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Racialised dissatisfaction: Homeless management and the everyday assemblage of difference

Setting the scene

Late March 2010. Marco and I were walking toward the bus station at the end of a chilly day in Turin, Italy. I was accompanying him to a public park on the outskirts of the city, where a temporary shelter for homeless people made of converted shipment containers had been set up to provide accommodation during the winter season. Approaching the park, I asked Marco how he was feeling about the fact that, since the spring was coming, the temporary shelter would be closed soon. He looked at me with his wide-open eyes and answered: '*It's about time that shit closes down!*' '*Why?*', I asked, '*You know why!*', he rightfully replied (I had, indeed, heard that story many times). He continued:

> 'That place is no place for humans. It's crowded. It smells and it is cold. Perhaps for Romanians, Algerians – yeah, perhaps it's good for them, they are always there, making a fuss about everything... But not for people like me! It's better it closes down and when it closes down those people should be locked in-there!'[1]

At that time Marco was a 24-year-old Italian male, living on the street for around 10 months. In the above conversation he was expressing, like many other people I met, a strong *dissatisfaction* towards the temporary shelter. Homeless people did usually refer to that as a terrible place to sleep, because of the poor isolation from the external environment, the lack of privacy, and many other factors that I will outline in what follows. What is worth highlighting here is that they were expressing such dissatisfaction always in *racialised* terms – namely vocalising their discomfort

1 All the quotes presented in the papers were originally collected in Italian and have been translated by myself. Some of those arise from transcribed audio-recorded interviews, while others are careful reconstructions from detailed field-notes. The former are presented with an indentation from the body of the paper, while the latter are italicised within the main text.

through the negative characterisation of 'other' people. In their discourses the ‘different’ other was functioning as a proxy to express one’s own frustrations about a personal condition or a service. Importantly, this proxy was all but just a linguistic repertoire: one of the regular features of the temporary shelter were verbal and physical fights between Italian and migrant homeless people, always performed in racialised tones. Interestingly enough, however, Marco did not seem bothered by the fact that his closest friend on the streets of Turin was a Romanian guy, nor did he blink an eye when he was working in the informal economy with other migrant homeless men (whom, on the contrary, he praised for their industry). Where was this tension coming from and what was its underlying politics?

Introduction

The contradiction emerging from Marco's story was very common among the homeless people I encountered in my ethnographic work in Turin. On the one hand, I was often faced with apparently xenophobic individuals, who were vocalising their everyday frustrations and discomforts in racialised terms. On the other hand, more often than not those same individuals were willing to engage in meaningful relationships of trust, friendship and work with different 'others'. The aim of this paper is to investigate this contradiction in order to highlight its underlying politics of difference at the urban margins. How is difference assembled in the everyday life of vulnerable and marginalised people? What role do institutional arrangements have in moulding how difference is negotiated? What can be learned from those spaces in which one witnesses a positive articulation of difference?

These and other questions are even more pressing today, in the face of massive waves of refugees coming into Europe from the east and the south. These waves intersect with established fluxes of economic migrations and the long-term expulsion of entire sectors of the population from the workforce, housing and factual citizenship (Sassen 2014). Although carrying with them slightly different demands, refugees, economic migrants and internal vulnerable groups end up sharing the same marginalised ground in the contemporary European city: one made of cultural, societal, economic and many other borders that factually prevent them both to access the right to the city and to work toward positive articulations for their lives (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

Among the countless challenges that these economies of expulsion bring to the fore, in this paper I focus on an aspect that has not received enough attention thus far. Namely, the problem of how difference is negotiated within groups that – because of their socio-economic status – are already at the margins of the canons. The paper therefore questions the processes of (dis-)encounter and contestation fuelling the urban spaces these people *have to* share – simply because no other alternative is available to them. It is only through a careful and critical understanding of these spaces, I contend, that a differential cultural understanding of today's margins – and an affirmative politics for the contemporary European city – can be articulated.

One of the biggest challenges in this sense is homelessness, which is on the rise in Europe affecting a wide range of marginalised groups, including migrants and refugees (FEANTSA 2014). Although one has to exercise care in generalising from contextual-specific dynamics of homelessness, it is still possible to learn from everyday experiences that can resonate among different contexts and scenarios (Lancione and McFarlane 2016). The paper relies on data collected in a 10-month ethnographic study undertaken between fall 2009 and summer 2010 (with additional extensions in 2011) in Turin, Italy. The ethnography included participant observations and volunteering in two religious institutions providing services for homeless people (Vincenziani and Cottolengo); participant observations undertaken in a drop-in managed by the City of Turin (via Sacchi 47) and observations of other public shelters, social services and drop-ins; extensive go-along, participant observations and semi-structured interviews with a wide cohort of homeless people (mainly male, both Italian and migrants); longitudinal semi-structured interviews with a smaller cohort of selected homeless men (all Italians); as well as semi-structured interviews with volunteers, service providers and policy-makers. The paper is the outcome of several years of analysis and reflection on this material. Its timelessness, once again, does not relate to the specific services or spaces here analysed (of which I said elsewhere, Lancione 2014a, 2014b), but to a reading of those spaces able to inform the pressing demands European cities are facing today.

