in our head, very much like, "Ooh!, like, okay, like, that kind of explains a little bit like even like how when we first went to the market, seeing how much different mixture you see there." Could you talk a little bit more about what you mean by the centripheria concept?

Aris Tufexis 32:59
So actually, this is vocabulary that I did not invent. But once I was talking with some friends of mine from Esquilino; we were just chilling and talking. And we said, once said Yeah, "si rega..." I'll tell you in Roman. "Si raga, ma Esquilino e la centripheria." It's very easy. It means that it's in the center, but you see a scene and social dynamics that you be not supposed to see in the city center of a European capital. But also, if you look at a lot of indicators, social indicators or

economic indicators, you see that the average of Esquilino is much lower than the whole of the city center of Rome. I think that the reason is that because there is this mixture of the wealthy Italian population and migrant population, but a lot of people leaving here because I think that the big difference with other quarters is that people not only they work here, [but] they live here. They have their activities, they have their houses. So that's why. Of course, if you start taking the annual wage of a film director, and the children of this film director goes to go DiDonato, and you take the Bengalis family having their tiny mini-market. Of course, the average wage goes down. That's something that probably that does not happen in there all other parts of the city center of Rome because there is not this mixture and integration.

Kellen Cooks 34:46

And even going farther with the concept, do you see Esquilino acting as a hub for people from the periphery to come to meet, or like do these organizations serve neighborhoods in the periphery?

Aris Tufexis 35:01

Is Esquilino open to other [neighborhoods]? What I've seen so far, as you see, Rome in general, it's a very quarter-based city. [We] already have a lot of demands within the quarter. I mean, of course, activities are open for example [at] Di Donato, we work a lot with another occupied building, which is far away in Prenestina Bis. And because of the model of the school we intercept a lot of migrant families, especially living in [the] far east of Rome. So because they choose DiDonato say, "Okay, I am a migrant family, I know I have this necessity for my children, I think that DiDonato will be a much more welcoming school." Scomodo, I don't know. This space is open to, for people to know, for everybody, everybody comes here, basically. And it's Spin Time as well because you spend time because it has a lot of space. It becomes a platform for cultural activities, for students making that need space to have a meeting... Actually, I don't know, I haven't mapped the departure point of all the people who come here, but I think that it's quite Esquilino-centered. But, of course, the services are open. And also you have to think that you don't make that kind of sponsorship or like targeted marketing to intercept [people of other neighborhoods].

Dante del Vecchio 36:50

So can I ask, bringing back to centripheria, and sort of this interaction between these spatial organizations, how do you think that these different organizations try to create equity between the different strata in the neighborhood? How are they trying to, not only create equality but equity and equality and justice? Yeah.

Aris Tufexis 37:36

So how do these kinds of organizations try to...?

Dante del Vecchio 37:39

It's because this relation between the center and the periphery often has to do with these power relations. So how does being a center and periphery in Esquilino, sort of rectify these power dynamics?

Aris Tufexis 37:54

First of all, I think putting people together. Everybody is in the same space. This is the real departure point, we draw a line, this is our space: altogether. You can enter the space, you can enter, you can enter the school. So you say everybody can stay in this in the first place. And of course, this is the basis, but how do you manage to actually create such an equal space? You can differentiate activities. You have to offer activities that somehow can be inclusive for everybody; for kids is easier. Because "Who wants to play football?" everybody was playing football. "Who wants to play basketball?", everybody wants to play basketball. But imagine the school and the fact that the school itself remains open. Parents can enter the place. That means that I am physically close to you. Physically, there is no boundary. Space. First of all, space. I think space is fundamental, and this is what I've learned also from this European project. Access to space; Access to common and free space. If I really want to be the community, I need a space where everybody is able to enter the space and they don't have to pay anything, at least to enter, at least to enter. And this is the concept of Spin Time. The reason behind Spin Time/Scomodo/Redazione. So I think that the other cool thing for example, at Redazione is that you see, I don't know, me that I'm white, a master-degree guy with blah blah blah stuff. And you see, you know kids from everybody smoking joints in the theater... but you stay all together. And then this is the most metaphysical part, then there is the most concrete one. Second, there are fair prices. Of course when you do activities, not only do you have to do your activity, but you also have to pay people to do the activities so that they can survive on what they do. Especially if they do social work that is as important as this one. Here that there is a division in people's thinking. [They think] when you do something, you do a job and then you go and become an activist or this is your job. But these are other questions. So prices that can somehow sustain, give sustainability to the organization doing the activities because if it's not sustainable, activities won't exist anymore. But at the same time, you need to guarantee that all people can enter. So this is why apart from creating activities that people have to pay to participate in -- and there you have to decide the price and how many people cannot pay --- we work on a lot of projects. Yeah, we're always looking for financing from an EU region, Italy, public foundation, private foundation, because you need money. Because you have projects. You know the problem, you know the solution, you don't have the money. So what to do? You add projects; You get money to do stuff. And the other thing is, I think it's if you really want to let people stay together, and you want there to be a sense of community, you need some common moment where everybody shares, but is also working together. Sharing, working, and keeping the community alive. One of the things that really binds people more

is working together. I think this is why also the grassroots organization network is so strong because everybody has worked with everybody. So, we work together, we get things together. And for example, for Redazione, what we do every Tuesday is to have [an] open assembly with everybody that wants to take part in it to say, "Okay guys, we have this space, we had this little issue. Do you want to add [untranscribed]?" To let people understand that once you created a space that, "Okay, guys, this space is particular. You have to be part of it. To get take care of it. To internalize some kinds of behaviors..." It's tough. It's tough. But, as with every beautiful thing, it is very fragile and tough to be kept.

Dante del Vecchio 42:31

Are there particular boundaries that you've seen when trying to get people to take ownership of these spaces?

Aris Tufexis 42:38

Yeah, first of all, basically... when you create this kind of space, people have to be aware of the space where they are, because they're very free inclusive spaces and the border between anarchy spaces [is] very, very, very, very, very low. It's more on people's minds than the rules. It's a lot on people's minds. When you create [a] very open, safe space, some people can just walk in as a free rider. Yeah, I think it's very natural in human history in general.

Dante del Vecchio 43:18

The tragedy of the commons.

Aris Tufexis 43:19

Yeah, and you also have to engage people. Take your little responsibility. Take one, so for example in school when you try to include a migrant's mother and father, "Okay, why don't you take this little..." because, it's empowerment. Also, if I do something for a group, I feel more part of the group than just stay[ing] here and play[ing] the part of a beneficiary.

Kellen Cooks 43:50

That's one thing I was gonna ask. Especially whenever we go around the neighborhood with different organizations, talking to different groups, we hear a lot of talking about doing things for migrant communities or engaging migrant communities. How are migrant communities also involved in the running of these organizations?

Aris Tufexis 44:10

Doing stuff?

Kellen Cooks 44:11

Yeah.

Aris Tufexis 44:12

Okay, as usual, I can only speak for Scomodo, Di Donato, and Spin Time. Let's start with Di Donato. DiDonato, I think of as the most advanced model, because what they do is when they find someone from with a migrant background (but the migrant background doesn't mean anything) with a migrant background and also in need of some personal empowerment and money. They say "Okay, you're good at this, why don't you do this, for example." Example of activities held and managed by non-Italian people in DiDonato: a dance workshop. There is this guy from Nigeria who's 65. You've seen it? [He is a] master. Okay...that's the job. The after-school is run by Eritrean or Somalian women; All the courtyards are managed by Moroccan women; The administrative responsibilities, they are one is Filipino, the other one is Moroccan. Before she had health problems, the English course was held by a Nigerian mother. And you offer the platform. For example, we gave the cleaning activities, or the cleaning jobs, especially to women that you know, they are in need of money. So, at the least, they spend an afternoon all together and schools are quite a positive environment. I mean you're staying with kids. Also if you don't do like a super job of cleaning, I mean, you get money, you stay in the school... I mean for your position... it's probably what they look for. Because what I've seen that a lot of times, these people they don't really give a fuck about "I want to achieve some results. And to know, express myself..." [They] need money to give money for their my family and to give money to their children. It's, I mean, it's very basic needs. And once you give them these kinds of things, they're happy to use this is money for the family, because they probably know that they could miss this opportunity and that they have to take this opportunity for the children. It's cruel, but it's reality. In Spin Time, as you see [there are] 350 people living here: 28 nationalities. So everything you do here, there are migrant backgrounds involved. What I see is that there is a high division among people, but this is for people in general. People that are proactive by themselves. And so what I think that what the pluses of this kind of organization are, is that they are sensitive to this kind of issue. And to do this, if someone wants to do something, you have already given them the platform. "We were really waiting for you to do this. Now that you are willing to work, tell us what you need. we will try to empower you." But a lot of times the opposite happens. You say "I really want to empower you. Come on come." [They respond,] "No. Why. Ehhhh." But this is human nature in general, but it's exacerbated in this situation. In general, the plus is giving the platform. [Because] If someone really wills to [do something], in this environment there is a culture [for empowerment]. If you want the chance then have everything you need. Go for it. I think this is that plus.

