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Article

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Abstract

The term 'arrival city' was notoriously introduced by Saunders (2010) to indicate all places which provide first access to the city. For Saunders, migrants from rural third world villages confront the same challenges in their home country or abroad. The informal neighbourhood in developing countries is thus advocated as a model for cities in western countries. Through an ethnographic approach, the article considers emerging practices of refugees and migrants in the centre of Milan and in a small town on the outskirts of Rome investigating a varied set of reception models. In conclusion, the article revises the model of the arrival neighbourhood while criticizing the underlying assumption of informal development. Instead, it insists on the need for understanding the specific requirements of arrival places for better regulation of the reception of migrants.

Issue

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1. Introduction

This article explores the contradictory spatial organization of migrants and refugees in two different cases of arrival neighbourhoods in Italy. Since the arrival of migrants in Italy, the engagement of associative and informal actors has become a permanent feature of local Italian policies, while governments have tried to disperse asylum seekers following more or less pondered demographic criteria.

Between the opposing logics of concentration and dispersion, urban policies struggle to grasp the emerging spatiality of migrants. It is to address this issue that recent analyses have focused on the role of particular urban neighbourhoods as places of 'arrival' (e.g., Saunders, 2010; Schrooten & Meeus, 2019). Despite the differences, these studies refer to the entanglement of ob-

jects, spaces, social networks, practices and resources, necessary for newcomers yet only found in particular portions of the broader urban environment. In particular, Saunders coined the concepts of 'arrival neighbourhood' to indicate urban zones that function as 'entry points' for newcomers to establish themselves in a new context and later transition into the 'mainstream society' (Saunders, 2010). Such transition areas, that he infers from cities in the South, combine networks of migrants, community monitoring, gradually upgraded jobs, homes and density in the cities core or the periphery. A common occurrence in developing cities of the South, nonetheless these informal neighbourhoods could represent the answer for the arrival cities also in the North.

The article initially discusses the apparent contradiction between planning and informality and the embarrassing tension created by Saunders appraisal of informal

ethnic neighbourhoods that exemplifies both the interest and the risk of adopting a 'southern' view on 'northern' issues (Cremaschi & Lieto, 2020).

Second, the article contextualizes the specific features of the Italian case and in particular whether migrants and refugees share the same space and the same spatial logic. The following sections present two studies: The first study addresses the emerging practices of welcoming refugees in Milan; the second one presents the local arrangements of migrants and foreign-born residents in the case of a small town on the outskirts of Rome. Both cases have a form of sustained informal production of arrival space in common; however, they represent two different facets of it. In conclusion, the article suggests a critique of the model of the arrival neighbourhood and the need for urban planners to develop a better understanding of the regulation of informal welcoming.

2. Planning, Informality and Immersion

Although arrival neighbourhoods are often considered as low-cost settlements, it is hard to consider them as the result of a spontaneous movement of citizens who re-appropriate urban spaces, or secluded political space, naïvely excluded from all political transactions. As argued by Hall (2013), global immigration has rapidly changed urban neighbourhoods, which are becoming increasingly diverse and transnational (Ley, 2004), sometimes challenging social cohesion (Phillips, 2006).

This article analyses such process of change, the establishment of novel routines, in two case-studies of arrival space considering various political, technical and social dimensions: actors involved in creating such arrival spaces, define, adapt and negotiate 'projects' based upon capacities as well as materiality and uses. Even more importantly, public and community actors—NGOs, associations, activists—have strongly interacted with migrants, inhabitants, policymakers, addressing all the usual resources and constraints of the social and material assemblage of different actors. The analysis is aimed at understanding the emergence of novel practices and how the actors related to each other. We explore the different forms of planned and informal developments that are involved. In this sense, informal projects are not the opposite of a plan or a project; they rather disclose and explode the contingencies that characterise all planning processes.

Planning scholars have become increasingly concerned with informality, acknowledging the structural role it plays in the economic and urban development processes (Cremaschi & Lieto, 2020). Widely studied in the global south (Roy, 2005), it is still often considered as marginal in the north, apart from a few historical cases. In particular, it is useful to consider "a multidimensional 'continuum' between more formal and more informal neighbourhoods" (Altrock, 2012, p. 187). In this approach, we consider that the "discrepancy between the regulative system and its implementation" (Altrock,

2012) make possible both bottom-up and Do-It-Yourself (DIY) activities.