This work contributes to three sets of literature. Firstly, it sets upon the wide range of research around the problem of encountering and living 'with difference' (Valentine 2008), with particular attention to the city and on how the urban could become more inclusive without reducing, but enhancing, difference (Amin, 2012; Massey 2005; Sandercock 2000). These and other accounts – like the ones revolving around the notion of 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007) – have

provided insights into people's capacities to mingle, live alongside in peace, co-operate or conflict (Chimienti and van Liempt 2014; Wilson, 2014), to which the present research add by analysing how difference is articulated *within* the urban margins. Secondly, the paper contributes to recent literature on the nuances of care in homelessness' management practices (Cloke, May and Johnsen 2010; DeVerteuil 2014; DeVerteuil and Wilton 2009). Favouring a critical approach both to the effects of homelessness and migrant policies (Darling 2014; Desjarlais 1997; Evans 2011; Hall 2013) and to the analysis of practices of 'care' (Green and Lawson 2011; Mol 2008), the paper shows how organisational practices and settings not only contribute to the constitution of specific homeless subjects, but also intervene in the ways difference is perceived, negotiated and performed among homeless people themselves.

Lastly, this work contributes to scholarship fostering processual, post-human and affective understandings of life at the margins (Amin 2014; Desai, McFarlane and Graham 2014; Pieterse 2013; Simone 2010). The paper is not interested in retrieving homeless people's 'affective preconditions' toward different others (Pile 2010, 9), but in investigating the urban surfaces where their everyday experiences and racial tensions are articulated (Simone 2011b). In paying attention to the unfolding of processual entanglements between human and non-human actants and in taking their capacities to affect one another seriously, the paper is able to offer a nuanced and critical understanding of how racialised encounters come to the fore. The notion of *racialised dissatisfaction* is advanced in this sense, to signal how street-level racism among the homeless poor is deeply connected to the broader machinery of homelessness' management and the material and affective components of life on the street.

The following section introduces 'racialised dissatisfaction' and clarifies the theoretical stances and contribution of the paper. Sections three and four deal with the Turin case study, showing how Italian and migrant homeless people negotiate their differences according to the institutional or non-institutional context in which they find themselves. Several everyday performances are taken into consideration: sheltering, feeding, making ends meet and being attentive. In the first two cases homeless people perform normative spaces designed to manage them, and tend to clash on the basis of personal-ethnic differences. In the latter cases different homeless people tend to co-operate and their ethnic, cultural, and social differences do not become

a matter of concern to them. The conclusions summarise the wider theoretical and political implications of the paper's findings.

The affective assemblage of difference

In questioning the role of poverty management in affecting the everyday encounters of marginal others, the paper does not take 'difference' as an established social fact but it investigates the everyday processes through which difference is produced, negotiated and assembled (Saldanha and Adams 2012). In order to do so it is necessary to introduce two interconnected theoretical strands: an *assemblage* approach to race and the notion of *affects*.

Assemblage and everyday racial encounters

Recent geographical scholarships are calling for a grounded and processual understanding of race. Such (re)ontologisation is expressed, among others, in the works of Amin (2010, 2012), Saldanha (2006, 2007) and Swanton (2010), who understand racial differences – and related conflicts and opportunities – as emerging from the everyday machineries activated in the encounter with *l'autre.* These are the discoursive, non-discoursive and material matterings that are both the refrain of historical traces and of contemporary racial practice (Amin 2010). According to these contributions race is not 'an arbitrary classification system imposed upon bodies' but the 'irreducible *effect* of the ways those bodies themselves interact with each other and their physical environment' (Saldanha 2006, 10; emphasis added). It is indeed in the assemblage of bodies (human and non-human) that race is assembled and brought to the fore: in everyday mingling, crossing, touching, walking, driving, passing-by, smelling, tasting and more (Swanton 2010). In this sense, race is made of a 'chain of contingency, in which the connections between its constituent components are not given, but are made viscous through local attractions' (Saldanha 2006, 19). This is not to deny the existence of race but, once again, to (re)define this existence in terms of how racial practices and bodies are constantly (re)made: race becomes the ambiance of a post-human process, rather than a bare signifier of a categorisation attached to one's own skin or traits.

In this paper I am interested in investigating the 'chain of contingency' of race in the case of homeless people taking seriously the insights that racial instances are not given but assembled in everyday performances. The key aspect of such understanding is to not limit race to a set of personal, individualised orientations – as an innate or culturally-learned orientation toward the other – but to conceive it as a machinic-assemblage of 'bodies'. There are at least three important aspects of this assemblage-driven approach to race. First, and following Actor-Network Theory, assemblage stresses the role that non-humans have in changing the state of affairs of things, since they are considered to be part of a human/non-human network of constitutive relations (Callon 1986; Law and Mol 1995). This means essentially to not diminish the importance of the material arrangements, for example, through which care for the poor and homeless management are delivered, because those arrangements are actants that modify how the service is perceived, embodied and felt (Mol 2008). Second, small devices and discourses do not only modify the course of action but they co-occur in the production of human subjectivity (Braidotti 2011; Guattari 1996): the way one thinks, behaves, dreams, perceives, acts, etc. is not only mediated by non-human matter but more fundamentally (re)constituted through it.

