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## **Making Home, Building Citizenship. Migrations, Rights and Housing Policies in Sicily (Italy)**

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**Abstract** How is the housing issue in Southern Europe changing under the pressure of the arrival of foreign ‘new citizens’? This chapter explores this question through two Sicilian case studies that share the need to provide some initial answers to the aforementioned issue. The complexity of the issue brings with it a further question, which highlights how the mutation underway is an open question that centrally concerns urban and territorial policies: How can territorial and urban planning address this issue, going beyond the emergency responses that have been implemented to date? The first case study illustrates the issue of the presence of migrant workers in rural areas, problematising the issue in terms of two aspects: the preponderance of foreign workers in areas of agricultural excellence and the emergency measures taken so far to address the problem of temporary accommodation for agricultural workers. The second case study focuses on the city as a historically privileged physical and relational space for social interaction with others (foreigners). The recognition of different forms of citizenship (inclusive or exclusive) of social groups is reflected not only in the use of urban space, places to live, work and trade, or in the provision of services, but also in planning techniques that design new expressions of citizenship by distributing resources (material or immaterial). In both cases, the study of migrations succeeds in highlighting the contradictions that the territory expresses. It denounces the inadequacy of territorial and urban policies and the general lack of will to manage and regulate the phenomenon of the modification of the social framework in both agricultural and urban contexts.

### **1 Introduction**

The profound change in Italian society is a fact, today, that has been ascertained and investigated with ample treatment and references in scientific literature. The

annual Caritas dossiers that, in the years following their publication, constituted one of the main, and not numerous, points of reference for a description and monitoring of the phenomenon of immigration in Italy, today represent only one of the many research reports that constitute a very broad and detailed field of investigation. The spatial dimension of this phenomenon continues to be, however, an aspect that is only partially addressed, and constitutes - on the contrary - one of the most significant elements, both in the collective perception and in the very structuring of migration outcomes. If in general the political debate is still substantially static and backward as a whole, an awareness of the complex dimension of the multicultural and multiethnic plurality of the Italian social structure (also in its spatial articulation) has matured in civil society, in the realities of associationism, but also in some local institutional spheres. A 'plural' society necessarily implies overcoming the emergency and welfare vision of the very principle of reception, despite the persistence of certain stereotypes, mass media slogans and political positions. This overcoming is operationally translated into spatially localised actions, which have space (urban, but not only) as a priority sphere of intervention. In cities and territories that are less and less represented by a univocal administrative domain, even the issue of rights, and specifically the right to the city, is influenced by a "more polymorphic and fragmented social geometry" (Soja 2011), requiring a clarification or, at least, a positioning with respect to the relationship between spatial justice and the right to the city. In contemporary urban territories, as highlighted in previous research (Lo Piccolo et al. 2021), inequalities and broader citizenship rights affect different groups of the urban population: from the rights denied to immigrants in post-rural territories to the difficulties of access to housing for increasingly significant portions of inhabitants of both urban centres and suburbs. If the notion of the city as a spatial and social fact is profoundly changing through new settlement principles, not only the investigation of 'new forms of the city' but also that one of new 'demands for the city' is necessary, as Marcuse (2012) suggests, in order to recalibrate the debate on the right to the city, starting from three questions: To whom does the right to the city belong? What rights are we talking about? And with respect to which city?

If we accept the Lefebvrian working hypothesis that the urban is "society in its spatial declination ... the projection of society on the territory" and that the right to the city is configured as "a superior form of rights, as a right to freedom, to individualisation in socialisation, to habitat and living", the theme of housing exclusion offers itself as one of the most relevant and stimulating problems to be reasoned upon. The aim is to orient urban and inclusion policies towards the real exercise of fundamental rights and the acquisition of new relevant subjective situations. For migrants, in particular, 'making a home' concerns not only a physical space, but also the surrounding human, socio-cultural and natural environment, and it is also a gradual but, in some cases, reversible experience. The extensive literature on migrant housing distress shows well-established trends of correlation between deterioration of buildings, poor services, high housing crowding ratios and the presence of migrants. From the classic comparative analyses carried out in the

