



SSIIM UNESCO CHAIR

On Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants – Urban Policies and Practice

The right to adequate housing of migrants factsheets

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THE NON-ACCESS TO FORMAL HOUSING: VIA ANELLI AS AN INFORMAL HOUSING POLICING

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The right to adequate housing for migrants - factsheets

The right to adequate housing for migrants is a series of thematic factsheets on migrants' level of access to adequate shelter in different urban contexts. Written by academic researchers and experts solicited by SSIIM UNESCO Chair, the factsheets were aimed at providing background information for the 2010 Report of UN-Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Dr. Raquel Rolnik.

Besides presenting the picture of the overall housing situation of migrants in the concerned contexts, authors were asked to highlight what the conditions of international migrants (regular and undocumented) are with respect to

- access to public housing and/or government subsidies
- access to housing loans
- access to the private housing market (discriminatory attitudes)
- inclusion into regularization and land tenure policies (if any, highlighting whether it is a local or a central government policy)

Authors were also invited to underline whether differences in policies/attitudes between local (poor) population (including rural-urban migrants) and international migrants are put in place and if any particularly interesting policy is being implemented that could be pointed out as innovative example.

Through the network of the partner universities, research centres and other relevant actors, SSIIM UNESCO Chair on Social and Spatial Inclusion of International Migrants - Urban Policies and Practices aims at:

- Identifying policies and practices that promote the urban inclusion of international migrants
- Supporting local governments in shaping adequate actions to foster effective urban governance and the social/spatial integration of international migrants
- Disseminating the experiences that can provide ground for effective policy exchange (good practices)
- Raising the awareness of policy-makers and the civil society at large, on the importance of international migrants' urban social and spatial inclusion

Being an immigrant in Italy has very different meanings according to regions and cities. Such variations result from the deep differences existing among local systems of governance, paradigm of local policies and differences relating to the migrants' presence (i.e circular migration, permanent migration). In 2002, 56.8% of all migrants lived in the North, 29.1% in the Centre, only 13.4% had settled in the South and the islands. At the beginning of 2008, the share of the North had increased to two thirds of registered migrants. The North-East hosts a large share of the migrant population in the country (26,9%), almost 2 out of 5 living in the main cities of the three regions composing the North-East. The foreign population in the area accounts for 8.1% of the total population and 7.2% of urban residents (Caritas Migrantes Report, 2008).

As far as Padova is concerned, currently there are approximately 27.000 foreign migrants (14.000 of whom are women) compared to less than 20.000 in 2006, representing more than 10% of the total urban population. Data available for 2006 and 2007 provide the share of nationalities among the different areas of the city. The northern districts host the largest percentage of migrants (27%), followed by the south-eastern neighborhoods (19%) and those to the east (18%). The spatial distribution of migrants in the city varies widely: compared to an average of approximately 10% foreign residents in Padova, in the northern districts immigrants represent 15,7% of the total population of the area. The largest share of Moroccans live in the eastern part (29,4% of the total population) while Nigerians concentrate in the northern (26,7%) as well as the eastern neighborhoods (23%).

1. The material re-production of Via Anelli neighbourhood

The Serenissima Residence, in Via Anelli, in the eastern part of the city, was built some thirty years ago as a residence for university students, with almost thirty square meters flats. The small flats were intended to satisfy the needs of students as well as temporary workers in a city where the rental market is particularly tight due to the insufficient supply of low-cost housing. In the Eighties, housing prices in the central areas of Padova, as in most of the cities in Italy, were falling for the lack of public investment in the older parts of the city and the lack of housing maintenance. As a result students started moving to the city centre, and 60% of the apartments in Via Anelli were put up for sale. By the beginning of the Nineties, a high percentage of international migrants arriving in Padova started to settle in Via Anelli, sharing apartments in the Residence, starting a process of population substitution (migrants Vs italian students) that in only five years ended up with the Serenissima Residence being totally inhabited by international migrants. In 2003 there were 900 international migrants and 300 temporary hosts (people using Via Anelli as temporary accommodation) (Padova Police Department, 2003). Between 1998 and 2003, 813 people applied for a flat in Via Anelli, 90% of them being migrants. Based on residence permits in 2003, 32% of the residents were Nigerians and 31% Moroccans.