This kind of 'post-human' thinking proposes a take on the social world that puts human and non-human on the same plane – 'a' plane reverberating with shared life (Bennett 2010; Deleuze 2001). The third important aspect of an assemblage-driven approach to race consists in considering that shared life both as matter of actualisations and potential, meaning that on that plane things constantly mutate and have the potential to become other things (Deleuze 2001). Life in this sense is understood as emergent, made of 'potentialities or tendencies that may be actualised in certain relations but that could also produce other relations, other worlds' (Colebrook 2005, 196). The quest of an assemblage-approach to race is to take this potential of life seriously and to explain both how – through what sort of machinic entanglements – we are faced with the event of racism and to imagine alternative articulations (Saldanha 2006).

Charged affective atmospheres

Following this assemblage-perspective the everyday doing of difference becomes (re)constituted (re-thought and re-written) as an endeavour of post-human matter: two persons and the concrete

of the pavement; an overcrowded shelter and its smell of used linen; cheap soap; the weight of a heavy backpack; an abandoned railway carriage with its rust, shadows and creaks; the smile of a volunteer after a joke; the gesture implied in serving food; the furniture of an emergency shelter; or the inquisitive eyes of a social worker, a priest or a person passing by on the street. 'Racialised dissatisfaction' emerges – in form of complaints, fights and arguments – as one effect brought forward by these entanglements, on which according to my findings poverty management seems to bear a certain degree of responsibility.

One way to understand the effect of racialised dissatisfaction is to frame it in terms of *affects*, which we can define as the active outcome of the encounter between different bodies (Thrift 2004). This is a Spinozian-Deleuzian understanding of affects, which encompasses 'mere feelings or emotions' and speaks of the capacities of *any*body to affect other bodies (Duff 2010, 885). Such capacity does not belong to anything in particular but 'emerges from a processual logic of *transitions* that take place during spatially and temporally distributed encounters' (Anderson 2006, 735; emphasis in original). Talking of 'effects' as 'affects' serves two purposes. First, it allows to situate those 'effects' within the broader processual mechanosphere outlined in the previous section (rather than seeing them just as linear events following pre-determinate 'causes', Buchanan 1997). Second, it explicitly invites us to take the capacities of *any*thing seriously, because these capacities – in the process of affecting each other – are productive of new powerful things: of new assemblages, atmospheres, experiences, performances and more. One could say that if assemblage thinking invites us to (re)approach the world through an immanent and processual take on 'a' life, the notion of affects gives us the means to pertain such investigation. I want to briefly recall two points in this sense.

Firstly, thinking through affects forces us to look for things that are non-evident although ordinary; unclear, although experienced; theorised, although non-representable (Pile 2010). Affects cannot be retrieved in social facts and they are not 'facts' themselves. Rather, they are better conceived as moving things, which 'can be seen as both the pressure points of events or banalities suffered and the trajectories that forces might take if they were to go unchecked' (Stewart 2007, 2). In order to grasp them, one needs what Stewart has called an 'atmospheric attunement', namely an 'attention to the matterings, the complex emergent worlds, happening in everyday life' (2011, 445). Theorising affects invites a nurturing of a peculiar sensibility toward the social, one inclined

to value poetic nuances (Lanne 2016), messy material practices (Law 2009), 'atmospheric' non-human agencies (Ash 2013). Through this sensibility one is able to take the complex sensorium of everyday life into account (Amin 2015) and to inform, at least in the case of this paper, how racial encounters are mediated by and through such a sensorium.

Secondly, reasoning around affects allows for specific political questions to emerge from the raw stuff of everyday life. These are not anymore questions pointed only at one's own culpability and/or responsibility (as the canonical tropes on marginal urbanites want it), but become ethical apprehensions toward the post-human, shared and shifting nature of life (Grosz 1993). Talking of affects does not serve the purpose of identifying who is culpable of what (e.g. in terms of deciding who is responsible for racialised behaviour). Rather, the importance of affects 'lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible' (Stewart 2007, 2). What do every day affiliations and mingling mean and bring to the fore? What is their wider politics and subjective biopolitics? What implications do they have for the making of racialised encounters? Affects, after all, can be both positive and negative for the involved bodies. The ethics of affects however is not to decide a priori if they are good or bad, but to trace what they portend and how they arrive at their eventful outcomes. As Thrift puts it:

> 'Affects, defined as the property of the active outcome of an encounter, takes the form of an increase or decrease in the ability of the body and mind alike to act, which can be positive – and thus increase that ability (counting as 'joyful' or euphoric) – or negative – and thus diminish that ability (counting as 'sorrowful' or dysphoric).' (Thrift 2004, 62)

Taking affects seriously is, in the end, a way of reapproaching race not only from an analytical point of view – as assemblage does – but from a political point of view too: an alternative articulation of difference will not start anymore from the individual, but from a much wider ecology of life.

Racialised dissatisfaction

Building on these understanding of race-as-assemblage and affects, I use the notion of 'racialised dissatisfaction' to describe a peculiar *affective orientation* characterising the assemblage of homelessness taking place in Turin at the time of my research. On the one hand, racialised dissatisfaction is *affective*, because it signals a particular 'effect' emerging from the everyday experience of homeless people in Turin – namely, a dissatisfaction toward certain services or spaces. On the other hand, racialised dissatisfaction signals the *orientation* that that effect took in its unfolding – namely, that of racialised stances and behaviours toward the different other. The notion of racialised dissatisfaction emerges from the attention I paid to the everyday assemblage of racial affects, not from the bare identification of racial comments or behaviours. In bringing this affective orientation to the fore I aim to evoke its political and theoretical significance, which clearly encompasses that of the human beings involved in its production.

