

“Tackling urban segregation of forced migrants in Milan: the (re)appropriation of public spaces through football”

Guido Belloni*

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(*) mail guidobelloni.urb@gmail.com | tel. +39 3470157255

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714.300. It is the number of incoming forced migratory fluxes in Europe in 2014. A number that has been increasing since political struggles in North-Africa. It led to a consistent change in the south-to-north migration axes, while EU metropolitan regions became the most attractive goals for migrants. And yet, EU and Member States still tend to underestimate the impact of immigration policies at the local level: effects such as the creation of marginality pockets and the impoverishment of local urban contexts may negatively influence integration, access to welfare and to labour and housing markets for forced migrants. Many authors (Bauman, 2011; Huysmans, 2000; Tosi, 2012) highlighted the link between destitution of migrants and degrade of some urban areas; a link that must be found into those interstitial spaces, where coping strategies arise to tackle the exclusion from institutional welfare policies¹. The aim of this paper is to mark the efficacy of social bonds, activism and bottom-up measures in activating individual integration and empowerment paths for forced migrants. Particularly in those marginal urban areas far from the city centre and further from institutional (or formalised) mechanisms of spatial appropriation or land valorisation. Finally, the case of squats and the example of “migrant football” underlines the role played by non-formalised, aggregative practices in publicly claiming a *right to the city* and in smoothing out the conflicts that may arise around the use and the functions of space by different ethnic groups.

1. The numbers of the emergency: an overview of 2014 migratory fluxes

Tracing forced migratory fluxes has always been a difficult task. The institutional reception of asylum seekers in receiving countries in fact, often ends up to an informal, unofficial (if not outlaw) and hardly observable path of accommodation and integration. It is an effect due to the aleatory condition of forced migrants into receiving countries, and to the national and international fragmentations of welcome accommodation policies. However, the yearly report “UNHCR asylum trend” gives a general overview on the 2014 situation. In Europe, 714.300 asylum claims were

¹ Here intended as housing and active labour policies, health care, education and socialisation.

submitted in 2014 (+47% compared to 2013), 570.800 in EU28 (+44%). The traditional North-South unbalance is confirmed, although inversely with respect to the trends registered in the period 2000-2010²: with 170.700 asylum requests (+95%) Southern European countries received 30% of the total amount of claims submitted in 2014 in EU28; with 63.700 applications registered in 2014, Italy is the second recipient in Europe after Turkey, the 5th among OECD industrialised countries.

Such trends highlight the effects of European asylum policies and legislations on (new) incoming migratory fluxes of asylum seekers and refugees. The discussed implementation on Dublin Regulation III³ and the call into question of Schengen Agreement; the worsening of borders patrolling by international police forces (Frontex); the adoption of extraordinary measures for maritime rescue⁴, produced an increasing concentration of asylum requests in Southern Europe. The main consequence of this trends-inversion is the establishment of a prolonged and cyclic “emergency situation” in Mediterranean countries, characterised by enormous deficits in the management of incoming fluxes, lacks in reception and accommodation programs, as well as in ruinous integration and individual empowerment paths. With regards to consequent socio-spatial effects, emergency mainly leads to the creation of unbalances at the national level, characterised by the polarisation of accommodation and by the inadequacy of reception systems. Which turns into a continuous recodification at the local and regional level of asylum seekers and refugees’ geographical sphere (Breckner, 2014), also due to the large size of the informal sector

² Numbers registered before 2012 highlighted the “geographical contradiction” between northern European countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), the most recipient countries of asylum demands, and southern European countries (Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Turkey), traditionally landing places of forced migration from global south.

³ The Dublin Regulation is the cornerstone of the EU law regulating asylum procedures among Member States. Strongly criticised (<http://www.sbilanciamoci.info/Ultimi-articoli/Dublino-III-cosa-cambia-23251>), it introduces a Europe-wide fingerprinting database (EURODAC) and the principle of the “first State”, meaning that the first Member State entered by an asylum seeker is responsible for the procedure of his/her asylum request.

⁴ Such measures are taken by single Member States, as in the case of *Mare nostrum*, launched upon decision of the Italian Government in 2013, or unilaterally agreed on behalf of the European Commission, as in the case of *Triton*, started in 2014.

in the national economies of Mediterranean countries⁵, working as a pull factor for immigration. The most direct consequence is the continuous proliferation of securitisation and control policies, based upon the “strategy of fear” and the increasing consensus of such measures by the native populations. Meanwhile, a comeback to xenophobic feelings directly related to an extreme right-wing political sphere has been registered in the last two years.

