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ROLES, STRATEGIES AND FORMS OF GOVERNANCE**

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COLLECTIVE INSTITUTIONS TOWARDS HABITABILITY: ROLES, STRATEGIES AND FORMS OF GOVERNANCE

Francesco Minora*

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to apply the theory of commons to residential contexts and verify if and how collective institutions can be used to produce habitability, i.e. a set of particular socio-environmental conditions conducive to inhabiting a particular area. While most literature on the study of the commons has a specific focus on the management of natural resources, this paper argues that collective institutions can work also in urban contexts.

This paper focuses on the issue of housing. Although this topic is rarely discussed in the literature on the commons, some authors have clearly shown the role of self-organising communities in producing habitability since the 1970s.

The theme of habitability will be discussed from two different perspectives: the first part of the paper will present the historical evolution of two very old collective institutions in north-central Italy responsible for managing common lands. These rural institutions have faced major socio-economic changes and have developed adaptive strategies to survive until today. The second part of the paper will discuss new forms of collective institutions (such as co-ops, trusts, charities, etc.) that use very similar institutional arrangements compared to the previous examples, but for the purpose of governing housing estates.

Keywords

Habitability, housing, collective properties, community land trusts, housing cooperatives

JEL classification

R52, R29, Q24, P14

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to present and discuss some theoretical considerations about the role of collective institutions in both rural and urban settings?. The paper is based on empirical evidence that has emerged in the context of a research project currently in progress, and from a previous study that has already been concluded.

This paper focuses on land; the collective institutions studied here govern sections of territory. The central idea of this essay is quite simple: collective institutions have governed *common pool resources* for centuries, ensuring the settlement and survival of the communities they represent in areas characterised by high socio-environmental instability, which would make habitable environments otherwise inaccessible. Avoiding overexploitation of natural resources or preventing pollution can both be considered ways of making an area habitable. In this paper, the general idea discussed is that collective institutions were formed not only to preserve natural resources for centuries, but also to influence many aspects of community life. Dealing with habitability means that collective institutions, while governing natural resources, simultaneously manage other economic and social values embedded within that resource.

To what extent are collective institutions able to produce public goods such as habitability? What is the main role that they can play in producing habitable lands? Which central and repeated forms of governance can be observed? Which strategies based on the idea of self-organising communities are used to house people? This paper aims to discuss the above questions, focusing in particular on housing in urbanised areas often described as lacking habitability (e.g. slums, squats, suburbs, etc.) according to housing standards defined and controlled outside the community (i.e. by the state).

The paper is divided into two parts: the first section will address the main question from a historical and evolutionary point of view, showing how two collective institutions have worked to settle and maintain two communities in their respective areas. The historical perspective offers the chance to show more effectively how the same good (the land) can acquire different values for local communities depending on the economic transformations occurring at a macro level. It will be interesting to see how collective institutions were able to manage changes in regulations and play a specific role in the process of producing habitability. In the second part, assuming collective institutions as key housing providers, the concept of habitability will be discussed from an analytical point of view, with specific reference to the main elements affecting its production, the typical forms of governance used by collective institutions and the housing strategies they have developed in accordance with the concepts of self-organisation and self-government.

2. Methodological note

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

The concept of territory assumed here is markedly similar to the 'action arena', but it considers a specific concept of 'action' in the form of 'practice', a distinct way of looking at interaction. The focus of the analysis is not on the participants' choices based on their role in each specific action situation, determined by in relation to the rules, biophysical conditions and character of the community, and the possible trade-offs. Here, 'practice' is defined as an interaction that is always situated in a specific spatial and historical context. A 'community of practice' is considered to be a group of people sharing beliefs, interests, information and knowledge about how to carry out a collective task more effectively through regular interaction (Wenger, 1998).

This particular definition of 'action' is adopted because the author wants to include a cultural perspective studying the space influencing the various action situations. If the biophysical conditions of a given territory context indeed play a crucial role in affecting action situations, there is no doubt that the signs left on the land, like a toponym or the settlement's shape, are not attributable to the characteristics of the community (such as skills, age, etc.), nor to certain aspects of the land or climate. These signs should be considered separately as a cultural evidence of the presence of communities because they have structured and organised territories.