I want to focus on the affect of 'dissatisfaction' not because that was the only pertinent one among homeless people in Turin, but because of its importance in linking racialised encounters to particular kinds of discourses and practices of poverty management. The affective atmosphere of the spaces that I present in the following pages provoked a variety of affective responses and ambiances – characterised by a mix of stress, fear, rage, boredom; or excitement, hope, amusement and more. However, among this plethora of affective ambiances it was only the dissatisfaction emerging from the experience of normative spaces that was unmistakably articulated in racialised terms. As I show in the second half of the ethnographic material, other forms of affects – emerging from instances in the everyday activities of homeless people in the public spaces of the city – were not racialised. In this sense, racialised dissatisfaction is a way to highlight the triangulation occurring between homeless people's bodies and the socio-material and discoursive means of service provision.

If '[t]he anthropology of everyday interaction in a given place at a given time plays a decisive role in influencing possibilities for intercultural understanding' (Amin 2002), unfolding how racialised dissatisfaction came to the fore is precisely about doing that anthropology – to which I will now turn in the remaining part of this paper.

Normative spaces of homelessness

In the following two ethnographic accounts I analyse two performative encounters between homeless people and services that have been enacted in their name: sheltering and feeding. The following accounts are not given to diminish the importance of the mentioned services, but to grant a more nuanced understanding of their side-effects and dynamics.

Sheltering

The camp toward which Marco and I were walking on that chilly day in late March 2010 was called Emergenza Freddo. This was a space managed by the City Council and the Red Cross, 'finalized by the hosting of homeless people during the night' in the cold season (Croce Rossa Italiana 2008). I discussed the nature of this camp and its logic from the point of view of the City Council in another publication (Lancione 2014a). Here I want to show how the relationships between Italian and migrant homeless people were articulated in this particular context (Figure 1). As we have seen in the prologue Marco portrayed the camp as an unpleasant and uncomfortable place, a place '*not for humans*'. As I reported elsewhere (Lancione 2014a) Roberto, an Italian homeless person, offers an account very similar to that of Marco:

> 'You can't sleep there! You've to trust me. Would you sleep if someone is smoking, someone else snoring like a pig, and in the other container a fight has just broken out? Would you tell the one who is smoking and talking with his friend to stop doing so? They are crazy. It is full of Moroccans and Romanians there. They always have knives with them. I go there just 'cause it's warm, that's it. But I'm gonna stop with it, it's shit!' (Roberto, Dec. 2009)

Antonio, another Italian homeless person, spoke even more vividly about his relationship with the camp:

> 'I don't go there. I prefer the train, the train is better. […] The Pellerina is a piggery. There is only one toilet, and there is shit everywhere. The beds are hard, and I can't sleep. The Romanians are always drunk, they scream, they fight... Do you know what they do? They piss on the front step of the container! There is a smell of piss everywhere in that place...' (Antonio, Jan. 2010)

[Please insert Figure 1 here]

Figure 1. The Emergenza Freddo Camp

Source: The author

Antonio, Roberto and Marco, like many of their compatriots, were negatively affected by the camp: they were nervous when talking about it, vehemently arguing against its form, function and management. Most importantly, it was not only that they were unsatisfied about the camp, but that they were orienting their dissatisfaction in racialised terms: it was through the 'other' that the camp was depicted as a '*piggery*', a '*place to avoid*', a '*last resort*'. Although they generally used a softer racial tone, similar patterns were at play in the repertoires of migrant homeless people. They too were complaining about the provided service using the 'other' as a proxy for their malaise. Here we hear Amiir, who originates from the Horn of Africa and provides an account very close to the many I have heard from his Romanian, Algerian or Moroccan peers:

> 'I don't like this place but hey, this is it. It's bad, it does not work... but this is it. But you know what? The problem here is people like you, the Italians. They come to the camp thinking it is their space and only theirs! They jump the queue, insult us, and they always get the best from the guy who stands at the door, the guy who opens the gate. I don't know what's up with these people but they better not touch me or I'll beat them so hard they won't touch me again!' (Amiir, Jan. 2010)

In order to understand where these colourful stances came from one has to get closer to the materiality and affective atmosphere characterising the camp itself (Anderson 2009). Its geographical location and aesthetics were powerful characteristics of this assemblage. The camp was located at the edge of the city, in the middle of a cold, poorly lit public park. Its location implicitly spoke about isolation, about distance from the city 'that matters', about marginalisation. It being made up of re-converted shipment containers reinforced such feelings, evoking a sense of rustiness, deprivation and 'last resort'. I remember walking there myself carrying all the time an uncomfortable sense of loneliness and melancholia, always amplified at the vision of the fenced metallic boxes in front of which people were queuing, already arguing among each other. The

camp was a materialised vision of home*lessness*: a place whose materiality, location and aesthetics spoke of having *less*, meaning *less* and being *less* than Turin's average urban citizens.