Selected cases are emblematic of different types of arrival neighbourhoods. Rome and Milan are the main metropolitan areas in Italy. Both entail multifaceted arrival practices, from the inclusion of foreign-born residents to the reception of new arrivals. Moreover, unlike arrival neighbourhoods' literature, which has long focused exclusively on big cities and thus ignored the dynamics at the fringe of urban zones, they allow us to look at two how the practices of a whole series of actors constitute 'arrival infrastructures' (Schrooten & Meeus, 2019) in both the core and fringe of urban zones.

These cases, even if seemingly diverse, highlight a peculiarity of Italian policies for migrants: a lack of interest from national bodies and the outsourcing of settlement and welfare policies to local authorities and civil society's organisations (Caponio, 2008). Whereas sometimes such responsibilities are entrusted directly to local authorities, more often the civil society activates spontaneously to fill the gaps left by the national government (Caponio, 2008). Against this backdrop, these two cases allow us to shed light on the forms of informal activation from civil society actors: On the one hand there are NGOs, ethnic organisations and voluntary associations that put in place informal but organized bottom-up practices; on the other hand, individuals or groups who mobilized through DIY practices of use of space.

The two case studies are the result of an in-depth ethnographic immersion work parallel to two doctoral studies (Albanese, 2016; Artero, 2019). The intermix of these two cases represents an example of purposive settings sampling (Gobo, 2008), with the juxtaposition of sites with particular and complementary attributes (see also next section). The Milan case accented the interpretive aspect and the immersion; the Roman case investigated materials and sites involved and the relationship actors they established in assembling the situation. The methodology of the case study is based in both cases on overt observation in loco and in-depth interviews with volunteers and operators. The empirical materials draw mainly from interviews with key informants that are people who have first-hand knowledge. The selection process identified and solicited the input of a wide range of informants: migrants and residents, as well as local decision-makers, and members of local voluntary groups. In particular, the fieldwork in Marcellina, that took place between 2014 and 2015, enabled us to gather materials from 15 interviews with informants whereas Milan's case is based on in loco observations during the summer of 2015 and interviews with 11 experts conducted between 2017 and 2018. The understanding of the relationships between the participants derives from the interpretation that the authors of the interviews made of the case study and the materials collected. To this aim, we adopt an 'immersive' point of view that acknowledges that such space is the outcome of the interactive and recursive practical engagement of field workers, activists,

migrants themselves as well as a variety of street-level bureaucrats and policymakers. In other words, we adopt a 'political ethnography' approach (Dubois, 2015) that focuses intentionally on situations to uncover the situated construction of broader categories and practices. Ethnography allows in fact for an understanding of how categories, like legal norms and political directives, are translated into actions and, the other way round, of how practices can inform our knowledge about issues, standards and procedures (not only in the informal domain). The adjective 'political' points to the collective dimension and the interaction between a plurality of actors, and the structured character of the arena that is neither independent from interests nor excluded from the competition for public resources.

3. Working Definitions: Migrants and Refugees

Geographers have insisted on the difference between the spatial behaviour and patterns of diverse groups of migrants, forced migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Though most live in large cities, an increasing number is now located in either small cities or the countryside (Balbo, 2015). Italy has a particular, hybrid organisation of the reception system, based upon a mix of central and local actors, both public and private. This is a crucial question from the Arrival concept. For instance, migrants tend to disperse spontaneously, following a general trend in suburbanizing and the offer of housing; while the relocation of refugees and asylum seekers is a specific policy objective and follows national criteria and directives. Thus, the spatial coincidence of refugees and migrants in the same neighbourhood, a basic tenet of the concept of the arrival neighbourhood, is far from guaranteed.

The label of 'migrants and refugees' is often blurred and the exercise in categorizing is awkwardly incomplete. Combining diverse criteria, a distinction is often made among foreign-born residents, asylum seekers (or refugees) and undocumented migrants, which allows for a better understanding of their distinctive geographies. Scholars have criticised this distinction (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018), as people can belong to more than one category or move from one to another. Labels are the result of states controlling national boundaries (Agier & Madeira, 2017). However, a provisional distinction can be useful for defining the logic of territorialisation:

1) Refugees, including asylum seekers: The first term indicates people who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, are outside their country of nationality, while the latter refers precisely to those who undertake the process of formal determination of their refugee status (EMN, 2014).
2) Statistically, migrants, or foreign-born residents, are those having resided in a foreign country for more than one year for all combined reasons, often because of the search for a better job and access to welfare.

Italy occupies a specific place in this double transition: foreign-born residents are five million, about 8.5% of the total population, half of whom originated from European countries. Romania, notably, after joining the European Union in 2007, became the first country of origin (in 2019, 23% of foreign residents were Romanians). Italy is however characterized by a scarce presence of large cohesive ethnic communities.