In other words, the methodological component of this work emphasises the crucial role that the rules have in structuring local systems, not only as devices capable of determining actors' choices, but also as capital and resources used in the evolutionary process of the local system. In dealing with habitability, the system under analysis is the socio-settlement system. For the purposes of this paper, a suitable definition of institutions is the one put forth by Selznick (1957). He identifies an 'institution' as an 'organisation' with human history that adapts to the environmental context into which it is inserted, in both a physical and political sense; gives a justification of its existence according to a precise ideology; defines its operating rules in terms formal and informal relations, as well as internal and external relations; and formulates its own specific codes and symbolic value. Institutions are therefore complex natural systems that develop mechanisms of self-promotion and self-defence.

The experiences shown here were studied according to the methodology of the case study conducted by Yin (1984). Specifically, quali-quantitative information was collected through interviews and direct observation in the field, or through documents that trace the history of these institutions. The cases were selected because they clearly show the ability of these institutions to influence and structure the local contexts in which they are located. These experiences also take place in different areas that manage land for different functions or uses (agricultural areas, pastures, woodlands, urban areas, etc.).

3. Enabling communities to settle themselves: habitability as an evolutionary process

Through the examination of two representative case studies, it is apparent that the question of habitability is closely related to the nature of collective institutions, from their formation to the present day. The institutions whose history is summarised here can be considered robust, as they have survived for centuries. Moreover, they have been able to adapt to changing conditions without losing their capacity to ensure socio-environmental sustainability; these institutions have governed resources for centuries without compromising their ability to reproduce them. However, it is also clear that these institutions exist for the purpose of giving their communities an opportunity to live in these areas for as long as possible.

In this first part of the paper, habitability is seen as the capacity of a collective institution to influence a community's ability to settle in a given context, and to allow it to remain there through the supply of means and motivations (land to be farmed, a job, a house, social relations, etc.) to individual members. Although they were created with the specific purpose of addressing environmental instability (e.g. flooding, avalanches), which can make an area uninhabitable, these cases show the crucial role played by collective institutions in activating useful abilities that can deal with social and economic instability.

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

During the 12th century, in the territory that is today the municipality of Cento, two collective institutions known as Agrarian *Partecipanze* arose.¹ These institutions emerged for the purpose of reclaiming wetlands that were owned by the Church at the time. In particular, the western *Partecipanze*, like Cento's ones, managed marshy lands generally leased by the abbot of Nonantola to local communities in order to be improved. These lands were located at the borders of the State of the Church, and needed to be guarded and defended. Many of those lands were located below sea level, and were subject to periodic flooding from the river Reno. The goal of these institutions was thus the reclaiming of these lands and their progressive farming. Over time, people from Cento and Pieve di Cento were able to acquire the land's freehold². The land was owned collectively, meaning that it was indivisible and inalienable. To this day, this land is still governed according to non-profit principles by the *Partecipanza*, which is entrusted with this task by the communities it represents.

The *Partecipanza* of Cento split the land into plots every twenty years according to an equity principle³. This tradition is still present today and is at the basis of what is

¹ The two institutions split in 1376, having previously been a single institution governing the entire area. The phenomenon is not just confined to the City of Cento, but is present throughout Emilia Romagna between the Panaro River in the west and Idice River in the east. There are currently nine known *Partecipanze*: besides Cento and Pieve di Cento, there are Nonantola, S. Giovanni in Persiceto, S. Agata and Crevalcore in the western region, and Villafontana, Budrio and Medicina in the east) along with three that have expired (Budrio, Medicina and Crevalcore).

² According to data collected by Torresani (1998) the overall extent of collective lands owned by the two institutions of Cento and Pieve di Cento was 2,551 hectares (1,732 and 819 hectares respectively).

³ The number of parts is 2,331 for the *Partecipanza* of Cento and 1,870 for Pieve di Cento. The number of claimants to the former during the last division in 2001 was 3,084; the extension varies from a minimum of 0.58

known as the 'family pact'. The right to crop the plots of land can be acquired only by a male homeowner descending from the original inhabitants of the area. When a father dies, his sons are eligible to inherit the land; these people are registered in a special book, in accordance with a rule introduced in the 18th century. In addition to the necessary blood ties, it is also essential to live in the area (*incolato* obligation) or in the city of Cento.