The facilities of the camp played a decisive role in shaping how that particular assemblage brought to the fore its effects. The containers were filled with bunk beds, poorly arranged, and with no space for storing personal belongings. The space was so tiny that two average-sized man could not stand side-by-side in the middle of the room. One has to sleep with their belongings – comprising usually at least a backpack and another bag – closely attached to their body, sometimes with the shoes still on because there was no safe place to put them. Although the volunteers did everything they could to assure decency and cleanliness, the camp was often dirty and it could not be otherwise because of its location and nature: imagine dozens of people coming in and out the containers on a rainy day in a middle of a muddy park, wearing their clothes at all times and sometimes experiencing vomiting, diarrhoea, and other unpleasant conditions. As many homeless people told me, the pinching smell of urine ('*piscio*') was the assured '*souvenir*' one always brought back from a night at the Emergenza Freddo.

Racialised dissatisfaction emerged from the affective encounter between homeless people's bodies and belongings on the one hand, and specific material facilities on the other. At the core of these entanglements sit the generation of charged ordinary affects such as rage, stress, tiredness, frustrations (Stewart 2007), which populated the tiny containers and more often than not took the form of violent physical fights among people (because of this, according to one of the camps' volunteers the police need to be called almost every night). The chain of contingency here was affected also by the normative rationale guiding the Emergenza Freddo – one aimed at providing a standardised emergency service genuinely disinterested in valuing personal needs, in taking into account subjective differences and in allowing people to have a say about how the service was provided and run.[2] For homeless people the only partial escape from this socio-material and discoursive entanglement was to channel their frustration - verbally and physically - towards the group they saw as more vulnerable: respectively the fellow migrants or Italian

[2] The camp was not only there to provide a safety-net to homeless people during the winter, but also to keep them out of the street and therefore implicitly 'controlling' them (Lancione 2014a).

homeless persons. The racialised clash of differences that was taking place in the camp had more to do with the chain of affects generated by the camp itself than anything else.

Feeding

The second ethnographic account tells of institutional spaces providing food for homeless people. In recent publications I have investigated in detail one of these spaces – a morning soup kitchen managed by a Faith-Based Organisation (FBO) where I spent almost every morning of my fieldwork (Lancione 2014b, 2015). In what follows I build on that experience, in order to highlight the raciliased tensions I have not mentioned in full elsewhere, but I will also briefly recall one other space where I used to hang out with my research collaborators in the extensive street journeys and the go-along we performed together on the streets of Turin.

The morning soup kitchen was a tiny room where a group of Vincenziani nuns[3] and volunteers served homeless people with breakfast, usually from 7.30am to 8.30am. Once inside, eating in the soup kitchen was a socio-material endeavour entangling *any*body one to the other by means of sounds, smells, tables, chairs, religious pictures on the walls, the stone-hard bread, hot milk with an inch of boiling coffee, the prayer that the nun addressed to the crowd before serving the meal, and more. In this context fights and arguments emerged on the basis of what kind (and how much) food you got in relation to your neighbour; on the basis of being too close to someone smelling bad; or simply because the bag that you put on the floor is somehow impeding the person sitting behind you from stretching their legs. These arguments, gestures, and physical altercations were always oriented in racist ways. Migrants were usually complaining of the fact that the Italians were getting food first, and that their food was – supposedly – of a better quality. For instance, the Italian homeless men who were part of my longitudinal study were able to sit almost every day at the table close to the kitchen entrance. The apparent advantage of being sited there was obvious: they were the first to be served, the first to get an opportunity to choose what slice of pizza they

3 The nuns belonged to the 'Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul' (a society of apostolic life for women within the Roman Catholic Church).

wanted, and the first to request this or that goods (like sugar, or napkins). The same goods were, however, made available to everybody else too. Despite this, in a case in which one migrant tried to explicitly address what he called the 'little Italian Mafia' a disproportionate verbal fight emerged, which led to a strong confrontation outside the soup kitchen as well, lasting several days after the episode.

Conversely, a group of sub-Saharan homeless people managed to have a very strong relationship with one of the nuns, who had worked in Africa for a long while. Although this relationship did not provide any obvious benefit, apart from a few smiles and chats, the Italians were constantly complaining about this '*weird relationship*' and the benefit it supposedly brought to the '*negri*', the Italian word equivalent to 'niggers'. Moreover, Italians were usually very loud in their comments about the way people of colour were eating, which they perceived as '*una schifezza*', a mess. As soon as a bit of tea or coffee was spilled on a table – something unavoidable due to the tiny dimensions of the tables and the number of people frequenting the room – comments were spread around and tensions aroused in a flick (Stewart 2011). Although there were not any '*schifezza*' going on, the atmosphere of the soup kitchen was charged in such a way as to augment those kind of comments: people felt under pressure to finish their meal; things and bodies were moving around; and little meaningful conversation was attempted to temper the moods. Racialised dissatisfactions emerged as an affect of the spatio-temporal and material configuration of the soup-kitchen, charged also by specific religious-based elements such as the number of icons on the walls (which non-Catholic people found stressful), the sermons given before the service (which were perceived as redundant by most people), or the practice to distribute out-of-date food (derived from donations and still considered good for, as one nun used to put it, '*i nostri amici senza dimora*', 'our homeless friends', Lancione 2014b).