1970s (Castles and Kosack 1973) to the most up-to-date studies, in the now long history of immigration in Europe, numerous authors point out how the housing dimension in social policies, even considering the different territorial areas and the relative legal systems, is marginal compared to other spheres such as work, health and language training, which appear more conveniently analysed and financed (Alietti 2010; Tosi 2010; Ponzo 2010). Yet, the migrants' housing issue and the specific measures implemented on the matter by their destination countries, with their degree of openness/closure and the consequent production/reproduction of potential inequalities, delimit one of the fundamental spheres on which the social rights of the "new citizens" take place. In this way, it is possible to make their co-participation in the process of social and political construction of new citizenship practices, understood as a space of expression of being "fellow citizens". Today, in Italy, immigrants constitute the largest quota of housing exclusion, which implies that these people have greater difficulties in finding housing than others.

The ISTAT (2022) figures state that foreigners living in Italy, as of 1 January 2021, number 5,030,716 and represent 8.7% of the resident population; on the other hand, migrants registered by the reception system as asylum seekers or refugees, those most insistently mentioned in the news, number just under 80,000 - of whom 423 are housed in hotspots; 50,714 in temporary reception facilities (Emergency Accommodation Centre-CAS and first governmental centres) and 25,938 housed in the facilities of the System of Accommodation and Integration-SAI (former Siproimi) (Ministero dell'Interno 2022). Recent studies show that there are as many as 4 million foreign workers living in rented accommodation, among whom as many as 80% live in cohabitation and overcrowded conditions (ISTAT 2022), just as 60% of the homeless in our country are migrants (ISTAT-Caritas 2015). These numbers highlight not only the difficulties in accessing housing, but also make evident the process of marginalisation that is severely undermining equality and the exercise of fundamental rights of an increasingly large segment of the migrant population. However, the issue cannot be summarily reduced to a quantitative problem but must be tackled in its multidimensionality, with an awareness of the limits of current policies that are essentially oriented towards providing beds rather than activating enabling housing processes. Therefore, the majority of migrants do not live in reception facilities, and for this reason it is important to understand what their experiences of living have been and what critical steps and junctures have shaped their housing paths. These considerations lead us to reflect on the difference between "integration" (understood as assimilation) of minority groups and "interaction" between different social groups, opening up to the concept of cosmopolitanism and linking up with what has been said above about the necessary interaction between housing policies, urban policies and claims for social justice and equity.

## **2 Spaces and rights: rethinking concepts and intervention categories for migrants' housing policies**

As Tosi argues, the issue of migrants' housing is in many ways pervaded by notions and concepts that risk posing this question in inadequate terms (Tosi 1998, 7). A 'plural' society necessarily implies overcoming the emergency vision of the very principle of reception, despite the persistence of certain stereotypes, mass media slogans and political positions related to welfare policies. The category of emergency reveals several critical issues from this point of view, which are related to: a) a consideration of immigrants' housing discomfort as a need to be solved immediately rather than a problem to be tackled preventively; b) the involvement of migrants in the local context of arrival and the disassociation of immigrants from other subjects involved in the housing problem. In particular, the latter criticality fuels the assumptions of competition between the weaker groups, legitimising the concern to control social alarm factors, connected to fears of invasion and abuse by the 'other' (Tosi 1993, 31). The 'fear of the other', which fuels cultural stereotypes and is often superimposed on the problems of housing discomfort and the (lack of) rights of access to citizenship experienced by migrants (Leone and Lo Piccolo 2008), appears functional to the stubborn maintenance of economic, political and cultural visions, even though they are in clear decline.

Consequent to this attitude are also those kinds of interventions that, in order to avoid further social conflicts, tend to conceal what may be considered excessive disturbing elements. In this way they act, for example, on the category of the "visible" with practices of territorial control (such as the dislocation of reception centres in peripheral areas), thus rendering the possibility of realising experiences of coexistence in shared spaces futile (Blanc and Garnier 1984). These policies do affect and influence the sphere of rights, which is consequently much more diverse and fragment in comparison with the past.