Since the 17th century, the members of *Partecipanza* have shown a propensity to settle away from the town of Cento, on land acquired after the final settling of the river Reno. In 1796, Cento was declared a city and a permanent breaking off with the *Partecipanza* of Cento took place, further emphasising the process of settlement outside the city. This principle of the formation of collective institutions is evident in many other contexts, such as in the Alpine region, where the rights of use of collective lands in high mountain pastures were tied to the usage rights for the bottom of the valley (the *Regole* and the *Consortele* in Trentino are good examples). In the case of Cento, this strong tie is still evident: the names of the ancient neighbours of the town are still used to define the order of extraction of the plots in a periodic raffle. These elements all contribute to the transformation of temporary hovels for farming into houses.

In 1611, the *Partecipanza* of Cento regulated the minimum distance between buildings so that development would take place in an orderly manner. Moreover, residents were given an incentive to occupy the land with a house in stable condition, as every household had the right to farm the adjacent piece of land. Today there are approximately 2,000 buildings in place and the area shows signs of an urbanised countryside; this process indicates the transition to a residential community. The resulting landscape is unique and even the typologies and techniques used to construct these buildings are characteristic of this small part of the province of Ferrara. The *Partecipanza* also had a strong impact on the structure of the land property regime. As some historical studies have shown (Centro Studi Girolamo Baruffaldi, 1994), the average size of land ownership in the municipality of Cento is small in comparison to the properties throughout the province. This phenomenon clearly derives from the tradition of splitting the *Partecipanza's* collective lands into smaller plots.

During the 20th century, the importance and economic weight of agriculture declined with the rise of the mechanics industry; the resulting atomisation of the society allowed many community members to build small sheds in order to start businesses in the new economic sector. The fragmentation of the local economy was accompanied by several factors that helped create the socio-settlement still visible today. These factors included a strong entrepreneurial mindset caused by the fact that each family had to manage itself in starting its own agricultural enterprise, the availability of land near every house, the presence of large companies in the area with the capital and know-how necessary to launch the motor industry and the realisation of infrastructure

to a maximum of 0.97 hectares. The number of parts for Pieve di Cento is 826, with an extension that goes from a minimum of 0.53 to a maximum 0.7 hectares.

such as training schools established by community members (Camera di Commercio di Ferrara, 1989).

Given the lack of interest in farming on the part of many *Partecipanti* (i.e. people within the *Partecipanza*), this institution acquired the status of a symbol of ancient traditions, one able to influence a significant number of votes in the municipality of Cento but which carries only modest weight in the decision-making process of territorial development. The inalienability of the area's ancient heritage, as well as its high urban sprawl, historical and environmental value and large area, make it difficult for local public authorities to promote modern projects, such as the construction of a motorway. Moreover, the community's abandonment of agricultural activities also shows a certain degree of detachment from the voluntary care of rural territories that has marked past centuries, which itself represented a reduction in the cost of public management. For instance, local wastewater canals resemble open-air sewers, and the municipality has helped the *Partecipanza* encourage the adoption of phytodepuration systems.

3.2 *The Regole of Cortina: from a 'people-based' to an 'interest-based' community*

The *Regole* of Cortina are eleven ancient collective institutions governing a section of undivided lands surrounding Cortina d'Ampezzo, a small alpine town in the province of Belluno. Unlike the previous case, in which the land has an agricultural function, in this case the land is used for pastures and forests. These eleven institutions only recently joined together to form a single unit. Each institution, including the general one, has its own statute. The collective ownership is widespread and covers 15,395 hectares, about 60 per cent of the entire commune's surface.

Similar criteria to the Agrarian *Partecipanze's* rules for the right to land use are employed by the *Regole*, namely the *incolato* and blood ties according to male descent. According to the 2001 census, the number of *Regolani* (i.e. people within the *Regole*) was 1,336 (about the 3 per cent of the town's population). In contrast to the previous case, the *Regolani* can exploit natural resources and have the right of estovers, herbage, grazing and water usage, including for the production of electricity, but they cannot divide the assets into smaller parts.