Kellen Cooks 48:04

I always want to reflect back on our first visit to the market. And see and I was looking around for South American and African stands that remind me more of

home. I was talking to the one Latino stand that I could find and [asking], "Are you the only Latin American stand in the market? How does that work?" She was talking a little bit about how like before COVID there had been more African stalls within the market, more South American stalls when the market but then you saw kind of centralization,

Aris Tufexis 48:57

A normalization by Chinese immigrants.

Kellen Cooks 49:00

...who were running things. And it's always been in the back of my mind, like how do those migrant dynamics work within this community? Or like, how does it? That's not another question. That's just saying why I asked that question. But I'll digress. Yeah.

Dante del Vecchio 49:15

Maybe you're talking about DC like the fragmentation of communities? And is that fragmentation rectified within the [communities]?

Kellen Cooks 49:25

Yeah, do you see those types of tensions?

Aris Tufexis 49:27

Among them? Yes, there is. First of all, there is a high fragmentation among groups. So Africans are Africans... Seriously, I don't know. Yeah, I really, I really, really can't tell. I don't know. I don't know internal dynamics. Yeah. But I know that, for example, within here, in this building [Spin Time] there were interethnic dynamics. So East European people had problems with African people. I mean, racism is everywhere. Yeah, racism is everywhere. And I think that not having racism in your mind, it means that you're civilized, but you had the opportunity to become civilized. I think that unfortunately, racism is not a point of departure is the point of arrival. So it's human dynamics, but the more you're closer to reality. So the more you are in, you have concrete problems, the more you're causing to reality, and the more these dynamics are exacerbated. This is the pattern I have seen.

Kellen Cooks 50:46

You can't work through racism by pretending it doesn't exist. You can't work through racism or work through these different tensions by pretending they don't exist. You have to acknowledge them and work through them.

Aris Tufexis 50:55

Yeah, they do exist. They do exist.

Dante del Vecchio 51:00

It's interesting because one of our group members just was talking to Jessica, and she was talking about sort of Italian reactions to different waves of migrants coming in Moroccans, North Africans, and now, the refugee crisis. She said that, basically, she said that she believed that Romans aren't really ready to see sort of this. She specifically says that they're not ready to see colored people, end of quote, but it's sort of like this jarring reaction. And I guess my question is, do you think that's true? Do you think that there is like large cultural pushback in this quarter for that dynamic diversity?

Aris Tufexis 51:55

Now what I see... Also, you're from New York, which is probably one of [the most cosmopolitan places].

Dante del Vecchio 52:03

I'm from Texas.

Aris Tufexis 52:04

Okay, that's not as cosmopolitan.

Dante del Vecchio 52:08

Houston's very [diverse] too.

Aris Tufexis 52:09

Okay, well, basically, we are in Italy, which is a kind of much more traditional country than the US, and New York, and Houston. So this is the point of departure. What I think, is that and we also have here like, the extreme-right movement that somehow works to try to press some kind of buttons on population psychology?

Dante del Vecchio 52:46

Because there was a far-right organization.

Aris Tufexis 52:52

CasaPound doesn't have any, any, any, any significance. So CasaPound had a space very close to here in Esquilino but they don't do anything. The problem is that there is a far-right movement, in Italy. About four years ago, it was very strong, he got like 30% of the vote.

Kellen Cooks 53:14

What's [the movement] called?

Aris Tufexis 53:19

Lega Nord. First of all, it's such a cultural shock for people that if you're not young, you're not ready for it. It's objectively a cultural shock. So imagine you had

your quarter, you had all people like you, and then you start to see people that are different than for you, and the socioeconomic level of the quarter diminishes. This is an objective shock. Then, if you are an open-minded person that understands that there is globalization and gentrification and that there are trends you need to know to understand how these kinds of things work. [The culture shock] is a justification that some people give to the end. [However], you also see some kind of objective problems, because if you go in the streets, and if you see people doing meth, basically they're not Italian, but this is something [for which] you would have to do a socio-economic analysis. If you go into in the suburbs, Italians do the meth, but here, Italians here are rich. They are not in this desperate situation. Yeah. If you go to Palermo, I just came back from Palermo (I did a master's there), you will see the same scene, but there are Italians who were doing this kind of stuff. So, you have to be forced to focus on the socio-economic situation, not on the color [of their skin]. You see in front of you people acting in a very different way than you. And so something can turn you. For example, I have to admit that the way some Bengalese mothers are treated [by these people], they get on my nerves. I have to say "Okay, I'm trained for this kind of stuff." I mean, we are European. So we have already gone through this process. I don't want to intervene. It's your family, do whatever you want. I accept it. I will work with your kids anyway. What I think is that this is the real case in which there is a new generational fundamental. Because this is cultural. And it's very difficult to change the culture of the 40/50-year-old person that has been raised in a very traditional environment. It's very difficult. But with kids, you can do whatever you want. You can do everything. This sounds like a slogan, but...

Dante del Vecchio 56:11

These are the sorts of sensitivities you're working with when you're dealing with children. Yeah, of course.

Aris Tufexis 56:15

But it's, you know, it's natural. I mean, also to me, it's very natural. I mean, I think that for our generation, I'm half Greek, half south Italian. I was born in Parma. I study international cooperation. I worked in Sri Lanka. I was in Berlin. I have been to the US. I mean, of course, at a certain point, you have to find the boundaries where we match on these values. We have to find some points to match the cultures. You really need to find a common layer at certain points. But if you are that used to stretching your mind, culturally speaking, you're ready to do a lot of work. And of course, you're more centered on socio-economic issues rather than a physiological ones.

Kellen Cooks 57:16

I have a lot of questions, but I know we are getting close to time. But, two questions.

Aris Tufexis 57:22

Okay. The last because then I had to talk about the majestically if you need another

moment and get another moment.

Kellen Cooks 57:29

Well, the first is kind of like a comment. Like, I know that. When we were talking with the people at Di Donato, they were talking a little bit about how even way, way before he moved to like back in like the 70s and 80s when, before there was a large migrant push into Esquilino, how it was largely Southern Italian migrants that lived in the neighborhood. I was, comparing that experience of how they were treated when they first came to this neighborhood back 50 some-odd years ago, and how those communities kind of like, respond to how they were treated then, and then responding to the influx of migrants now.

Aris Tufexis 58:14

So someone who has been a migrant, [you're asking] how do they react?

Kellen Cooks 58:18

Because we see similar things in American cities where Italian or Irish immigrants come in at first, and then they're looked down upon by the Anglo white communities, and then when the Black people come in, they turn their faces.

Dante del Vecchio 58:33

It's this changing dynamic of the other that we see in the US.

Aris Tufexis 58:37

Okay, I think this is a structural dynamic of social psychology. I don't know, actually here, I haven't seen it here actually.

Dante del Vecchio 58:58

In the quarter?

Aris Tufexis 59:02

Here, no, I mean, at least for people my age. I have been living here for three years, I have not been living here for all of my life. But you know, it really depends on your level of education. For example, my parents, they were migrants because my mother is from Southern Italy. My father is from Greece and they went to Parma which is North Italy. Of course, they don't give a shit. But there is like this video that I can share with you. There is this speech by people from Veneto which is supposed to be one of the most racist regions in Italy, where during the 50s 60s, and 70s, a lot of people from the South came and they were super discriminated against. This person this man says, "Okay, you know what? I don't hate Salvini the most. I hate the most people who were being discriminated against who are now voting for Salvini because you have understood nothing." But I can't really say for Esquilino. I think at this point that I know, the same as you, I think. Yeah, if you

want to do the last one [now], because then I have to talk with Francesco.

Kellen Cooks 1:00:55

Five years from now, if you had to look into the future in the neighborhood and dream about the neighborhood in five years?

Aris Tufexis 1:01:05

Dream?

Kellen Cooks 1:01:08

Dream realistically, I don't know. But if you have to kind of project into the future, how would you see these different projects and these different concepts that you're talking about within Esquilino?

Aris Tufexis 1:01:19

Okay, I'm a pessimist person. And I work a lot because if I start thinking, I am a pessimist. In fact, I always work with optimistic people because they say "Okay, let's do this." And what I do most is that I do stuff. I have them structure things because I'm too pessimistic to think about a beautiful future. I really, I think that now, we are in a watershed because all of these organizations have grown up a lot [and now] they are becoming mature. But, they're becoming so mature that there is a high risk of them collapsing. Because they have reached the highest point of their development. So, the highest threat is the danger of this and the capability of connecting. Because the only way to survive now is to start connecting in a very performative and collaborative way. So if I have to dream, I see a super solid social economy that is able to face, in a structured way, the problems of the quarter, that is able to cooperate and co-design and co-program activities and policies with the municipality, and that is able to keep the quarter as human as it is right now. Also if it works in a conservative way against a lot of contemporary trends that I really fear, it will be a dream also if it remains as it is. If it doesn't get worse, that will be enough for me. That's awesome. Thank you so much for talking with us. It's just generally so cool. We don't run into stuff like this in the States.

Dante del Vecchio 1:03:24

It's definitely a lot more fragmented in the US. It's especially way more individualistic or top-down. It's all about the market.

Kellen Cooks 1:03:38

Yeah, it's different but thank you so much.

