



European and international solidarity campaign for the Collettivo Sottotetto housing project in the Compagnoni quarter of Reggio Emilia, Italy

One of the most important projects engaged in fighting against the social dismantling of this area, the Collettivo Sottotetto, is in danger.

Since spring 2006, the Collettivo Sottotetto, a northern Italian collective in Reggio Emilia, has taken on the task of making the right to housing--to having a home in the city--an issue of public discussion.

The right to shelter is every person's fundamental right, it is also an important aspect for building a life in dignity, which is not just a theoretical demand the collective makes, but it is also something that is put into practice here. Italy, too, has been following a "strategy of cleansing," and increasingly become more racist and intolerant and less social.

As part of this development, one of the most important projects that is engaged in fighting against the social dismantling of this area, the Collettivo Sottotetto, is in danger.

[Open letter to the mayor and the city council of Reggio Emilia](#)

Global Project Reggio Emilia - Sunday September 14th, 2008

We are highly concerned and cannot understand why the existence of the Collective Sottotetto in the Via Compagnoni quarter continues to be threatened. We feel that a project that combines collective artistic and political activism with everyday life with a focus on basic needs, such as a place to live, must be supported, not repressed! We must resist the planned privatization of previously affordable and social living space in this traditional working-class area!

There are several good reasons to support Collettivo Sottotetto, as it is an extremely necessary project in the city: The empty flats that the collective has occupied and renovated on their own initiative--for which the residents pay a symbolic rent--provide the residents with a very significant basis for creating a life in dignity. The creation of such living spaces is a concrete, creative, and constructive response to the effects of neoliberalism and the relentless precarisation of every aspect of our daily lives.

This project does not assume that the right to living space means that people have to live closed off from one other within their own four walls; instead, it means filling an entire quarter with life, building social relationships, and forming a community-minded environment to live in.

In addition to being used as living space, the previously empty flats in the quarter also house an art project called Habitat and a museum for modern art, M.A.C.R.E., which are both art projects that seek to resolve the classic divide between everyday life and art.

From an international point of view, it can safely be said that there are not many projects comparable to this one. Therefore, endangering Collettivo Sottotetto also means endangering a perhaps influential model project that is actively "working" on creating another world. For this reason, we cannot declare our solidarity with this project without also acknowledging that we are indeed also affected by its removal.

This project is a small ray of light that cast on Italy that shows it in a very different way in contrast to images of the last few months that have been increasingly racist, intolerant, and militaristic.

We therefore demand:

- No more evictions
- The preservation of the historic working-class neighbourhood Via Compagnoni
- Official acknowledgement by the city council of the project and squatted buildings/flats of the Collettivo Sottotetto in the Compagnoni quarter.



If you would like to sign it, please send an e-mail with your name and the name of your institution or project and your location to:

soli_sottotetto@libero.it. If you would like to declare your solidarity as an individual, please send your letter to the same e-mail address. We will translate it into Italian.

At the end of the solidarity campaign the open letter with the signatures shall be online on: <http://www.globalproject.info/art-16860.html> and will be given to the mayor of Reggio Emilia.