Many of the difficulties experienced by the people living in Cento in asserting their rights were superseded by the *Regole* in the 12th century. In fact, the first documentary evidence of land ownership dates back to that period (Richebuono, 2001). With the Cadastre of Maria Theresa in 1755, the *Regolieri* established ownership of the pastures but not the woods, which were assigned to the local municipality (called the Magnifica Comunità of Ampezzo). At that time, forests were not considered important and the *Regolieri* themselves would even sit on the board of the local municipality. As in the case of Cento, there was a substantial assimilation between this collective institution and the one that used to govern the entire area.

In the late 19th century, interest in forests grew and the *Regolieri* attempted to assert their ancient rights, which were not recognised. Their situation worsened during the Fascist Period, when a national law was enacted to eliminate collective properties and the municipality itself was ruled by fascist leaders from other parts of Italy. The legal

controversy ended in 1957, with the return of nearly all the ancient lands back into the hands of the *Regole*. Following this legal agreement, a similar process took place in the Ampezzo region as in the Centro region discussed earlier: the town of Cortina became a popular tourist destination, and the region's ancient silvo-pastoral practices were abandoned by the community.

The central figures in this change were the very same *Regolieri* who had sold their private lands at the bottom of the valley, thus providing developers with the opportunity to create ski slopes on common land, while simultaneously claiming compensation from the developers, such as the planting of new forests on every hectare leased. As a result, the local community was transformed from a 'people-based' to an 'interest-based' community. The abandoning of traditional activities of grazing and cultivation of vegetables near the *viles* (i.e. the residential areas), in favour of building a substantial number of new homes, led to the loss of the original landscape and the merger of several neighbourhoods into one single agglomeration. The poor management of the phenomenon of land rent has also led to an increase in the cost of homes, to the point that young people are forced to move to the nearby villages where houses are cheaper in order to continue working in the Ampezzo area.

Since 1990, the *Regole* were asked by the Veneto Region to manage the Regional Natural Park of the Ampezzo Dolomites, located on most of the collectively owned land in the northern part of the area. This important responsibility has given renewed importance to this institution at the local level. The *Regole* are now recognised as nature conservation advocates, as they have governed natural resources for centuries and continue to do so today. The *Regole* of Cortina are now trying to promote young community members' participation in this new idea of preserving nature according to professional skills. The park management requires specific preparation, and members of the local community have received specific training on how to manage the natural resources according to modern laws and current systems of government, which are defined by the region, the state and the European Union.

4. Collective institutions' roles in the production of habitability

According to the general theory of the commons, a key factor in the success of collective institutions in producing sustainability, or in this case habitability, is the capacity to establish rules appropriate to the type of resources governed. In the cases discussed above, this capacity is also fundamental to the coordination of resources in a local system that has seen profound changes, from both an economic and a social point of view, as a result of forces not directly controlled by the institutions themselves. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the productive conversion of local economies.

Habitability seems to be the result of these institutions' capacity to regenerate the value of resources for the community; in the case of Cortina, for example, it is clear that the distribution of wood to rebuild houses is of little use today if the land costs are disproportionately high. In the case of Cento, farming one hectare of land is not sufficient to support a family economically, even if a house on the plot is guaranteed.

These collective institutions have tried to develop new ways of using the same resources, while not giving up their original mission of proving lands for agricultural and silvo-pastoral practices. Although the rules enshrined in traditions appear to be obsolete or of little meaning today, or are attributable to the symbolism of the traditions themselves, the property and rights still exist and continue to be used in relation to other institutions. Consider, for example, the role of the location of the property (e.g. any new slope in Cortina will necessarily have to pass on common lands because they entirely surround the town) or its dimensions (e.g. the *Partecipanze's* common lands cover a large part of the local municipal area with houses, which in general are not compatible with factories or infrastructures).