Chiara

On April 13, 2022, Chiara was interviewed by Kellen Cooks virtually through Zoom, as Dr. Cacciotti was in Turin and Kellen was in Rome at the time. Dr. Cacciotti was raised in Esquilino, and studied modern literature and ethno-anthropology for her Bachelor's degree from Università di Roma Tor Vergata and her Master's degree from Sapienza Università di Roma, respectively. As a part of her doctoral research at Sapienza, Chiara focused on the politics and cultural dynamics of Spin Time/Santa Croce, and was fully immersed in the complex as an inhabitant for nearly a year. As Chiara is now a postdoctoral researcher at the Politecnico e Università di Torino, she remains deeply engaged within the Esquilino community.

Chiara Cacciotti 0:03

Now, first of all, I don't know if I can remember if I already told you this, but I am an inhabitant of Esquilino and I was born in Esquilino. I lived there until three months ago when I moved to Turin, so I'm an historical inhabitant and I have an academic background in anthropology. People always think that since I am an anthropologist, I am interested in going abroad and studying different cultures and different contexts, but I thought that anthropology could be useful also in studying your own context, your own society and your own city, as in this case.

When I was still in my Master's, and my Bachelor's also, I was an inhabitant of Esquilino, but I wasn't an actual inhabitant. I lived there, but at the same time, I hung out with friends in other neighborhoods, so Esquilino was like a place where you can come back and sleep and see your family, and that was it. Also, because it became a very fancy, trendy, and interesting neighborhood to live and go out only in recent years, because 10 years ago, it was quite boring, actually. It is the multicultural neighborhood of Rome, but at the same time is in between Monti, San Lorenzo and Pigneto, which are very interesting, crowded, and are places where young people go, so it wasn't so interesting to go and see and visit Esquilino, and now something has changed.

It was 2013 when Spin Time was occupied by the Action movement. Every time I was out, and I was walking through the neighborhood, I walked past this building. I knew that there were offices of a state Social Security institution called INPDAP. But the building was sold and left abandoned from 2010, and at that time, I didn't have a background in housing activism. So when I was walking through the neighborhood, I started to feel something strange about that building because every time I was nearby, I noticed people going in and out, mattresses near the entrance, clothes hanging on the balconies, and I was like, what, what's going on? During those years, I was a Master's student and my supervisor began to do research about other housing squats, and sometimes I went with him. From those experiences, I started to feel comfortable with those contexts. And I realized that that building in my neighborhood was becoming a squat. I was like, "Okay, I have to go there. I have to enter here. But how?" So then I applied for a PhD, after my Master's, with a project about Roman squats. And I started to do some literature review about squats in Rome, and I realized that it was a bigger issue than I thought it was because it's in Rome. Now, there are something like 90, maybe squats. There are different kinds of squats. I mean, there are organized squats, there are spontaneous ones, it's a very complicated issue. I realized this so at the time, I didn't know if Spin Time would be welcoming, but at the end, a friend of mine who was an activist in Action introduced me to them, and I started to do fieldwork. Even after the PhD, I'm still with them. Even if now I'm in Turin, every time I come back to Rome, I like to be with them and do something for the community.

Kellen Cooks 5:25

I didn't know that you grew up in Esquilino! How did you experience Esquilino and the neighborhood differently, or the same, during the time that you spent in Spin Time, compared to your childhood and to being raised in the neighborhood?

Chiara Cacciotti 5:45

First of all, I went to an elementary school in Esquilino, which is very close to my apartment. It's a private catholic school. And, yeah, it was a very closed environment and a religious environment, even though I, nor my parents, were religious. My parents still don't care about religion and Catholic religion, but you know, it was close by. It was easier. The name of the school was San Giuseppe and I live on Via Tasso, so my apartment is on Via Tasso near the museum. Between the museum and my apartment, there is the school, which is a castle. I don't know if maybe you saw it.

Kellen Cooks 6:42

Is it when you walk away from Manzoni? Yeah, a little bit.

Chiara Cacciotti 6:52

Yeah. It's nearby. I mean, it's closer to Piazza San Giovanni than to Viale Manzoni. It's not so different. It's quite close to Viale Manzoni. I went to that school which, as I told you, was a really closed environment. So there weren't many occasions to leave the neighborhood, the social life of pupils was mostly inside the building. I remember that in those years, I went to the basketball school in Di Donato. At that time, it was 1997. That was during the first few years of that school that is still active in Di Donato. At that time, that was the only activity I did in Esquilino, because I was often inside school, and then I went there.

And then after primary school, I started to join and enroll in other schools that weren't in Esquilino. They were always in San Giovanni, so not very far from my apartment, but I felt like Esquilino was a place mostly inhabited by elderly people. Of course, there were migrants too. But in schools, there weren't so many migrants, because at that time, it was the beginning of the migrant wave in Rome. So there were only the parents, and then in the following years, their children came. So yeah, I always felt quite bored when I was in Esquilino, and I started to make some friends and enroll in schools that were outside of school, so as I told you, in San Giovanni or Piazza Indipendenza, which is close to Termini. My high school was there, and it's still Primo Municipio, so it's still the same Municipio. I don't know if they told you that Municipio and Comune are two different things because municipio is not a municipality. It's something different.

I always picked schools that were close to my home, but at the same time, they weren't in Esquilino. It was not so interesting of a place to go, at least for me. But then something like five or six years ago, I started to realize that Esquilino wasn't the same as when I was a little girl, especially when I realized that Spin Time was there. Actually, I have to thank Spin Time for letting me be more involved in the neighborhood, because Spin Time is the core of a lot of other realities and

associations that are very active in the neighborhood. Once I discovered Spin Time, I said, "Okay, there is not only Spin Time, there is a lot of other stuff in here." Then at that time, I became really involved in the local activities, but until then I was like, "Okay, Esquilino is nice, but I don't feel it's really interesting for me."

Kellen Cooks 10:55

Understood. When you were getting adjusted to Spin Time and when you first came into the building started to get to know the community, how was it entering the space? What was that process like when you were getting to know the people that were within the organization?

Chiara Cacciotti 11:14

At the beginning, it was strange, because I didn't mean to move into the building at the time, because I thought it wasn't fair. There are people who need a place to live. And it's not fair that I have to ask them to do this. In the beginning, I felt strange, because I was able to leave at the end of each assembly or meeting and return to my housing normalcy. As a result of this, I felt that I was unable to grasp the real complexity and precarity of the precarious living conditions. Then a squatter asked me, "Why don't you move into the building?", and after maybe one month or a month and a half of research, I still said, "I mean, I think it's not fair to move into the building".

But they said, "No, no, no, we have an apartment, inside the building that is, we decided to give this apartment for a situation like yours. So for students, refugees, asylum seekers, people who are planning to be here, but only for a temporary condition."

Then I said, "Okay, let's move into the building", so then I moved into Santa Croce in March 2019, before the pandemic. I stayed there for nine months inside the building, and then [the research] was easier. Once you are in the field (in that case, it was really literally in the field), all of the relationships that were initially established on a more professional basis became more and more personal. I started to know people not only for interviewing them, but also [more personally], like when you are coming back home from the university department and you meet them at the elevator, and say "Oh, how is it going, How was your day?" Those situations were the most important for my research, because residents started feeling more and more confident with me. While we were waiting for the elevator, they would tell me something that was really huge for my research. And I was like, "Oh, okay, it's midnight, I'm very tired, but repeat this to me." It felt strange, but at the same time interesting. Doing research for me is a job, but in that case, the house and the workplace were the same thing, so I wasn't resting at all. I was always on duty. I was always doing fieldwork and that's exhausting. But at the same time, it's interesting because you can grasp the most interesting things even if you are like having a beer with some of them and it's 11 and you are not working in theory, but that's still work.

Kellen Cooks 14:51

That's amazing. And to pivot this a little bit, you were talking a little bit about the way that the neighborhood changed to become more interesting and lively, and there being more things going on over the past 10 years or so. I also know that with Aris, we were talking about how one of the main kinds of anxieties that he had about the neighborhood was gentrification. And I was wondering what you are, what are your opinions on gentrification in Esquilino, and what have you seen in the transformation of the neighborhood? How has that affected housing and socioeconomics of the neighborhood too?

Chiara Cacciotti 15:32

Actually, I disagree with Aris. I have a very technical idea of gentrification. I don't think that what is happening in some neighborhoods in Rome is gentrification, at least if we think about gentrification, as the same thing that happened to Brooklyn or Berlin. I think in Rome, it's a very different situation. I mean, it's problematic, but it's not gentrification. Gentrification is when you substitute people and working class people that were there with a new Gentry, so in Esquilino, I don't think it's gentrification. Esquilino was never a popular neighborhood. Esquilino was born after Rome became the Italian capital, a long time ago. At that time, in the early decades of the 19th century, it was already a cool place to live, because all the workers that worked for the capitol in Turin, then moved to Italy, and they lived in Rome. And they started to build this new neighborhood, which, I mean, I don't know if you've ever been in Turin, but in Esquilino, the architectural features of Esquilino are quite similar to the ones you can find in Turin.

Kellen Cooks 17:21

So it's a whole thing (with you moving to Turin from Rome)!