As Bobbio (1990) points out, describing the processes of 'multiplication' of the spheres of rights, today more than ever the ownership of rights is ascribable not so much to an abstract and undifferentiated category - the generic man - but rather to different and particular categories - the specific man - based on the characteristics and prerogatives of different social statuses. All this leads to a rethinking on the subject of citizenship: a notion in which the characteristic of status seems to prevail again today, almost by a paradox of history, and with a process of 'involution', or backwards. Just as the historical meaning of status (be it family, citizenship, legitimate child, etc.), similarly, citizenship today seems to exercise, in relation to certain subjects, the function of an instrument of differentiation, and therefore of separation, within the social organisation (Alpa 1993): citizenship status acquires in some ways the characteristics of privilege. In this respect, citizenship can be assumed not only as a sort of 'interface' between the individual and collective dimensions, but also between the centres and peripheries of rights-holders, fuelling a permanent conflict that may be sometimes overt, sometimes latent.

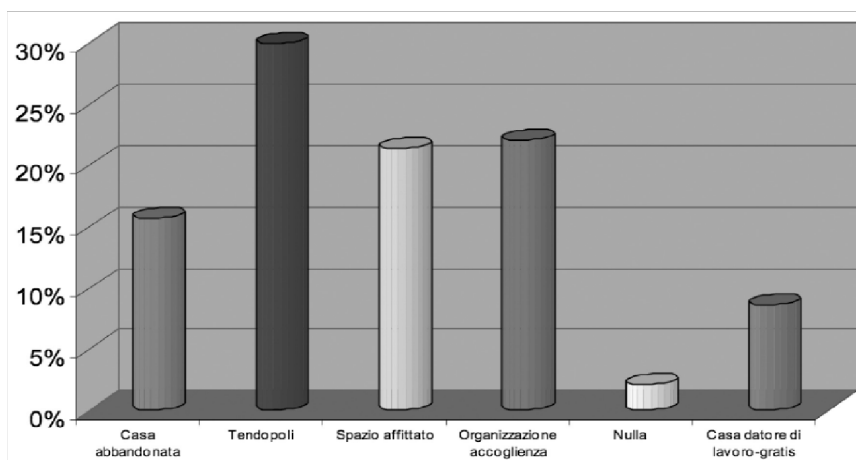
Neglecting the conflictual nature of the plural cohabitation or appropriation of spaces is a mistake, both political and disciplinary. The majorities feel threatened by those same minority groups of migrants that nurture the conditions of development in the host countries, and migrants, on the other hand, engage in defensive behaviour in relation to dominant patterns of life with the risk of both groups relegating themselves to closed communities. Migrants, like other groups on the margins, rather than destabilisers of culture, economy and institutions, represent an uncomfortable otherness because they rather highlight contradictions and risks of the host countries' founding ethical value system and the widening gap between rich and poor. With their presence, migrants raise issues of social justice and equity for access to resources, whether they are economic, spatial or forms of rights such as of access to citizenship. In reference to the housing problem, the previously mentioned aspects cannot be underestimated, on pain of misrecognizing the “variety of paths, the role of community processes, the transactional character of relationships, etc.” (Tosi 1998, 8). The arguments so far make it urgent and necessary to rethink the concepts and categories of intervention in the field of migrants' housing policies.

### **3 Migrants' housing: learning from practices**

As Harvey (2012, 8) explains, the right to the city is “much more than a right to access, individually or as a group, to the resources that the city possesses; it is the right to change and reinvent the city in a way that is more in keeping with our needs”. With respect to the political and scientific debate that struggles to recognise the plurality of situations pertaining to the migrants' right to live, it seems opportune to report some case studies that highlight the different dimensions, critical issues and elements of action that permeate the migrants' housing issue, using the Sicilian context as a geographical focus of reference. What emerges is a variegated scenario in which migrations reshape the territory beyond simple rhetoric that crushes the figure of foreigners into stereotypes. At the same time, the presented cases, despite their conciseness, redraw different geographies of suffering, restoring the complexity of the phenomenon both in time (with reference to the migrant's length of stay in the places of arrival) and in space (with reference to the territorialisation of the recounted experiences). I have deliberately not taken into consideration here the first and second reception systems nor the cases related to extraordinary reception.

