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The silenced paradoxes of urban renewal: morality, welfare reconfiguration and precarious labour in Collective Food Procurement in Turin

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The silenced paradoxes of urban renewal

Morality, welfare reconfiguration and precarious labour in Collective Food Procurement in Turin

Maria Vasile

The silenced paradoxes of urban renewal
Morality, welfare reconfiguration and precarious labour
in Collective Food Procurement in Turin

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Per Hajar,
per una Torino che sia a misura dei tuoi bisogni
o che venga contagiata dalla tua allegra ribellione.

[For Hajar,
for a Turin that can be tailored to your needs
or animated by your cheerful rebellion.]

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Introduction

Preamble

The public garden Mother Teresa (*Madre Teresa di Calcutta*) is one of the few green spaces of the Aurora neighbourhood, in Turin. The area used to belong to a large textile factory called Financial Textile Group (*Gruppo Finanziario Tessile*) (GFT), which had its production plants in Aurora from 1930 to the end of the 1990s. After the second world war, GFT was one of the main Italian firms specialised in mass production of ready-to-wear clothing. Its plants used to employ a great part of the local inhabitants, up to 12 thousand people in the booming season of the brand, between the 1960s and the 1970s. From the end of the 1990s, the relocation of GFT activities contributed, together with the closure of several other industrial plants in the area, to rising unemployment and the economic crisis.

Today, the history of the GFT factory seems far away from everyday life in Aurora and it is unknown to many of its inhabitants. In recent years, part of the former GFT offices were converted into luxurious apartments, which contrast with the low average income and basic standards of living of the local population. Just below, what used to be the GFT outdoor area became a public garden later renamed after the Nobel Peace Prize Winner Mother Teresa. While "the naked structure of the factory, with concrete pillars and plastered ceilings, became the frame for a sophisticated loft over two floors" (Open House Torino, n.d, translation is my own), the garden became a site for leisure but also recurring episodes of petty criminality. This green area was, and still is, narrated as a symbol of the public administration (failing) attempts to address social vulnerability and insecurity and of the so-called *degrado* in Aurora.

The term *degrado*, is defined in the Italian dictionary as the "deterioration suffered by given social, urban and environmental contexts due to socio-economic factors. Examples: the *degrado* of the historical centre, urban *degrado*, costal *degrado*, living in conditions of *degrado"* (Gabrielli 2020). In Italy, this term is used to talk about

insecurity, inappropriate waste disposal, but also in relation to urban poverty and marginality (Parlare Civile, n.d.). Discussions about everyday life in Aurora make no exception: the usage of the term *degrado* is recurrent in daily conversations and media accounts about this and other areas of the city most affected by the (now structural) socio and economic crisis. The word *degrado* is often use in combination with terms such as incivility and opposed to the idea of decorum (*decoro*). Its usage supposes a sense of concern while incarnating the quintessential simplification of complex urban phenomena and is sometimes associated to and discriminatory of specific minorities.

News' titles about the Mother Teresa garden have not changed much over the last decade and are exemplificatory of how *degrado*-centred accounts often include blaming and accusation of inappropriate citizens behaviour. An article on the local newspaper *Torino Today* titled in September 2012: "Drunken and delinquents in the former GFT gardens, residents protest. Carpets of shards and broken bottles. People who sleep on the benches or that urinates on the trees. In the green area urban *degrado* continues to reign" (Versienti 2012). Newspaper *Torino Today,* March 2018: "Installing of the cameras 'against pushers' in the 'garden of drug dealing'. Operating on a 24-hour basis" (Martinelli 2018). Newspaper *Torino Oggi*, June 2020: "Aurora, residents ask for security in the Mother Teresa Garden. Several banners appeared today on the balconies of the buildings overlooking the green area" (Berton 2020).

As discussed by Ivasiuc (2015, 59), the use of the term *degrado* often refers to:

> [a series of small] visual signifiers of neglect in the management of the urban space and *inciviltà* in its public use: graffiti inscriptions, poster displays, the destruction or deterioration of objects of urban decor, the uncontrolled growth of greenery in spaces deemed inappropriate for it and the inefficient collecting and treatment of waste.

As resumed in the titles above, the case of the Mother Teresa garden emphasises two central features of *degrado* also pointed out by Ivasiuc

(2015): first, its relation to notion of civility or lack of civility (*inciviltà*) namely the disrespect of shared rules and manners. Second, its polysemy and cumulative dimension resumed in the expression "degrado brings degrado" which is key to understand its "material, social and symbolic layers" (Ivasiuc 2015, 59) and, I add, the tendency to discuss it as the core of the problem and not as the consequence of broader social issues. Following the writing of Ivasiuc (2015), I decided to translate the term *degrado* as urban decay, used from now on as an equivalent of the Italian term.

In the context of diffuse economic hardship and the increasing cut of welfare state support provided in the area, the tropes of urban decorum and renewal were presented as the main responses to *degrado*. Renewal (*riqualificazione urbana, rigenerazione urbana,* in English, also referred as urban regeneration) was understood as punctual physical and social interventions, usually promoted by the private sector and non-profit organisations respectively, aimed at renovating the image of the area and transforming the use of its public space. These entailed the reconversion of abandoned industrial plants, such as in the case of the GFT, a securitarian approach to the management of socio-economic hardship and consequent petty criminality, as well as the promotion of what was considered to be as the appropriate use of public space through new forms of citizens engagement. During an interview, the president of the local district, Luca Deri, representing the social-democratic party (*Partito Democratico*), explained:

> The redesign of public areas should be done in a way that prevents them from being used inappropriately. So, you must build open spaces, visible spaces, avoid bushes or hedges, use specific street furniture, place a couple of surveillance cameras, for a careful monitoring, but also a kiosk for local cultural and social activities.[1]

This comment by the president Deri first illustrates the local shape of the security paradigm in Turin, characterised by its intrinsic relation with the need of restructuring the post-industrial urban space. Secondly, the quote reveals how the notion of appropriate use of space

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[1] Luca Deri, president of the *Circoscrizione 7*, interview, 06/08/2020.

is constructed on the nexus between spatial and civic transformation. It is through "monitoring" as much as "local cultural and social activities" that the area and its usages are to be transformed.

While I will not discuss further about the Mother Teresa garden, I have decided to open the dissertation with this case as it is exemplificatory of the type of processes and narratives that I observed during my fieldwork in Turin. With this preamble, and the rest of the introduction, I wish to present to the reader some of the features of contemporary Turin, features which connected my fieldwork sites or put differently, features which I decided to connect and bring under my analytical lenses as a researcher. Living few blocks away from the Mother Teresa garden, I went and still go there frequently. For example, I went there to study and play with children from the neighbourhood – as part of an afterschool program, which I partook to during the moments of my life in Turin which I considered research free. I was also there in the occasion of a few protests, organised at the margins of the garden, just in front of the district offices. In other words, in various occasions, my experience of this space and its sociality was far from the urban decay-centred accounts reported above. While my aim here is not to downplay the social and economic challenges of the area, my analysis of this garden is for me a metaphor of how my lived experience brought me to develop the critical questions I raise in this dissertation. The aim of my work is to discuss Aurora neighbourhood as well as other peripheral areas of Turin beyond any form of generalisation: the material provided in this thesis does not reflect an absolute reality but can be regarded as an ensemble of images, which I bring to the attention of the reader to call for diversifying our outlooks on this city, deconstruct certainties around urban renewal and sustainability, and move away from the incautious optimism that contemporary efforts around these themes tend to generate.

Collective Food Procurement as a lens to investigate urban transformations

The silenced paradoxes of urban renewal. Morality, welfare reconfiguration and precarious labour in Collective Food Procurement in Turin is based on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork which I conducted in Turin, Italy, between December 2018 and September 2020. My investigation revolved around Collective Food Procurement networks, which can be broadly defined as networks of people who direct participate in food production, distribution and consumption (Grasseni 2018). As further elaborated in the methodology section, my research was framed within the ERC consolidator project *Food citizens? Collective Food Procurement in European Cities: Solidarity and Diversity, Skills and Scale* (2017-2022) (Food Citizens n.d.). My fieldwork involved participant observation in urban gardens, at food markets, and together with different food redistribution organisations and educational initiatives. Living in Turin also involved experiencing the context of these people, sites and events, namely a city strongly affected by its deindustrialization and in search of a new identity. A city in transformation, aspiring to a cosmopolitan future, irregularly sprinkled with privatisation processes and punctual social interventions, while increasing unable to provide structural services and deal with raising inequalities, poverty and marginalisation (Di Paco 2022).

In this dissertation I use Collective Food Procurement (from now on CFP) as a lens to examine urban transformations ongoing in Turin, which also speak of global themes such as welfare reconfiguration, precarious labour and gentrification. I investigate urban transformations as physical but also social and cultural changes, which in contemporary Turin's more disadvantaged areas – the focus of my research -, were often shaped by the trope of urban renewal (*rigenerazione urbana*). While presenting different case studies ranging from the making of an urban gardening project to a neighbourhood-based food aid initiative developed during the covid-19 pandemic, this dissertation discusses how visions and moralities of a "good urban space" and of a "good citizen" are articulated together. I show how urban renewal builds upon the reproduction of specific forms of citizens engagement such as

volunteerism and community care. I present how these forms of engagement, while being praised in the name of progress, sustainability and participation, can silence the diversity of opinions, and be exclusionary of marginalised people, practices and knowledge. I reveal how these can coexist with austerity and reproduce disparities, jeopardising people's actual right to the city, to appropriate food and labour conditions. Overall, I problematise, building on detailed ethnographic material, the hegemonic imperative of renewal by looking at its reasons, agents and paradoxes, which I anchor as part of the neoliberal transformation of the city and its welfare system, and reveal the veiled moral apparatus of which it is encrusted.

From food to society

This dissertation builds on different sets of literature. First, critical food studies from various disciplines were central to the initial development of my research project. These have described how CFP networks can be more than sites where immediate daily life matters are addressed, but spaces where people socialise and learn, satisfy their desire for a specific lifestyle, experiment new practices, and formulate political claims (e.g., Grasseni 2013; Rakopoulos 2014). Most importantly, scholars examined how CFP (also discussed in the literature as Alternative Food Networks) should be regarded as a heterogeneous, context-specific phenomenon and that nothing inherent about it should be assumed (e.g., DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Born and Purcell 2006; DeLind 2011; Tregear 2011). An important reference in this sense is the work of the urban planners Born and Purcell (2006) who argued that the local scale of a food system or transaction can represent a way for actors to pursue quite different interests and goals. This means that local food projects should not be idealised and outcomes such as increasing social justice will depend on the aims and directions given to them by the actors involved.

Critical approaches to CFP, such as Guthman (2008) also highlighted how these networks are not isolated from but interconnected and in continuity with neoliberalism. As argued by this geographer, in these networks "neoliberal forms, spaces of governance, and mentalities" can also be reproduced (Guthman 2008, 171). Important contributions in this perspective come from the analysis of urban gardens, which

reveal how heterogeneous these can be and how diverse ways of governing of urban gardens can facilitate or hinder an advancement towards securing people's right to food and to the city (e.g., Eizenberg 2012; Certomà and Tornaghi 2019). For example, recent literature on urban gardening in Greece shows how community gardening can represent a form of autonomous land management and a way to resist neoliberal urbanism and austerity (Apostolopoulou and Kotsila 2022). On the other hand, scholars have discussed how gardens can be part of processes of eco-gentrification (Cucca 2012) or have no significant impact on the wellbeing of the local population in contexts of severe economic marginalisation and absence of public services (Drauss *et al*. 2014). Scholarly debates also exist around the role of food aid, in the form, for example, of institutional food banks, which growing role was analysed as the problematic result of welfare state withdrawal and the neoliberal erosion of rights (Riches and Silvasti 2014), among other perspectives.

A review of this literature is important to learn how to look at CFP networks as a plural phenomenon that needs to be understood in relation to the role and symbolic value of food in context-specific cultural, economic and political debates and agendas. CFP was indeed associated to a variety of (local) political processes, including "gastronationalism" (De Soucey 2010), "defensive localism" (Allen 2010), and the "commodification of pleasure", namely the re-appropriation of local skills and traditions for the making of élite products (Leitch 2003). Elements of CFP were also used to interpret distinction mechanisms of the middle class, processes of self-differentiation and performance of taste as part of which certain practices and skills were favoured over others (e.g., Bourdieu 1984; Griskevicius *et al*. 2010; Rosenblatt 2013). As CFP networks are examined as much more than sites of food procurement but sites of (re)production of new visions and practices of citizens engagement, they also reflect multiple conditions, expectations and imaginaries of the future of contemporary citizens (and cities) (e.g., Gordon 2011; Jung 2014; Dickinson 2016). My analysis is therefore also anchored in the literature about social transformations in contemporary Turin and Italy, more generally.

Turin: crises, neoliberal urbanism and the non-profit sector

Understanding the premises of CFP in Turin entails contextualising the development of its many practices as part of broader ongoing and desired future transformations of this city. Hinting back to the preamble of this introduction, it means, among other things, examining narratives around urban decay and imaginaries about urban renewal. That is why this dissertation builds on and dialogues with a significant body of Italian scholarship which has investigated contemporary Turin and/or highlighted the local meanings and forms taken by neoliberalism in Italy. Particularly relevant to frame my ethnography is the literature around the processes and actors that shaped post-industrial spatial and welfare transformation in this city.

Turin is an historical industrial city and was especially so after the second world war when it became the symbol of reconstruction and economic growth in Italy. In the 1950s and 1960s, Turin's automotive industry attracted hundreds of thousands of immigrants, mainly coming from rural southern regions of the country (e.g., Fofi 1976). Even though the 1970s were characterised by the development of the tertiary sector, industry remained the main employer until the mid-1980s (Bagnasco 1986). The city was very much organised around a "one-company-town" model (Bagnasco 1990) as its economic and social structure were influenced by the existence of FIAT, the largest national car manufacturer (e.g., Revelli 1989). In these decades, Turin also grew as a great melting-pot and as an important centre of working-class culture and movements (Polo 1989).

From the 1990s onwards, the crisis of Turin's industrial-centred economy, linked to the closure, delocalisation or downsizing of most industrial plants, became "a crisis of the whole city, breaking down its identity as much as its economic foundation" (Bolzoni 2019, 443). The city's structural crisis implied important waves of unemployment, decreasing average income and ageing population. To give a few numbers: between 2008 and 2010 the average yearly income pro capita passed from 21.116 to 19.911 euros (Pagliassotti 2012). Moreover, after years of depopulation, only from 2007 onwards the number of city inhabitants became more stable (844 990 inhabitants as

per May 2022) but the population is ageing – growing from 162.273 to 216.995 already between 1991 and 2009 (Pagliassotti 2012).

To face the crisis, its administrations attempted to attract new businesses and to reimagine the city. The political scientists Belligni and Ravazzi (2012) examined how the construction of the new, post-industrial Turin entailed political efforts from local administrations to develop new models of governance and pro-growth urban development strategies. These entailed reorganising the urban planning (in particular transport infrastructures and former industrial areas), fostering a knowledge-based economy, cultural agendas and large-scale events (Belligni and Ravazzi 2012; Semi 2015). This novel approach resulted in urban renewal agendas which, from the mid 1990s, included a considerable number of projects aimed at improving the physical but also economic, social and environmental conditions of Turin's most deprived areas (Marra *et al*. 2016). Examples of such interventions will be discussed all along the dissertation, such as the case of the URBAN plans targeted to the areas of Mirafiori (2000-2006) and Barriera di Milano (2011-2015), which were developed by the municipality and funded through regional and European funds. Different generations of interventions followed one another, changing their focus from an attention to physical improvement operations to social and economic support. More recently, these were premised on an integrated approach (Marra *et al*. 2016) - as part of which many of the CFP initiatives I studied are grounded. Urban regeneration also became increasingly entangled with the rebranding of the city as an attractive and cosmopolitan city (Vanolo 2008) and the increasing privatisation of its public space - especially since the 2006 Olympic games and the consequent debt matured by the city administration (Pagliassotti 2016; Marangi 2022). Changes in terms of space use and sociality in the city therefore also need to be analysed in relation to processes of gentrification, persisting inequalities and new forms of exclusion (Semi 2015; Bolzoni *et al*. 2015; Capello 2021; Capello and Porcellana 2017).

Particularly central to urban regeneration efforts (and to this dissertation) are the key implementers of these transformations, namely non-profit organisations – or what is discussed in Italian (and international) literature and public debate as the Third Sector (*Terzo*

Settore)[2]. In the field of anthropology, Alexander (2009) analysed general definitions of the Third Sector as well as how, internationally, its autonomy is being eroded, "providing 'public' services of welfare and environmental concern while internalising the risks of operation" (221). This is surely applicable to Italy, where Third Sector organisations came to play an increasingly vital role, especially in terms of the delivery of social services and poverty alleviation (Caselli 2015). In Turin, since the late 1990s, they became important interlocutors of the public administration. This can be exemplified by the emphasis put on local organisations and community building within *Periferie 1997-2005*, which were municipal plans for the regeneration of urban peripheries (Comune di Torino 2005). As austerity and the public debt diminished local government's actions, the work of non-profit organisations continued to be intrinsically interlinked with the delivery of public services (e.g., Ravazzi 2016). As critically examined by the sociologist Bolzoni (2019), in this context, (some) non-profit organisations also came to play a role as part of broader urban governance processes, through shared agendas with the local administration and private actors. This scholar problematised how the organisations included in these processes are the ones aligned with the city's neoliberal agenda (Bolzoni 2019). The work of these organisations is funded through public and, most often, private contributions such as via call for projects of large foundations. As discussed by Ravazzi (2015; 2016), because of their key role in such new welfare configurations, banking foundations such as *Compagnia di San Paolo* - one of the largest in Italy with a long history of activity in Turin - also acquired an increasing significant role in urban governance and *de facto* participates in local policy making. In this perspective, the role of such foundations can be regarded as a continuity with the type of economic but also social and political influence that big firms such as FIAT had in the governance and in the making of welfare in Turin. This considerable influence derived from

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[2] See Lori and Zamaro (2019) for an overview of the different types of non-profit organisations that compose the Italian Third Sector and for insights on their legal classifications after the Third Sector Law Reform. See Busso and Gargiulo (2016) for an overview of the Italian debate on the role of non-profit organisations.

their economic (and employment) power but also their ability to finance public interest interventions (Pagliassotti 2012).

Morality as a framework

As illustrated in the preamble, the complex theme of urban renewal can also be analysed in relation to notions of citizenship. I investigated citizenship as a cultural process and a set of practices (Craith 2004). Anthropologists have indeed underlined how citizenship can be studied ethnographically beyond its legal definition - and the process of belonging to and being framed as part of a nation state - and in relation to its multiple dimensions. In the Italian context, anthropologists have discussed the multiple dimensions of citizenship in relation to, among other themes, the issue of mistrust vis à vis the state in the form of corporatism, clientelism and traffic in favours (e.g., Herzfeld 2009; Guano 2010) as well as welfare state withdrawal (e.g., Muehlebach 2012).

Particularly relevant to frame this dissertation is the attention, which was brought to the political dimension of citizenship, studied, for example, by Lazar (2013), who explored it in terms of the relationship between the person and the trade union in Argentina. Lazar (2013) explained how the trade union is a political community, where citizenship can be examined as a form of subject making or, in other words, a process of formation of political subjectivities. Another starting point of my analysis is the work of Holston and Appadurai (1996) who discussed the notion of urban citizenship and the progressive formation of new kind of rights and claims (and forms of exclusion from them) that can be framed "outside of the normative and institutional definitions of the state and its legal codes" (197). These include many issues at stake in the urban context especially impoverished areas such as the right to appropriate housing and childcare, which have called for an expansive understanding of entitlements. The authors refer to the right to the city and political participation as elements that however remain fragile and endangered in many ways. To understand how, I focus particularly on the significant role of morality in this sense.

I build on these approaches to discuss citizenship as a cultural and moral process of subject making which I investigated as an integral component of CFP networks' practices and narratives. I mostly talk about citizens engagement as I am interested in the ways the participation of citizens is articulated: what is asked, what is performed, how are decisions taken, who is silenced or excluded. The main forms of citizens engagement I came across were volunteerism, precarious labour and community care. This was the case, for example, of volunteers involved in the creation of a new urban gardening projects (chapter two) or the collection of food surplus at food markets (chapter five). I also came across cases of citizens engagement in the form of grassroots and autonomous resistance and self-appropriation of the urban resources as well as in the form of struggles to have a say in decision making processes. I will illustrate this with the case of a collective of vendors protesting against top-down policies for market renewal (chapter four).

Central to my analysis is the attempt to unpack the ways in which morality operates in these contexts. All the CFP networks that I have investigated were strongly morally charged as exemplified, more generally, in my preamble in relation to the notions of urban decay and renewal. In the context of the Mother Teresa garden, for example, the narrative of urban renewal builds on what is defined by Ivasiuc (2020) as the "security - morality nexus" as part of which time and context specific moral judgment is at the basis of the visions of security and public order. As argued by the anthropologist in relation to the racialized marginalisation of Roma in Italy:

> Analysing such underlying moralities is imperative if we are to understand how particular social worlds that exclude and exterminate subaltern populations garner support.
> (Ivasiuc 2020, 2)

In this dissertation, I use morality as a framework to explore the reshaping of the urban space, citizens engagement and welfare as well as the logics behind silenced social conflicts and paradoxes that accompany these processes. This means investigating the evaluation of what is considered, promoted and experienced as a good/bad, desired/undesired urban space and forms of citizens engagement in the specific

context of contemporary Italy. I frame my analysis as part of the investigation of what Muehlebach (2012; 2013) examined as a "postwelfarist public morality", which accompanies neoliberal reforms in the Italian context. In particular, the author discussed the widespread development of unwaged labour regimes through processes of moralisation of citizenship – exemplified by volunteerism – as pivotal to welfare privatisation and subcontracting. As also discussed by other authors, the strong presence of the non-profit goes along with, on a cultural level, the diffusion of a common sense which naturalises neoliberal reforms through citizens activation, but also through an increasing depoliticisation of such engagement and its confinement within specific configurations (see also Hyatt, 1997; Busso, 2018; Bolzoni, 2019). This morality around citizens engagement is also to be understood in continuity with (and as a progressive reformulation of) the paternalistic and charity-like approach to welfare characterising the history of this catholic country (Marcon 2004; Muehlebach 2013).

More generally, I will dialogue with different anthropologists who have approached welfare and urban transformations (but also the role of CFP more specifically) by focusing on the morality that accompanies and reproduces in these processes. Contemporary anthropological studies on morality generally build on philosophical literature such as the works of Émile Durkheim or Michel Foucault, summarised by Didier Fassin in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology* (2012, 7). However, as also highlighted by Fassin (2012), many anthropologists do not position themselves as part of a specific paradigm nor do they mention these authors and philosophical works. Anthropologists are more attentive to the complexity of what emerges from their analysis rather than inscribing their reflections in a specific theoretical interpretation (Fassin 2012, 8). Moreover, some anthropologists worked around other key contributions of these same authors, which do not necessarily fall into the classical Durkheimian or Foucauldian approaches described by Fassin (2012). For example, as resumed by Abeles (2009), studies in the field of political anthropology build on the Foucauldian examination of power, its sovereignty, technologies and the notion of "biopolitics".

Among others, anthropologists such as Fassin (2005), Ticktin (2006) and Rozakou (2012) build on the work of Foucault (as well as Agamben (1998)'s re-elaboration of the idea of biopolitics) to unpack how power is exercised in the context of the humanitarian aid sector. Their approach is becoming increasingly relevant for the analysis of poverty and its management by non-profit organisations not only outside but within Western societies, as also revealed throughout this dissertation. Particularly key to the analysis of power from an anthropological perspective is also the Foucauldian conceptualisation of power beyond its negativity and punitive facet, and in relation to its multiple ramifications. This also implies that the exercise of power should be analysed beyond the public sector, in other words by "delegalizing and deinstitutionalising our approach to politics" and power (Abeles 2009, 64). In this perspective, morality can be studied as part of the power technologies that maintain a certain political order in place and something that is reproduced by and with a range of actors.

Other examples of such examination of power and morality are the works building on the moral economy approach, originally developed by Edward Palmer Thompson (1971) and generally defined in anthropology as "the production, distribution, circulation and use of moral feelings, emotions and values, norms and obligations in the social space" (Fassin 2009, translated by Paloma and Vetta 2016). Anthropological works in this sense include studies of the "solidarity economies", namely networks of reciprocity and grassroots organisations attempting to act at the margins of capitalist market (e.g., Goodman 2004; Edelman 2005). They also include growing number of analyses of the multiple dimensions of the economic crisis in Europe (e.g., Narotzky and Smith 2006; Pusceddu 2020; Koch 2021). Following Palomera and Vetta (2016), I find this second approach relevant to try to understand local mechanisms in relation to macro-economic and political processes "by bringing together structural properties and peoples' moral dispositions" (428). Palomera and Vetta (2016) was particularly important for framing my investigation as it calls for a repoliticization of the moral economy - to be understood as a concept and, most importantly here, as an approach. This means bringing capital and class dimensions back into discussions on morality and use the latter to understand how neoliberalism works.

To do so, this dissertation builds on different ethnographic studies of morality and power. In addition to Muehlebach (2012) and her conceptualization of the "postwelfarist morality", I build on the study of new moral orders in other contexts such as the UK and the Netherlands. Authors in these contexts similarly discussed about widespread notions such as the "active", "good" citizens (e.g., de Koning *et al*. 2015), and the shift "from citizen to volunteer" (e.g., Hyatt 2001). These are problematised as key mechanisms to redistribute the costs of social interventions onto the citizens themselves. I will also dialogue with anthropologists such as Jung and Newman (2014) and Newman (2015), who have linked the discussion around morality to the discourses and practices of urban renewal in France and the US.

Methodology

Research framework: working as part of the *Food Citizens?* research project

This dissertation builds on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Turin, Italy between 2019 and 2020. The fieldwork was based on longitudinal, native language and multimodal ethnography, following the methodological framework of the project *Food citizens? Collective Food Procurement in European Cities: Solidarity and Diversity, Skills and Scale* (2017-2022). The project aimed at investigating the premises and consequences of CFP in three European cities namely Gdansk (Poland), Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and Turin (Italy) (Grasseni 2018).

The work of the *Food Citizens?* project's PhDs was structured around distinct phases. Firstly, a period of preparatory work at Leiden University, which included the review of literature around the themes of Alternative Food Networks, short food chains, food governance but also citizenship and economic anthropology. This first period was organised around team meetings, group presentations, written assignments and seminars together with external scholars. It also included a training on audio-visual research method to prepare the PhD candidates to conduct multimodal ethnography. The team also

further developed a research protocol based on the fieldwork techniques, deliverables and working questions originally formulated by the principal investigator (PI) Prof. Cristina Grasseni in the early project documentation[3].

The second phase consisted in a period of pre-fieldwork conducted by the PhDs between December 2018 and February 2019. This was the opportunity to start acquainting myself with the context of Turin, select some of my case studies and try out some of the research methods and working questions of the research protocol. The PI had already identified a first set of case studies to be investigated in Turin, namely Solidarity Purchase Groups (*Gruppi diAcquisto Solidale*) and the local food governance network *Nutrire Torino Metropolitana*. As part of this process, the PI also contacted key stakeholders to get a better understanding of the context and facilitate my access to the field. Building on this preliminary work, as well as some public events I had attended in 2018 and conversations with scholars working on similar themes within the University of Turin, I started engaging with different typologies of CFP networks (presented in the following section).

Third and fourth phase consisted in renewed theoretical work and group reflections at Leiden University as well as the actual fieldwork, which took place from August 2019 to August 2020. What characterised the research work as part of the *Food Citizens?* project was its circularity, with the alternation of fieldwork and theoretical study, which meant moving in and out of the field - and more precisely returning to Leiden both after pre-fieldwork as well as in January 2020. As elaborated by Grasseni (2020), this allowed to put in practice the comparison research design and alternate fieldwork with teamwork. To mention some examples, we wrote fortnightly fieldwork reports and shared research material. This allowed the PhDs to regularly take a step back, keep track of progresses in terms of deliverables and connect fieldnotes to the larger working questions of the protocol. Our comparative discussions were facilitated by shared

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[3] See calendars of activities, annotated bibliographies and working material: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/foodcitizens/dissemination/public-resources (accessed 31/05/2022).

levels of analysis – urban foraging, short food chains and food governance – and analytical dimensions – namely the concepts of solidarity, diversity, skill and scale. These were identified by the PI and used as reference points but also as concepts to be continuously redefined based on the various local meanings they took in our fields. These phases also included gathering and sharing audio-visual material, which were used both as part of the research process as well as to produce the final outputs of the research. Building on Grasseni and Walter (2014), we worked with visual methods during the research process to grasp more comprehensively various aspects of CFP, giving a particular emphasis to the ways in which actors presented and represented themselves and their context beyond words. Working with visuals was also important for the comparative discussion, namely, to visualise some of the fieldwork dynamics, similitudes and contrasts in the three cities.

The fifth phase was dedicated to the systematisation and analysis of the fieldwork data, the continuation of team seminars, comparative analysis and writing up of the dissertation. The PhDs were asked to work in similar ways and develop common working sheets for the team to be able to visualise and juxtapose the different outputs resulting from the three research. Team seminars were organised to develop a shared analysis of the material (for example through narrations and mind mapping), present preliminary findings to scholars external to the project, and to comment and give feedback on the PhDs' thesis outlines and chapters. During this phase, the team also worked on scientific articles as part of shared special issues in the journals Anthrovision and Kritisk Etnografi, co-constructed the project's winter school "Digital Visual Engagements in Anthropological Research", its final conference and the development of an interactive documentary (i-doc). This i-doc[4] brings together the material collected in the three cities by the PhDs and the postdoc Federico De Musso and represents an opportunity for divulgating the research's findings in unusual ways, reaching and involving in the discussion a wider public by the means of virtual interaction. It also

[4] For more information about the i-doc and to access it see: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/foodcitizens/about/interactive-platform (accessed 26/07/2022).

aims at showing some of the interactions between the researchers and the participants and incorporate some of the research processes and dynamics in the way in which the platform works (De Musso 2020).

Fieldwork: case studies, methods and approach

Through participant observation I followed closely and, in most cases, became part (as a participant, volunteer or collaborator) of eleven collective food procurement networks. The following table resumes more in detail the case studies and methods of my research. It is organised following the shared levels of analysis of the *Food Citizens?* project and resumes the various sites of my research as well as provides examples of some of the events and people at the centre of my investigation. It also includes the detailed list of the outputs that I delivered: in addition to fieldwork notes and fortnightly field reports, the data collection included 75 semi-structured interviews, mostly audio recorded, as well as the (co)production of audio-visual material such as five cultural maps and a considerable amount of video footages and photos.

	TURIN		Sites	Events	People	Deliverables
Urban Foraging (producing)	Allotments:	Allotments at Orti Generali (OG); Spontaneous allotments in Mirafiori Sud area	Gardens	On garden activities, guided tours in illegal allotments	E.g.: Ciro, Dino, Sergio	*Interviews:* 3 *Video elicitations:* 1 *Other:* videos and photos
	Social gardens (Porous border with allotments):	OG; Rete ONG (Il Boschetto/ Agro Barriera); Orto Mannaro	Gardens	At OG: Permaculture course; Bee keeping; collective works; meetings with volunteers; connection to the rural: sheep herding. More occasional visits and interviews at Il Boschetto and one visit (and two interviews) at Orto Mannaro	E.g.: Carlos (OG gardener); Loredana (OG gardener and volunteer); Fabio (permaculture student and volunteer), Olivier (gardener and volunteer), Bergero (sheep herder); Serafino (gardener at il Boschetto)	*Interviews:* 16 *Cultural maps:* 1 (+ also refer to the cultural map of Rete ONG/Food Pride below) *Video elicitations:* 1 (OG) *Other:* videos and photos; internal documentation OG
Urban Foraging (gleaning)	Grassroots free food distribution:	Food Not Bombs (FNBs); Spesa SOSpesa Rete Zona Aurora Solidale	Market; storages; public parks and streets	FNBs: Food collection; cooking; distribution; SOSpesa: food aid package preparation; protest	E.g.: Gianfranco (FNBs); gleaners; SOSpesa activists	*Interviews:* 8 *Other:* videos and photos; SOSpesa communication material
	Institutional free food distribution (Porous border with grassroots free food distribution):	FaBene; Food Pride (Eufemia, Eco dalle Città, Rete ONG); Ristorante Giardino; Snodo Torino Solidale Via Aglié	Market; storage; kitchens; community centre	Food collection; cooking session; food package preparation	E.g. Nadia (Fa Bene); Kevin (Eco dalle Città); Maria (chef at il Giardino); Erika (president community centre Via Aglié); Luca (volunteer at Via Aglié during the pandemic)	*Interviews:* 14 *Group interview:* 1 (Via Aglié) *Cultural maps: 3 (among which a pre-existing one) Video elicitations: 1 (rete ONG) Other:* videos and photos; articles; internal documentation Food Pride
Short Food Chains (connecting producers and consumers)	Entrepreneurial (digital) platforms for (local) food procurement	Alveare che dice si; Cortilia; Eco shops Ecobotteghe in San Salvario (which are part of the GAS Torino network)	Stores	Shop tour (few visits), one food distribution of Alveare at San Salvario community centre	Andrea (shop manager Cortilia); eco shops managers (few encounters)	*Interviews: 5 Cultural maps:* 1 *Other:* videos and photos

	Neighbourhood (open air) (fresh) food markets:	P.za Foroni; Via Porpora; Corso Taranto; Porta Palazzo (PP)	Markets	Piazza Foroni: everyday life at the market; Food Pride activities at PP, Via Porpora and Corso Taranto	E.g.: market vendors Enzo and Laura; Paola (market goer and volunteer at PP)	*Interviews* 6 *Other:* videos and photos; booklets on markets and their history
	Craft, entrepreneurial markets:	Mercato Centrale (+also relevant the case of the eco shops mentioned above)	Food hall – less research here			*Interviews:* 2 *Other:* few pictures
	Networks of food procurement through a collective	Solidarity Purchase Group (GAS) Manituana; Rete GAS Torino (and few visits at other GAS namely GAS Roccafranca, GAS Bilanci di Giustizia, GAS La Cavagnetta); Popular Purchase Group (GAP) La Poderosa (+ 1 interview with activist of a former GAP: GAP Vanchiglia)	Manituana (social centre); farm; street stand (GAP); GAP community centre	Dinner at the farm; food collection and distribution (GAP); GAS Manituana assemblies and distribution; GAS Torino assemblies	E.g.: Rosella (GAP activist); Giorgio (gasista); Andrea (gasista and leader GAS Torino)	*Interviews:* 5 *Group interviews:* 2 *Cultural map:*1 *Other:* internal documentation GAP; public analyses and articles GAS Torino
Food Governance	Networks lobbying/ producing politics/policy of - on food procurement (at least at city level)	municipal administration – environment dep. (one interview only); Atlante del Cibo UniTO; Network Case del quartiere; Citta Metropolitana (one interview only); District 7 administration; Assemblea 21 collective	Meetings	E.g.: Food waste camp (Food Pride), Fatto Per Bene program evaluation; public assemblies		*Interviews*: 9 *Cultural maps:* 1 (Fondazione Mirafiori, pre-existing one) *Other:* photos Food Pride events; public documents such as A21 analyses and articles
	Educational enskilment	Food Pride; Eatnico; Il Gusto del Mondo (GdM); Rescue!	kitchens; theatre room	Cooking classes; plays rehearsal and performances	E.g.: Sonila (eatnico); Vicente (theatre actor Rescue!); Chiara (chef and tutor Food Pride)	*Interviews:* 3 *Group interview*: 1 *Video elicitations:* 1 (eatnico) *Other:* videos and photos; internal documentation GdM and Rescue!

When reading this table, it is important to consider that I engaged distinctively (and spent a different amount of time) within each of these networks. For example, while I conducted participant observation all along my fieldwork in contexts such as the urban gardening project Orti Generali, the market Piazza Foroni and the food surplus redistribution network Food Pride, I only visited a few times the food hall Mercato Centrale and rarely participated to the food distribution of the company Alveare che dice Si. This is linked to distinct reasons. Firstly, to my choices as a researcher and the idea to follow an "iteractive-inductive approach" (O'reilly 2012). This approach identifies the research as a spiral process in which "data collection, analysis and writing are not discrete phases but intrinsically linked" (O'reilly 2012, 30). It invites to continually develop and reshape ideas all along the research process, as the researcher discovers and analyses the research setting. In this way, while I aimed at following an inductive approach, I also recognised that the research process was shaped by the literature I read and the guiding questions developed by the research team.

The choice of where to pursue more in-depth research was also influenced by (my understanding of) the relevance of a specific case study in relation to broader urban transformation dynamics in Turin. For example, this was the case of Orti Generali, where I soon understood that a longitudinal analysis of the project was going to be an opportunity to discover more about urban renewal and related conflicts and paradoxes that only in-depth observation can unravel. Making such choices necessitated a constant ponderation of how to keep working on the shared protocol of the project and follow the directions of the PI (such as maintaining a variety of case studies), while being open to pick up what emerged as central themes in that specific time and context. In this process, it was key to think reflexively and systematically about the way in which I carried out the ethnography. I attempted to take such step back daily by reporting in a reflexive journal what I observed, how I observed it, and how it was impacting the research process and myself.

The directions of the research also depended on the characteristics and developments of the field. For example, some networks organised meetings and events only fortnightly or monthly, such as in the case of

the free food distribution activities of the grassroots organisation Food Not Bombs or the assemblies of the Solidarity Purchase Group (GAS) Manituana. Moreover, some of these collectives were much less active than others, which often revealed that they underwent a phase of stasis or decline. This was the case of the network GAS Torino or the Popular Purchase Group (GAP) La Poderosa. From March 2020 onwards, the COVID-19 pandemic also highly impacted my research first obliging me to pause my fieldwork. During that period of confinement, I conducted only interviews on the phone as well as started transcribing, analysing some of my material and writing vignettes. From April onwards, I decided to get involved in some networks developing as a response to the crisis in my neighbourhood. I felt the need to take part to emergency response initiatives, which also became opportunities to continue conducting fieldwork in times of crisis. I partook to two food aid initiatives, mainly the food aid hub of Via Agliè (chapters six and seven).

The choice (and possibility) to conduct research in these contexts was also shaped by the "ongoing sampling method", which can be resumed as a strategy where "deciding who to spend time with, where to be, what to do and so on is not one-off decision, but it is part of the ongoing practice of ethnography" (O'reilly 2012, 45). I often followed the snowball sampling method as, in most cases, I was introduced to new people and groups by other research participants. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I also received contact suggestions from scholars from the University of Turin familiar with these research themes. Dr. Magda Bolzoni, for example, talked to me about the transformation of gleaning practices at open air food markets, inviting me to go to the market and try to talk with the old gleaners. This was possible only rarely as most of them were not willing to be interviewed. However, these conversations were essential to be able to contextualise the new gleaning practices I studied (chapter five) as part of long-term habits. Most importantly, it is by talking with people in the field that I got to know more situations to be explored in a specific area or sector and got new contacts. Thanks to my immersion at Orti Generali, for example, I got the chance to interview the president of the Mirafiori Sud Foundation - which played a leading role in the definition of urban renewal interventions in the whole area. I also met volunteers that introduced me to other local initiatives (such as the Ecomuseum).

Moreover, I crossed the way of gardeners who showed me other gardens, which exemplified what gardening in the area looked like before the development of Orti Generali.

In terms of access, I was welcomed in all the groups where I asked to participate. I never used social media and first contacts with people were made either in person or via telephone or email. Participant observation took different shapes depending on the cases being investigated. For example, some of my fieldwork sites were mostly one-sited (such as in the case of Orti Generali) and others multi-sited, such as in the case of Food Pride and its member organisations, with which I moved around various markets. In the different chapters of this dissertation, I provide a more detailed description of how I accessed and conducted participant observation in some specific cases. In the case of a more continuous participant observation, I most often relied on the possibility to work voluntarily within CFP networks to become integral part of the group as well as to be able to guarantee a form of contribution from my side. Collaboration with the research participants happened in many ways: it included working side by side, listening and sharing reflections, being available for specific requests for support as well as doing together audio-visual work. For example, while engaging in the Rete Zona Aurora Solidale, we develop a video to narrate how the activists of this network organised to distribute free food during the pandemic[5].

While this dissertation focuses on only some of the case studies of my research, it is important to acknowledge that my analysis arises from the ensemble of my encounters and the possibility to compare case studies and examples from Turin and beyond. The notion of "comparison by context" (building on Jasanoff (2005), among others) was one of the constitutive elements of the *Food Citizens?* project and shaped my understanding of the fieldwork and my attention to (and attempts to understand) specific practices as much as their context. As resumed by Grasseni (Food Citizens? Description of Action, part B):

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[5] The short video "SOSpesa. Food, solidarity and claims during the COVID-19 pandemic" is accessible online as part of the *Food Citizens?* idoc.

> even though it registers differences and regularities, comparison by context does not evaluate or measure. It brings difference into relief, for a better understanding of the social and political relevance of the social practices under study.

Working on different case studies allowed me to better contextualise the ones that I present in this dissertation as well as identify the continuities and discontinuities that different CFP networks revealed about welfare and urban transformations in Turin. Having various case studies pushed me to attempt defining a bigger picture while fine-tuning my understanding of nuances. It is also important to stress that my case studies were often interconnected by transversal processes and people (e.g., funding agents, experts such as university scholars and independent practitioners working within the non-profit sector) making them overlap.

Ethics and positionality

In terms of research ethics, following the *Food Citizens?* research protocol, I used written informed consent with all my research participants. This implied to distribute printed information sheet about the project together with informed consent sheets. These sheets asked for permission for using information, image and documentation for specific research purposes. They also explained that people could always withdraw themselves from the research. While I always verbally introduced myself and the research, depending on the context, it happened that I distributed these sheets at different moments, sometimes at the very beginning of my investigation, other times later, for example during an audio-recorded interview or, simply, as a specific interaction became more consistent and continuous. In fact, it was not always an easy task to establish rigorously who the research participants were, especially in lively research contexts such as open-air food markets and neighbourhood community centres. In several cases, the context of the research was busy, with people coming and going daily, and invited for constant new encounters. The broader issue mirrored in these considerations is that, as argued already by many anthropologists such as Mead (1969) (see also Fluehr-Lobban 2003), anthropology holds specific features which contrast with laboratory research and necessarily imply more ethical

concerns, beyond systematic procedures. In other words, distinct types of relations imply different definitions of the framework of these relations.

Gathering written informed consent was particularly complicated in terms of visual research in lively urban sites, with people moving around and many situations calling to be captured on the spot. This theme was extensively discussed as part of the *Food Citizens?* team and, following a conservative understanding of the research protocol, images with no written consent by all the persons appearing in them were not included in the project publications and i-doc. t is important to acknowledge that working with informed consent forms and related guidelines impacted my way of filming people and my relation to the camera, which were more pondered or at times inhibited. It also shaped the representation of the field which I produced, namely the type of images that were gathered and, more generally, what was made visible (and what was not) in my research outputs.

Most often, the research participants were not used to informed consent sheets because, as far as I know, these are not frequently utilised by journalists nor researchers in Italy. People agreed to sign these documents, but these were, most of the time, not regarded as important (signed quickly and indifferently) thus did not play a role in the definition of our relation. While I do not want to downplay the importance of informed consent, I want to report on people perception of this procedure as a bureaucratic requirement, like if it worked as a disclaimer for the university but did not speak much to them. I think that (at least in this context) this implies that written informed consent should not be considered as the only central element in the evaluation of the ethical dimension of research. I share the idea that the research ethics is an integral component of the relation developed between the researcher and the research participants: in the ways in which they do things together, collaborate, talk to each other and understand each other boundaries. For example, this was discussed by Thorne (1980), who argued that discussions about ethics and fieldwork "should involve a critique, as well as serious consideration, of informed consent" (284).

Central to the research ethics are therefore also questions about one's own relation to the field and positionality. A first important question which emerged during the fieldwork related to my understanding of Turin and my position as a native Italian. From the early development of the *Food Citizens?* project, the PI Cristina Grasseni decided that, in the three European cities, the ethnography had to be conducted by native speaker anthropologists (Food Citizens? Description of Action, part B). This decision was based on the "polyglot perspectives" approach (Herzfeld 2009) and the benefits produced from linguistic proficiency and a shared understanding of basic cultural codes.

While Italian is my native language - I grew up in Rome in a French-Italian family -, my fieldwork in Turin raised a series of questions about what this entailed in terms of my relation to and understanding of the context of the field. The city of Turin was completely new to me and it was the first time I lived in an Italian city that was not Rome, having also studied abroad for some years. Such form of estrangement was common to the *Food Citizens?* PhDs as it was also part of a deliberate methodological choices of the PI and represents an ethnographic technique per se. In many situations, I felt like a stranger, especially at the start of the fieldwork, as I was not familiar with the references people were making to specific places, people and facts occurred in the recent history of the city. In the first months, after most of my conversations, I had to go back to my notes and study what I had not understood. For example, this was the case of the recurrent reference to one of the big economic players of the city, the banking foundation Compagnia di San Paolo or to specific divisions and historical figures of the local administration. These situations brought me to question the presumed preliminary acquaintance and continuity between myself and the research participants that notions such as "native anthropology" or "anthropology at home" seem to imply (see also Narayan 1993).

Similarly, shared language did not provide automatically an insider status and this was also confirmed by the perception that the research participants had about me. In fact, reflecting about positionality also necessitates thinking about how we are perceived in the field. For many research participants, being from Rome was one of my distinctive features. It was often used to introduce me – a "Roman",

together with “a student” or “an anthropologist” based on the educational background of my interlocutor. For many of them, my roman origin was an opportunity to stress a difference while finding common grounds and getting closer: by being migrants in Turin, joking together about my accent or asking me question about Rome. In other words, I was not perceived as a local - which should be contextualised as part of the Italian attachment to regional identities – but this did not impact our being together.

Moreover, as reminded by Moore (1988), shared national origins and language does not say anything about the differences in conditions and privileges between the researcher and the research participants. Doing fieldwork in peripheral neighbourhoods of Turin necessitated continuous reflections around these themes. During the pandemic, I did not feel comfortable about my privileges as a paid researcher while most of the people around me were losing their jobs or going through a tough economic period. In such moments I felt more detached from the research, questioning the importance of my work. Overall, it was key for me to get involved in my neighbourhood beyond the scope of my research. This allowed me to develop important relationships with some people and place that are going on, as I continue to live in Turin today.

On one occasion, the fact that I was not from a specific area of Turin and worked as an external researcher was discussed by one of my research participants as a limitation of my analysis. As we discussed in Vasile and Grasseni (2020), my analytical approach and questions were judged as something interesting but far from the approach of these interlocutors. I was a researcher and they were practitioners: while I was thinking critically about things, they were trying to do something (“though maybe imperfect”) for their neighbourhood. Such comment is also to be related to the way in which I decided to share openly my critical thoughts that emerged with the development of the fieldwork. This was important for me to be able to be true to myself and avoid any attempt to convey a sense of scientific neutrality or personal detachment from the issues being discussed.

Outline of the dissertation

In the first section of the dissertation, I discuss the transforming management and use of a peri-urban green area called Parco Piemonte (Mirafiori Sud neighbourhood) – and, in particular, the development of an urban gardening project called Orti Generali (General Gardens) led by the non-profit organisation Coefficiente Clorofilla. In chapter one, I explore the ways in which local inhabitants and workers were directly involved in the transformation of the area. I point to the premises of such participatory approach, which I contextualise as part of a broader genealogy of urban renewal plans in the neighbourhood. I argue that while the new users of the area are key actors of its transformation, their ability to intervene remains confined to limited levels of decision making. In chapter two, I explain about the diverging visions that emerged during the park transformation process. I point to the issue of silenced confrontations to argue about what I analyse as a key feature of urban renewal guided by local non-profit organisations. Their intervention, while being participated by the local population, does not come without power relations and becomes a way of redefining, based on moral standards what is appropriate, legal, beautiful, in need of renewal and what is not. In chapter three, I report on the perspective of citizens who remain partially excluded from such process of renewal namely the long-term occupants of the area: spontaneous gardeners and a family of errant shepherds. I focus on their skills to explain how their forms of right to the city (such as land self-appropriation and itinerant labour) do not find a space for legitimisation in the new configuration of the park. In fact, these do not align with neoliberal visions of the urban space nor with the production of hegemonic images of urban sustainability.

In the second section of the dissertation, I continue to discuss how urban renewal is interrelated with changing notions of citizenship, sustainability and welfare, proposing further reflections based on my ethnographic investigations at open-air food markets. Chapter four revolves around the traditional open-air food market of Piazza Foroni (Barriera di Milano neighbourhood). Focusing on the perspective of long-term market vendors, I present the market life in relation to the history of immigration in the area as well as its current transformations, among which the impacts of the economic crisis and

the globalised market economy. I discuss some of Piazza Foroni vendors' diverse experiences as well as their collective organisation and engagement in local social activities and various forms of political contestation. Chapter five reports on the case of an initiative for food surplus collection and free redistribution at open-air food markets, coordinated by a non-profit organisation called Eco dalle Città. I particularly focus on the perspectives of asylum seekers and refugees involved in these activities as workers and volunteers in Aurora and Barriera di Milano neighbourhoods. I contextualise their experiences as part of socio-cultural interactions that characterise diverse and low-income neighbourhoods at the intersection between unemployment, austerity, the promises of urban renewal and risks of gentrification. I also delve into the organisation of Eco dalle Città activities: I report on workers and volunteers' different perspectives on their labour and power relations. As part of the latter, I show how the idea of urban dwellers' deservingness of rights is entangled with structural racial disparities and precarious working conditions.

The third and final part of the dissertation discusses institutional food aid during the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, it examines its premises, organisation, agents and representations. I focus my analysis on the food aid hub which was developed at the Via Agliè community centre (Barriera di Milano neighbourhood). I propose to step back from the normalisation of the Italian welfare mix and the growing role of non-profit organisations in the delivery of social services. In particular, I advance a detailed investigation of the morality upon which it is premised and that it reproduces. In chapter six, I retrace the genealogy of the Via Agliè community centre to unpack the social and cultural features that brought to a specific set of responses during the pandemic. Chapter seven explores the functioning of the food aid hub, delving into the description of its materiality such as the food managed and distributed. I discuss decision-making around how to compose the packages, highlighting the ways in which food aid can reproduce a stratification of citizenship. I problematise how the figures of the volunteer and the food recipient were constructed through internal and external accounts of the hub's activities, extending previous discussions around the concept of deservingness. I conclude with an analysis of the evolution of the organisation of food aid at Via Agliè over time and the changing levels of intervention of the municipality.

I conclude that unpacking how people mature their understanding of their rights and duties as citizens and urban dwellers is key to examine contemporary urban transformations. I suggest that it is important to investigate the social, cultural and civic dimensions which create consensus around these processes, and the role of the non-profit sector in this sense. In particular, I suggest to further investigate why these transformations do not generate (if not to limited extent) critical debate or reactions, while they represent open conflicts over resources and space use. Among the many potential reasons, I mention the intermediation of the non-profit sector because, while it holds a vital role in welfare provision, it also reinforces the stratification of citizens. Such stratification occurs through the normalisation of the transition from an entitlement to a need-based approach to welfare. As part of this shift, it becomes increasingly difficult for citizens to reconfigure city space as a right and self-organisation as a potential. At the same time, the presence of the third sector contributes to the invisibilisation of the public administration and its responsibilities in the social realm.