Chiara Cacciotti 17:25

Exactly, without even knowing this! It's similar because Turin was the capital, then the capital moved to Rome, and then they decided to build this new neighborhood that was supposed to welcome the workers that came from Turin. So, it has always been a cool place to live. It has not been quite like Parioli or richer neighborhoods, but at the same time, it has never been a popular neighborhood. Then at a certain point, it became the multicultural neighborhood because it was very close to Termini station. The Chinese community was the first to establish in Piazza Vittorio and the surrounding area, but I don't think that you can call that process gentrification, because the rent prices have always been very high in Esquilino. I mean, maybe now it's worse than before, but I don't think it's an actual gentrification. Maybe Aris was referring also to the fact that Piazza Vittorio, in particular, became the place where the artists chose to live. So we have people like Sorrentino, Matteo Garrone, and other famous filmmakers and directors that choose to live there because it's cool,

and because it's multicultural. I don't think this choice has affected the real estate market and prices very much. It was high even before that.

Kellen Cooks 19:30

Understood, and within that conversation, part of what we were also talking about were his experiences at Di Donato and the relationships we've seen between migrant children coming from all different backgrounds, including Chinese backgrounds, Bangladeshi backgrounds, African backgrounds and largely coming from lower socioeconomic status. With the neighborhood also having the children of the artists and more upper middle class communities, I was wondering how that relationship plays out within the neighborhood, especially now as the neighborhood becomes more and more multicultural? And then how has that developed even during your time at Spin Time?

Chiara Cacciotti 20:43

We should talk about Di Donato, the neighborhood school, because it's always like the neighborhood on a small scale. In that case, maybe gentrification happened, but it was more of a cultural gentrification. So I remember DiDonato when I was a child, and it was a good school, but at the same time, there were so many Chinese pupils at the time, and the teachers didn't know how to deal with it, because it was the first time they dealt with diversity. So it was considered a very tough and hard school to enroll your children. Then, something happened very similar to what also happened to another school in Rome.

I don't know if you ever heard about Pisacane in Tor Pignattara, because I did my Master's research on that school, and it's a very similar case to Di Donato. When you are in a neighborhood in Rome that starts to become multicultural, and then so-called foreign pupils start to enroll to that school because it's the closest one, there are the first years where locals say, "Oh, no, we don't want to enroll our children here because there are so many foreign people, they will not be able to learn Italian and bullshit like this." But then, you know, people and parents with our high cultural level and our higher political awareness, start to say, "Okay, that's cool. I want my children to be there, because I think it's enriching. I think it's nice. I think I can keep on with my political interests while raising my children through the activities that my children will do at school", and then people both in Pisacane and in DiDonato started to enroll their children there even if they are not living there. There are so many parents and families in Pisacane that are not living in Tor Pignattara. They are living in surrounding neighborhoods, but they prefer to take their children there because it's more effective, pedagogically speaking of course, and the same happens also in DiDonato. There are many parents who live in Monti and other neighborhoods but they say "Okay, I have something like three or four schools close to my apartment but I want my child to go there, because I like that model. I like that political, pedagogical, and intercultural model." So that is what is happening in Di Donato. And yeah, of course the neighborhood is

changing through this process because it's a very welcoming neighborhood but at the same time near the school there is also CasaPound which is the fascist association. There have been some issues, but I don't know if Aris has already told you about the Via Bixio affair.

Chiara Cacciotti 24:44

Di Donato is on this street, Via Bixio, and the parents association of DiDonato was trying to pedestrianize it, and their reason is that they wanted to transform Di Donato into an open school, that would be open also during the evening and the afternoon for external activities. Of course, that street is a bit dangerous because it's quite small, and there were many children during the years that were injured or damaged by cars while they were playing. They asked the Municipio to close that street because it's not mandatory for cars to pass Via Bixio, it's not an important road in that neighborhood. That happened, unfortunately, during elections last year. The fascist party in Esquilino decided to take advantage of this and start doing some kind of mobilization and advertisement against this measure, because it's "[too much] authority and because you want to close the road for poor inhabitants and blah, blah, blah." That became an issue. The last time I was in Rome was the time we went to Spin Time together, and I think that that day, I saw Via Bixio closed, so I think it's working. I think that's interesting for your study. So maybe you can ask also to Aris because he's more involved, and now I'm in Turin, so he's more updated, let's say about this process. But I think this Via Bixio effect and Polo Civico also could be interesting for you.

Kellen Cooks 27:21

It's always closed whenever we walk by, with all the Zumba classes and everything going on in the street. Especially when there's not a ton of public spaces that we've noticed within the neighborhood, that space, especially in the afternoons and the evenings, becomes one of the most lively outdoor spaces, where just everybody's hanging out and running around. We would definitely want to focus on that bit for the research. Talking about the efforts of the parents and those aspects too, I know that in your article that we were reading about Spin Time you were talking about the local moral economy in Esquilino, and how it's beyond thinking about purely transactional ways of working with people but instead there being a more holistic way of working together within the neighborhood. I was wondering how Esquilino helped to develop that concept in your mind? Then, especially with the Lupi decree, how might have that created a necessity for that local moral economy as well?

Chiara Cacciotti 28:57

Okay, I don't think Esquilino has helped in developing the local moral economy, but not because they weren't helpful, but because it's an already existing model. As you may have read in the article, the Roman squatting for housing system is very old. It dates back to the post-Second World War period. And this moral economy has changed, of course, but the very idea of paying your stay with participation, and not with money, is

something that has always been there.

The role of Esquilino, in this case, was very important, and it was that of accepting this system, and not criminalizing this system. Ten years ago, Andrea, or Tarzan, the guy you met last time, was arrested and accused of criminal association, just because he and Action in general were asking squatters to give a contribution of 10 euros per month in order to pay staff for the building, and buy cleaning products. The Roman court decided that it was a criminal activity, because if you ask for money, [in their eyes] it's criminal. That's the big issue, because many are used to a housing system that is basically neoliberal, where if you can afford to pay your rent or to buy a house, you can be here and otherwise, you are a free rider or a criminal. When people inside squats talk about this local moral economy, it's the fact that there is a circulation of goods, values and products inside a squat that doesn't happen through money transactions, but through other forms of activities like political participation, mutual help, and individual contribution in organizing activities. That all is a form of payment. But of course, it's difficult to make this acceptable outside certain contexts.

Kellen Cooks 31:47

You can't put this on an account sheet or document and then send it to the state.

Chiara Cacciotti 31:52

Yeah, because it's not recognized as a formal economy. There are many squats in Rome, and maybe Esquilino was and is one of the most welcoming places to be because they immediately recognize the importance and the meaning of this way of paying your stay and keeping on with the Spin Time experience, and they never criminalized these kinds of transactions, So it was very helpful in the sense. But at the same time, [the local moral economy is] quite an old system, and it existed also before the Esquilino squatting experience.

Kellen Cooks 32:51

Gotcha. Gotcha. Yeah. Because I remember, what did he do? Didn't he punch Jessica when she brought up that people had to pay that 10 Euro. And he was saying, "Don't talk about that, don't talk about that, don't talk about that!"

Chiara Cacciotti 33:06

Because he got arrested for this and he was scared!

Kellen Cooks 33:12

We were talking about that for a while after, like "What just happened?!"

Chiara Cacciotti 33:16

Don't call it payment, don't call it payment! That's the reason, haha.

Kellen Cooks 33:24

Understood, and yeah that's awesome. One concept we were kind of exploring was seeing Esquilino within the border between the center and the periphery, and how the neighborhood and its dynamics relate with both? We have been kind of running and rolling with this term, centripheria, and it came from Aris, alongside our larger experiences in the neighborhood. I was wondering if you could, especially from your childhood to now, talk about your feelings about how the neighborhood relates to both the center and the periphery?

Chiara Cacciotti 34:24

According to my experience? Yeah, I always have these crazy discussions with Roman colleagues and friends of mine who actually are working in very complicated neighborhoods like Tor Bella Monaca, especially. I don't know if you ever heard about it but that's maybe the most problematic neighborhood of Rome. When in Rome, when a social researcher decides to study a peripheral neighborhood, it's all because they are either coming from a peripheral neighborhood, so they want to identify in that experience, or because they are middle class individuals, and they want to not feel guilty of being part of that class. And in my experience, I am an inhabitant of Esquilino, but in Esquilino, it's a centripheria. There are also a lot of complicated issues and complicated families and individuals who have a lot of issues and social and economic problems. But people from outside Esquilino and people who are living in the suburbs, even if they come from middle class families and are not experiencing some specific economic problems, they suppose that if you are living in the center, then automatically you are rich, or you don't have issues.