### 3.1 Migrants' Housing in Rural Territories

This section highlights some examples of the ways in which the housing problem connected to the presence of foreign workers in Sicilian territories has been tackled in recent years. The discussion does not claim to be exhaustive but begins by tracing an initial geography of the responses given to the problem of housing, particularly for seasonal workers. For an initial idea of the extent of the housing problem for immigrant workers, it is useful to reproduce below the graph contained in the 2005 report by Médecins Sans Frontières (Fig. 1) on the housing possibilities "offered" to foreign workers.



**Fig. 1** Types of accommodation for foreign workers (source: Medici senza Frontiere 2005).

The data base is the result of interviews with immigrant workers that Médecins Sans Frontières conducted in 2004. The graph provides a picture of the different types of housing and indicates the high degree of precariousness of the accommodation solutions that are available to foreign workers. The issue of finding accommodation remains unresolved and is dealt with in different ways and forms (or not at all). Sicily is the first region in terms of the number of people employed in the agricultural sector and is home to about 11% of the entire national workforce: in this sense, the propensity of immigrants to agricultural work and consequently their dispersion across the territory is not surprising. On the other hand, some data highlight blatant contradictions, for example: the huge growth trends in quality agricultural production are attributable not only to appropriate new marketing, communication and sales strategies, but also to the employment of immigrant labour, both regular and non-regular, since, in the last decade, the data on both phenomena show constant increases, denouncing a clear correlation of the phenomena. The particular nature of Sicilian agriculture, which is characterised by a strong specialisation in seasonal crops, generates phenomena with specific characteristics, compared to other regions, regarding the possibility of integration and the construction of structured demand for housing: "The extensive presence of

crops, both in greenhouses and in open fields, have also made Sicily a privileged destination for seasonal workers tout court, i.e. for that large group of foreigners who spend six to nine months in the area every year, regularly returning to their country of origin. These are purely economic migrants” (Médecins Sans Frontières 2005). Emblematic in this sense are the provisional interventions invoked and promoted by associations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and implemented by organisations such as the Italian Red Cross, which, in collaboration with Caritas, has been setting up two reception camps for immigrants for less than ten years.

The first experience of this kind is in Cassibile (hamlet of Syracuse) where, in 2003, on an initiative promoted by Médecins sans Frontières, the first temporary reception camp was set up for immigrants, who move en masse annually to the hamlet to work in local farms. The tent city set up in this way turned out from the start not to be sufficient to meet the demand for accommodation, so much so that in 2004 Médecins sans Frontières reported the existence of three different camps: the first is the ‘official’ one, set up by the Civil Defence at the municipal stadium; the second, accommodating approximately 70 people and consisting of six tents set up in a side street at the entrance to the village, was created to resolve the tensions that arose among immigrants in the municipal camp: it lacks water, electricity and toilets; the third camp is self-built by the immigrants themselves, in dramatic living conditions.

On the other side of the island, in Alcamo, since 2004 (Médecins Sans Frontières 2005) a reception camp has been set up at the S. Ippolito stadium, in agreement with the municipality, managed by the Local Committee of the Red Cross, Caritas and UniTre (the ‘Father Nino Aparo’ Counselling Centre for Migrants) called ‘Matthew 25.35’. Here, too, the need is for hundreds of workers who move to the Trapani area in September for the grape harvest, generating heavy problems of coexistence and integration and exasperating living conditions: “around 1,500 foreigners are concentrated in my area during this period to work in the vineyards, explains Giacomo Scala, mayor of Alcamo. They make up 70 per cent of all the labour involved. And it is a percentage that, in the province of Trapani, remains unchanged even in the case of the tomato and olive harvest. For the harvest, from August to October, together with Caritas and the Red Cross, we set up a reception camp with 170 beds and about 400 hot meals a day. There are two tents for prayer and a clinic for medical examinations. Hospitality, however, is reserved for legal foreigners” (Giorgi 2009). The reception camp was visited by the organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (2005), which reports as follows:

“At the time of the visit made by MSF, in September 2004, about 250 people, all men, mainly from Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa, were sleeping at the reception camp. Only people with a regular residence permit were allowed access for overnight accommodation. Another 200 foreigners - the irregular ones - only had access to toilet facilities, canteen service and health care. At the end of each day (after the gate was closed), the list of registered workers, i.e. the regular ones at the camp, was handed over to the local police headquarters. The centre was open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., for the use of toilets, and from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. for soup

kitchen and medical examinations. From 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. it functioned as a dormitory: at 10 p.m. the gate was closed, at 5 a.m. all the guests were invited to leave 'to look for work'. MSF in Alcamo conducted the examinations at the outpatient clinic, set up in a warehouse in the camp with a local ASL doctor. In all, 45 patients were examined, being almost all of them camp guests and therefore in possession of regular residence permits".

An interview conducted as part of a previous research<sup>1</sup> with Davide Bambina, President of the local Red Cross Committee of Alcamo, shows how the camp is equipped to host 115/120 people each year, who receive accommodation, medical care and hot meals on a daily basis. A similar number (around 120 people) are the irregular migrants who, although they do not benefit from accommodation in the tent city, receive medical care and hot meals. Camp guests are asked for a daily contribution of 2 euro. The massive presence of irregular migrants, and the response given by local authorities, limited to regulars only, confirms the fact that, not only in Alcamo, irregular migrants are forced to find makeshift housing solutions.

The case of the Alcamo tent city, with all the limitations it presents, allows us to frame what is a response given by a public body to a problem that began as a social and labour issue, and led to a real urban problem: the presence of available public properties that could be to be reconverted and the planning of areas and uses designed for the activation of reception and integration services. Bambina himself, during the interview, confirms the Médecins Sans Frontières report on the seasonal migration of foreign workers, recounting the workers who, from the Cassibile tent city, used in June/July during local agricultural activities, move to Alcamo to begin the grape harvest in September. According to the Alcamo Red Cross President's observation, these are migrants who would tend to 'institutionalise' such territorial movements, and move over a wide territory, including other regions, such as Calabria. At the same time the aspects highlighted in the discussion of the phenomenon of rural migration clearly show a trend: communities of foreigners offer themselves as passive elements in the management of space, which is entrusted either to a paternalistic management, as in the case of the tent camps organised by Caritas in Cassibile and Alcamo, or to a business-criminal management. There is no doubt that the temporary solutions of tent camps are preferable to criminal systems, but it is necessary to look for solutions that allow new citizens not only to live with dignity the transitory and precarious condition to which they are subjected, but also to succeed in generating phenomena of appropriation and recognition of spaces.

Confronting with traditional models of intervention, it is possible to detect new self-help forms proposed by housing movements in urban areas, where the occupants/tenants adapt the empty public properties (or social private properties) to a new residential use, also through micro-projects of renovation which fill the lack

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<sup>1</sup> Between 2008 and 2012, research was conducted - in collaboration with Davide Leone and Giuseppe Lo Bocchiaro - on the housing condition of migrants in the rural territories and historical centers of south-eastern Sicily. Outcomes of the research were published in Lo Piccolo et al. 2012.



of formal housing policies and intend to be an innovative alternative to the current model. These practices appear as a successful model for cutting housing production costs, providing an affordable and accessible form of housing, enhancing user empowerment (Teasdale, Jones and Mullins 2010) and producing social capital in the process (Garcia and Haddock 2015). If we applied such a model in rural areas, the stock of abandoned rural properties could be self-recovered and put to new uses: both housing and services. In contrast with other forms of divestment of empty properties, self-restoration practices are an opportunity to use the empty rural properties (defined as available material facilities) for individual, as well as collective, functionings to improve the quality of life of migrants.