In Milan and Rome, the average proportion of migrants is 14,5% and 12,8%; however, more than 50% of foreign-born residents live in smaller municipalities (Balbo, 2015). This new geographic location of migrants partially follows a suburbanization process that pushes a slice of the population towards the smaller metropolitan municipalities (Albanese, 2016), and partially a ruralization process that sees the insertion of many foreigners in the 'fragile areas' (Osti & Ventura, 2012).

Contrariwise, compared to most other European countries, the migrants' inflows coincide with the restructuring and the crisis of the Italian industrial model. Flows are not (anymore) commanded by firms and industrial jobs, as they were in the post-war period when migration was mainly an interregional process. Of late, economic pull-push factors and the rural industrial divide seem less influential on the global movement of international migrants (Pastore & Ponzo, 2012). The access to jobs in all sectors, from care to commerce and agriculture, rely mostly upon urban ethnic networks. The particularity of immigration in Italy, therefore, leads to the definition of different insertion models, due in part to specific geographical characteristics (Pugliese, 2002). In addition to being more attractive in economic-working terms, medium and small municipalities are more porous and welcoming. Regardless of national governance levels and policies, it is usually the responsibility of the municipalities to help the refugees with housing, education, jobs, integration etc. Overall, the governance system and the public discourse are particularly weak and contradictory, with a strong divide apparent between the largely national (anti)immigration policies, and the often mainly local welcome initiatives (Balbo, 2015; Caponio, Jubany Baucells, & Güell, 2016).

At the same time, some notable initiatives at the local level have reached significant success, like those launched by the Protection Service for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) intending to aid refugee integration in the local community. The article now introduces two different cases, one about refugees in the metropolitan core of Milan, the other about migrants in a small municipality at the metropolitan fringe of Rome.

4. Refugees In Milan: From the Bottom Up

With a population of 1.4 million, Milan is Italy's second-largest city. Capital of the Lombardy region, since the 1980s it witnessed a rapid growth of the foreign population, now accounting for about 20%. The recent arrival of refugees has further strengthened the relation-

ship between Milan and international migration. Indeed, from 2011 to 2017 there was a particularly high influx of refugees, during the so-called 'refugee crisis.' Some arrived 'formally,' by following their distribution in national asylum system reception centres, as decided by national and local authorities; most, however, arrived more spontaneously to Milan's Central Railway Station, along the transit route from Southern Italy to Central Europe. In this period, the city of Milan assisted roughly 170,000 refugees coming primarily from Syria and Eritrea (Artero, 2019).

Under the incitement of an 'emergency,' Milan developed and structured its welfare sector to accommodate up to 2,000 people a day, during which Milan emerged as an 'avant-garde' for migrant integration (Bazurli, 2019). This 'Milan model' spread internationally and depicted Milan's response as resulting from the local administration's determination to tackle effectively the 'refugee question,' with a municipal delegation invited to the European Parliament (Bazurli, 2019). However, the 'Milan model' mostly represents the accomplishment of the efforts and expectations of a set of actors in a constant discussion (also with disapproving tones) with the local administration. Some guiding principles and operational strategies were, indeed, shaped by and even introduced 'from below' (Artero, 2019), through a series of networks of actors constituted by pro-migrant supporters of various kinds (from NGOs to political activists) activated at different scales.

Importantly for us, supporters' groups operated and even emerged at the micro-scale. During the en-masse arrival of refugees, many of these grassroots associations, volunteer groups and civil society networks mobilised to assist incoming migrants in particular neighbourhoods of the city. Alone they were just 'minor' expressions of solidarity but taken together formed infrastructure of welcome, less formalised than the one constituted by the Municipality but equally important, shedding light on the critical role that urban neighbourhoods have for migration dynamics. Refugees' visible presence in public spaces has provoked expressions of discontent by some residents and shopkeepers. At the same time, Milan's neighbourhoods have also proved to be able to represent welcoming contexts. In particular, the strong presence of bottom-up social capital in some of these areas have been capable of creating a certain degree of 'solidarity' toward the newcomers, that expressed through the activation of groups of residents or local associations—groups that confronted the mounting discontent, in some cases successfully (Bazurli, 2019).