The second role usually attributed to collective institutions by the theory of the commons is the reduction of transaction and organisational costs, even in urban neighbourhoods (Webster and Lai, 2003). In our examples, this was true until the community began to lose its connection to the institution's original mission. As mentioned, although the *Regole* manages a regional park, local people cannot afford to live near the land they care for because real estate in the area has become too expensive. Prices have increased because the *Regolani* have sold the land to private investors. Even in Cento, where the canals were cleaned for the centuries by the *Partecipanti* themselves, this service is now delegated to the local municipality, which does not have enough money to develop a sewage system in the area. The voluntary action in looking after the land is particularly relevant if we wish to discuss the intriguing idea, expressed by certain authors⁴, that collective institutions are considered to be innovative institutional solutions, acting as a substitute for state functions, as in the case of homeowners' associations in the United States (Coyle McCabe, 2011; Beito, Gordon and Tabarrok, 2002).

First, we should consider that while habitability is a public good, it is not necessarily produced by the state, which is a recent institution compared to the ancient collective properties described in this paper. One solution offered by the case of the *Regole* shows that an entirely new public institution has been created by the state but has been put in the hands of the local community, which has itself been placed in a position of trust by the region. The general idea behind this institutional solution is that local people, especially those within the *Regole*, know their land much better than other people outside the community, even forestry experts. As such, the *Regole* should be able to provide a better service to the entire community by managing a local park. In this case, the *Regole* do not define the general rules for the management of the quantity and quality of the forests, but ensure the provision of a public-interest service. This experience shows us that modern collective institutions can function as a habitability device when they are asked to supply general-interest services to the community.

It has been argued that there is a lack of democracy within collective institutions, especially in the production of housing (Glasze, 2005), because they are based on property status; hence it would be risky to replace public housing institutions with collective institutions. If we assume collective institutions to be a means of enriching

⁴ See Nelson (2002, 2005).

the quality of services and to grant a territory the possibility to have a reserve of resources (such as a park), this problem should be overcome, even if the property remains in the hands of a small and closed group. This is particularly relevant for those populations that, in theory, have a right to a decent home, but do not actually have one, or live under very poor conditions. Hence, the idea emerges that communities should have the possibility to self-organise and govern themselves in order to create their desired living conditions and, especially, their habitability. The next paragraphs will examine this point in greater detail.

5. Institutionalising habitability

Habitability is a concept originating from the past. In the manifesto of the 'Athens Charter' (Le Corbusier, 1965), the modern architecture movement situates housing as a central issue in the modern city, and clearly defines it as a private and separate function from others such as manufacturing, leisure, mobility and so on. Habitability is determined by the relationship with the surrounding space, and through a linkage between interior and exterior, built and opened, individual and collective, and the private and public space (Di Biagi, 1998).

The Athens Charter had a great influence on post-war urban planners' philosophy because, beyond the technicalities of manuals, it succeeded in becoming popular to a wider audience, with specific reference to some issues (especially in housing); it thus became a form of 'reference document' for various administrations of that time. The contents of the Athens Charter have been translated into a practical form, i.e. institutionalised, in a way that perhaps even its writers would not have imagined. The rationalism upon which it was based was later transformed into bureaucratic and administrative practice, which today is still largely visible in the culture of urban planning. The idea of home as a private and separate space from the street and from the rest of the city, capable of hosting only domestic and family activities, has been applied ubiquitously and has resulted in a degradation and a trivialisation of the concept of housing itself (Tosi, 1994). Housing should be understood as a process of settlement and inclusion of people in the context in which they live.

However, this process has eliminated, by law, the inhabitants' opportunity to define their own living standards, leading to the creation of housing solutions that are not affordable to the poorest sectors of society. The strong propensity of individual families to buy private homes, a trend that has been endorsed by the political system in Italy since the 1960s, has overshadowed traditional housing solutions based on co-ownership (such as in-stock cooperatives), and has stifled many spontaneous housing initiatives aiming to solve the demand for housing through more modest means.

Housing solutions in collective structures have been downgraded for those who are unable to pay for individual and adequate houses. Residents' voices and views on the housing situation in which they live are no longer considered important. In the past, technicians, such as planners, architects and engineers, have been key experts in defining whether a house is habitable or not. Housing models have been reduced to limited number of options for the inhabitants, and these models have not proven

themselves to be appropriate for arrangements other than the 'traditional' family. This process has been particularly evident in cities in developing countries, where a significant portion of the population tends to be concentrated in urban areas.

