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HOUSED by CHOICE, HOUSED by FORCE - Homes, Conflicts and Conflicting Interests

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Architecture_MPS, University of Cyprus; Cyprus Institute

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title: Forced to live dead in public space: an experiment of democracy in Rome

2. Format: ____Written Paper (possibly also verbal presentation)____

Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / short film / other – please specify

3. Author(s) Name: _____Fabrizio Gesuelli_____

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5. University or Company Affiliation: Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, The University of Edinburgh

6. Abstract (300 words):

Is using unused buildings to shelter people whom have found themselves homeless and sleep rough in the city an effective solution?

Rough sleepers are surely among those whom are social unaided people that are in need to be housed. In a survey I conducted myself for a project in Rome about homelessness and public space (described later), interviewees- general public and charitable bodies, were reporting how the use of abandoned buildings to shelter rough sleepers could be a plausible solution to prevent the issue with homelessness.

However, Judith Butler in the essay How can one lead a good life in a bad one, warns about the cynic view, one that has a mono-perspective approach, i.e. proposing the use of abandoned building to host homeless people. Butler claims that this view corresponds to a universalisation of desires, and social and cultural backgrounds: The projection of an individual's private into the political sphere of the public.

According to Butler, it seems that proposals such as hosting homeless people into abandoned buildings are anyway partial solution. This paper investigates whether it is possible to develop a more interconnecting methodology for architects to deal with the issue of homelessness. How can this interconnection be made visible through design interventions with and for homeless people?

The aim of this paper is to present an ongoing research project I am developing in Rome together with a community of homeless people and the charitable body Focus-Casa dei Diritti Sociali. The project combines the use of an activist cultural probe- provotype with ethnographical studies. It offers a different methodological approach to deal with those whom are socially excluded that is based upon Ancient Greek mythology and the interrogation of the dead. Finally, the project aims to be an experiment of democracy through the activation of an open dialogue between rough sleepers and general public in the public spaces of Rome.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):

Fabrizio is a PhD candidate in Architecture at the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the University of Edinburgh. His research interests concern the study of the relationship between architecture and protest, activism and hacktivism. Particularly, Fabrizio's thesis is focused on analysing architecture and protest- collective actions with regard to the role of bystanders (free rider) and possible ways for activating the latter.

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