In what follows, we illustrate the successful case of Porta Venezia, a historical neighbourhood near Milan's centre. Porta Venezia is an 'antique' arrival neighbourhood, the point of reference for Eritrean exiles in the 1970s, which thanks to a strange 'alliance' of descendants of those Eritreans and Ethiopians who first arrived in this neighbourhood in the 1970s and the middle class that inhabits now this part of the city proved to be able

to regain its function of welcome space. What is more, Porta Venezia is paradigmatic of how the welcome of refugees is not simply 'given' or bestowed, but is actively 'made' from the 'bottom-up' initiatives in neighbourhoods that embody the idea of cities as "strategic frontier zone for those who lack power" (Sassen, 2013, p. 67). The arrival of refugees produced tensions as well as the activation of a set of refugee supporters that confronted the strong discontent by some residents and shopkeepers, envisioned a route to refugees' reception opposing the securitisation of the neighbourhood, and tried to act as an interlocutor with the local administration.

4.1. Porta Venezia: The Neighbourhood and the Contention over the Public Space

Located just north of Milan's historic centre, Porta Venezia is an important shopping area and the city's 'gay village.' Thanks to large affordable housing stock, this neighbourhood represented Milan's arrival neighbourhood for the first Eritrean migrants in the 1970s. Even today, although gentrified, Porta Venezia retains a certain recognition as the heart of the Eritrean community in Milan (Arnone, 2010). This neighbourhood, indeed, has been the target of economic and symbolic investment for Eritreans and Ethiopians, with the opening of many ethnic shops and restaurants flanking their 'Italian' counterparts.

During the so-called 'refugee crisis,' from 2013 to 2016, furthermore, Porta Venezia has assumed an important role in the geography of migration. Italy was affected by a surge of seaborne migration that brought many people to its coast and among them also a significant number of Eritreans and Ethiopians. Milan was an important stopover for thousands of refugees from Eritrea who were waiting to leave and continue to Central Europe— a waiting period that many Eritrean refugees used to spend in Porta Venezia (Grimaldi, 2016). Following on the steps of their predecessors, in effect, Eritrean refugees were attracted to Porta Venezia hoping the informal ethnic networks could help them to find accommodation and orientation. The ethnic community was unable to 'absorb' the unparalleled number of newcomers (reaching 300 a day) (Grimaldi, 2016). In a short period, the public spaces became crammed with de facto refugees, meaning refugees who have not yet undertaken the process of formal determination of their refugee status, who usually escaped from reception facilities and were without a place to sleep. In particular, 'taking advantage' of its public nature, refugees utilised the nearby park as shelter. Thus, full of people, the flowerbeds along Viale Vittorio Veneto became dotted by makeshift beds. Porta Venezia, and in particular the green area surrounding the Viale, soon became the stage of a 'battle' between an association of local shopkeepers and residents, who argued that the use of the public spaces should be forbidden to vagrant refugees, and pro-migrants groups.

As advanced by Brivio (2013), the social use of public spaces by immigrants, that is divergent from that of the Italians, often causes outcry and exacerbates the stigma on migrants. In this case, some the residents and Italian shopkeepers vocally expressed their anger toward the use that Eritrean refugees made of the park. They promoted an anti-immigrant initiative, led by members of the League Party, and a neighbourhood watch initiative, 'infiltrated' by right-wing politicians; they also requested the deployment of police agents to prevent refugees from sleeping out within the neighbourhood. While the municipality limited its response to acquiesce to security-driven demands, the work of assistance was delegated to civil society groups, in particular to a group constituted mainly by second-generation young Eritreans with links with far-left activism (a group that later on became formally established as Cambio Passo, henceforth CP) and to volunteers linked to local parishes and led by members of Sant'Egidio (SE), a well-known catholic voluntary organisation. This situation of indolence from the municipality is well-painted by Zeghé, one of the leaders of CP, when remembering the context of their initial intervention:

> For us, the inability of the municipality to talk with local leaders of the Eritrean population was depressing. [At that time], the municipality's only interlocutors were some residents and shopkeepers with a strong demand for securitarian interventions….So much so that the only action from the municipality was to send in policemen to move migrants off of certain streets. With no noticeable results, since migrants temporarily moved to return to their previous location.

Both CP and SE were engaged in offering humanitarian assistance to the migrants in Porta Venezia: mainly food, clothes, and accommodation for the fortunate few. These activities were at first mainly carried out in the space of contention, the public gardens where refugees used to spend the night and from which anti-immigrant groups wanted them removed. Soon, however, they aimed to spread their activities throughout the area and involve as many residents as possible. One of them is Caterina, a long-standing resident of Porta Venezia that joined the volunteers of SE. She recalls the outcry that the presence of many black men generated in the area:

> There were many hostile people among the residents that organised the distribution of flyers here. They said that migrants were too many, that they carry some serious disease….But I think that the main problem was the fact of being young men, young black men in particular.