The slums of Buenos Aires or Calcutta can be habitable in the opinion of the people who live there or who have spent a great deal of time and resources to create and improve their shanties. In contrast, the state does not consider this kind of settlement to be habitable because of poor hygiene. Habitability can be described through the capacity of a territory to host certain kinds of activities, which vary depending on the historical period and the institutional context. Today, the concept of habitability has not lost its relevance and has taken on many other connotations such as 'liveability'. In this paper, these two words are not synonymous.

This brings us to the key question of this paper: who produces habitability? Are collective institutions able to produce it? What are the main factors that impact its production process? Until now, habitability has been defined as the minimum necessary conditions for a community to settle and remain in a given context; now, an analytical description of the concept is required.

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

Given the complexity of the issue, it is essential to delimit a specific field of analysis. In particular, the discussion here will make specific reference to the issue of housing. Few studies on the commons are focused on urban or rural settlements (Ingerson, 1997), or provide a deeper analysis of the housing issue (Tang, 1986; Bengtsson, 1998; Scott, Derrick and Kolbre, 1999; Webster and Lai, 2003; Vihavainen, 2009), while the literature on housing studies (Turner, 1977; Ward, 2002) since the 1970s has emphasised the role of self-organising communities in creating homes for themselves.

In this paper, part of the theory of the commons is adopted as a way of analysing the housing issue. Using the design principles outlined by Ostrom (1990), the following is a set of elements that affect the production of habitability:

- 'clearly defined boundaries' or 'accessibility': one of the characteristics of collective institutions is their ability to control the degree of social homogeneity within the community; they limit the number of members to a few units in order to control the costs associated with the group's organisation. Accessibility of the system can be analysed in many ways, such as by defining a set of architectural features that provide the possibility to control access through better visibility. Favouring

accessibility also means producing housing solutions that familiarise people with their living spaces, but also implies enhancing the provision of a particular type of housing that the public or private market is lacking.

- 'congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions' or 'congruence': collective institutions define the function or use of housing spaces (especially the common ones) in order to avoid the problems of overexploitation or a behavioural correspondence to the expected use of the space. In fact, congruence is also a matter of matching inhabitants' expectations as to how daily life should be or the image that the building (especially if public) should have in the media.
- 'collective choice arrangements' or 'participation': collective institutions provide mechanisms for collective decisions that include resident participation in the definition of the rules of exploitation of housing spaces and services. Communities can reduce these costs by establishing a series of coordination meetings/moments of coordination.
- 'monitoring' and 'graduated sanctions' or the 'degree of control': collective institutions are expected to monitor and control the activities that directly involve the inhabitants, as well as to define progressive intensity and credible sanctions against those who do not respect the rules for using common spaces. This function is crucial to avoid legal expenses.
- 'conflict resolution mechanism' or 'social relation management': collective institutions can provide tools and services for the resolution and prevention of conflicts, but they can also promote opportunities for people to socialise, encouraging behaviour that is aligned with the care and maintenance of common areas, and supervising and promoting the establishment of channels of information and communication. It is also intriguing to analyse how institutions promote different ways to cooperate (Nowak, 2012): proximity and reciprocity (the '*do ut des*' principle) can be used as a primary approach to the need for social inclusion of disadvantaged people (solidarity). Institutions can promote social networks within the neighbourhood, and as a third option they can develop a system of incentives to change the reputation of the area. As a fourth option, institutions can use familistic levers as in the case of Cento and Cortina d'Ampezzo.
- 'minimal recognition of rights to organise' or 'institutional legitimisation': collective institutions can obtain minimal recognition of self-organisation from higher-ranking institutions, thus managing issues related to building design and urban planning, and granting adequate housing standards defined by the rules above through self-financing, without placing a burden on the state.
- 'nested enterprises' inside the institution as 'integrated management': collective institutions can integrate all the previous aspects into each other through the creation of organisational functions, or through the provision of housing services appointed *ad hoc* for that purpose.

- 'nested enterprises' outside the institution as a means for developing infrastructure in the area: collective institutions promote initiatives that complement the local infrastructure in their respective neighbourhoods and cities. In terms of housing, the free riders are those who own the land, because they gain access to any new infrastructural projects without paying for them (Foldvary, 1994). Collective institutions working as non-profit organisations can mitigate this phenomenon.