36:25

It's very difficult to let even Roman people understand this dualism and contradiction that Esquilino expresses, because in Rome, that dualism between the center and the suburbs and the periphery is very strong, and is at least socially perceived as very sharp. In Rome, it's more complicated than this, at least from a social point of view. Of course, if you go to Tor Bella Monaca, it's different. Of course, there is a worse situation there and, and it's more widespread in that territory than in Esquilino. At the same time, there is a kind of identification between the position that the neighborhood has in the map, and the alleged socio-economic condition of everybody there. I think this is a pity because you miss a lot of nuances and features that Esquilino has, because there are a lot of homeless people. Those people sometimes are migrants, but sometimes are former Esquilino inhabitants, so it's not so easy to divide the Center from everything else, as it's more complicated than this. So according to my experience, it was difficult to grasp this complexity of a bourgeois neighborhood that, at the same time, has a lot of periphery inside of it. The most difficult thing was that people outside Esquilino still don't understand this complexity, even if they are from Rome. They are more like, "Yeah, but I live in Torre Angela, so I'm coming from the periphery, and you don't know what it means to live in the periphery." Okay, but what does it mean? I mean, there are still many issues here.

Daniele

Frey Ranaldo 0:06

Nice to meet you, first of all. The first thing I want to ask you was if you would be able to draw a lynch map or a mental map. Just a quick rendering of the first things that come to mind when you think of Esquilino as a neighborhood. We've been asking some people from the community to do these, and it can just be a few pieces of text or a few landmarks that you think are important to the neighborhood.

Daniele 0:43

I think that the main core is Santa Maggiore, and then from Santa Maggiore you are able to connect with Piazza Vittorio and then there is San Giovanni. Also, we know that there is a railway system, so when we talk about Esquilino we have the three main points: Santa Maggiore, San Giovanni, and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. This is Esquilino. Around Piazza Vittorio is the old system of the grid, maybe this is the main aspect.

Frey Ranaldo 2:01

You live in Esquilino, Correct? How long have you lived there?

Daniele 2:12

I have been there since 2010

Frey Ranaldo 2:14

And how did you end up living there? What brought you to Esquilino?

Daniele 2:38

I didn't think to live there before, because before I lived not so far from Monte Verde and I was looking to buy an apartment there with a certain limit on the price. Then, with my girlfriend, we decided to try and give more flexibility to this money cap. We discovered that we can buy a great apartment in Esquilino as a solution. I think that now we don't have this type of life in another part of Rome, because the center of Rome has completely changed its identity in the past 20 years. Also, the periphery has completely changed because it's lost a lot of pieces about society. Monte Verde is a more residential neighborhood, and also Prati, and so on. There are a lot of tough conditions about the urban topography of Rome, and maybe Esquilino keeps the condition to live well because it has a lot of elements about what this society is: relationships, you can be free, you can be busy.

Frey Ranaldo 5:25

Yeah, and that ties into part of what we've been talking about in our study, and what we've gotten from talking to people who live there, referring to Esquilino as the Cetroperipheria, like the center of the periphery.

Daniele 5:38

Now I think it's completely changed though because it takes just 10 minutes to go to the colleseo, it's really close. It's always considered a little bit far from the center because Esquilino has always been a melting pot. People that live in the center always refused the solution to create this type of mixed planning to match the different typologies of citizens.

Frey Ranaldo 6:14

Besides living in Esquilino, do you spend time there?

Daniele 6:25

Yes, a lot. My office is also in Esquilino, as is the life of my son. So, maybe you know, the condition of being closed off from the pressure that comes from the past of the city that you live in. I think that Esquilino doesn't give you this position, because when you get out of your apartment and you take place into the street or into the park, you always feel like you're a part of this space. You don't feel pressed about something that seems strange to you, like in the center of Rome where you see a lot of artists, for example, artisans, craftsmen, shops that have clothes. You see how quickly you lose something from the city?

Frey Ranaldo 7:43

So regarding public space. Where do you find that people congregate? Do you feel like there is enough public space in Esquilino?

Daniele 8:11

I think that there are different types of public space, right? We have a public space that meets spatial geometric conditions, Piazza Vittorio, for example. Also the street, and how the street is arranged in grids, or to the respective use. The main part of public space in Esquilino comes from the people that live there. You'll see how the people move themselves to the street to play so you can see how the kids are free to do a lot of things. Yes, the public space is more connected with the people, and not exactly how the city is arranged.

Frey Ranaldo 9:22

Right, not the physical space. Related to that, there are a number of community hubs in the area, So are you familiar with Spin Time or Scomodo? Scomodo is the magazine operated within Spin Time.

Daniele 9:37

Ah yes, I know Spin Time but I don't know Scomodo.

Frey Ranaldo 9:39

Do you do you have anything to say about Spin Time or how you feel like it's impacted the community, or do you not know so much about that?

Daniele 9:46

So, a scholarship for my son comes from Spin Time, this is my connection with this reality. Also, I know Francesca, I'm not sure of her surname, a girl that is really connected with Spin Time to organize and help the families that live there about clothes, about shoes, about toys, and so on.

Frey Ranaldo 10:37

Related to this I know your son attends Di Donato, so I had some questions about the school. I know they're starting to open the space for community use and for student extracurriculars, is your son involved in this? How do you feel about it, and do you know maybe how your son feels about it?

Daniele 11:10

I think that it's a really great thing, opening the street- via Bixio. It's a simple act, it's really simple because when you don't have cars immediately the space becomes more free to use for the people and for the kids. It's a simple consequence of a simple action. I really love this type of solution. Maybe you can understand how it's not really important to do an intervention that is directly connected with the function. For example, I mean that we remove the cars from the street and this street becomes an immediately pedestrian space, but the shape of the street is the same. You can see the walkway, the street, the other walkway, and then the school. If you try to imagine this space transformed into a square, maybe yes it could be a completely different approach to how you understand the space in the city. But I think that it's really interesting the action through a simple barricade. Two simple barricades, each that define a different type of space, and then the space is the same: you can see the street and you can see the walkway. It's completely different how the people can change the shape through their personnel use of the space.

Frey Ranaldo 13:22

My next question is about Esquilino market. What do you feel like the impact of Esquilino market is on the community, or how does it interact with the community?

Daniele 13:38

I think that the market interacts really well with the community. In Esquilino, maybe you have seen a picture before of the original place of the market around piazza Vittorio- it was completely different, completely crowded with people, a lot of dirty boxes, and it was in a very confusing condition. Now I can tell you that there are a lot of boxes there, I don't know maybe 80% of boxes, that is completely occupied by extra-

European people. They sell really strange types of fish and really strange types of vegetables. But I know because I do go shopping there, there is really great food and really great boxes for food, and things like that. I think that it is really positive for all the people that live there to have this type of market because the prices are not really high.

Frey Ranaldo 15:06

As an architect, I was wondering how your architectural background influences your perception of the neighborhood, or if you see certain things as an architect about the neighborhood that are significant?

Daniele 15:23

You know that now Piazza Vittorio works like SoHo or Brooklyn, 30 or 40 years ago because there's greater gentrification. There are a lot of architects, there are a lot of artists, there are a lot of actors, there are a lot of film directors. Maybe you know that Abel Ferrara lived there, and Paolo Sorrentino lived there, Willem Dafoe too. So there's a great community of actors, artists, and architects. Mainly I think that this is directly connected with the possibility for one to be how they want to be. Maybe there you can feel that you're more connected with your identity because so you know that the place doesn't force you to the other [unintelligible]. Maybe you can feel not really aligned with your personal research. This type of neighborhood maybe gives you the possibility to be more free to discover other parts of you, moreso than other parts of Roma. I think that it's really strange because you how diverse it gets at Piazza Vittorio. There is the main piazza, right? So here we have the market and here we have Via Merulana, so here is Chinese, here is African, here is Bangladeshi, here is Chinese, this part is completely Romana. You can find a different topology of ethnicity directly connected with the garden. Here, in Piazza Vittorio, all the people meet together. If you go to the garden during the day, from the first part of the morning you can see a lot of Chinese, and then in the middle part of the morning you can see the Bangladeshi that listens to music, and then another part of the day you can see Africans that meet together and eat, and then after the school ends you can see a lot of kids: the Roman part. That's where everyone comes together, and lives together, and maybe sometimes we hate together. I completely agree with the Chinese way to live in the neighborhood, because the Chinese citizens are really close. The Bangladeshi are not really, but their producing the most money. It's strange, because, for example, the Chinese don't want to live together with the Bangladeshi. For example, the school. Before, Di Donato was really crowded with Chinese people. Then, when the Bangladeshi came the Chinese changed schools and now prefer Bonghi.

Frey Ranaldo 19:39

And is there a big Bangladesh population at Di Donato now?