In terms of spatial conflicts, the dynamics described above find their concretisation in urban areas. Urban centres in fact constitute the main settling option for forced migrants, not only for the opportunities they offer but also for the role they play as starting points towards other European countries: in Milan in particular, official data (from the Territorial Commission) show an amount of 2.006 submitted asylum requests processed in 2014, on a total amount of 36.270 applications processed in Italy in the same year, classifying the city as the 6th recipient at the national level⁶. However, considering NGOs and non-institutional observatories reports, a totally different data emerge: in the period between October 2013 and September 2014, some 47.942 asylum seekers⁷ transited Milan without asking for international protection. These numbers underline the willingness of immigrants to head for Northern Europe, and validate the critics on the current European asylum system, bringing under observation the economic, social and spatial effects that arise from the reception of forced migratory fluxes in urban areas.

If numbers noticeably increased at the end of 2000s, from 2011 on acknowledgments of refugee status and subsidiary protection remain more or less stable; on the other hand, the number of humanitarian protections as temporary and renewable (to the decision of an ad hoc legal process) measures of international protection increases. In this frame, talking about “emergency” clashes with a situation that continuously

⁵ A significant proportion of immigrants find work into the “hidden economy”, this last being estimated around 20-26% of national GDP in Italy (source: Reyneri, 2004).

⁶ The Territorial Commissions that proceeded the highest number of asylum requests in 2014 were Crotone (5.578), Rome (4.802), Bari (4.711), Syracuse (4.022), Caserta (2.211), Milan (2.006) (source: Ministero dell’Interno, 2014).

⁷ Source: Progetto Melting Pot (<http://www.meltingpot.org/>), Redattore Sociale (<http://www.redattoresociale.it/>), associazione NAGA.

protracts since four years. The emergency management of migratory fluxes amounts rather to a precise political choice, which reasons have to be attributed to the European asylum regulations and norms, successively understood and acknowledged by Member States. The repercussions of these choices are measurable, and find in cities a place of implosion.

2. How to tackle emergencies? Institutional responses at the European level and the re-adaptation of a mistaking model

Many European (and Mediterranean countries) have experienced hard difficulties in managing incoming migratory fluxes. As Carlotta Sami⁸ told:

EU immigration policies often translate into actions against human rights, both for the treatment of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees within Member States (generally recurring to detention measures) and for the reiterative research for bilateral agreement with North African countries for the institution of a sort of “checkpoints”.

It is a fact connected to a non-systemic approach of public policies: EU seems reticent to adopt new norms for an effective burden-sharing system (Theilemann, 2005) in international protection matters. The everyday of a relevant problem is always different, and is related to its territorial dimension (both physical and geo-political): limits, urgencies and process schedules vary from State to State, even if the homologation among national norms and regulations is stated to be the main objective for the European community. National governments are treating the accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees more and more frequently as emergencies. An example is the set of norms issued in 2011 by the Italian government under the so called “North-Africa Emergency” (ENA), which aimed at tackling the increasing number

⁸ General director Amnesty International Italia, on an interview released for *Mare Chiuso*, a documentary by Stefano Liberti, January 2013.

of forced migration waves from North African countries: among others, some measures were taken disrespecting international treaties and the universal declaration of human rights, as for example the Bengasi Treaty⁹ (signed in 2008 under Berlusconi government), the several cases of *refoulement* in the Mediterranean Sea driven by Italian Home Office Roberto Maroni in 2012 - and later subjected to sanctions by the European Court of Human Rights. Such an adoption of extraordinary norms is representative of the postponement of a univocal, structural answer of public policies towards humanitarian crisis, and is the main reason of the cyclic adoption of buffer measures which characterised the management of emergency migrations from the Balkan crisis on.

What stems from this situation is to be considered a [new] urban question, strictly related to issues such as accommodation, social inclusion, working opportunities, right to health and education for asylum seekers and refugees in contemporary urban areas. The lack of institutional responses contributed to (re)create ethnic-based marginality pockets, excluding some parts of the population from public life and policies, disenfranchising any fundamental right (to an adequate housing, education, health-care and access to the labour market) and allowing segregation into specific urban areas stigmatised as marginal or extremely fragile.