6. Forms of governance for the production of habitability

Some studies (Moroni and Brunetta, 2011; Glasze, 2005) have identified at least three institutional models that occur in any residential situation where a community uses a contract to govern itself. The two main discriminating factors are the property regime and the manner in which decisions are made. They are described and adapted here according to their capacity to influence habitability. Moreover, if habitability is related to the usage of the territory, these models have to be combined with repeated and recurrent types of initiatives used to house people.

The first model can be observed in the historical cases of Cento and Cortina; it consists of a 'community of co-owners' in which all eligible community members participate in collective decision-making. With specific reference to housing, the in-stock cooperative is reminiscent of this model. In this case, the capacity of collective institutions to affect the conditions of habitability is undoubtedly highest compared to the following models, because the institutions have direct control over many of the elements described (accessibility, participation, congruence, control, sanction, etc.). One of the most problematic aspects of this model is its ability to integrate these elements into its surroundings, especially if the community has ownership over strategic assets for the entire community. In some cases, they tend to be gated or closed communities.

This form of governance can be observed in housing initiatives where a group of people wants 'to house itself', such as with self-help housing, self-building, certain co-housing experiments, Community Land Trust (Swann 1972), eco-villages, kibbutzes and so on. In these initiatives, a community of people with common interests directly design and realise housing projects aimed at satisfying their specific housing needs. These initiatives are usually very small (10-12 homes) and are developed in a single building, although they may also involve the construction of several buildings (a village for example).

This form of governance combined with this strategy tends to produce stable and long-lasting communities. Each member of the group that plays a role in realising the initiative will be an inhabitant and will have a home. In this situation, a key role in producing habitability is assigned to the congruence of inhabitants' expectations: they are selected according to the idea that the group has with respect to the nature of daily life in the residential context (e.g. cutting the grass, cleaning common stairways, avoiding the use of a car, etc.). Proximity and territoriality are very important elements for community stability. Moreover, there is a general agreement on key aspects of daily life before the project commences, so formal mechanisms to solve

conflicts are thus quite uncommon. Social relations between inhabitants are encouraged, especially through architectural characteristics. In these small communities, control is guaranteed through informal meetings and situations; antisocial behaviours are avoided through strong social control, since everyone knows each other. These initiatives are developed in order to solve specific housing needs for specific groups, and tend to exist as special residential districts in urban contexts.

The second model, in contrast, requires the presence of a single owner (private or public), with community members acting as tenants. The single homeowner decides the living conditions to which members of the community will have to adapt. This model is used for public estates, but is also present in some forms of private buildings (shopping malls, tourist villages). It is the 'hotel' model, and involves a great deal of variation in terms of housing standards, depending on the type of renters that the owner accepts. Even in this situation, the inhabitants voluntarily decide to adhere to the contract that defines the relationship between people and assets, but they have less of an opportunity to affect habitability directly in comparison to the previous model. Inhabitants can contribute to the management of social relations (good neighbourhood relations) and daily life.

This model tells us that property is not necessary to establish a collective institution. If the homeowner fails in his obligations with respect to, for example, property and facility management, inhabitants can leave the house or can squat it. In both cases, collective institutions will not be present. A different option is to sign a contract that can dictate facility management; there are some collective institutions such as Tenants Management Organisations (TMOs) in the UK or the *Regie de quartier* in France that take over the state's responsibility for maintaining the building from a social, physical and economic point of view. A group of residents is nominated by other residents to work for the community.

These collective institutions are used to provide housing services, managing and maintaining the buildings and social relations in order to improve housing standards. They attempt to allow people to lead better lives in the places they inhabit. In general, these communities are homogeneous according to a set of externally defined characteristics. They do not have the possibility to self-define architectural characteristics, but they develop more familiar contexts from a social point of view. They encourage social proximity relations, collect and filter information about what goes on in the neighbourhood and can answer to renters' inquiries faster than the homeowner because of a closer proximity to the inhabitants. Some of those initiatives are meant to produce jobs.