Part 1.

Growing food in the urban periphery. Transforming space, transforming citizenship

Introduction

The urban public park Parco Piemonte is situated at the southernmost point of the peripheral neighbourhood Mirafiori Sud. One can arrive to the park from the city centre using public transportation, heading south for a 40 minutes journey on the tram number 4. This way, as the tram travels along Corso Unione Sovietica (Soviet Union Avenue), one stops in front of several buildings, which are representative of the industrial history of Turin. Among these, the fifth entrance to *FIAT Mirafiori Sud* factory plant, the Salesians School Agnelli (*Istituto Salesiano Agnelli*), named after *FIAT*'s founding family, and the 19th century former Hospice of the Poor Elderly (*Ospizio dei Poveri Vecchi*), where in 1993 the University of Turin moved its faculty of economics (now called School of Management and Economics). Switching perspective, one can also arrive at the Parco Piemonte from outside the city. The area represents a green frontier, along the river Sangone, between smaller municipalities on the outskirts of Turin and the city itself. When arriving from the south, one passes by the edges of the park, first thing when exiting the highway and entering the city. Looking out from the car, moving along the street, one first sees some high trees, a Roma camp[6] made of white temporary housing containers, and then a large agricultural field. What one sees are just parts of what composes the complex landscape of Parco Piemonte.

In this chapter, I present the case of this public park, focusing on its 2019-2020 partial transformation into an urban gardening project called Orti Generali (General Gardens). Orti Generali offers 160 individual allotments for rent (for between 25 and 45 euros per month) as well as shared gardening and recreational spaces, including an educational farm and a café. Orti Generali also organises several courses around sustainable agriculture, apiculture as well as yoga, film screenings and creative activities for children (Orti Generali n.d.). The aim of the project is to create a sustainable environment, where urban

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[6] In Italy, the *campi nomadi* (literally nomads camps) are precarious encampments of Roma population most often situated in the urban margins. These can have different legal status: informal, authorised or developed by the public administration.

dwellers can reconnect with nature while enjoying and taking care of the space through gardening, volunteering or simply consuming quality products. The project also collaborates with local NGOs and is part of the neighbourhood solidarity networks.

Based on my participant observation during the setting up of the project, I discuss the transforming management and use of this peri-urban green area. I shed light onto the perspective of its occupants to analyse visions and narratives of urban gardening which, ultimately, speak of urban renewal and citizenship more generally. More precisely, the transformation of the park represented a privileged arena to study the changing nature of citizens engagement - in the context of urban renewal - and the ways in which specific visions and moralities of a "good urban space" (e.g. open and beautiful) and of a "good citizen" (e.g. active and obedient) are articulated together. More specifically, this case allows to engage with the following questions: what forms of civic engagement are practiced in the context of urban renewal? How are these forms of engagement entangled with welfare state retrenchment and the emergence of non-profit organisations as new mediators of state-citizen relations? Which citizens, practices and forms of knowledge remain excluded by such forms of engagement and urban renewal processes?

Scholars have investigated similar questions around urban renewal in other post-industrial contexts similar to Turin such as the city of Detroit. Turin and Detroit shared similar industrial histories, shaped by the FIAT company and General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, respectively. Historical similarities invited for comparative investigations around, for example, the organisation of labour, during the Fordist era (Signoretti 2015). Scholars have also focused on the consequences of the industrial crisis and the necessary redefinition of these cities' economies and overall identity. As highlighted by Castellani and Damiano (2011) and Berta (2019), the crisis of the car industry has provoked in both cities rapid social changes such as growing unemployment and poverty. Rethinking the economy of these cities also meant rethinking the use of many of their areas, and food often played a central role in these transformations. As shown by Yung and Newman (2014) in relation to Detroit, food can represent an

interesting entry point to analyse a city in crisis and local approaches to inequalities and urban governance.

Particularly relevant to frame my reflections on the transformation of Parco Piemonte is the work of the anthropologist Andrew Newman, who explored the making of a public park called *Jardins d'Éole* in a post-industrial and peripheral area of northeast Paris (Newman 2015; 2020). Throughout his work, the author examined the ways in which "parks materialise changing notions of citizenship and belonging" (Newman 2020, 61). Newman argued that the construction of the park - and the green turn in urban policies common to many cities - can be analysed as a "broader reimagining of what nature, the city, its citizens, and political contestation mean at a fundamental level" (Newman 2015, xv). Contributing to the discussion around the "right to the city" approach[7], Newman started from a simple question: "how do people - from residents to planners – create "vibrant" urban spaces, and how are such places reproduced in everyday life, and for what political end?" (xviii). I will particularly engage with three ideas discussed by Newman (2015).

The first is the idea of moving boundaries between planners and users of the park. Newman (2015) built on the work of Henri Lefebvre and, more particularly, his critical approach to capitalist urbanisation. In his important contributions to the study of the city, space and politics, Lefebvre (1968; 1991) highlighted the power relations and inequalities that characterise the production of the urban space. Among other things, he theorised the "semiology of the city" namely its messages, meaning and values, as well as the different dimensions of space (namely the perceived, conceived and lived spaces, Lefebvre 1991) which explains its centrality in all people's life. Particularly relevant here is the difference he drew between the powerful and the weak in terms of their access to and appropriation of urban space, and their participation in decision making. Newman (2015) revisits such sharp

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[7] The concept of "the right to the city" was theorised by Lefebvre (1968) and more recently Harvey (2008; 2012). It is also being used by grassroots initiatives and social movements as a working slogan and political vision to reclaim citizens' right to co-create the urban space in the context of growing spatial inequalities and the commodification of the urban space.

contrast between these two groups by unravelling how, at the *Jardins d'Éole* different roles and positions are often mixing, arguing for a complexification of these categories. The author analyses the perspectives and the "creative agency" of all the people such as urban planners, politicians, neighbourhood activists, local immigrant youth therefore also including "nonexpert residents" who reimagine and reshape places in ways that might not always correspond to the understandings of authorities (Newman 2015, xx). The case of Parco Piemonte further complexifies these advancements towards a more profound understanding of contemporary urban renewal. In chapter one, I explore the ways in which local inhabitants and workers were directly involved in the transformation of the area through their voluntary contributions and gardening practices. I point to the premises of such participatory approach, which I contextualise as part of broader genealogy of urban gardening and urban renewal plans in the city. I argue that while the new users of the area are directly involved in and key actors of its transformation, their ability to intervene remains confined to certain levels of decision making and specific forms of civic engagement.

The second and related element of Newman's analysis which I want to discuss is the idea that the park can be an arena of engagement, confrontation and political activism, despite the increasingly privatised and exclusionary definitions of public space. More generally, anthropological and geographical literature on urban gardening has also engaged with these themes, looking at urban gardens as sites of urban power relations. Authors such as Crossan *et al*. (2016) questioned the extent to which urban gardens become sites of "neoliberal construction of citizenship" (937). Tornaghi (2014) and Certomà and Tornaghi (2019) called for a critical analysis of urban gardens as political spaces, unravelling their forms and functioning in the context of neoliberal urbanism. The case of the development of Orti Generali adds to this literature by revealing how gardens can also become sites of legitimisation of certain practices over others and silenced confrontation between different visions of urban public space and its (need for) renewal. In chapter two I explain about the engagement of new volunteers and gardeners as well as the diverging visions that emerged in the park transformation process. I point to the issue of silenced confrontations to argue about what I analyse as a key

feature of urban renewal guided by local non-profit organisations. Their intervention, while being participated by the local population, does not come without power relations and becomes a way of redefining, based on moral standards what is appropriate, legal, beautiful, in need of renewal and what is not.

The third element that I take from Newman is, ultimately, the problematisation of the meaning of sustainability and renewal of urban green spaces. The author argues that the early twenty-first-century green turn in urban planning and the narrative of the "ecocity" can facilitate gentrification and exclusionary practices. He explains how in the context of northeast Paris sustainable redevelopment has taken the character of a civilisation-based project:

> Tensions that run across ethnic, class, and gendered lines are particularly visible in the Jardins d'Éole: when the city itself (and not merely the park) is viewed as a "project", the stakes behind the political life of even small green spaces such as this one become quite visible. (Newman 2015, 129)

My ethnography speaks to these broader reflections on the premises and implications of greening projects by including the analysis of practices which existed at the Parco Piemonte before and beyond its renewal. In chapter three, I report on the perspective of citizens who remain partially excluded from such process of renewal namely the long-term occupants of the area: spontaneous gardeners and a family of shepherds. I focus on their skills to explain how their forms of "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968) (such as self-appropriation and itinerant labour) and related knowledge do not find a space for legitimisation in the new configuration of the park. In fact, these do not align with neoliberal visions of the urban space (e.g. Guano 2020) nor with the production of hegemonic images of urban sustainability. This chapter of the dissertation contributes to its overall aim by emphasising the linkages between new practices of urban renewal (and gentrification), widespread understandings of civic engagement at its basis and problematising hegemonic visions of urban greening and sustainability.

Chapter I. Co-producing urban renewal?

I arrived at the Parco Piemonte in January 2019, after a first encounter with Matteo, one of the founding members of the Orti Generali project. A few days before, I had contacted him via email then we had talked on the phone and agreed to meet during his lunch break. I had joined him at his office, at the community centre of Mirafiori Sud, which hosted the offices of several local non-profit organisations as well as recreational spaces and a social canteen. During that first meeting he introduced me to the various and complex phases of the Orti Generali project design as well as invited me to pass by the park to see things directly. The actual construction phase of the project was just starting. Matteo worked as part of the cultural association *Coefficiente Clorofilla*, which had developed the idea of Orti Generali over the last years. In the Italian context a cultural association is defined as a non-profit private organisation constituted by a group of subjects pursuing a common goal of public interest and using its financial resources for cultural or educational purposes. Based on its statute, Coefficiente Clorofilla aimed at "encouraging sociality, participation and contributing to the cultural, environmental and civic growth of the entire community, by realizing activities related to cultural, environmental, social, educational and recreative projects" (statute 2013, translation is my own). In 2014, this association had officially won a 15-years land concession and funding to reorganize and manage part of the park and developing their urban gardening project. The development of Orti Generali was funded through the call "smart cities and communities and social innovation" allocated by the Ministry of Instruction, University and Research. The project also received funding by the bank foundation *Compagnia di San Paolo*, the European Union Horizon 2020 project *proGireg* and through other smaller collaborations. Due to delays in the arrival of the funds, the land rehabilitation and construction works at the park could only start between 2018 and 2019 through the anticipation of some payments by the association and the mobilization of volunteer work.

January 2019 was a busy time: the whole area that would soon host Orti Generali's gardening activities was being cleaning up. I accepted Matteo's invitation to join the group of workers and volunteers at the park, to meet them in person and see what such land rehabilitation

operations actually meant. I arrived at the park with the tram 4. I remember walking toward the empty agricultural field, thinking that I really was at the very end of the city. I was leaving behind me this peculiar mix of buildings that characterize the margins of the former industrial neighbourhood Mirafiori Sud, namely a set of working-class housing compounds dating back to various waves of urban construction between the 1950s and 1990s. The landscape was whitened because of the frost. I passed next to an old peri-urban farmhouse (*cascina*): it was difficult to say if it was semi-occupied or entirely abandoned. As I learned later, this was called the *Cascina Cassotti Balbo* and was historically related to the nearby agricultural field. I entered the dirt road on the side of the field: no signs revealed that I was entering a public park, nobody around, just an open iron gate. I continued walking and saw, fastened to a pole, an information leaflet about Orti Generali. It was wet and partly damaged but still readable: "by March 2019 at the Parco Piemonte 150 new urban gardens will be born. Water, automatic irrigation, light, organic waste disposal and many other services for agriculture. For information, costs and procedures call this number or you can find us here at the park on Mondays between 10h and 13h or by making an appointment at the *Casa nel Parco* [neighbourhood community centre]".



[Image 1: Orti Generali information leaflet. 21/01/2019. Photo by the author.]

I continued walking, following the dirt road, which started descending towards what seemed more like an actual park: trees, plants and then again, more fields – which would later be dedicated to collective gardening and educational activities. I also caught sight of what seemed like vegetable gardens, hidden behind high plants and improvised fences made of plastic ropes and rusty bed nets. They seemed frozen in time, left alone in their winter sleep, with different materials and farming tools piled in their corners. On the other side of the path, I found a small concrete house. I saw Matteo with some workers and volunteers. He was preparing coffee for everybody on a portable gas cooker while the others were getting ready to start.

When I first started doing fieldwork at the Parco Piemonte my idea was to study the project Orti Generali as an example of urban gardening initiative in Turin. I was interested to understand the actors involved, their way of working and skills in relation to food production. At the time, I had little knowledge about the park where the project stood: its context, origins, former users and linkages to the industrial past of the city. As I took part to the land rehabilitation and construction works, I understood that partaking to the development of the project would allow me to understand much more than what I expected. This process spoke to the meaning given not only to urban food production but to urban renewal more generally: the redesign of urban margins and the making of new framings for and by its citizens. While cleaning up the park from the industrial material which companies and former users had abandoned there over the past decades, the project was redefining the function of public ground in an area where the local administrators had for long closed their eyes. This process also redefined the meaning of the public sector, putting non-profit workers and local inhabitants at the centre of urban renewal and staging non-profit organisations a new (moral) authority.

In this first section, I present the actors involved in this process, expanding on the extent to which this initiative redefined the urban planner – user divide as discussed by Newman (2015). In his analysis, the author looked at how urban design and the production of space can occur through the everyday practices of city inhabitants beyond urban planners and their logic. In the case analysed by Newman, at the *Jardins d'Éole* in Paris, different everyday (political) practices blurred

the distinction between "planners" and "users" and called for attention to the ways in which:

> People envision and analyse infrastructure, parks, streets, city blocks, and neighbourhoods in terms of movements and flows that may or may not correspond to the understandings of planning authorities; they also attempt to redirect, fix, shift, or even maintain the movements within and across these spaces by reimagining these sites and even materially reshaping and reworking places and infrastructure. (Newman 2015, xvi)

Following a similar approach, namely inquiring on who designed and transformed this urban space, I first contextualise the case of Orti Generali as part of the changing frames of urban gardening in Turin. I discuss the case of community gardens in relation to the emergence of non-profit organisations as new urban planners and users. I then analyse how these processes take shape at the park: how the workers of the association *Coefficiente Clorofilla* positioned themselves as figures in between city planners and local inhabitants and involved the latter in the transformation of the park? I shed light onto the ways in which this is part of a broader seemingly participatory approach to urban regeneration in the area, to be understood however as a feature of welfare state retrenchment.

(Re)defining urban gardens

Typology of urban gardens

Turin is characterised by different types of gardening arrangements[8]. There are regulated individual allotments also called district gardens (*orti della circoscrizione*). These are managed and assigned by the local administration based on criteria among which the age and socio-economic situation of the applicants (Bianco 2012). Moreover, school gardens are also part of municipal development plans for urban gardens. Such officially recognised and regulated activities have always co-existed with what are called illegal or spontaneous gardens (*orti abusivi, orti spontanei*). The way of naming these spaces varied according to the position and sensibility of my interlocutors. The gardeners would often just call them "gardens" and specify that these were "illegal" just when asked more specific questions. The name "illegal gardens" is more common – and resonates, in Italian, with the widespread issue of unauthorised construction. The adjective "spontaneous" was probably initiated in the realm of NGOs. Using the term spontaneous can serve multiple purposes, and sometimes the one of going beyond their immediate criminalisation and observing these as complex social phenomena. I will refer to them as "spontaneous gardens" to remark that these are the result of local inhabitants' direct land appropriation, but also to go beyond the legal/illegal and formal/informal dichotomy. As argued by Herzfeld (2020) going beyond such juxtaposition is important to be able to analyse the power relations and social assumptions that characterise decision making processes around urban spaces.

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[8] For a more general historical account of the development of urban gardens in Italy see Crespi (1982). While the historical overview of urban gardening in the Italian context goes beyond the scope of this section, it is important to recall that urban gardening became common practice during the wars to face the challenge of food provisioning. The fascist regime particularly emphasised the importance of these "war gardens" (*orti di guerra*) and converted a number of urban spaces into cultivated areas, as summarised in the slogan "cultivate park and squares" (*coltivare parchi e piazza*) (Albinati 1997; Fratin and Pozzati 2015). For a more recent overview of urban gardening in Italy see Marino and Cavallo (2016).

Spontaneous gardens were often developed at the margins of the city, in peripheral neighbourhoods, alongside water streams, railways or around abandoned farmhouses. This phenomenon particularly grew in the 1970s, in parallel to the increase of urban population linked to the development of the industry and the country's internal migration (Tecco *et al*. 2016). At the time, the new city inhabitants were workers coming from rural southern Italy, who developed urban gardens for both subsistence and recreation purposes (Baldo 2012; Crespi 1982).

From the mid 1990s, the municipality of Turin worked more actively on the conversion of these green areas in the name of legality and of what they named as a more "appropriate" and "shared" use of spaces – these terms, were still recurrently used by administrators and non-profit workers in the field to define the desired future of these green areas. An example in this sense were the efforts of municipal urban planners to create more public green areas obtaining peri-urban agricultural land (such as the fields around the old peri-urban farmhouses) from their private owners with the zoning plan of 1995:

> How could the city administration of Turin give parks to its inhabitants? It had to find a trick to obtain green areas and at the same time not to displease the landowners. Then the municipal technicians and the creator of the zoning plan thought of giving a sort of compensation: the owners would confer the agricultural area to the city administration of Turin, which in turn recognised them some land rights in other parts of the city.[9]

In 2010 (which corresponds to the years in which the city was hardly hit by the economic crisis), the municipality also started working on developing new regulations (2012, 2013) specifically for the development of urban gardens. As part of these plans, urban gardening was seen as a strategy to "valorise impoverished areas, support sociality, […], incentivise educational and therapeutic activities" (Tecco *et al*. 2016, translation is my own). The project TOCC (Turin a City to Cultivate) (*Torino Città da Coltivare*), for example, was

[9] Luigi Canfora, municipal employee at the department of urban green area management, interview, 06/11/2019.

developed in 2012 to promote the development of agricultural practices in the urban context such as short food chains, social agriculture, gardening and urban reforestation. With TOCC, the municipality aimed at developing an analysis that would reveal the state of the art: mapping existing agricultural areas, land concessions and understanding what the different options were to foster the development of urban agriculture in these spaces (Comune di Torino 2012).

Urban gardens, city renewal and the third sector: entanglements

I frame such interests for urban gardens as part of the local administration's attempts to renew the city's identity. Namely to transform its image from the one of an industrial to a sustainable and creative city, attract external resources and position itself in global networks – elements discussed by Vanolo (2008) and Finocchiaro (1999), among others. I build on similar arguments that have been made about other post-industrial cities such as Detroit, where urban agriculture was promoted to counter post-industrial decline and give a new function to vacant land. In their article on marginality and urban agriculture in Detroit, Draus *et al*. (2013) remark however that people living and working in heavily depopulated areas of Detroit actually foresee little opportunities for urban agriculture to alter their living conditions and marginalisation. Building on Wacquant (1999)'s notion of advanced marginality, the authors highlight the importance of contextualising these projects, looking at how, at the same time, these inhabitants are subject to "absence of an effective public sector, the withdrawal of services, and the reliance on non-profit and volunteer efforts for maintaining day-to day survival in the neighbourhood (Draus *et al*. 2013, 2535-2536). More generally, literature about Detroit reveals that the many attempts to "reinvent the Motor City" and its image are to be analysed as part of the narrowing down of the range of public interventions and the normalisation of city governance by "extra-democratic entities" (Smith and Kirkpatrick 2015). As I will exemplify all along the dissertation, the case of Turin analysed from the perspective of collective food procurement adds to this line of arguments and is particularly relevant to explain how welfare (its meaning, practice and agents) is reconfigured (and scoped down) in such post-industrial contexts.

In Turin, processes often defined in terms of public green renewal (*rigenerazione del verde pubblico*) occurred through the remaking of entire green areas (which included the dismantlement of spontaneous gardens) as well as through collaborations between city planners, local non-profit organisations and citizens. While the municipal planners worked on the identification of potential areas for urban gardening, the definition and management of the urban gardening projects were not always compatible with the limited resources and "times of institutional politics and the local administration" (*il tempo della politica*) - as pointed out by several non-profit workers engaged in urban agriculture. This meant that, aside from the municipal gardens managed by the districts' administrations, other public green renewal projects were rarely seen as a public policy priority because of the high costs and long-term of such operations. Among other places, this was the situation at Strada del Drosso (close to the Parco Piemonte), which is an area left completely unmanaged by the city administration and hosting more than 300 spontaneous gardens. The municipality increasingly developed land concessions and collaboration with local non-profit-organisations or group of citizens in charge of renewing and directly managing some of these public areas. While telling me about the limited economic and human resources of the city administration (an important theme, recurring in most of my interviews), Vittorio Bianco, one of my research participants and a researcher and practitioner in the field of urban agriculture, explained:

> It is an engine in trouble [referring to the municipality and its budget]. From the point of view of its human resources too, with regards both to the management of the space and to the policies that should be put in place. Therefore, inevitably, the principle of subsidiarity has been implemented, de facto giving

> to private social organisations also the duty to find their resources[10].

The remark of Vittorio points to yet another element of such public green areas' concessions and shared management, namely the need for external resources. As confirmed throughout my ethnography, local non-profit organisations most often had to search for private funding (and voluntary work) to be able to sustain their activities. While I do not have the space to expand on this here (but will come back to it in part III of the dissertation), the dependency on external funding further complexifies the figure of the urban planner: who are the city planners in a context in which the municipality, non-profit organisations and private founders have a say and different margins of intervention (bringing in agendas and power relations) in the redefinition of the urban space?

Orti Generali should therefore be contextualised as part of the emergence of non-profit organisations workers as co-planners of urban green areas and the development of what could be regarded as a third way between public management (municipal gardens) and direct appropriation (spontaneous gardens) [11]. It is also to be linked to a general increase in interest in urban agriculture from the bottom-up across European cities and to the proliferation of concepts and international models such as North American community gardens and *jardins partagés*. According to Vittorio Bianco, the emergence of similar experiences in Turin represented a renewed citizens' interest

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[10] Vittorio Bianco, urban ecology and sustainable development consultant, interview, 06/06/2020. Original quote: "È una macchina in difficoltà anche dal punto delle risorse umane, rispetto al presidio del territorio e a tutte le politiche che dovrebbero esserci; e quindi giocoforza il principio di sussidiarietà è stato implementato un po' a forza e di fatto lasciando al privato sociale anche l'onere di recuperare risorse." All along the dissertation, I sometimes report the original quotes in Italian like I did here - when I felt that the words and turn of phrase were particularly telling.

[11] While I do not have the space to discuss this here, it is important to add to the picture also the growing number of urban gardens sponsored by private companies. For example, I visited an urban garden on the rooftop of a supermarket (managed by the non-profit organisation *Rete O.n.g.*) as well as gardens managed by the multinational *Le Roy Merlin*.

for urban green spaces that were envisaged as "opportunities for socialisation, passing from an individual management of the garden to a **collective vision**, more or less formalised, more or less open" (Bianco 2012, 1, translation and emphasis are my own).

At the time of the fieldwork, many of Turin collective urban gardens were gathered under the umbrella of the network Metropolitan Gardens of Turin (*Or.Me. Torinesi*). This network was developed in 2016 to allow garden organisers (most often workers of non-profit organisations, social cooperatives and informal groups of citizens) to discuss about their experiences, get common trainings on the themes of agriculture and education and collaborate in the search for funding[12]. The Or.Me network developed as a consequence of the changing requirements of private foundations, which incentivised the creation of networks as means to channel their funding. Highlighting this perspective is interesting to think of the meaning of contemporary networks of non-profit organisations: as I discuss in Vasile (2023), I argue that these are not necessarily created based on a shared vision per se, but the shared vision is constructed as a tool to access funding and develop a homogenised narrative around different initiatives. As a matter of fact, it was only in 2019 that Or.Me members started to work more actively on a presentation document stressing their shared visions and needs. They also aimed at creating a more unified image of their work. As illustrated by the image reported below (retrieved from a presentation given by Or.Me as part of a webinar[13] organised by the municipality of Paris on the theme of Italian urban gardening experiences) by 2021 the network managed to develop such shared narrative and homogeneous aesthetic. It recalls international models

[12] Matteo Baldo, founder of Orti Generali, interview, 25/05/2020.

[13] "*Retour d'expériences des jardins urbains italiens à Turin, à Rome et en Toscane"*. Webinar organised on 09/06/2021 by the *Pôle Ressource Jardinage Urbain de la Direction des Espaces Verts et de l'Environnement de la Ville de Paris*.

such as community gardens in Rotterdam[14]. The network also developed shared yet broad objectives such as the promotion of local development, increasing urban food access, strengthening or creating community ties and improving urban microclimate.



[Image 2: the different gardens that compose the network *Or.Me*. Courtesy of *Or.Me*.]

By taking a closer look at these urban gardens, it was possible to note that, more than a linear third way, these initiatives incarnated a wide variety of actors and different forms of collaborations, modes of organising and thinking about collective gardens. Such variety was also pointed out in the context of community gardens in New York city and Amsterdam by Eizenberg (2012) and Bródy and de Wilde (2020), respectively. These authors look at the effects that different models of NGO management of community gardens can have on community participation, people's sense of ownership and control over space (Eizenberg 2012). Bródy and de Wilde (2020) delve into their social inclusion and food provision and distribution potentials. While

[14] I give the example of Rotterdam here as my research is informed by the comparative framework of the *Food Citizens?* project. The case of community gardens in Rotterdam was analysed by Vincent Walstra who looked at *Rotterdamse Munt*, among other cases.

attending one of Or.Me's meeting I was able to discern the variety of approaches of the gardens' organisers, who talked about their scopes, activities and challenges. Such meetings gathered groups and non-profit organisations such as Orti Generali and Rete ONG.

I have introduced general trends in the transformations of urban gardens in Turin, which illustrate the relation between welfare state retrenchment and the development of new models of green renewal in line with international trends and examples. I discussed the emergence of new figures at the frontier between planners and users, namely non-profit organisations workers and volunteers engaged in the development of collective urban gardening projects. In what follows, I present the case of Orti Generali in more details: how the engagement of non-profit workers occurred in practice? What was their role in and visions of urban renewal in Mirafiori Sud? I also question the extent to which the remodulation of the planners-users divide occurred in practice. I build on participant observation to uncover the actual shape that concepts such as collective and social inclusion took in practice.

"Giving back"

Land configuration, organisation and access at Orti Generali

The area concerned by the project Orti Generali comprises two very different parts of the Parco Piemonte. An agricultural field (called A on the map below), flat and closer to the street, which was converted into allotments rented to individuals or families. The other area (B), closer to the Sangone river, wilder and more isolated, and previously partly occupied by spontaneous gardens was transformed into a space for collective gardening and educational activities.

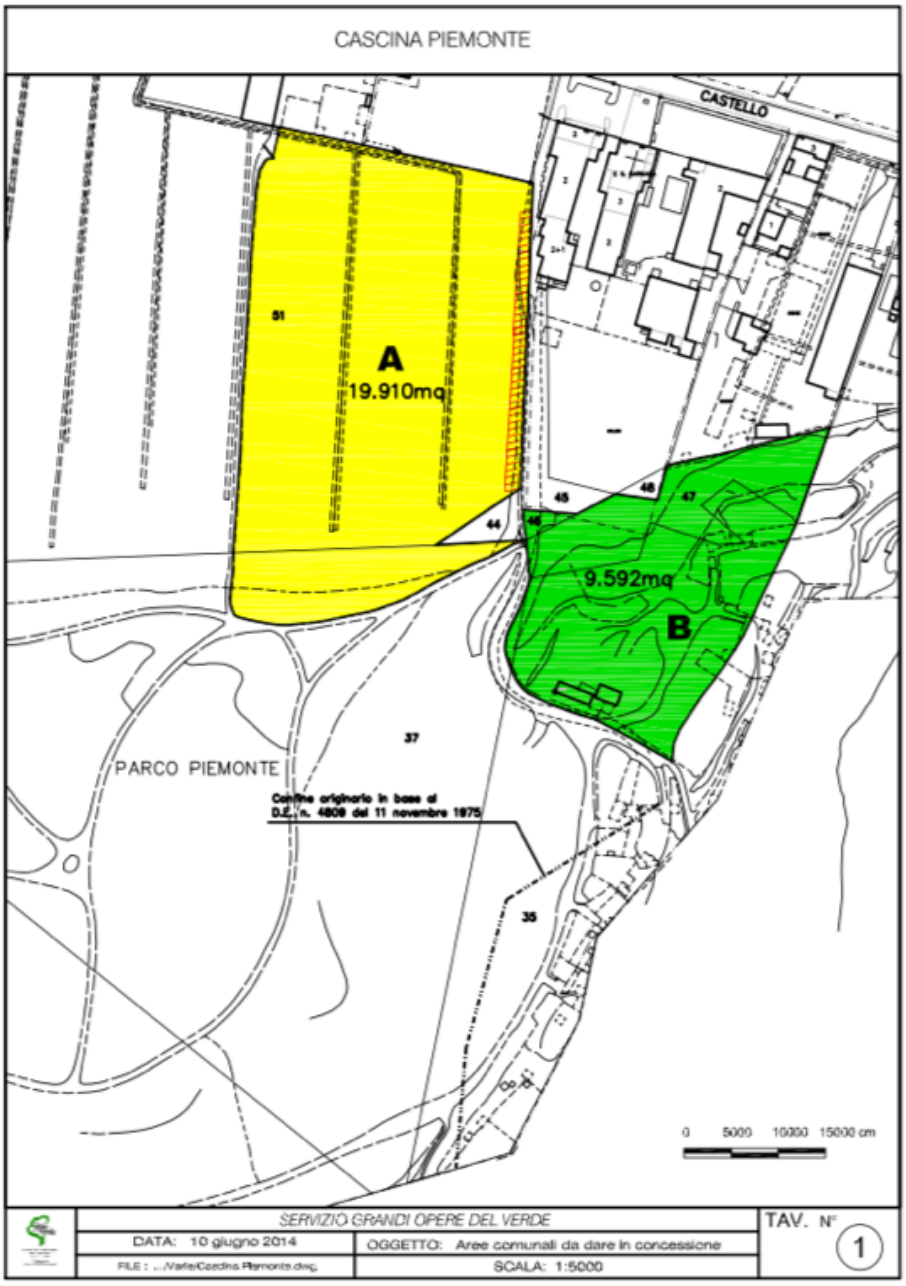
As per 2021, the area A was transformed into 160 allotments of varied sizes: 50, 75 or 100 square meters, costing respectively 25, 35 and 45 euros per month. Gardeners at Orti Generali included inhabitants of the neighbourhood Mirafiori Sud, a working-class area of the city historically inhabited by workers of the car industry (e.g. Vasile and Pisano 2021). More recently, the area become characterised by an ageing population which increased by 14.5% between 1991 and 2011. Mirafiori Sud also attracted new immigrants, representing 9.94% of

the local population - which is less, however, than the city average (data from 2015)[15]. As I will explain further, gardening is, since a long time, part of the habits of the local population – for recreational and subsistence purposes – also considering that in the area the average yearly income amounted in 2009 to just under 14,000 euros. It is important to underline that Orti Generali also attracted dwellers from other areas of the city such as young families, people interested in sustainable agricultural practices and environmental activists.

To try to ensure a wider accessibility, the association reserved 25 of their allotments at a reduced price to people under 35, and 15 allotments to people facing economic difficulties. The latter, also called "solidarity gardeners" (*ortolani solidali*) were asked 5 euros per month, in addition to 10 hours of voluntary work to support the association in the management of the shared areas of the gardens. Such system of "solidarity" must be problematised in terms of unremunerated labour, as I will further elaborate throughout the dissertation in relation to similar free labour arrangements and the widespread culture of volunteerism. While "solidarity gardeners" agreed with such arrangement, this corresponded to free labour for the organisation. Moreover, it represented a form of engagement in the management of the area (e.g., cleaning, maintenance, small construction works) that did not correspond to shared decision making but rather to the implementation of tasks decided and organised top-down by the project directors. Finally, it is important to highlight that a waiting list to access such type of contract and garden soon developed, reflecting a broader need and desire for more accessible plots that remained unsolved.

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[15] Data retrieved from the infographics of the exhibition "*Mirafiori Dopo il Mito*" visited in October 2019. The infographics were mostly based on the Rota reports on Turin.



[Image 3: The two areas of intervention. Image from the municipal department *Servizio Grandi Opere del Verde*. 2014. Courtesy of *Associazione Coefficiente Clorofilla*.]

All allotments benefitted from a technological irrigation system connected to a groundwater pomp and in situ weather station. These were regarded as essential elements of the innovative model of Orti Generali and contributed to attract both people that had a garden for the first time as well as long-term gardeners from the area. For example, this was the case of Alessandro, a former railway worker now retiree, which rented a plot at Orti Generali because of such services as well as the active management and monitoring of Davide, Matteo and Stefano, the garden organisers[16]. When learning about the project, he had decided to opt out of municipal gardens, which he said were left unmanaged by the district administration. Over the years, Alessandro noted, the administration had dedicated less and less time and resources to the gardens. In recent years, he argued, claims made to the local administration about broken fences, frozen water pipes and theft always remained unanswered and, as the space lacked general maintenance and supervision, the overbearing behaviours of some of the long-term gardeners had also grown stronger. Frustrated by such challenges, he had decided to take part to the new project, finding what he described as a place with "civil, constructive and collaborative people". Alessandro's transition from one type of garden to the other is illustrative of the progressive decline of public investment in urban gardening, the emergence of new planning actors and the consequent redefinition of gardens' organisation and attributes. This line of argument was often used by the organisers of Orti Generali, who pointed to limited action of the public administration and the need for a different model of gardens' management.

The other space concerned by the project, the area B, was transformed into a community garden including areas for educational activities, collective gardening and a café. As per 2021, the organisation also developed a stable (mainly hosting chicken, a dog and few sheep during the summer), an area for bee keeping, one for university experimentation projects and two large greenhouses for hosting courses and events. The land rehabilitation and construction work in this lower area - once called by Matteo "the legacy we had to

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[16] Alessandro – a pseudonym, gardener, interview, 25/05/2021.

undergo"[17] - was an enormous endeavour achieved thanks to the work of volunteers involved for several months in the cleaning up and significant reshaping of the space. In the past, the area had been the site of accumulation of industrial material by spin off industrial firms, that would use parts of the city river banks as an informal landfill[18]. Later, as spontaneous gardeners had started to use the area, they also brought in all kinds of materials for their activities such as metal, construction material that, in the process of renewal, were deemed inappropriate, polluting and out of place. As I will elaborate next, these transformations not only dramatically changed the aesthetic of the area but also its occupants and local ways of understanding gardening. New rules and standards were brought in by the project organisers and, to a lesser extent, the volunteers and new gardeners.

At the basis of Orti Generali: visions, narratives and the moral approach

At the time of my fieldwork (2019-2020), the project organisers were Davide – a young inhabitant of Mirafiori Sud, who joined the team after a first period of participation as volunteer -, Matteo and Stefano[19]. Before winning such concession and ideating the project Orti Generali, the founding members of the non-profit organisation *Associazione Coefficiente Clorofilla*, Matteo Baldo - social worker - and Stefano Olivari - landscape architect -, had previous long-term experiences around urban gardening and project

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[17] Matteo Baldo, field recording, 17/10/2019. Original quote: "*l'eredità che dovevamo subire*".

[18] Luigi Canfora, interview, 06/11/2019.

[19] As I finalised this chapter (August 2022), the staff of Orti Generali increased - including, for example, new people responsible for the educational activities and food preparation. On the other hand, some of the people encountered during my fieldwork left the project such as Davide who quitted in October 2021. Most importantly, in January 2022, Orti Generali's status was transformed from a non-profit organisation into a for-profit social business. While these elements are important to shed light onto the evolution of the project, I do not discuss them in this dissertation, which focuses on my fieldwork period.

management in the area. In 2010, they started a research participatory planning project called *Miraorti*. It aimed at understanding together with local inhabitants how to reconfigure more than 300 spontaneous allotments (situated in the area of Strada del Drosso, near to Parco Piemonte). The idea at the basis of their research was to propose a new model of allotments reconfiguration based on the active engagement of the spontaneous occupants encouraged to open their gardens to a wider public and new activities. After several years of research and experimentation in Strada del Drosso, their official proposal for the transformation of the area was not taken ahead by the local administration and "the project ended up in a drawer"[20]. Their approach was in fact not deemed appropriate by the public employees in charge of green renewal in Mirafiori at the time who preferred to follow a different management model[21]. In 2014, as new funding possibilities arose, they decided to present a proposal for the partial reconfiguration of the Parco Piemonte, another piece of the peripheral green belt that the administration planned to transform. As they designed the new project, their work transformed from one of research and experimentation to one of actual implementation and transformation.

As narrated by Stefano during a presentation meeting with the volunteers and gardeners that took part to the transformation of the area:

> When we arrived here, this area was the target of different types of speculations. For example, at the beginning there was the idea of a supermarket which then vanished because of urbanistic limitations. Then the idea of making a camping, but quite a heavy one. At that time, us and the group Borgata Mirafiori did some questionnaires, participatory planning, to

[20] Matteo Baldo, interview, 25/05/2020.

[21] As per September 2020, the project *Miraorti* was back on the agenda of the association due to a renewed interest by the local administration – also to be linked to a change in the employees working in the greening department. The association attempted to mobilise funds to restart the research process in Strada del Drosso through a crowdfunding campaign sponsored via the project *Bottom Up* (Bottom up Torino n.d.).

> understand what the neighbourhood wanted and we fought a bit so that the area could remain an agricultural land, as now these are very few in the urban fabric […]. The agriculture that mostly made sense in the city was not the one of the tractors, on a large scale, but a type of agriculture which involves as much as possible citizens so small-scale agriculture. A form of horticulture as part of which all the people kind of become small-scale farmers, they have their gardens and in fact it also becomes a practice with an educational and social value, where you can bring schools and then involve the neighbourhood in the transformation.[22]

Stefano underlined the importance of urban agriculture and explained how the association operated to guarantee the continuity of agricultural activities within the Parco Piemonte. The reference made to inadequate private investments risking transforming the very nature of the land was juxtaposed to the association's efforts to develop a participatory, social and educative project for the area. In other parts of his talk, Stefano also referred to the local administration as an ensemble of pre-constituted visions and agendas that were difficult to influence or, using his terms, were not always ready to respond to new proposals and new ways of doing.

The positioning emerging from the words of Stefano is to be linked to the work of non-profit organisations and in particular to their growing role in the delivery of social services in Italy (e.g. Caselli 2015). As explained in the introduction, such shift to a third way characterised the last decades of welfare reconfiguration in the peninsula and was accompanied by an important moral reconfiguration of shared understanding of welfare and the role of citizens – discussed by Muehlebach (2012), among others, and all along this dissertation. Claims like the ones of Stefano about the role played by the Third Sector can be found, among other, in Alexander (2009) and Koch (2021), both discussing welfare reconfiguration in the context of neoliberal reform of British public policy and welfare. Building on Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, Alexander (2009) explained how welfare has been redefined through claims on the importance of the

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[22] Stefano Olivari, field recording, 17/11/2019.

retrenchment of the public sector "in favour of an autonomous market and civil society" (222). In such context, the third sector is viewed as means to "foster social cohesion, providing the trust in a community of strangers that the state no longer credibly supports" (222) and works to recast the relation between public administration and society. The analysis of Koch (2021) helps reflecting on the moral economy brought in by such figures, which she called "frontline workers" (244), many of which are part of non-profit organisations (to which the government outsourced the delivery of public services). Koch (2021) shows how these figures (feel that they) are guided by ethics while navigating between people's need and structural constraints.

The morality imbued in Stefano's vision emerged through recurrent terminology such as "sharing spaces and practices" (*condivisione di spazi e pratiche*) and "giving back to the neighbourhood" (*restituire al quartiere*). Connecting this terminology to the broader question on the urban planner/ user divide allows for new questions and contradictions to be unfolded: who "gives back" the land? Is it the non-profit organisation which is in charge of representing the interests of local inhabitants and preserve public green areas from the neglect of the local administration and market speculations? Are then local inhabitants involved on the same level of planning and management as these non-profit workers? Are there tensions and diverse levels and forms of engagement to be considered? Answering these questions necessitates looking at the everyday practices of the making of the urban gardens. But before doing so it is important to contextualise such terminology and related moral approach to urban renewal as part of the history of Mirafiori Sud and the participation of local non-profit organisations and citizens in its regeneration plans.

Urban renewal through citizens engagement at Mirafiori Sud: a critical analysis

The neighbourhood Mirafiori Sud, situated in the southern part of Turin, was an agricultural production area until the 1930s. Then the FIAT industry established there one of its plants and since then the area underwent enormous transformations both in terms of construction and population, as it started to host migrant workers from southern Italy. This neighbourhood became the heart of Turin's

industrial production and, at the same time, some of its areas (such as Via Artom and Via Millelire) were sites of profound social hardship and marginalisation (Basile 2014). The industrial crisis, the progressive closure of most of the city industrial plants and growing unemployment severely affected the local economy and the working class's living conditions. In Mirafiori's most vulnerable areas it entailed an increase in micro criminality and drug use (e.g. Segre 1976). Since the end of the 1990s, policy interventions such as urban renewal and socio-cultural programs aimed to ameliorate living conditions in the area. Among these, the ensemble of measures (*Programma di Recupero Urbano*) was put in place to redevelop part of the neighbourhood, as part of which the famous urbanistic housing interventions of Via Artom (1998-2006)[23]. Such physical transformations were accompanied by a series of social measures (*Piano di Accompagnamento Sociale*) aimed to tackle social problems and give a new identity to Mirafiori's most critical areas, which were considered for many years the "ghetto of the Fordist Turin" (Scarafia 2003).

Over time, third sector organisations including social cooperatives, non-profit organisations such as cultural associations, the voluntary sector and civil society groups proliferated, coming to play a key role in the idea of the neighbourhood's renewal and overall, in social care in marginal areas. The development of the Mirafiori Community Foundation (*Fondazione di Comunità di Mirafiori*) in 2008 was a significant step in this sense. Its objective was to give continuity to the above-mentioned transformations and "valorise the interventions made by the municipality of Turin, the foundation *Compagnia di San Paolo* and local actors to create strong partnerships between the public administration, the third sector, bank foundations, private companies and citizens" (Fondazione della Comunità di Mirafiori Onlus 2020, translation is my own). The community foundation also aimed at sponsoring new forms of civic engagement (such as building networks

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[23] For a collection of research material on Mirafiori Sud and its transformations refer to the online archive "*Atelier Mirafiori - Mirafiori Dopo il Mito*". In particular, Scarafia (2003) discusses the reconfiguration of Via Artom (including the renewal of social housing) by presenting the perspective of local inhabitants, social workers and administrators.

of volunteers) as a way to give a new life to the area, both for the benefit of current inhabitants as well as to attract new inhabitants and to "work on the non-residents' imaginary of *Mirafiori*"[24].



[Image 4: detail of the leaflet of MiraMap, a collaborative platform connecting citizens, the public administration and the third sector in *Mirafiori Sud*.]

The image above is a detail of a leaflet sponsoring a new digital platform facilitating collaborations among local organisations via the setting up of a rooster of volunteers. Images such as this one – which depict the different steps that non-profit organisations should follow to

[24] Elena Carli, president of Mirafiori Community Foundation, interview, 03/10/2019.

work with volunteers and incentivise their active participation - should not be red in a vacuum but as part of contemporary city agendas where urban renewal and civic engagement are viewed as a vector for city branding, repopulation, boosting the local economy, and actually, only rarely, simply ameliorating current inhabitants' living conditions. Wanting to attract new residents, while making the current ones participate to urban renewal, does not come without the diffusion of a morality that justifies and legitimates their active participation.

I find that the leaflet above is illustrative of the moral apparatus which reframes local inhabitants as volunteers and aims at normalising volunteerism while attempting to make it more efficient. In the top left corner, the handing of a medal visually represents the scoring system which was built in this platform and that attributes a good score to the more active citizens. This is part of a broader system that praise volunteerism, for example, through its official legitimisation and "recognition by the city administration" - as written on the leaflet itself and exemplified by many public discourses presented in this dissertation. As represented in the bottom right corner, the platform also aims at facilitating all the paperwork revolving around the setting up of volunteering activities, easing organisational procedures around volunteer work. As similarly pointed out by Bolzoni (2019) in the context of another neighbourhood of Turin named San Salvario, the work of local NGOs (and, I add, their employment of volunteer work) is being increasingly facilitated and entangled with other city agendas which results in several ambivalences. Among other, not all the stances, voices and point of views find space in these processes – an element which I will come back to –, the rhetoric of participation may actually decrease public engagement, fostering neoliberal logics and jeopardise more radical initiatives (Bolzoni 2019).

Overall, the transformation of Parco Piemonte can be contextualised as part of two main trends: first, "urban green renewal" and second the "participatory approach" as part of which citizens were invited to co-manage new spaces and communities. Both of these trends speak of changing relations and blurring boundaries between the local administration and the third sector. In particular, they are characterised by the emergence of non-profit organisations as entities in between urban planners and users, positioned at the forefront of the

transformation of urban peripheral areas in terms of the redefinition of both their welfare and space (see also Bolzoni 2019 and Eizenberg 2012a). More general trends about the growing role of the third sector have been highlighted in international literature. The work of Alexander (2009), among others, pointed to the ways in which the state has externalised the functions of care to the third sector and how that reshapes citizenship (as the Third Sector becomes an intermediary between the state and citizens).

The case of Turin and the analytical angle of the evolution of urban gardening in peripheral areas confirm such evolutions while displaying some peculiarities. The narrative around the development of Orti Generali reflects a growing morality around the new role of citizens who shall directly contribute to urban transformation and to the improvement of liveability of their environment – also discussed in terms of a narrative and morality of active citizenship inherent to contexts of welfare state retrenchment (e.g. Muehlebach 2012; Pusceddu 2020). However, this approach can be intertwined with different city agendas, visions and scopes of urban renewal and the modus operandi of the non-profit organisations can vary significantly. Narratives of urban renewal such as "giving back" reveal some tensions as per the role of non-profit workers and how citizens can be framed as recipients in a narrative of participation. In the next section, I focus on the involvement of volunteers at Orti Generali, going beyond the narratives of civic engagement and entering into its practices. I show how this case complexifies the idea of the moving boundaries between city planners and users by exposing the ways in which users' contribution is confined to particular forms of civic engagement.

Chapter II. Appropriate garden(er)s

As I started to engage in the land rehabilitation works at the park Piemonte, I met many volunteers who came there once or twice a week and dedicated their energies to the Orti Generali project for several reasons. At the time (winter 2019), these were mainly youngsters and retirees, mostly men. The gender composition of the group of volunteers however changed over time and in relation to the tasks, and more women started to partake in the initiative as the end of cleaning and construction works gave way to gardening activities. New gardeners also started to arrive in March 2019 when the individual allotments were ready to be rented. Some of them also contributed to the continuation of the works and to the development of the collective gardening areas (while others only worked on their individual plots). In this chapter, I share insights on the ways in which the land rehabilitation and volunteer work took shape at the park and how this process can be regarded as an example of non-expert citizens engagement in urban transformation (Newman 2015; 2020). At Orti Generali, volunteering emerged as a key form of civic engagement: it was therefore privileged arena to delve into volunteers' individual motivations as well as the moral premises that banded together their visions and experiences. I reveal a connection between urban renewal and forms of civic engagement considered as appropriate. At the same time, I problematise the extent to which volunteers, gardeners and local inhabitants were involved in different levels of decision making and explain how some diverging visions and confrontations were silenced. I report on the disconnections that emerged between the rules, agenda and approach of the project organisers and the needs of some gardeners.

Networks of volunteers

Orti Generali in the set-up phase: volunteers' work and motivations

On a cold but sunny day, late January 2019, I got at the park around 9h30. Likewise, other volunteers progressively arrived, covered with their winter jackets and working shoes. I had also got one

pair of working shoes after running the risk of injuring myself a few days earlier, while we were moving around heavy wood and metal waste found in the area. The first task of that day was to work in the lower part of the park, close to the Sangone river and clean a specific seemingly empty area, which it was discovered to be "full of shit", according to one of the volunteers who had been working there in the previous days. We were provided with gloves (some volunteers already had their own) and start removing all sorts of material from the ground: pieces of glass, metal, plastic. They all surfaced as we move the soil. We also found car wheels, a washing machine buried in the ground, an iron table. We managed to remove most of what we found in that first section of that area and to separate this waste in big piles, according to the type of material. Matteo announced that the rest of that angle would remain uncleaned because there were too many things that we could not remove by hand. That was where they would draw the spatial boundaries of the project and plant fences.

The volunteers and the project organisers Stefano and Matteo collaborated in the definition of tasks, steps and procedures. As later explained by Matteo, volunteers were fundamental to achieve the final results and the timely opening of the gardens, and him and Stefano had worked to identify their different skills and channel them productively:

> I learned from Stefano how to identify people's skills and how to valorise them, not only on a practical level but also in terms of mediation and building relationships. We [workers of the organisation] were few and always needed to rely on others […] and asking them things became a particularly important thing and, even before that, understanding what they were capable of.[25]

On some occasions, volunteers' skills and expertise had revealed themselves crucial for the continuation of the works. This was the case of hobbyist carpenters, smiths or former construction workers who gave a hand and always had their say, co-directing works together with Stefano and Matteo. Going beyond Orti Generali, volunteering was a

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[25] Matteo Baldo, interview, 25/05/2020.



[Image 5: volunteers attempting to remove a washing machine from the ground. 21/01/2019. Photo by the author.]

widespread phenomenon in my fieldwork's sites as well as a theme which is discussed in the literature on contemporary transformations of civic engagement (e.g. Hyatt 2001; Rozakou, 2016) and the development of the "postwelfarist public morality" (Muehlebach 2012, 7; Pusceddu 2020) in the Italian context and beyond. While I will discuss the theme of volunteering from different angles in all the chapters of this dissertation, I focus here on its linkages with urban renewal: who were the volunteers actively engaged in the transformation of the area? Based on which (moral) premises did they got involved in the redefinition of this area and its scope?

As discussed by Hyatt (2001) based on her reflections on the social organisation of impoverished communities, in the context of welfare state retrenchment and urban deprivation, the relational skills of local inhabitants are particularly important. They become active agents of transformation having and being incentivised to provide for themselves and people around them. Hyatt (2001) argues that neoliberal governance builds on "making volunteerism an *obligation* of citizenship for the working and middle classes" (228). In a similar way, Muehlebach (2012)'s analysis of the Italian voluntary sector shows how it can become a widespread moral standard. In the context of Orti Generali, the volunteers came from diverse backgrounds, especially in terms of previous participation in volunteering and community activities in the area. For some, this was their first experience and they were there mostly out of individual interest. For example, this was the case of the volunteer Maria, a nurse in her sixties, with a passion for gardening. She had learned to farm from her father and had always enjoyed it. Since she arrived at Orti Generali she took care of many collective gardening tasks, volunteering regularly (once or twice a week) despite her hard-working life[26]. For others, volunteering at the park was linked to their broader involvement in volunteering activities in the neighbourhood. This was the case of several people varying from Loredana, a local retiree active in many

[26] Maria Carnà, gardener and volunteer at Orti Generali, interview, 16/10/2019.

groups in the area[27], to Fabio, a youngster who had grown up in Mirafiori Sud, was now unemployed, interested in urban agriculture and enthusiastic about the idea of working voluntarily for the improvement of the area, together with people whom he appreciated[28]. Some of the volunteers who had grown up in Mirafiori Sud were also moved by memories of their childhood and an attachment to the history of their neighbourhood: Loredana, for example, liked to recall how, in the fifties, her parents used to spend their leisure time around the Sangone river. Between the 1930s and 1960s – before the river was considered too polluted - this was the case of many working-class families who could not afford to go to the seaside (FIAB 2018)[29].