As Bauman observes:

A fortress continent is a bloc of nations that joins forces to extract favourable trade terms from other countries, while patrolling their shared external borders to keep people from those countries out. But if a continent is serious about being a fortress, it also has to invite one or two poor countries within

⁹ It is a bilateral treaty agreed between the national governments of Italy and Libya after Italy's colonial experience in north Africa. Among other economic agreements, the treaty puts into force a joint struggle against international terrorism by tackling illegal immigration.

its walls, because somebody has to do the dirty work and heavy lifting¹⁰.

Migrants often enter richness production mechanisms through non-qualified or degrading labour, thinning more and more the separation between transitory and peremptory disabilitation and the definitive labelling of “wastes” (Baumann, 2011). Destitution and the exclusion of forced migrants can be as well considered a product of securitization policies and measures, which resulted (politically) into restrictive regulations that prevent immigrants from free movement within the EU and augment their grade of vulnerability. Territorial confinement and control is the base to different right claims, as for example the protest movement of the caravan (*die Karawane*) supporting refugees in Germany. However, limitations become more and more evident if referred to the accessibility to welfare services and to processes of socialisation, causing a shift-effect from social policies to security issues. Securitisation policies are specific policies to mediate belonging (Huysmans, 2000), using media and exploiting social discontent to mystify the issue of migration, transforming political integration through the identification of threats. As a consequence, spatially based conflicts among different ethnic groups, among immigrants and social workers and between immigrants and locals¹¹ arise.

The proliferation of marginality and exclusion pockets in urban areas, where forced migrants dwell, gives place to a short-circuit in securitization assets. On one side, the institutional control of asylum seekers and refugees’ everyday life (accommodation, shelter, health care, education and labour) recalls Goffman’s “total institution”; on the other, the normalisation of *laissez-faire* practices allows the perpetuation of entering mechanisms into the informal circuits of labour and housing markets. This shot-circuit implicitly validates the increase of securitisation policies, which primary function is not

¹⁰ Naomi Klein, “Fortress Continent” on the Guardian (16 January 2003), quoted in Bauman Z., *Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcasts*, Polity (Cambridge), p.78 (Italian edition).

¹¹ The clashes that happened in Tor Sapienza district in Rome at the end of 2014 can be assumed as the concretisation of the extreme discontent of a specific social group of Italian citizens, that led to the assault of a first reception accommodation centre hosting asylum seekers.

to educate, but rather to grant custody and control (Bauman 2011) to the detriment of more flexible integration measures.

Moreover, a missing stance on the issue of forced migrations by several institutions confirms somehow an increase in alternative, bottom-up measures claimed by local NGOs and citizens' movements throughout European cities, as it happened for example with the resistance against the application of the Dublin Directive¹². Activism and social movements constitute nevertheless a fundamental step to enhance processes of capability and empowerment of forced migrants in many European cities, mainly by openly criticising the inadequacy of communitarian policies in asylum matters and by tackling a progressive, dangerous come back to xenophobic movements (as for example PEGIDA in Germany).

Repression increases, and it takes the place of solidarity. Real problems, such as the contraction of housing market and the massive unemployment rate in cities [...] are ignored in favour of policies associated with discipline, restraint and control (Bauman, 2011:106).

3. Welcomed into emergency to live (a city) as a temporary guest

From the perspective of city planning and governance, the necessity of rethinking accommodation and management policies, as well as a reflection about the collocation and functioning of ad hoc territorial services for a specific and variegated group of urban immigrants (Breckner, 2014) emerges urgently. As data on transit, *nonmigratory* migrations show, in this historical moment the comprehension of spatially attracting and repulsing dynamics calls for a deep reinterpretation: to a high grade of territorial mobility characterising the struggle to self-empowerment and the research for

¹² Perfectly shown by the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and *Lampedusa in Berlin*. More recently, struggles in the Italian town of Ventimiglia (bordering the French city of Mentone) depict passive protests against delocalisation of migrants in response to the take back of Schengen agreement (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/15/italy-threatens-to-give-schengen-visas-to-migrants-as-eu-dispute-deepens>).

individual possibilities of affirmation, emergency accommodations into a urban system implicitly tie asylum seekers and refugees to a condition of forced immobility towards the diverse urban environments and social integration at the local level. Even if, in terms of time and space, cities offer better chances to embody immigrants into host society in comparison to rural or peri-urban territories, the access to formative, mobility or free-time infrastructures depends in many cases upon the position of the residence places with respect to the (geographic, economic, functional, social) centre and to the acceptance of “undesired” population in the neighbourhood (Breckner, 2014). While questioning at the communitarian level the principles of free movements and the meaning of borders, the progressive polarisation of places and territorial services addressed to forced migrants has been reconfiguring under a crescent national and international competition among cities.