### ***3.2 Migrant living in urban areas: the case of Mazara del Vallo***

Mazara del Vallo is one of the southern cities with historically high numbers of migrants. Approximately half of the migrant population in the province of Trapani, and four times the number of migrants in the provincial capital, are concentrated in Mazara del Vallo and work in the fishing sector, with an incidence of about 2,500 units (Alisei-coop 2008a, 47). Migrants, mostly of Maghreb origin, are concentrated in specific districts of the historic centre, although they are now distributed in other expansion areas of the city. In particular, and with reference to census areas, in the historic centre of Mazara del Vallo foreigners make up 22% of residents, while in external areas such as Mokara, Cappuccini and Casa Santa, the incidence of foreigners fluctuates between 8 and 9%. A much lower foreign population density of 3% is found in the peripheral areas, and a very low percentage of foreign residents (1%) is recorded in the Trasmazaro area. Compared to an initial migratory flow of a few hundred migrants from Tunisia, which was recorded at the end of the 1960s in connection with the expansion of Mazara del Vallo's fishing fleet, the current population of foreign origin amounts to 5% of the total (2007 data), although unofficial sources estimate the number of Tunisians to be at least twice as high as that actually recorded. According to official data, the number of foreigners of Tunisian origin amounts to about 90% of the total foreign population, while 4% are Serbs and Montenegrins, 2% Moroccans, 1% Chinese and the remaining 4% are people of other nationalities. From the very first flows, immigrants settled in the historical Arab quarters of San Francesco and Giudecca, collectively known as the Casbah, and after 1968, following the Belice Valley earthquake, which also caused considerable damage to the houses in the historic centre of Mazara del Vallo, they began to distribute themselves in the neighbouring districts, abandoned by the citizens of Mazara, through a process of filtering down.

Although some research reports (Augustoni and Alietti 2010; Alisei-coop, 2008a) mention the case of Mazara del Vallo as a “virtuous” example with respect to the migrants’ housing discomfort in other areas of Southern Italy and Sicily (and especially in the rural areas of Ragusa or in the metropolitan areas of Palermo and

Catania), many issues remain very similar. In particular, comparative analyses conducted in the historic centre of Mazara del Vallo (Gatto et al. 2011) show that poor states of preservation of buildings for residential uses correspond to high levels of foreign residents, who are concentrated mainly in the San Francesco and Giudecca districts (Fig. 2). Good and fair states of preservation, on the other hand, are recorded overall in the building fabric of the San Giovanni district, which is home to the City Hall, the Cathedral and monumental complexes housing important cultural and social solidarity facilities; these building and functional typologies in the district are matched by a low percentage of migrant residences. Similar considerations apply to the Xitta district where, against a discrete state of preservation of the building fabric, which in this case is predominantly residential, there is a low presence of migrants.



**Fig. 2** The deterioration of the part of the historic centre that is inhabited by the Maghrebian community (Photo by Vinci I)

At present, even though there is a lack of up-to-date local surveys (and reliable data related to the informal market) on the housing tenure status in relationship with income levels, building types and their state of preservation, the research reports on migrants' housing discomfort in Sicily (Alisei-coop 2008a; 2008b) describe Mazara del Vallo as an exemplary case of peaceful integration which, if sporadic episodes of conflict are disregarded, has allowed migrants to have access to low housing rents (between 200 and 400 euro). On the basis of surveys of privileged witnesses (Alisei-coop, 2008b), these research reports attribute the reasons for the presumed process of 'integration' to conditions of greater familiarisation, due to the

Tunisians' consolidated integration into the work market and in particular into the fishing sector (understood as a relational laboratory), to the territorial and cultural contiguity with the countries of origin, to the increasing learning of the Italian language and to the high incidence of minors among immigrants (around 37%). The latter is an index of rootedness and stabilisation, compared to the Sicilian panorama which was characterised, until a few decades ago, by transit migratory flows towards final destinations in northern Italy (Alisei-coop 2008a; 2008b).