The possibility of co-sharing the flat, reducing the cost of renting, was highly attractive particularly for incoming migrants who did not have any other alternative for housing. Together with this process of "ethnicisation" of the neighborhood, the cost of the flats started to fall. In 1997 a flat in the Serenissima Residence could be sold for 45-50 million Italian liras, 50% less its 1989's value: in the year 2000 prices were 80% down. However, by renting out to several renters, owners could still get a significant amount of money from their flats even though the building's values were continually going down. In the same period the area had become a magnet for prostitution and drug dealing, as well as a target for police patrols and raids. In 2001 a new police station was established next to Via Anelli, while Italian families living in the areas next to the Serenissima Residence started moving out, contributing to the process of residential substitution. The reference to Bronx when speaking of Via Anelli became widespread, both in the media and in the common city jargon. The urban stigma conveyed Via Anelli inhabitants as criminals: those who lived in the Residence became invisible in the urban imaginary and

the media started to focus on Via Anelli, highlighting its features as a core of illegal and criminal activities.

2. The social re-production of Via Anelli neighbourhood

Via Anelli is a clear example of such social phenomenon as an "ethnically oriented" neighbourhood that coincides temporally with the intensification of migratory flows coming to Italy. In other words some immigrants settled in via Anelli after searching for housing in other parts of Padova. However most migrants knew before they started their migratory journey that they were going to end up in Via Anelli as a safe place where to receive the support of fellow citizens, in terms of working protection in situations of illegality. This process highlights the importance of migration networks in determining their migratory choices and consequently in shaping their position within the host society. Via Anelli was also known as a resource in terms of informal activities: some apartments were used as bar-restaurants and a barber was working on the stairs of one of the buildings. Via Anelli simply confirms "the fundamental contribution of migrant community networks in determining some stages of the migration process" (Mezzadra, 2004) both for the newcomers and for the channel of information for the would- be migrants.

To this extent, where migrants policies are fragile, mutual help networks are the sole response to the needs of migrants, particularly when settling for the first time. In recent years, national immigration policies have increasingly focused on national security and public order. The aim is to limit the number of migrants entering the country by imposing more stringent requirements for the delivery of residence permits and tighter border controls. Among the consequences of restrictive measures there is certainly an increase in irregular migration and the change of status, from legal to illegal, for many immigrants already in the country (Balbo, 2009). Immigration policies have a strong influence on migrant policies. As stated before, the production process of Via Anelli cannot be analyzed without referring to the immigration policies and to their effect on individuals.

From 1977 to 2004, 1,233 residence permits were delivered to migrants stating they were living in Via Anelli: 76% of the permit were given thanks to temporary jobs (Fincati, 2004). Between 2000 and 2003 illegal migrants settled in Via Anelli were estimated at 39% of the total population living in the complex. These data are particularly important when considering that Italian migration laws bind the delivery of residence permits to the possession a work contract obtained before entering the country. As a result, temporary jobs can easily undermine the possibility of being legal. To this extent Via Anelli was protecting migrants who could not enter the official labour market or were illegally inhabited the city. Accordingly Via Anelli can be looked at as a "stabilized area of transit" of marginal population, with scarce pressure of the population to exit the quarter and, on the contrary, with large number of immigrants asking for bed places. In a context of job precariousness, illegality becomes a potential protection in the case of unemployment, guaranteeing a minimum salary. The marginal urban area responds in this way to the need of a marginal population. The streets next to the Serenissima Residence were at the same time a place where to easily find illegal occupations, contributing to the criminalization of Via Anelli population. Immigrant population settled in Via Anelli can be defined "included with exceptions" (Mezzadra, 2004), referring to a community that can visibly use the city and its services but cannot exercise the same grade of citizenship as the natives. The term marginality, in this sense enquires various concepts such as access to housing, public space, services and security linking them to the notion of citizenship. According to these reasons, Via Anelli might be described as a "zone of exception" (Ostanel, 2010), a non-place where concept as citizen, stranger, social, antisocial are continually negotiated.