We assist today to a continuous and cyclic proliferation of non-places, locations intended for the socio-spatial control of immigrants, homologated to (uncertain) guidelines dictated from the national accommodation systems. At the same time, we are not able to discern the specific needs of individuals, nor to let those places gravitate around the economic and social grain of cities. For example, the interpretation of non-negotiable rules and regulations of first accommodation centres remain critic, as they are perceived as a detriment for self-autonomy and the management of individual times and spaces. It is not a case if integration strategies relocate somewhere else, far from constricting places and from the mechanisms sustaining them. These place may also be considered (I) spatial references for the inhabitants (one may assume them as nodes which turned into perceptive emotional landmarks, referring to Lynch’s *The Image of the City*), but are in fact places of transition where *aleatory living* turns concrete; (II) abstractions from the socio-economic grain of cities that duplicate their significance into a negative connotation, where different deprivations and marginalities of unrepresented populations spatially converge; (III) circumscribed landing places for technical-administrative measures, connected to emergencies, that put immigrants into a parallel reception

accommodation path, facilitating swerves towards a mere helpful model¹³. It is interesting to observe the geography that revolves around some emblematic places, which function has been redefined in order to accommodate “extraordinary” migratory ways. Such places ended up to be parallel references for immigrants, replacing de facto institutionally entitled authorities. It is the case of railway yards (where emergency shelters and informal settlements have been built in the past four years), of first reception accommodation and photo signalling places which rose in mobility nodes, of “human warehouses” (arrival places of caravans from southern Italy), of the so called “hubs”, temporarily set up by the red cross with the support of territorial services and turned into tent cities, of many hotels used as low-threshold accessibility centres to develop a sort of “diffused accommodation”.

The European juridical space has been delocalised: it bended inward and polarised around airports, railways or maritime stations and identification centres in the principal European cities, where processes of registration and identification of migrants are simplified, but where secondary effects such as exclusion, impoverishment and underground living subsist as well. In the current sociologic debate refugees fill an undefined space, as a consequence of the diverse contradictions which characterise this kind of population (Chignola, 2010¹⁴).

The spatial fragmentation in the management of emergency migrations produces some effects in terms of resources efficiency and efficacy of reception accommodation services. The main effects are: the proliferation in the field of reception accommodation of non-qualified subjects afferent to other disciplines, and the consequent entitlement of competences; the lack of monitoring (often transferred to independent observatories such as NGOs and territorial associations); the worsening in

¹³ The complete take on responsibility of fragile individuals is characteristic of Mediterranean reception accommodation systems and welfare regimes. Users enter a path of “dependence from the service” which difficultly ends with the plain individual’s awareness and independence.

¹⁴ <http://www.meltingpot.org/La-frontiera-addosso-Cosi-si-deportano-i-diritti-umani.html#.UeUfDm22DgB>

the quality of services, mainly due to the integration of underqualified human resources and know-how, and the consequent approximation of accommodation services' management and planning; the creation of the so called *business of accommodation* by favouring temporary, non-systemic, speculative solutions validating the repetition of illegal situations¹⁵. Such a problematic frame reveals the urgency for the creation of a bridge between public policies in welfare and social affairs with urban planning and spatial management. Two complementary disciplines that could deeper understand the diverse requests currently sustaining the different declinations of *the right to the city* and the bottom-up claim for a place of representation for forced migrants into host societies.

Social policies are affected by the traditions of national welfare regimes, variously defined in Southern Europe as “formative welfare states” or “Mediterranean welfare regimes”, where a strong role is played by the civil society accompanied by modest state involvement in social protection (Tosi, 2012). If difficulties in managing social policies often bring to the amendment of national regulations to spatially control asylum seekers and refugees, on the other side the institutionalisation of de-locative policies pushes reception accommodation centres far from urban areas, demanding to non-institutional third actors a “grant role” with regards to forced migrations. It is in such an accommodation system that the refugee dilemma (Belloni, 2013) arises: asylum seekers are forced to search for a place in the city which perception is subjected to a continuous change in the migrants' physical, psychological, juridical status (asylum seekers *do not know where to go*); migrants wander in places they are stranger to (asylum seekers *do not have where to go*), in which they do not recognise any purpose nor a domestic dimension. National reception accommodation systems produce socio-spatial exclusion, which bounds forced migrants to some places preventing them to access other part of national territories (asylum seekers *cannot go everywhere*). Fragmentation, polarisation and externalisation of accommodation services break the process of integration and reduce individual possibilities of “getting