The second space that I want to briefly recall was a convent located on top of a hill very close to Turin's city centre, right on the banks of the river Po.[4] There, every day at 5 p.m. a number of friars were distributing a '*pacchetto alimentare*', namely a pack containing two sandwiches, one

4 The convent was named 'Santa Maria al Monte', and it was managed by friars belonging to 'The Order of Capuchin Friars Minor', a Franciscan order of friars who are part of the Roman Catholic Church.

piece of fruit, and a small bottle of juice. The racialised dissatisfaction emerging from this space was slightly different from the ones I previously recalled, since this time *dissatisfaction* was not pointed toward the service but just toward the presence of the 'other'. Nonetheless, the service still had a key role in generating that kind of affective response. My closest Italian homeless friends were always very adamant of the reason why they preferred to go to the friars for their dinner. Half-joking and half-serious, Giuseppe, a middle aged long-term homeless man, used to say that *'Niggers cannot climbs hills'*, while others were echoing him saying that '*Romanians are too lazy to do it!*' A number of migrants were however present at the friars' place too and issues between the groups emerged there as well. The arguments more often than not took the form of people complaining about their positioning in the queue that was formed before the commencement of the services, which also included non-homeless people in financial hardship. Among those there were poor economic migrants, which were usually attacked by the Italian homeless as '*stealing from the service and from us*', while the migrants accused the Italians of '*being lazy, not working and not even looking for a job!*'

These arguments took place while moving, step by step, from the queue to the semi-open door where the friars were handing off – rapidly and without much verbal exchange – the alimentary packs. In these moments people felt trapped. They did not like to queue, as many told me, because they '*hate*' to be one close to the other, displayed in the open air of the convent's entrance, almost literally with their stretched arms waiting to be served food. It was in there, in the mist of those moments of washed faces, tired bodies and charitable attitudes that the affects I am registering in this paper emerged. It was there and not elsewhere that racialised dissatisfaction was taking place: no one was arguing while climbing the hill, while returning to the centre of Turin, or while meeting in one of the green areas surrounding the convent. There was something in the atmosphere of service provision, in the mingling of queuing bodies, and in the anonymity of that queue bringing everyone at the same level (that of the 'poor' home*less*), which was provoking racialised encounters and responses.

That 'something' was the chain of contingency at play both in the nuns and in the friars' case, one made of bodies affecting each other but also by the last point I want to highlight, namely by a specific blueprint to action driving those services. As I have argued elsewhere, and as recognised also by Allahyari in the case of the US (2000), the moral blueprint that moves Faith-

Based Organisations in 'serving the poor' is one that tends to create vertical relations of care, where the beneficiary of the service does not have a voice on how the relationship itself is shaped in the first place (Green and Lawson 2011). Despite what a certain a-critical literature on FBOs portend (Cloke and Beaumont 2013; Molendijk, Beaumont and Jedan 2010; for a critique see Carta 2015; Lancione 2014b), FBO spaces can be highly normative and diminishing of subjective differences and needs and, therefore, they can produce the sort of racialised dissatisfaction I registered in Turin.

Affirmative spaces of homelessness

In the previous cases I illustrated how a normative way of managing the poor translated into peculiar assemblages that affected not only the quality of the provided service but gave rise also to racialised arguments and fights. The following two ethnographic accounts play on a different note. They illustrate cases in which the subjective differences of the homeless individuals I met were set free to express, without being constrained by the normative stances highlighted in the previous examples. In these and other similar cases racialised dissatisfaction was factually absent. These cases provide insights on a different way to approach homeless management starting from the affective experiences of its subject.

Making ends do

This ethnographic note emerges from a small public park a few hundred metres from Porta Palazzo, the main open-air market of Turin, close to the city centre. The photograph in Figure 2 was taken around 7 a.m. one morning towards the end of January 2010. The men that I have highlighted were waiting for someone to come and offer them a job. The 'employer' would have arrived in a small van – like the white one portrayed in the picture – and choose a few people to work with. The jobs were usually related to carpentry, and were all of an informal kind – hence no insurance, and no minimum wage was provided.

[Please insert Figure 2 here]

Figure 2. Homeless men waiting to be called for a job in the informal economy

Source: The author, 2010

At this 'urban crossroad' everything happened very quickly (Simone 2010). Cars drove along to where the men were waiting between the bridge and the park and slowed down. While doing so, the drivers scanned the faces of the homeless men on the sidewalk, possibly looking for someone they had already worked with, so that when they stopped they already knew who to pick up. They pointed with their index finger to who they wanted, the men got into the car, and in a matter of a couple of minutes everything was all over: the driver sat back in the car, turned it around and left with his new employees. Then another car approached and the scene was repeated. There were usually no more than two or three cars per morning, and the men who were left without a job simply left trying to reach the morning soup kitchen in time for the last round of coffee and bread. Although jobs were scarce, no fight emerged between the men waiting. Both Italian and migrant workers stood there waiting for their opportunity to be called without argument. Not only this, but they shared information too: on where to go to find a job, on the quality of the jobs being offered by this or that informal employer, on other possibilities in the informal market of Porta Palazzo, etc. Moreover, as I had the chance to witness, it was not uncommon for one homeless man to introduce one of his peers to a driver with no regard for where he was from. The reason for this was a simple reciprocal scheme: the favour I do for you today may come back to me tomorrow. The assemblage of this *do-ut-des* was not *affected* by racialised dissatisfaction. Even if dissatisfaction or discontent for not having found a job was arousing, it was not oriented in racialised manners. People, disrespecting their ethical traits, complained among themselves and then moved on to the next task of the day.