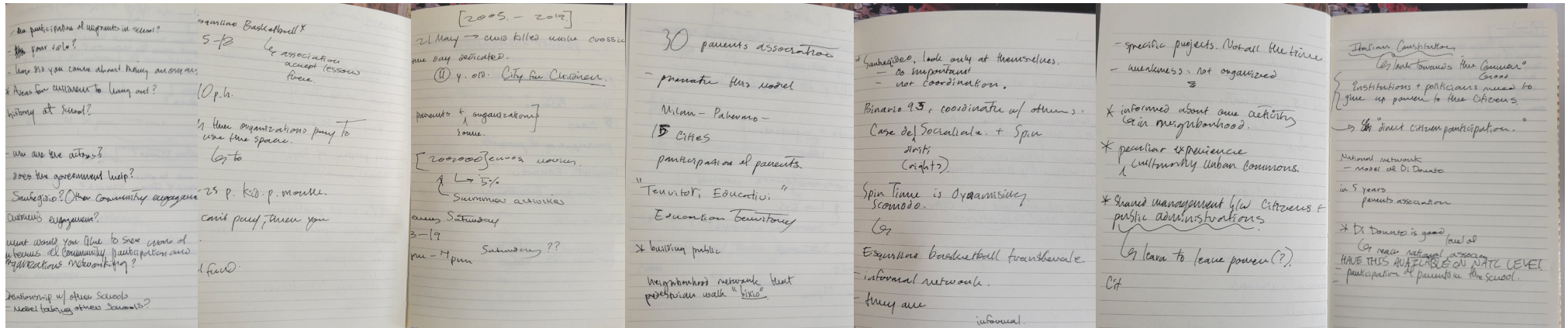
Daniele 19:43

Yes. More Bangladeshi and more Africans use Di Donato, and Bongi has more Chinese and Italian people. So also you can see this strange movement by the different types of communities. Bongi is quite the same school as DiDonato, they are different types of buildings built at the end of the 19th century that work quite the same: a huge building with the huge quarters inside, it's quite the same.

One other thing that maybe you want to keep in mind is how the identity of Piazza Vittorio and Esquilino was changed by the new Sisde office building in Piazza Dante. It is a huge ex-postal office building that is now the main headquarter of the Sisde. Sisde for Italians is like the CIA for Americans. Like the Secret Service. All the services created that before were in different parts of Rome are collected all together in this huge building. This is a new building built on top of the old one, and this has changed completely the balancing of how you see a lot of policemen and a lot of people that work there. Also, it completely removed all the public parking around the place, and the people lose their parking plots. It seems stupid, but it's not really stupid because you feel the pressure about something that you cannot control. Also, underground Piazza Dante there is the main anti-aerial-raid shelter, it's the most popular shelter in Rome. Maybe you can see also signs around the piazza for the shelter. It was used during the second world war. When you read the signs they are black and yellow, they say Piazza Dante or some other place in Rome. These signs mean that there is an underground shoulder. These are the signs that come from the Second World. And maybe this enormous shelter is used by the Sisde for acting in Iraq (?) and functioning with a lot of busy powers, always we can control it.

Gianluca Interview Notes

On April 15th, 2022, Geena interviewed Gianluca at Di Donato. With Marco's help, she was able to write down the translated notes. Gianluca participates in the Parents Association of Di Donato and afterschool clubs that the school hosts (for example, Esquilino Basketball club).



Alessandro Interview Notes

On April 12, 2022, Geena interviewed Alessandro, who works for Sant'egidio and was taking care of the children at Santa Croce/Spin Time at the time. With the translation provided by Jennie, the interview was able to take place in the basement of Spin Time.

Alessandro: A + Allegro
brave Army → Christian Spirit
Santa Croce 10y. → volunteer in q
H 4.0 → exists in Boston + Washington

Invisible Room.
Lz 3 y.a.

work of homeless around Esquilino.
- open community
- Multicultural +

* work of homeless people.
"Organization is friendship"
→ spread out of empathy
We are united to stop the war in Ukraine
- young people in Esquilino 38m

M+W+F

"Father of Charity"
Papa Alessandro!!

List of the People first
The Last People

Park ~~Santa Croce~~
- manifestation center of park
- 10-20 people.

Let to
- multicultural

* opportunities for growth
* sharing

contact of Chinese community → and important & isolated.
- Sant'egidio keeps contact with Italian to Chinese in Esquilino.
* Sant'egidia in China.
- lessons in G.T.Y.A.
- lessons moved to Trastevere.

* everyone's the same level.
Lz humming room?

Friday All White

com. total month
Anzeo Dicardi → founder of Sant'egidio & Ro-peace.


- war is poverty not
- "we are in a poor war"
Lz self gratification
Lz occupy

Wear all white → Ranting / not a symbol of Sant'egidio.

Since 14 years old → passion for teaching children

leader of Choir.
* children - the mother takes away the water Sang! fly away Pandemia

2-4 y.o.
2-6 bambini



William I
- used to sing in chorus - was too deaf
- now a singer.
- pleasant
- 6 years ago.

3-12 children = 10 children
age group.

3-12 : 20-30 children.

- live in Trastevere.
- in 1/2 years → better area, more clean than now, environmentally friendly.

child-writing practice
- sense of belonging
- autonomous identity - otherwise marginalized



ISTAT

General Notes/ Introduction

Part of the neighborhood study included an analysis of the Italian National Institute of Statistics' (ISTAT) spatial data by census tracts. In this section, we will describe the quantitative exploration of questions posed about the quarter. This section is important because it helps us understand the quarter outside the bounds of our physical surveys.

Guiding Questions:

Exploring the dynamics of the centropheria: Who lives in Esquilino neighborhood. What is housing like?

Population: Exploration of female versus male inhabitants. Spatial exploration through population density.

Education: The lack of financial data causes us to explore economic and social agency in different ways. Educational attainment is strongly correlated with these two forms of agency.

Housing: Esquilino, as both center and periphery, has the potential to differentiate from the Roman standards for home ownership and renting. Furthermore, we wanted to explore the average size of housing compared to the Roman standard due to the high level of migrant residents, who, as marginalized groups, often face disproportionate levels of crowding.

Methodology:

We began this process of data analysis by combing through the ISTAT 2011 census data provided for the Lazio region. These included population statistics, and demographics on age, gender, and place of

origin by continent. The data set also included statistics on educational attainment, building quality, residential space, family size, number of total families, and number of building units occupied.

We then sifted through, organized, and identified the parameters useful to explore our guiding questions. It is important to note that part of this process was translating the data descriptors from Italian into English. With the help of translation software built into Microsoft Excel, Professor Greg Smith, and the studio teaching assistant Dr. Marco Gissara this process was completed. Once we identified parameters, we selected the census tracts within the Esquilino. and manipulate them to come to conclusion by comparing the Primary Area, Secondary area, the whole Quarter, and finally based on all Roman Census tracts.

Primary Site

- Building, usage, and street surveys conducted here
- 20 Census Tracts
- Area centered around Porta Maggiore tram interchange and historic site
- Population: 3,461
- Rent to Owned Ratio: ~0.17
- Sum Area of Residential Space: 154,361 m.sq

Secondary Site

- Greater Esquilino neighborhood
- Additional 81 Census tracts
- Population: 17,125
- Rent to Owned Ratio: ~0.375
- Sum Area of Residential Space: 647,857 m.sq