¹⁵ The last relevant inquiry has been *Mafia Capitale*, that revealed a corruption system in public tenders regarding the management of Roma internment camps and centres for the reception accommodation of asylum seekers (16), with 5 private-service corporations and 39 individuals involved.

through”, by arising spatial dispersion phenomena and excluding refugees and asylum seekers from education and work opportunities. The direct consequence is a socio-spatial isolation of the forced migrants population, an effect due also to securitisation and control measures. It can be argued that forced migrants in urban areas are *inhabitants without a city*, as fragility (about their personal condition), exclusion (from local labour and housing markets) and marginalisation (with regards to the local society) do characterise their daily living in a city. The recourse to coping strategies and public claim for their rights are spatialized practices of resistance that tackle socio-spatial exclusion. They are rooted to local associations and movements and constitute the ground for the spatialisation of interethnic conflicts.

4. The spatialisation of resistance

The most evident contradiction arising from the short-circuit of territorial accommodation is strictly related to the housing question, as it embodies other broader aspects connected with living in a city or society. Work, social relations and norms, regulations and laws, even the link between migration and food often translates at the same time into *cause and effect* of the housing difficulties experienced by forced migrants in urban centres. Inconvenient situations or provisory solutions become durable, as in the case of public dormitories or squats (Sacchi et al., 2013). Here the negative effects of reception accommodation systems worsen: out of the institutional care, many forced migrants enter a destitution circuit which ends in severe exclusion, marginalisation, homelessness. As matter of fact, approximately the half of the homeless population in southern European countries is represented by immigrants, a percentage that sharpens in large cities (60% of the roofless population in Milan are migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees; Tosi, 2012). The irregularity (or precariousness) of the legal status, the low level of income and the weakness of the position in local labour markets are some of the elements that contributes to rise different degrees of social and housing marginality. However, three main factors could be assumed as the main causes for the progressive overwhelming

destitution of forced migrants. One first factor is the legal status, which happens to be continuously precarious and undefined, related with the gain or loss of rights and benefits; this pushes forced migrants into a spiral of marginalisation (Belloni, 2013) which is particularly difficult to lessen. As theorised by some scholars (Kessler and Tosi among others) precarious legal status brings to a marginality on the local labour market and to a higher discrimination on the rent market, meaning a consequent dependence on public assistance policies; this increases poverty rates and deviancy, leading immigrants towards destitution. A second factor is the precariousness of work. If in some cases work opportunities traduce into spatial instabilities (as, for example, in the case of seasonal agricultural workers in southern Italian regions, where illegal status, work in the informal sector of the economy and accommodation in the informal housing sector combine), the stable entrance in local labour markets strictly depends upon the migrants' juridical status: before having submitted the asylum request and for six months right after the claim, forced migrants are not legally allowed to work. If the asylum request is rejected, migrants reverse into an illegal condition , with all the consequences described above. However, even in case of positive decisions, entering the labour market is often discretionary and related on whether the resident permit is positively perceived by the employer or not¹⁶. Finally, a third factor regards institutional barriers and juridical restrictions, which is naturally rooted in the precarious condition which migrants live. Laws are prescriptive instruments traducing norms into prohibitive measures, often denying a certain right. On the matter of housing for instance, Lombardy regional law (LR 27/2009) limits the accessibility to public housing estates to some criteria:

- foreigners applying for a dwelling must have been registered at least five years in regional civil registries *and* own a two-years-long possession of a regular residency permit *and* being regularly employed;

¹⁶ In Italy, working permissions start six months after the submission of the asylum request. The period in which the immigrant is a "seeker" (i.e. waiting for a decision and not yet acknowledged as refugee) may vary from time to time; it currently lasts some one and a half year. In this period asylum seekers can work, but have to renew a temporary residency permit every six months. Being acknowledged with a humanitarian or subsidiary protection, the immigrants gain a longer-lasting, yet temporary residency permit (respectively 1 and 5 years of duration). The perception of a non-durable *temporary* stay may negatively influence the entrance of immigrants into local and national labour markets.