[Image 6: “My parents on a boat on the Sangone river”. n.d. Courtesy of Loredana Vecchi.]

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[27] Loredana Vecchi, gardener and volunteer at Orti Generali, interview, 12/03/2019.

[28] Fabio Giraudi, volunteer at Orti Generali, interview, 18/02/2019.

[29] Loredana also introduced me to the song *Sangon Blues* (1965) by Gipo Farassino. It narrates the romances of a young factory worker which spends an afternoon on the popular Sangone riverbanks.

Volunteering as a model of urban renewal and sociality

Davide and Felice were two volunteers whom I met in January 2019. Davide - who later became for a couple of years an employee at Orti Generali - was a young inhabitant of Mirafiori Sud. Chemist, he was doing a civil service program within a social agricultural cooperative. He had joined the project already since a few months as he had heard about the renewal of the area: he had liked the idea and joined the weekly cleaning activities[30]. Felice was also from the neighbourhood. He was retired and used to work as a computer scientist. As I told him about the research, he explained that he was volunteering within different projects in the area, including the ecomuseum of Mirafiori[31]. I also noticed that he was wearing the jacket of Turin 2006's Olympic games: a grey jacket, with the sign of the Olympics on the back above which it was written "Torino 2006".

The jacket had been given to many of the city inhabitants who had worked voluntarily during the Olympic games: 41 thousand candidates, among which 21 thousand recruited as volunteers (Gherra and Rolandi 2016). The Olympic games are to be contextualised as part of a series of large-scale events hosted in Turin, which are still ongoing today (e.g. national book fairs, international music contests) and which are often discussed as the vehicle to a new identity for the

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[30] Davide Di Nasso, volunteer later employee at Orti Generali, interview, 07/08/2019.

[31] A few days later, on January 30, I was invited by Felice to participate to a presentation of the ecomuseum at the community centre *Cascina Roccafranca*. The ecomuseum was defined during the presentation as "a pact with which a community commits itself to taking care of a territory" (based on the work of Hugues de Varine). At the *Cascina Roccafranca* this translated into the creation of a space where different types of documentation related to the history of the neighbourhood and its people (maps, printed material like testimonies, photos, books, often donated by local inhabitants) were collected. It is, they explained, a "museum of the people" (*museo popolare*) namely a museum that should be full of people and not of collections. The concept is linked to the protection of an area (the neighbourhood in this case), composed of 'the marks that its inhabitants have left from the past'". See also Grasseni (2010).

city (Morbello 2022). While these are praised as opportunities to relaunch Turin's image and role in the European scenario, they often entail a reorganisation of the urban space and a series of public expenses which do not benefit its urban dwellers and appear inappropriate in the context of austerity and lack of long-term responses to local needs (Morbello 2022). Moreover, the economic impact of such large-scale events is often not benefitting the local population as exemplified, among other, by the widespread use of unremunerated labour through the recruitment of volunteers. As recalled by Antonella, one of my research participants, who critically analysed the winter jacket as an emblem of contemporary transformations of civic engagement and its depoliticization:

> There was this glorification of the role of the volunteer: they were giving them the winter jacket. People were really proud of having this jacket with the symbol of the Olympics like if it was a big social prestige. I think that the message was really wrong because in that occasion many people got richer and retirees and youngsters were exploited, exploited as volunteers.[32]

As argued by Antonella, in these contexts, volunteering appears as a way to reinforce inequalities: while some consolidated businesses benefited from arrivals of international staff and tourists such as the hotels, not many new working opportunities (as also more recently debated in relation to the Eurovision contest see, for example, Sistema Torino 2022) nor long-term benefits in terms of the rearrangement of the urban space were created. On the contrary, several areas developed for the Olympics such as the housing facilities ex Moi were left completely abandoned.

More generally, such big event was surely a turning point in the volunteering culture of the city: volunteering remained a central theme, the most recurrent form of civic engagement, a practice and narrative often mobilised by the local administration and non-profit organisations for the implementation of plans and projects in the city.

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[32] Antonella - a pseudonym, member of the Popular Purchasing Group (*Gruppo di Acquisto Popolare*) *La Poderosa*, group interview, 27/02/2019.

Similarly to the Greek case analysed by Rozakou (2016), the institutionalisation and professionalisation of volunteering can be analysed as a local institutions' "attempt to regulate public sociality" (96) following rules and hierarchies that differ from the informal models of sociality. Such process is to be understood as part of ongoing socio-economic transformations, narratives of modernisation and not "merely top-down initiatives nor fixed projects, but rather grassroots and works-in progress" (Rozakou 2016, 81).

At the level of the park and its transformation, the case Felice also spoke of the collaboration between local non-profit organisations and the ways in which they were interconnected by a network of resources, including the volunteers. These volunteers travelled across different projects, moved by the importance of participating to local renewal and by a set of ideas and values, such as being active and helping others. As explained by Muehlebach (2012), these values become functional to neoliberal governance while coexisting well with ideas typically inherent to Catholicism and the Left. United by these moral values, by participating to Orti Generali, volunteers often became part of a broader network of social care in the area, which gave a higher moral stand to their contribution and to the project itself, going beyond the redevelopment of the park and forwarding the idea that non-profit organisations joined forces to systematise their activities.

At the Parco Piemonte, the act of cleaning became a way to analyse more in depth some of the moral premises of volunteering and their entanglement with urban renewal. On that same day of January, after a coffee break, we were asked to clean another area, which was formerly occupied and cultivated by two spontaneous gardeners, originally from Romania, it was said. Like other gardeners, they had been cultivating their plot in the Parco Piemonte for the past years. They had abandoned it when learning that the area was going to be transformed into an official urban gardening space. I felt a bit like an intruder, undoing the work of others, as I removed from the ground the different sticks and canes put by these gardeners to grow tomatoes, peppers and chilly – we guessed, while observing the dried plants leaning on the soil. It seemed like they were well organised: we discovered different tools and water collection containers that we were asked to dismantle. I learned from Matteo that only two of the former gardeners of the area

had decided to stay. After winning the land concession, the association had talked to most of these spontaneous gardeners, proposing them to remain and keep their garden, under the condition of removing the unused material they had accumulated and remaining open to collaborations, such as opening their gardens to educational or therapeutic activities to be conducted with schools and external visitors. While I will expand on the practices of spontaneous gardeners in the next chapter - where I explain how contemporary visions of urban renewal and cleanness *de facto* excluded other visions of gardening – what I want to point out here is how cleaning became a shared responsibility and a process through which the distinctions between the appropriate and inappropriate urban spaces and citizens were underlined.

The land rehabilitation process was in fact a phase which created consensus between volunteers and project organisers, making them work together and allowing all to be part of planning's everyday decision-making processes. Volunteers were directly engaged in the definition of renewal which meant deciding on a daily basis what to remove, what to leave unchanged, what to throw away and what to keep for possible reuse. The project organisers, Matteo and Stefano, were open to volunteers' suggestions and had to revise their plans also based on unexpected constraints. As also highlighted by Herzfeld (2020) building on his fieldwork in Rome and Bangkok, the work of planners is mostly of social nature: "while they attempt to fix spatial relations for all eternity, the spaces they design become sites for negotiations, compromise, and even, sometimes, radical change" (20). The general consensus on how to proceed was based on shared principles around cleaning and the ideas of restoring decorum as well as "giving back" the public space to themselves and others. The area was depicted as an area that had been for long left in a situation of decay. As explained in detail in the introduction, since several years, this term is widely spread in the Italian public debate in relation to the ways in which city spaces can be left abandoned or misused (e.g. Pisanello 2017) and discussions around several areas of Mirafiori Sud made no exception. In the context of the park, decay was also associated to the practices of its previous occupants and the spontaneous gardeners. As discussed by Barchetta (2021), such visions

around urban nature's decay in Turin often correspond to stigmas about specific areas, which are usually known very little.

The usage of the notion of decay by the volunteers at the park often supported argumentations around blaming and responsibility of citizens and the local administration. As discussed by Pusceddu (2020), in his research with volunteers involved in food aid distribution in the south of Italy - which I will come back to in the last chapters -, volunteers can have conflicting visions of the state, their role and the ways in which they make sense of it in the context of economic crisis and welfare transformation. While the volunteers at Parco Piemonte were also moved by a variety of individual interests, the land rehabilitation process was premised on a shared understanding of the limited capability of intervention of the municipality and the idea of responsibility of individual citizens to look after their city space and contribute directly to its decorum and transformation. These particular civic values and narratives about the city transformation, its cleanliness and decorum, were directly associated with the work of volunteers and the (re)production of moral figures among which the "concerned planner", the "good citizen" working voluntarily, as well as the "illegal gardeners", whose practices were cancelled and relegated to the realm of the past. Such understanding of the good citizen constitutes an important component of neoliberal public morality as it reflects a vision of civic participation as part of which the work of the volunteer is separated from reflections on broader socio-political phenomena in the city and its inhabitants' needs for services and is thus rooted in a depoliticized conception of solidarity action. In the next section, I also show why, in this framework, the ideas of participation and co-planning have limited extents. I discuss the limitations of the idea of blurring boundaries between planners and users as I present how volunteers and gardeners at Orti Generali had limited involvement in decision-making processes (especially once the project fully started).

New rules and silenced confrontations

New urban gardens as "controlled spaces"? Aesthetics versus shared decision-making

Mid-March 2019. The volunteers and future gardeners Olivier, Alessio, Fabio and I were finishing some small works in the grassland area. The cultivation in the new individual allotments had started since a few days and everything was still very much in transformation. As we talked, we started imagining how the gardens would look like as they further developed. Alessio and Olivier had already been allocated their respective plot and, as we worked to fix some wood fences, they shared ideas about what to implement in their own gardens. Alessio mentioned that he was told that all gardens should be sharing a sort of aesthetic "homogeneity". It was the first time that I heard about such regulation and asked what this would entail more specifically. "No plastic nets, no motored tools, no manure, nothing higher than 1.70 meters…": Alessio and the others spoke out a list of don'ts that would soon become part of the official regulations of Orti Generali. Some of these were known to all of them, others sounded surprising for most of us. "What about my pergola?" asked Olivier, hinting to the 1.70 meters restriction. Alessio added to Olivier's complain by explaining that he did not like the greenhouse prototype that had been chosen by the managers of the project. "It is invasive, it will look like a camp" he criticised. From where we were, we could see the prototype standing several meters in front of us: rectangular, with a wooden structure and a large semi-transparent plastic tarpaulin. Alessio further explained that he was going to suggest a different model, but he was not sure that his proposal was going to be accepted. He took his phone out of his pocket and showed me an online photo of a different greenhouse model, which he wanted to try to develop at home, as he was a hobbyist woodworker. The conversation continued and words such as "prototype", "pattern", "standard" were debated. On one side, Fabio agreed that allotments should appear in "good order", thus share similarities and patterns, to be visible to the eyes of people passing by. On the other, Olivier found still unclear which were the actual prohibitions: at the time, not all were written in the contracts. Both of us argued that these could be better discussed and decided jointly together with the future gardeners.

This was not the first time that I was exposed to the idea that the project's efforts for homogeneity and aesthetics could contrast with the ways of doing of some gardeners and, in a way, could limit their possibilities. However, I was assisting to a first clear expression of dissent, which had not emerged in the first phase of collective works and land rehabilitation. As previously discussed, that period was indeed characterised by a sort of unity, linked to the fact that the focus of most activities and discussions was cleaning and transformation, rather than creating and envisioning. But as the new project was taking shape, the different visions about what gardening sustainably or a beautiful garden actually signifies emerged. This resulted in a re-evaluation on the side of the project managers of how and to what extent decision could be taken within open and participated discussions. When informally discussing it with Matteo, I asked if they thought that it would be a good idea to have some collective discussion moments, gathering volunteers and gardeners, and talking over and defining some of these decisions together. Matteo answered that he would talk about it with Stefano but added that they did not necessarily think that this was clever. He explained that the risk of such consultations was that people would then have the expectation to obtain everything that they had voiced. I was also told that there were too many people to be engaged and that shared decision-making processes were too complicated to be managed. I argue that such approach to decision-making resulted in rather paternalistic behaviours, the reinforcement of hierarchies and that it should be critically analysed in relation to questions around democratic processes, spatial justice and dispossession from public land.

My analysis builds on anthropological and geographical literature on urban gardening which critically discusses the theme of civic engagement and the ways in which it can be related to neoliberal urbanism, power relations and new ways of constructing notions of citizenship (e.g. Newman 2015; Eizenberg 2012; Crossan *et al*. 2016). As part of this set of literature, Ghose and Pettigrove (2014), who investigated community gardens in Wisconsin (US), argued that urban gardens are to be regarded as spaces of citizenship that both oppose and reinforce local neoliberal policies. The authors pointed, for example, to the mechanisms that might exclude from participation and decision-making local inhabitants who lack economic and social

capital or who do not "produce space conforming to government specifications" (1109). On the other hand, while acknowledging the many linkages between neoliberal city agendas and urban gardening project today, authors such as Crossan *et al*. (2016) and Bródy and de Wilde (2020) counterargued with examples that nuance such entanglements between civic participation, neoliberalism and urban gardens. Crossan *et al*. (2016) uses the concept of "Do-It-Yourself (DIY) citizenship" to explore the ways in which counter-hegemonic practices might emerge in these spaces. In their article *Cultivating food or cultivating citizens?* Bródy and de Wilde (2020), anthropologists who looked at 19 community gardening projects in Amsterdam, compared gardens managed differently to describe the variety of relations between gardeners and governing actors which at times impair and other enable civic participation and social inclusion.

Similarly to the idea of gardens as "controlled spaces" (Eizenberg 2012), I argue that these discussions at Orti Generali correspond to entry points to problematise the extent to which urban gardens can represent spaces for participatory practices, democratic discussion and a collective production of space. This case is also relevant to highlight the ways in which the management of a non-profit organisation can silence the clashes between different visions of urban public space and discussions around the actual meaning of renewal and sustainability. I argue that Orti Generali only rarely became a site of open contestation and that conflicts remain silenced in the name of the responsible "expert eyes" (Grasseni 2007, 7) and aesthetic standards of the project organisers. The aesthetic standards also reveal how the gardens have functions that go beyond its use by gardeners and local population: it is also a place of display and branding of a particular model of urban agriculture, a space for the "aesthetic consumption" of the city (Guano, 2020; see also Vasile and Grasseni 2020). As pointed out by Guano in relation to the city of Genoa, aesthetic was for a long time specifically associated to the city centre of most Italian cities, in relation to heritage sites for example, while the post-industrial urban peripheries were left to concrete constructions and utilitarian purposes, "often defined as *quartieri dormitorio* [dorm neighbourhoods] and *nonuoghi* [non-places] in the Italian public sphere" (2). As part of the multiple efforts to apparently redirect these trends, while not necessarily breaking the "uneven distribution of resources and

externalities" (Guano 2020, 2) at their basis, greening became a central political narrative. As discussed by Newman (2015, xv), this can be regarded as "a green turn in urban policy, planning, and design that is swiftly becoming ensconced as a global orthodoxy guiding the ways cities are being built, reimagined, and inhabited". As reviewed by Barchetta (2016), it is because of the multiple economic and urban planning agendas behind greening project that these can have a variety of outcomes in terms of social and environmental justice, from new amenities to green gentrification.

Communicating out, not communicating in: conflicting visions and silenced confrontations within Orti Generali

In the setting up of their activities, Orti Generali's organisers Matteo and Stefano gave and exhibited a great attention to collaborations, but also to the ideas of openness, inclusivity and education, front staged through several of the initiatives being organised. This was the case of artistic seminars, collective cooking activities, screenings of queer short movies, to name a few. An example in this sense was also the so called *Social Passata* (social tomatoes sauce), an event of collective preparation of tomato sauce to which Orti Generali participated in September 2019. This was organised at Mirafiori Sud community centre by a series of local organisations including Mirafiori Community Foundation and Slow Food[33]. This event also inaugurated the official entitlement of the neighbourhood as a Slow Food Urban Community, called *Mirafood*.

Mirafood did not add to the existing activities but was a way to frame and present a new image of the area, gathering the many food production, collection and distribution activities developing in the area under a same umbrella. Orti Generali contributed to the organisation of the event by inviting gardeners to join the cooking activities and bring their tomatoes. However, after the event some of them told me that they had felt somehow out of place: these gardeners were unsure about

[33] Slow Food is a global organisation founded in Italy in 1986 by Carlo Petrini and other activists wanting to defend local food and culinary traditions (Slow Food, n.d.). See also Siniscalchi (2022).



[Image 7: detail of the leaflet of the event. "Mirafood Together Tomato. The first Slow Food urban community is in Mirafiori Torino".]

the tomatoes which had actually ended up in the sauce, they asked themselves whether they were all coming from the gardens or also from the supermarkets. Moreover, they were disappointed by the fact that they had to pay to participate. One of them also told me that he had felt unease while being photographed by upper class women coming for the occasion from the city centre. Such accounts are illustrative of a progressive feeling of disconnection between locals' needs and desires and parts of the agenda and new collaborations sponsored by the project organisers, as experienced by some gardeners and volunteers.

Such feeling of estrangement is also discussed in Bourlessas *et al*. (2021) who examine food gentrification around Porta Palazzo in Turin. While I will engage more with their work in the next part of the dissertation, particularly relevant here is the idea that such food events and new food spaces can create a "displacement atmosphere" (Bourlessas *et al*. 2021) deriving from middle-class restructuring of local spaces and, I add, practices. In this case, I relate the notion of "displacement atmosphere" with the incorporation of a normal local

practice such as the making of tomato sauce to a distinctive phenomenon, to be in a way commodified and showcased city-wide. At the same time in which such events started to flourish, while being seemingly unaddressed, questions around decision-making processes and the construction of democratic spaces of engagement therefore appeared to me as an increasingly central topic. Who took these new decisions, based on which premises and what if some divergences arose?

I could find some answers to these questions when I was asked by Stefano and Matteo to support them in the resolution of a conflict with the volunteer and gardener Olivier. The core of the conflict lied in their different approach to sustainability: while Olivier envisioned a wilder approach to the reorganisation of the area - very much inspired from concepts of permaculture and the principle of "letting nature do" - Stefano dedicated a great importance to the aesthetic dimensions of beauty and neatness of the landscape (*dimensione paesaggistica*). His vision was particularly influenced by his formation as landscape architect at the National School of Landscape Architecture of Versailles (*École Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles*). Olivier – a man of Belgian origins in his fifties living in Mirafiori Sud since several years - used to have a spontaneous allotment before arriving at Parco Piemonte: "this was part of my socio-economic integration in the Italian society!", he joked[34]. He was part of the volunteers of Orti Generali since the beginning of the land rehabilitation and construction works, dedicating to it much of his time and efforts. As he explained during an interview, Olivier saw this project as a possibility to collectively experiment and share knowledge, especially in relation to adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, topics which he regularly brought to the table:

> Very soon we will see what works and what does not, what is valid and what is not. Will the irrigation system work? […]. Then we will learn all together: some gardens will work, some will not at all. And maybe there will be students coming "why are you doing things? How is this working?". What I want to

[34] Olivier Fontaine, gardener, interview, 07/03/2019.

> say is that we need places like this one. I am here rather for this than for growing carrots.[35]

Olivier and Stefano's different visions came out in several occasions, especially in relation to practical issues linked to the management and well-being of animals and to the collective garden. In October 2019, Olivier had the impression that his work was not being respected ("they undo what I do", he explained) arguing that he had thought that there would be much more space for experimentation and proposals for "really sustainable actions" such as avoiding completely the use of fuel motored grass trimmer. On the other side, Orti Generali was asking him to take a step back, arguing that his involvement and predominant behaviour was leaving little space for others to use the space and his ideas were too "radical" to be taken up in this project[36].

Justifying the lack of participatory decision making in the name of progress and cultural divide

As I accompanied meetings and dialogue between them, I was repeatedly told by Stefano that the ideas and propositions of the volunteers and gardeners were always welcome, as far as these would remain within the margins of the broader decisions taken by them, the project managers. I was illustrated how they had been researching, imagining and planning alternative land use for the area for more than a decade. According to him, this made them experts with an overall vision of the desired transformation, which could not be completely challenged or rethought at this stage. During a conversation, he explained:

> I believe that it should be us to provide solutions, as we have the knowledge linked to our training path. […] With Miraorti we got to know the neighbourhood but now we have become an implementation project, a subject who offers a service, a

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[35] Olivier Fontaine, interview, 07/03/ 2019.

[36] Fieldnotes, 25/09/2019.

> model of enterprise. […] [It is also a matter of] valorisation of our role and a sense of responsibility.[37]

This discussion was particularly telling of the new visions and definitions that the organisers of Orti Generali brought to the area, which I regard as actually it's most significant transformation: the fact of bringing in a narrative about what that space should look like and how it should work sustainably, as a modern enterprise. In such circumstances, the boundary between planners and users were stressed based on knowledge difference of the people engaged in the project. Only some of this knowledge was regarded as more or less pertinent in relation to the vision of the project organisers, which partly drew on and had to fit within globalised ideas of sustainable urban greening. From this perspective, the words of Stefano are exemplificatory of the "hierarchy of value" (Herzfeld, 2004) that can be embedded in the development of such sustainability projects. This concept, as developed by Herzfeld (2004) is his analysis of the heritage industry in Greece, is useful here to think of how common sense around good greening practices is based on often invisible struggles and competition for meanings. As argued by the author:

> the rhetoric of the global hierarchy of value is perhaps a more subtle kind of globalisation than that of companies logos and fast food. It is, after all, not obviously associated with specific interests. It is not always immediately visible to us because, having invaded local universes of common sense ("local worlds") it creates the sense of universal commonality. This is a common sense that is no less cultural than the local versions it appears to supplant but that, for reasons of scale and power, is better equipped to hide that contingency and so to make itself completely invisible (3-4).

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[37] Fieldnotes, 26/09/2019. Original text: *Credo che dobbiamo essere noi a fornire soluzioni, visto che abbiamo dei saperi legati ai nostri percorsi di formazione. […] Con Miraorti abbiamo conosciuto il quartiere ma ora siamo diventati un progetto attuativo, un soggetto che offre un servizio, un modello di impresa. […] [È anche una questione di] valorizzazione del nostro ruolo e un senso di responsabilità.*

Such linkages between common sense, value and power relations are important to reflect on practices of sustainability and urban renewal in Turin, and the (limited) extent to which the meaning of these practices is being discussed with the local population. The case of Orti Generali's new rules and internal conflict raises questions on the ways in which renewal is forwarded and of the democratic debate at their basis. While some contemporary anthropologists nuanced and problematised a dichotomic understanding of the urban planners and users divide (Newman 2015; Herzfeld 2020), I argue that the rules and internal conflicts described above recall the importance of keeping into the discussion the presumed cultural divide that is mobilised to silence or give voice to specific understandings of urban agriculture and renewal. A divide that is often unspoken and implies that certain understandings of high culture (e.g. expert planning, landscape architecture) make some proposals valued more than other, grassroots ones, before these are even discussed in detail. Olivier's ideas of the urban green, while based on agriculture and meteorology knowledge, were deemed inappropriate and simply never discussed with the rest of the group. Olivier continued to raise some questions in the following months and, while being criticised and isolated, for a while his criticisms coexisted with the approach of the garden organisers. However, these remained confined to a small circle of persons with whom he continued to share his thoughts.

More generally, the limitations set by the garden organisers Matteo and Stefano and the lack of participatory decision-making was justified in the name of their expertise, their cultural capital and ability to better understand what could be deemed as appropriate. In fact, Stefano and Matteo never said that they would include all requests in the development of the project, despite their initial peer to peer collaboration with the volunteers and their use of participatory language (which was opening the way to a more participatory forms of involvement of the local population). As explained in other studies on urban gardens managed by non-profit organisations such as Eizenberg (2012), organisers can take quite different approaches based on their visions of how a garden should be managed and what should be happening in it. This often results, however, in much broader impacts, as it is ultimately about the transformation of the meaning of public space and giving or bringing away opportunities for local inhabitants'

autonomy and ownership of such projects. Going back to what the Italian anthropologist Amalia Signorelli wrote already in 1989 in relation to the renewal of public housing estates, it is important to consider the cultural divide and power dynamics that always characterised the relation between planners and users. While today these seem to appear in a more tacit, hidden way (and keep coexisting with other forms of engagement, resistance and appropriation of spaces), urban areas such as Parco Piemonte still represent a "cultural connecting ground" (*terreno di contatto culturale*, Signorelli 1989, 13) between different cultures, visions and practices. In this perspective, it represents a peripheral space where "new references, values and symbols" (Signorelli 1989, 20) are brought to others in the name of progress.

Chapter III. At the margins of urban renewal

In this final chapter of part I, I shed light onto whom remained partially excluded from the process of renewal of Parco Piemonte. In particular, I discuss the case of spontaneous gardeners and of a family of errant shepherds, who utilised the area since several decades, long before its transformation into the Orti Generali project. My aim is to bring light onto their urban agriculture visions, practices and skills, which came to be jeopardised by the park's renewal. More generally, these skills are increasingly delegitimised in the subtle "global hierarchy of value" (Herzfeld 2004) that is developing in the fields of sustainability, urban greening policies and urban agricultural practices. I chose these two groups as they incarnate different approaches to urban agriculture that are, in fact, silently disappearing, paradoxically in the name of greener cities. These practices contrast with the one of new urban gardeners at Orti Generali especially in terms of the different land access and management systems which are at their basis. These cases were quite controversial in the field, especially in the case of spontaneous gardeners. These were generally associated to illegal practices and the notion of decay both in the media and conversations between non-profit workers and public servants involved in local renewal.

Examples of such forms of criminalisation of spontaneous gardeners can be found in local newspapers' articles, which, for example, elaborate on their supposed danger and on the damages which they might cause, such as fires (Berton 2020). Others blame them for transforming the gardens into precarious homes for vulnerable groups (Redazione CronacaQui 2016). Alternatively, spontaneous gardens were mentioned in relation to their dismantlement (Redazione Torino Today 2014) or substitution by official gardening projects (Coracciolo, 2018; Redazione CronacaQui 2020). In fact, on one hand, renewal projects such as greening non-profit or municipal interventions were depicted as key processes that remarked boundaries between legality / illegality, formality / informality, appropriateness / inappropriateness. On the other, spontaneous gardens and the errant shepherd were associated to everything that belonged to the past, which did not have a reason nor a space to be in anymore. In the past, both practices had continued because of the little attention of the local administration to

these areas. As also written by Orti Generali project manager Matteo in his research on spontaneous gardens, when looking more closely to these practices it was hard to define them as illegal as they operated in an administrative vacuum left by the local administration, namely in a context of connivance of the local authorities (Baldo 2012, 4).

Going beyond the legal/ illegal divide allowed me to take a closer look at these practices and remark how the Parco Piemonte represented a site of self-appropriation in the case of the spontaneous gardeners and a space of autonomous labour in the case of the errant shepherds. These experiences speak of other forms of citizens participation (that contrast with more widespread configurations such as volunteering) and which are often invisibilised or delegitimised. They also represent forms of resistance and ways out the alienation of intensive production rhythms at both industrial and agricultural level. I regard both self-appropriation and errant labour as forms of engagement in and with the public space, which are everyday more incompatible with the making of neoliberal urbanism. This can be associated to several factors which include their incompatibility with "neoliberal urban aestheticization projects" (Guano 2020, 14) as well as their way of developing autonomous spaces and practices, which challenge both the divide between private property and public space as well as "neoliberal concern with efficiency" (Herzfeld 2010, 259).

Next, I explain how renewal processes observed at Parco Piemonte jeopardised the continuation of these practices. I show how new forms of citizen engagement can in fact exclude or delegitimise other practices, and in this case other skills and ways of doing urban agriculture. The new ways of framing gardening, as depicted in the previous chapters, seemed to leave little space for urban gardens to also be "spaces of autonomy" (Eizenberg 2012) and of autonomous labour. Autonomy would have allowed for the continuation of activities not fully aligned with contemporary neoliberal visions of urban space and production. An attentive review of these cases calls for a problematisation of the contemporary homogenising meaning of sustainability, as employed in the context of the renewal of urban green spaces.

Spontaneous gardeners

As previously explained, in Turin the phenomenon of spontaneous gardening is usually called *orti abusivi* (illegal or unauthorised gardens). This phenomenon is generally defined as "unstandardised nor regulated self-appropriation of a plot of land not of property used for the production of fruits and vegetables mainly for self-consumption" (Baldo 2012, 4). New greening projects in Mirafiori Sud did not include the preservation of spontaneous gardens in their plans because these were regarded as illegal practices. When an intervention was taking place, these would be dismantled and the gardeners would be told to leave, without any kind of social support[38]. Only in the case of Orti Generali, the association attempted to integrate some of them into their project. They propose them to stay but, to a certain extent, redefining and standardising their gardening habits, space, material and asking them to collaborate with others in new ways. In this section, I discuss the case of some of the Parco Piemonte long-term spontaneous gardeners, their ways of managing gardens and related skills. Their perspectives represent yet another way of envisioning the park, urban gardening and subsistence food production in the city. I focus particularly on three aspects that were common to the approach of different spontaneous gardeners I engaged with: the reuse of abandoned industrial material, the cohabitation with a changing natural environment and the redefinition of property.

[38] Luigi Canfora, interview, 06/11/2019.



[Image 8: Walking around spontaneous gardens in Strada del Drosso. 03/06/2021. Screenshot of a video taken by the author.]

Gardening within the industrial life and material

On September 12, 2019, I arrived with my camera at the garden of Dino. Dino was one of the oldest spontaneous gardeners of the Parco Piemonte. He had started cultivating his plot there in the 1970s, a few years after migrating to Turin from the Italian southern region Calabria. Growing up in Calabria, he had worked as a woodcutter until he was 26 years old. To upgrade his "standards of living" (*tenore di vita*) and have better working rights (such as well-defined working hours and paid leave) he had followed the invitation of his brother-in-law, who had migrated to Turin a few years before. His brother-in-law was telling him that working with the chainsaw was a very hard work and that, if he would have joined him in Turin, he was going to help him looking for a better job in factories' plants[39].

As I entered Dino's garden, I could not see him but as I called his name out louder, he came out of his garden barrack. He smiled as he saw me with the camera, which he immediately disregarded and told

[39] Dino - a pseudonym, gardener, interview, 22/02/2019.

me: “do you know what I am doing? I made the tip of the pole”[40]. He walked towards me and picked up from the floor a wooden branch that he was turning into a pole, indicating its point. “Now I need to scrape it”, he explained. I continued filming him as he leant part of the pole against the table in front of us, letting it pass in between his legs and resting its other extremity on the ground. As he proceeded with the scraping operation, removing all the bark, he explained that this was very important to avoid that the pole got covered with mould: “it will resist better to humidity and rain”. This was especially important for the part of the pole that was going to be underground. Dino was going to use the pole in the near future, to grow his tomatoes, but first he needed to improve its resistance. This, he told me, comprised a whole process that started when he had selected the branch, put it to dry for a year on a levelled surface (so that it did not curve) and which continued as he scraped it and would leave it to dry for a few months. “Scraping the pole is almost like dyeing it, but you don’t need the dye”. Dino was using a “*raschietto*”, a scraping tool that he created on his own, precisely for such purposes. “I built it because this was a billhook, the handle broke and then I welded these two pieces of iron and so I thought that this could be a *raschietto* to scrape the poles”.

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[40] Dino, video recording, 12/09/2019.



[Image 9: Dino's self-made scraping tool. 12/09/2019. Screenshot of videos taken by the author.]

This moment with Dino revealed some important aspects of the adaptation mindset and different skills that were typical of the spontaneous gardeners whom I met in that period, and that generation of gardeners more generally. As also pointed out by Matteo in his initial research on gardening in Mirafiori Sud, gleaning and recycling represented a common denominator of spontaneous gardeners' way of working (Baldo 2012). Their way of gathering and putting together gardening material revealed their spartan pragmatism and idea of reuse, which contrasted with the aestheticized gardening standards found at Orti Generali. The materiality of spontaneous gardens (such as iron poles, iron and plastic nets, aluminium roofing sheets, wooden boards, plastic water containers, pallets) often spoke of the gardeners' linkage to and capability of reworking abandoned industrial material found in the area.

Most often, these gardeners had worked in local factories and as part of the logistical spin-off of the city automotive sector. This was also the case of Dino, who, once in Turin, had started to work in construction and then, for 30 years, as a factory worker at the Carello, a company developing headlights for motor vehicles. His experience had thought him to recognise, collect, reassemble and reuse all the surplus that the factories were generating. In fact, more generally, while spontaneous gardeners were often accused of generating dirtiness and decay themselves (because accumulating material now deemed inappropriate for gardening and for renewed urban green spaces), most times they had simply collected material already abandoned in the area by factories and firms in the area[41]. I argue that by reincorporating this material, spontaneous gardeners continued to cohabitate with the factory but overturning their relation to it: they creatively appropriated themselves industrial material for their own purposes and uses. In this perspective, their gardening activities can be regarded as practices through which they digested the materiality which characterised their work and life experience in Turin, its decline as well as their marginal conditions, while developing a creative and affective relation to it.

The time, effort and skills that were part of such reuse and gardening practices also spoke of the place that they held in the life of these city inhabitants. As similarly noted by Torquado Luiz and Jorge (2012), who conducted research in the "illegal gardens" cultivated by Capo Verde population in Lisbon, such gardening activities can represent for marginal city dwellers:

> an exercise of re(approximation) to origins, to the land, in a broad sense, a space dedicated to idleness and freedom, as opposed to the limitations experiences in accessing the city, a form of satisfaction that also pertains to the sphere of affect (Torquado Luiz and Jorge 2012, 155-156, translation is my own).

During my time at the Parco Piemonte, such affective relation was manifested by the five spontaneous gardeners I mostly interacted with,

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[41] See also Barchetta (2021).

who were usually happy to show and talk to me about their gardens. Like Dino for his *raschietto,* gardeners such as Alessandro (presented in chapter one) and Sergio (whose perspectives I will introduce later) were quite proud of their work, production or plots (which were not always at their best, they underlined), apparently uncaring of external outlooks and judgements. They liked to discuss about the different crops which they grew, how some had failed and others were tasty, and how they went to the gardens with their families to eat and spend time together. The gardeners were used to share their production such as salads, potatoes, onions and home-made tomato sauces with their family but also friends and neighbours, who are important to mention when considering these gardens' direct and indirect beneficiaries.

An adaptive relation to land and the natural environment

The pragmatic management of spontaneous gardens also reflects a very peculiar way of relating to the park and coping with its changing natural environment. This can be illustrated through the following example, as narrated by Dino:

> When a flood arrives, the water [once] arrived up to here, this slime, this sand, it was brought by the Sangone [river], it brought it to me. Here [pointing to his shack] it was completely full, I was keeping tools here. The flood did not bring them away because the door was closed. But the water arrived at this level. […] My god, [it was] a hard work to unravel these nets, taking them out, all full of sand. It covered it all. […] [Showing me his garden journal] It should also be written here, I write everything, see here, in 1994…[42]

With these comments, Dino recalled one of the many episodes of overflow of the Sangone river. Such incidents represented – for him, as well as for many gardeners cultivating along the river - moments in which part of their cultivation, barracks and equipment got damaged. He explained that he was used to keep going despite the challenges and managed to keep his head above water as he always was a hardworking man.

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[42] Dino, interview, Parco Piemonte 22/02/2019.

Dino had an important relation to land linked to his rural past, similarly to many of the "*meridionali"* (name and social label given to Italians coming from southern regions) that had arrived in Turin to search for work and better living conditions. As underlined in the documentary *Meridionali in Turin: an investigation on emigration in Italy in the 1960s* by Giordani and Zatterin (1961), being a *meridionale* in Turin often involved facing similar social difficulties such as adapting to an urban lifestyle, inappropriate housing and being discriminated. It also entailed trying to maintain relations with the region of origins and continuities with local habits – as I will further discuss in the next chapter focusing on a community of emigrants from Apulia. This often entailed an important emotional relation to land and its cultivation (Giordani and Zatterin 1961). Dino had initially arrived at the Parco Piemonte thanks to a proposal of his relatives. At the time, he was working following shifts, which meant, he explained, that he often had half a day of free time, outside of the factory. Gardening at the park represented for him a way to occupy his free time and change his mind, as well to procure food for his family. This was also a learning process: every day, he would go to the park and learn how to garden by conversing with neighbouring gardeners, also local workers and inhabitants. This process also included living and coping with nature unpredictability, such as the overflow of the Sangone river.

In his article *the temporality of the landscape* (1993), Tim Ingold advocates for an understanding of the landscape as continuum between "inner and outer worlds", which describes well the particular way of relating to the park of spontaneous gardeners such as Dino. This was exemplified by his acceptance of and co-existence with the different temporalities and shapes of the river. While he could have decided to move away from that plot due to its instability, he has decided to stay and develop ways to mitigate the effects of the overflows. Making a parallel between the management of the garden and the life of Dino allows to see the landscape of the park as both an external and internal experience that bridges between the industrial life, the rural past and every day artisanal experience. The work of Ingold is useful here to think of the contrast between such ways of inhabiting the park and the approach of the managers of Orti Generali. The latter defined new rules to prevent the use of such material as well as created mechanisms for controlling the environment in the name of sustainability and

aesthetic order. Their approach could be discussed in similar terms to what Ingold regards as the opposite of the above-mentioned vision of the landscape namely the creation of "a landscape as a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing or symbolising surroundings" (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988, 1 in Ingold 1993, 154).

Re-appropriation of public space and the pervasiveness of the private property model

The context of *s*pontaneous gardens, while based on such different practices of self-appropriation, reuse and cohabitation with nature, also included a specific morality around property as well as conflicts over resources. Among the other long-term occupants of the park, stood Sergio, whom I met in 2019 via Orti Generali. Sergio shared with a partner a spontaneous garden close to the Sangone since several years. While talking, Sergio stressed that gardening at the park had always implied many interactions with its other occupants. However, such connections were not always positive. His plot, situated near to the one of Dino – and even closer to the riverbanks -, was often a site of "pillage":

> I planted garlic, a beautiful one! Mine was the most beautiful one, well-grown. So I said [to myself] tomorrow I come [to collect it] and take it [home with me]. But they [thieves] came first […] and did not leave not even one for me, they took them all.[43]

Sergio explained that the cases of theft in the gardens were numerous: according to him these were conducted by other gardeners or dwellers living in the vicinity. The Roma living at the edges of the park were among the people recurrently mentioned by Sergio, as well as by other spontaneous gardeners. This did not come as a surprise and should be contextualized as part of the widespread prejudices and forms of discrimination that surround the Roma people in Italy and beyond (e.g. Piasere 2015). During our exchanges, Sergio accused them of theft as well as considered them as privileged because, according to him, their camp was provided with free water and electricity by the local

[43]Sergio - a pseudonym, gardener, interview, 26/02/2019.

administration. Reference to Roma people was also made during an interview with another spontaneous gardener called Alessandro. He used the term gypsies (*zingari*) to talk about gardeners who behave inappropriately such as taking food from other gardens and not taking care of or damaging common infrastructures. I interpreted such statements also as a way they used to differentiate themselves, their position and practices from the one of other local occupants.

More generally, some spontaneous gardeners seem to imply that they were more legitimised than others to use that space. Sergio, for example, often referenced a system of contracts and exchange of plots:

> In that garden that we have here, the first parcel is the one of a friend, we are business partners. He got it from the municipality. He told me "if you want a piece of it we go to the municipality" and that is how we did it. We went to the municipality, I also have the papers…[44]

While the existence of such contracts is difficult to believe as the park always remained public domain, I was told by Matteo that such narrative was common. In his research in Strada del Drosso, Matteo dwelled deeper into how spontaneous gardeners, fearing the precarity that characterised their gardening situation, attempted to reject such instability in different ways (Baldo 2012). Gardeners often talked about how the administration, despite its discourse, was unable to intervene in the area. It lacked the resources to change in any way the situation of "illegal allotments", which translated into what was discussed as "decisional immobility of the administration" (*immobilismo decisionale*) (Baldo 2012, 138-139). In the context of Strada del Drosso, however, some gardeners did own their plot. The ones developed on unused private property had been reassigned to the gardeners through usucaption, resulting in a diversity of land tenure systems in the same area.

Stephen Campbell's anthropological reflections on squatting are particularly relevant to analyse the two elements that I highlight through these last interviews' extracts (namely theft and land

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[44] Sergio, interview, 26/02/2019.

contracts). In his research on Yadana, a squatter settlement on the outskirts of Yangon, in Myanmar, Campbell explored the agricultural practices on such "industrial frontier" (Campbell 2019, 8). The author argued against a "hypostatization of squatting" and illustrated how "squatting […] becomes imbricated with wider relations of extraction, exploitation and rule and with the broader capitalist context more generally" (Campbell 2019, 7). The ideas of private property and gardening as an individual practice, which permeated the reflections of these spontaneous gardeners, are illustrative in this sense. While these gardeners were occupying public land themselves, their vision of such activity did not fully reverse, and to a certain extent perpetrated, some of the central features of contemporary society. In other words, the phenomenon of spontaneous gardening – and its critical potential – remained "tied to the world around it" (Campbell 2019, 7).

Such continuity was symbolised by the signs visible on the gardens' improvised fences such as the ones visible in the images below. The use of signs indicating video surveillance and forbidden entrance (normally found in front of protected areas) could seem to be taking a contradictory flavour as the land was most often occupied and not owned. But not according to these gardeners, who found in these spaces unique margins for self-expression and ransom over the industrial city life.

To conclude, the analysis of spontaneous gardening calls for a problematisation of public management of peripheral green area. It reflects the city administration's long-term lack of efforts to respond to the need of certain strata of urban inhabitants. The discussion around the (criminalised) practices and skills of spontaneous gardeners also brings out important questions about contemporary development of a hegemonic and decontextualised vision of urban sustainability. The phenomenon of spontaneous gardening is in fact being cancelled in the name of sustainability while it represents a way to digest, both internally (as a way for (factory) workers to contrast alienation, develop skills and provide for themselves) and externally (through the reuse of material) the industrial life and its crisis. I stressed spontaneous gardeners' specific gardening skills linked to manual labour, cohabitation with the natural environment and self-arrangements for cultivation and subsistence.



[Image 10: Entrance of a spontaneous garden at Parco Piemonte. 18/10/2020. Photo by the author]



[Image 11: Entrance of a spontaneous garden at Strada del Drosso. 18/10/2020. Photo by the author]

The analysis of their practices further highlighted the aestheticised and market dependent dimensions of new models of urban gardening. Moreover, as noted by Roy (2019) in the context of community gardening in Copenhagen, it invites for reflections on how the

imposition of specific behavioural norms in new gardens might leave little space for the authentic inclusion of the practices of marginal groups. While regarding spontaneous gardens as spaces of autonomy and creativity - which should not be analysed as social phenomena in a vacuum - I also pointed to some of the ways in which these practices reproduce the aspiration to private property.

The errant shepherd

When I met the Bergero family[45], in August 2019, it was the first summer of the Orti Generali project. The shepherds had borrowed four of their sheep to the initiative. These were kept for educational purposes in the collective area of the gardens. This idea of the educational farm was developed at Orti Generali following a practice that is usually done in rural Italy on some farms, which decide to diversify their work by offering educational activities. Such type of farms "regularly welcomes children and young people - either as part of school visits or private groups - with the aim of teaching them about farming" (Forleo and Palmieri 2019, 431). At Orti Generali this entailed hosting similar groups and introducing them to urban gardens' activities as well as the animals (mostly chickens and sheep).

Their service responded to the need for educational activities around the themes of nature and food, which are depicted as increasingly important in urban contexts like Turin, where such activities targeted to children are increasing (e.g. Redazione Eco dalle Città 2021). Hosting educational activities was also common in the other urban gardening projects visited during my fieldwork, which however did not include any animals. At Orti Generali, keeping animals necessitated a lot of work, which, most often, depended on the dedication of volunteers and solidarity gardeners. These animals' conditions and welfare was criticised by some of these volunteers, who argued that children and visitors were not acting respectfully towards them and that, more generally, these did not receive enough attention

[45] In Piedmont dialect, the term and last name "*Bergero*" means shepherd. Their last name reveals how the family has been in this profession since several generations.

from the project managers[46]. More generally, the idea of showcasing animals has also been criticised by environmental and anti-speciesism activists, who problematise the hierarchical understanding of human-nature relations that such settings reproduce[47]. As I will explain next, I argue that, at Orti Generali, such attempt to reproduce a farm-like environment for "educational" and aesthetic purposes contrasted with the fact that sheep herding in the area in parallel became increasingly limited and endangered. In other words, the representation and image of farming was valued more than its actual practice or, put different, an image was extrapolated from a real practice and replaced it in the name of sustainability.

In August 2019, I had not yet considered that the development of the project had affected the Bergero family use of the area and had not considered their permanence in the park. Their presence (but not the one of their animals) seemed to be almost invisible to the new gardeners. In this section, I shed light onto this invisibility and the ways in which errant shepherds' work and skills were increasingly pushed away from the urban context. I also discuss the divide between new imaginaries and understandings of urban farming and some of its more traditional configurations in Turin, like the activity of this family. Similarly to the case of spontaneous gardeners, the continuation of their work was undermined by the new land use and management of the area. In this case, however, the activity at risk was also a productive one. More specifically, one which challenged neoliberal uses of the city and an intensive approach to food production.

Memories: the Parco Piemonte over the years

I met the shepherd Giovanni Bergero as he was taking a walk close to the entrance of the individual allotments of Orti Generali. As I passed next to him, I did not know who this smiling and tan men in his 80s was, until we exchanged a few words. He seemed very open and

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[46] Olivier, informal conversation, 02/09/2021.

[47] See for example the information campaign against Zoom, the zoo of Turin, developed by the anti-speciesism collective Transelvatikə (Assemblea Antispecista e Transelvatikə 2022).

willing to talk, and mentioned that he was there to look after the sheep, currently grazing in the nearby field. I realised that neither me nor the other volunteers had really noticed or asked about the owners of the animals, which were grazing right there, in the field adjacent to Orti Generali. Like the children growing up in the urban context, who are said not to know where tomatoes or chicken grow, we did not draw a connection between that activity and ours. We did not things about these in terms of two different ways of urban farming and their possible incompatibility in the long term.

Later that day, I went to the shepherd. As I walked in the direction of the sheep, I saw him rearranging things in front of a caravan. As it saw me, the dog chained to a nearby tree started barking, making the shepherd turn in my direction. It was rare that somebody from the urban gardens wondered around in that part of the park. He had set his small base in a rather isolated spot, not far from the Roma camp. The allocation of the occupants at the margins of the park seem to reproduce their position in contemporary society, reflecting once again the ways in which the organisation of urban (green) spaces can also reflect how difference is articulated in the city (Newman 2015). The shepherd walked toward me with a chair in his hand, deciding that we were going to sit and talk in front of the main field, while watching the sheep.



[Image 12: The sheep of the Bergero family at the Parco Piemonte. 23/09/2019. Screenshot of a video taken by the author.]

Giovanni shared with me his childhood memories about the park: he depicted a landscape of grassland and informal landfill for local factories, which constituted a rural-urban continuum of its kind, concurrently populated by farmers and subproletariat. The latter were gleaning from the landfill to attempt making a living out of the collection and resale of iron, bolts and other of such material[48]. From the farmers' perspective, this area was particularly interesting because of its vicinity to the river, which always had an important and ambivalent role in the transformation of the area[49]. In his narration, the river was functional to herding: cow and sheep were drinking its water and grazing at its margins. At the same time, the river was used by some local construction companies to extract sand, representing once again a point of coexistence and possible tension between the rural and the urban realm. Upstream it was also as a space for leisure and bathing for the city inhabitants (as also recalled by Loredana, see chapter two).

The shepherd's memories, dating back to the 1950s, also help contextualising the following development of the Parco Piemonte and the housing units around it. The park officially arose in the early 1980s on what was used as a landfill by nearby factories until the 1970s, which was covered with soil. It also incorporated the surrounding seven hectares of agricultural land and the farmhouse *cascina Cassotti Balbo*. Meanwhile, around it, much of the land had turned into housing, initially constructed specifically for factory and railways workers, who came to populate the industrialising neighbourhood. Such historical account of the area, as presented by one of its long-term goers, illustrates well the ways in which nature also played a role in the development and later renewal projects of Mirafiori Sud (most often referred as the historical industrial neighbourhood of Turin).

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[48] Giovanni Bergero, shepherd, interview, 23/09/2019.

[49] Similar references to the river also appeared in most of my conversation with old local gardeners.



[Images 13: images of the Parco Piemonte area before and after its official transformation into a park. The images on the left show the landfill in the 1970s and the ones on the right the activities (such as walks and picnics) promoted in the park over the years 1980s-2000s by the spontaneous neighbourhood committee. 21/12/2021. Courtesy of the Comitato di quartiere spontaneo Borgata Mirafiori.]

As explained by Newman (2015, 31) in relation to the historical production of northeast Paris: "the urban process is not only spatial, economic, and political, but fundamentally ecological as well". In the context of Mirafiori Sud, this area had represented a site of ecological procurement and subsistence as well as one of waste discharge and pollution of firms, while in parallel always hosting acts of re-appropriation by the poorest strata of the population. Later, its conversion into a park represented the intention to legalise and modernise this liminal area. At the same time, however, responses to the social inequalities in accessing welfare services took a long time to arrive. In this perspective, the park's "greening" and popularisation through the urban gardening project Orti Generali seemed to represent a new promise of transformation of the area. A promise in the sense of fostering its attractiveness and its "sustainability", which passed

through a new branding, new forms of city consumption and ways of rendering the city productive by bringing forth the idea of disciplined urban nature.

Changing access to land

Eliciting the reflections of Bergero was also important to unravel aspects of his relation to the urban territory as well as traditional forms of agreements that use to regulate land use in that area.

> We were the *margari* (cow breeders and shepherd)! The *margari* would spend eight months a year in Turin! You would go where you would find a farmhouse [cascina]. In August, you would make a contract: my father was coming down [from the mountains], he was looking for the people of the farmhouses. If you were getting along you would go there, if you were not or maybe it was too expensive, you would go somewhere else. You would spend eight months in Turin and four months in the mountains. […]. At Porta Palazzo in August there was the hay market, and you would go there to look for a farmhouse for rent.[50]

The family's direct search and arrangements for land speak of a time during which the use of urban green areas (situated around the typical northern Italian peri-urban farmhouses *cascine*) was regulated through private agreements between their owners and users. The square of Porta Palazzo, which is today an important market square of Turin (which I will further elaborate on in chapter five), served as a point of

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[50] Giovanni Bergero, interview, 23/09/2019. Original text: "*Eravamo i margari! I margari si facevano otto mesi a Torino! Dove ti aggiustavi di cascina. C'era agosto, c'era un contratto, mio papà veniva giù, si trovavano quelli delle cascine, se andavi d'accordo andavi lì, non andavi d'accordo magari o troppo caro, cambiavi posto. Facevi otto mesi a Torino e quattro mesi di montagna. […]. Perché te andavi a Torino a Porta Palazzo, a Porta Palazzo ad agosto c'era il mercato del fieno, per aggiustarti in cascina, e c'è ne era marghè, avevano il gilet, sai il gilet con i buchi qua che c'è l'ho ancora io, che andavano lì sui capelli di velluto, tutti apposto.*"

encounter, where initial contacts were made for shepherds to rent a plot[51]. These months closer to the city were important for shepherds to be able to sell their products to the city inhabitants.