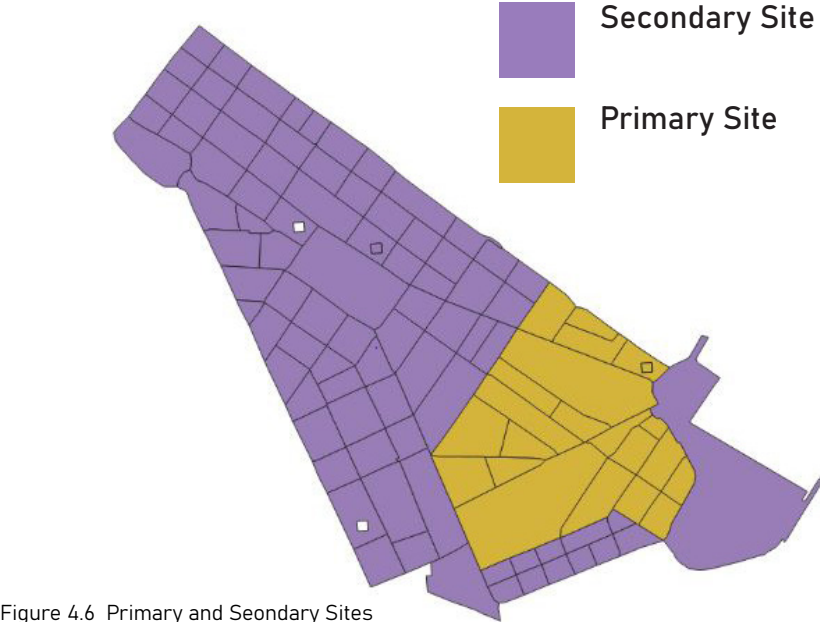


Figure 4.6 Primary and Secondary Sites

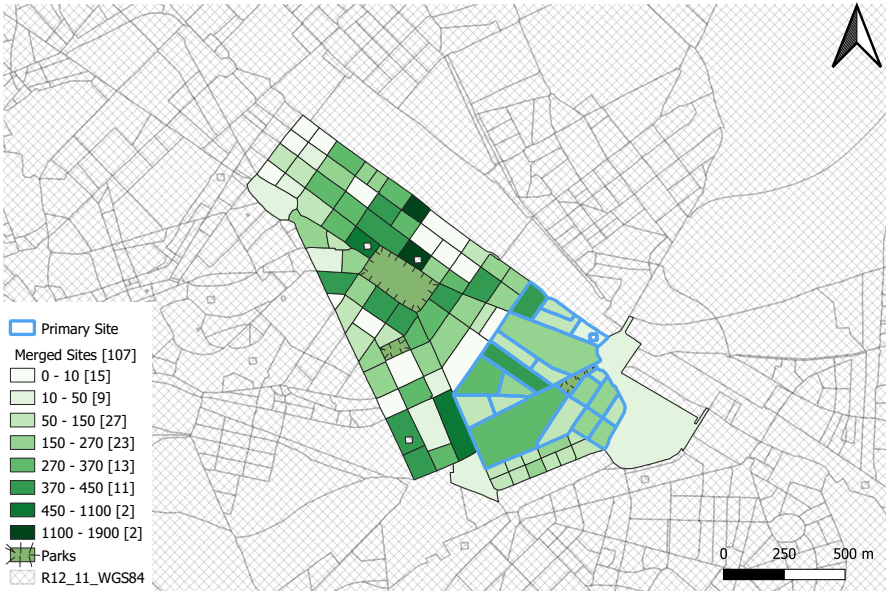


Figure 4.7 Population Density

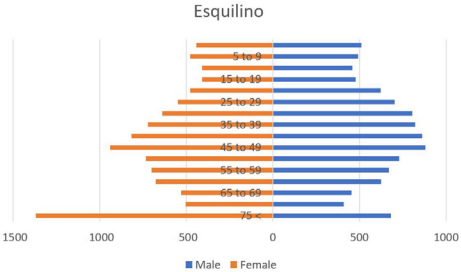


Figure 4.8 Esquilino's Population Butterfly Chart

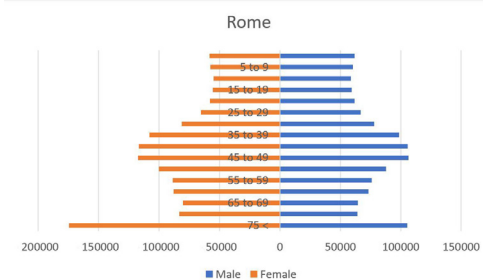


Figure 4.9 Rome's Population Butterfly Chart

Graphic statistics

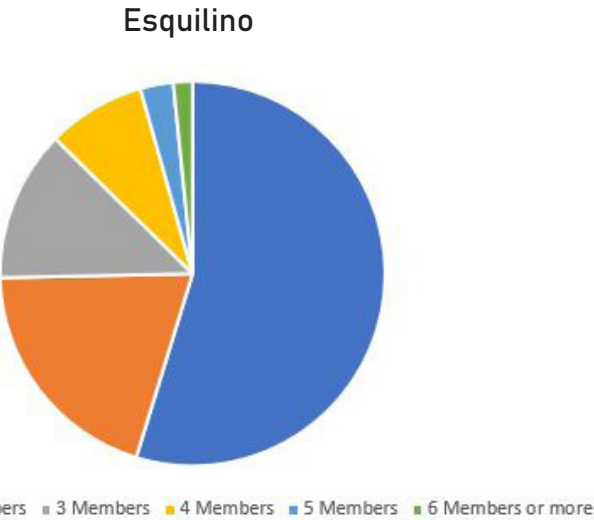


Figure 4.10 Esquilino's Family Size

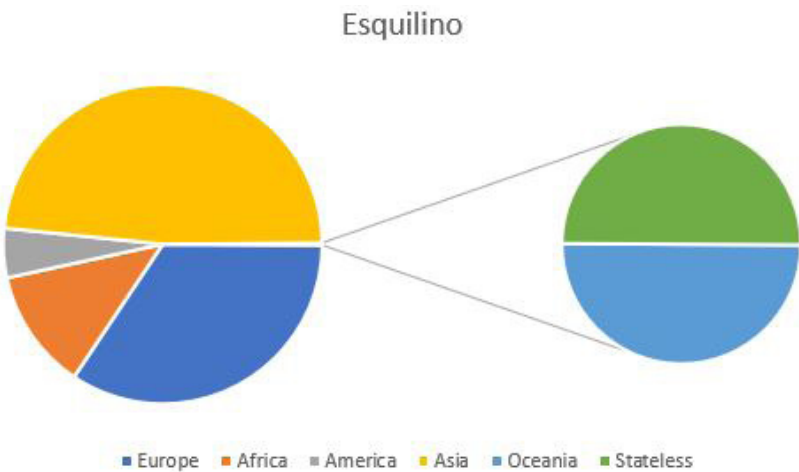


Figure 4.12 Esquilino's Foreign Born and Stateless Population by Continent of Origin