- individuals who squatted a public dwelling in the previous five years antecedent the presentation of the public dwelling request are prevented from the application;
- applicants should never have been evicted from public dwellings due to arrearages.

The framework presented above clearly shows how these norms counteract with the housing biography of the average asylum seeker (or refugee, but also of many foreign and Italian citizens); they rather are an obvious politic expedient, which aim is to limit the quote of foreigners entitled to live in public houses (following the populist motto “Italians first”), if not to precisely and systematically deny the enjoyment of a citizenship right. The adoption of these norms is also contrary to the international right to housing, as stated in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Urban areas are socio-spatial arenas in which the matter of forced migrants is dealt with. It is here that arbitrary and fragmented institutional policies directly influence (if not deny) the accessibility to some parts of contemporary cities to asylum seekers and refugees, including the admittance to local labour and housing markets, the access to social protection and to welfare distribution policies or the appropriation and creation of invisible infrastructures (Belloni, 2013). The activation of local movements and social parties for the claim of rights; territorial-rooted activisms and the involvement of the civil society; the production of bottom-up strategies against marginalisation phenomena are often the only measures which currently tackle the inefficacy of coherent institutional responses to the lack of public, dedicated services. The “study of the everyday” shows some paradoxes in the functioning of the welfare state: policies aiming at distributing the well-being as equally as possible seem nevertheless to repress differences among social groups, with no consideration for the innovation that

may eventually arise from the direct participation of individuals to the construction and the practice of the city (Secchi, 2013: 61). The process of territorialisation and localisation in welfare production, coping with the lack of a systemic public strategy, calls for a reframing of the relations among actors towards a deliberative democratic model. The consideration of the political struggle and the reconnection to those populations living a space and expressing their needs into it is necessary to the construction of more inclusive, democratic urban policies, able to reduce inequalities in space.

4.1 The case of refugees squats in Italy

Particularly on the housing matter, marginality situations of forced migrants in urban areas sharpen. Informal settlements and squats are places concentrating dynamics of resistance, concerning refugees and asylum seekers and their *right to the city*. Housing is the most problematic aspect for migrants' integration, but remains marginal in comparison to labour, health and language learning policies: it recurs cyclically as a social question, particularly worsened in those period of emergency corresponding with the increase of incoming migratory fluxes. Systemic interventions connected to social policies are far from being implemented: even if a crescent number of individuals could access adequate housing on the private market, the public actor is still not able to grant an accommodation intended as a service (shifting accessibility criteria from the mechanisms of the free market to the exercise of individual rights). Being the whole housing question "the staggerly pillar of European welfare" (Agustoni, 2011:26), it is a fact that immigrants often cope with different strategies to access housing. The increasing presence of immigrants in urban areas brought to the reuse of some crumbling buildings, with the consequent production of cohabitation forms that are based on a shared condition of marginality and segregation from the surrounding social contest, as well as to an always increasing production of informal solutions. If these solutions are a first shelter against rooflessness and a starting point for the creation of social bonds, they also constrain migrants into destitution. Especially in southern Europe, informal housing is particularly significant: it is an aspect of civil

society where reciprocity and solidarity are more pronounced, even if they assume in many cases the most dramatic forms. If some years ago informal settlements were often related to an irregular conditions of migrants, it has been observed nowadays (Tosi, 2012; integrAzione, 2012) that the recourse to informal housing solutions often appears to be the first anchorage in urban areas for several different “pending” migrant communities (typically those asylum seekers whose request is still processing, or newcomers in transit towards north European countries). As the efficiency of reception accommodation policies turns unequivocally down while inequalities in accessing social services increase, informal housing may represent a stable solution. In the cases of Rome and Turin, illegal squats of asylum seekers and refugees integrated into a much broader and more articulated locally-based claim, which orbits around the significance of reuse of abandoned buildings (generally referred to those political squats related to local housing movements).