Over the following decades, many of the *cascine* were abandoned or converted into public green areas by the municipality. As proven by the story of the Bergero family, such transformation also entailed a change in the ways in which potential users of these urban spaces engaged in their procurement and access. In this perspective, it can be interesting to contrast the experience of the Bergero family with the one of the new urban gardeners at Orti Generali. With the development of the project, the contracts that govern the use of the grassland now consisted in an agreement between the managing non-profit organisation and the gardeners. The organisation mediated between the municipality (owning the land) and the gardeners (using the land), as part of its more general responsibility to manage that area of the park. I argue that this shift exemplifies the way in which the management of urban spaces in Turin is increasingly delegated to the Third Sector. It also reveals how such new managing systems undermine other forms of traditional productive usage of these areas.

The area that was used for grazing by the Bergero family was in fact reduced with the development of Orti Generali and even more so in 2021, when another part of the park was intended for an urban reforestation project sponsored by the IKEA company (Comune di Torino 2021; Redazione Torino Today 2021). According to the municipality, the 3000 trees planted in the park contributed to its reforestation, which was considered as an important element as part of its more general alignment with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Comune di Torino 2021). Ikea reforestation is a good example of the ways in which Turin municipality attempted to renew urban green areas through collaborations with private firms investing in environmental projects as part of their corporate social responsibility programs (Comune di Torino 2021). In this process, the activities previously ongoing in the area were not considered: the case

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[51] For an introduction to the history and multiple functions of Porta Palazzo see Balocco (2014).

of the Bergero family seemed to be unknown or, more probably, actively disregarded.

As explained by scholars investigating processes of "green gentrification", greening might come from outside investors (e.g. Gould and Lewis 2012 in Barchetta 2016) who have no knowledge of the areas but can extract value from the process of revitalising environmental resources such as urban parks rehabilitation. The choice of the municipality to give space to such large-scale and generally identified as "sustainability projects" is also exemplificatory of the linkages between greening, governance and city branding (e.g. Newman 2015). In the context of global neoliberalism, the municipality is interested in producing images of its engagement and compliance with international targets, implementing the same type of project and speaking the same language as other cities and countries. This probably provides a higher return in terms of visibility than what would be supporting and incentivising different local productive activities such as the ones of Bergero. To explain more in depth the ways in which these transformations impacted the activity of the Bergero family, it is first necessary to illustrate better their work and values. I will do so by reporting on their vision of production as narrated to me by the son of Giovanni Bergero, Giorgio.

The work and skills of an errant shepherd

A year later my encounter with his father, in summer 2020, I visited Giorgio in their mountain pasture and worked with him for a few days. The pasture situated close to the village Salza di Pinerolo (still part of the metropolitan area of Turin) was composed of large areas of mountains of property of the family as well as some of public property, which they rented from the municipality. The shepherds and its sheep normally spent there only the summer months. Then they descended, moving and grazing up to the margins of the city. As explained by Giorgio:

> I go, I sleep, I ask someone if I can eat a small piece of grassland to have breakfast, then, as I am eating the banks of the rivers, I arrive in Pinerolo in two days. From Perrero, to arrive to San Germano, Pinerolo, two, three days maximum, I

> go fast, as I do not want to eat anybody's grass, you understand? Because the other [shepherds] must sustain themselves the same way I do. And then going down from Pinerolo I know some places.[52]

As he talked about the ways in which he worked as an errant shepherd (*pastore errante* – term which he used proudly), Giorgio identified himself with the sheep: he used the pronoun "I" even when referring to the animals (for example when he said: "I am eating the banks of the rivers"). He often emphasised his connection to the land and the animals, which were at the basis of his passion and choice for an errant life. As he mentioned different towns on the way to Turin, he explained about the different types of land use agreements and speed of traveling that characterised each distance, such as where it was possible to reach an agreement between shepherds. Similarly to other Alpine people analysed by Aime, Allovio and Viazzo (2001), the case of the Bergero family should be regarded not as an isolated mountain community but rather as part of a network of engagements and negotiations with other actors and institutions such as local administrations. The family's mobile labour tradition (and necessity to migrate) is exemplificatory in this sense (e.g. negotiations of their paths and pastures, economic exchanges and commercial relations, to name a few).

While telling me about his labour, Giorgio Bergero was standing in front of me. It was around 7 pm and we were on our way to his sheep (around a thousand), which were grazing freely up the mountain. Like every evening, we needed to close them inside the *reti* (mobile electric fences used to create an enclosure), which protected them from getting attacked by wolfs during the night. Bergero had went to the sheep on his motorbike, followed by one of his white dogs. When he caught up with me, I had been walking uphill for the past hour. He decided to stop a few meters in front of me. He got off his bike and took out his phone: he explained that it was one of the rare places where he had coverage. While he spoke on the phone, I decided to take this break as an opportunity to talk to him about Orti Generali. It was hard to find a moment to talk to him about that urban world, as the mountain life and

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[52] Giorgio Bergero, shepherd, field recording, 21/08/2020.

work were fully absorbing. As he hung up, I started the conversation by asking about his work during the winter, when the mountains were covered in snow. It was not hard to imagine: as we talked, the fog whitened the mountain tops all around us. As resumed in the quote above, he explained to me some of the logistics and the language related to his winter displacements. By defining himself as an errant shepherd, he also underlined the differences to the way of farming of his father and ancestors. He moved with the sheep, for longer distances and period of times, whereas his father used to be both a cows and sheep breeder (*margaro*, piedmont dialect). Because of the presence of the cows, his father would rent a farmhouse close to the city to sell milk and cheese, and only move around it for short distances. That is how the Bergero family had started to go to the *Cascina Cassotti Balbo*, in the Parco Piemonte.

Even though he did not rent the farmhouse anymore, Bergero still brought his sheep to graze at the park because, he explained, this had remained the last sector (*zona*) of his errant pasture (*pascolo errante*). His approach to sheep keeping - also called errant pasture or transhumance - is part of a declining tradition that has been a long-term characteristic of the Alpine region, studied by several anthropologists (e.g. Verona 2016; Aime 2011; Aime, Allovio and Viazzo 2001). The set of skills developed by these shepherds is to be linked to the hard living and working conditions and the poverty that historically characterised these mountain communities. The continuation of such practices, which represents an important contribution to the diversification of agricultural activities, is being increasingly endangered by contemporary economic system and the reduction of spaces and paths for herding (Verona 2016).





[Images 14a and 14b: Giorgio Bergero looking at his sheep above Salza di Pinerolo. 20/08/2020. Screenshots of videos taken by the author.]

The images above symbolise the continuous connection between the shepherd and his sheep (even when these were grazing far away) as well the skills that he developed over the years. Among other, Bergero could make his animals move from a section of the mountain to another by giving remote instructions to his sheepdog with sounds, short words in Piedmont dialect shouted aloud and several types of whistles. More importantly, his way of looking after the sheep

reflected his skilled visions (Grasseni 2007) coordinated with his skilled movements, namely his peculiar way of looking at, knowing and relating to his environment. These reflect a peculiar set of competencies but also ideas, meaning and beliefs that are configured by his skilled visions (Grasseni 2007, 5) that are becoming increasingly jeopardised by contemporary standardised understandings of animal production and modern society, more generally.

Keeping the sheep, removing the shepherd: physical and political marginalisation of the last shepherds of Mirafiori Sud

When talking about Orti Generali, Giorgio explained that he had to reduce his stay at the park: during the last autumn, after 15 days of grazing in the area, he had to find another place. Giorgio felt that he had no influence on these processes:

- Maria: So the urban garden has taken a piece of your…
- Giorgio: It took me 5 days of grass.
- M.: and did you tell them?
- G.: Well, the world is changing, I do not have control and neither do the urban gardens, you understand? It is the municipality. I was taking it from the municipality and [then] they wanted to make the gardens and that's it.[53]

The shepherd had not resentment if not a feeling of being marginalised and disregarded from decision making processes, in a context which rendered increasingly complicated his way of working and, more generally, difficult for a diversity of small-scale productive activities to be sustained in mountain areas and beyond[54].

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[53] Giorgio Bergero, field recording, 21/08/2020.

[54] While I do not have the space to further elaborate on these broader challenges, see for example Liechti and Biber (2016) and Mannia (2016) for an overview of the economic, social, environmental and policy-related challenges of contemporary pastoralism. On general transformations and opportunities see Farinella et al. (2017).

In her dissertation *Municipal Goats. Exploring social relations and multiple ruralities in El Boalo, Spain*, Flora Sonkin (2017) explored a quite different context, where goatherd became part of municipalist politics working to create resilient, autonomous and participatory rural development projects. While highlighting the potential of such experience, the author underlined the ways in which such project also became embedded in the context's converging and conflicting "multiple ruralities, or different ways of relating with place that do not conform to a unified ideal of 'the rural'" (Sonkin 2017, 34). I reflect on her analysis in the context of peri-urban Turin in the search for alternatives to the contemporary situation of the Bergero. I also build on her questions to ultimately ask if multiple peri-urban realities can coexist at all in the context of urban renewal.

On that day at the mountain pasture, I met Bergero again uphill, in the place where he had decided to plant the fences. We had not reached the sheep, which had gone even higher than expected. While we set up the enclosure, Bergero shouted to the sheepdogs, giving them precise orders to direct the animals back down, towards us. The fog now surrounded us and it became impossible to see at distance. But this made no difference to the shepherd: we still had some work to do. Some of the sheep had injuries and needed treatment. Until darkness I observed the shepherd managing his sheep with the skills, manual techniques and *savoir faire* that revealed his years of experience. He turned the injured sheep on their back and operated on their hoofs. As I observed his way of proceeding, I compared it to the way in which at Orti Generali we had attempted to treat one of his sheep, which he had borrowed for the summer activities conducted at the didactical farm of the project. I remembered how we needed at least four people to immobilise the sheep on the ground, attempting to replicate the expert hands of Giorgio. Concerned with the health of the sheep (clearly suffering the consequences of a sudden sedentary life), we played at the sheep keepers, simulating in the urban context what was done with expertise by shepherds, whose labour in the area was currently endangered by the space assigned to its very *simulacrum*. Absorbed by the enactment of the rural life, we did not pay attention to how it was being jeopardised.

A similar paradox was to be found in relation to the use of the image of the sheep: again, as the continuity of Bergero's activities was being endangered, the animals were being photographed and used to depict the special features of the neighbourhood of Mirafiori Sud. For example, this was the case as part of the 2019 exhibition about the neighbourhood entitled "Mirafiori after the legend" (*Mirafiori Dopo Il Mito*). In this advertisement the shepherd was absent: in this way, the sheep were there to represent an imaginary landscape more than an actual practice. Similarly to the sheep used for the didactical activities at Orti Generali, these were presented in a socio-political vacuum.



[Image 15: Bergero's sheep on the flyer of the exhibition *Mirafiori Dopo il Mito* organised at the *Polo del '900* in the period October 11 – 25 2019. Image retrieved on 19/08/2021 at: https://mirafioridopoilmito.it/in-mostra/ .]

To conclude, my visit at the mountain pasture of the Bergero family helped me reflecting on the strong contrast between the knowledge, skills and capacity of adaptation of these shepherds and their very limited recognition and inclusion in decision-making processes. Drawing parallels between the rural and the urban contexts across which the shepherd and his animals navigated also shed new light onto the extent to which urban renewal practices at Parco Piemonte jeopardised the coexistence between diverse ways of envisioning and practicing peri-urban rurality. While, at the time of the research, Parco Piemonte remained a space where, with difficulty, a diversity of gazes, practices and forms of civic engagement encountered, it remained clear that not all of these were going to be transformed into priorities, political claims or simply considered equally in the present and future management of the area. The importance given to the image of renewal meant that the park should, among other, increasingly comply with visual standards and with opportunities to account for results and improvements, which seemed to be pushing some more than others at the margins of urban renewal. In this perspective, we see how the case of the renewal of Parco Piemonte partly reflects some of "the same neoliberal urban strategies of gentrification and consumption-drive redevelopment seen in cities throughout the world" (Newman 2015, xxix). If mobilising for a park is "as important for being a political idiom for broader social issues as it is a goal in itself" (Newman 2015, 35), the same should be said in relation to the political attention and will (also mentioned in Roy, 2019) to include activities such as the one of Bergero in the future of the area. Following the right to the city approach, this case calls for thinking about how marginalised groups in Mirafiori and beyond are currently being pushed away from two key rights of all inhabitants, namely the right to participation and the right to appropriation (Purcell 2002). Jeopardising the continuation of such activities does not only mean rethinking the scope of Parco Piemonte but also taking a position on broader issues such as local small-scale production, rural-urban linkages, diversity, participation and democratic debate in the city, openness of urban spaces, and ways of making these sites a right for urban dwellers, but also for people passing through these spaces. More than a question of the park it becomes an issue of definitions of civic engagement and participation, and of political attention to local experiences of marginal groups to be put at the centre of processes of urban transformation.

Conclusion

By focusing on the case of Parco Piemonte and its "greening" through the development of the Orti Generali project, I analysed some of the shapes taken by urban renewal in Mirafiori Sud, a peripheral area of Turin, which image is being transformed from the one of an industrial to a green and attractive area. I firstly framed the park's regeneration as part of a (relatively recent) growing attention to marginal green urban areas and the redefinition of urban gardens. Non-profit organisations in Turin play a significant role in these transformations and are key players as part of new forms of management of public (green) spaces (see also Bolzoni 2019). At the time of the fieldwork, a growing number of urban gardens in the city was managed by non-profit organisations, which also increasingly worked to create a network, among other for finding common resources and objectives, as exemplified by the case of *Or.Me*. Non-profit organisations' involvement in the management of urban renewal was justified by the retrenchment of the municipality and by broader trends, language and morality of citizens activation and participation to the transformation of their neighbourhoods, as exemplified through the practice of volunteering (Muehlebach 2012). Similar trends have been analysed in contexts such as the US where new forms of management of public space have developed, such as NGO management (e.g. Eizenberg 2012). This case study in Turin, however, allows to highlight specific entanglements between the moral "reformation of sociality" (Rozakou 2016), the governance and sustainability narratives around contemporary urban renewal practices and their exclusionary features.

The in-depth longitudinal analysis of the Orti Generali project revealed that while its development highly relied on the engagement of local inhabitants, their participation remained confined to only certain levels of decision-making. Going beyond the language of citizen activation, it became clearer that the garden organisers envisioned the continuation of the project via their guided intervention, legitimized by their professional knowledge and expertise, rather than on open debate and participatory decision-making processes. I argued that such configuration, while opening the park to new gardens and (gardening) activities, reduced the possibility for this space to become an arena for

democratic debate and inhabitants' ownership of an "autonomous community space" (Eizenberg 2012). On the contrary, the project became functional to neoliberal urbanism reproducing, among other, its exclusionary features and an "aesthetic consumption of cities" (Guano 2020).

My analysis of Parco Piemonte also aimed at giving voice to some of the long-term occupants of the park, namely spontaneous gardeners and errant shepherds. I shed light onto their practices (and their environmental, social and economic context) to challenge widespread narratives which tend to delegitimise these *in toto*, in the name of renewal and progress. I regard these practices as forms of knowledge, civic engagement and resistance, which continuation is increasingly jeopardised by processes of urban renewal, and in particular by hegemonic understandings of beauty and cleanness - even more than ideas of legality. Looking at both long-term and more recent urban gardening practices is also important to consider how many people from the area were involved and benefited from this production and how many are today. As it might become clearer in the future, the development of new gardening projects such as Orti Generali might reduce the gardening space for local inhabitants due to the price of plots and its growing attractiveness to other urban dwellers.

I built this section around anthropological works such as of Newman (2015) 's political approach to ecology and to the analysis of the "production of nature" (xxii); key debates among the ones on urban planning and the planner – user divide (Herzfeld 2020; Bolzoni 2019; Newman 2015; Signorelli 1989); literature on volunteering and its moral premises (Pusceddu 2020; Muehlebach 2012) as well as on sustainable redevelopment and greening (Certomà and Tornaghi 2019; Barchetta 2016). This allowed me to go beyond the context of Turin and develop an understanding of the case of Parco Piemonte as part of broader global trends. This ethnography contributes to the current debate on blurring boundaries between city planners and users by highlighting how such approach could benefit from in-depth analysis of decision-making processes (e.g. everyday forms of negotiation and resistance) and by bringing back into the discussion the dimensions of cultural divide and power relations between these different agents (Signorelli 1989).

Moreover, this case exemplifies how such renewal projects can be at the same time based on the language of participation, civic engagement and blurring division of roles, while also adopting the character of a "civilization-based project" (Newman 2015, 128). In this context, this signified developing a new culture of civic engagement that is, among other, functional to the promotion of volunteer work, the morality of the good, responsible, modern citizen (Rozakou 2016) and confines civic engagement to certain practices and models. As part of these, disagreements and contestations are only rarely voiced and conflicts become silenced, among other, because of the mediation played by non-profit organisations which are represented as a saving entity in the context of the generalised austerity threat that "a renewal project is better than no project".

The uncertain future of the long-term occupants of the park sheds light on some of the exclusionary features of contemporary greening practices and the loss of knowledge and diversity which they might entail. While this goes beyond my capacity of evaluation, gardeners such as Olivier also problematised the actual environmental impacts of these "sustainable projects", as exemplified through his requests for more radical environmental practices and a new approach to human - non-human relations. Overall, my analysis aimed at unpacking some of the political (e.g. management, participation, decision making) and social (e.g. diversity, marginality, exclusion) dimensions of the transformation of the park and, through its contextualisation, introduce how this might open the way to further processes of (eco) gentrification (e.g. Barchetta 2016; Cucca 2012).

Part 2.

Working at the food market. Austerity, labour precarity and engagement at the marketplace

Introduction

In the previous part of the thesis, I discussed the issue of transforming urban space in Turin, its renewal and changing occupants starting from the case of a public green area. I highlighted how urban renewal is interrelated with changing notions of citizenship, sustainability and welfare. In this second part of the dissertation, I continue to discuss these transformations, proposing further reflections based on my ethnographic investigations at open-air food markets. As I will highlight next, markets represent interesting entry points to add to the discussion and look more specifically into other complex forms of labour precarity and citizens engagement.

Contemporary food markets around the world have been studied by many anthropologists (e.g. Gell 1982; Bestor 2004; Black 2012). These scholars often focus on interactions at the marketplace and, among these, Black (2012) specifically investigated the market of Porta Palazzo in Turin. The author analysed the market as a space of social exchange, in a context of decreasing urban social spaces and social life (Black 2012). Scholars who studied food markets in relation to urban transformations and civic engagement often focused on farmers markets and quality food: their work is to be contextualised as part of the literature on the (re)establishment of direct relations between producers and consumers (e.g. Bubinas 2011), ethical consumption (e.g. Orlando 2012), and farmers' movements against neoliberal agendas (e.g. Leslie 2017). Authors such as Bubinas (2011) have approached the civic and political dimension of farmers markets from the perspective of consumer behaviour. The scholar argued that farmers markets in the U.S can be analysed as sites where middle-class citizens build on their consumer power to develop new, class-based economic behaviours and form a community. Among others, Leslie (2017) investigated farmers markets and the ways in which related practices and regulations both challenge and reproduce elements of neoliberal ideologies in Argentina. In the Italian context, an example of anthropological work in this sense is the recent research *The Peasant Activism Project* (2016-2018), which is an ethnographic study of neo-rural activism. Going beyond farmers markets, it investigated forms of political activism related to local food production and food sovereignty (The Peasant Activism Project n.d.).

In these scholarly works, the emphasis is put on farmers markets, local food activism and social movements. This can make them class-biased, as it can be argued about literature on Alternative Food Networks more generally - see for example the critical reflections by Guthman (2008), Orlando (2012) and Tregear (2011). Moreover, markets' civic and political significance is most often approached in relation to (what are regarded as) innovative, sustainable and activist-like forms of engagement (*the Peasant Activism Project* being a good exemplification of such approach). While this body of research provides important analyses of grassroots movements around food and new marketplaces, it also tends to overlook what happens within and around more conventional food markets. I use the term conventional to refer to the official open-air food markets which mostly occupy Italian (but not only) urban landscapes. These revolve around the work and organisation of vendors, who resell fresh products purchased through wholesalers often procuring food from the national or global market.

In Turin, these markets are called neighbourhood markets (*mercati rionali*) and these corresponded to a total number of 33 markets (as per 2015), open daily all around the city (Mangiardi and Altamura 2015). While the continuation of such markets is partly jeopardised by demographic and habit changes, the economic crisis, competition of supermarkets and high-quality food stores, these continue to play an important role in the urban (food) landscape[55]. I will show how, by analysing these sites in relation to the following questions: how can conventional open-air food markets be regarded as urban spaces in transformation? What are the shapes of labour, civic engagement and contestation in these spaces? What processes of citizens (trans)formation can occur in such environments? What can the analysis of everyday life at these markets reveal about urban renewal, recession and austerity, diversity and marginalisation?

Chapter four revolves around the market of Piazza Foroni and my participant observation as helper of a market vendor in that context.

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[55] Information based on five in-depth interviews with market vendors, participant observation and informal conversations at open-air food markets. These issues are also pointed out in news articles such as Coccorese (2013). I did not find any scholarly literature on the recent trends of these markets.

Piazza Foroni is situated in Barriera di Milano, which is a neighbourhood discussed in the literature as an urban 'emiphery' meaning "geographically close to the city centre, but at the same time marginal and far away from the social and public representations standpoints" (Ciampolini (2007) in Cingolani 2018, 95, translation is my own). Focusing on the perspective of long-term market vendors, I present the market life in relation to the history of immigration in the area as well as its current transformations, among which the impacts of the economic crisis and the globalised market economy. I discuss some of Piazza Foroni vendors' diverse background and experiences as well as their collective organisation and engagement in local social activities and forms of political contestation. I mainly connect my investigation with Susana Narotzky (2020)'s anthropological analyses of "ordinary people" in Southern Europe and their ways of making a living under economic recession and austerity.

Chapter five discusses the case of an initiative for food surplus collection and free redistribution at open-air food markets, coordinated by a non-profit organisation called Eco dalle Città. I particularly focus on the case of asylum seekers and refugees involved in these activities as workers and volunteers at the markets of Porta Palazzo and Via Porpora, situated in the neighbourhoods Aurora and Barriera di Milano, respectively. I contextualise their experiences as part of socio-cultural interactions that characterise these diverse and low-income neighbourhoods at the intersection between unemployment, austerity, the promises of urban renewal and risks of gentrification. I also delve into the organisation of Eco dalle Città activities: I report on the workers and volunteers' different perspectives on labour, and on the (power) relations between asylum seekers, the project manager and Italian workers. I explain why these linkages reflect complex dynamics. As part of these, the idea of urban dwellers' deservingness of rights is entangled with structural racial disparities and precarious working conditions. I mainly build on the work of Aihwa Ong (2003) and her conceptualisation of "deserving citizenship" which reveals how such initiatives also include a moral production of deserving citizen-subjects.

Based on two very different cases and perspectives, these two chapters are interconnected by their attention to labour, most often in its most

precarious forms, and the analysis of the context-specific meanings of diversity and austerity, based on these research participants' everyday life. Labour (and related conditions, rights, commitments, challenges, opportunities) being one of the most recurring themes emerging from the fieldwork, it also became a particular lens through which I analyse everyday life at the market but also problematise the actual sustainability of non-profit operations in the social and environmental realms. Moreover, both chapters describe disparate forms of civic and political engagement at the marketplace. In continuity with the previous part of the dissertation, this second part highlights a series of interconnections between urban renewal and transforming citizens' practices and sociality.

Chapter IV. “You cannot invent yourself as a market vendor”

One can cross the market square Piazza Foroni as a market goer. Go there to buy some fresh products or to enjoy its colourful and lively atmosphere. The market is a reference point for local inhabitants and well-known across the city as a traditional and iconic market, characterised by typical products from southern Italy. The space is simple but pleasantly organised: the market alleys develop in between approximately 150 market stands, surrounded by housing buildings from the beginning of the 20th century and long-standing shops and café. Market goers move from one stand to the other, based on their habits or simply following their feelings on the spot and vendors’ loud calls. Every stand reveals a specific set of products: fruits and vegetables, bread and pizza, cheese and dairy products, meat and fish.



[Image 16: Piazza Foroni in the 1930s. Photo archived by EUT 6. Retrieved on 07/03/2022 at: https://www.museotorino.it/view/s/0d0b0cde4372478db0de5c7e24f4ef72#]



[Image 17: Piazza Foroni. 2010. Photo by Mauro Raffini. Copyright Museo Torino. Retrieved on 07/03/2022 at: https://www.museotorino.it/view/s/0d0b0cde4372478db0de5c7e24f4ef72#]

One of the other ways to explore this market is to follow the perspective of market vendors. During my fieldwork, I decided to better understand Piazza Foroni and its context approaching it as a space of labour and related forms of collective engagement. During my very first visits at the market, I was struck by the comment of a vendor who said: "you cannot invent yourself as a market vendor!". This sounded as an invitation to a whole new world to be discerned, in relation to the history of a profession, vendors' skills, working habits and conditions, but also to the context of the market and its transformations.

I decided to conduct participant observation at the market, assisting one of the market vendors in his work. Spending time at the stand was a learning experience on different levels. It was an experience of apprenticeship: I learned elements of a profession, learned by watching, listening and imitating. But it was also a political experience: an occasion for spending time in the streets of *Barriera di Milano*, side by side with vendors, learning about their visions and

political stands. Before taking part in the market life, I knew very little about the challenges and claims of such category of self-employed workers and my experience revealed to me the heterogeneity of such category (especially in terms of their professional trajectories) but also their common struggles.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the market as a space in transformation. I built on literature on taste (Bourdieu 1984) to explain processes of identity formation, community building and distinction at the marketplace. I also contextualise the market as part of its neighbourhood, often discussed in terms of urban margins (e.g. Basile 2016) and which went through an important economic recession and demographic changes. In the second section, I discuss the trajectories of two vendors and their entanglements with the social and economic history of the neighbourhood. I discuss how they were affected by austerity and the economic crisis and their ways of making a living in such changing environment. I build on the approach of the volume *Grassroots Economies. Living with Austerity in Southern Europe* edited by Narotzky (2020) aiming at understanding austerity from the perspective of the lived experience of ordinary people, in specific times and contexts. In the third section, I discuss how vendors engage in actions of solidarity and contestation at the marketplace. Building on Muehlebach (2009) I discuss the different facets and ambiguities of market solidarity, including its potential exclusionary features. I also analyse their engagement as a form of contestation. I specifically report on vendors' mobilisation in the context of top-down market renewal plans and their more recent claims for a better recognition of their category and request for welfare support.

A real market

I arrived at the market of Piazza Foroni following the advice of a research participant named Riccardo. He had argued with emphasis:

> Do you know the market of Piazza Foroni? The market of Piazzetta Cerignola [the small square of Cerignola, a town situated in the southern Italian region Apulia], that's how they call it. It is in [the neighbourhood] Barriera di Milano. That one is a real market.[56] [57]

Based on the rest of our conversation, I understood that a "real market" was for Riccardo one with a long history and a working-class essence. He had distinguished Piazza Foroni from other open-air food markets of the city centre, which, over time, had become "upper-class" and were transformed into "picturesque markets". Based on his narrative, I got the sense that the continuation of such neighbourhood markets was under threat, as supermarkets, on the one hand, and quality food products (Riccardo had given the example of organic shops) on the other, were taking over most of their consumers.

As later confirmed during my participant observation at Piazza Foroni, in this context, the meaning of authenticity (alias the "real market") and quality food was tightly linked to the working-class and immigrant identity of the population of Barriera di Milano. As a matter of fact, the interpretation of quality food at Piazza Foroni was quite different from what is frequently presented as such in recent literature on food markets and sustainable consumption. For example, it had little to do with the idea of "quality turn in food production" developed by

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[56] Riccardo, member of the GAP Vanchiglia, interview, 14/03/2019.Original quote: "*Il mercato di Piazza Faroni, lo conosci? Il mercato di "piazza Cerignola", così la chiamano. È in Barriera di Milano. Quello si che è* un vero mercato.

[57] Riccardo was a leading member of the food collective GAP Vanchiglia, which is now extinct. The *Gruppi di Acquisto Popolare* (GAP) (Popular Purchasing Groups) are networks of citizens that gather and purchase collectively goods such as food. GAPs developed in the early 2000s all over Italy mainly as a reaction to the rise of the cost of living.

Goodman (2004) in relation to alternative food networks. Nor it could relate to the concept of critical food consumption, discussed among others by Orlando (2012) in relation to middle-class consumers' moral concerns. As I started to visit the market more regularly, I increasingly asked myself: how do market vendors at Piazza Foroni define authentic and quality food? In which ways these local meanings relate to the past and present transformations of the area? In the following paragraphs, to introduce this marketplace, I address these questions and present its social history.

Since 1925, Piazza Foroni was one of the main market squares of the neighbourhood Barriera di Milano (Beraudo *et al*. 2006). This area was always characterised by strong immigration. It developed as a city suburb during the second half of the 19th century, as rural inhabitants moved from the countryside to the city in search of work and better living conditions (Beraudo *et al*. 2006). With the development of the city's industrial plants, Barriera di Milano started to host immigrants from the whole peninsula (Beraudo *et al*. 2006). As part of the long immigration wave that brought to Turin many southern Italian (especially between the 1950s and the 1970s), Piazza Foroni became a reference point for immigrants from Apulia and more precisely from the town of Cerignola[58].

In the 1980s, the community of inhabitants originally from Cerignola (also called *Cerignolani*) living in the surroundings of the square was estimated to be around 35 thousand people (Donna 2018). The anthropologist Dario Basile (2003; 2009) examined, among other, the ways in which such population developed and experienced external marginalisation and internal community-building over the years. The scholar pointed to the strong identity juxtaposition between people from Piedmont and people from Southern Italy. Distinction mechanisms and discriminatory labels were common in those years

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[58] As noted by Basile (2003, 29-30), immigrants from Cerignola started to arrive to Turin even before the city's immigration boom. This was linked to the situation of poverty and unemployment that characterised the area of Cerignola, the possibility to work at FIAT in Turin, but also to local cultural components such as the idea of social mobility and a long migratory tradition.

and affected these immigrants as well as their sons and daughters – who correspond to both Basile's and my research participants' generation.

Apulia identity and the local meaning of "good taste"

At the time of my fieldwork, hints to the Apulian identity and traditions were still present at the market square. As mentioned by Riccardo, the square was often called Piazzetta Cerignola. The local inhabitants, among which several market vendors, had fought to obtain the official recognition of its additional name since 1983 and had requested it to be inscribed as such on a road sign at one of the corners of the square. The link to Apulian traditions also continued to be commemorated with the festivity of the Virgin of Ripalta (*Madonna di Ripalta*), the patron saint of Cerignola. Every June, it was celebrated with the traditional religious procession as well as activities organised on the square, including music and food stands.

The connection to Apulia was also visible from the many regional products sold at the market and at the surrounding shops. Traditional products included: horse meat, *taralli* (salted biscuits), olives, *lampascioni* (leopoldia comosa bulbs) and *cime di rapa* (turnip greens). In the right seasons (autumn and winter), while walking across the market, one could hear some vendors shouting aloud the name of this green - "ah, ah, ah, there is plenty of turnip greens!"[59] -, to attract the attention of market goers. Turnip greens are exemplificatory of the sort of fresh products which arrived at the market directly from Apulia and were consumed in big quantities in the past.

[59] Fieldnotes, 27/09/2019. Original expression: "ah, ah, ah, c'è tutta cima!".


MARIASS DI RIPALTA
DAL FORNAIO


PIAZZETTA
CERIGNOLA
GIA' VIA CANDIA N° 2



[Images 18a, 18b, 18c: References to Apulia at the market, including the road sign “Piazzetta Cerignola”, the altar of the Virgin of Ripalta and the typical Apulia product lampascioni. 03/08/2019. Photo by the author]

In recent years, the popularity of such products decreased, but remained a distinctive feature that some of the well-established vendors used to attract and build a relation of trust with certain customers – mainly of Italian origins, regular clients, elderly people or young foodies. Having beautiful turnip greens on the stand allowed retailers to show their ability to select good products and exhibit their knowledge of regional (culinary) traditions. These products often represented an opportunity to engage in a conversation with costumers, during which vendors explained how to clean and prepare them, and shared recommendations and recipes. The heritage of such Apulia working-class traditions therefore echoed beyond festivities and products, and remained present in the local meaning of "good taste", which encompassed both the ideas of authenticity and quality.

Among the many social theorists concerned with (food) practices as "identity markers", Bourdieu's (1984) analysis is particularly relevant for framing "good taste" in the context of Piazza Foroni. Bourdieu (1984) explained how social classes are not only differentiated by their position in production relations but also by their class habitus and lifestyles. In the case of working-class population, defining the principles of its own identity is, according to the sociologist:

> perhaps one of the last refuges of the autonomy of the dominated classes, of their capacity to produce their own representations of the accomplished man [or woman] and the social world (Bourdieu 1984, 384).

The author also argued that such self-representations have over time transformed through "the imposition of the dominant lifestyle and the legitimate image of the body" (Bourdieu 1984, 384).

While the idea of class and class-based identity have become more complex, in the context of Piazza Foroni, some local vendors kept alive the memories of the periods when such identity markers were source of both community-building and external discrimination among working-class immigrant families. Food from Apulia also allowed to keep the continuity with the imaginary of their rural past. This was also pointed out by Basile (2003, 33), who highlighted how traditional recipes were still important for these immigrants in the early 2000s, to

feel *cerignolani* and cultivate a relation with their area of origins through the procurement of Apulian products. Moreover, based on my observations, such products and underlying ideas of taste helped vendors to maintain a sense of stability in a changing urban environment characterised by important demographic transformations. In this perspective, I argue that the local meaning of good taste allowed vendors of Apulia descendant to legitimise themselves as historical figures of the area, cultivate a sense of community as well as delineate its boundaries.

A market and neighbourhood in transformation

Over the last decades, the area of Barriera di Milano was characterised by significant socio-economic and demographic transformations. These are to be contextualised as part of the economic and occupational crisis that followed the deindustrialization of Turin and particularly affected the area. The crisis aggravated the situation of socio-economic hardship of many local inhabitants. Literature on the area (mostly in the field of urban geography) pointed to these issues in terms of marginalisation, deprivation and also of inadequate urban policy measures (e.g. Basile 2016; Governa 2016; Salone 2018). In a theoretical piece, Basile (2016) discussed contemporary social construction of urban margins (including Barriera di Milano) through the criminalisation of poverty and "a punitive approach against the most underprivileged" (Basile 2016, 310). By comparing so-called marginal areas in Turin and Marseille, the geographer Francesca Governa also called for scholars to move away from the "rhetorical opposition between deprived urban spaces and idealised conceptions of "good places" (Governa 2016, 3) to critically discuss mainstream categorisation of peripheral areas.

As I will further discuss, the creation of Barriera di Milano as an "urban margin" was strongly tangible at the time of my fieldwork, through stereotyped media accounts of the area (e.g. Massenzio 2022) as well as narrations of research participants, who often talked about residents' general feeling of abandonment and inadequacy of support from the public administration. As pointed out in the analysis of local urban renewal plans by Salone (2018), while the area was targeted by a series of urban renewal plans between 1997 and 2014 - often to be

implemented by local non-profit organisations - not always these were enough to ameliorate local inhabitants' living conditions and compensate the lack of public investments in the area.

As part of these plans, between 2011 and 2015, the market was one of the 34 target areas of the urban renewal program *Urban Barriera* (2011-2015) promoted and financed by the municipality of Turin, the Piedmont regional administration and the European Union (Comune di Torino n.d.). *Urban Barriera* was one of the renewal plans targeted to different peripheral areas of the city from the early 2000s, which included *Urban II Mirafiori*, discussed in chapter one. *Urban Barriera* included spatial, economic and socio-cultural interventions. At the market, the intervention aimed at "improving the security, accessibility, hygienic norms and, last but not least, the urban design, in order to increase the liveability and fruition of the area" (Comune di Torino n.d. a). The definition of the actual interventions was not a linear process. As I will later go into, vendors got engaged in the discussion refusing a top-down approach.

The area was also characterised by a series of demographic transformations. Since the 1990s, Turin started to attract an increasing number of foreign immigrants, and, in Barriera di Milano, particularly from Morocco, Romania, China, Albania, Peru and Nigeria (Beraudo *et al*. 2006. Data from 2005). This increased the diversity of the population in the area and also gave rise to new forms of discrimination, divisions and clashes, between people of different origins, ages (young versus elderly population) and occupations (employed versus unemployed) (Cingolani 2018). At the market, such transformations translated into vendors and customers' turnover and greater diversity. At the time of my fieldwork, several stands were owned or managed by Moroccans and the diversity of market goers generally reflected the one of the neighbourhood. Diversity among market vendors is also to be contextualised as part of the increasing presence of vendors of foreign origins city-wide (Ambrosini and Castagnone 2010).





[Images 19a, 19b: Views of the market. 03/08/2019. Photos by the author]

These transformations also entailed changes in the urban landscape (such as new shops, including halal butchers and Chinese houseware stores)[60] and in consumption habits. Some vendors got destabilised by these changes and voiced their fears and frustrations through exchanges, jokes and open conflicts at the market. As they explained, in economic terms, market life also transformed due to the reduced purchasing power of local inhabitants, shrinking of families' size - which had significant repercussions on the quantities purchased by each costumer -, and increase in the number of supermarkets in the

[60] While I do not discuss in-depth the neighbourhood landscape in the dissertation, the analysis of visual elements (such as the neighbourhood's architecture and shops signs) was key to gain a deeper understanding of the area. See also Krase (2012)'s general introduction to visual approaches to urban life and culture.

area[61]. According to the same vendors, the urban decay (*degrado*) and the bad reputation of the area had generated a widespread feeling of insecurity which had drawn away many long-term market goers. Based on my observations, such narratives were surely true for part of the local inhabitants but, at the same time, the market also attracted new costumers, mostly during the weekends, when it was particularly busy. For example, this was the case at the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic (which corresponds, in Italy, to March 2020), even though the number of people allowed into the market square was limited and queues prolonged.

One of my first conversations at the market was with a waitress around my age who was working in one of the cafés at the corners of the square. This first exchange allowed me to organise an interview together with her as well as the owner of the café a few days after. This was my first immersion into local inhabitants' perceptions of Barriera di Milano. These two women of different ages and employment positions shared a similar narrative - which I later discovered to be quite popular also across long-term market vendors. They depicted the neighbourhood as increasingly diverse - "there is a bit of everything. The Italian, the Chinese, the Moroccan, the Bangladesh [sic], blacks"[62] - and problematic. Local problems included poverty (often mentioned in relation to the elderly), lack of employment, petty criminality (drug dealing, prostitution, robbery) and lack of security, due to little police intervention and attention by local administrators (despite inhabitants' many complaints). They also shared their impression about the market, which they described as a "working-class market" (*mercato popolare*), which was fading away because of urban decay, changing consumers' habits and increasing costs faced by vendors.

Their outlooks displayed the many tensions and contradictions that developed in this area. They spoke about the city transformations, in demographic terms, as well as in relation to the local impact of

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[61] These themes were discussed in detail during interviews with the market vendors Enzo (13/08/2019) and Laura - a pseudonym (26/11/2019).

[62] Liliana Amatore, interview, 06/08/2019. Original quote: ""*C'è un po' di tutto. C'è l'italiano, c'è il cinese, c'è il marocchino, c'è il bangladesh, neri.*"

globalisation and the economic crisis (e.g. changing economic activities, labour precarity, unemployment). These themes resonated with broader challenges of Turin and rendered the case of this market relevant. Not only in terms of local inhabitants' everyday life and ways of navigating the area but also, following what Herzfeld argued in his volume *The Body Impolitic*, to explore the dynamics of power at the centre, defined in various ways: the state, the wealthy, the international economic community, the church, the educational system (Herzfeld 2004, 16). As I show throughout this chapter, the narratives and everyday lives of the people encountered at Piazza Foroni shed light on a multitude of facets of "the centre". Many of these were revealed by their fears, contestations, ways of remarking borders and internalising "representations and narratives surrounding stigmatised neighbourhoods" (Basile 2016, 309).

In the next section, I will expand on the perspectives and trajectories of market vendors at Piazza Foroni. I will focus on two of them, whom I got to know better, and will discuss their background, labour, feelings and visions about the area and the economy. I will follow Narotzky (2020)'s approach, on one hand unpacking the diversity and complexity of their everyday life and, on the other, shedding light onto the meanings of economic transformations and austerity from the perspective of "ordinary people". I aim at showing the diversity as well as the interconnections between these stories. It is important to underline that they represent only a partial representation of the perspectives of market vendors – other perspectives were not investigated in-depth such as the ones of the many vendors of Moroccan origins[63].

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[63] As part of my methodological choices, I decided to deepen my relations with few vendors, whom I got to know and work with on a continuous basis. The fact of investigating only some perspectives, but more in-depth, was mainly linked to my preferences in terms of how to organise my time in the field. To a minor extent, this was also a matter of access. In fact, once I started to work at Enzo's stand, I started to be directly associated to him. This changed the way I was perceived and my positionality within market's relations, sometimes facilitating others hindering my possibility to communicate with others.

Market vendors in crisis

Enzo: small-scale entrepreneurship and masculinity

Enzo (or Vicenzo, his full name, though rarely used), a big man of Apulia origins in his fifties, worked at the market since he was a child, helping his father at the stand. His family represented the quintessential story of migration from southern Italy, managing their own small enterprise (namely the food stand) since 1952. Enzo was 14 years old when his father passed away and he had to stop going to school and start working at the market every day, together with his mother. At the time of my fieldwork, 40 years later, Enzo was still working at the market, managing the stand he had inherited. He was also the president of the market commission and association, thus the reference point for many market vendors and consumers of this square. He was also known by many local inhabitants as he took active part in a series of social and political activities in the area, such as local charity projects, small cultural events and meetings with local institutions.

When asking more information about the market during one of my first visits at Piazza Foroni, the owner of the previously mentioned café had directly referred me to Enzo. He welcomed me at his stand, telling me that he was used to talk with journalists and researchers. I told him about my research and he agreed for me to ask some questions and to come back. He immediately introduced me to his helpers at the stand and shared with me his phone number. It was only after a few visits and Enzo's first recorded interview that I thought about asking him if I could work at the stand voluntarily, for the scope of my research. He answered positively, telling me that I could do as I wanted but that he was not able to pay me – an option which I would not have considered in any case. As I learned from him, his wife and helpers, we got to know each other better and develop a dialogue about our lives and working conditions, which alternated with moments of shared work and apprenticeship.

Enzo felt at home at the market: "I know everything about the market, I know all of its history"[64]. However, he was not particularly optimistic about the present and future of his work as market vendor. He often complained about the difficult working conditions such as the peculiar working hours, the physical efforts it required such as lifting weights, and the hardness of working outside every day, all year around. He also often explained how his income had decreased with the economic crisis since 2008 and due to high taxation and lack of welfare support for self-employed, small entrepreneurs. Enzo also felt threatened by transforming consumption patterns in the area – "there isn't the same people as before, the way of eating and way of buying changed"[65], which, according to him, made the market less popular than in the past.

While working at his stand, I got to see some of these challenges directly: the market life required him to wake up at 4 am almost every day of the week, go to the wholesale market, loading and unloading his truck, commuting between the market and his storage unit, opening and closing the stand, interacting with customers and solving bureaucratic issues that arose on a weekly basis. During the market hours, Enzo would occasionally receive the help of his wife, sister and retirees from the neighbourhood. However, he always remained in control, directly managing the stand's official responsibilities.

More than once, Enzo told me that he was tired of this work, but that he had to do this for his family. He wanted to do everything that was possible to support his daughters in their studies. While he had inherited the market licence from his father, he knew that after him nobody would take up the stand nor continue this family tradition. This work had become too difficult, too competitive and, with all the expenses it entailed, the margins for making a proper living out of it were shrinking every day.

Enzo talked about self-employment most often in relation to the lack of welfare state support for his category namely small-scale

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[64] Vincenzo Torraco (Enzo), market vendor, interview, 13/08/2019.

[65] Enzo, interview, 13/08/2019.

entrepreneurs and more specifically self-standing itinerant vendors (in Italian: *microcommercio, commercio autonomo, commercianti ambulanti*). He argued that, at the same time, they were increasingly controlled, having to obey an "exaggerated amount" of regulations. Bureaucracy such as multiple and differentiated systems of tax payments rendered small-scale businesses far too complicated to manage, while bigger companies were privileged: "big companies can do as they want"[66]. Such feeling of injustice and discussions around news of large firms' owners committing illicit actions (tax evasion and corruption) were widespread among vendors. Such issue is quite frequent in Italy, while some literature also suggests the opposite, for example, in relation to the fact that small firms "are more likely than larger ones to employ informal labour and participate in the shadow economy" (Schneider 2011 in Yanagisako 2020, 702). High taxation was a recurrent theme of discussion and an opportunity for Enzo to start talking about lack of institutional support for small-scale entrepreneurs:

> Today nobody helps you if you want to be entrepreneur… on the contrary! […] If [you are small scale and] you happen to have an idea [to start a business], forget about it. […] If, like me, you inherited something from your parents, it becomes a noose around the neck.[67]

The case of Enzo exemplifies the crisis of autonomous vendors and small entrepreneurs in contemporary Italy. Small enterprises always corresponded to an important sector of the Italian economy: as per 2017, small and medium enterprises (defined in these statistics as businesses having a turnover of less than 50 million euros) employed 82% of Italian workers and represented 92% of the total number of enterprises (Prometeia 2019). These included the activities of market vendors, who, as mentioned above, are legally categorised as itinerant vendors and in 2019 corresponded to 180 thousand persons and 22% of the Italian commercial enterprises (Unioncamere 2021). These categories were highly impacted by the economic recession that

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[66] Enzo, video recording, 17/12/2019.

[67] Enzo, video recording, 17/12/2019.

followed the 2008 crisis. As discussed in recent statistics and articles, the crisis of small retailers persists and has become a structural one, linked to various and cumulative factors such as the decrease in consumption, competition of large-scale retailing and e-commerce (e.g. Balduzzi, 2020). In these circumstances, many small retailers had to close their activities - around five thousand in 2019 (Redazione Today 2019).

Only few articles in news and scholarly literature exist on the crisis of open-air food markets in Turin. Some news highlight, for example, vendors' accounts of desertification of small markets and the increasing competition and tensions between vendors (e.g. Coccorese 2013; Ambrosini and Castagnone 2011). COVID-19 related economic crisis also impacted open-air food markets such as the ones of Piazza Foroni, in a complex way, based on the various stages of the crisis. While I do not have the space to delve deeper into it – and the economic consequences will have to be evaluated in a few years from now -, in 2020 I could observe some immediate impacts. Among others: changing market opening regulations (passing from totally closed, to open with restrictions in numbers, to fully open), the reorganisation of market areas and the general increase of prices of agricultural products.

More generally, the long-term crisis of this professionals impacted them beyond the economic realm. As pointed out by Yanagisako (2020) (who examined family firms in Italy), the meaning of the past, present and imagined future of these firms is to be analysed in relation to ideas of the self, kinship, gender relations, and social mobility. Analysing the case of Enzo necessitates in fact dialoguing with anthropological literature which discussed the ways in which small entrepreneurs are impacted by the economic recession in various aspects of their life and personhood. Particularly relevant to this case is the study of Loperfido (2020) who explained the ways in which recession and austerity can impact entrepreneurs' sense of self. His contribution, as part of the volume *Grassroots Economies, Living with Austerity in Southern Europe* (edited by Susana Narotzky 2020), discussed the case of "small entrepreneurial identity" (173) in the context of the collapse of Small and Medium Enterprises since the economic crisis in 2008 in the Veneto region, in Italy. The author

delved into the case of suicides of entrepreneurs which followed the crisis as "the product of the collapse of entrepreneurialism as *both* an economic project and a symbolic space of identification" (Loperfido 2020, 174). The author examined - through the example of Anna, a 45-year-old entrepreneur – how the crisis of enterprises often entails a crisis of personal identity, a sense of failure of the subject as a whole, due to the complex intertwinement between productive, reproductive and affect relations.

Similarly, in the case of Enzo, continuing his work and attempting to resist the crisis meant safeguarding his sense of self as the son of a market tradition, Italian hard-working man, paterfamilias and local inhabitant. Enzo's way of living with the crisis at the market was deeply interrelated with his idea of being a man and his performance of masculinity. Discussing such interrelation seems particularly important to contextualise the different forms of his (and other vendors') forms of solidarity and engagement at the market, which I will examine in the following section. The theme of masculinity emerged at Enzo's stand recurrently, in several manners: in the way he and other male vendors spoke about themselves, in the gendered division of labour at the stand, and through discussions on food and on politics.

Again Bourdieu (1984)'s concept of class identity markers is relevant here to approach masculinity (referred by Bourdieu as virility) as a way of emphasising one's own belonging to specific class cultural models and habitus. Specific ideas of virility are, according to the author, entrenched in class visions of work, of being an accomplished man and working-class identification mechanisms (Bourdieu 1984). In this perspective, Enzo's approach is to be contextualised as part of his education in the context of a hard-working immigrant family, in which both men and women worked, but men maintained a central role and, most often, the overall family's responsibility. As mentioned by Yanagisako (2020), some Italian small entrepreneurs' ways of managing their business and family might also be influenced by the heritage of agrarian paternalism. This seems relevant in the case of the history of this family, originally from rural Apulia.

Enzo would always oversee the general management of the stand and the heaviest physical tasks such as the transportation of food boxes and the setting up of the stand. Moreover, while Enzo would be at the stand until market closure time, his wife and sister would usually go home before that stage of the day, usually to prepare lunch for the whole family. If women were there to help, their work was limited to serving customers. When needed, Enzo would also do all the tasks by himself such as cleaning vegetables, serving customers - especially the most regular ones or whom he considered as the most important such as lawyers, police officers, Apulian elderlies. He also talked with them about food recipes, without that this threatened in any ways his masculinity. As also underlined by Black (2012) in relation to Paolo, a market vendor at Porta Palazzo, while, in the Italian context, food is often associated to women roles, at the market, it can represent a medium to perform masculinity and a social bond between men. Similarly to Paolo, Enzo often gathered with a group of male vendors to eat lunch all together every Saturday, sitting on an improvised table in the middle of the stands. This moment of rest and sociality revolved around the meal prepared especially for them by the local chef Rocco, selling his dishes a few stands away.