A survey (Gatto et al. 2011), carried out in order to explore and assess the incidence of the places of interaction between migrants and native residents in the urban fabric of Mazara del Vallo, took into consideration not only commercial activities, social and cultural facilities, but also public and semi-public open spaces. The analyses reveal that the numerous commercial activities distributed along the main roads of the San Giovanni and Xitta districts and along the streets surrounding the historic centre are to be considered as prevalently used by the natives, as opposed to the commercial activities managed by migrants, which in considerably lower numbers are distributed near their homes and which can be considered as exclusive places, except for the refreshment areas which are frequented by both communities. Cultural associations for the exclusive use of natives are distributed in various city districts and concern specific economic sectors (agricultural associations, maritime associations, hunters' associations, etc.), whereas the associations for the exclusive use of migrants are mostly of cultural, recreational and creative nature and are concentrated in the San Francesco district and at the marina. As far as educational facilities are concerned, the two public elementary schools, which are easily distinguishable from the historical fabric because they were built during the fascist period in the heart of the San Giovanni district, are mainly attended by locals, although there is a progressive influx of migrants, while another school, located in the same district and very modest in size, is used exclusively by Tunisians. The public spaces of greatest interaction between migrants and natives, sometimes used in different ways and at different times, are basically:

1. the marina, where migrants and locals have been working together for decades (Fig. 3);
2. Piazza Regina, where there is the presence of associations self-managed by migrants and various commercial activities;
3. the Promenade Mazzini, which is characterised by the presence of numerous commercial activities (permanent and temporary) and restaurants and is frequented especially on holidays (Fig. 3);
4. the Villa Jolanda, which is used as a meeting, resting and walking place;
5. the Tunisian restaurant in the historic centre;
6. the San Vito Onlus foundation, outside the historic centre, a place of interaction especially for younger generations.



**Fig. 3** Public spaces in Mazara del Vallo: the 'marina' and the 'Promenade Mazzini' (Photos by Bonafede G and Picone M)

With a few exceptions, these are mostly public spaces that characterise the coastal strip of the historic centre of Mazara del Vallo and that at the same time need maintenance and urban redevelopment, as is the case with the historical fabrics mainly used by migrants. The qualitative survey, conducted through interviews administered to the resident migrant population, revealed the difficulty in finding housing. Upon arrival, the newcomers were only able to find acceptable, although often precarious, housing situations, thanks to the help of their fellow citizens already living in Mazara. The migrants understandably complain, however, about the absence of municipal policies facilitating the search for housing, with one important exception being the S. Vito Onlus association and the project, sponsored by this association, aimed at supporting migrants in their search for appropriate housing.

At the same time, a social survey (Bonafede and Picone 2013) - aimed at investigating the relations between old and new inhabitants of Mazara - showed that the degree of interaction between natives and migrants is rather mediocre and only apparent, a façade, often limited to a 'peaceful coexistence', marked simultaneously by tolerance and mutual suspicion. It is interesting that many migrants stated that they felt safe within the districts of Mazara's historic centre, but at the same time they noted that the Mazara inhabitants tend to avoid those same districts, considering them not very peaceful and therefore expressing an even too implicit negative judgement on migrants. Based on this, it is certainly difficult to get real interaction going. In spite of a now achieved 'integration' rhetoric revolving around the case of Mazara, qualitative surveys and urban analyses have revealed prejudices, insecurities, conflicts and forms of exclusion that are exacerbated by economic uncertainty. On the other hand, there is a need to undertake shared pathways to citizenship that take into account both cultural differences and the higher-risk conditions faced by economically disadvantaged segments of the population, in order to foster greater social justice and equity. Moreover, if on the one hand the high percentage of young foreigners can be seen as a symptom of the greater entrenchment of migrants, on the other hand it is precisely this generation that

expresses greater unease with the economic and cultural crisis, and is considered particularly threatening by the natives.

## 4 Conclusions

Contemporary society tends to polarise into a system of borders and territories (Kymlicka 1995; Sandercock 2000; 2003): whereas until a certain period, models of coexistence in space presupposed a progressive annulment of (virtual and real) borders, currently a model prevails and accepts the existence of differences through mutual recognition (Foucault 1985-86; Zanini 1997). These two tendencies manifest themselves in policies aimed at the construction of a homogeneous society, as in the French assimilationist model (Italian Geographical Society 2008), or in the American melting pot (Amendola 1997), or towards a postmodern model that moves in an archipelago of phenomena aimed at determining a series of boundaries and appropriations. However, this interpretative paradigm works very well in the urban sphere, where the 'game' of identification and appropriation is possible, but is much less valid for describing rural areas, as the cases of Chapter 1.3 testify.