In Rome, informal shelters are precarious settlements, squats or shanty-towns, located far from the city centre in peri-urban districts facing the hilly farmlands that surround Rome. In these places it is impossible to trace autonomy-gaining paths, as the risk of deviancy and recruitment by criminal organisation remains high. However, in the case of larger squats (some 1.700 immigrants are estimated to live into the squatted structures in Rome, most of them being pending or rejected asylum seekers) thousands of refugees organise in parallel communities, that commonly lack of a well, solidly structured service of accommodation, support and integration. In Turin an interesting case is the squat in ex-MOI buildings, formerly built to host the Olympic Village of 2006 Winter Olympics. At the moment the buildings are the larger squat in Turin, counting 700-800 inhabitants and being the scene of several conflicts between the local community and the squatters. Every time, the stress is put on illegality, national laws violation, grant of human rights, on the urban degradation derived from the concentration of undesired populations and the consequent demand for public security and police patrol. In comparison to Rome, the ex-MOI case is not isolated, but it attracted many different subjects to support squatters (the large majority of them are asylum seekers) in building informal accommodation and integration paths: *the*

“migrants and refugees supporting committee” helps in the management of the squats and in keeping the relation with the district alive; there are students and activists who organise classes with the support of former teachers volunteering; the USB (trade unions base confederation) and the ASGI (Association for the Juridical Studies on Immigration) take care of the legal matters and keep contacts with other refugees’ claims all across Europe; institutional subjects as Job Centres promote professional formation and education; finally, other movements such as Cavallerizza Reale or the local movement against evictions are politically supportive¹⁷.

The two cases depict the same model of squat, directly managed by immigrants, with some substantial differences. A clear break with the social grain, the high presence of self-excluding dynamics, the condition of indigence and progressive (social and political) destitution in Rome, where housing marginality lives decontextualized from the host society: although it represents resistance and willingness to stand against excluding dynamics, it maintains self-excluding mechanisms. The presence of fragile categories such as victims of torture, unaccompanied minors, families, women, asks for a reform in the guidance towards territorial services, which currently cut off the most excluded populations from welfare services. On the other side, the case of Turin shows an acceptance of and an attempt to enter the complex dynamics of local protest movements (historically well-rooted in Piedmont region). The ex-MOI squat enlarged the acceptance and the involvement of locals, promoting collective forms of right-claim and fostering the access to welfare services.

However, even if the regulation of housing and social relationships is an instrument for collective empowerment, it amounts to paradoxical in extremely deprived situations: immigrants become outsiders with respect to the host society and tend to exclude those who cannot afford to find a stable living condition. In such an undefined frame as the housing issue, where hybrid informal solutions meet formal paths of integration, refugees squats are representative of a dynamic which often happens by managing emergency migrations. The take on responsibility of forced migrants by social services

¹⁷ Giulia Borri, researcher and activist, interview with the author (19 June 2015).

left some holes, systemic leaks where informality weaves into, through which three recurrent cause-and-effect relations can be identified. Here *deviancies from pre-determined integration paths* (I) take place, resulting from the agency activities of refugees and of local NGOs. Such deviancies, even if positively affecting the everyday dimension of forced migrants, are hardly acknowledged by the institutions. They nevertheless constitute *an attempt to create social bonds and relations* (II), territorially rooted and claiming a physical and political decisional space, aiming at the progressive admittance into host society through an autonomy-gaining process (far from the traditional integration, still based on assimilative or pluralistic models). Finally, refugees squats and the organisation of housing-related services reflect a consolidating trend in peripheral urban areas. In a context where resources are substantially lacking and welfare is severely contracting, *the territorialisation of welfare goes through the direct activation of the most marginal populations* (III), consequently producing endogenous and strictly local solutions, responding to the needs expressed by a specific territory - and rarely intercepted by universalistic and centralised welfare policies. Moreover, the emersion of submerged needs through bottom-up resistance practices answers the necessity for advocacy of excluded populations, finding in unconventional instruments and activities the vehicle to claim citizenship rights.

5. Football and resistance: can sport be an expression for fundamental rights?

Emergency is a political choice, on which immigration policies are based and implemented. There is a discrepancy between policies construction and implementation that determines an elbowroom where public action becomes unclear, undefined and not measurable. All social relations and the collective or individual cultural implications are excluded from local policies design, while the instruments for the valorisation of (spontaneous) coping strategies have not been codified yet. The aleatory condition that forced migrants experience in urban areas, the continuous shift from legality to illegality mark a series of specific devices and strategies of relationship with the urban environment. If this mirrors the connection between those specific