As observed by Amin (2013), due to 'phenotypical racism,' the visible nature of migrants often fosters the perception of socio-geographical 'transgression' at the local level. The visibility of migrants' presence as well as

the work of assistance carried out by civil-society groups, however, represented also a trigger for many residents to join CP and SE. To promote a virtuous circle, residents were involved not only in humanitarian relief but also in activities whose goal was self-promotion and recruitment of new volunteers. Caterina recalls, for example, the neighbourhood festival that she organised with other volunteers. This work of "solidarity-spawning"—as it was called by Luca, the leader of SE—pursued also another goal: dampening the hostility and getting residents' and policymakers' consensus by showing the welcoming spirit of the neighbourhood.

4.2. The Strategic Alliance in Porta Venezia: Local Actors and Political Negotiations

As illustrated above, the joint efforts of CP and SE made possible the arrangement of a set of services aiming at satisfying refugees' basic needs and easing the tension in the neighbourhood. These actions, however, saw the acquiescence of the city government that at first adopted a strategy of tolerance and then expressed active support. In effect, providing voluntary services and obtaining permission for neighbourhood festivals required extensive negotiations. In particular, strategic considerations drove mutual interactions between CP and SE, on the one side, and the local politicians, on the other; such negotiations brought together an alliance that strengthened each other's positions in the face of an otherwise hostile environment. In Porta Venezia, these groups used different tactics to get the attention of the municipality and public opinion; tactics as the ones described by Luca:

> Our first goal is to interest residents and parishioners….This is fundamental since the involvement of volunteers outside our organisation is a means to generate further solidarity. For this, we appeal to the city as a whole, through interviews with newspapers and interventions in media outlets.

Against this backdrop, claims have moved from the 'level of the street' to the institutional level. The city government first legitimised some CB and SE demands, once the municipality started considering them as valid interlocutors. This introduced an important shift in the municipality's action, from a securitarian to a more humanitarian approach. As narrated by Zeghé, indeed, the municipality limited the deployment of police officers and started to meet (partially) the demands for the provision of services to migrants as expressed by the civil-society groups:

> Our demands to the municipality were for more services: more public toilets, more cleaning services, and presence of Eritrean mediators that inform and orient migrants. This when the dominant frame was securitarian….Over time, however, the municipality has increased the services for refugees, starting with more toilets and the assistance of Eritrean mediators.

What is more, while adopting a confrontational attitude toward the Municipality, CP and its leader, Zeghé, sustained continuous dialogue with the municipality, showing a partial success. CP, for example, actively campaigned for two initiatives endorsed subsequently by the city government: the opening of the city's reception centres to Eritrean de facto refugees and the establishment of a 'reception hub' from which to manage incoming people. In the accounts of interviewees, in this period the pro-migrant movements of the city felt encouraged to upscale their demands: CB, for example, endorsed the emerging local branch of No One is Illegal movement and its precise requests for a change in national and local policies on asylum.

At the same time, in such favourable contexts, the municipality has felt legitimised by a large sector of the civil society in articulating a line conflicting with national positions. Indeed, albeit the central government was also led by PD, the same centre-left party, its Milanese branch has most often maintained a pro-migrant stance while the national government took an increasingly restrictive approach. As a result, its local leaders felt isolated; as revealed by a public official, "since…the national government did not understand nor reply," Milan resolved to maintain a pro-migrant stance.

Ultimately, the pressure on the city government enacted by committees, groups and supporters in different neighbourhoods of the city (in particular, other than Porta Venezia, in the district of Ghisolfa and Central Station; see Artero, 2019; Bazurli, 2019) pushed the municipal agenda closer to their demands and proved critical for shaping the response of Milan to the arrival of refugees. Though Saunders (2010) depicts arrival spaces as rather spontaneous, neighbourhoods like Porta Venezia indicate how arrival neighbourhoods are the outcome of the interactions of a variety of actors with projects—the arrangements of political negotiations, rather than the triumph of informality. Besides, the events following the en-masse arrival of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in Porta Venezia have shown how urban neighbourhoods can (re)turn into welcoming sites for migrants by establishing new connections and alliances.

This example, set in the metropolitan core of Milan, illustrated the important function that social network and civil society exerted on the forging of arrival contexts. In the next section, we will focus, instead, on an arrival context in the eastern metropolitan area of Rome. Public space in it is seen as an opportunity for informal gatherings and exchanges, creating, therefore, a chance for stronger inter-ethnic bonds.

