

In this contribution, the author aims at reflecting on how our cities are being reshaped. Cities are nowadays included in global economic circuits and, in order to compete successfully within the global market, they must increase and intensify their connections to these circuits by implementing policies similar to those traditionally carried out by economic actors. At the same time, these cities have to face processes of impoverishment, more or less extreme, deeply affecting them.

This reflection is oriented by a twofold perspective:

- 1) Observing what happens at the margins of our society can help us to understand the deep transformations that innervate the core of the social body.
- 2) In this research perspective, homelessness can be assumed as a privileged object of observation in order to read the on-going transformations of the contemporary city, assuming homelessness not as a detached world, but as a life condition that stands in continuity with our condition of people 'with a home', even with its specificities.

Starting from three research focuses, the Author will try to show how, nowadays, the city is a battlefield, a contested place, an arena where actors endowed with different resources and possibilities are confronting each other. What is at stake here is not only the retrenchment of the possible uses of the urban public space and the 'struggle for existence' of the homeless and the other figures living at the margins of the city. It is the very idea of the city, with its heterogeneous populations, uses, functions, which is actually denied.

- 1) The first focus deals with the numerous ordinances issued by the Municipalities. Although the art. 18 of the Law 25/06/1999, n. 205 abolished the art. 670 of the Penal Code that used to punish with detention up to three months «anyone begging in a public space», the tackle and repression of beggars are once again pursued at the local level by issuing hundreds of municipal ordinances. The beggar is, once again, considered as a threat to the established social order, an "internal enemy" to be controlled, isolated, concealed, but now this is done within a new frame. We can observe that in the majority of the cases, actually, the prohibition is limited to certain spaces (hospitals, cemeteries, crossroads, public parking, stations, markets, religious spaces). The form of the ordinance is thus used in a limited and focused way, to face or prevent the emergence of specific critical issues. Although begging is accepted and de-penalized by law, to beg is interdict in specific places. This means that is not the homeless person per se, neither his/her behaviors to be punished; contrariwise, what is sanctioned is the misuse of a specific public space. These sets of strategies necessarily

force homeless people to change their habits and their uses of public spaces, but, at the same time, they also interrupt the relationship that this population has with the urban public space.

- 2) The second focus concerns the dispositives of deterrence related to the spatial organization of the urban public space that, through architectural-urban planning and urban design, define its prospective users and uses. What is possible to observe in the European cities is the implementation of new type of street furniture aimed at exclude, socially and spatially, homeless people from the use of public space (anti-homeless benches, gates and fences, etc.). This type of furniture not only aims to push away an unwanted segment of the population from certain places in the city but, at the same time, acts as a dispositive of humiliation. It is a reference to the social order that reminds to the (homeless) person his/her place in the society.
- 3) The third focus hinges on a georeferentiation of the reception centers for homeless people in Bologna between 1994 and 2017 (dormitories, help centers, soup kitchens, clothing distribution services, etc.). The Author has observed a progressive displacement of these structures from the city center to the extreme periphery and, consequentially, a physical expulsion of the homeless from the urban public space, being them strongly dependent on this circuit. Due to a reduced accessibility to mobility, the homeless population is therefore relegated by the assistance circuit to the margins of urban life, denying them a "right to the city". The homeless is thus located, both socially and spatially, at the margins of urban life, and this contributes to his/her invisibilization as an unwanted subject.

In conclusion, what we can observe is a trend oriented at an invisibilization of the homeless and at a reorganization of the urban spatial structure, that becomes increasingly segmented, fragmented, polarized and mirrors growing inequalities and poverty, processes that redefine previous social arrangements and threaten social cohesion.