[Image 20: Enzo preparing meat at the local event and craft market *Barrierafiera*. 29/09/2019. Photo by the author]

In his study of manhood in a Cretan village, Michael Herzfeld examines the ways in which local inhabitants distinguish between "being a good man" and "being good at being a man", highlighting the importance of understanding local performative aspects of masculinity (Herzfeld 1985 in Gutmann 1997, 386). In the case of Enzo, the performance of "being good at being a man" linked to other important facets of his personhood, namely his entrepreneurial self and his social and political engagement around the marketplace. Enzo presented himself as a resilient and self-sacrificing man who, despite the deteriorating working conditions, continued to fight for keeping its activity in function and to defend his profession from multiple attacks. Such attitude is similar to the one of Greek artisans pushed at the

margins of the economy, as presented in Herzfeld (2004)[68], for whom similar expressions of resistant masculinity become essential to their struggle, when "struggle is the only thing capable of redeeming their social worth" (80).

Before connecting these elements to a discussion on social and political engagement at the market, I want to highlight the diversity of vendors' trajectories by presenting the case of another market vendor called Laura (a pseudonym). Her story is particularly telling about yet another aspect of the transformation of vendors' profession, and the local effects of and reactions to increasing market competition. In particular, the story of Laura shows how some vendors navigate economic transformations by changing professions, going in and out of the market, continuously searching for new ways to make a proper living.

Laura: self-employment and global competition

When I met her, Laura was a woman in her sixties. She sold coffee capsules, a few meters away from Enzo's stand, on the other side of the market pathway. I would often observe her while working with Enzo. Short, red-coloured hair, colourful nails, most times she sat quietly behind her stand. She would sit alone, resting on the counter, supporting her head with one hand, with an expression of tiredness on her face. Other times, someone was standing close to her, probably friends or markets' regular goers, chatting. Few clients approached her stand. From time to time, her strong personality would come out when engaging in brief exchanges with other neighbouring vendors. As it was generally done, she would shout things from her stand as a response to others' jokes or calls for opinion: "Have you seen the news on TV last night?", "what are you talking about?", "Enzo did you take the documents to the post office?".

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[68] In his book *The Body Impolitic, Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value* (2004), Herzfeld examines the everyday work of Greek artisans and their apprentices in a context of changing value of craft production. The author reflects on the cultural and moral aspects of globalisation , artisans' marginality and relation to the state, and the practice of apprenticeship, among other things.

Only several weeks after the start of my participant observation, I discovered more about Laura, as she came to the stand and asked me to change her 10 euros banknote in smaller pieces - an exchange which was quite common among neighbouring vendors. While I was taking the change from the cash desk, she asked me about my accent and showed some curiosity when learning about my Roman origins. Several conversations followed this first exchange as I also started to stop by her stand. I liked to ask her opinion on little facts happening at the market, as she was the only woman who was willing to take part in the research and agreed to be interviewed. She also asked me questions about Rome, a city which she had visited only very briefly to partake in national demonstrations. She dreamt of going back for holidays and liked to ask me for recommendations.

Like Enzo, Laura had grown up at the market, but she had never liked it that much[69]. From her childhood at the market, she remembered the cold that would freeze her fingers in winter, her hard-working father, the river of people that would fill the market's pathways. Attempting to stay away from the market life, Laura had tried a variety of jobs. She had worked as a factory worker at FIAT, being fired after ten years, as part of the company's mass dismissals of the late 1980s. She had opened a paint shop together with her husband, but they were forced to close it down due to the development of large-scale competitors. Family and friends had then pushed her to reconsider coming back at the market and she decided to invest in a fresh pasta activity, buying the license and all the material needed. However, her new activity got highly affected by the mad cow disease and, for a long time, consumers refrained from buying any product filled with meat. While her stand survived that specific phase, it proved not to be economically viable in the long term, mainly because of the fast perishability of fresh pasta products as well as her limited sales, often coming down to families' weekend purchases.

With the booming of the coffee capsules market, Laura, following again the advice of her family and friends, decided to convert her activity and start a business in this rapidly expanding sector. Based on their analysis, many people around them had a coffee machine at

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[69] Laura – a pseudonym, market vendor, interview, 26/11/2019.

home, which confirmed that there was a local demand for these items. However, when I asked Laura about her current situation, she explained that the problems were on the side of the offer:

> Amazon. Gaia [a pseudonym] is working at Amazon and without any hesitation she tells me "You can't imagine how many boxes of B. [coffee brand] we sell". So [I have] a fearsome competitor because if you go and buy on their website of course you save a bit of money. The new coffee pods and capsules chains have a higher purchasing power than you have […]. And then if you go online, on Facebook, now everybody has improvised themselves as coffee pods seller, have you noticed? […] It became a very competitive world. […] Before I started, I just used my old Moka, so I had no idea… there is an entire world that I would have never imagined, a world of blends, compositions, origins…[70]

Laura, like several other vendors encountered at Piazza Foroni, suffered from the direct consequences of increasing global market competition. In particular, she spoke of the uneven competition with large food chains and e-commerce controlled by multinationals. Contemporary anthropological literature often focuses on the consequences of the globalised food systems by looking at the local alternatives put in place through new agri-food structures such as Solidarity Purchase Groups, Community Supported Agriculture and farmers markets (e.g. Dubuisson-Quellier *et al*. 2011; Grasseni 2013). These structures develop alternatives to the global food market by re-embedding producer – consumer relations in the local context. For example, Dubuisson-Quellier *et al*. (2011) discussed three French organisations advocating for alternative food procurement through protests and educational campaigns, as part of which consumers play a significant role. Grasseni (2013) provided an ethnographic account of Italy's Solidarity Purchase Groups. While presenting these systems of

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[70] Laura, interview, 26/11/2019.

local food procurement, her book also sheds light onto the organisation of civil society in contemporary Italy, more generally[71].

However, such analyses do not consider the workers of the food sector or food retailers, such as Laura, who are not necessarily in the position or do not have the economic or cultural means to operate such reconversion and to opt out of conventional food circuits. These vendors are hit by recession and austerity but do not envision alternatives and continue their activities in a situation of dependency but also of direct and uneven competition with large-scale food retailers. Laura attempted to work in several contexts, with different products, but she surrendered to the idea that she would manage to improve her living conditions.

As written by Narotzky (2020, 1) this is a general trend in contemporary Southern Europe, where "prospects for well-being and upward social mobility, or even stable employment, have grown increasingly elusive since 2008". This was also the case of other vendors such as one of Laura's neighbours, who, in 2019, alternated his work as market retailer with occasional employment at the Amazon local distribution centre. He often complained about the stressful working rhythms and repetitive movements at the centre, but decided to continue working there as long as he would have the opportunity to do so. This "opportunity" ended very quickly: after three months his contract was not renewed and he came back to work at the market on a regular basis.

Such volatile working conditions of market vendors can be analysed in relation to notions of labour and dispossession as analysed by Sharryn Kasmir and August Carbonella in their edited volume *Blood and Fire. Toward a Global Anthropology of Labor* (2014). In their introductory piece, the two anthropologists explain how global precarity can be understood by exploring the variety and complexity of histories, struggles and social relations around labour in different contexts. The

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[71] These contributions are just two examples of the wide set of literature on alternative food networks (AFNs). For critical approaches to AFNs beyond the field of anthropology refer to, for example, Harris (2009), DeLind (2011) and Ashe (2018).

authors build on David Harvey's conceptualisation of "accumulation by dispossession" to point to the global dynamics of capitalist accumulation that, while transforming the ways of working and "making, remaking and unmaking" working classes also connect different contexts and local struggles (Carbonella and Kasmir 2014, 6). The authors also call for a holistic understanding of dispossession as:

> the varied acts of disorganisation, defeat, and enclosure that are at once economic, martial, social and cultural and that create the conditions for a new set of social relations. (Carbonella and Kasmir 2014, 7)

The case of Laura shows how the labour of small entrepreneurs is also part of these transformations: their work becomes volatile and just a partial solution that is often not sufficient to guarantee a stable income. Moreover, the public sector does not necessarily work on the improvement of their conditions – which can be analysed as part of what Carbonella and Kasmir (2014, 15) discuss as "the politics of dispossession". Global competition also affected vendors such as Laura by creating a feeling of disorientation and inability to make sense of markets' fast transformations. Such processes can be regarded in terms of increasing abstraction, interdependency and mediation, which render more complex for subjects to discern the causes and effects of the many fluxes that characterise society (e.g. Ciavolella 2013; Narotzky and Smith 2006). In their historical and ethnographic study of the Vega Baja region in Spain, Narotzky and Smith (2006) similarly point out to the growing feeling of alienation which workers experience as globalisation transforms their local production systems, class relations and culture. At Piazza Foroni, feelings of alienation and vulnerability in the face of global dynamics also informed and modulated local understanding of civic engagement and political participation, which I will discuss next.

I presented two cases of vendors of Apulian origins (as long-term local inhabitants and workers of the area) and stressed how the food market and their profession allowed them to maintain a feeling of continuity with the past, while their labour underwent several transformations and was highly impacted by economic recession and austerity. I argued that these also affected their sense of self as small entrepreneurs by

showing how this related to other aspects of their personhood – in line with scholars analysing the complexity of "small entrepreneurial identity" (Loperfido 2020, 173). Reporting on their everyday life also allowed me to discuss how issues such as global economic competition and labour precarity were experienced by workers at Piazza Foroni. While these vendors often felt discouraged, isolated and marginalised both by the global market and the state, they did not remain silent and found ways to raise their voice in local and national political debate. In the next section, I analyse some of these practices, which I discuss in terms of solidarity, engagement and contestation. I do not define these terms upfront, but rather describe how they unfold in practice and how context-specific ways of doing can enrich different denotations of these concepts. Going back to the initial questions of this chapter, I argue that conventional markets represent a space of engagement and organisation despite contemporary anti-politics turn (e.g. Ciavolella 2013) and workers' disorganisation through differentiation (Carbonella and Kasmir 2014).

Solidarity, engagement and contestation

It was a quiet day at the market and I was working together with Enzo[72]. I was at the back of the stand, waiting for costumers next to the weight-scale and cashier. Enzo was at the front, cleaning leafy vegetables - cutting off damaged or perished leaves - and rearranging them. The market was less busy than usual and I decided to ask Enzo some questions. He was used to me asking things and he seemed to appreciate our conversations, as he often took the time to explain his views in detail. I took my notebook out of my bag, which he made me keep under the stand, "far from the robbers' hands" as he said.

While starting to write, resting the notebook on a box of onions, I said aloud: "Enzo, are trade unions popular among market vendors?". He seemed to find that question worth discussing and got closer. He firstly explained to me about the two main unions, the "big ones, the ones that are related to *la politica*". The expression *la politica*, literally "politics", was used in this context with a pejorative connotation to refer to formal or informal interactions and agreements between (local)

[72] The following vignette is based on fieldnotes taken on the 18/09/2019.

politicians. “These large unions have become the ruin of workers” he stressed. In the last decade, he had witnessed the development of new unions, smaller and managed completely by workers. However, these did not gather many vendors as “foreigners [market vendors of foreign origins] are not interested”. He added: “they get state support and face lower expenses!”.

Later that day, Enzo introduced me to an old friend of his, who was shopping at the market with his wife. He used to work as market vendor but had to stop because his activity was not economically viable anymore. “Together, we fought a lot of fights!” Enzo said to me proudly, patting on his friend’s shoulder.

These exchanges illustrate how political reflections were part of the everyday conversations between Enzo, me, nearby vendors, as well as his most regular customers. These reflections revolved around the institutions, which they most often mistrusted, such as large unions and *la politica*. They also referred to past demonstrations, solidarity among vendors and collective achievements as organised workers. At the same time, they emphasised differences between one group, so called “us” and composed of Italian vendors, and the others, “them”, namely vendors of foreign origins.

The multiple facets of market solidarity

In the next paragraphs, based on the case of Enzo, I will further discuss how solidarity relations unfold at the market. I will focus on two main facets of market solidarity. Firstly, I will illustrate the characteristics and boundaries of a form of solidarity among vendors, namely their collective organisation. Secondly, I will discuss food donations as a form of vendors’ solidarity towards the local population. In both cases, solidarity reveals itself as an ambiguous dimension, as similarly underlined in anthropological literature calling for context-specific analysis of solidarity such as Rakopoulos (2014), who investigates the meaning of solidarity in a grassroots movement in the context of austerity in Greece. As highlighted by the author, ambiguity emerges not only in terms of the meaning of the concept of solidarity but also in terms of its implications on the relations between people, their visions of the state and the market (Rakopoulos 2014). At

Piazza Foroni, practices of solidarity included tensions and ambiguities that I put at the centre of my analysis.

As introduced above, one of the ways in which solidarity among market vendors became particularly apparent was through their organisation as part of small unions and collectives. Enzo and some of the other Italian vendors of the market were organised as part of a small union of vendors called *G.O.I.A. Gruppo Organizzato Imprese Autonome* (literally, organised group of self-standing enterprises) as well as the market vendors association *Associazione Commercianti Piazza Foroni*. Together with the market commission, the association served as a space for decision-making on logistics, activities and events at the market. It organised social and cultural events such as artisanal fairs, concerts, temporary art projects that would animate the market square, often in collaboration with other local organisations. It promoted these events through its Facebook page[73], which was also used to advertise products and share news articles and videos of the market. It was through these posts, often written by Enzo himself, that vendors also shared information about their collective efforts. For example, they explained about local and national demonstrations[74]. They also communicated the days of market closure, organised in solidarity with vendors participating to national strikes.

On the other hand, the vendors union G.O.I.A was born in Turin in 2010, following the protests against the Bolkestein directive, namely an EU law approved in 2006, which aimed at creating a single services market within the European Union (Goia n.d.; EUR-Lex 2006). G.O.I.A emerged from the mobilisation of vendors and other self-standing entrepreneurs wanting to act together to protect their work in such context. More precisely they protested against the fact that their concessions for the use of public ground would no longer be automatically renewed but regularly re-assigned through tenders open

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[73] See https://www.facebook.com/mercatopiazzaforoni/ (accessed 19/01/22).

[74] For example, a demonstration organised on the 18/05/2020 to protest against the strict government measures in terms of the reorganisation of open-air food markets due to COVID-19. Communication shared on 17/05/2020 on the *Mercato Piazza Foroni* Facebook page.

to stakeholders in the whole European region (Percossi 2017). The protests lasted several years and in 2018 self-standing market vendors obtained the temporary exclusion of their category from the national implementation of the Bolkestein regulation (HuffPost 2017). More recently, vendors continued to organise themselves collectively as part of G.O.I.A to request a single taxation system to simplify complex bureaucracy-related tasks, among other things.



[Image 21: The protest in Spinaceto in 2017. Photo by Massimo Percossi/ Ansa. Retrieved on 10/03/2022 at: https://www.ilpost.it/2017/03/16/ambulanti-bolkestein/]

Both G.O.I.A. and the association *Associazione Commercianti Piazza Foroni* brought together Enzo and Laura, as well as few other of their neighbouring long-term colleagues. However, these organisations did not represent all vendors working on the square. According to Enzo, most vendors of foreign origins did not participate to these groups and related activities. While I did not investigate this matter directly – and lack the material to discuss in depth why other vendors did not participate and whether they were part of other collectives or solidarity networks[75]-, such difference represents an interesting entry point to

[75] I could not find any literature on the theme of vendors' collective organisation in Turin, despite the existence of some studies on market vendors. See, for example, Blanchard (2011).

discuss the boundaries of such forms of vendors' solidarity and unpack their idea of marginality. While they considered themselves as marginalised individuals and category of workers (e.g. marginalised by economic competition, decline of small-scale retailing, lack of welfare state support, pushed away by urban transformations, to reiterate a few), they also seemed more inserted in local networks when compared to vendors that had been on the square for a shorter amount of time. Especially Enzo held a position of power due to his legitimacy as long-term market vendors, and his many contacts with the local administration, associations and police officers. To provide an example, police officers would usually interact directly with him when issues of (perceived) insecurity or petty criminality would emerge within the market area.

As hinted in the vignette above, Enzo would often also differentiate between vendors of Italian and foreign origins, arguing that the latter were privileged from the point of view of taxation and welfare state support. When discussing these differences, Enzo repeated that he was not racist and exemplified the good relations he held with his neighbouring vendors of Moroccan origins. He underlined that it was "the system" (to be understood as the public sector, its bureaucracy and regulations) that brought people to become racist, because of the disparities it generated. As previously discussed, these mechanisms of differentiation between "us" and "them" were common in this multicultural, fast changing neighbourhood and reflected fears of isolation and economic insecurity among certain groups of the Italian working-class population (see also Cingolani 2018; Campolongo and Tarditi 2019). I add that such preconceptions created circles of solidarity that were not easily permeable and which inclusiveness towards other vendors is to be questioned and remains to be investigated.

Such mechanisms of differentiations also coexisted with the other form of solidarity which I want to discuss, namely vendors participation in local charity projects such as small fundraising campaigns and food donations. Enzo liked to sponsor and participate in some social activities in the area: his stand would often be decorated with leaflets of local initiatives such as charity campaigns, positioned amidst his scarfs and posters celebrating the Torino football team.

Moreover, Enzo donated weekly some of his products to local inhabitants in need, through the food aid initiative *Fa Bene* (literally doing good). As we discussed in Mari and Vasile (2020), *Fa Bene* was a project born in Barriera di Milano in 2014, and later extended to several other neighbourhoods in Turin, with the objective of collecting unsold food surplus or food donations at the marketplace. These products were then redistributed to families in need, which, in exchange, made themselves available to volunteer within the local community. Enzo and the market association *Associazione Commercianti Piazza Foroni* had been supporting the initiative *Fa Bene* from its very beginning. For example, they had actively participated in discussions about how to develop the project as part of the social activities of the market (Corriere di Barriera 2014).

While this and other food aid projects will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, here I want to highlight how vendors' participation in such projects coexisted with possible preconceptions and discriminations towards vulnerable categories of the local population. This can be exemplified by the opinions of Enzo's sister, who helped at the stand from time to time. While she supported the fact that Enzo donated part of his products to local population in need, she also blamed vulnerable groups and immigrants, arguing that they were responsible of the decline of the area. Enzo and his sister would often end up in a discussion. He was particularly critical about some of her arguments which she borrowed from far-right politics. To me he argued that her views were related to the situation of economic hardship that she was facing despite an entire life of demanding work.

This final example shows how the notion of solidarity can incorporate quite different positions and has stopped pertaining to specific political postures. As argued by Muehlebach (2009, 497):

> "solidarity" has long ceased to pertain exclusively to the Left's narrative repertoire. […] A trope that circulates across various social and political domains, solidarity draws together disparate projects and agents while seemingly eradicating historical and ideological difference.

While Muehlebach (2009) mainly refers to master narratives (which are present at all levels of political debates including policy makers), the example of these vendors shows how the solidarity trope incorporates paradoxes and divergent political views also at a very local, neighbourhood level. I showed how local understandings of solidarity are related to collective representation of vendors and their donations to vulnerable groups. At the same time, I highlighted how such forms of solidarity can coexist with mechanisms of differentiation between long-term and short-term vendors and with narratives that blame vulnerable local inhabitants. In the next section, I focus on two themes that proved to be strongly interlinked with notions of solidarity at the market, namely engagement and contestation.

Contesting at the market: vendors engagement to shape urban renewal and the future of their category

To discuss market vendors' forms of engagement and contestation, I will discuss two examples: vendors engagement in market renewal and in demonstration for better welfare support. I discuss vendors engagement at the market following Georges Balandier (1984) theorisation of contestation as "protest within", as also discussed in the work of Tommaso India (2013) who used this framework to examine the case of FIAT factory workers at Termini Irmese (Sicily). In particular, he analysed their use of traditional food practices in the factory as a form of contestation of power. As India (2013) explained (building on Balandier), contestation is a form of protest that does not aim to fully subvert the system but to increase the possibilities for subaltern groups to negotiate their necessities to alleviate their condition of subalternity.

In this perspective, I firstly examine vendors' participation to the process of market renewal between 2011 and 2015. While I did not witness this period directly, Enzo frequently referred to it as a period of great achievements for local vendors, who had managed to protect the market from the inappropriate renewal plans initially proposed by the administration. I found this case particularly significant as clearly interlinking the topic of urban transformations to the one of civic and political participation. In fact, vendors had decided to collectively raise

their voice to have a say in the market renewal process. Moreover, while reviewing material about the renewal of the area, I realised that such active engagement of vendors was not narrated in the official documentation, such as the project's website and magazine. When mentioned, vendors' engagement was reduced to the account of the participatory tools developed by the project such as questionnaires and official working tables meant to establish a dialogue between the administration, planners and local inhabitants[76]. However, vendors were partially critical of these tools and their engagement went beyond these spaces, as reported in vendors testimonies, visual material, articles and blogposts, which I use (together with the accounts I gathered) to acknowledge and discuss their complex engagement.

The market renewal plans were part of *Urban Barriera,* a broader set of interventions for the physical, social and economic renewal of the neighbourhood Barriera di Milano. The intervention at Piazza Foroni aimed at improving the organisation of the market from the point of view of its access, security and hygienic standards. In practical terms, this involved construction works that lasted 18 months and included new pavement, improvements to the electric and water provisioning for market stands, new parking lots and renew of facilities such as benches and bike racks. Such physical interventions were complemented with an innovative marketing project aimed at increasing market's visibility through the development of shared image, colours and logo (Comune di Torino 2016). The process was facilitated through a participatory organism called the Urban Committee (*Comitato Urban*), which was created by the city administration. This committee aimed at "coordinating, informing, promoting and mediating" and followed the renewal works (Comune di Torino 2016, 4). It informed local inhabitants about ongoing transformations, collected the ideas and requests of the local population and mediated these with the needs of the administration. As part of its various activities on the ground, in 2013, this committee organised at the market the information campaign INFOroni (playing with the words info and Foroni). This consisted of a small information stand present at the market two days a week to notify market goers

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[76] See for example the accounts of participatory processes in the final report of the Urban Barriera project (Comune di Torino 2016).

about the distinct phases of the construction works as well as to collect their impressions and suggestions in relation to the future of the neighbourhood, more generally.

Despite these tools for co-planning and information, market vendors did not feel appropriately included in the decision-making process around the market renewal. Before the start of the construction works at the market, vendors were invited to discuss the plans via the market commission. According to Enzo, it was while partaking to such discussions that vendors realised that the plans being presented were already finalised in the mind of the administration. Enzo and his colleagues felt tricked by such "fake" participatory processes*:* they were being called to the table, but this felt like a pure formality, they had no power as the main decisions had already been taken. Enzo and other vendors felt that these plans were not adapted to the context of the market. As he explained, they were designed by bureaucrats who had no idea about what was going on daily at the market[77]. For example, they wanted to improve security at the market but, according to vendors, planners' initial program risked worsening it by decreasing the width of some alleys. Most importantly, vendors did not agree with the reorganisation of the stands and the new arrangement proposal. They did not want to leave their original spots nor to excessively distance the stands.

Vendors expressed their disagreement throughout the renewal process with demonstrations, active participation in local meetings on the matter, which transformed the plan into a subject of debate felt and participated by the local population. Vendors' discontent was so important to the point that it was also perceived as dangerous, as proved by the presence of anti-riot police on the square on the day of the start of the works in 2013[78]. To be heard, vendors decided to organise simulations of how the new market would look like if the original plans would go through. Only following these simulations, the local administration started taking vendors' opinion more seriously and ultimately decided to revise its plans.

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[77] Enzo, informal conversation, 04/01/22.

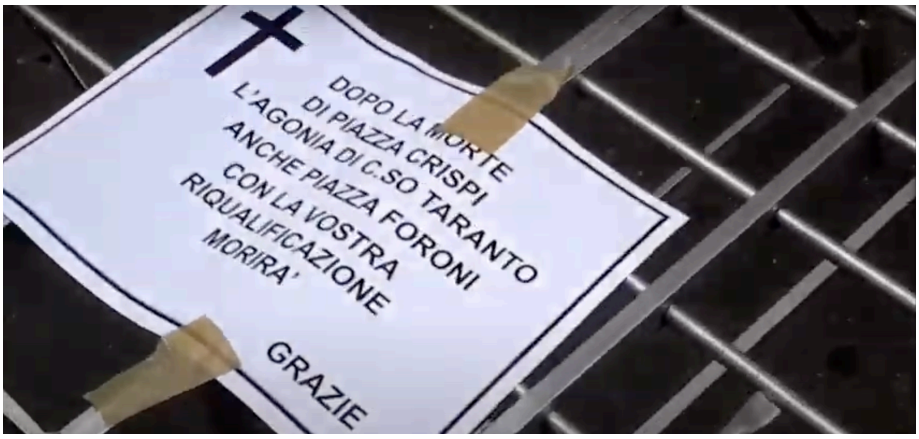
[78] Enzo, informal conversation, 04/01/22.

As shown in the video recording of the simulations[79], these days at the market also included heated discussions with local politicians as well as symbolic actions. For example, the possible future death of the market (following the renewal) was symbolised by the transportation of a coffin made of cardboard. The vendors carried it on their shoulders enacting the funeral of the market.





[79] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-47myZedBY&t=576s (accessed 10/02/22)



[Images 22a, 22b, 22c: Screenshots from the video of the protest and simulation (02/07/13) illustrating the references to the death of the market. Retrieved on 10/03/2022 at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-47myZedBY&t=576s]

As resumed in the images above, the vendors argued that the renewal plan of Piazza Foroni was going to lead to its decay, as in the case of other markets in the area - which had been transformed in the previous years. Vendors resumed their ideas in banners and messages such as the ones above. The big banner stated "Piazza Foroni must not die. Why not listening to the advice of the vendors?" and referred specifically to the lack of appropriate consultations on the reorganisation and physical transformations of the market area. Similarly, the message posted on shop shutters (last image) stated: "after the dead of Piazza Crispi [market], the agony of Corso Taranto [market], with your renewal [plans] also Piazza Foroni will die". These markets had indeed lost many of their vendors and customers, were reduced in size and frequency, as confirmed for example in a 2013 news article about the market of Corso Taranto (Coccorese 2013). Based on my observations several years later, the market of Piazza Crispi had basically ceased to exist: its impressive iron structure and roof only hosted a few stands, on occasional weekends. The daily

market of Corso Taranto attracted few vendors and customers, as also confirmed through interviews I conducted with two local vendors[80].

Vendors at Piazza Foroni were particularly afraid that the renewal would make the market lose its identity. A market without a strong identity was, according to them, destined to disappear. Therefore, they also wanted some elements to remain unchanged and evocative of its long-term history. The pressure of market vendors brought to the development of a second renewal plan which did not include any rearrangement of the stands and most vendors were able to keep their same workstation on the square. It also allowed vendors to continue their activities during the renovation and construction works by dividing these in different steps. Such outcomes encouraged the vendors: during our most recent conversations in winter 2022, they still remembered these days as a victory.

Vendors' willingness to have a say in urban transformations and their direct intervention in the market renewal are interesting to be analysed in relation to the notion of "right to the city", as theorised by Lefebvre (1968) (also introduced in part I) and Harvey (2008). Both authors stress how collective voice and power are key to reshape the processes of urbanisation, while related rights to direct participation and action are most often neglected. From this perspective, these processes at Piazza Foroni reveal the details and tensions of such mechanisms – and maybe that is why they also tend to be forgotten. They speak of different meanings associated to participation, the mainstream one often being just a formal narration or, as explained by Enzo, a word to be used to create a space for discussion and information, while the actual decisions have already been taken. With their contestation, these vendors challenged such "participatory mechanisms", finding their own ways (such as the simulations) to reshape urban renewal plans.

During my fieldwork, I could observe also more recent example of collective engagement and contestation at the market. Most of them related to concerns and demands for the future of vendors' profession. More specifically, vendors contested the way in which their profession

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[80] Rachid, market vendor in Corso Taranto, interview, 16/12/2019. Monica – a pseudonym, market vendor in Corso Taranto, interview, 16/12/2019.

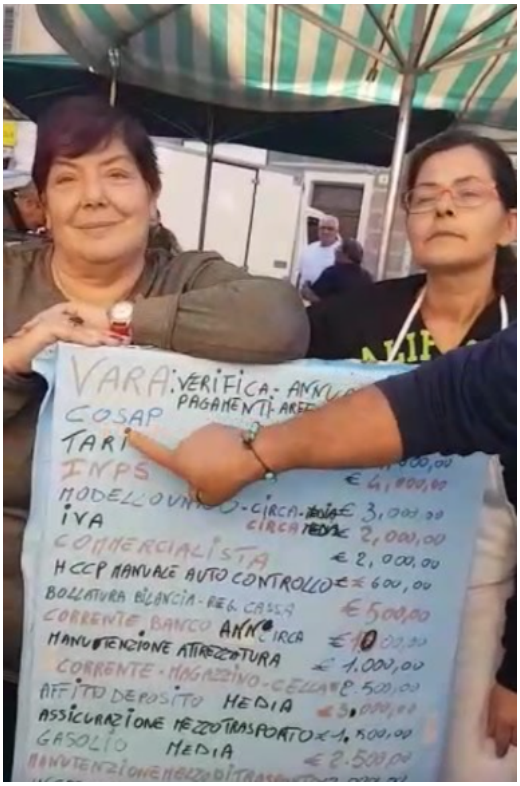
was negatively depicted in public discourse, often associated to fraud and tax evasion. They also complained about the lack of state support, high taxation and increasing bureaucratisation of their labour. They participated to local and national demonstrations - for which they also travelled to Rome. Such engagement is to be contextualised as part of a tradition, as mentioned by Enzo in the quotes reported at the start of this section, for example when he said: "we fought a lot of fights". Enzo often referred to protest movements such as the mobilisation of the *Forconi* (pitchforks) in 2012 (Zunino 2013). This series of protest consisted in road and rail blockades and urban demonstrations and uprisings which aim was summarised in the slogan "let's block Italy" (*fermiamo l'Italia*). These protests were initially organised by farmers and truck drivers, but soon extended to small-scale entrepreneurs, unemployed and students. The main critiques put forward by the *Forconi* related to the consequences of global competition and austerity, which had pushed these workers into difficult economic conditions (Sperandio 2013). They also requested the possibility for ordinary people to be involved more directly in political decision-making processes. While the *Forconi* has generally been regarded as a right-wing and populist movement, according to Enzo, it was quite heterogeneous.

At the time of the fieldwork, interestingly, this same group of vendors also used the market as a space of contestation. They developed video messages by filming themselves during working hours and posting these images on social media – usually on Facebook. In October 2019, one of their videos, ironically entitled "greetings from the tax evaders" (*un saluto dagli evasori*) reached more than 3100 likes 650000 views[81]. The video showed the group of vendors standing in front of a stand, sheltering from the rain. The vendors called themselves sarcastically tax evaders to respond to recent public statements of a politician who had made blunt generalizations about vendors' tendency to evade taxation. Sarcastically, they thank the government for worsening their reputation and made applauses. Enzo talked loudly and heatedly, explaining that vendors worked hard, every day, despite

[81] https://www.facebook.com/vincenzo.torraco.5/videos/195624471457614/ (accessed 10/03/2022).

the terrible weather conditions, and arguing that it would not be the case if they were rich.

Based on the success of their message, a few days later, the same group developed a follow-up video aimed at creating awareness about the amount of bureaucracy they dealt with. They presented a board with a lengthy list with the names and amounts of their disparate expenses, including various taxes and markets costs. They aimed at explaining about their profession and its challenges, while inviting people to think beyond prejudices.



[Image 23: Enzo pointing to the different fixed costs faced by market vendors. 26/10/2019. Screenshot retrieved on 23/02/2022 at: https://www.facebook.com/vincenzo.torraco.5/videos/196453018041426/]

I take these examples to highlight how markets can represent a space of civic and political engagement, and should be analysed as part of contemporary multiplication of the "lieux du politique" (places of politics) and the reconfiguration of political participation and repertoires of action (Abélès 1992). Abelès (1992) described how political anthropology increasingly shifted its focus to political processes and power relations in Western societies, where the political landscape is transforming due to the crisis of legitimacy of institutional politics. The author calls for anthropologists to develop a new outlook on every day political action and "its associated symbolic and rituals", linked to both the affirmation of power and its contestation (Abelès 1992, 17). As explained by Melucci (1991), among others, in the last decades, different forms of non-institutional places of politics emerged and the action field of grassroots organisations diversified - despite the neoliberal drive towards the individualisation of society.

Popular movements, together with less structured types of action (such as occasional participation in campaigns, public events or demonstrations), can be regarded as ways in which politics emerge in contemporary subjects' everyday life, offering possibilities for the practice of political and civic participation, while bringing new questions with regards to their contemporary definition and emancipatory potential (e.g. Ciavolella and Wittersheim, 2016; Van Deth, 2014). The organisation and forms of contestation of the vendors of Piazza Foroni forces us to enlarge conceptualisation of market space, beyond its function as site of economic and cultural exchange (e.g. Black 2012) and multicultural relations (e.g. Semi 2009). Despite their limitations, such as the possible exclusionary features in the definition of the group of vendors, contestation and political participation is forwarded at the market to denounce undemocratic urban transformations and precarious working conditions.

From this perspective, the case of Piazza Foroni illustrates how conventional food markets can be site of political engagement as much as alternative food networks. The engagement of these vendors however revolves around different themes: while they do not engage in critical consumerism or short food supply chains, they discuss about labour precarity, welfare and urban transformations. While one might

disagree with vendors' political opinions or find some of these issues to be prioritised over others, this case reveals how these themes are embedded in class dimensions. The concerns of vendors at Piazza Foroni are an expression of what is happening to the people most impacted by austerity, economic recession and unequal urban transformations, representing attempts of ordinary people to have a say.

To conclude: in this chapter, I have discussed the case of Piazza Foroni market building on my experience side by side with some of its vendors. I examined the market from the perspective of its rooted and dynamic cultural identity - also important to gain a deeper understanding of the whole area of Barriera di Milano (which I will return to in the next chapters as well). I have discussed the context-specific meanings and consequences of austerity and economic recession through the analysis of the personal trajectories of two vendors. Their paths, in and outside the market, depict the possible intersections between changing labour, sense of alienation and loss of sense of self (for example, in relation to dominant models of masculinity). Finally, I discussed the market as a site of ambiguous solidarity, political engagement and contestation. In the next chapter, I continue to discuss the case of food markets but from the perspective of a different set of market goers. I enlarge my discussion on markets, urban transformations and labour, by looking at how a morality of deservingness is constructed through the gifting of unsold food and precarious labour at the marketplace.

Chapter V. Collecting food surplus. Asylum seekers and the construction of deservingness

While becoming more familiar with various marketplaces, I also started to get to know better many people aside of vendors who found an occupation at the market, such as people in charge of installing the stalls, cleaning the market square or engaging in the recuperation of food surplus and leftovers. This last activity, usually called food gleaning, is an old practice consisting of individuals or small collectives recuperating unsold food (e.g. damaged, semi-perished) that would otherwise be wasted for their own consumption (e.g. Varda 2000). During my fieldwork, while such gleaners (ranging from elderly women to grassroots initiatives such as *Food Not Bombs*) were still part of the markets' life, a new form of gleaning flourished prominently, namely institutionalised initiatives for the collection and redistribution of food surplus. These were promoted by non-profit organisations - thanks to the endorsement of the municipality and the financial contribution of the private sector - in several food markets around the city. Their activities mainly revolved around the collection of food surplus, such as overripe food which vendors could not sell anymore, as well as its free redistribution to people in vulnerable socio-economic conditions.

Such initiatives arose in parallel to the activities of food banks, aiming to tackle at once the issue of food waste, food insecurity and social exclusion. These were extensively analysed in literature on food poverty and welfare transformation in Italy (see for example Maino *et al*. 2016) as well as in Turin-centred scholarly works. Toldo (2017), Vietti (2018) and Pettenati *et al*. (2019) mapped these novel practices and pointed to their organisational features. During my fieldwork, I followed three of such initiatives which had different approaches to food surplus collection and redistribution in terms of whom they worked with and how. Some initiatives, such as *Fa Bene* (introduced in the previous chapter), involved people in vulnerable socio-economic conditions in the collection at markets and later food was delivered to specific beneficiaries. Other initiatives were organized with workers and volunteers who collected the food surplus and then redistributed it *in loco* to whoever passed by and wanted food, such as in the case of

the recollection organised by the association Eco dalle Città in several markets - including Porta Palazzo, the largest open-air food market in Europe. This association was born as part of the homonymous editorial board and news website on the urban environment and ecology, and organised awareness raising campaigns around these themes since 2009. In 2016, Eco dalle Città (from now on EdC) had also started several projects to collect and redistribute food surplus while supporting waste management at markets. EdC became famous for involving refugees and asylum seekers in their activities.

While these projects were publicly lauded by the local administration and media, little was said about the subjects (such as workers, volunteers and recipients) involved in the activities. Nor it was assessed how their participation shaped the way in which they understood themselves or in which they were framed. In this chapter, I focus on these subjects and more specifically on the asylum seekers and refugees (which I will also refer to as newcomers) at the forefront of the EdC projects. I expand on the ways in which they navigated the multicultural context of the markets, their role, precarious working conditions and their different relations with the EdC manager and Italian workers. I focus on the perspectives of the newcomers, but consequently also the ones of Italian workers, market goers and food recipients that they interacted with. By doing so, I discuss everyday intercultural interactions, labour conditions, power relations as well as the image-making of morally good and appropriate subjects and spaces. I argue that such initiatives around food surplus recollection are tightly interlinked with the transformation of the Italian welfare, the idea of deservingness, the reproduction of racial and social disparities and urban renewal in the context of gentrifying areas of the city. In continuity with the previous chapter, I use the perspectives of asylum seekers and refugees to contribute to new analyses of the marketplace, aiming to bring back spatial, social and labour dynamics into the equation.

To examine this case I bring together and dialogue with different anthropological sets of literature, including works on migrants, race and class at food markets (Black 2012; Semi 2009; Alkon 2012); asylum seekers and their reception in the Italian context and beyond (Boccagni and Riccio 2014; Pinelli and Ciabarri 2017; van der Veer

2020); and migrants' (and marginal groups) inclusion in processes of moral production of deserving citizen-subjects (Ong et al. 1996; Ong 2003). In particular, the work of Aihwa Ong (2003) inspired my reflections around the notion of deservingness[82]. This author analysed the life of Cambodian refugees in America and the ways in which their access to welfare and citizenship was tightly interlinked with issues of race, class, labour and to the notion of deservingness. As explained by Ong (2003) – and later also by other scholars such as de Koning, Jaffe, and Koster (2015) in the context of the Netherlands - these processes of subject-making and related "citizenship agendas" are produced beyond the nation state, for example by actors such as cultural associations, private enterprises and non-profit organisations. I build on Ong's work to critically analyse how projects such as the EdC ones play a role in the "transformation of the newcomers" into "normalized" and deserving citizens (Ong 2003, 80).

My analysis of EdC adds to this literature from mainly three angles. Firstly, I show how the management and redistribution of food surplus can be an important mediator of processes of subject-making. Extending what written by Fredericks (2012) in relation to participatory trash management in Dakar, garbage and cleaning reveal specific configurations of moral projects. These are particularly powerful to analyse "because trash work is deeply implicated in the ordering of people as well as spaces" (Fredericks 2012, 136). My second point is that processes of subject-making and urban renewal are interlinked. In continuity with the other examples gathered in this dissertation, the analysis of EdC and their collaborations at the marketplace shows how urban renewal and gentrification are not only a matter of remaking the urban space and its economic activities but also of transforming its social practices. The progressive institutionalisation of gleaning which I discuss here is an example in this sense. Thirdly, an investigation of newcomers' perspectives sheds light onto more general trends that characterise the transformation of the Italian welfare system, and allows to extend the discussion around the idea of "deserving citizens" (Ong 2003) beyond their case. I show how their situation and the one of precarious Italian workers and food

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[82] Currently, several anthropologists are focusing again on the theme of deservigness, see for example Tošić and Streinzer (2022).

recipients share common features as they all must prove their deservingness in a multitude of ways, in a context of uncertainty. Extending what Beneduce and Taliani (2013) argued in relation to the bureaucratic systems regulating the reception of newcomers, such initiatives represent "a unique laboratory to study the transformations of the neoliberal state and its disciplining of alterity" (232, translation is my own).

Next, in the first section of the chapter, I look at the everyday dynamics that asylum seekers and refugees working for EdC are part of. Building on their experiences, I reflect on some of the socio-cultural interactions that characterise diverse and low-income neighbourhoods such as Aurora and Barriera di Milano at the intersection between unemployment, austerity and the promises and risks of urban renewal. In the second section, I delve into the organisation of EdC initiatives: I report on the workers and volunteers' different perspectives on labour, and on the linkages and power relations between asylum seekers, the project manager and Italian workers. I explain why these relations reflect complex dynamics as part of which the idea of deservingness coexists with structural racial disparities and precarious working conditions. In this chapter, while I kept the real name of the association, initiatives and places, I have use pseudonyms for all EdC workers and volunteers.

Hello brother

Collecting food surplus at Via Porpora

When I arrived at the market of Via Porpora - another daily open-air food market situated in Barriera di Milano – Charles and Kevin, respectively an intern and a volunteer of the association EdC, both asylum seekers originally from sub-Saharan Africa, were waiting for me[83]. On that day, they oversaw the EdC food surplus collection and redistribution for that market. As introduced above, EdC promoted initiatives aimed at reducing food waste and promoting a more

[83] This vignette incorporates insights gained during different days of participant observation at the market of Via Porpora in autumn 2019.

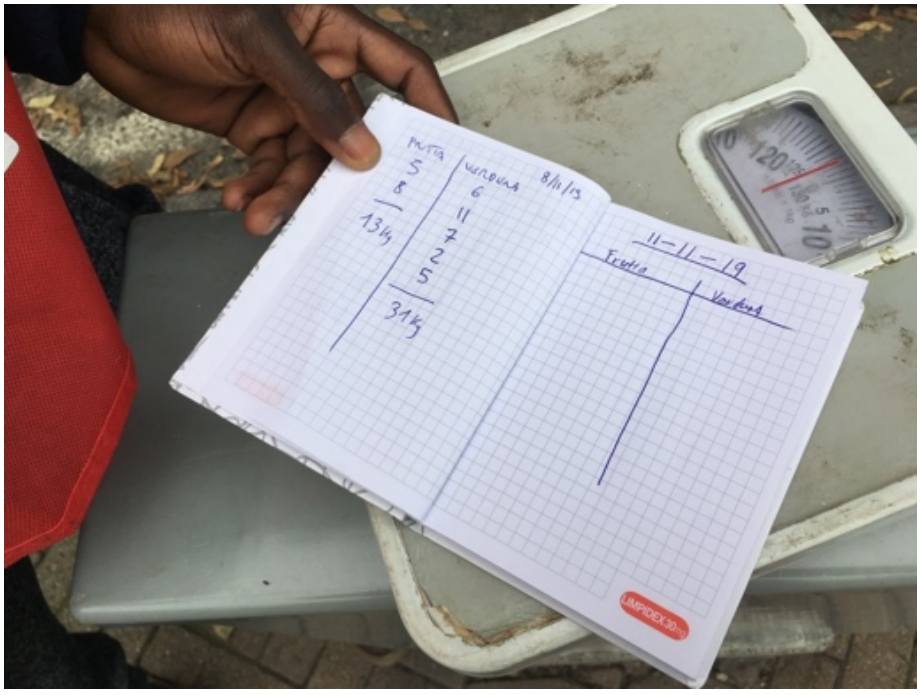
sustainable system of waste collection at markets. In 2019 the project saved and redistributed more than 73.000 kilos of food. It also helped to guarantee that 73% of the waste produced at markets where it operated was managed properly, namely separated into the organic, plastic and paper bins. To do this, the association receives the economic support of private foundations (above all *Compagnia di San Paolo*) and enterprises including, *Amiat Gruppo Iren* and *Novamont* (involved in urban waste management as contracting firms), and, to a minor extent, the sponsorship of the municipality.

Charles and Kevin stood at the EdC meeting point not far from the first stands of the market, on the left sidewalk, next to a waste collection point. At that time, they were already quite used to my presence. They welcomed me in a friendly manner and handed me one of the project's red vests, which they also tuck above their jackets. We were ready to start the market tour: we stopped in front of every stand, said hi to the vendors and asked if they had some products that they were willing to give away. Charles and Kevin were smiling and mild, alternating a general "*ciao*!" to the expression "hello brother!" (*ciao fratello!)*. The vendors were used to the presence and requests of these "youngsters of colour" (*ragazzi di colore*), as one of the vendors called them, while turning to his colleague and asking him to search for food leftovers in their van. The interactions were brief as vendors in most cases were also busy serving their clients. Several of them reacted in an open manner and gave us a box – which they had already prepared or made on the spot - of very ripe fruits and vegetables, which they were unable to sell. Some told us to pass by again later, others just said "no nothing, sorry!" and few did not even look at or answered to us. As Charles and Kevin were busy taking some boxes from the rear of a stand, a market goer, an Italian elderly lady, asked me about the project. I explained that we were gathering unsold food to redistribute it to people for free and she complimented us, emphasizing that so many people needed such support in the area. She underlined with emphasis that many of them were Italians and elderlies.

As we walked back, loaded with boxes in our arms, around ten people were already waiting for us, standing at the meeting point. We said hi, while putting the boxes on the floor. Charles took the weighing scale out of his bike's basket: we weighted the food and, as instructed by the

project managers, he wrote down on a small notebook the number of fruits and vegetables collected on that day. At the same time, Kevin selected the food, removing the most spoiled products by throwing them into the brown container for organic waste just next to us. Then, Charles asked me to stay there, surveying the food and the weighing scale, while they went back to the market for another round.

As I stood there, some people had started to form a circle around the boxes, starting to glimpse at what was there. I knew some of them, while others I saw for the first time. Carla, a caretaker (*badante*) originally from Romania, came there every day of the food collection. She usually liked to teach me Romanian words. She picked up an apple, cleaned it with her knife, cut it and offered pieces to her friends – who worked in the area as caretakers and housekeepers – Mario and me. Mario was also present regularly to the food distribution. He liked to make jokes, that he said helped him not to think about his economic situation. As he saw Charles and Kevin come back with more food, he joked aloud: "the bogeyman is coming!" ("*sta arrivando l'uomo nero!*"). In Italian, "*l'uomo nero*" also means the black man. Like the bogeyman, it can be mentioned to children as a demon that comes at night and take them away if they do not behave appropriately by closing their eyes and falling asleep. Charles laughed with him, amused or maybe just reacting politely. At 13h sharp, Charles announced "you can help yourself!" and people immediately started selecting and filling their bags as we stood there, on the side.


11-11-19
LIMPIDEX3D





[Images 24a, 24b, 24c. Photos taken at Via Porpora on November 11 and 27 2019. Charles taking notes. Carla cleaning an apple. The recollected food. Photos by the author.]

In the following paragraphs, I build on these observations to analyse markets as arenas of intercultural relations navigated by the newcomers that were part of EdC - mainly asylum seekers and refugees originally from Sub-Saharan Africa. Transactions around food represented, also in this context, privileged moments to explore the fine lines between social inclusion and exclusion as well as new understandings of citizenship which developed in post-industrial, working-class and diverse neighbourhoods such as Aurora and Barriera di Milano.

Markets and multiculturalism in Turin

As introduced in the previous chapter, Turin was characterised by several waves of immigration and hosts a diverse population, especially in Aurora, Barriera di Milano and other northern neighbourhoods of the city (Comune di Torino 2020). These areas host a population composed of several generations of immigrants with multiple regional and ethnic origins. This gives a context-specific meaning to the notion of multiculturalism, which needs to be understood here as a multi-layered set of relations, frictions and disparities, including inter-generational and intra-group dynamics[84]. Among the anthropologists writing about Turin, Cingolani (2016) examined the coexistence between populations of different origins in these areas and explained why this is not always easy. For example, he shows how this is intertwined with generational conflicts and inhabitants' socio-economic challenges. The specificities of the case of Turin were also explored by Sacchi and Viazzo (2003) who gathered a series of ethnographic studies on migration in Turin conducted between 1996 and 2002 pointing to the relations to past immigration waves from Southern Italy and the complex experiences and representations within more recent immigration phenomena. Immigration in Turin, related bureaucracy, reception practices and popular responses should also be contextualised as part of the relatively recent history of immigration in Italy. While I do not have the space to expand on such historical account, Jacqueline Andall provided a good overview of the distinct stages of the Italian migratory model. This was characterised by a late institutional response to the migratory phenomenon and the significant role of the voluntary sector as "principal regulator of immigration" until the 1980s (Andall 2000, 49).

As part of the ethnographic studies exploring immigration from a "space and people focused" perspective (Cingolani 2016, 123), several anthropology researchers have discussed open-air food markets in Turin as central (and complex) economic, social and cultural arenas, where many intercultural relations take place (see for example Basile

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[84] In relation to intra-group dynamics, see also Capello (2008) on Moroccan immigrants in Turin.

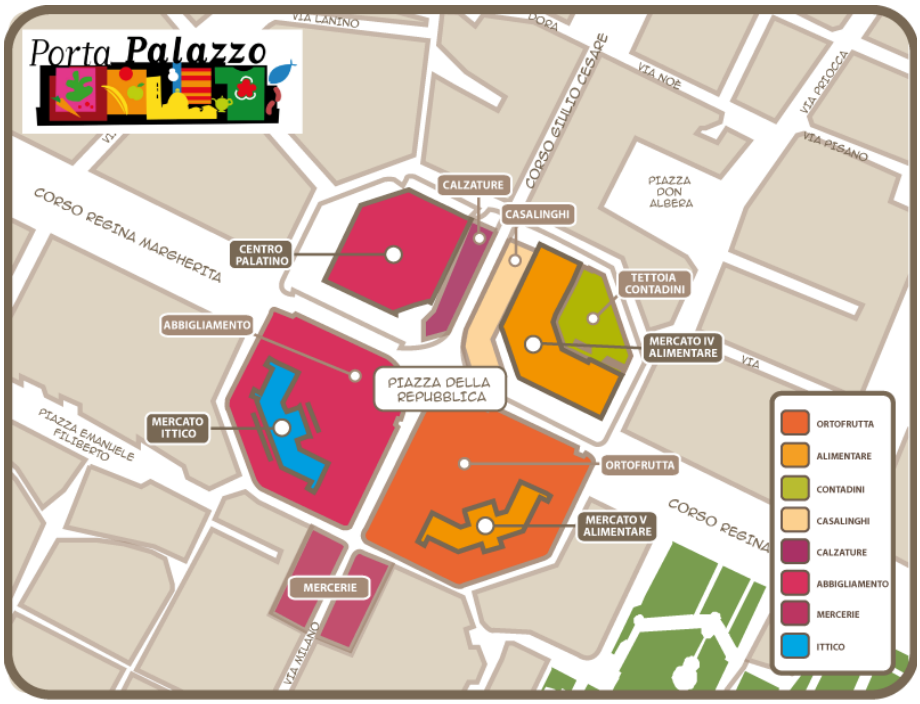
2003; Semi 2009; Black 2012; Vietti 2018). As pointed out by these scholars, markets play a key role in the path of many migrants as they often represent spaces where it is possible to:

> meet compatriots, cultivating in this way linkages with the country of origins, but also to establish interactions with the context of settlement, with its products, with the people who live in the same neighbourhood, with the vendors, with the local language and its everyday practices. (Vietti 2018, 117, translation is my own)

This is surely true for the markets of Porta Palazzo and Via Porpora, both important centres of the food collection and redistribution promoted by EdC. The market of Via Porpora exists since the 1970s. It is a daily (07h-14h) open air market for food but also clothes and accessories situated in the northern part of the neighbourhood Barriera di Milano. At the time of the fieldwork, it was considered as a relatively small market, of about 60 stands, popular among local residents – usually low-income elderly people and immigrant families. It gathered food retailers and few farmers' stands, which offered fresh fruits and vegetables as well as meat, fish, eggs, bread and sweets.