5. Migrants in Rome and DIY Urban Spaces

Rome, capital of Italy and the Lazio region, contains the second-highest number of migrants (after Lombardy) with 683,000 foreign-born residents in 2019. The province of Rome (now a Metropolitan City) hosts 82% of the regional foreign-born population. During the last twenty years, the attractive role of the city has decreased favouring suburbanization towards the small municipalities, as much as towards the other Provinces. The centrifugal movement of migrants and the decentralization process is a widespread phenomenon throughout the country, as demonstrated by the growing amount of empirical research that focused on the settlement of those foreign-born in small and medium-sized Italian suburban centres (Balbo, 2015; Fioretti, 2016) and no longer only those in large urban centres.

Public and collective spaces are important assets in contemporary cities for promoting the daily encounter among diverse people. Urban space is one of the main places of visible coexistence. However, it emerges from literature and field research the great importance of every public space in social inclusion processes due to the creation of positive relationships between natives and new arrivals (Fincher & Iveson, 2008). The public space which will be referred to later includes both open urban spaces and welfare spaces. Scholarly research emphasises the importance of 'welfare spaces' concerning the issue of migration (Fioretti, 2016); indeed, public facilities and open spaces open to dialogue and recognition of differences, playing a key role in building up a shared feeling of citizenship. Besides, migrants tend to revitalize some abandoned urban contexts, not only by taking over jobs which Italians no longer want but also by proposing new uses of the public space (Briata, 2014).

In the following case, some DIY activities of use and re-use of spaces are presented. The label of DIY urbanism includes different practices, from flash mobs to squatters' movements (Iveson, 2013). Migrants take it upon themselves to shape the places they need either in a DIY way or in the form of more organised self-help urbanism. In the same vein, informal housing has alternatively adopted the model of collective movements or individual mobilisation (Cremaschi, 2020).

5.1. Between Suburbs and Countryside

In this section, we illustrate the case of Marcellina, a small town with a population of 7,000, in the eastern metropolitan area of Rome, 37 km from the capital that hosts a large number of migrants. Marcellina is indeed one of the municipalities in the Lazio Region with the highest incidence of foreigners (nearly 20%) of which approximately 80% are of Romanian origin and mainly arrived before 2007. Their presence is largely due to the greater access to the local labour market and affordable housing options. But it is also due to its proximity to Rome and the convenient railway connection to the second most important station in the city. In recent years, the emerging and most prominent issue is certainly that of refugees and asylum seekers reception. Even Marcellina has been involved by hosting a small reception centre.

Beyond the thorny management of the recent refugee crisis, the local administration of Marcellina

seemed unable to promote social inclusion even of those migrants, such as Romanians, who have been living in Italy for decades and are experiencing a more stable phase in their settlement process (compared to newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers). As often happens, Romanians living in Marcellina have kept the jobs abandoned by Italians. According to interviews and the available information, men usually have started as agricultural workers and they have then moved on to the more profitable building and construction sector (nowadays about 90% of the Romanian residents of Marcellina work in these sectors); women, instead, mostly work as caregivers, also due to the lack of recognition in Italy of degrees and qualifications obtained in Romania.

Even in the locational choice, they seem to fill in Italian's blanks: Many Romanian families live in the small historical centre, reusing empty housing units, as publicly described by Pietro Nicotera, the centre-right mayor in 2015:

> The apartments in the historical centre of Marcellina were rented by Romanian citizens. They have restructured them. They concentrated right in the historical centre for two reasons: First, some houses were uninhabited; and secondly, these are old buildings and therefore the prices are more accessible. In general, however, there is no concentration of immigrants in some areas, such as ghettos. Furthermore, we are currently renovating the facades of the historic centre.

The concentration of foreigners in the run-down centre, despite not being such a thing as a ghetto or ethnic neighbourhood, has still resulted in growing stigmatisation and division between migrants and indigenous population. Moreover, although the families who settled in the historical centre have renovated and maintained—often informally—the abandoned houses, however, for the work done by the public administration on the facades, there was no involvement of the residents and no collaboration has been promoted by the administration. In this case, the dialogue between formal and informal is made of silent indifference between actors: The mayor ignores the work of migrants and they rearrange the houses with DIY solutions. The difficulties encountered in the process of inclusion of migrants are tangible (Albanese, 2016). They strongly depend on the social and economic dynamics that affect in turn the intercultural relations, and on the peculiarity of the territorial and urban fabric of the small town. Marcellina is stuck in between metropolitan growth and rural decline, not yet a suburb but no longer a small town. It could be considered as a dormitory suburb where public urban spaces are not well frequented and there is a lack of spaces for aggregation.