If the right to the city can be considered "a right to belonging to a place, whether in spaces that we call cities or do not" (Aalbers and Gibb 2014, 209), then by forcing the concepts a little, we can say that not having a house is tantamount to being deprived of the very right to urban life and its spaces. 'Dwelling', in fact, relates back to the surrounding social and cultural environment and contributes to the realisation of an autonomous life project. The right to housing - in this perspective - allows each individual, group or family unit to inhabit a place and not only to live in a place; and it is obviously starting from the house that an existential path is realised: from aspirations, to life projects, to our way of establishing an intimacy with what is around us. For migrants, in particular, the "housing dimension" concerns not only a physical space, but also the surrounding human, socio-cultural and natural environment, and it is also a gradual but, in some cases, reversible experience.

In the case studies of Chapter 1.3, the identification and 'appropriation' of spaces by new citizens is absolutely marginal, due to two converging factors. The first relates to the peculiarities of the rural world, which, by distributing inhabitants over large areas, makes opportunities for exchange and confrontation less possible. Thus, it is precisely these needs and opportunities to identify and appropriate (physical and symbolic) spaces, and to express (at least potentially) emerging or different forms for active citizenship, that are limited. The second aspect, prevalent with respect to the first, concerns the temporary nature of work, which is often offered in agriculture; this clearly does not allow or discourages rootedness, the delimitation of spaces and thus the creation of rooted identities. On the one hand, European and Italian regulations strongly emphasise integrating and rooting new

citizens, while on the other, local policies and the division of labour make these objectives particularly difficult to achieve.



**Fig. 4** Example of a structure adapted for housing by migrants in the province of Ragusa (Sicily). (Photos by Todaro V)

In Southern Italy in particular, the most serious conflicts between old and new inhabitants have taken place in rural areas (as in Rosarno, Calabria, in 2009) and have been directed against criminal organisations rather than the State. This is due to the fact that these criminal structures subsidise the functions of the workers' organisations, especially in certain geographical areas. In this respect, dealing with issues related to the relationship between the rural environment and the new inhabitants are different from those of the urban areas. In the rural context, it is the absolute denial of the use and appropriation of space that is at stake, rather than the conflict over the use of space or the question of boundaries. From this perspective, the issues raised by the rural context are at the same time simpler, but also less clear and circumscribed (Miraftab and Diaz McConnell 2008). They are simpler because they have only a marginal impact on the spatial sphere; they are less clear because they propose issues and problems that change very rapidly and strongly over time, precisely because they are transient. Conflicts in rural areas arise not so much from communities' need to assert particularisms and differences, but from the denial of opportunities to build community groups. From these premises should derive a greater openness to dialogue, diversity and interaction. On the contrary,

unfortunately, we witness daily phenomena of closure, attempts to defend phantom 'national identities at risk', denials of the very idea of interaction (Guarrasi 2011). It is strange that even today we prefer to talk about 'integration' rather than 'interaction', referring, for example, to migrant citizens who arrive in our western nation-states and who must 'integrate', i.e. adapt to heteronormed socio-cultural models, rather than simply 'interact', i.e. exchange cultures and knowledge.

The suspicion is that behind these anti-cosmopolitan government policies and these regurgitations of nationalism there is a real 'strategy of fear', i.e. a conscious use of the fear of diversity as an instrument of control. If it is true that our societies are among the safest of all times, it is also true that, in contrast to this 'objective evidence', the spoilt, pampered 'us' feel unsafe, threatened and fearful, more prone to panic, and more interested in anything to do with the quietness and security of the members of most other societies known to us (Bauman 2005, 3). And yet, despite the reluctance and obstacles posed by majorities and power, as the cases of migrant living in urban areas show, our cities are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan. This is also (perhaps especially) true for Mediterranean cities, which are "privileged places of emergence and formation of new cultures and identities" (Guarrasi 2011, 44). Linking the housing issue with new inclusive and intercultural urban and territorial policies, can represent a step forward in the construction of a more cosmopolitan society and of a new, plural and diverse sphere of citizenship rights.

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