There are two affects worth highlighting in relation to this performance. The first is the ambiance generated by the capitalist machine, which creates its own informal spaces where both exploitations and job opportunities can be found. The second is the desire of the homeless people standing on the side-walk to return to that economy from which they have been cut out. As almost every homeless man I encountered told me, the return to the work economy, either formally or

informally, was seen as *the* thing to do: the first necessary step to get out of the life situation and normative categorisation they experience as 'home*less*' (Gowan 2010). Looking for a job, and co-operating to do so, was a way to concretely try to achieve ones' own ends. These were related to gaining money to afford rent; to earn extra income in order to send some money back home (in the case of the migrants, but also in the case of those Italians with a family to maintain); or to have enough money to not rely on the first-aid services provided by the City Council or the FBOs.

The affects emerging from homeless peoples' entanglements with the harshness of the informal economy – with its provisional materiality and dreams – were boosting homeless people with moderate hope, a sense of fulfilment and, most relevantly, were leading them to collaborate rather than to fight. In saying so I do not intend to argue that informal capitalist economies are the solution to homelessness, or to advocate in favour of the numerous exploitative practices characterising the urban margins. I aim to highlight, however, the value of looking at the everyday affective assemblage of life at the margins. In spaces like the one portrayed in this vignette – or others like the black market where people were selling the second-hand clothes obtained from the FBOs – the assemblage of race was simply not assembled, because a different, more affirmative articulation was in place. Homeless people's personal ambitions were not harnessed in the name of an institutional schema but were plugged into the work-machine, where these subjects wanted to be plugged, and where a positive expression of difference was possible (Guattari 2009).

Being attentive

The last ethnographic account regards an institution called Sermig,[5] a brotherhood where at the time of my fieldwork young people, families, monks and nuns, lived together praying, meditating and working on a wide range of activities, both in Turin, where they operated the 'Arsenale della

5 SERMIG stands for SERvizio MIssionario Giovani, namely Young Missionary Service.

Pace' (Peace Arsenal), and around the world.[6] The Arsenale, located just a few metres away from the bridge depicted in Figure 2, hosted three main services targeting homeless and vulnerable people: a medical centre, a night shelter and a residential shelter (for women only). The blueprint for the activities taking place at the Arsenale was strongly rooted in faith for the Catholic God, and references to the Bible and the Gospels were common in the materials produced by this organisation. However, the above services were provided following a philosophy that is arguably different from the one instantiated by other FBOs in Turin. The following statement summarises well the Arsenale's philosophy of care:

> 'Everyone is willing to help any man or woman who sincerely wants to find the way out of a bad situation, provided that he or she accepts a method, a family, and a righteous path. The Arsenale is not only inside the Arsenale, it's also outside: our Brotherhoods are people who mix with others, to share and to be shared' (Sermig 2011b).

The focus of this discourse is not 'the poor', or the 'love' of God for the poor. Rather, the stress is placed upon the necessity, both for the Sermig and the beneficiary of the services, to respect and follow a defined methodology of intervention. Simona, a lay volunteer living in the Arsenale, provides a clear account of this method:

> 'From our point of view there is a reciprocity in what we give and what the people receive. Reciprocity of duties and rights. For this reason, we ask everyone to give a small financial contribution for their stay here. And if someone can't pay, we let him or her do some small work [on the Sermig estate] in return, of course according to the abilities of each one.'
>
> (Simona, Feb. 2010)

At the time of my fieldwork if a homeless person decided to enter into the Arsenale's main shelter, they knew that the following rules would have been applied. First, sleeping at the shelter

6 The 'Arsenale' ('arsenal' in English) takes its name from the location it occupies: that of an abandoned military factory. From 1983 the factory was re-converted in a religious brotherhood but also in a place where a number of caring activities take place (from shelters, to health clinics and counselling).

was not free but involved a charge of 1.50 euros per night. When the individual was not able to pay the fee, they must provide some of their skills to the Sermig's mission, i.e. people were asked to contribute to the communal life of the institution according to their capabilities and interests. Second, if the individual wanted to have breakfast, they had to take a coffee from an automatic machine (it cost 30 cents) and they had the responsibility of cleaning the common room after using it. Dinner was, on the contrary, included in the sleeping cost. Other free services included in the stay were usage of a phone, e-mail and laundry. Third, the minimum stay at the Sermig was usually 30 days, a considerable period of time if compared to other city shelters. During this period the individual was encouraged to talk with the volunteers about their own problems and desires. The individual was then actively supported to tackle the first and reach the second, through specific personal support. Fourth, homeless people were requested to respect other people and things (such as the shelter's furniture) and they committed to not carry weapons and to not bring alcohol or any other substance onto the premises. Lastly, the individual was requested to sign an agreement between them and the Sermig, which stipulates the rights and duties listed above. The Arsenale, thus organised, at the time of my fieldwork was able to welcome 44 people every month of all nationalities (Sermig 2011a).