The market of Porta Palazzo is situated in the square *Piazza della Repubblica*, at the edge between the city centre and the working-class (but also gentrifying) neighbourhood Aurora. It is the largest and most iconic market of the city, with a long history which started in 1835 (Balocco 2014). In the last decades, various sections of the markets developed on different parts of the square. As represented on the map below, one section is dedicated to fruits and vegetables retailers, while another one to clothes, textiles and accessories stands. Its covered sectors host fish, meat, dairy and bread stalls as well as a separate farmers' market. Porta Palazzo is a multicultural space, a crossroad between various cultural traditions and commercial activities (including the adjacent historical flea market *Balôn*). Since 1996, the area has been subject to various urban renewal interventions for the physical improvement and socio-economic development of the area

promoted by the municipality and non-profit organisations[85]. As I will further discuss, at the time of the fieldwork, the area was at the centre of a series of transformations and increasingly targeted by gentrifying actors such as quality food retailers and the international hospitality industry.



[Image 25. Map of Porta Palazzo market. Retrieved on 09/12/2021 at *Scopri Porta Palazzo* website: https://scopriportapalazzoaurora.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/mappa-mercato-pp.png]

Giovanni Semi explored the connection between multicultural relations, spatial and commercial transformations at the market of Porta Palazzo building on ethnographic research conducted in the early 2000s (Semi 2009). He depicted a series of complex intercultural interactions between Italian vendors and those of foreign origins as

[85] See for example the urban renewal project Progetto Porta Palazzo (Comune di Torino n.d. b).

well as between informal and official vendors of foreign origins. Such relations took the form, for example, of open conflicts and jokes, which the author found particularly telling of the social relations produced in these spaces (Semi 2009, 645). Rachel Black also described the market of Porta Palazzo as a place of encounter for immigrants and "not always happy multicultural moments" (Black 2012, 10). While food is discussed as a "steppingstone in cohabitation" (Black 2012, 43), the visibility of immigrants at Porta Palazzo were (and still are) integral part of a narration of public insecurity in the area depicting it as potentially dangerous and a site of petty criminality (137). The work of asylum seekers and refugees as part of the EdC initiative is therefore to be contextualised as part of such complex arena. As I will further discuss, their presence gave continuity to intercultural conflicts at the marketplace. At the same time, their work and its representation were used to talk about the progressive renewal of the area and to put forward, also in this context, the figure of the "good immigrant".

Deserving and undeserving alterity

The figure of Mario (one of the above-mentioned food beneficiaries) is useful to start introducing how similar dynamics to the ones depicted by Semi (2009) occurred in the everyday interactions surrounding EdC food surplus redistribution. At Via Porpora, Mario's main way of interacting with others was by making jokes, often related to an imaginary past as well as a present full of difficulties. Through his jokes, he revealed how he "ended up here, doing this [gleaning], with poor people" and attributed most of the fault to "*la politica*"[86]. With a smile on his face, pointing out to Charles he once explained: "then they arrive and they [politicians] give them 600 euros like nothing, as soon as they arrive!". The idea that the local administration tends to give more economic support to immigrants than to Italians was quite widespread in multicultural low-income areas of the city. This was also pointed out by Bertuzzi, Caciagli, and Caruso (2019, 113) based on interviews with inhabitants of the suburbs of four Italian cities (Milan, Florence, Rome and Cosenza). As written by Pietro

[86] Fieldnotes, 27/11/2020. See the previous chapter for a description of local understandings of "*la politica*".

Cingolani (2018) in relation to the neighbourhood of Barriera di Milano, labels and reciprocal definitions are used to differentiate between Italians and foreigners, as well as between different migrants, and reflect the competition over resources and the marginality experienced by the population in the area. As analysed by the scholar:

> The foreigner is also the illegitimate user of welfare: an "us" - impoverished and isolated Italians - is juxtaposed to "them" - immigrants who are very solidarious, united and well organized, sharing information to misuse public assistance but also the help provided by charity and voluntary associations." (Cingolani 2018, 97, translation is my own)

As exemplified by the interactions at Via Porpora, such preconceptions could result in everyday episodes of distrust, more or less aggressive racial discrimination and layered marginalisation, as part of which different generations of migrants and socio-economic factors were at play. The approach of Mario was also telling of the limited extent to which the role of newcomers as free food distributors helped dismantling negative preconceptions about the presence of migrants among Italian working class and underclass population. Paradoxically, this theme was presented to me as one of the central goals of EdC, namely the idea that their activities could help increasing tolerance in these areas and deconstruct racist preconceptions. As explained by one of the Italian workers of the association:

> The project was born in a period in which the language of politicians and media was starting to change, and Salvini was in his run for power. So, it was good for us to show this aspect: "mind that there are starving people in Italy and they are Italians and the person who is collecting food for them, who is helping them to make it to the end of the week, of the month, is

> the migrant that you have transformed into the new Austrian, the new enemy…".[87]

In the view of this worker, through the engagement of migrants as food collector and redistributors, EdC developed a new narrative, which represented an alternative to a growing political discourse that tended to depict them as enemies and exclude them. This interviewee hinted to a cultural shift that could happen via interactions around food, and through newcomers' role and moral stand as food givers.

Building on Ong (2003)'s terminology, I argue that the organisation aimed to construct the "ethical figure" of the refugee, intertwining the idea of race, performance and deservingness of social recognition. In fact, the visibility of EdC asylum seekers as different, working and deserving subjects was also emphasised through the use of red vests, which they were asked to wear at all times. The red vests also increased the visibility of the project itself, which, as I will further explain, built on the use of the image of asylum seekers and their black bodies. It is interesting to note that the theme of migration, race and discrimination is also discussed in some literature on Alternative Food Networks but often from a different perspective, namely examining the (lack) of involvement of people of colour and migrants in these initiatives (e.g. Guthman 2008; Mares 2014). The practice and narrative of EdC raises yet another set of questions as it requires to explore what happens when these novel food (and waste management) practices do engage migrants in their activities and build their communication around such participation. What does it entail in terms of everyday practices and interactions? What does it reveal about representations of a deserving alterity? How does it connect to the transformations of the area? And what does it translate into in terms of the association's internal dynamics and organisation of labour?

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[87] EdC worker, interview, 10/12/2019. Original quote: "*il progetto nasce in un momento in cui iniziava a cambiare il linguaggio politico e all'interno dei mezzi di comunicazione c'era la cavalcata di Salvini verso il potere. Quindi a noi faceva gioco far notare questo aspetto qua: attenzione, ci sono morti di fame in Italia che sono italiani e qua chi gli sta recuperando il cibo, chi lo sta portando alla fine della settimana, a fine mese, è il migrante stronzo che tu hai fatto diventare il nuovo austriaco, il nuovo nemico...*".

Gentrification and the redefinition of food gleaning

Asylum seekers and refugees at EdC experienced subjective, complex and changing relations with food recipients. These included a variety of people ranging from elderly women of various backgrounds to young students. While I refer to them as food recipients or beneficiaries, EdC workers called them "*recuperatori*", a term which could be translated as gleaners. I decided not to use this word in the text as it could lead to some confusions in relation to who did what. However, such terminology shows how EdC reframed the figure of the gleaner as a rather passive subject, namely a person queuing, waiting for and taking home the food surplus collected by workers and volunteers. Such vision of gleaning contrasts with the image of gleaners reported in recent literature on this matter, which depicts them as active agents, often young and motivated by anti-capitalist values - see for example De Musso (2010) on the gleaning practices of university students in Bologna.

In Turin, in addition to the type of interactions depicted earlier - as well as more frequent anonymous exchanges -, some of the long-term food beneficiaries and EdC asylum seekers knew each other well. They called each other by their name and seemed to care about each other. In some cases, the beneficiaries brought something to give to the EdC workers such as clothes and shoes[88]. Over time, EdC also reached out to new people, aiming at normalising the collection and redistribution of food surplus. It did so by enhancing the visibility of food surplus, for example, through the organisation of theatre performances on the issue of food waste at the Porta Palazzo market square[89]. The number of food recipients also significantly increased

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[88] I did not witness such exchanges myself but was told about it by a research participant (EdC worker, interview, 03/12/2019).

[89] Performances by Vicente Cabrera, entitled "The Route of Food". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bjCsbtUS6g (accessed 29/10/2021). This performance later evolved into a play called "Raymi" directed by Vicente Cabrera, which narrates the experience of an asylum seeker involved in the recollection of food surplus. More information available on the website of the Rescue! theater project (Progetto Rescue 2023).

after the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic and related socio-economic crisis, namely up to 60 and 25 people per day, respectively at the market of Porta Palazzo and Via Porpora[90]. During the pandemic, EdC adapted to the new context by increasing its food surplus redistribution, for example by collecting also at the wholesale market, refurnishing non-profit organisations which, in turn, distributed food aid packages, and expanding its activities to new markets. EdC also enhanced its collaboration with new food actors in the area of Porta Palazzo such as the food hall *Mercato Centrale* (literally central market). This collaboration translated into new interactions, increasing visibility and number of beneficiaries but also symbolised broader changes in the area.

In particular, in September 2020, EdC extended its distribution points to a space within the Mercato Centrale hall (which they called Circular Stand - *Banco Circolare*). They also started to collaborate with its internationally renowned chef Scabin, who prepared a soup with the ingredients recollected at Porta Palazzo. They created an event of out this collaboration which consisted in a free meal distribution outside of the hall, which I had already witnessed in February 2020, on the national day against food waste (see also Rasero 2020). The *Mercato Centrale*, a quality food hall established in several Italian cities, opened in Turin in April 2019 and can be regarded as an emblem of urban transformations as well as new approaches to food in the area. Selling quality and expensive food products, organising events such as food related debates and *aperitivi* around local products were among the elements which made it contrast with the popular and accessible open-air food market across the street[91].

Few local vendors thought that the new food hall could attract more well-off consumers to the area and indirectly benefit their activities[92]. At the same time, several research participants considered it as a symbol of the gentrification processes occurring in the area. These

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[90] Fieldnotes, 01/06/2020.

[91] To see more of their activities, visit: https://www.mercatocentrale.com/turin/info/ (accessed 29/10/2021)

[92] Clothing retailer at Porta Palazzo, interview, 03/02/2020.

processes involved changing economic activities and new safety and hygienic standards aimed at pushing away the poorest inhabitants. Research participants' diverse and sometimes opposed outlooks on this issue reflected various expectations and disillusions around urban renewal in the area. Local activists recurrently referred to it in terms of gentrification and they spoke aloud its exclusionary features on several occasions. For example, they organised a protest on the day of the official opening of the *Mercato Centrale* during which they used slogans such as "menu of the day: rich binges and kicks to the poor" ("*menu del giorno: ricche abbuffate, ai poveri scarpate"*) (see also Rocci 2019).

As critically analysed by Bourlessas, Cenere, and Vanolo (2021) and Vanolo (2021), the hall is to be regarded as part of a broader process of what the authors called food-oriented "retail gentrification" and which should be contextualised as part of Turin's recent attempts to modernise its international image. The authors argue that such processes of "foodification" produce a displacement atmosphere in the area, through specific "discourse, materialities and practices" (Bourlessas, Cenere and Vanolo 2021, 10). These include quality food discourses, its homogenised aestheticization (see also Parasecoli and Halawa 2021) and related experiences for connoisseurs, which should also be understood as mechanisms of class and cultural distinction. Such distinction and displacement processes fit into broader spatial dynamics which revolve around the fact that the gentrifying areas of the city centre are expanding northwards (Bourlessas, Cenere and Vanolo 2021).

I find important to stress that such gentrification processes also included episodes of resistance, among which loud-spoken ones such as in the event mentioned above. Resistance should also be understood as the continuation of local inhabitants' everyday life and habits. For example, it was not rare to see the terrace of the Mercato Centrale busy with market goers and vendors, who used the space without necessarily consuming more than a coffee. Moreover, building on the example of the collaboration between the Mercato Centrale and EdC, I want to underline how gentrification in the area also happened in dialogue with existing food practices such as gleaning. In turn, gleaning became increasingly institutionalised, normalised and

incorporated into the discourses of a variety of local actors ranging from the municipality to private food businesses. As also discussed by Semi (2015), gentrification processes can allow for an initial coexistence of what is regarded as the new and the old, the fashionable and the outdated. Food is particularly interesting to study in this perspective as it allows for the materiality to stay the same, while its surrounding agents and meanings are changing.

In the literature such properties of food are discussed in numerous ways. Grasseni et al. (2014), among others, studied processes of "reinvention" of certain food practices and associated meanings, relations and ethics. Within the *Food Citizens?* research project, this was also discussed by PhD candidates Vincent Walstra and Ola Gracjasz around the development of the quality food hall Fenix Food Factory in gentrifying Rotterdam South (The Netherlands) and the recent renewal of the *Polanki* (now called *Rynek w Oliwie*) market in the working-class neighbourhood Oliwa in Gdansk (Poland), respectively. Adding to the examples of these scholars, I argue that, through the collaboration between Mercato Centrale and EdC, the practice of gleaning at Porta Palazzo was reinvented. While its reach and visibility were extended, it also became incorporated into new fashionable and gentrifying spaces.

This case is interesting to point to the tension between the presence of what becomes generally framed as ethically "good food" (whether it is referred to quality products or food surplus) and its impact in terms of urban transformations. At Porta Palazzo, the advancement of "good food" also involved the normalisation of certain marginal practices. This created a fertile ground for the food hall (and potentially also other gentrifying agents) to play a role and establish itself in the local urban dynamics. By partaking to projects such as the free soup, it created its image of inclusivity and became functional to the visibility (thus economic survival) of EdC initiatives – as exemplified by the newspaper article below. The article firstly describes the latest offers available at the food hall and comments positively on the new partnership with EdC and their stand Banco Circolare. It also reports on the tons of food surplus recuperated by EdC over the years (e.g. 74 thousand kilos in 2019) and sponsors their future initiatives around food reuse (such as the use of fashionable coffee mushrooms).



L'iniziativa

di Piera Genta

La pappa al pomodoro di Scabin al Banco circolare

Al Mercato centrale pasti pronti anti spreco per chi è in difficoltà

La scheda

- Il mercato centrale ha deciso di accogliere il Banco Circolare, spazio destinato a RePoPP, progetto di economia circolare urbana
- Ogni giorno, dal lunedì al venerdì, i prodotti recuperati saranno offerti a chi ne ha bisogno
- Lo chef Davide Scabin si è messo ai fornelli per istruire i volontari in modo da offrire anche piatti già pronti

Un'offerta dinamica quella dell'autunno al Mercato Centrale di Torino. Tante novità rappresentate dall'inserimento di nuove botteghe del gusto: la cucina vegetale creativa GiveMeVeg a firma Antonio Chiodi Latini, la sfogliatella napoletana di Sabato Sessa, il Girarrosto di Dennys G. Rodriguez e il riso della famiglia Perinotti.

Fortemente voluta da Umberto Montano, presidente del Mercato Centrale, la vera novità: Il Banco Circolare. Si tratta di uno spazio all'interno del Mercato stesso destinato a RePoPP un progetto di economia circolare urbana, unico in Europa, nato nel 2016 su iniziativa della Città di Torino e sostenuto da Amiat, Gruppo Iren, Novamont ed Eco dalle Città, con la collaborazione scientifica dell'Università di Scienze Gastronomiche.

Un luogo che non ha finalità commerciali, dove ogni giorno (dal lunedì al venerdì, dalle 15 alle 17), vengono messe a disposizione, gratuitamente e fino ad esaurimento, per chiunque ne avrà bisogno, cassette di prodotti ortofrutticoli recuperati dagli Ecomori (volontari richiedenti asilo) e dalle Sentinelle dei Rifiuti presso i banchi degli ambulanti del mercato.

Per Davide Scabin, testimonial dell'iniziativa «L'avanzo è sempre una risorsa» e con l'occasione ha lanciato l'idea di strutturare anche una formazione per i volontari di RePoPP, offrendo loro una svolta lavorativa e con la trasformazione delle eccedenze in gustose pietanze l'avanzo diventa sostenibile.

Il successo del progetto RePoPP nel corso degli anni è stato sempre crescente, da poco più di 53 mila chilogrammi di eccedenze del 2017 si è arrivati a circa 74 mila nel 2019, con una media settimanale di 216 persone beneficiarie del recupero; la raccolta differenziata nel mercato ha raggiunto ormai quota 73 per cento nel primo semestre 2019. Dall'inizio del progetto sono stati recuperati quasi 195 mila chilogrammi di cibo.

Nel corso degli anni RePoPP ha ricevuto importanti riconoscimenti sia in Italia sia all'estero, inoltre risulta conforme ad alcuni dei 17 obiettivi fissati dall'Onu nell'ambito dell'agenda 2030 per lo sviluppo sostenibile, quali sconfiggere la fame, maggiore pulizia delle aree di mercato e miglioramento della raccolta dei rifiuti, riduzione degli impatti ambientali associati alla produzione, distribuzione e smaltimento del cibo. Potrebbe essere un valore aggiunto alla candidatura di Torino European Green Capital 2022.

Presso il Banco Circolare RePoPP si terranno attività di sensibilizzazione contro lo spreco e di promozione di esperienze innovative di recupero e coltura, con dibattiti culturali incentrati sui temi della sostenibilità dei sistemi alimentari urbani.

Uno degli obiettivi è quello di promuovere esperienze innovative come far nascere funghi commestibili dai fondi del caffè. Attraverso il «Food Metrics» si racconteranno gli indicatori del sistema alimentare torinese, strumento utile per tutti gli attori del sistema che vogliono creare nuove relazioni e migliorare le future politiche del cibo del territorio.

Con una gustosa e colorata pappa al pomodoro, un grande piatto di recupero della cucina toscana, Davide Scabin ha inaugurato il primo appuntamento di un calendario mensile, «Bontà contro lo spreco», in cui si alterneranno artigiani e chef per preparare nuove ricette con le eccedenze alimentari.

Ai fornelli Qui accanto, lo chef Scabin con Umberto Montano: sopra, un gruppo di ragazzi del RePoPP

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[Image 26. Article about the collaboration between EdC and Mercato Centrale. Corriere della Sera, Cronaca di Torino, p.9, 17/09/2021]

New roles, old forms of discrimination

The everyday work of EdC asylum seekers and refugees also implied different interactions with market vendors. Aside of the food recollection operations, EdC workers and volunteers also played an educational role by informing vendors about how to better manage their waste. This was particularly the case at Porta Palazzo, where EdC organised an initiative called RePoPP (project for the valorisation of organic waste at Porta Palazzo) together with the Municipality of Turin, the waste management companies Novamont and Amiat-Iren Group and the University of Gastronomic Sciences[93]. As part of this project, EdC oversaw the operational and awareness-raising work around the themes of food waste and urban waste management. Supporting waste management meant that EdC workers and volunteers actively participated in cleaning up the market square and

[93] For more detailed information on the RePoPP initiative see Fassio and Minotti (2019) and (Eco dalle Citta n.d.).

complemented the work of the official employees of the cleaning company (Amiat-Iren Group) in charge of urban cleaning services.

Facilitating an increase in sustainable waste collection also involved supporting the market vendors developing new habits in terms of differentiating their waste. For example, EdC distributed biodegradable bags for free to make their work at the stand easier and incentivise a more sustainable recollection of perished food. Such interactions were also an opportunity to engage in a conversation with the vendors at Porta Palazzo and gain their trust, as the interactions were not always easy[94]. Many of them feared that the project would negatively influence their sales and that people would prefer to get food for free rather than to buy it. As once explained by Charles, market vendors of Via Porpora were not always friendly but better than the ones of Porta Palazzo: "nobody is looking bad at you… nobody is telling you to fuck off… even the food they give here is in better conditions"[95].

Porta Palazzo was defined by Charles as "the real chaos" because of the size of the market but also due to the complex relations with vendors, some of which often looked down on him and made racist comments. The words of Charles should be contextualised as part of some of his broader comments on his personal experiences in the Italian context. For example, his regular encounters with police authority were particularly telling of the forms of structural racism and power abuse that characterised his everyday life in Turin. He once told me and other volunteers that in that period he got stopped by police officers up to two times per week. "I do not react, I stay calm, even when they touch me or check my backpack for no reasons"[96]. During the first *Black Lives Matter* 's demonstration in Turin (June 27 2020), people denounced many similar abuses and forms of discriminations at the open microphone set up in the main square of the city centre *Piazza Castello*. During an interview, Alessia, one of the EdC Italian

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[94] EdC worker, interview, 28/02/2020.

[95] Fieldnotes, 28/10/2019.

[96] Fieldnotes, 04/11/2019.

workers and coordinator of the activities at the market of Porta Palazzo also pointed to the discriminatory language of some market vendors:

> Some [of the project's members] do not have any type of relation with the market vendors, if not the fact of being the youngsters who go to pick up stuff and carry it away. Why? This is also linked to the fact that ours are all black Africans, [while] most of the vendors at Porta Palazzo are Moroccans and Moroccans hate black Africans so they call them "Africa" or "negros" across the whole market. To call them they shout "negro" and they [project's members] rightly get pissed and so they do not develop any relation. Others instead go beyond this way of being called, they really do not care, they start to joke with them, and slowly the Moroccan vendors stop calling them "Africa" but learn their name and then the relation is established.[97]

To conclude, EdC food collection and redistribution activities involved much more than material aspects linked to the management of food surplus. In fact, the work of EdC is to be analysed to understand part of the interactions occurring in public space in transforming post-industrial, working class and multicultural neighbourhoods in Turin. By involving asylum seekers and refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa in their activities, EdC tried to develop a new role, image and narrative for recent newcomers present in the area. It provided them with some occupation and volunteering opportunities, which they also framed as a new productive and ethical function. EdC discussed this as means to increase newcomers' deservingness and social recognition. The ethical dimension of their new role was linked to the nature of their activity, namely the fact of supporting the poorest strata of the population with free food and engaging in more sustainable waste management. By being responsible for food surplus recollection, the association ensured a more equal division of food surplus, extended the reach of the practice of gleaning but also transformed its meaning and incorporated it into the work of new food businesses. The relations between EdC workers and the market environment also hinted to urban transformations which occurred in different areas of Turin, beyond

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[97] Alessia – a pseudonym, EdC worker, interview, 03/12/2021.

Porta Palazzo. In particular, EdC expanding collaborations spoke of the development of new food spaces and the consolidation of their image. As underlined by Semi (2015), the flourishing of new (food) commercial activities was central to gentrification processes in Turin, for example in the case of San Salvario and Quadrilatero Romano areas. Looking at these interactions is important to analyse EdC initiatives in relation to its effects on the area, but also the new meanings of food surplus redistribution, which became institutionalised and in harmonious accordance with the work of gentrifying businesses.

In the next section, I focus on the dynamics internal to EdC: I present the ways in which asylum seekers and refugees work as part of the organisation and their relation to its Italian manager and workers. I firstly discuss how some of the asylum seekers whom I met during my fieldwork joined the initiative, their understanding of the working (or volunteering) conditions and what motivated them to stay or leave. I argue that their inclusion into the initiative, most often publicly lauded, should also be problematised and speak of challenges linked to precarious labour conditions, voluntarism and racial prejudices present in contemporary Italian society more broadly. Secondly, I report on the perspective of the Italian manager and workers of the organisation, depicting their visions around this diverse working group and its rationale. I particularly expand on the use of the image of the asylum seekers to advertise the project as well as on elements of the internalised moral conflicts of the Italian workers. I show how the idea of the "deserving citizen" is useful to analyse the case of EdC workers, beyond asylum seekers. In fact, to a certain extent all workers also shared a similar condition linked to the fact that precarious labour became normalised, if not encouraged, through the interrelation between the idea of "doing good" and deservingness.

Precarious sustainability stewards

The reception of asylum seekers in Italy

Several of the asylum seekers I met at EdC arrived there through friends and acquaintances, often met in the centres and accommodations that compose the Italian reception system for asylum seekers. While expanding on the functioning and complexities of this system goes beyond the scope of this section, it is important to underline three main elements to stress the variety of situations in which the asylum seekers whom I encountered in the field found themselves. Firstly, this complex reception system was often subject to reforms, among which the Law 173/2020, which changed the rules to access different reception facilities and the services provided in these centres[98]. Such reforms created procedural and practical differentiated experiences among asylum seekers, who arrived before or after a certain year. In particular, in 2018, the right-wing parties and at-the-time Minister of Internal Affairs Matteo Salvini (*Lega* party) promoted the Security and Immigration Decree (*Decreto Sicurezza e Immigrazione*). This decree changed several regulations and included the abolition of the humanitarian protection residency permit, which was used frequently because it allowed to comprise a larger category of asylum seekers (e.g. people fleeing general conflicts and natural disasters)[99].

Secondly, the accommodation centres and inclusion procedures for immigrants differed based on their status and stage of their request.

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[98] For an overview of the legal framework, asylum procedure and reception system in Italy in 2020 consult (Bove and Romano 2021).

[99] For an overview of the changes brought by the Security and Immigration Decree see Camilli (2018). For more detailed information see the collection of articles and juridical guides collected by the *Progetto Melting Pot Europa*: https://www.meltingpot.org/+-Decreto-legge-Salvini-su-immigrazione-e-sicurezza-+.html (accessed 09/10/2021). In the last year, new decrees have brought several changes among which the partial restoration of a residency permit for humanitarian reasons called "special protection". For an overview of these more recent changes see Camilli (2020).

The asylum seekers and refugees whom I met in Turin were usually part of the so-called second level of reception (*seconda accoglienza*) (and only few were living on their own) meaning that they were recognised as asylum seekers entitled to international protection. These second-level reception centres were generally run by non-profit organisations, social cooperatives or catholic institutions. These groups were also responsible for designing an inclusion path for their hosts, which entailed to ensure that they had access to courses, internships or working opportunities. Such inclusion paths however often resulted in differentiated experiences and opportunities, also based on the various resources available, types of management, everyday interactions and relations at these centres (see also Tarabusi 2010). Thirdly, receiving the final residency permit was often taking much longer than expected, around 18 months, due to the high number of requests and slow bureaucratic system (e.g. Pinelli 2015). Consequently, asylum seekers faced difficulties to get a more stable and autonomous life and to secure long-term employment, but rather experienced a prolonged situation of uncertainty.

Different motivations and experiences

When arriving at EdC, most asylum seekers did not have a job and knew few people outside of the circuits of the reception centres. This was the case of Edu, an asylum seeker in his twenties, originally from West Africa. I met Edu several months after his experience at EdC had ended. I encountered him in a different context, but via volunteers I had met at EdC and with whom he had remained friend. After seeing him a few times, I asked him if he agreed to be interviewed about his experience in Italy[100]. Edu had joined EdC following the advice of a friend, who had been volunteering with the association before. His friend had presented it as an opportunity to get out of the centre and get to know more people. When they had gone together to the market of Porta Palazzo for the first time, Edu had got to know some of the coordinators of the initiative, felt welcomed and decided to stay. This was his first work-like experience in Italy. It was not the work that Edu dreamt of, but he liked to help other people:

> I was a volunteer, I was really helping the poor. We were going every day to the market to collect fruits and vegetables, we were gathering them on a table and poor people, people that do not have anything, that do not have money and do not know

[100] While Edu agreed to be interviewed, he also stressed that he found more relevant to talk about his past and document what he had experienced in his home country and had pushed him to flee. However, I did not feel that I was the right person to listen to these very personal facts and proposed to him to talk about that in a different context - and focus our interview on his Italian experiences only. At that time, I felt unable to provide him with the right tools and platform to publicly narrate his story. I remained available to try to support him to find a way to voice his story and once participated to a meeting with him and a film director, who seemed interested to do a short movie about it. However, this meeting did not have any follow-ups and the project remained unaccomplished. I point out to these elements to highlight that Edu's personal story did not have the public dissemination he desired as well as to include in this dissertation some examples of what I consider were my limitations as an anthropologist and active listener during the fieldwork.

> how they will prepare food and eat, well, these were the people whom we were helping.[101]

Edu explained that he did not care about money and that he was doing this because helping people was important to him, referring to both his religion and background, explaining that he used to do the same for his family and had worked laboriously since a very young age. Edu volunteered with EdC for more than a year, until he found a job - an informal occupation which he accepted to try to learn a profession. He remained in contact with some of the members of the association, especially with its manager, whom, he said, was like a father to him.

Perspectives such as the one of Edu call for exploring volunteering as a complex phenomenon. As mentioned in the literature, volunteering should not be regarded as a "black box" but analysed in terms of its specific processes and actors (Shachar, von Essen, and Hustinx 2019; van der Veer 2020). As emphasised by Lieke van der Veer (2020) in her analysis of volunteer initiatives to support refugees in the Netherlands, volunteering can assume different meanings for the people involved, including for the refugees, some of which are also volunteers themselves. In such cases, volunteering is framed and perceived as an opportunity for "shifting positions in the gift exchange" and "giving back" (van der Veer 2020, 3). Such narratives around refugees' volunteerism also became an integral part of broader social arrangements for the promotion of a moral, active and responsible citizenship (van der Veer 2020). Muehlebach (2013; 2012) highlighted how different moralities and value systems, for example linked to Catholicism or the Left, can be at the basis of voluntary labour and in a creative tension with neoliberalism. For example, in the case of Edu, his (religious) values were an important drive for his participation to EdC initiatives. At the same time, these kept him in a position of dependency and unemployment.

Others, like John, had arrived to EdC in search for an employment. After two weeks of try-out as a volunteer, John decided to ask to the association to be remunerated and, after some time, he obtained the possibility to do a six-month internship (*tirocinio*). He considered that

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[101] Edu – a pseudonym, former EdC worker, interview, 01/05/2020.

he was paid very little - first 300 euros, then, when he asked for more, 600 euros per month - especially for the amount and quality of his work. He fully understood what to do, he had developed good relations with market vendors and beneficiaries, he spoke Italian and English better than most of his peers and often helped introducing the project to new participants. When I met John, he was towards the end of his internship and seemed indeed fully autonomous in his work and to be holding quite some responsibilities. I met him as I was directly referred to John by my initial contact at EdC, one of its Italian workers. John was responsible for guiding EdC activities at some of the smaller markets. As soon as we got the chance to talk to each other more calmly, one day, after the end of the food redistribution, John explained to me that he wanted to ask to the association to be employed with a stable contract. He was critical about the fact that some of EdC members had a contract while others did not. Moreover, he was often asked to do more tasks than what he had been told initially - such as attending public events in the name of EdC. This had been justified to him in terms of the important nature of the project:

> When the six months ended, they told me to continue to do an internship for a year and I said that I would not do an internship anymore. […] He [manager of EdC] always said: "the things that you are doing are very important" but then there were many youngsters there and I understood that he wanted to make them work without a long-term contract. And then other people had a contract: like [X] and [Y]. These people were employed in accordance with the law. I understood that this was not fair to me. I must work but not like this. […] The money was little and I did not have paid leave.[102]

John was aware of his rights that he had learned in the course "Italian language for work" offered as part of the asylum seekers reception system, he explained. However, not all the asylum seekers he met at the market were able to attend or understand this course. Therefore, he often found himself in the position of explaining to other EdC asylum seekers and refugees what a stable contract was, why it was important and the long-term benefits that it could secure.

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[102] John – a pseudonym, former EdC worker, interview, 18/05/2020.

By engaging in EdC activities, I also got the confirmation that the group was very varied, in terms of the asylum seekers' level of Italian, engagement in the project and working conditions. I heard about all types of working arrangements: volunteering, reimbursements of five euros per day, internship organised in collaboration with other organisations, casual work contracts (*contratto di prestazione occasionale*) and more. As discussed by John, only few had a permanent contract. One of them was Samuel, who had joined EdC since the early stage of their initiatives at open air food markets in 2016. He had received the invitation to participate at the reception system centre - to whom EdC director had communicated that they were looking for asylum seekers and refugees interested in partaking in the collection of food surplus. Samuel was in Italy since 2014 and had been a fast learner: he held his Italian school diploma, had followed a cooking school and done an internship. He started to collaborate with EdC as a volunteer but always wanted to continue as he felt that he was doing "something useful"[103]. Quickly, Samuel gained enough experience and responsibility to coordinate the operations at the market of Porta Palazzo (where I first met him and saw him regularly) as well as to present the project in public events. During an interview, he explained to me the distinct phases of the project, such as how they had started to collect food and got progressively better organised and how the project had started to gain the recognition of local authorities. He also gave particular emphasis to the relations they established with market vendors and the ways in which asylum seekers were raising awareness about waste management. Samuel sounded fully part of EdC work, but his account also reflected a privileged position, when compared to the situation of many of his colleagues.

The cases of Edu, John and Samuel reveal the various situations of asylum seekers working at EdC. They also speak about the different feelings and levels of trust that they developed towards the organisation: while John left the organisation with the sense that his rights had not been fully respected, Samuel was in a more advantaged position, feeling recognised by and belonging to the project. Authors such as Tomlinson (2010) have studied the pathways from voluntary

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[103] Samuel – a pseudonym, EdC worker, interview, 28/02/2020.

work to employment for refugees in London and discussed these in terms of processes where belonging and inclusion are negotiated. Similarly to the Italian context, in the UK, refugees are encouraged to participate to courses and voluntary activities to gain experiences and because securing an employment might be particularly difficult. However, voluntary activities might also trap newcomers in specific situation of partial inclusion: they might continue feeling treated as foreigners and have limited possibilities to express their agency. They might also experience "multiple marginalities" because volunteer work is often perceived as less significant than paid work, and offers no chance for self-sufficiency (Tomlinson 2010, 292). In the context of EdC, this was also the impression of John. For him, the idea of continuing to work as an intern represented a lack of recognition of his efforts. Moreover, the internship incarnated a step back from the stabilisation and normalisation of his situation in Italy, namely from his objective of getting a formal employment and full recognition of his labour rights.

Testifying deservingness

The different feelings of EdC asylum seekers surely reflected their various positions, expectations but also past experiences, including those with other non-profit workers, whom are part of the Italian reception system. As argued by Pinelli (2015) in relation to Italy's asylum seeker camps (first level of reception), the staff of humanitarian agencies and social workers often hold an ambiguous role. As she explained, these camps are characterised by "the ambiguity of control and the role played by humanitarian agency personnel as 'delegates of surveillance'" (Pinelli 2015, 14-15). In these contexts, NGOs' social workers play both a role of care and control, limiting the agency of asylum seekers but also exchanging information with the commissions and producing the idea that "'respecting the rules' will guarantee the positive outcome of their asylum claim" (Pinelli 2015, 15).

This was also the case at EdC, where some asylum seekers were motivated by the idea that working or volunteering there would increase their chance to obtain a residency permit. Edu referred to a letter that the association could send to the authorities as part of the

documentation considered as part of their demand for the residency permit. Many of his peers had been told about this letter – and its possibility to favourably influence authorities' decisions. The existence of such document was confirmed to me during an interview with one of the Italian workers of the association, who explained:

> They [EdC workers and volunteers] saw that being part of our project is a way to obtain the residency permit, well it is not written anywhere that if you work with *Eco* [EdC] you obtain your permit. But when you present (to the commission that evaluates you) a sheet of paper [stating] that you are doing this work and that probably we are also paying you (we have activated an internship or through a collaboration or something else) … well, it looks cool.[104]

The point of the interviewee was that such letter could represent a proof of the good integration of the asylum seekers: as he further explained, it could demonstrate that the candidate knew Italian and took part in "nice projects". I argue that this document also symbolises the way in which organisations such as EdC can, not only influence the everyday life of asylum seekers, but also play a role in the definition of their long-term rights. In this perspective, the letter testifies the moral stands of the newcomers and links their deservingness (to have a residency permit) to their engagement in projects deemed appropriate for their position. In this case, it entailed helping others and improving environmental sustainability, independently from their working conditions and uncertain situation.

Linking asylum seekers' rights to their moral attitude and ability to conform with certain context-specific expectations of the "good immigrant" is even more problematic as the commissions, on the other

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[104] EdC worker, interview, 10/12/2019. Original quote: "*Hanno visto che stare nel nostro progetto è un modo per ottenere il permesso anche se non sta scritto da nessuna parte che se lavori con Eco ottieni il permesso, però quando presenti alle commissioni che ti valutano il foglio di carta che stai facendo questo lavoro con noi e probabilmente ti stiamo anche pagando (ti abbiamo attivato un tirocinio o tramite una collaborazione o qualcosa altro) ... fa figo.*"

hand, often fail to acknowledge as valid and legitimate their personal accounts (Beneduce and Taliani 2013). Moreover, as in the US case analysed by Ong (2003), the idea of a "model minority" often implies a stereotyped and racialised differentiation between the docile and productive immigrants versus the unemployed and criminal ones.

To sum up, while the diverse perspectives I gathered above are not representative of all the opinions of the asylum seekers and refugees encountered at EdC, they provide insights for reflecting on what this organisation represented for them. For Edu, John and Samuel, it had allowed them to become more active and reduced their isolation. The three of them spoke proudly about their engagement in the organisation and perceived their work as a useful one. At the same time, working conditions at EdC generated very differentiated experiences and little long-term employment possibilities. As also discussed by Tomlison (2010), non-profit organisations only rarely represent a long-term working opportunity for refugees.

The analysis of their perspectives also reveals how EdC played a role in the definition of their deservingness. As argued by Ong et al. (1996), citizenship in Western democracies became a process of subject-making beyond the state. Especially in the context of discontinuous state presence, "the work of instilling proper normative behaviour and identity in newcomers must also be taken up by institutions in civil society" (Ong et al. 1996, 738). Building on such analysis, I argue that the case of EdC is an example of the ways in which non-profit organisations define the deservingness of refugees in relation to their inclination to "doing good" (namely a sustainable and charitable food surplus distribution) and normalise labour precarity.

To further develop my argument around the construction of deservingness (and its entanglement with labour precarity), I now turn to the analysis of the approach and opinions of EdC Italian manager and workers. Firstly, I discuss the ways in which the image of asylum seekers is constructed and used by the organisation. I also highlight some of the recurrent arguments that the manager and workers made about the role of their organisation in terms of the support and education it provided to asylum seekers. Secondly, I report on challenges common to all EdC workers around issues of labour

precarity, working conditions and opportunities. While I have presented the views of asylum seekers and Italian workers separately (as I believe that their various positions must be accounted for), I also want to go beyond a dichotomic understanding of their conditions and underline some of the commonalities that characterise their work. Such common conditions call in fact for a larger problematisation of the social and economic sustainability of initiatives such as EdC, beyond the condition of asylum seekers.

Branding through inclusion

Most of EdC Italian workers saw the involvement of asylum seekers and refugees as the distinctive characteristics of the project. While EdC focused on the theme of (food) waste management and its reduction, their engagement had increased the visibility of their initiatives. The work of the organisation was often advertised through their image (e.g. Ricca 2017). Exemplificatory in this sense is the name *ecomori*, which was developed to advertise specifically the work of food collection and redistribution done by asylum seekers and refugees. *Eco* (as in ecological) refers to their work around sustainability, the reduction of waste and positive impact of their action on the environment. *Mori* can be understood as a reference to the Moors, black people or, in Piedmont dialect, to foreigners more generally. As defined by EdC director in one of his articles on the initiative: "[…] *ecomori* is a self-mocking definition that puts together the "colour of the skin" and the ecological nature of the actions […]" (Hutter 2018). While this expression was normalised by the local administration and media, it was considered controversial and criticised as discriminatory and opportunistic by some local inhabitants such as the educated youth. EdC director counter-argued that shocking the population was also a way to attract its attention[105]. He had invented this expression himself, without concerting with the asylum seekers - who never discussed their feelings about it with me.

Moreover, the work of the organisation was often advertised through the image of the asylum seekers and refugees, who were put at the forefront of everyday work at the markets and public events. As also

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[105] Paolo Hutter, EdC manager, informal conversation, 05/12/2019.

explained by one of the Italian workers of the association in charge of fundraising and communication, EdC manager gave a considerable importance to communicating about their work and achievements. It was not rare that EdC initiatives appeared in local newspapers and regional TV channels and, in such contexts, asylum seekers were often asked to present the projects themselves[106]. To discuss how the branding of the organisation occurred through the use of the figure of the asylum seeker, I discuss the example of images from February 2020.

In the framework of the national day against food waste, EdC organised an event with the Mercato Centrale for the preparation of a free soup with the food surplus collected at the market of Porta Palazzo[107]. The soup, prepared by the famous Michelin star chef Davide Scabin, was served to people passing by as well as to several journalists and politicians who had joined the event (such as the at-the-time mayor Chiara Appendino and the Environment city councillor Alberto Unia). The images below, retrieved from the website of a local newspaper, show the participation of the asylum seekers and refugees during the event, on the side of EdC director, the Environment city councillor and chef Scabin.

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[106] See for example the local TV news of 11/08/2020 (TgR Piemonte): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr3nLlpNpVs and the videos reported on EdC Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkMnC1Ij8-0O0LAJBb7uimA (accessed 12/12/21).

[107] See the previous section for more detailed information about Mercato Centrale food hall and its collaboration with EdC.





[Images 27a, 27b. Screenshots from a video reportage of the day. Retrieved on December 12, 2021 at *TorinoOggi* website: https://www.torinoggi.it/2020/02/05/leggi-notizia/argomenti/attualita-8/articolo/progetto-repopp-lo-chef-scabin-offre-la-zuppa-prodotta-con-gli-avanti-alimentari-del-mercato.html]

These images were shot by journalists in front of the entrance of Mercato Centrale, shortly after the distribution of the soup. Like during the activities at the markets, EdC members are recognisable through the systematic use of the red vests of the project, which recall their tasks and role as sustainability stewards. The vests contrast with the more formal outfits of the politicians and chef, whose presence also appears like an official recognition of EdC activities. These images are particularly telling of the ways in which the branding of the project is built upon the presence of black bodies. Moreover, these images mediate a certain idea of newcomers' deservingness, especially when compared with mainstream representations of immigrants and asylum seekers in the Italian media. As explained through a media analysis by Cava (2011, 4), the representation of immigrants in Italy is often stigmatising, distorted and criminalising. While EdC (like many others non-profit organisations in the area), subverted the ways in which the figure of the newcomer was generally framed in the news, its self-narration and representation also reproduced racial and social disparities. Among other things, these images reveal how a clear division of labour and paternalism (mediated in this example by the bodily position of white men) can accompany such reframing of newcomers into deserving citizen.

Precarious labour

Going beyond the representation of asylum seekers and refugees as sustainability stewards, working with them on a daily basis acquired different meanings for the Italian workers of the organisation. For workers such as Luca, EdC provided asylum seekers with a "small employment opportunity and a remuneration", building an innovative model of sustainability and inclusion which he opposed to that of private companies:

> Outside of non-profit organisations, migrants are almost always used for specific tasks that can be downgrading. […]. Probably [in the case of] a migrant who works on an assembly line during a night shift, they employed him with the lowest level and he is the fifth wheel, on which they can put pressure, to increase productivity, withdraw his rights, because he does not stand up […] He thinks he found a good salary, because it is

> surely so when compared to his country of origins, and so if the boss shouts, orders something, the migrant does it because he thinks its normal. But it is not normal.[108]

According to Luca, non-profit organisations are better places for migrants to work within, when compared to the other possibilities and conditions in the private sector. EdC Italian workers also framed the project as an educational and relational platform for the asylum seekers, in a context in which the official reception system was not always doing its work. This was exemplified by Alessia, a social worker coordinating EdC daily activities at the market of Porta Palazzo. As she explained, her work went beyond the coordination of the food surplus collection and redistribution:

> A typical working day could be accompanying the youngsters [asylum seekers] to open a bank account, explain to them how the city services are working and whom to address if you have this or that problem. So, helping them. We do it in a non-professional manner because we are not teachers of Italian, but we also try to help them with the language. [..] When they stay [after work] we talk in Italian about separate waste collection and we do a bit of environmental education.[109]

Alessia would also help them with "the more bureaucratic part", namely sorting out their paperwork and organising all the documents they needed to present to the commissions. Over time, she had developed knowledge and skills around these processes and helped

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[108]Luca – a pseudonym, EdC worker, interview, 10/12/2019. Original quote: "*I migranti, se non è il Terzo Settore, vengono quasi esclusivamente utilizzati per determinate mansioni che potrebbero essere dequalificanti. […]. Probabilmente il turno di notte che fa uno in catena di montaggio ed è migrante lo assumono con l'ultimo livello più basso ed è l'ultima ruota del carro, sulla quale puoi fare pressioni, per aumentare la produttività, per togliergli diritti, perché non si ribella […]. Lui crede di aver trovato un ottimo stipendio, perché sicuramente rispetto al suo paese è un ottimo stipendio, e quindi se il padrone urla, gli ordina una cosa, lui la fa perché lo ritiene normale. Però normale non è*."

[109] Alessia, interview, 03/12/2019.

them also in her free time. However, this was not always easy: according to her, the reception system had passed on wrong habits and expectations to the newcomers. In her view, it did not prepare them to be independent nor to face the world "as it really is". Alessia felt that sometimes they did not trust her because she was the first person to tell them how things worked in Italy - she made the example of housing costs and bills. She tried to maintain the relations less hierarchical as possible and to work with them daily at the market and avoid staying in the office. Based on her experience, working at the office complicated the relations between Italian workers and asylum seekers as it involved counting their working hours and arranging their contracts. This made the relation more distant and decreased, she argued, possibilities for developing trust relations and a shared sociality.

It is also around these issues of working arrangements and remuneration that EdC Italian workers and asylum seekers faced, to a certain extent, shared challenges. These included precarious working arrangements, payment delays and limited possibilities for professional growth. Nino, an Italian student in his twenties, was one of the people in a situation of more evident precarity. He had joined EdC for an internship during which he supported the administration and accounting of the organisation. As he explained:

> Economically I asked a minimum. To live and to… I am not saying to save money, but to pay for my vices such as cigarettes and going out from time to time. A decent minimum wage which, in the beginning, we set to seven euros per hour… Now I cannot really tell you what my wage is as there were several… not retractions but attempts to redefine my type of contract.[110]

As further explained by Nino, in the beginning, EdC had funding possibilities and arrangements for his internship. He had tried to organise that himself while starting to work at EdC but had encountered complications because, following the Italian law, the number of interns per organisation is limited. If he would have made

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[110] Nino – a pseudonym, EdC worker, interview, 18/03/2020.

himself a contract as an intern, this would have limited the possibility to set up an internship for an asylum seeker. Therefore, together with the EdC manager, they had decided not to do it, which meant to try to find another arrangement for Nino. For example, by making another organisation collaborating with EdC take him as an intern. In the end, Nino got paid with a casual work contract (which, by law, entails max 5.000 euros per year and no social security) for a few months before he moved abroad.

Because of the slow arrival of funding, it was also not rare that Italian workers would get paid with one or more months of delay. EdC manager had decided that the asylum seekers would get paid with priority, while Italians might have to wait. This led to internal complaints as some Italian workers felt that such differentiation was unfair and that their personal situation (such as having children to take care of) was not considered. However, in general, EdC italian workers accepted precarious working conditions, low remuneration, extra working hours in the name of their passion and the "good" outcomes of EdC projects.

The sociologists Busso and Lanunziata (2016) discussed this phenomenon in their analysis of social labour in the context of Italian non-profit organisations. As explained by these scholars, the limited costs and flexibility of this sector makes it particularly competitive in the delivery of public social services. This is the reason these services are increasingly contracted-out. However, such limited costs are linked to the extraction of value from non-profit workers. In fact, the immaterial components (e.g. sense of solidarity, care, friendship, attention to the common good) and passion related to this type of social work generates forms of self-exploitation and unconditional dedication to these organisations, which the continuation and competitiveness of this sector builds upon (Ross 2008, Chicchi and Leonardi 2011 in Busso and Lanunziata 2016). Such reflections can be particularly applicable to social workers who engage with migrants. As explained by Pilotto (2018), these social workers are in a potentially vulnerable and (self)exploitative situation because of the relation they develop with migrants. They are requested flexibility, daily contact and emotional labour and often have no boundaries between their private and working life (Pilotto 2018). This is like the efforts made by Italian

EdC workers such as Alessia, committed to supporting the asylum seekers in relation to their life matters daily, during and beyond her working hours.

While dealing, mostly silently, with their precarious working conditions, EdC workers also developed general critiques about the functioning of EdC and the non-profit sector more generally. They would all recognise that their working conditions were not good but normalised these as part of the country's general lack of employment opportunities and precarious working environments. As also discussed by Molé (2010) in her account of precarious workers in northern Italy, precarity has become normalised in the way in which people speak about labour and affects them materially and psychically. Moreover, several EdC workers did not think that this experience could open-up new working opportunities neither for asylum seekers nor for them. According to an Italian former worker at EdC, the organisation also reproduced forms of occupational segregation. It offered little space for professional growth of workers nor for the diversification of their tasks, because of the continuous efforts needed to sustain the initiatives.

To conclude, the case of EdC and its workers speaks of a changing multicultural environment for the understanding of which the study of open-air food markets can play a role. It also speaks about processes of urban transformations and gentrification by showing the evolutions of food practices such as gleaning. This case also reveals the fine lines between the creation of a sustainable and inclusive practice and new forms of extraction of value - as also exemplified in other analyses around waste management such as Fredericks (2012). This case invites to question what inclusion of asylum seekers is and on what it is premised. As argued by Millar (2012) marginality is not only about being left out but the outcome of specific forms of inclusion in the city. I argued that asylum seekers and refugees' engagement in food waste collection and redistribution is used as a proof of their deservingness and interrelates with their social recognition as well as with precarious working conditions and racialised power relations. I concluded by remarking how the effects of moral entanglements between sustainability, food charity and deservingness expand beyond the situation of asylum seekers. Precarity in the name of "sustainable

work" is also a shared condition among all non-profit workers and a central theme, too often neglected, when discussing the overall sustainability of food procurement related initiatives.

Conclusion

In this second part of the dissertation, I attempted to contribute to a broadening of the anthropological analysis of food markets. Building on my observations in three different open-air food markets in northern Turin, I highlighted how these can be sites of various forms of civic engagement. Going beyond literature on critical consumerism and alternative food procurement, I firstly discussed the case of conventional market vendors, their political engagement and practices of contestation in relation to urban and welfare transformations. I argued that their engagement can be regarded as ways of practicing their "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968), voicing their needs and desires, beyond institutional consultation tools. In chapter five I discussed yet another form of engagement which is linked to the increasing role of the non-profit sector in the context of welfare state retrenchment. As part of non-profit organisations' work at food markets, civic engagement builds on volunteering and precarious work which I analyse, in line with part one, as the result of the development of a specific morality around sustainability and the construction of deservingness.

In both cases, I contextualised these forms of engagement as part of the changing urban environment, looking at, on one hand, how long terms occupants of Piazza Foroni lived with and reacted to demographic, social and economic change in their neighbourhood. On the other, I looked at how the transformation of certain collective practices is entangled with urban renewal. I gave the example of how the transformation of gleaning can be analysed as part of gentrification processes. I argued that new gleaning practices (e.g. through the intermediation of non-profit organisations and collaborations with fashionable local food businesses) invite for studying gentrification as a process that creates a continuity between the transformation of space and the one of collective practices.