3. The relocation policies

Via Anelli is the spatial outcome of the contradiction on migrant issues that exist between central government and local authorities. Such contradictions materialize within the dialectic relationship among different levels of policy, conveyed as immigration and migrant policies. The option of settling in Via Anelli is not related to a "voluntary choice" in order to find a social, physical and economical protection in marginality. Migrants social networks, low cost housing, the possibility of earning easy money, have contributed in different ways to the creation of Via Anelli.

Via Anelli began to be considered a space of marginality in the mid 90's but no actions were taken to address the needs of the immigrant population living there. In 2005 the local government was able to implement the relocation policy directed to the dismantling of the ethnic neighbourhood. The relocation finished in 2007.

Via Anelli's documented inhabitants (569) have been relocated in public houses within the city and the province of Padova, with location contracts of 2 or 4 years. The Municipality of Padova, the Province of Padova and the Region of Veneto were the main implementing stakeholders.

Families have been settled preferably next to the workplace, while singles have been directed to cohabitation. After 2 years, in 2009, some location contracts started to expire and migrants were not able to find houses in the private markets due to some main constraints: i) lack of money ii) racism (owners did not want to loan to migrants) iii) long waiting list to access to public housing iv) permits of sojourn have expired due to the lack of job and as a consequence access to housing is not possible.

In 2009 the Project "Oltre il Ghetto"¹ started. The Project is supporting people that were living in Via Anelli in accessing the private housing market. To this extent the Project supports migrants in the payment of the rent deposit, facilitating the access to private housing agencies, accommodating singles in cohabitation. "Oltre il Ghetto" Project will finish at the end of 2010. Today, 230 people are still living in public houses due to the difficulty in accessing housing in the private sector. Moreover the financial crisis has strengthen the situation of marginality that migrants were living and high percentage of them has become undocumented.

The difficulties migrants are facing to access the housing market, both private and public, are particularly relevant bearing in mind that the 47% of Via Anelli inhabitants were considering the Municipalities has a main actor supporting the right to a proper housing once they arrived in Italy². On the contrary, during their sojourn in Padova the 75% of the respondents have not requested for public aid in the city, conveying a situation where the distance between migrants and the public is ample. "Via Anelli relocation policies" (e.g. the relocation and Oltre il ghetto Project) have represented a major contact between migrants and the public, where the 61% of the respondents evaluate the service offered as "quite good". The evaluation of the public policy for Via Anelli has been influenced by the constraints that the Municipality had in facing the macro-social effects (Allietti, 2004) that are forcing local policies to their inefficiency. Migrants were unable to walk out the public support due the above mentioned constraints in accessing private housing or the public one, in a situation of legal (Bossi-Fini law) and material (financial crisis, scarce access to proper salaries) precariousness.

The "projectable policing", such as "Oltre il ghetto", was insufficient to impact on the social and material condition that migrants are facing due to national and transnational dynamics. Some "Oltre il ghetto" operators highlights another relevant point: migrants that were living in Via Anelli have been target as special beneficiaries of two public policy and they have been push to believe that public aid must be

¹ The Project has been financed by the Italian Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affair

² Data from the research "Oltre il Ghetto" done by the Sociology Department of Padova, 2010

there, especially concerning access to housing. As a consequence, migrants are waiting for public aid, being used to receive assistance.

4. Conclusions

The reference to Bronx when speaking of Via Anelli became widespread starting from 2003-2004, both in the media and in the common city jargon. The urban stigma conveyed Via Anelli inhabitants as criminals: those who lived in the Residence became visible in the urban imaginary and the media started to focus on Via Anelli, highlighting its features as a core of illegal and criminal activities. Via Anelli is the physical materialization of the scarce access to housing for migrants in the city of Padova.

The relocation policy and the "Oltre il Ghetto" Project tried to solve the social and spatial constraints that Via Anelli were materializing, but they did not address the macrosocial constraints that are forcing migrants to marginality. What is important to highlight is the relationship between local and national/transnational level of policy because it stresses the role of local government in managing migration: while local governments have a specific responsibility on the community they are governing, macrosocial elements that are affecting migrants' urban inclusion/exclusion are playing at different levels. Local policies become partial and national and transnational constraints are impossible to address.