As both Italian and migrant homeless people reported to me, and as I witnessed during my visits to the place, the material arrangements of the Arsenale were excellent. The shelter was not organised as an open-space filled with bunk beds, but was divided into a number of rooms allocating a maximum of two people each. Rooms were cleaned daily and were provided with personal lockers where people could safely store their belongings, a feature that positively affected many of my research collaborators. Numerous clean showers and toilets were provided as well, so to diminish the waiting time and increasing the chances of people having a shower at the time (and for the time) they wished. The common room of the shelter, where people had their dinner and spent their time in the evening and in the morning, was spurred of religious symbols although the Sermig was very explicit about its religious roots: all that camped in the room was a huge flag reading 'Pace', *peace* (Figure 3). Importantly, all these spaces, including the rooms, were shared by men of all sorts of ethic provenance. Like in the services analysed above, here bodies were still mingling, eyes were still meeting, and words were still exchanged, but none of these encounters was characterised by racialised dissatisfaction. The service was able to provoke a positive affection to homeless people: they liked the privacy, cleanliness and attention to detail and to people brought

forward by the Sermig. Because of these affections, even in those cases in which dissatisfaction was coming to the fore – for instance at the moment of paying for the shelter or signing the agreement – that did not take a racialised orientation.

[Please insert Figure 3 here]

Figure 3: The common room at the Arsenale's main shelter

Source: The author

Although the biopolitics of the Arsenale could be read as a neoliberal take on the subject – because of its normative attention to 'rights' and 'duties' – I tend to read it from the affects that its arrangement were able to articulate with the homeless people I encountered. That was a positive and emancipatory affect totally different to that found in other FBOs. At the Arsenale bodies were allowed - through molecular machineries such as a clean room, a shelter free of religious signs, a personal locker - and encouraged - via the molar frame of 'responsibilities and duties', but also the attention to individual needs - to affirmatively (re)assemble their take on life. In a sense, they did not have to fight with others to achieve personal recognition, since personal recognition was the starting point for – and a first affirmation of – the relationship of care assembled in that space.

Conclusions

In this paper I have questioned how racial tensions between the homeless poor arise and are performed in normative and affirmative spaces of homelessness. Although the paper is based upon a contextualised ethnography whose findings may not be automatically generalised, my aim has been to show patterns and dynamics that can speak to other European contexts too. Faced with increased waves of refugees, economic migrants and internal vulnerable groups, the challenge of the contemporary European city is to welcome, assist and manage these populations in ways able to foster a positive and productive articulation of difference. As Darling has recently pointed out, it is at the level of the city that the political responsibilities for a new politics of care for different

others should reside (2016), and it is there – in the micro-politics of everyday life at the urban margins – that the paper addresses its contribution.

The paper introduces the notion of *racialised dissatisfaction* to signal how particular forms of racialised affects come to the fore among different others. The findings of my research indicate that such affections emerge most commonly in contexts that are designed and managed in the light of a normative and homogenising understanding of homelessness, such as the case of the temporary shelter, the soup kitchen and distribution of alimentary packs found in Turin at the time of my research. This work therefore has highlighted the importance of institutionalised settings in promoting particular experiences of difference, which needs to be taken seriously into consideration to work toward more positive articulations. The way European cities provide services and spaces for their new migrant and refugee populations will determine how difference will be negotiated between them and others, but also within these groups. As the paper has shown, this is especially true at the urban margins, where tensions, negative affections and constraints impact harshly on people's already traumatised bodies (Robinson 2011).

Contributing to recent geographical literature on race (Amin 2012; Saldanha 2007; Swanton 2010), the paper has also shown the value of understanding difference and race as assembled through the interplay of human predisposition, blueprints to care and a whole plethora of small devices and non-human bodies. Through the notion of racialised dissatisfaction this work has advanced an anthropology of everyday life able to show how and where racial tensions arise in order to excavate the affective processes triggering them. These tensions are not understood as coming from individualised racial stances, but as chains of affects brought forward by peculiar bodies, machines, atmospheres and discourses. This is the 'whole event' of race (Saldanha 2006) that the paper has brought to the fore: an event made of ordinary 'bioscopic linking of bodies and bodily states to everyday feelings, navigations and judgments' (Simone 2011a, 130). Racialised dissatisfaction is part of that event: a machinic assemblage made of bodies affecting each other, where the human phenotype is a body like others, (co)producing 'the' other.

Racialised dissatisfaction is not, in this sense, a theory or a definitive concept but a contextualised affective orientation that points our attention to matters that are usually discarded in traditional accounts of race. It is in paying attention to those matterings that an alternative micro-politics of difference may be possible, as shown in the last two ethnographic accounts here

presented. In these cases, subjects are either allowed to choose what is best for them or to receive appropriate attention and care. Both cases have their strong limits: on the one hand one is about exploitative work while the other could arguably be read as the production of neoliberal (compliant) subjects. Yet, these cases do enlighten a path. Both in the informal economy's account and in that of the Arsenale, homeless people were able to co-operate without regards to their provenance and personal objectives, and they did so without clashing one against the other. When their subjective differences were taken positively into consideration – either by themselves or by a third party – a different mobilisation of affects and desires became possible (Thrift 2005).

The absence of racialised dissatisfaction in these cases signals the possibility of managing homeless people by valuing their differences, rather than containing those into normative contexts and visions. To work in this sense there is a twofold movement to imply. First, there is the need to subvert the vertical, normative blueprint underlying canonical interventions, which could be achieved by establishing relationships of mutual responsibility and by listening closely to *how* that particular subject wants to be and wants to achieve. Second, the quality of the context where care takes place, and the quality of the things through which it is enacted, need to be seriously taken into account. The lived materialities of any context matters in allowing for, or not allowing for, a positive affirmation of difference or, at least, for non-racialised and non-violent encounters with the other.

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