The central red thread across this second part of the dissertation was the analysis of labour and, more specifically, the different forms of precariousness that emerge in the analysis of the market as a space of labour. I highlighted how people lived and worked in different phases of recession and austerity, showing the meaning taken by these notions

in the everyday life of some market vendors, asylum seekers and refugees. I also attempted to untangle the ways in which the notion of "deserving citizenship" (Ong 2003) is key to understanding the neoliberalisation of the Italian welfare and related culture of voluntarism. Following Beneduce and Taliani (2013, 233), neoliberalism emerges here as:

> the (imperfect) articulation between the market, the state and citizenship [as part of which] […] the state occupies a decisive role in the making of subjects and social relations".

As I argued in chapter five, it is not only the traditional components of the state, but also new articulations and subjects of the welfare realm, such as non-profit organisations, that become integral part of these processes of subject-making. The next part will focus precisely on the increasing centrality of non-profit organisations. Building on the case of food aid initiatives during the covid-19 pandemic, it will report on the blurring boundaries between the public and the third sector.

Part 3.

Food aid, community care and the reconfiguration of rights into needs. Anthropology of welfare at the times of COVID-19

Introduction

This third and final part of the dissertation discusses institutional food aid during the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, it examines its premises, organisation, agents and representations. I analyse the case of the food aid hub which was developed at the Via Agliè community centre in the neighbourhood Barriera di Milano. The hub coordinated the distribution of food aid to up to 600 households in vulnerable socio-economic conditions living in northern Turin. From April to August 2020, I participated to the preparation of the food packages, working side by side with the many volunteers recruited.

I frame my analysis of this food aid hub as part of the anthropology of welfare, which, following Russel and Edgar (2003, 2) is concerned with "what welfare provision should entail, and where it should come from". As also underlined by these authors, these are themes which are "intensely contested in most industrialized societies" (Russel and Edgar 2003, 2). This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which, in Italy, required a general mobilisation in the face of the growing needs of the population generated by or surfaced with the crisis. The lockdown measures and restrictions had important socio-economic consequences, impacting prominently the most vulnerable groups of the population (e.g. Conte 2020; Zaghi 2020). These consequences included the loss of employment, decreasing households' economic means, food insecurity, disruption of social services, increasing social isolation and domestic violence, to name a few.

To analyse the nature and organisation of welfare that emerged in response to this socio-economic crisis, I build on the definition of welfare proposed by Porcellana (2020, 211, translation is my own):

> Welfare is not an abstract concept but a mode through which societies, and therefore the people that compose them, incorporate and translate concretely meanings, values, ideas. Welfare can be described as the product of political and economic forces, of social structures and cultural norms at global, national and regional levels.

This definition invites for reflections on the values and ideas mediated by a given welfare system and highlights its social and cultural dimensions, which are at the core of my examination. More generally, I contextualise my analysis as part of the anthropology of welfare in Italy such as the recent volume edited by Rimoldi and Pozzi (2022), which discusses various forms of welfare including what is left of the Italian welfare state in the form of unemployment services and housing support. The volume also includes a chapter on the responses to the COVID-19 crisis in Milan (Grassi 2022). I follow the invitation of these anthropologists to investigate Italian welfare not necessarily to define it but to understand how it is operated – which discourses, processes and categories are taken for granted, which are marginalised – in a specific time and context.

The context of the crisis revealed (even more clearly) some of the assumptions and standards on which contemporary Italian welfare is premised. This was a moment in which the essential role of non-profit organisations in the management of urban social services became even more visible. As highlighted by Grassi (2022), while some have argued that COVID-19 has transformed societies, this is not true in terms of the continuity in the externalisation of public services. The COVID-19 crisis was also a privileged juncture to interrogate and problematise how and by whom the criteria to access (food) aid are defined in the context of welfare mix. In fact, as part of this arrangement, multiple agents are involved in the very definition and implementation of social interventions (Caselli 2015).

With this part of the dissertation, I propose to step back from the normalisation of the Italian welfare mix and the growing role of non-profit organisations in the delivery of social services. I advance a detailed investigation of the morality upon which it is premised and that it reproduces. As highlighted by Muehlebach (2012) – and mentioned already in previous sections of this dissertation -, the proliferation of a specific moral order became key to justify the lack of public interventions as well as the normalisation of volunteering and unremunerated labour, to name a few. Such morality clearly emerged in media narrations of the management of the COVID-19 crisis such as political discussions, newspaper articles but also post-produced international documentaries such as Piacenza (2021). I will discuss

this material in parallel to my direct accounts of institutionalised food aid practices and their contradictions.

Based on my participant observation in one of the official food aid hubs of Turin, I follow the invitation of Russel and Edgar (2003) and Rimoldi and Pozzi (2022) to discuss some of the configurations that the language, social organisation, culture of welfare might take. I want to connect these issues to the rest of the dissertation by firstly proposing an historical introduction to the space where the food hub developed (chapter VI). Again, I want to highlight the importance of connecting an analysis of practices to one of space, to reveal how visions of specific urban areas and their (ideal) inhabitants are co-constructed, for example through the local conceptualisation of community care. To explain the construction of community care in the neighbourhood Barriera di Milano, I retrace the genealogy of the Via Agliè community centre – where the food aid hub was based. I highlight its progressive transformation into an "urban assembler" (Koster and van Leynseele, 2018) of local institution, associations and citizens, and into an active promoter of the "postwelfarist morality" (Muehlebach 2012). Such diachronic analysis of welfare is important to unpack the social and cultural features that brought to a specific set of responses during the pandemic (Porcellana 2020; Rimoldi and Pozzi 2022). Chapter VI also introduce the forms of solidarity that emerged during COVID-19, explaining the diverse types of responses to urban poverty and food insecurity that were put in place.

Chapter VII is more ethnographic and discusses the functioning of the food aid hub of Via Agliè, delving into the description of its materiality such as the food managed and distributed. I discuss decision-making around how to compose the packages, highlighting the role of morality in these processes and the ways in which food aid can reproduce a stratification of citizenship. To do so, throughout the text, I also compare this food aid system with the grassroots free food distribution initiative Rete Zona Aurora Solidale (also called SOSpesa), to which I also participated. This second initiative allowed me to take a step back from the everyday way of doing at Via Agliè. Moreover, I present the perspectives of volunteers at Via Agliè and highlight how their more critical and political reflections remained silenced - similarly as in the case of Orti Generali (part I). Based on

my observations and interviews, I problematise how the figures of the volunteer and the food recipient were constructed through internal and external accounts of the hub's activities, referring to and extending previous discussions around the concept of deservingness. I conclude with an analysis of the evolution of the organisation of food aid at Via Agliè over time and the changing levels of intervention of the municipality.

Chapter VI. Genesis of a food aid hub

In this chapter, I introduce the case study at the core of this part of the dissertation, namely the food aid hub that was put in place at the community centre *Bagni Pubblici di Via Agliè* (public washrooms of Agliè street - from now on also designated as Via Agliè) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The community centre is situated in the neighbourhood Barriera di Milano, which characteristics were presented in the previous chapters. I examine the premises based on which this hub was put in place, such as the origins and management of the community centre. I do so to shed light onto the more long-term cultural and spatial transformations around this specific configuration of "institutional" food aid – which I study as a form of welfare organisation. I write the term "institutional" into inverted commas because this was the term used in the field to classify the Via Agliè food aid hub. However, my aim here is to problematise the meaning of institutional in a context of blurring boundaries between the roles and practices of the public and third sector in the delivery of welfare.

This chapter serves precisely to introduce such blurring boundaries and the long-term mechanisms through which a local community in northern Turin was formed and got involved in the welfare system following and reproducing a model of community care. Community care can be analysed as a "locally constructed subset of welfare" (Russell and Edgar 2003, 3). This concept emerged in Britain from the 1970s onwards to create an opposing ideology to prevailing views of what a welfare state is or should be (Russell and Edgar 2003). Anthropologists such as Susan Brin Hyatt (2001) analysed community care by discussing the engagement of citizens-volunteers (especially women) in the management of vulnerable communities. As explained by the author, the neoliberal state, while withdrawing public resources from local development programs, fosters volunteerism as "an *obligation* of citizenship" (Hyatt 2001, 228). At the same time, in the communities where forms of civic engagements were already present, these were co-opted and transformed into low-wage labour as part of local administration (Hyatt 2001). This author highlights how the development of community care and related culture of volunteerism can be regarded as a form of neoliberal governance:

> Given the widespread acceptance of the dictum that the era of big government is over, it is the volunteer who now stands at the ready as the citizen who has been liberated from the morally debilitating belief that the state should be the primary source of such services as schooling, policing, welfare and maintenance of the physical infrastructure, embracing in its stead the far more invigorating notion that people can and should take on the responsibility for providing many of these amenities themselves. (Hyatt 2001, 205- 206)

This quote speaks to the context of Barriera di Milano, and the Italian case more generally, where such reconfiguration (especially in terms of welfare, security and maintenance of the urban space) is part of the everyday public debate and accompanies neoliberal reforms of the welfare state (e.g. Caselli 2015). During my fieldwork, the question of who should be responsible for the delivery of such services was often discussed by the research participants and, in peripheral areas, accompanied by a general feeling of long-term abandonment from the state. Waiting for the state intervention was presented by local non-profit organisations as an old mindset to be replaced with local configurations of civic engagement and community care (*welfare di comunità)*. As I will elaborate, community care was promoted as an immediate response to local *needs*, a form of welfare of higher moral significance. A form of welfare linked to the supposed primacy of acting over asking, and the local administration's lack of resources and inefficiencies. Discourses around the notion of community care also recast citizens' rights (e.g. right to social services, adequate infrastructure, food) into citizens' *needs*, understood as individual difficulties, responsibilities and special conditions.

The main questions addressed in this chapter are the following: which shape did community care take in Northern Turin? How did local non-profit organisations and other collective actors become involved in the delivery of welfare? How were these mobilised at the times of the emergency? How did they work as urban assemblers (Koster and van Leynseele, 2018)? How did they play a role in the widespread morality of citizens activation? The chapter is structured as follows: I firstly introduce the local meaning of community care by presenting the history of the community centre *Bagni Pubblici di Via Agliè*. In

particular, I problematise its role as intermediary between institutions and the local population, contextualising it as part of a broader evolution of the shapes of civic engagement in recent Italian history (e.g. Marcon 2004). In the second section, I briefly explain the rationale of food aid during the COVID-19 crisis. I report on how this community centre became a hub of the city-wide network of food aid called *Torino Solidale*, meaning, literally, Turin in Solidarity. The chapter is based on participant observation and interviews conducted at the community centre before and during the pandemic. I also build on secondary research, which helped me understanding the history of the centre and the urban governance dynamics in which it is embedded.

Genealogy of a community centre

Public washrooms

In the street Via Agliè number 9 stands one of the fifteen public washrooms that were constructed in Turin between 1900 and 1960, when many houses did not have washrooms. The one of Via Agliè started operating in 1958, after the restructuring of the building which had served as a wash house (*lavatoio*) since 1916 (Bagni Pubblici of Turin n.d.). After remaining closed for approximately 20 years, in 2006, the local administration decided to reopen the baths of Via Agliè and, through a call for tenders, devolve its management to a social cooperative called *Liberi Tutti*. This cooperative developed project for community building (*sviluppo di comunità*) such as social inclusion projects and social and educational services (Liberi Tutti 2022).

The devolution of the management of the baths to this organisation is to be contextualised in the principle of subsidiarity of the Italian Constitution (article 118) and the subsidiarity reform. Horizontal subsidiarity, more precisely, guides the relation between institutions and civil society, allowing the latter to actively engage in the shared management of common goods when in the interest of a territory or a community. To this regard, the municipal council of Turin adopted a specific bylaw in 2016 called "Regulation over the collaboration between citizens and the administration for the care, shared management and regeneration of urban public goods" (Città di Torino

2016) which was renewed and rendered more detailed in June 2020 (Città di Torino 2020).



[Image 28. Façade of the Via Agliè public washrooms. 2011. Photo by Giuseppe Beraudo. Retrieved on May 23, 2022 at *Museo Torino* website: https://www.museotorino.it/view/s/1cbd5abbeae54b67af4a9300b6e6568e]

Among the principles of the regulation, the one of "non-subrogation" (*non surrogazione*) reminds that the co-management should never become an instrument for the administration to hand over its duty to deliver public functions and services. In Turin, this remains an intensely contested issue as the local administration strongly relies on such mechanisms and collaborations with local non-profit organisations - as already exemplified and discussed in the previous parts of the thesis.

Erika Mattarella, manager of the baths and employee of the cooperative *Liberi Tutti* for 17 years, was part of the reopening of the public baths since the beginning. As she explained in an interview published on the Cooperative City magazine (Mosquera 2019):

> In 2006, during the Winter Olympics, the Municipality of Turin enacted welfare measures to fight poverty and to give the city a more welcoming look. One of them was the new plan called "Emergenza Freddo" ("Frost Emergency"). The plan included four dormitories, one in every sector of the city, to host homeless during the winter nights. Every dormitory had its own kitchen and bathroom, but here, in the northern sector, they could not connect it to the water supply because on an old factory's polluted soil. So, they reopened these public baths, allowing the homeless to use it for showers. The Municipality published a public call for tenders for the site's management, but nobody seemed to be interested in it and the district authorities involved us into the project. We were a social cooperative focused on assistance and with no experience in such big projects, but we accepted the challenge, although afraid of the huge responsibility it would imply. We renovated the building just enough to make it usable, only changing water pipes and part of the electric grid before beginning our activity. The rest of the structure remained untouched.

This account not only sheds light onto the processes around the reopening of the structure, but also reveals interlinkages between issues related to the urban space, its image and social services. It also highlights connections between local assistance and large-scale events such as the Winter Olympics of 2006. In particular, the account shows how the idea to increase services for homeless was part of the municipal agenda to improve the outlook of the city during the Olympics, thus linked to the notion of decorum (*decoro urbano*) [111] rather than a structural social intervention. In the next section, I describe the services provided in this space, to examine how political agendas of public and private sector created specific practices of community care.

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[111] Refer to the introduction of the dissertation for an in-depth analysis of this terminology.

Social services, cultural activities and the network *Case del Quartiere*

Over the years, the reopening of these public baths transformed into a broader social and cultural project. In 2008, Erika Mattarella and the rest of the cooperative's local employees, through their encounters with the local inhabitants, assessed a more general need for a space for social gathering and hosting cultural activities[112]. I met Erika after she had worked as part of the cooperative for 17 years. After studying communication and working for three years in a communication and marketing agency, Erika had faced a personal crisis as she did not share the same values of her colleagues and did not like that competitive environment. She decided to quit her job and after a while started volunteering with the social services by supporting vulnerable teenagers in *Falchera* (northernmost periphery of Turin). In 2003, as her activities with children and teenagers had grown, she became an intern of the local neighbourhood committee, developed afterschool programs and got to know the cooperative *Liberi Tutti*, as it engaged in the urban renewal plans for *Falchera* (progetto Periferie, as previously discussed in the context of Mirafiori Sud). Through her participation in the local neighbourhood committee, Erika became active part in the social renewal plans, starting in this way what she called her "pathway working with and for citizens"[113].

In 2009, the cooperative received the financial support of the bank foundation *Compagnia di San Paolo*[114] to start transforming the public washrooms into a community centre, hosting, for example, art exhibitions, photography classes, music events, but also social services. Among these, free legal support to social housing tenants and

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[112] Erika Mattarella, director of the Via Agliè community center, interview, 18/11/2019.

[113] Erika Mattarella, interview, 18/11/2019.

[114] *Compagnia di San Paolo* (CSP) is a foundation of banking origin. This foundation, one of the biggest in Italy in terms of net assets and amounts of donations, is based in Turin. For more information on the involvement of CSP in Turin urban development agenda please refer to the introduction of the dissertation.

administrative support to immigrants. During our interview, Erika underlined that their idea always was to create a space open to all, where local inhabitants were free to propose activities: "we almost never looked for things to be organised here. They [the activities] are the result of the proposals of people who come here regularly"[115]. In 2011, the community centre also benefitted from the financial support of the urban renewal plan "Urban Project"[116]. These additional funds allowed for the restructuring of the building, which included the improvement of the washrooms facilities as well as the transformation of the ground floor into a space allocated specifically to social and cultural activities, and a café (Comune di Torino n.d. c). As visible in the picture below, the space was progressively readapted to host new guests, beyond the people using the washrooms. As per 2021, the main room on the ground floor was entirely dedicated to the clients of the café and used for activities and events.

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[115] Erika Mattarella, interview, 18/11/2019.

[116] The "*Urban Project*" was a Local Development Integrated Program funded by the City of Turin, the Piedmont Region and the European Union. It lasted from 2011 to 2015 and costed 35 million euro. *Urban Barriera di Milano* included 34 interventions which revolved around physical-environmental transformations, fostering economic activities and employment as well as socio-cultural services. See also part one and two of the dissertation for other examples of "*Urban Project"* interventions in Mirafiori Sud and Barriera di Milano.



[Image 29. Main room at the Via Agliè public washrooms. 03/09/ 2019. Photo by the author.]

As it grew, the community centre also served increasingly as a liaison between local institutions and inhabitants: on one hand, the administration started using the work of the community centre to get a better sense of what was going on in the area and the challenges faced by its population. On the other, it was presented as a bridge to bring the voice and requests of local groups at discussion tables with the administration. Erika mentioned the example of a group of elderlies who wanted to ask to replace the night tram with buses to reduce noise provoked by the railways track. As she explained:

> among other things, the intermediation of the community centre limits the expectations [of the citizens]. […]. You introduce in the head of the inhabitants how the process of public demands works[117].

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[117] Erika Mattarella, interview, 18/11/2019. Original quote: "*E poi tra l'altro l'intermediazione di una casa di quartiere frena l'aspettativa. […] Freni e costruisci nella testa degli abitanti il percorso delle istanze pubbliche*."

Again, the words of Erika reveal more than the simple functioning of the centre. Her sentence also highlights the context-specific understanding of the idea of voicing inhabitants' needs. Here it is connected to reducing their expectation and educating them to the normalising possibly lengthily and inefficient procedures. As I will further discuss, I argue that the morality that animates the community centre is one that aims to attenuate public discontent, mitigate local challenges, rather than advancing a radical transformation of local conditions. This approach should be contextualised as part of the transforming idea of "doing good", as retraced in the history of social solidarity practices in Italy by Marcon (2004). Particularly relevant here is Marcon (2004)'s analysis of the transformation of the way of understanding civic engagement in the 1990s. This was the period when the notion of Third Sector (*terzo settore*) developed in Italy. As part of this process, the idea of engagement transformed into a new form of entrepreneurship. The functions of critique and social transformations were put on the side and priority was given to new objectives such as economic efficiency and dialogue with institutions (Marcon 2004, 215).

Such function of intermediation of the community centre was officialised and further expanded in 2012, with the development of the city-wide network of community centres (*Rete delle Case del Quartiere*). The network gathered nine public spaces which were physically and socially renewed, thanks to the support of public institutions, private funding agents, associations and citizens. As described in its chart, the network is framed as a mean to "encourage a more symbiotic relation between institutions and citizens, overcome sectoral policies and put in communication the city centres and the peripheries" (Bagni Pubblici n.d.). To expand on these notions (such as "symbiotic relation" and "put in communication"), in the next section, I discuss how Turin community centres can be examined as urban assemblers (Koster and van Leynseele 2018). I also problematise their role in the context of austerity. I make use of theory on assemblage (Koster and van Leynseele 2018) and "governing through community" (e.g. Rose 1999) and contribute to this set of literature by arguing about the importance played by the actual physical space of community centres such as Via Agliè.

The community centre as an assembler

The increasing number of roles played by the social cooperative *Liberi Tutti* (from the management of public washrooms to the promotion of social and cultural services) represents yet another instantiation of the growing functions of Third Sector organisations in the delivery of welfare in a context of austerity. As suggested by Anjaria and Rao (2014) (who propose a different approach to the study of neoliberalism), contemporary processes of restructuring should be analysed as "co-produced by top-down and bottom-up processes" (411). Based on their analysis of local government reform and new health insurance in India, the authors invite to pay greater attention to "the ways the state is restructured by the social processes that follow on from neoliberal reform" (Anjaria and Rao 2014, 410).

In the case of Via Agliè, the community centre emerged as a bottom-up response to local needs in the face of the limited engagement of the administration. Following Anjaria and Rao (2014), it also contributed to an acceptance of austerity, promoting citizen activation through the idea that citizens involvement is central to the revitalisation of the neighbourhood and its services. The growing collaborations between the local administration and the cooperative *Liberi Tutti* also further normalised the fact that local organisations should act as brokers between the city administration and the inhabitants. Following Koster and van Leynseele (2018, 804)[118], who link brokerage to assemblage theory, the community centre can be regarded as an "assembler":

> […] as 'assemblers', as connective agents who actively bring together the different elements of the development assemblages they operate in and are targeted by. They assemble government, citizen and corporate actors, institutions and resources.

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[118] This article opens a special issue, also edited by the Koster and van Leynseele, entitled *Assembling development across the globe: Ethnographies of brokerage*. It functions as a theoretical introduction to the special issue: the two authors review anthropological literature on brokerage and present their contribution to such debate, namely the ways in which they understand brokers as assemblers and make use of a comparative approach.

The authors further argue that such assemblage can engender "practices of alignment, coercion and resistance and also spur experiments aimed at reconciling old and new subjectivities and modes of organisation" - while underlining that assemblage is not governed by a singular logic (Koster and van Leynseele 2018, 805).

While the community centre offered a multiplicity of activities, partook to and developed various projects and results, it also created alignment around a specific morality. To discuss such moral features, I take the example of a food aid related project co-promoted by the centre before COVID-19 pandemic which was called *Fa Bene* (introduced before). Before describing the project more in details, it is worth mentioning that, more generally, when I started my fieldwork at the community centre, food was used as means to create new relations and social inclusion. It was present at the community centre in multiple ways but most directly through its bistro (where food was offered at accessible prices and procured only in the nearby shops) and through Fa Bene.

Fa Bene was a project born in Barriera di Milano in 2014, and later extended to several other neighbourhoods in Turin, with the objective of collecting unsold food surplus or client's donations at the marketplace. The food was then redistributed to families living in precarious conditions, which, in exchange, made themselves available to volunteer within the local community. The goals of the project (developed by the social committee *S-nodi* in collaboration with *Liberi Tutti* and funded by *Compagnia di San Paolo*) were to create social inclusion and a support system for families in need at the local level as well as develop community-based entertainment and capacity building both at the marketplace and the community centre (Fa bene 2020; Mari and Vasile 2020).



[Image 30. Fa Bene volunteers getting ready to go to the market. Via Agliè community centre, 08/01/ 2020. Photo by the author.]

Conducting research within the Fa Bene group from October 2019 to February 2020, when the local section of the project ended, led me to regularly visit the community centre and develop a friendly relation to its manager, employees and Fa Bene food recipients and volunteers. Many activities as part of Fa Bene were based on volunteer work and the idea of active participation of beneficiaries. Such participation occurred through their engagement in the collection of food, at the market, or through volunteer work at the community centre. The latter often meant cleaning or rearranging shared spaces and facilities. Following the logic of the Fa Bene project, this was key to foster inclusion and give these people more opportunities to develop new relations rather than being there as "passive recipients". For example, as highlighted by Fa Bene local coordinator Nadia, being at the community centre was an opportunity for women of foreign origins to interact in Italian, get to know other people and maybe find a job through word-to-mouth. In this perspective, Fa Bene and food donations were just a small part of a broader project for transforming social interactions in the area, namely, using Nadia's words, "an excuse for reviving all kind of things in the community"[119].

[119] Nadia Burdese, Fa Bene worker, interview, 01/03/2020.

Building on de Wilde and Duyvendak (2016), I frame such morality as part of the process they name "engineering community spirit". These anthropologists, who analyse a community participation programme in a deprived Amsterdam neighbourhood, build on Rose (1999) analysis of "governing through community" to point to the central place of community participation and active citizenship in Dutch programmes of urban renewal. de Wilde and Duyvendak (2016) stressed how local practitioners make use of "sensitising policy techniques" for "getting residents "into the spirit" of community engagement […], feel, see and desire in *designated* ways" (979).

In the neighbourhood of Barriera di Milano, where many people live in precarious conditions, such techniques represented a shift in the way of thinking and operationalising urban regeneration (Salone 2018). Such techniques of community participation, and the specific morality that came with it, also found a fertile ground as many local inhabitants were keen to do anything to "make things change" (*far cambiare le cose*), a recurrent expression used by the research participants. Abandoned by the local administration, they felt like they had no other choice than partaking in these schemes. This was also the case of Nadia, whom, however, brought in these practices also the spontaneity of interactions she took with her from her past experiences as grassroots activist. While she operated within Fa Bene and related standards, she also detached herself from its bureaucracy, valued self-organisation and informal mutual help. On several occasions, she told me that she did not understand all the funding and partnership mechanisms at the back of the project. Nadia simply navigated this system to be with people and because she lacked food herself. These elements about the life path of Nadia are important to underline that the community centre also acted as an assembler of people with very different backgrounds and visions of social organisation. However, in a way or another, their visions ended up being incorporated in the logic and morality of the non-profit sector.

Covid-19 solidarities and food aid

Various crises and forms of solidarity

Comparably to other southern European countries, over the last decades, the Italian critical socio-economic situation and the policies of austerity affected people's "ability to ensure even their physical reproduction" (Matos 2020, 116). This became even more apparent with the COVID-19 sanitary crisis, which was accompanied (and still is) by dramatic socio-economic consequences, especially among the most vulnerable groups of the population. As per June 2020, statistical forecasts indicated that the COVID-19 social crisis would double the number of the "absolute poor" (1.7 million of households in 2019) and particularly affect the "relative poor" due to the increase of unemployment and worsening precarious working conditions (Ciccarelli 2020; Istat 2020). According to this data, the ratio of absolute poor was five times higher when looking at households of foreign origins who reside in Italy (Istat 2020). This is linked, among other things, to their limited access to state solidarity programs such as basic income (*reddito di cittadinanza*) – due, for example, to language and bureaucratic barriers and the criteria of number of years of residency (minimum 10 years of residency and long-term permit)[120]. COVID-19 also increased social inequalities in Italian cities (especially in the urban peripheries) due to interruption of informal labour: informal workers were left without work nor had access to any form of welfare state support such as unemployment benefits (Grassi 2022, 274).

In Italy, from March 2020 onwards, as the COVID-19 crisis hit the country, a high number of solidarity initiatives flourished all over the country (e.g. Polchi 2020; Vitale 2020). Aid and solidarity became buzzwords in the media and public debate: solidarity towards vulnerable groups of the population such as isolated elderlies, homeless people, or families in situation of economic hardship. Solidarity towards local businesses and precarious workers affected by the restrictive measures. Solidarity as state programs, donations by

[120] See also (Hate Speech 2022).

bank foundations, businesses or individual contributors. Solidarity through the activation and operational work of volunteers, official associations and grassroots groups. News often reported on such solidarity presented as a social by-product of the pandemic and a motive of national pride. For example, this was the case of articles on the key role of volunteers and social movements in supporting the very functioning of welfare at city level (e.g. Musella 2020) or TV reportages and documentaries showing the everyday work of volunteers in charitable groups and religious entities (e.g. Piacenza 2021).

The agents and entities who acted in solidarity with these vulnerable groups were various, ranging from the Church and non-profit organisations to the family. As highlighted by the literature on COVID-19, which is further developing as I am writing this dissertation, solidarity and mutual aid initiatives increased in numbers, changed scale and forms, globally (e.g. Sitrin and Colectiva Sembrar 2020). During my fieldwork in Turin at the time of the pandemic, I observed and differentiated between institutionalised forms of solidarity and more grassroots ones – meaning, most often, developed by smaller groups with a critical approach to the crisis and a broader scope of intervention, going beyond emergency aid. Institutionalised solidarity surely seemed more prominent and occupied much more space in media and public debate. From this perspective, I share the experience of Susana Narotzky (2021, 13) when she writes:

> Contrary to the accounts of solidarity grassroots movements that have emerged in the wake of the terrible breakdown of social reproduction after the financial crisis, we have witnessed only scattered experiments of alternative, non-market solidarities. Solidarity has mostly been tied to the Church, the state, the family and especially women.

In the case of Turin, solidarity during COVID-19 was indeed most often tied to these same structures. In most cases, solidarity operations were rather disconnected from the critical questioning of the origins of the crisis, including neoliberal urban governance and the inequalities it produced. However, I will keep these grassroots alternatives in the discussion throughout this part of the dissertation and, more

specifically, refer to the case of the grassroots neighbourhood network Rete Zona Aurora Solidale. This network was also referred as SOSpesa, meaning SOS shopping but also hinting to the practice of the *caffè sospeso* or 'pending coffee', which is a cup of coffee paid for in advance for any following customer who might need it, as an anonymous donation. The network was a collaboration between grassroots groups, namely a neighbourhood committee (*Comitato di Zona Aurora*), an occupied social centre (*Laboratorio Culturale Autogestito Manituana*) and a non-profit organisation (*Educadora*), all based in the Aurora neighbourhood. This network supported many families with food aid packages from March to July 2020, while promoting an entitlements-based (versus charity) approach to the crisis response. As we summarised in the article *Torino: from food to demands,* the network organised several public food distributions and demonstrations to hold local institutions accountable for the social crisis and demand adequate income support and social policies (del bello *et al*. 2020).

Between the end of April and July 2020, I took part to the activities of this network, when compatible with my work at Via Agliè. I did less shifts there than at Via Agliè but partook to the assemblies and all the public food distributions. My participation to this network happened as a natural continuation of my personal engagement within the neighbourhood committee Comitato di Zona Aurora. While, during the previous months, I wanted and had managed to keep this separated from the research activities, the engagement of the committee in food-related activities implied for me the implosion of the complex (and maybe fictitious) boundary between personal life and fieldwork (and between friends and research participants) (see also Thajib et al 2019). I had to question and redefine (with myself and the others) my positionality within the group as well as what was going in and what was staying out of the research. This process was facilitated using audio-recorded interviews (during which I felt that my role was clear and the information gathered consensually shared for research purposes), my possibility to share contacts, information and reflections gained throughout the research, and the short duration of this overlap (only the last three months of my fieldwork).

Punctual comparisons between the case of the Via Agliè food aid hub and the network Rete Zona Aurora Solidale allow for the specific features of the case of institutionalized solidarity to emerge more clearly. Moreover, it will help also going beyond a dichotomic narrative of clearly differentiated forms of solidarity but rather discuss porous boundaries between public and third sector solidarity and between institutionalized and grassroots solidarity. The case of Rete Zona Aurora Solidale will also be important to report on what is being discussed in recent literature in terms of a renewal of grassroots solidarity linked to COVID-19. For example, as reported in Interface special issue 12(1) (2020), globally, COVID-19 was accompanied by the development of a series of grassroots movements' struggles and forms of solidarity. These included feminist solidarity networks in Mexico, collective claims by healthcare workers in Egypt, solidarity kitchens in the UK, and the establishment of self-governed and autonomous food systems in Italy, to name a few (Interface 2020).

Different responses to food insecurity

In Italy, food insecurity was one of the most immediate consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. This was revealed by the increasing number of requests for aid registered by *Caritas* (more than 153.000 new requests) and *Banco Alimentare* (an increase of 40% in food packages delivered), which are the largest food assistance organisations in the country (Actionaid 2020). To respond to such food emergency, the government allocated 400 million euros to be shared among the 8000 Italian municipalities. With this budget, and thanks to the additional mobilisation of private donors and local associations, municipalities such as Turin developed a system of food vouchers and food aid packages. In most cases, the public intervention was insufficient as resources mobilised showed to be inadequate when compared to the number of demands and needs of the population. Moreover, the aid programs' application criteria often revealed themselves discriminatory, penalising people based on residency and income benchmarks (Actionaid 2020). The emergency also shed light on the absence of large-scale strategies that would facilitate coordinated interventions (at municipal level, for example) to tackle food poverty city wide (Actionaid 2020).

In Turin, the problem of food insecurity quickly became visible in Aurora and Barriera di Milano, the neighbourhoods where I lived and undertook part of my research. One of the most emblematic information in this sense was the number of food vouchers requests (Aurora and Barriera reaching the highest numbers of the city) and the ones which remained unanswered: around eight thousand families who asked for such aid were left behind, as the vouchers exhausted a day after the application process had started (Ricci 2020).

Therefore, local non-profit organisations, charities, religious entities, as well as grassroots collectives were key for forwarding social support. Similarly to what was pointed out by Grassi (2022) in the case of Milan, not all people facing difficulties managed to access official support systems, be it because these were overloaded or because their navigation required social and cultural capital. In this context, grassroots and informal networks played a key role in extending access to aid to more households. Local mainstream news applauded daily the bourgeoning of local solidarity initiatives. In a way, these also contributed to spreading the imaginary that the social costs of the pandemic (and past years of austerity) could be faced by mutual care and acts of responsibility (r*esponsabilizzazione*) of single citizens and local communities.

In the domain of food insecurity this was already the case before COVID-19. A variety of analysis of food aid emerged in the Italian literature, focusing specifically on the responses put in place by non-profit organisations. In the book *Food Poverty in Italy: the responses of the second welfare*[121], Maino *et al*. (2016) narrate about the non-profit organisations and resources that are mobilised to face food poverty and the welfare state retrenchment in the peninsula. The authors discuss the example of the *Banco Alimentare* (Food Bank), a country wide network composed of a main foundation and local

[121] In Italy, the term second welfare (*secondo welfare*) is used to refer to "a mix of social protection and social investment programs which are not funded by the State, but provided instead by a wide range of economic and social actors, linked to territories and local communities, but open to trans-local partnerships and collaborations (including the EU)" (Ferrera and Maino 2011, 20).

organisations promoting the recuperation of food surplus and their redistribution to charities (Banco Alimentare n.d.). Maino *et al*. (2016) also present a variety of other forms of aid such as solidarity supermarkets managed by volunteers (*empori solidali*)[122], purchase groups and urban agriculture. Toldo (2017) reports on Turin context and a variety of local initiatives engaged in food surplus recuperation and distribution, similarly to food banks[123].

As part of the local responses to the COVID-19 crisis, both Via Agliè community centre and Rete Zona Aurora Solidale mobilised to provide basic support to food insecure households. Both groups got organised to collect food donations and deliver food aid packages following, however, different approaches in terms of their resources, collaborations and relation to food recipients. As I participated to these two groups - and discussed about the theme of food insecurity with research participants, friends and activists engaged in the area -, I discovered how these different approaches not only represented differences in the practice of food aid but also in terms of its ideology and underlying visions of welfare and community. As also problematised by Narotzky (2020, 13):

> Forms of mutual help rely on different ideological discourses, expectations and entitlements that result in different moral valuations, practices and material transfers. Charities, state benefits, third sector organisations, self-organising groups and family networks imply different reconfigurations of self-worth as well as feelings of dependency and autonomy, entailing the

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[122] The *Empori Solidali* are free supermarkets managed by non-profit organisations often working as networks. The first one developed in Genoa in 1997 and, as per 2020, they are more than 200 all over Italy. They are based on the redistribution of food surpluses and often function on the basis of volunteer work (Redazione Nonsprecare 2022).

[123] Toldo (2017) presents these initiatives as practices of care. The author argues that this is because of the ways in which the activities are co-organized with the aid recipients, and more generally, because these projects tend to frame food needs as a "social deprivation and not only as a form of material injustice" (271, translation is my own).

> renegotiation of the boundaries between claims and entitlements, rights and needs.

It is precisely around these various practices, valuations and ways of conceptualising welfare that the two groups I observed were different from one another. One of their key ideological differences was the way of understanding mutual help around food aid. While the development of the Via Agliè hub represented a way in which institutions and third sector criss-crossed their operations – in a process that I will unpack in detail in the next chapter -, the grassroots Rete Zona Aurora Solidale aimed at building relations of informal mutual help among who organised and received food aid. These activists wanted, in the long term, to move away from such dichotomic division between food giver and recipient. They framed their intervention as part of a broader set of actions targeted at enhancing new relations among people in the area. The network wanted to differentiate itself from aid and charity-like practices (*assistenzialismo*), though this was not always easy and immediate in the practice. It aimed at fostering a sense of shared conditions and ability to act collectively, beyond the pandemic. The vision of these activists was influenced by their long-term political engagement in the area and the notion of mutualism (*mutualismo*), which they used recurrently, and which has a long history in the Italian context (e.g. Marcon 2004; Cannavò 2018). This is especially true in the case of working-class Turin, which, already in the first decades of the twentieth century, was characterised by self-managed networks of relations, informal exchanges and solidarity at neighbourhood level (Gribaudi 1987).

Cannavò (2018) reports on different contemporary forms of mutualism, for example the one of conflictual mutualism (*mutualismo conflittuale*) as part of which the author includes a classification of several examples of food related initiatives. These include the case of *Mondeggi Bene Comune – Fattoria senza padroni* (literally Mondeggi Common Good – farm without owners), a farm of 200 hectares situated close to Florence (Italy) which is occupied and managed autonomously by a committee of local inhabitants, farmers and unemployed promoting food sovereignty and peasant agriculture (Cannavò 2018; Mondeggi Bene Comune n.d.). It also includes the case of *Solidarity for All*, a Greek network of solidarity initiatives

which developed after the protests of 2011 and continues to organise self-managed food distribution, solidarity kitchens and short food chains. These initiatives do not want to have only a social function but also have a clearly stated political positioning and the broader aim of reorganising societal interactions (Cannavò 2018). Based on the analysis of these and other cases, the author frames conflictual mutualism as a set of practices which:

> […] is not part of a process of welfare state dismantlement. On the contrary. It advances as an antidote to that process and as a tool to reinforce unusual forms of public service guaranteed to and managed by all. (Cannavò 2018, 147, translation is my own)

The case of the Zona Aurora Solidale network is to be contextualised in such set of experiences because of the above-mentioned political nature of its self-organisation and claims. It presented itself as a tool for finding collective solutions to ongoing problems but also to mobilise for transformation, beyond the management of poverty.

Such setup contrasted with the one of the Via Agliè hub, which, referring back to the quote above, emerged precisely from collaborations between the public, private and third sector to fill the gap left by the lack of public intervention. In this perspective, this approach to the alleviation of food insecurity (and poverty, more generally) is inscribed in continuity with welfare state retrenchment. Similarly to other interventions of the third sector, these are perfectly compatible with austerity policies and in fact are frequently used by many local governments to alleviate itself from social reproduction responsibilities (Del Re 2015).

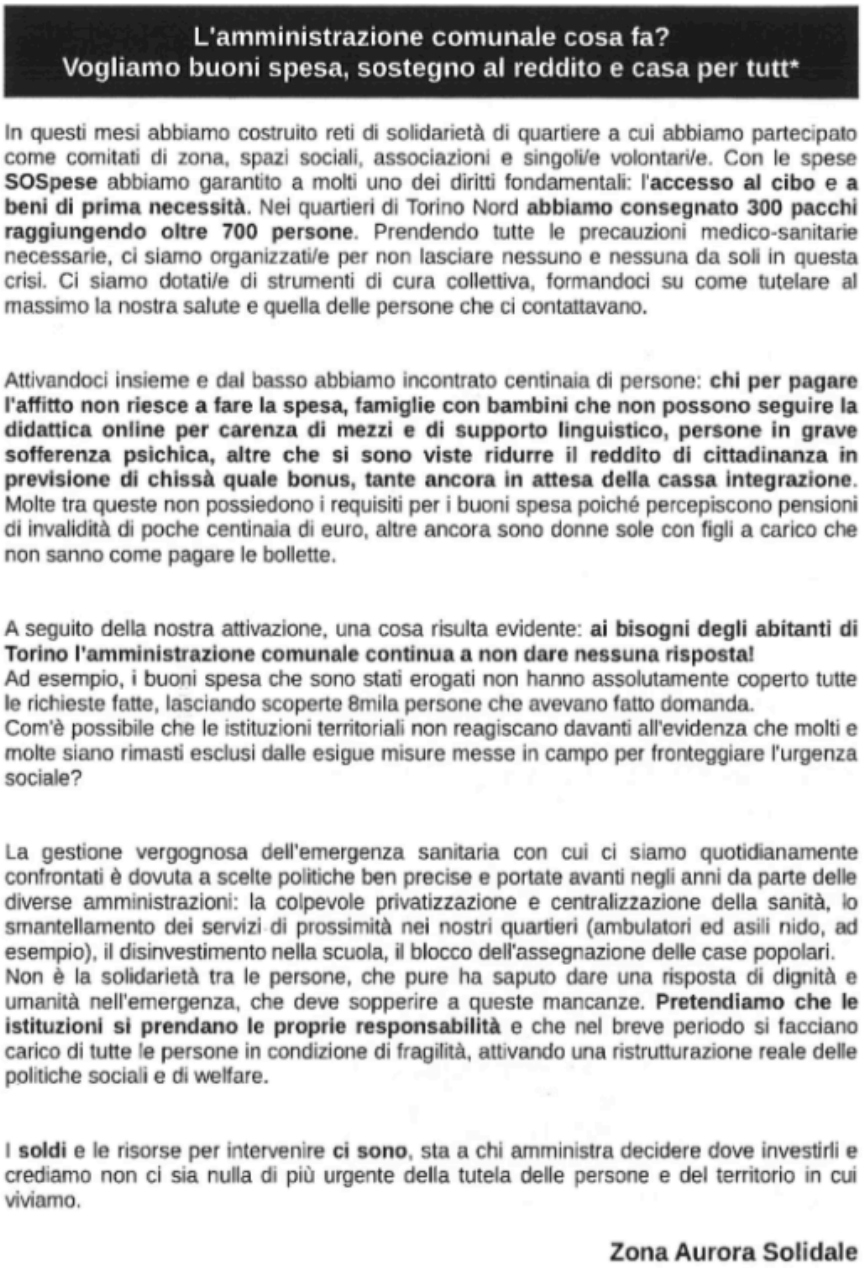
In the context of the community centre, mutualism was not part of the terminology used. The idea of collective action only included the group of volunteers, who worked together creating a "community of volunteers"[124], but most of which never really encountered the food aid recipients. While people at Via Agliè often referred to the idea of

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[124] Erika Mattarella, Hakima Eljamaoui and Martina Dragoni, director and employees at the Via Agliè community centre, group interview, 11/05/2020.

community care and neighbourhood solidarity, the separation between who distributed and who received food remained present until the very end of the project. Moreover, volunteers were not part of decision-making processes (for example, no assemblies to discuss the directions of the project were organised) but they followed the instructions of the community centre's director and employees. Their possibility to play a role in decision-making was relegated to the operations around the construction of the food packages. Moreover, when discussing with the centre's director and employees, they also sometimes felt that they lacked control over decision-making, as they depended on public and private institutions in terms of their material and economic resources.

Another fundamental difference between the two initiatives and approaches to food insecurity revolved around the valuation of food as a need or as a right. After the reduction of the lockdown measure, the network Aurora Solidale organised public food distributions in front of the local administration offices, that aimed at highlighting the responsibility of institutions to ensure basic rights such as food. Moreover, they made use of various leaflets: some with contact information in Italian, French and Arabic, some with references to other grassroots solidarity initiatives, and others with a scan of a newspaper article about the protests organised by the network. Leaflets were inserted in the food aid packages to share with recipients a political analysis and the invite to take part to the discussion.



L'amministrazione comunale cosa fa?
Vogliamo buoni spesa, sostegno al reddito e casa per tutt*

In questi mesi abbiamo costruito reti di solidarietà di quartiere a cui abbiamo partecipato come comitati di zona, spazi sociali, associazioni e singoli/e volontari/e. Con le spese **SOSpese** abbiamo garantito a molti uno dei diritti fondamentali: l'**accesso al cibo e a beni di prima necessità**. Nei quartieri di Torino Nord **abbiamo consegnato 300 pacchi raggiungendo oltre 700 persone**. Prendendo tutte le precauzioni medico-sanitarie necessarie, ci siamo organizzati/e per non lasciare nessuno e nessuna da soli in questa crisi. Ci siamo dotati/e di strumenti di cura collettiva, formandoci su come tutelare al massimo la nostra salute e quella delle persone che ci contattavano.

Attivandoci insieme e dal basso abbiamo incontrato centinaia di persone: **chi per pagare l'affitto non riesce a fare la spesa, famiglie con bambini che non possono seguire la didattica online per carenza di mezzi e di supporto linguistico, persone in grave sofferenza psichica, altre che si sono viste ridurre il reddito di cittadinanza in previsione di chissà quale bonus, tante ancora in attesa della cassa integrazione**. Molte tra queste non possiedono i requisiti per i buoni spesa poiché percepiscono pensioni di invalidità di poche centinaia di euro, altre ancora sono donne sole con figli a carico che non sanno come pagare le bollette.

A seguito della nostra attivazione, una cosa risulta evidente: **ai bisogni degli abitanti di Torino l'amministrazione comunale continua a non dare nessuna risposta!**
Ad esempio, i buoni spesa che sono stati erogati non hanno assolutamente coperto tutte le richieste fatte, lasciando scoperte 8mila persone che avevano fatto domanda.
Com'è possibile che le istituzioni territoriali non reagiscano davanti all'evidenza che molti e molte siano rimasti esclusi dalle esigue misure messe in campo per fronteggiare l'urgenza sociale?

La gestione vergognosa dell'emergenza sanitaria con cui ci siamo quotidianamente confrontati è dovuta a scelte politiche ben precise e portate avanti negli anni da parte delle diverse amministrazioni: la colpevole privatizzazione e centralizzazione della sanità, lo smantellamento dei servizi di prossimità nei nostri quartieri (ambulatori ed asili nido, ad esempio), il disinvestimento nella scuola, il blocco dell'assegnazione delle case popolari.
Non è la solidarietà tra le persone, che pure ha saputo dare una risposta di dignità e umanità nell'emergenza, che deve sopperire a queste mancanze. **Pretendiamo che le istituzioni si prendano le proprie responsabilità** e che nel breve periodo si facciano carico di tutte le persone in condizione di fragilità, attivando una ristrutturazione reale delle politiche sociali e di welfare.

I **soldi** e le risorse per intervenire **ci sono**, sta a chi amministra decidere dove investirli e crediamo non ci sia nulla di più urgente della tutela delle persone e del territorio in cui viviamo.

Zona Aurora Solidale

[Image 31. One of the leaflets of the network Zona Aurora Solidale entitled "And what is the municipality doing? We want food vouchers, income support and housing for all". May 2020.]

In the leaflet above, for example, the activists of Zona Aurora Solidale explained in detail their activities as well as denounced the limited intervention of the public administration. In particular, the leaflet points to the importance of developing more food vouchers as well as income support subsidies. At Via Agliè, ideological discourses and political discussions about citizens' rights were, on the contrary, rather silenced. However, they surely influenced the functioning of the hub. In the next section, I discuss the initial set up, resources and material of the hub to provide examples of how moral and political premises shaped its daily activities.

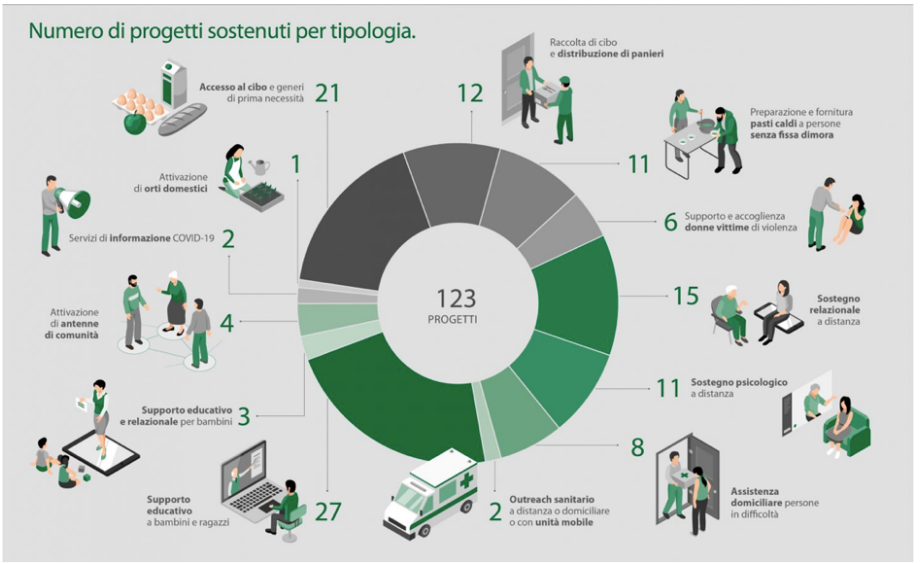
Assemblage or the making of the Via Agliè food aid hub

"Together everything will be alright"

Mid-March 2020, I learned that Via Agliè community centre was going to be involved in a COVID-19 emergency food aid initiative financed by the banking foundation *Compagnia di San Paolo* (from now on CSP). The foundation had developed an emergency call for projects named "Together everything will be alright" (*Insieme andrà tutto bene*) through which it distributed two million euros among 123 social projects, 34 of which situated in the metropolitan area of Turin (Compagnia di San Paolo 2020). Such intervention is to be contextualised as part of this foundation's long history of involvement in the urban development agendas and in social services in the city. Ravazzi (2016), among others, analysed the influence of the foundation in terms of its financing of public interest interventions and its participation in local policymaking. Even more as austerity impacts the ability of local governments to address public needs, such foundations have gained an increasingly significant role in terms of public administration (Ravazzi 2016). CSP emergency call for project is also to be analysed as part of the Europe-wide mobilisation of several foundations during the pandemic (EFC 2020).

The selected project proposals had been submitted by various non-profit organisations, social cooperatives, volunteer groups - including some that were part of my research and were already discussed in the

dissertation such as Eco dalle Città. They proposed to deal with several issues brought to the forefront by the sanitary crisis and lockdown measured, including food security, psychological and educational support on distance and COVID-19-related information services.



[Image 32. Number and typology of projects financed by the call *Insieme andrà tutto bene*. Infographic developed by *Compagnia di San Paolo*. Retrieved on 22/12/2020 at:*https://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/it/news/esiti-del-bando-insieme-andra-tutto-bene-di-generazione-urbana-2/*]

On March 25th, I called Erika (the director of Via Agliè community centre) to ask if she could tell me more about the project in which they were going to be involved and whether I could join their team as a researcher and volunteer. She responded positively, explaining that they were about to organise a large call for volunteers, who were needed to actually forward the project in practice. Erika sounded enthusiastic about starting this new initiative, this "new challenge" as she put it, while already overwhelmed by the number of calls and organisational work it entailed. As she explained to me some practicalities, she mentioned several local partners that would be part of the initiative including private companies in the area such as the local branch of the retail company *Leroy Merlin*. While such

cooperation initially seemed to me out of place, I soon got used to the assemblage (Koster and Van Leynseele 2018) of diverse local and transnational actors which composed and sustained the functioning of the food aid hub. While it already worked as a contact point between the local administration and inhabitants, as well as among different local initiatives, more than ever, the COVID-19 crisis transformed the centre into an assemblage of urban agents who had nothing to do with one another, but now wanted to cooperate. The centre assembled firstly in the sense of "fitting together different actors, institutions and resources" and giving shape to "a temporary structure" (Koster and Van Leynseele 2018, 804)[125]. Secondly, assembling meant that its very functioning also started to depend on an increasing number of other actors differently included in the operations – such as actors who donated food, delivered it, insured the volunteers or identified recipients.