The third model of governance is a mixed form of the two previous ones. In this situation, each member has ownership over parts of the area (a house for example), but he or she shares spaces and services. Homeowners' associations in USA are examples of this model on the neighbourhood scale, while in Europe it is quite common to live in a condominium (a kind of homeowners' association working on a single block), in which appurtenant spaces are collectively owned. Decisions are taken only by homeowners elected by inhabitants and in accordance with their portion of the property. Renters, if present, are excluded from decision-making. This situation may contribute to low congruence of expectations and the creation of conflicts. A collective

institution does not define the criteria for selecting and accessing inhabitants, because each homeowner decides whether to sell or rent his or her home on the market. In this model, habitability is defined mainly through control and sanction of common parts, and at the level of the integration of services and infrastructures produced within the surrounding areas. These kinds of collective institutions are a means to concentrate investments in a local area. This form of governance can be observed as a means to develop and manage entire neighbourhoods, and can in some cases be used to regenerate them. Let's focus on this particular situation.

A methodology used in USA is Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). Its aim is to define a housing project involving especially social connotations, tailored to the specific needs of the inhabitants of a residential area that shows a variety of interconnected social problems, and starting from the idea of regenerating an underused asset. This strategy will work with the socio-physical resources of the area in an integrated manner, activating residents' resources and capacities. The neighbourhoods involved are usually characterised by multi-faceted and problematic conditions. Housing initiatives, therefore, can be integrated with other functions such as employment and training.

This strategy assigns a key role to the involvement of inhabitants in the definition of the project, thus empowering them to change their role. The promoters have the role of identifying and coordinating local resources from social (social capital), economic (financial investment) and urban (areas to be regenerated) perspectives. The involvement in the choice of transformation of assets provides the possibility for people to participate in actions on important issues. In general, this type of work requires a commitment from public actors. The public has the function of a facilitator and supporter, and, more generally, ensures consistency of the initiative in terms of housing policy.

7. Conclusions

This paper offers a general and analytical view on the roles and functions that collective institutions can play in producing habitability. The table below shows schematically how the three different forms of governance combined in the three housing strategies described affect habitability.

The following scheme informs an international research the author is carrying on the field, which, from a particular point of view, aims to understand the relevance of collective institutions in housing policies. From a general point of view, this paper shows the many implications that collective institutions' actions can have in governing urbanising phenomena. In terms of sustainability, this is an issue that theory of the commons cannot avoid investigating in greater detail, particularly considering the number of people who are currently moving from rural to urban contexts worldwide.

Tab. 1 - Forms of governance and housing strategies producing habitability

<i>Elements for institutional success in the theory of the commons (Ostrom, 1990)</i>	Elements affecting habitability	Co-owners housing themselves, producing stable communities	Renters providing housing services, increasing housing standards	Homeowners managing and regenerating neighbourhoods, concentrating investments
<i>Clearly defined boundary</i>	Accessibility as degree of homogeneity, visibility and familiarity of spaces, provision of types of home	High homogeneity internally defined Proximity Special residential districts	High homogeneity externally defined Proximity	Low homogeneity Rebuilding and regenerating homes
<i>Congruence between appropriation and provision rule and local conditions</i>	Congruence between inhabitants' expectations of daily life and media image	High congruence from the beginning	Improving congruence through services	Improving congruence through opportunities
<i>Collective choice arrangements</i>	Participation in decision-making on housing phases	One head, one vote in most of the housing phases, including building	Inhabitants elected by inhabitants	Mixed board composition: inhabitants' institutions and other from outside
<i>Monitoring and graduated sanctions</i>	Degree of control	Social and informal control, social sanctions	Formal control, formal sanctions	Both forms of sanctions
<i>Conflict resolution mechanism</i>	Social relation management	Proximity preventing conflicts	Collecting and filtering information	Listening and problem solving
<i>Minimal recognition of rights to organise</i>	Institutional legitimisation	Through property	Through contract	Through plans and projects
<i>Nested enterprises inside the institution</i>	Integrated management	Within the group	Within the contract's signatories	Within the network of actors
<i>Nested enterprises outside the institution</i>	Developing infrastructure in the area	Not required	Required within the neighbourhood	Required

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