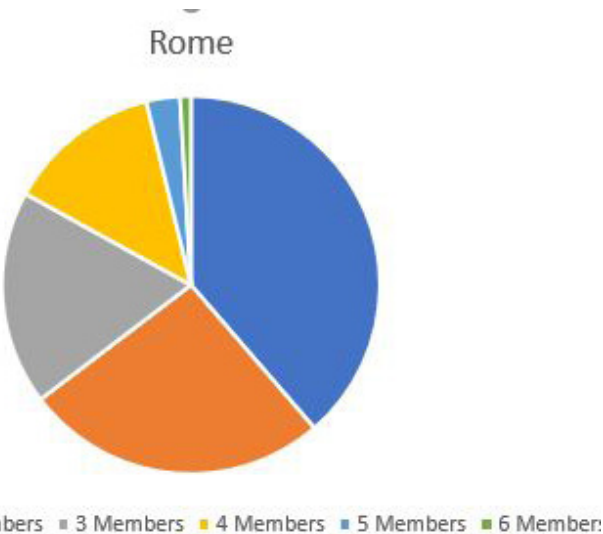


Figure 4.11 Rome's Family Size

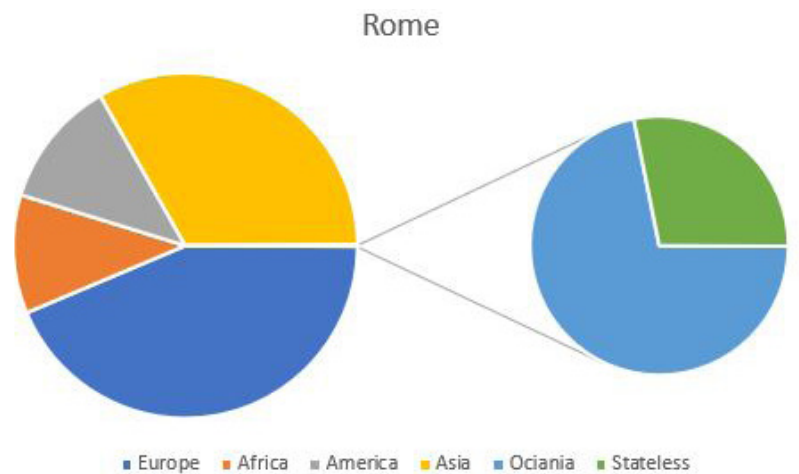


Figure 4.13 Rome's Foreign Born and Stateless Population by Continent of Origin

Figure 4.14 Average Family Size

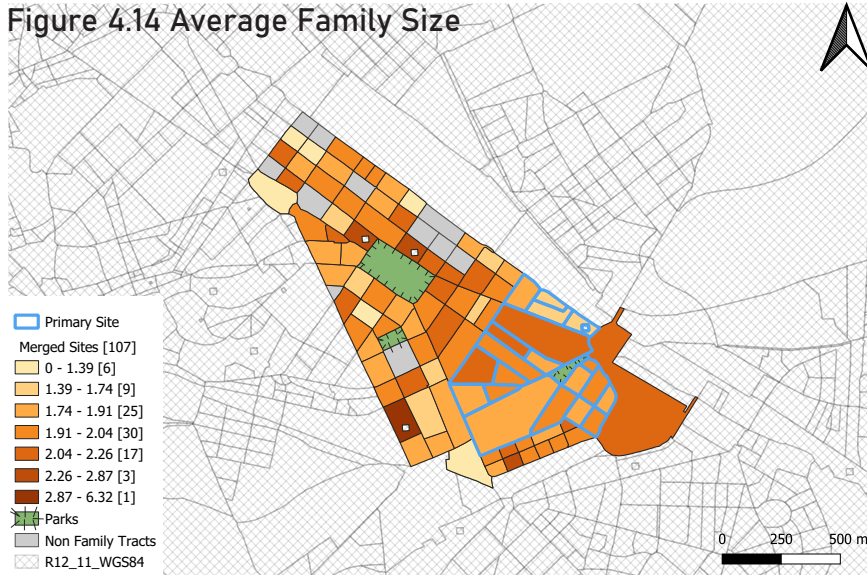


Figure 4.16: Residential Area (M²) per capita

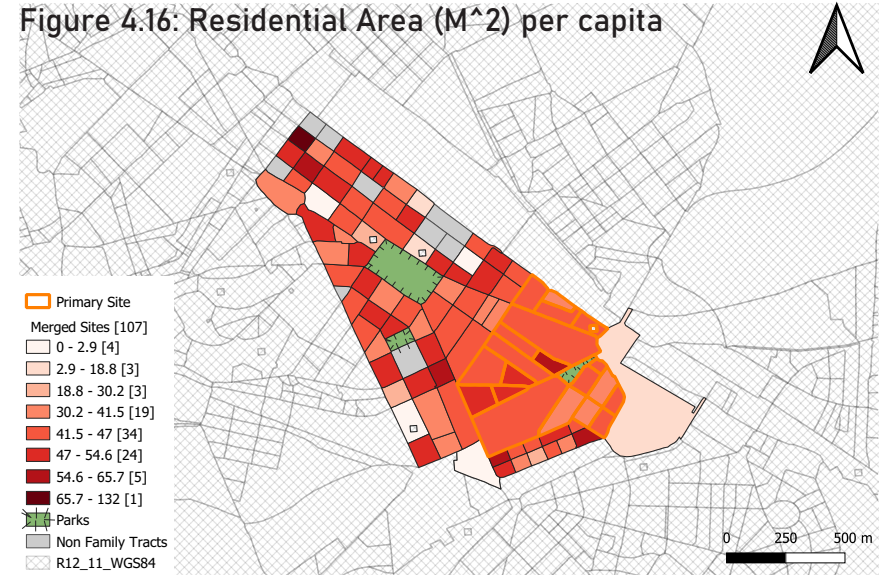


Figure 4.15 Average Family Size by Standard Deviation

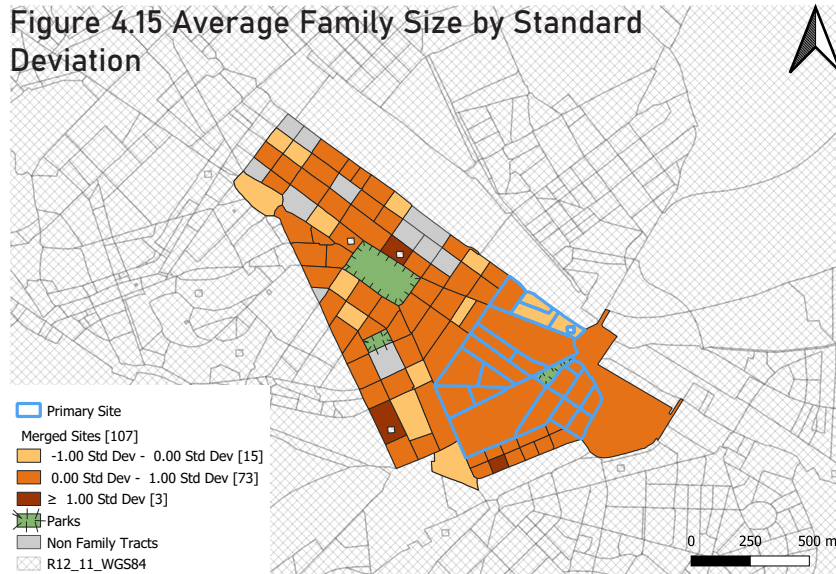


Figure 4.17: Residential Area (M²) per Capita by Standard Deviation

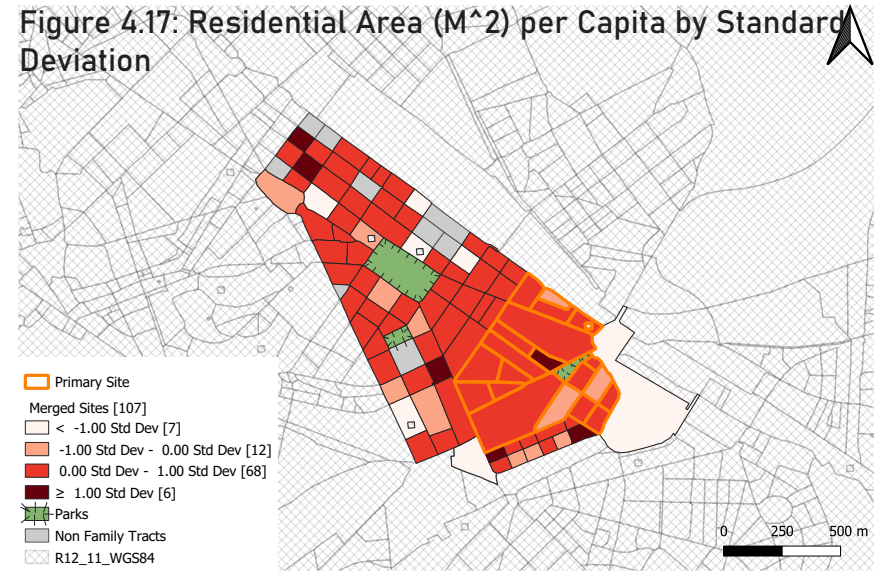
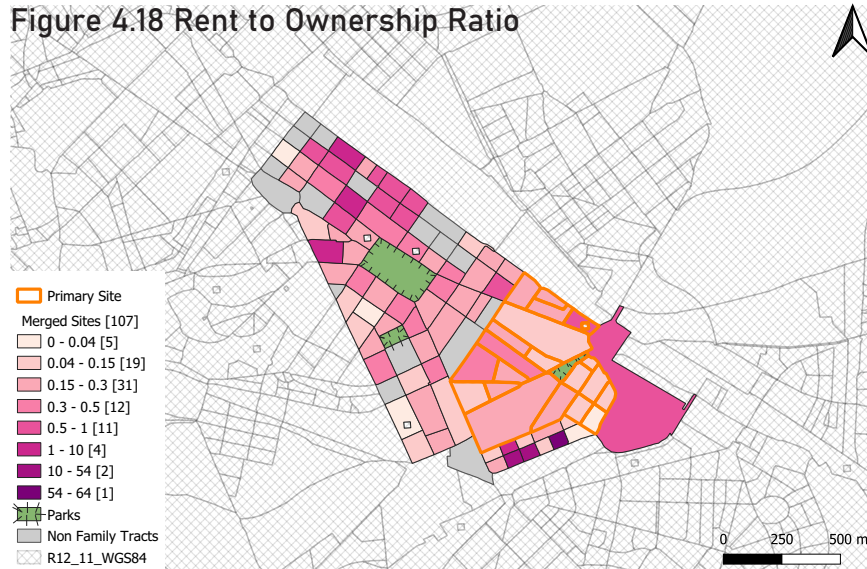


Figure 4.18 Rent to Ownership Ratio



Rent ownership ratio is calculate by dividing total number of renters by the toal number of home owners: Rent Ownership ratio = (Renters/ Home owners)

ROR Rome: 0.298

ROR Esquilino: 0.329

ROR Primary: 0.167

Rome: 2.188 members / family

Esquilino: 1.907

Primary: 1.921

Esquilino

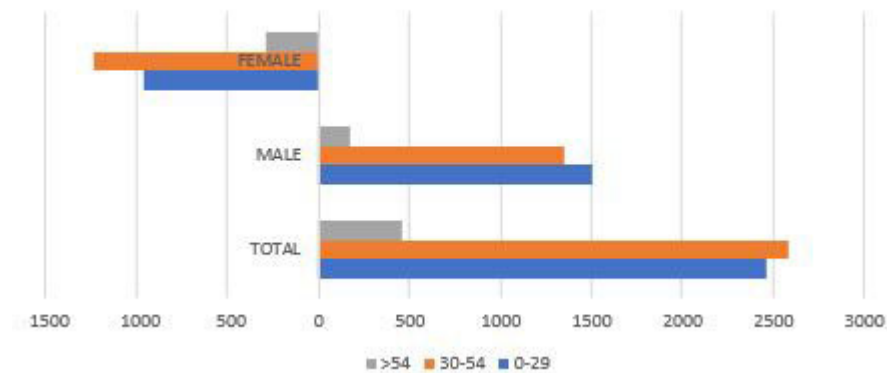
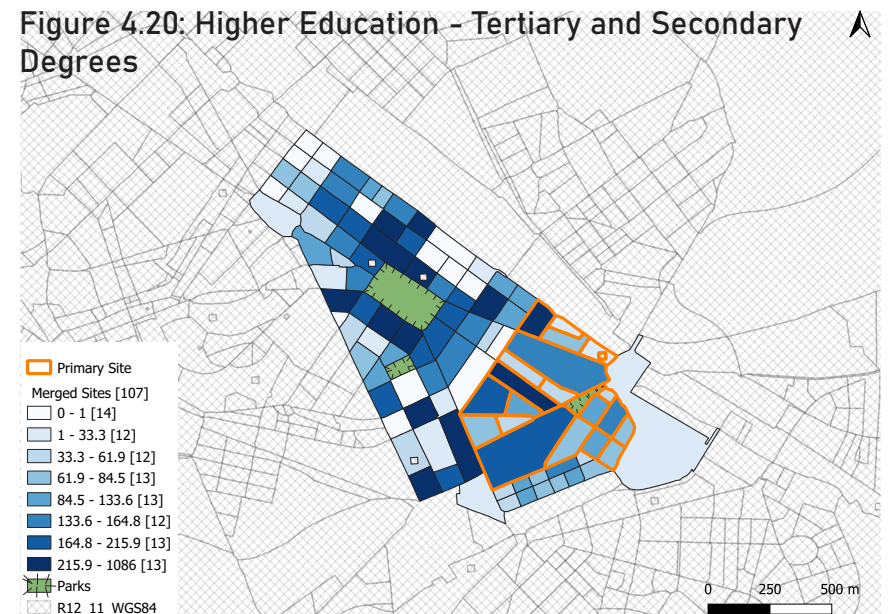


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From left to right Dante, Geena, Kellen, and Frey pose before presenting