strategies and the juridical status of migrants, it also underlines the importance of new adaptation strategies in redefining dependence-relationships among social groups and institutions. The efforts to overcome (or to bypass) the lack of rights and the indefiniteness of migrants' condition stress the process to gain a place (*right to stay*), as it constitutes a bottom-up tool to build active integration and self-sufficiency. As well, it is a way out of the dependence from public assistance and from primary needs help. The misinterpretation of the importance of such a question allows the proliferation of (geographical) restraint, concealment and repulsion trends, against which the construction of intra-group social bonds and strategies of bridging social capital arise. This implicitly endorse the recourse to primary solutions, i.e. the informal ones. Therefore, the planning and production of welfare interventions following a universal approach can hardly consider contextual specificities, giving place to locally rooted inequalities. Such a frame calls for a necessary reform of localisation criteria, contextualising public welfare interventions. If the social question tends to be defined more and more as a localised dimension connected to the negative symptoms characterising specific places (Augustoni, 2011), abandon a typical assistance approach could definitely encourage self-organisation and legitimate the production of drop-in services relating to the unexpressed demand. *Contrasting welfare* is conceived to tackle emergency situations, but it is neither farsighted nor sustainable. The production of welfare services through non-formalised paths is a valid answer to the needs of marginalised groups, and at the same time it represents an instruments to claim fundamental rights: the deny of citizenship rights calls for the auto-construction of welfare admission channels.

The case of football well introduces self-organisation as an instrument for the exercise and claim of rights, constituting at the same time a bridge to social policies. In fact, football in its diverse declinations, from small peripheral fields until the organisation of big events, is strictly tied with society and societal changes, with the expression (or denial) of rights, with social policies and with immigrant populations. Even if it may look like a residual element, not being a "stolen right" for asylum seekers, football becomes (in addition to a right and a claim) a fundamental instrument for integration

(Grozny, 2014), an aggregative and collective glue, broadly shared and comprehensible for all the social groups. Nevertheless, those “short-circuital and excluding” logics presented above keep happening. The condition of immigrants workers occupied in the building sites for Qatar 2022 World Cup¹⁸, as well as the protests against FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil, are representative of how football could implicitly and deliberately (with a pronounced note of couldn’t-care-less attitude) allow social externalities which in some extreme cases violate human rights.

Incommunicability between international guidelines and recommendations and the further acknowledgment of norms and regulation at the national level reclaims the same interpretation problems due to specific choices or political orientations. In the case of FIFA regulation for example, the status of refugee is compared to national citizenship, but there are no traces of this comparison in the Italian FIGC regulation: refugees are therefore considered non-EU citizens (whose sign-up must undergo the limitations which apply to “foreigners quote” fixed by the federation itself). However, at the local level, the role of football is assumed to be helpful for newcomers to integrate into a society hostile towards asylum seekers; many local teams¹⁹ already moved in this direction, using football as an instrument for the rights’ claim, structuring an agency activity strictly connected to the exercise of sport, to specific territories and to local movements, to the composition of the fan scene and to the message communicated while playing. In this frame, extremely and intentionally moved away from the *football-business* model, playing football becomes a vehicle to claim access to well-being and to aggregative socialising activities; to benefit from facilities such as showers, locker rooms, sports equipment; to denounce the condition of exploitation of immigrants in their everyday life. This praxis of claim assumes an

¹⁸ ITUC estimates some 1.200 workers died since the World Cup was awarded in 2010. Following this trend, 4.000 immigrant workers will die in construction sites before the World Cup’s official kick off. Besides, repatriation is denied to immigrant workers, as well as the possibility to freely associate and collectively bargain, while deportation and detention centres are kept for absconded workers whose ID and paperwork is not in order (in many cases documents are forcedly and illegally held by the employers).

¹⁹ Among others, the most famous are the experience of Balon Mundial (Turin), Multietnica NAGA har (Milano), Liberi Nantes (Rome), AfroNapoli United (Naples), KOA Bosco (Rosarno), Ads Cara di Mineo (Catania).

even more relevant aspect if we consider that Italy has historically had difficulty battling racial abuse, and amateur football has not escaped: relevant matters such as sportive citizenship (for the sons of immigrants born in Italy or arrived in the country before the age of 10) is an example of how football embraces some issues much related to citizenship, welfare and enlargement of political rights.

Again, sport like other collective experiences of claim for integration and civil rights, would deserve a more important place in the implementation of national policies for managing migrations and in the construction of more efficient integration strategies, locally-rooted and oriented towards individuals. As long as politics continues to refuse the presence (and the role) of informality in the reception accommodation of migrants, adducing the migratory question to election strategies based upon fear and reject of “the other”, we will difficultly exit this four-years-lasting emergence.

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²⁰ Latest update: 24 June 2015.