Below three examples of significant public space (a church, a square and a sort of park) are presented. These are useful for debate about the role of space's materiality and those of the local actors dealing (or not)

with social inclusion. The first example highlights that when public authorities are absent or unable to meet the specific needs of foreign-born residents, other actors come into play as supporters. Indeed, for their own specific needs, migrants often resort to DIY solutions. For instance, the large local community sought to identify an appropriate place for the Romanian Orthodox Church. Proving the administration, however, unable to respond adequately, the Orthodox congregation rented and redecorated a garage to celebrate their functions, as remembered by the Orthodox priest of Marcellina:

> Initially we celebrated mass in the municipal library. This space was made available by the Municipality [also thanks to the intervention of the Romanian municipal councillor]. However, the space was inadequate and we still had to pay the rent. We asked the municipality to sell us land where we could build a church. But he told us that there are none. So we, the Romanian Orthodox community, rented a garage with our money and set it up like a church.

As mentioned by the priest, Marcellina for two years (2009–2011) had an elected municipal councillor of Romanian origin, Leontina Ionescu. She was elected in a centre-left civic list and she was the first Romanian-born councillor in Italy. Although her election may seem an opportunity, actually Ionescu dealt mainly with legal and social counselling for individuals. Little was done for the community and its need for public spaces during the short time she was in charge. Despite the presence of a foreign-born member in the municipal administration, local public policies remain inadequate to address the specific needs of the foreign-born population, making DIY practices necessary.

The second public space considered is Piazza 4 Novembre, the central square of Marcellina. Public spaces in town are often abandoned or underused, even though Marcellina is not suffering from depopulation. The central square, due to an unfortunate rearrangement of the 1990s and the displacement of the market that was held there every week, is today stripped of its social and urban functions. This space is mainly used by Romanian mothers and their children when leaving the adjacent primary school, a rare possibility of exchange with other parents of different nationalities. Although they did not declare an interest in using such space, Italian mothers displayed intolerance towards Romanian women, accusing them of spending too much time sitting on benches. Some Romanian women interviewed in the square, have reported the discomfort caused to them by these discriminations:

> The four of us…meet here in the square when the children come out of school and, when possible, we stay a little outdoors with them. It is something that Italian mothers rarely do. However, even this simple habit has created tensions with local women who complain

that they never find free benches because they are occupied by Romanian women. For us, this square is the only place where we can be together.

This woman's words highlight the fact that, as Valentine (2008) underlines, mere proximity does not suffice to generate social relations and change, while 'meaningful contact' is needed. A common sense of belonging can be fostered, for instance, via playgrounds where parents from different backgrounds can meet each other and share common needs and concerns. In doing so, they can overcome prejudices. Unfortunately, playgrounds in Marcellina are either degraded or in peripheral areas of town.

To overcome this lack of public spaces and nice parks, the foreign-born residents of Marcellina have the habit of spending Sundays and holidays in a few clearings in the nearby mountain woods, named Prati Favale—this is the third example—where the public space is used in a similar way to that of some large parks and gardens in Rome. As Peters, Elands, and Buijs (2010) states, parks can play a positive role in building interactions between different groups and in building social cohesion and cooperation. However, strangely enough, Prati Favale is almost exclusively frequented by the foreign population (mainly Romanians, but also Moldovans). A Romanian woman described the situation as follows:

> Today is the day of Orthodox Easter….Many Romanians went to celebrate it by picnicking on the mountain because we have a strong bond with the countryside and nature….During the rest of the year, on Sunday, many Romanians go to barbecue….There was an equipped area, with benches and more, but someone destroyed it. Some say it is the fault of some Romanians who got drunk; but also some Italian boys from Marcellina often spend the nights there drinking.

Although uninterested in using mountain meadows, the locals restrain from barbequing and listening to music in the open air, habits that also generate growing friction. Frictions occurred when the alternative use that Romanians propose deviated from the habits of the natives, and were perceived as inappropriate (Brivio, 2013). This demonstrates how cohabitation is a question related to the use and appropriation of spaces by different populations (Tosi, 1998).

Finally, it is believed that the flexibility of public spaces, their opening to different and multiple uses, is a requirement for them to be capable of offering opportunities for meeting and therefore the possibility of creating inter-ethnic bonds (Fioretti, 2013). A flexibility that is expressed in the reception of different activities, and the ability to accommodate functions not foreseen at the start. Immigration, like all social phenomena, is in fact in constant evolution, and continually proposes new needs to which urban policies and public space must respond. Lacking dedicated local public policies, these are only DIY spaces: A few Romanians residents occupied and partially restored some buildings in the historic centre, reused public urban spaces (square and parks) and converted a garage to a church. While these actions respond somehow to direct group or individual needs of the foreign-born population, they did not interact with the local natives.

6. Discussion and Conclusion: Regulating the Arrival Places

This article engaged with two Italian 'arrival neighbourhood' to explore the emerging practices of welcome and inclusion of refugees and migrants. Mixing civil society or the state, the Italian model of reception emphasizes the interrelations among actors that lay at the core of the 'infrastructuring practices' (Schrooten & Meeus, 2019). Different social-cultural contexts and degrees of metropolitan centrality influenced our cases. However, we noted several similarities.

Different forms of mobilization occur in the metropolitan core and the periphery. Milan constitutes a temporary entry point for refugees thanks to the bottom-up mobilisation of social actors; migrants' associations were involved and groups of supporters have not only taken action to welcome newly arrived people but also forged an alliance with formal authorities.

Rome instantiates the occasional outcome of incremental and individual DIY involvements in a peripheral location that play the role of arrival contexts for stable settlement. In Rome, the migrants themselves are the ones setting up the spaces they need pursuing individual forms of 'self-urbanism.' DIY shows that immigrants invest in public space as well as in housing and jobs. As Finn (2014) notes, DIY offers quick and sometimes innovative solutions to urban issues rather than a long-term answer. However, individuals and small groups match needs and actions giving both strength and some sort of legitimacy to their claims.

Both cases share forms of spatial 'porosity': Even though in different stages of the migration process (transit or settlement), both Eritrean refugees and Romanian migrants tend to slip into interstitial spaces, public ones or housing, taking possession of them and sometimes reinterpreting their meanings. Such 'transgressive' use of spaces led to conflicts with the local population, such as residents and Italian shopkeepers in the green area of Porta Venezia, or Italian mothers in the central square of Marcellina. These conflicts need attention and mediation since people in receiving areas are potentially equally deprived (Eckardt, 2018).

Some actors played the role of supporter for the reception and socio-spatial inclusion, such as CP and SE in Porta Venezia, or the orthodox priest and the Romanian councillor in Marcellina. A strong set of regulation, almost unexpectedly, fostered some forms of compensation and stabilisation between formal and informal arrangements,

seen more clearly in the difficult case of Milan, but also in an 'ordinary' way in the suburban Roman case.

The model of the arrival city correctly pinpoints the informal aspects of the spatial arrangements that foster complementary initiatives of integration: Informality, however, hardly applies at the level of policy-making. Thus, this article suggests a major limitation of the model when it implies both informal place and informal governance. We suggest instead that the 'arrival city' is not a natural output of informal arrangements; it results from the situated political arrangement of different actors in neither a random nor determined way.

These arrangements and the lack of planning do not necessitate that practices are not regulated, as the Italian mixed reception system has shown. They rather bourgeon when social actors activate novel practices and governments do not implement their regulatory powers. Actors engaging in welcoming practices interact with political institutions, bending regulation in one sense or the other. Thus, informal practices shape and channel the process of arrival and, at the same time, the forms of regulation. In doing so, they explode the political contingencies that characterise all planning processes.

This is even more important when planners are facing elusive and normative aims as hospitality. In supporting arrival places, we have argued that urban planners should learn from practices and their capacity to shape arrival and be careful in praising the arrival model as if self-generated practices and self-urbanism were always successful and sustainable.

Building on recent debates on urban planning and informality, we argue that urban planning should consider these practices to learn how to better shape and regulate arrival places. This probably requires repositioning planning between formal and informal practices (Cremaschi & Lieto, 2020). Adding to this literature, our argument emphasizes that both social interactions and the 'institutional memory' of places shape these practices informally; however, these latter are not the result of a 'natural' process. The risk is in fact that cities and planning feel exempted of taking sides in the process of arrival, the issues at stake being how, and not if, to intervene.

Urban planners can learn several lessons. First, the doorway between formal and informal regulations is never secured, and passages are frequent; hence the need to monitor and interpret these doings. Second, access to basic or secondary resources take always place somewhere, often encroaching upon the public space; the regulation of public space is, therefore, a key in shaping welcome practices. This is even more important when considering that public space is often subject to general and abstract design rules that rarely adapt to rapidly emerging needs. Third, as the Italian case shows, informal practices pop up in different social and physical settings, making it hard to define ex-ante the ideal features of an arrival district. Hence the importance of delving into bottom-up and DIY urbanism as sensors of both latent conflicts and possible solutions.

Informal and formal regulation are both at work in the arrival spaces that respond to different logics of action: New regulatory patterns result from the cooperation between local and political actors that produce empowering, fit-for-size regulation. The 'arrival city' requires regulation, though a specific, empowering one.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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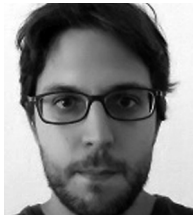
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