The municipal hat

The picture became even more complex a few days later, during an initial online meeting with the first 21 recruited volunteers. Erika presented the initiative as part of a municipal, city-wide food aid program. She explained that the municipality had contacted her to ask if they were willing to participate and that this seemed like the natural continuation of their engagement to support local families. During her account of such developments, Erika never mentioned CSP and their funds. I argue that, in a way, her narration revealed how, on a cultural level, this foundation's intervention in the social sector was normalized – CSP and the municipality were often mentioned as one. Such overlap, which appeared recurrently during my whole fieldwork in the accounts of workers of non-profit organisations, seem to add to Ravazzi's (2016) analysis of the increasingly significant role of CSP in funding public interest activities.

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[125] Koster and Van Leynseele (2018) use these terms precisely to define what the process of assembling is. Their definition is developed on the basis of the work of other scholars who wrote on assemblage theory before. Assemblage theory is based on Deleuze and Guattari (1987)'s philosophical concept of assemblage, coming from the French term "*agencement*".

Looking at the role of the foundation from the perspective of non-profit organisations on the ground, it is possible to observe its impacts not in terms of policy processes but on a cultural level. The way in which the interventions of CSP were perceived as common sense speak of cultural transformations in the ways in which Turin municipality and the local administration are envisioned. More precisely, it speaks of the widely shared perception that the public sector is limited in its operation due to lack of resources. As part of this approach, there are no other options than to support its action through the private sector. The long-term and pervasive interventions of the foundation normalised its presence, as it increasingly acted as part of local institutions, as a figure to which the financing of welfare was outsourced. Over time, such interpretation legitimised the role of such foundations as "co-producers of public goods" (Ravazzi 2016, 920).

As Erika accepted the municipal request, together with many other organisations around the city (among which six community centres), Via Agliè officially became part of the network "Solidarious Turin" (*Torino Solidale*) and an official food hub (*snodo alimentare*). From then onwards, for several months, it dedicated its courtyard and main room to the storage of various food donations[126]. The term "hub" (*snodo, snodo alimentare, snodo territoriale*) became widespread as part of the new vocabulary of emergency food aid, reflecting the assembling function, once again, of these actors. In addition to the community centres, the network was composed of several non-profit organisations such as the food bank *Banco Alimentare* and private agents, which donated part of the food needed to compose the packages. It also included the participation of the public sector in the form of the Civil Protection forces (*Protezione Civile*) and the municipality.

The Civil Protection forces worked to support the management of the requests for help that arrived via the dedicated helpline. They then divided these between the different city hubs, usually following the

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[126] See also the first news and articles explaining about the development of the network: Rete delle Case del Quartiere (2020) and Comune di Torino (2020a).

criteria of geographical proximity (between a hub and a household) and hubs' maximum capability. The helpline of the Civil Protection became a symbol of institutional emergency response, as it was advertised on websites, newspapers and leaflets in the street. At the community centre, whenever new people called or passed by to ask for support, we could not handle their case directly but had to ask them to go through the helpline. Only in this way they could be inserted in the official list of beneficiaries. The helpline got congested soon after it was put in place, as too many people called to ask for support. This was also reported by Grassi (2022) in the case of similar helplines set up in Milan.

For what concerns the municipality: in the first months of the pandemic, it was mainly in charge of the distribution of emergency food vouchers. For several months, it was not clear how and to what extent it was involved in the food procurement for the hubs. This mixed system also characterised other cities including Milan – and, in particular, the response to food insecurity in the peripheral area San Siro (Grassi 2022). Also in that case, the emergency response involved a variety of actors which gathered around the funding given by Milan banking foundation *Fondazione Cariplo*. Moreover, in Milan as well, these improvised food aid centres were called "hubs" (Grassi 2022, 277). In Turin, the engagement of the municipality changed over time and its responsibilities became clearer from summer 2020 onwards, as it took more direct control of the composition of the food packages – a change of approach, which I will further investigate in the next chapter.

To conclude, in this chapter, I introduced the community centre and the various actors it assembled before and during its temporary transformation into an official food aid hub. By retracing the history of the community centre, I underlined the continuities in the local shape taken by welfare in the form of community care. In particular, I explained about the long-term role played by the community centre. Building on Koster and Van Leynseele (2018), I analysed it as an assembler, namely functioning as a juncture between the local administration, non-profit organisations, collective initiatives and the population. Through its various activities, the centre encouraged

volunteering and citizens activation as means to achieve better living conditions in the area.

In the context of Barriera di Milano, the idea of community participation found fertile ground as proven by people's active involvement at the community centre. More generally, the area is characterised by a high number of non-profit organisations, cultural associations and informal groups differently involved in its renewal. These forms of participation speak of a local feeling of abandonment by the public administration, often perceived by research participants as inefficient and lacking resources. Moreover, the advancement of a strongly morally connotated vision of community care is to be contextualised as part of the progressive retrenchment of the welfare state and neoliberal reforms in Italy, more generally. In this context, I argue that while carrying out its role as assembler, the community centre became nested into and contributed to neoliberal reform and its legitimisation from the bottom-up (see also Anjaria and Rao 2014). Some of the instantiations of these trends are the following: the local recasting of rights into needs, in both the language and practices; the community centre's key role in the COVID-19 emergency response; and the legitimisation of philanthropic foundations as co-producers of public services.

By presenting some of the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic such as food insecurity, I have juxtaposed such approach to solidarity and welfare to other forms of mutual help. In particular, I introduced the case of the network Zona Aurora Solidale to talk about local configurations of conflictual mutualism (Cannavò 2018). I will keep referencing back to the case of this network to juxtapose it to the hub of Via Agliè to reveal discontinuities but also some of the shared challenges and operational skills needed for handling emergency food.

In the next chapter, I delve deeper into the work of the community centre as a food aid hub by discussing the materiality and morality at the basis of its operations during the pandemic. I will explain about the process around the making of food aid packages and particularly focus on the food that was used. I will then describe the key figures of the hub, namely the ones of the volunteer and the aid recipients, pointing to their roles, social representations and moral differentiation. I will

also come back to the interactions between the community centre and Turin municipality: in particular, I will explain more about the municipality's evolving intervention and its blurring boundaries.

Chapter VII. The materiality and morality of food aid

April 2nd 2020 was my first day as a volunteer and the official starting day of the food aid related activities at the community centre. On my shift, we were around six volunteers, working at the composition of food packages under the supervision of Hakima, one of the employees of the community centre, a friendly and resourceful woman of Moroccan origins in her thirties. Several pallets and cardboards containing dry food had already been delivered: all of them had been stocked in big piles at the back of the courtyard of the centre. On some boxes one could read about the provenance of the products, such as "EU FEAD" or "*Banco Alimentare* (food bank) - donations collected at supermarkets".

We started by reorganising the courtyard to create a line of several tables where to put the boxes. We debated on which was the fastest way to compose the packages and we started by dividing ourselves according to the specific food items which we would oversee. I was firstly responsible for putting one or more long-life milk cartons in each package, based on the number of household members. As we realised that this was not really working out, we divided the packages on different tables, based on whether they were being composed for households of one to three, four or more members. This also meant a new division of tasks as each one of us would be responsible for composing complete packages for a specific set of households. I was taking care of all packages for households formed by one to two people.


UNIONE EUROPEA
FEAD
AIUTO UE - FEAD -
NON COMMERCIABILE
Latte
Parzialmente Scremato
Zucchero



[Images 33a and 33b. The making of food aid packages and the food stock. Courtyard of the Via Agliè community centre. 02/04/2020. Photo by the author.]

Meanwhile, Hakima was struggling to get the most updated list of food recipients. She wanted to print out a complete list but had to work around different excel files composed by other local organisations such as parishes and religious groups, non-profit organisations working with immigrant population and associations specialised in assisting youth or women victims of violence. These structures had flagged up vulnerable households and their lists were the first way to reach people in need. In addition to the people on these lists, the requests gathered by the official COVID19 emergency helpline of the civil protection were starting to arrive. As that seemed too complicated to handle on the spot, Hakima ultimately decided that our shift would prepare the first hundred packages only. She explained that she would find a solution during the lunch break and prepare a new list for the shift of volunteers arriving in the afternoon.

As we did not have enough boxes for a hundred packages, Hakima sent me together with one of the other volunteers to the nearby market

of Piazza Foroni to collect and bring back more wooden or plastic boxes. These are normally found on the floor of the market square as vendors use them to transport products and then throw most of them away at the end of their market day. The five minutes' walk towards the market gave the volunteer and I the time to better introduce ourselves: Eric, originally from Peru, had been living in Italy for the past ten years.

When we arrived at the market, policemen and security guards were surveying its entrances and limiting the number of people that were allowed to circulate on the market square at the same time. This was part of the corona restrictive measures aimed at avoiding mass gatherings (*assembramenti*). We were able to skip the queue as Eric explained to the guard that we were part of a group of volunteers preparing food aid packages. Quickly, we went in and crossed the market which, despite the circumstances, was quite lively. We reached the corner where the boxes were usually gathered, close to the garbage containers. Eric decided that we would bond some of these together, to transport them more easily. He tied together plastic bags found on the ground creating a long string that could pass all around a tall pile of boxes. We did so for two piles and we carried them back to the community centre.

This day of activities was revealing of the many challenges and arrangements needed to set up the food aid hub. This was the first time for both the community centre employees and the volunteers, who had no prior guidance on how to proceed. As I will further elaborate in this chapter, the management of food aid became for the group a learning process made of improvisation, experimentation and readjustments. While the work of the volunteers became progressively more organised, elements of discontinuity and improvisation remained, such as needing to deal with unstable food supply and a growing number of requests for food aid. That day also introduced me to the degree of discretion that was left to the centre employees and volunteers. Such discretion was partly revealed by the different answers given to questions such as how much food to put in the packages? How to assess the appropriate quantity for an entire household for a week? If we are generous with the quantities put in the current packages, will we have enough for the remaining households? Which specific food

requests can we consider, and do we have enough time to compose differentiated packages?

To discuss the materiality and morality at the basis of this welfare configuration, I link anthropological theory on welfare to other specific set of literature. I connect my analysis to international critiques of food banks (e.g. Riches and Silvasti 2014), to the theme of morality and volunteerism in Italy (e.g. Muehlebach 2012; Pusceddu 2020) and the analysis of contemporary depoliticization of social issues in the context of austerity (e.g. Capello 2019; Palazzi 2021). While I will interact with this literature in detail in the next sections, it is important to contextualise my critical examination of the Via Agliè food aid hub as part of the current scholarly debate around the role of food banks in Europe. On one hand, food banks have been criticised in terms of their organisation, efficiency and implications (for example, in terms of related challenges in monitoring of food poverty) (e.g. Riches and Silvasti 2014; Kenny and Sage 2019). Authors such as Dowler and Lambie-Mumford (2015) also highlighted the morality which such systems reproduce, namely the "shift from entitlement to a gift relationship" (413) and the depoliticization of the notion of food poverty.

On the other hand, geographers such as Cloke *et al*. (2016) take a different position counterarguing that food banks can also be spaces where political and ethical values challenging neoliberal austerity can emerge "in the meantime(s)". These authors discuss food banks as welfare "in the meantime" and, building on Gibson-Graham (2006) notion of "reading for difference", call for alternative ways of understanding food banks going beyond their representations as spaces where neoliberal reform and depoliticization of food poverty become practice. While, as an anthropologist, it would be difficult not to agree with the importance of looking for nuances and complexity, with the previous chapter I showed how food aid is embedded in long term welfare configurations. These already normalised the transformation of entitlements into needs and, as part of this processes, the "in the meantime" has, since a long time, become common sense.

Food aid packages

Experiencing welfare through food packages

In this section, I describe the food packages prepared at the community centre following a material culture approach: I use the analysis of specific (food) items as a tool for unravelling the societal relations that surround them (Woodward 2007). I show how the food donated was often market surplus, such as overripe fruits and vegetables, that was recycled into food aid. I highlight that the assessment of the quality of these products was a relative and relational one, namely not only associated to the conditions of the product itself but also evaluated considering the overall resources available as well as the socio-economic conditions of food recipients.

I also raise the question of the way in which food recipients might experience their relation to the state through these packages. As argued by Tarabusi in her discussion about the significance of an anthropology of welfare in Italy:

> social policies represent the field in which people have a concrete experience of the state, where they learn the explicit and implicit rules to which they must conform not to be excluded from society […].[127]

It is also in this "field", the author adds, that people internalize the violence that can hide behind the rhetoric of aid (Tarabusi 2022; Ong 2006) such as making direct experience of the progressive welfare state retrenchment. In the context of the Via Agliè food hub, such concrete experience became even more complex because of the fragmented presence of the state which seemed to become one with non-profit organisations and other forms of social solidarity.

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[127] Tarabusi (2022, 15, translation is my own). Original text: "Le politiche sociali rappresentano, infatti, il campo in cui le persone fanno esperienza concreta dello Stato, apprendono le regole esplicite e implicite a cui occorre conformarsi per non essere esclusi dalla società […]".

Parts of these arguments have been already discussed in literature about food banks (from various disciplines, among which sociology, political science, geography and anthropology) which developed over the last decades. The book *First World Hunger Revisited: Food Charity or the Right to Food?*, edited by Riches and Silvasti (2014), is a good exemplification of the different kind of critical arguments developed around such forms of welfare. The volume reports on several case studies, discussing how the proliferation of food banks can be associated to a shift in the management of hunger from a right-based approach to one of charity. Several of the contributions specifically analyse European societies and connect the proliferation of food banks to the crisis, raising inequalities and austerity (Riches and Silvasti 2014).

In particular, Lambie-Mumford and Dowler (2014) report on contemporary British context where food poverty has re-emerged as a social problem, while public expenditure and welfare state support are being reduced. The institutional response is therefore replaced with an increasing number of non-governmental organisations that attempt to ensure people's primary needs. Lambie-Mumford and Dowler (2014)'s analysis is relevant here firstly because of the similarities with the Italian case in terms of the growing role of the third sector in the management of food poverty (Maino et al. 2016). Secondly, among the various critiques to this aid system, Dowler (2015) highlights the fact that food packages might not always be adequate because of the poor quantity or quality of the food provided. In this section, I analyse the materiality of food packages composed at Via Agliè during the emergency to contribute to this critique by revealing how they might reproduce existing inequalities in terms of access to appropriate food.

Food packages as the circulation of products and symbols

The preparation of food aid packages included several steps. First, the organisation of the pallets (containing large quantity of food) and their appropriate sharing out in the limited space of the courtyard of the Via Agliè community centre. Everything had to be sorted out to make all products accessible to the hands of the volunteers. The second step consisted of the composition of the packages and their distribution among the volunteers in charge of the delivery. At the

same time, other volunteers would be taking care of the paperwork, namely checking the lists of recipients and dividing them according to their address. This was meant to facilitate the distribution of the packages. This group of volunteers would create paper labels (indicating the household's name, number of members and occasionally other details), which we would fix with tape on the boxes. The other details on the label normally included whether the household needed children's diapers (and related size), stationary material, and if these recipients ate meat. No halal products were available therefore Muslim families (corresponding to a considerable share of the recipients) were automatically categorised as "no meat". Finally, one or two other volunteers would call the recipients to alert them about the prompt arrival of their packages. This was done to ensure that someone would be at home at the time of the delivery.

The work normally flowed in quite an organised manner. Some days turned out to be more stressful than others. In particular, when packages labels got lost, the dispatch of food pallets was delayed, some households did not answer to the phone or, only rarely, if volunteers were too few. The quantities of products available varied over time and period of abundance contrasted with periods during which the hub lacked the products to compose appropriate packages.



[Images 34. A food package for a household of six people in the making. 14/05/2020. Photo by the author.]

The packages were composed of all sorts of products that were brought at the community centre. These included food products collected by the food bank *Banco Alimentare* (in particular fruits and vegetables), donations of private enterprises (often non-food items such as face masks and baby care products) and EU FEAD products (usually dry products, including pasta, sugar, milk and canned meat). EU FEAD stands for Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived and it is a European Union program implemented since 1987 to "support EU countries' action to provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived" (European Commission – Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2021). While the program is designed at European level, national authorities "take individual decisions leading to the delivery of the assistance through partner organisations (often non-governmental)" (European Commission – Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion 2021).

As analysed by Dorondel and Popa (2014), based on their research of EU FEAD products distribution in Romania, such approach to the implementation of the program "give[s] a 'local flavour' to a centralized policy" (126). As argued by these authors, this approach invites for a more complex analysis of how the state works. At the community centre, on one hand, the presence of EU FEAD products materialised the presence of the public administration and European institutions. They contributed to legitimise the centre as an official hub sponsored by the municipality and differentiated it from grassroots networks. Their presence in the package also partly shaped the ways in which the package was perceived by its recipients, who received no information about the agents behind it. Were the packages sent by the municipality, by charitable organisations or by volunteers? Such confusion was generated by the many apparently contradictory features of this system. For example, recipients had registered themselves through an official helpline - or were registered directly by social services or charitable organisations that they were in contact with. Later they communicated only with volunteers, whom often had to highlight their limited power by arguing they were "only volunteers". This happened to me as well, when it was impossible for me to answer to their questions. Finally, to add to this confusion, recipients then received products marked with institutional logos such as the EU FEAD products.

Dorondel and Popa (2014) also invite to think of the circulation of such products as embedded in local dynamics and power relations. Power relations in the distribution of food aid clearly emerged in the everyday work at the community centre. As a matter of fact, all products were handled by the volunteers and employees, who decided to whom and in which quantity they were to be allocated. Their allocation depended on the overall variety and quantity of food available, which changed daily thus required continuous adjustments.

Food surplus as food aid

Among the food donations piled in the courtyard, there were also many end-of-stock items about to expire. For example, towards the end of April, this was the case of substantial quantities of seasonal sweet products. These included the typical sweet bread and chocolate eggs, which are normally sold and consumed only during Easter festivities and after which they are not suitable for the market anymore. As often observed in the literature on food aid, the waste generated all along the food chain is often transformed into resources redistributed to the most vulnerable groups of the population (e.g. Toldo 2017). In Turin, similarly to many other cities, food surplus recollection and redistribution characterise many contemporary food aid initiatives - as also discussed in relation to the case of Eco dalle Città and Fa Bene, presented in previous section of this dissertation. As explained by Gracjasz and Grasseni (2020, 44) in relation to Polish Food Bank – which operated similarly to the Via Agliè food hub:

> Not only does the *Food Bank* take on the government's responsibility of feeding the poor, the *Food Bank* rescues food "waste" and creates institutionalised systems for its distribution.

While the Via Agliè hub did not rescue food waste directly, it was the space where such surplus was reassessed and, if possible, given back a productive function by reintroducing it into consumption circuits.

Riches and Silvasti (2014) and Dowler and Lambie-Mumford (2015), among others, developed in depth critiques of the redistribution of food surplus as food aid. These authors examine the ways in which

such mechanism perfectly fit within capitalist logic of food overproduction and unequal distribution of resources. Paradoxically, distributing food surplus as aid often contributes to legitimate capitalism as an efficient and moral system and is presented as a solution to both issues of food waste and food insecurity. Authors such as Kenny and Sage (2019) demonstrated how such mechanism can even represent an obstacle to reintroducing food as a common good and working towards healthy and inclusive food systems. In particular, these authors highlight the issues of malnutrition and unhealthy diets among vulnerable groups of the population as well as the lack of possibility to choose for aid recipients (Kenny and Sage 2019).

At the Via Agliè hub such use of food surplus had immediate consequences in terms of the quality of the food package being composed. This was particularly the case with regards to fruits and vegetables, which arrived sporadically but always in vast quantities. These were often very ripe and, in some cases, looked almost perished. Because of this, during the composition of food packages, some of us volunteers were responsible of selecting and washing these products. I experienced such task as quite a repetitive but important one. Next, I discuss through few examples how such process of selection was shaped by volunteers' discretion and how it also connected to an attempt to evaluate, from a distance, the conditions of food recipients.

A first example in this sense was the selection of green leafy vegetables. Iceberg salads arrived closed in plastic bags and the first leaves were in most cases damaged or rotten. One day, a volunteer who had taken the lead in cleaning these salads explained to me how she proceeded and, more precisely, how she drew the line between what to keep and what not. In her case, she had quite a strict approach to what she considered good-enough and removed anything that looked too bad. On another occasion, I was selecting and cleaning prunes with two other young volunteers. In that situation, we all felt that the prunes which we were selecting and washing were not very good. However, since only very few fruits had arrived at the community centre over the last days, we felt like our selection could not be too strict and had to include them in the packages.



[Images 35. Selecting and cleaning prunes. 14/05/2020. Photo by the author.]

Overall, these decisions did depend on and vary according to the judgement of volunteers. They seemed to share different feelings about this process. While we composed the packages, some argued that, in the context of the emergency, it was better to receive something rather than nothing. Fewer were more careful, calling into question the issue of dignifying and undignifying food. However, these matters never became the subject of a group discussion. As argued by one of the volunteers (who preferred to remain anonymous) during an interview:

> We cannot do this: we are giving food waste to people that already have many problems. You treat them like if they were less important. So, indeed, there was a [food] distribution but was it equitable? I don't think so.[128]

These issues were also discussed as part of the Rete Zona Aurora Solidale, which, to much more limited extent, also used food surplus recollected directly at open-air food markets. Members of the network also found themselves learning how to select what was good-enough, operating, however, what looked like a stringent selection in the name of the "dignity" of people that needed to be preserved[129].

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[128] Volunteer at Via Agliè, interview, 21/05/2020.

[129] Rete Zona Aurora Solidale activist, video recording, 02/05/2020.

Heterogeneous food standards or the stratification of citizenship

These few examples are important to reflect on the social construction of food standards and to understand how they might reflect different conceptualisations of citizenship and citizens' rights. Food standards and its symbolic value represent long-term research topics in anthropology. Mintz and Dubois (2002) retraced how the functions of food have been studied from different perspectives, such as historical materialism, structuralism and symbolism. Moreover, recurrent themes emerged in food-related ethnographies from the 1980s onwards, including food and social change, food and identity, and food rituals. In the context of the hub, a material culture approach to food helps unravelling the moral concerns that surround the selection and classification of food deemed appropriate. The definition of what was good-enough differed from one volunteer to the other and was not always corresponding to an item's intrinsic value. It depended on general food availability and, most importantly, on the position of who was going to eat it.

The idea that the recipient was a person in vulnerable socio-economic conditions altered the food selection criteria, and many products were considered good-enough not in absolute term but because these were intended for people having no other choice. In this perspective, the quality of the food distributed reproduced a categorisation of citizens' rights following existing social inequalities.



[Images 36. A volunteer selecting and cleaning peaches. 14/05/2020. Photo by the author.]

Such stratification of citizens was further visible following the pathway of some products (such as overripe fruits) that were discarded from the composition of the food packages. To avoid to throw them away, some were redistributed among the centre's employees and volunteers who wanted to process them – for example by making jams with the cut peaches visible in the picture above. What was left was put at the exit of the community centre or on the street as a way of giving it away for free. Some were thrown away in the garbage in the street, where some people still stopped by to take them out of the bins. A few times, I also asked if I could take it and distribute it in other networks. One day, for example, a friend and I brought overripe bananas to occupants of social housing, as illegal occupants were cut out of the list of institutional food aid. Another time, we brought some perished crackers to a group of homeless, who were camping in the street as the public dorms had been closed because of the spreading of the virus (see also Redazione Quotidiano Piemontese 2020). I mention these examples to show how the life cycle of such food surplus often continued. In other words, the boundaries between food and waste retraced more or less tacit boundaries between categories of citizens: citizens that were officially entitled to food surplus, citizens who could take what was left over and so on, with the leftover of the leftover.

Overall, the quantity and quality of the food managed at the hub varied and, in my opinion, was not always good, especially in the case of fresh products such as fruits and vegetables. As mentioned earlier, while these issues raised some questions among the volunteers and workers of the centre, these had no say on what was delivered. This was different in the case of the members of the Rete Zona Aurora Solidale, whom discussed all together in weekly assemblies where and what to procure as donations and leftovers.

Volunteers at the Via Agliè hub learned to clean and select food deemed appropriate-enough for food recipients in vulnerable socio-economic conditions, while dealing with time pressure and the necessity to produce a large number of packages. Such food selection criteria clearly reproduced existing inequalities in terms of access to nutritious and healthy food. In this perspective, I argue that a material culture analysis of food aid packages reveals a differentiated approach to food quality and an underlying stratification of citizens. I argue that this impacted not only the diet of the recipients, but also their relation with and experience of the public administration. As a matter of fact, it is also through these food packages that citizens experienced welfare state retrenchment and the normalisation of the recasting of their right to food into aid. An aid that was most often composed with what is possible to retrieve from the excess of the system. This included moments of food shortage during which the deliveries were delayed and, in some cases, more than 12 days passed with some households not receiving anything. While the idea that the municipality was not taking any action was strongly criticized in other networks, it was not openly discussed by the volunteers of this hub. In the next section, I unpack why, exploring more in detail the positioning and perceptions of local volunteers.

From volunteers to local heroes

Volunteerism and the redefinition of the public sphere

As discussed above, the organisation of the (so-called institutional) food aid hub highly relied on the work of volunteers. This is a widespread phenomenon and is often discussed as a characteristic of contemporary configurations of welfare in Italy - as demonstrated by the literature and the recurrence of this theme in the dissertation. In this section, I report more in details about the perspective of the volunteers at the Via Agliè food hub. I examine their motivations, ideas about the initiative and (self-)representations. After looking at the hub from a material culture perspective, I discuss the morality that surrounded the hub and the way in which it was represented. Examining the morality around volunteer work allows to address questions such as: who were the citizens that got involved at the hub in such period of emergency? What were their motivations? How were these parts of and functional to the moral construction and practical development of contemporary welfare configurations, such as the notion of community care?

My reflections are particularly informed by the analyses of volunteerism developed by Rozakou (2016) and Pusceddu (2020). These authors point to changing models of volunteerism and to the ways in which volunteers make sense of their role in a context of contamination between what is institutional and charitable food aid. The work of Rozakou (2016) is focused on the Greek society and on the changing nature of local solidarity initiatives after the crisis. Before the crisis, volunteerism was promoted from the top down and such "institutionalized volunteerism" remained unpopular. Instead, contemporary Greece is characterised by the raise of solidarity activities promoted by people who conceive their activities very differently, going beyond the figure of the professional volunteer and that like to define themselves differently (e.g. solidarian). While at the Via Agliè hub, volunteers called themselves as such, the work of Rozakou (2016) will be used to show the different ways in which they understood and questioned their role and status.

Pusceddu (2020)'s work focuses precisely on the self-perception of volunteers in Italy, which he explores from a moral economy perspective. The author focuses on the context of the Italian Caritas food bank in the period in which it underwent an increasing bureaucratisation. In particular, a growing number of welfare tasks were transferred from the state to the organisation. For example, new parameters of eligibility and selection criteria were put in place and managed directly by volunteers. As part of these processes, Pusceddu (2020, 2) argued:

> The ways volunteers deal with the transfer of responsibility and care from the centralized welfare state to charity in the wake of the austerity crisis, and how they perceive their "voluntary work" in filling the gap of an increasingly fragmented and decentralized welfare state.

The questions I deal with in this section are similar to the ones of Pusceddu (2020), namely interrogating the perspective of volunteers to reveal their visions of their role, and more generally, of the needs of the area and the changing functions of the public administration. At the Via Agliè food hub, the emergency context and high number of food packages to be prepared did not particularly facilitate the emergence of moments of reflexivity and discussion. Many issues emerged in the making and people made sense of what was being done while doing.

The group of volunteers was quite varied. It included middle class city inhabitants acquainted with occasional voluntary work, local youth differently involved in local urban renewal projects and unemployed in their forties, who had lost their jobs because of the pandemic. I will particularly focus on these two last categories (local youth and the unemployed) as I believe that their outlooks on volunteerism can offer new perspective for its analysis and critique. Moreover, their social and economic conditions can help problematizing the boundary between who gives and who needs aid. As a matter of fact, in a context like the working-class neighbourhood and the pandemic crisis, this distinction was particularly fragile. Even when the socio-economic situation of the people who gave and received food was not substantial, the food aid hub reproduced such divisions. In other words, it hindered the possibility to go beyond the differentiation

between the volunteer and the aid recipient, because of how this system was organized.

As highlighted by Muehlebach (2012) it is precisely such distinction that is reproduced through the "humanitarianization of the public sphere" (46) and the moral reconfiguration of social relations and connections. Building on Arendt (1958), the author argues that the notion of the public is reconfigured as acts of compassion between unequal parties (Muehlebach 2012, 46). At the hub, the idea of inequality reproduced as part of a clear division of roles and societal stands between volunteers and aid recipients – rather than in terms of actual material conditions. The moral language employed at the centre made it difficult for volunteers to connect to these recipients and realize the ways in which their rights were being equally affected by larger transformations. In the next sections, I discuss the motivations and perceptions of different volunteers. As also demonstrated in relation to the various profiles of volunteers at Orti Generali and Eco dalle Città, volunteerism should be regarded as a plural phenomenon that necessitates to be unpacked.

"I feel more like a citizen"

Among the local youth active at the food aid hub, I met Soukaina, a girl in her early 20s. She grew up in the area where she continued living with her family of Moroccan origins, while studying nursing. Soukaina was already active in a local project targeted to Italian and first or second-generation immigrants called *YEPP (Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme) Porta Palazzo*. *YEPP* aimed at involving youth from 16 to 27 years old with the idea of giving them the tools to directly create the activities they need in their area[130]. Since she started participating in YEPP, Soukaina took up an increasing number of responsibilities in the organisation of activities such as group excursions but also the management of bureaucracy. Following the vision of the project, the latter should have ultimately been fully managed by the youth itself, without the support of social

[130] Soukaina Bouallala, volunteer at the Via Agliè community center, interview, 04/06/2020. See also YEPP (n.d.).

workers. While being involved in YEPP, Soukaina had started to feel "more like a citizen":

> Now I feel more like a citizen. More like a citizen of my city. Because I am doing something for my city, I am working and meeting youngsters so I create social fabric and so it really makes me feel more active. I am not only the little girl who was going around but I am really working in it, trying to improve the neighbourhood and to meet the needs that we, especially as youngsters, have. [131]

Soukaina's idea of citizenship is deeply interrelated with the idea of taking care of her neighbourhood, "doing something" and being "active". Her language, such as the use of the term "social fabric", reflects the moral sentiments that are passed on within non-profit organisations - also previously discussed as processes of "engineering community spirit" (de Wilde and Duyvendak, 2016) - and which she probably learned as part of her experience in YEPP. As Soukaina explained, she experienced the project both as a voluntary worker and beneficiary. It is such combination of roles that allowed her to feel empowered and more like a citizen.

It is within the YEPP network that Soukaina learned about the Via Agliè community centre's call for volunteers at the times of the COVID-19 outbreak. Shortly after she joined the group of volunteers, she became one of its central figures: she joined almost every day (regardless of whether she had been allocated to a shift or not), taking an active role and sympathizing with everybody. As she mentioned, she immediately felt "at home": she made jokes and liked to put music on while we were working. She found the situation stressful, but she attempted to find ways to cope with the tension of not having enough

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[131] Soukaina Bouallala, interview, 04/06/2020. Original quote: "*Ora mi sento più cittadina. Più cittadina della mia città, ecco. Perché sto facendo qualcosa per la mia città, ci sto lavorando e conosco dei giovani quindi creo anche del tessuto sociale e quindi si mi fa sentire proprio più attiva. Non solo la ragazzetta che girava ma proprio ci lavoro, cercando di migliorare il quartiere e di venire incontro alle necessità che noi giovani abbiamo soprattutto*."

food available. Soukaina also spoke Moroccan Arabic and she soon became a key resource and reference point in the mediation with households where nobody spoke Italian.

The case of Soukaina is exemplificatory of the path of many young volunteers, who grow up and are trained within the culture of active citizenship and volunteerism. As youth growing up in vulnerable areas of the city, their personal trajectories were shaped by their encounters with non-profit organisations, which provided social services in such contexts (e.g. afterschool activities, youth social inclusion programs). For many of these youngsters, welfare always was framed as such, namely as something to be constructed through the engagement of targeted groups themselves. In this approach, it is the moving boundaries between beneficiary and volunteer which transforms people's social role, upgrading their status to the one of citizen.

Such moving boundaries between the condition of aid recipient to the one of active citizen and back was also visible in the case of other people encountered in the field. For example, this was the situation of Nadia, the local leader of *Fa Bene* food distribution project, whom I have introduced before. With the COVID-19 crisis, her role within local food aid networks had shifted to the one of aid recipient, as she was now at home and benefitted from the food aid package herself. She was afraid to leave her house due to the sanitary situation and, as a single parent, had to take care of her daughter as school was suspended. The COVID-19 crisis had also transformed the everyday life and socio-economic conditions of several Italian men in their forties such as Antonio, Giorgio, Marco and Giacomo (a pseudonym), whom I met at the community centre and will introduce next. Their precarious work situations had worsened with the crisis and had left them without an occupation or reduced their working hours and collaborations. It was because of their time availability, and thanks to their direct or indirect connections to the community centre, that they engaged as volunteers as part of the food aid hub.

Critical viewpoints

I met Marco and Giacomo while volunteering at the hub. They were both living in the area since a few years and were acquainted with the community centre. They visited it as a space for gathering with friends, to eat at the café or to attend cultural events. Both were familiar with Turin network of community centres. During the interviews, they talked about the centres' sociality, describing it as diverse but also characterised by left wing, white, educated people, working precariously in the social, educational or artistic field.

Before moving to Barriera di Milano, Marco lived in another neighbourhood, San Salvario, where he regularly visited the local community centre. Giacomo was also part of a similar urban scene: he had participated for many years in another network of social and cultural centres named ARCI clubs (*circoli ARCI*). The Italian Association for Recreation and Culture (*ARCI – Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana*) was founded in Florence in 1956 to link the activities of local recreational centres managed and attended by people close to the Italian communist and socialist parties. Over the decades, local centres affiliated to ARCI developed all over Italy and, as per 2022, these are around 4400. The ARCI clubs promote social and cultural activities in relation to the themes of social inclusion and migration, social and civic rights, anti-mafia and anti-fascism. These are also denoted as spaces for local initiatives, social gathering, food and beverage.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, both Giacomo and Marco felt that it was important for them to do something to support their neighbourhood. When reading about the call for volunteers on the Facebook page of the community centre, Marco had immediately decided to participate to the food aid hub. Like many other local inhabitants, he was also hit by the crisis and had lost his employment as a technician for public events, concerts and shows: "since the lockdown started, we do not have any stages to be assembled, so I am basically unemployed"[132]. Similarly, Giacomo had recently lost his

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[132] Marco Pianelli, volunteer, video interview, 11/05/2020.

employment. At the beginning of the lockdown, he had seen people moving things around the community centre:

> I saw Erika and said "are you moving things out? Do you need a hand?" and Erika [replied] "yes, come here". And that's it [laughing], that is how I got caught up in this thing![133]

From there, Giacomo started to volunteer at the hub almost every day. Then, in May, he found a part-time job and had to reduce his participation. However, this did not particularly worry him or the others, as, in the meantime, many other volunteers had joined the hub.

When volunteering at Via Agliè, both Marco and Giacomo often took care of organisational tasks such as rearranging the courtyard to make it more functional, moving food pallets with the trolley and carrying the heaviest food packages. Both felt that their contribution was linked to their past professional experience and related skills: they were used to collective manual work and knew the organisation needed to make it efficient. It is also based on their experience that they developed an analytical outlook on the functioning of the hub. In particular, Giacomo mentioned that he found it to be quite chaotic. The type of work being done was enormous and of foremost importance, while the people working at it were not specialised in this field. Volunteers and employees were experimenting, unsure about how to proceed, constructing a way to move forward, with no specific competences. While he recognised that the organisation of the hub got better with time and that people were animated with good intentions, he asked:

> I don't know who here had ever managed team work before. I worked with big services where there were two, three, four people who did not know anything about what was the issue at stake, but directed 50 of us. Because when you move things, transport, assemble, there is a need for proper organisation. Here we dispatch things for 650 families a week I think: these are huge numbers! […].[134]

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[133] Giacomo – a pseudonym, volunteer, interview, 21/05/2020.

[134] Giacomo – a pseudonym, interview, 21/05/2020.

Giacomo problematised the quality of volunteer work and the lack of professionals in the organisation of important social services. Both Giacomo and Marco underlined that the role of institutions should have been different. In particular, Giacomo problematised the way in which volunteering was often performed in an acritical manner. He did not share this approach. He pointed out how, in the past, he would have never imagined participating in such initiative. While he partook to it in the context of the pandemic, he maintained a critical viewpoint. He found particularly problematic that many other volunteers simply found it a very beautiful initiative, without interrogating its reasons and consequences. Among these, he denounced the absence of a public response to the emergency:

> We are fully substituting ourselves to what should be the social assistance performed by the city, the region, the province, the state, which, except for the showgirl-like apparition of our mayor, to say how cool we are now that we are doing this thing, did not put a penny, did not hire a worker, a truck, nothing. Once they delivered European food aid. Only once. For the rest it was all *Banco Alimentare* and all groups financed by *Compagnia di San Paolo*.[135]

While I will go back to the changing role of the municipality and its different phases of (non) intervention, the comment of Giacomo is important here to highlight that such argumentation, while rare, also appeared at the hub. His views were much more similar to the one of the activists of Rete Zona Aurora Solidale than to the one of other volunteers and employees at Via Agliè.

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[135] Giacomo – a pseudonym, interview, 21/05/2020. Original quote: "*Perché ci stiamo sostituendo in tutto e per tutto a delle dinamiche che dovrebbero essere di assistenza sociale della città, della regione, della provincia e dello stato e invece, eccetto un'apparizione della nostra sindaca per fare la velina di quanto siamo fighi che stiamo facendo questa roba qua, quando non ha messo un soldo, non ha messo un operatore, un furgone, niente. […] C'è stata una consegna sola che mi ricordo che era di materiale di aiuti alimentari europei. Solo una volta. Per il resto Banco Alimentare e tutte realtà finanziate da Compagnia di San Paolo*."

Marco also commented critically on the absence of public support during the pandemic. He connected it to the long-term situation of the neighbourhood and its ongoing transformations. He mentioned the lack of public spaces for social gathering, interaction and services. He juxtaposed it to the excess of shopping malls and the issue of the so-called cementification (a literal translation of *cementificazione* – see also Guano (2020)), alluding to the new building being constructed in the area despite all its abandoned ones (inherited from the period of the industrial boom). The only social gathering opportunities in Barriera di Milano relied on the efforts of the Third Sector. In his view, the management and the organisation of the hub were simply a coherent continuum with the rest – as I have also demonstrated in the previous chapter.

By presenting the views of Marco and Giacomo, I want to nuance the idea of "uncritical solidarity" as discussed by de Armiño (2014), which represents one among many articles that depict volunteers as people who do not question the political implications of their activities. While de Armiño (2014) examined the environment of food banks in Spain, a similar attitude is also observed by Lorenz (2012), who discussed the case of the German charitable food assistance *Tafel* and its volunteers. Based on the case of the volunteers at the Via Agliè food aid hub, I tend to agree with these authors, but I argue that more critical outlooks might also circulate in these environments. This was also pointed out by Pusceddu (2020) in the case of volunteers active in impoverished neighbourhoods in Southern Italy. These were sceptical about their involvement in the bureaucratic procedures increasingly left in their hands. Similarly, at Via Agliè, some people did ask themselves critical questions. However, these often remained silenced and emerged only during one-to-one conversations (and were rather avoided during grouped discussions). In other words, the lack of political discussion and democratic debate around what was being done did not derive from the lack of critical thinking but rather from the fact that talking about these matters openly would contrast with the hub's atmosphere.

As Giacomo once said to me, when someone exposed more critical viewpoints, he or she was immediately labelled as the boring and negative person, which made it a hard position to be in, one that would. This position would at least temporarily, differentiate the

person from the rest of the group. I also experienced this directly, when sharing more critical reflections about the functioning of the hub. Building on these experiences, I argue that the "postwelfarist morality" (Muehlebach 2012) should not only be examined in the narratives, representations and viewpoints that circulate in these environments but also by keeping an eye on what is silenced or left unspoken. The issue of these silenced analyses is like the one of the silenced confrontations, which occurred in the context of the urban gardening project Orti Generali, as described in the first chapters of the dissertation. Building on the words of Giacomo, it is the difference between "solidarity" and "equity" that is particularly hard to be outspoken and which is rarely discussed during collective moments. In part, it is because these groups are highly morally connotated. They represent an example of highest sentiments, an active and united community, and the only alternative to abandonment. These ideas do not leave much space for reflecting about how these activities can be counterproductive to the achievement of societal equity (e.g. Lorenz 2012). In the next section, I turn specifically to such construction of the group of volunteers as a morally-connotated and united community.

The construction and representation of the Via Agliè community

Between April and May 2020, the group of volunteers grew significantly: in total we were around 50[136], divided in two shifts a day (morning and afternoon), from Tuesday to Friday. Most volunteers were part of the "storage brigade" (*brigata magazzino*) and were concerned with the composition of food aid packages. The others were part of the "phone calls brigade" (*brigata telefonate*): they answered to the calls of food recipients, assessed their needs, as introduced before. The "delivery brigade" (*brigata consegne*) was composed by the volunteers who had a car and were available to deliver the packages to four to five households.

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[136] I take as a reference point the shifts sheet for May 5-8 shared on 01/05/2020 by one of Via Agliè employees on the volunteers WhatsApp group chat.

The volunteers were coordinated by the two community centre employees: Hakima and Martina, who did the same tasks as the volunteers, worked closely with them with friendliness, care and availability. They also had the responsibility of being constant reference points, coordinating the group and taking care of the communication with externals such as the deliverers of the food stocks. Despite the stress, they managed to entertain good relations with the volunteers, as also noted by Heederik (2020), who discussed the silenced tensions between paid advisers and volunteers in the context of an advice centre in Manchester. As Heederik (2020, 6) elaborated:

> Despite having tensions in the workplace, where advisers sometimes feel volunteers just add to their workload and volunteers feel left to their own devices, these tensions did not seem to translate into frustration with one another.

Erika, the head of the community centre, did not work with the volunteers but passed by the centre several times a week. She monitored and took care of the overall coordination of the activities, emergencies and the relations with institutions and other food hubs. She always looked very busy, often said that she was in a rush, but her approach was one of extreme friendliness with everyone. She often knew the volunteers from past experiences, she dialogued and joked with them and learned immediately the name of new members.

It is important to note that the composition and numbers of volunteers changed over time. For example, from June 2020 onwards, the number of volunteers decreased as, with the end of the most restrictive phase of the lockdown, some started to work again and others left town for the summer break. Moreover, the partial redefinition of the lockdown allowed people to circulate and food recipients were invited to collect their food packages autonomously – consequently the "delivery brigade" was significantly downsized. Only some volunteers were there from the start to the end of my participant observation at the hub (in July 2020). These persons (including Soukaina and Marco, together with the community centre employees Martina and Hakima) represented influential figures, who gave a continuity to the group and

passed on the friendly way of interacting with and advising one another.

The courtyard was often animated with music – including life music, with the project *Canta Oltre* organised by members of Rescue!, who played and sang for the volunteers active during the pandemic across the city (Progetto Rescue 2023) -, lively conversations and collective breaks with shared snacks such as Moroccan mint tea and overripe fruits taken from the stock. We all worked with face masks and gloves and only in certain brief moments we could discover the entire face of the others. Creating a friendly atmosphere was important to mitigate the stressful situation generated by the pandemic as well as the fast working pace at the hub. Food packages had to be assembled as quickly as possible to meet all the demands managed every day. The packages had to include the right ingredients – though often time some were missing - and following as much as possible the specific needs of beneficiaries. As commented by Soukaina:

> I started to play a game: I read the name [of food recipients] and based on that I imagine how that person could be. Even if it is quite stupid, it helps to deal with the stress. At night when I go to bed, I dream of all the people for whom I prepared the package. I do a brainstorming thinking if I put the diapers, this and that.[137]

Like others, Soukaina attempted to mitigate the stress through her active participation in the construction of a sense of community among the volunteers. In this perspective, it is interesting to note how the ideas of solidarity, collaboration and community care were also attributed to the relations among the volunteers, regarded as a category, with specific needs to be accounted for. Ways of working together such as the ones mentioned above, allowed to develop a form of the community care by and for the volunteers as well as an imaginary of collectivity.

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[137] Soukaina, interview, 04/06/2020.



[Images 37. Volunteers working together to stock the food products. 28/05/2020. Screenshot from video by the author.]

The community of volunteers was also at the centre of the many representations of the hub. These representations were multiple, including self-representations, media accounts and artistic-like narrations. These shared similar features in the way in which they described the organisation of this food aid hub. Paradoxically, they managed to emphasise both the community-like dimension of the hub, while highlighting individual contributions. I noted such feature also thanks to the juxtaposition of this case with the one of the Zona Aurora Solidale network, where, on the contrary, individual efforts rarely emerged in the accounts and representations of the initiative. When talking about their activities, these activists preferred to use the pronoun "we" and when the name of one of their members appeared on the local newspaper (Roselli 2020) they problematized it, deciding to remain anonymous during future interactions with journalists.

An example in relation to the case of the Via Agliè food aid hub is the *Corriere Della Sera* newspaper article written in April 2020 entitled "the other emergency and the hidden heroes" (Coccorese 2020), which referred specifically to the food emergency and the volunteers of the Via Agliè hub. After briefly reporting on the atmosphere at the community centre, the journalist describes the profile of the volunteers

who engaged at the hub, also reporting their views and the organisation of the hub by quoting them directly. The reference to heroism is interesting here and is to be connected to media accounts about the burgeoning civic values (such as sense of sacrifice and diffuse solidarity) which accompanied the pandemic more generally. This language reverberated the war language that spread in political speeches and the medias. As analysed by Cassandro (2020), the corona virus was commented with several metaphors that referred to the war, such as the recurring expression "we are at war" (*siamo in guerra)*. The author refers to the analysis of Sontag (1978) who theorised such link between the ways in which diseases are discussed and the language of war and emergency. References to the war allow for approaching complex social problems as a state of exception in which all forms of sacrifices seem to be legitimate (Sontag 1978).

In the context of my fieldwork, presenting volunteers as heroes was an integral component of the celebration of voluntarism and the normalisation of welfare state retrenchment. As also discussed by Hemment (2012) in the case of postsocialist Russia, such language is among the elements that facilitate the reception of neoliberal technologies, which "can actually stimulate socialist imaginaries" (522). As reminded by the author: "neoliberal practices (such as self-help and self-work) persuade and convince precisely because they resonate with or resemble prior socialist forms" (Hemment 2012, 522). In this perspective, in the Italian context, such celebration of voluntarism – and its history – winks to the catholic tradition of charity and participation, new and old ideas of community care of the Left as well philanthropists who also support neoliberal welfare reform (e.g. Muehlebach 2012; Marcon 2004). It is important to note, as also visible in Pionati (1990)'s "guide to Italian voluntarism", that the celebration of voluntarism in various historical phases meant underlying its different definitions and connotations, thus also making it always more like a container, which could be filled with very different practices and ideologies, mixed together and possibly manipulated (47).

The article "the other emergency and the hidden heroes" was also accompanied by a series of pictures of single volunteers in action. In a similar way, Tomás, a Brazilian reporter and photographer, developed

a photo account of solidarity and voluntarism in Turin during the pandemic. He had moved to Italy shortly before the pandemic and started to take pictures around the city to get to know the city while registering what was going on. Initially he worked for a Brazilian press agency, as Brazilian newspapers discussed the situation in Italy "so that the population there realized what was going on before it hit the country[138]. In a second moment, he developed a photography project together with the non-profit organisation Vol.TO standing for Volunteering Turin – though in Italian, *volto* also means face - which functions as the Volunteer Service Centre of the city of Turin (Volontariato Torino 2021). He gathered images of volunteers all around the city, in places such as the Via Agliè food aid hub, and later developed an exhibition called "from emptiness to faces" (*dal Vuoto al Volto*) with the support of local institutions.

To represent voluntary mobilisation during the pandemic, Tomás decided to shoot close ups of volunteers' faces. He usually took two pictures per volunteer, one with the mask and another without. As he explained:

> It is by putting together all these faces that one can realise the enormous number of people that got engaged. Some were volunteering for the first time. Some told me that in the first phase of the lockdown they were volunteering just to get out of their house. […] Some were minors. […] Some were immigrants working to help immigrants, some were Italians working to help immigrants.[139]

Tomás was surprised by the diversity of situations which he encountered in the hubs around the city, which also reflected the spatialisation of its various socio-economic contexts. He highlighted the diversity of volunteers, while presenting a more general trend that

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[138] Tomás Cajueiro, journalist and photographer, video interview, 10/08/2020.

[139] Tomás Cajueiro, video interview, 10/08/2020.

spoke of the ways in which individuals got together to work for a common "solidarity network"[140].

I argue that these attentional narrations and celebrations of volunteers, talking about a community but focusing on single individuals, moved the debate away from an analysis of the welfare reform that it (re)produced. Moreover, this attention to volunteers contrasted with the ways in which food recipients were regarded and approached as a vulnerable category.



[Images 38. Tomás in front of his exhibition. 10/08/2020. Screenshot from video by the author.]

[140] Tomás Cajueiro, video interview, 10/08/2020.

From citizens to needy

Communicating needs

As opposed to the idea of a community of volunteers, food aid recipients were approached as a fragmented reality. At Via Agliè food hub, they were individuals or families living in Northern Turin in vulnerable socio-economic conditions. They were people with whom only few volunteers would have a direct contact. Most of the time, they were known by their name, household size, address, and sometimes their primary needs. This subsection focuses on the figure of the food aid recipient, and the way in which it is framed in this specific welfare configuration, namely as a person in need. As argued by Matos (2020), the reframing of citizens into needy and the "political mobilization of "needs" to differentiate access to resources and entitlements" (114) represent a widespread phenomenon across various countries subjected to austerity measures.

On April 3rd I was working at a table in the main room on the ground floor of the community centre, far from the other volunteers who were composing the packages in the courtyard. I was taking care of the phone calls, which meant alerting the beneficiaries of the prompt delivery of the packages and monitoring their diverse needs. I was instructed to ask them whether they were doing fine, if they necessitated something specific and fill in a questionnaire related to the educational needs of children, if there were any. I was given a phone, a pen and several folders – improvised by folding the paper placemats that were normally used at the centre's café – containing the files of the beneficiaries to be contacted. The phone kept ringing and it was hard for me to compose a new number without being interrupted.

I managed to make several phone calls between 11h and 14h, learning about the situation of very different households: Italian ones, but also many families of foreign origins, several of which Moroccans – reflecting the diverse composition of this area of the city. Each call took at least 5 minutes as most people wanted to talk and had several questions to ask. I spoke with several Italian women who felt the need to explain to me more about their situation: they told me that their income was too little, that social benefits were not sufficient to provide

for the whole family, that they requested food vouchers, but these were unavailable, that they had already mentioned these things to the social services… Why did they feel the need to justify their situation to me? On several occasions, I realized that it was not clear to them who was providing these food packages and some related it to other forms of state benefits they were entitled to or which they received in the past.

Some also felt offended by the products they had received so far: they complained about fruits and vegetables that were too ripe and had to be thrown away as well as expired yogurts. As pointed out by a young mother: "this is not what I expected! what am I supposed to do with this?". I had to answer that I was just a volunteer, that I could note down their criticism but that none of us at the hub had the possibility to change much. At that point, many of them just remained silent for a moment or thank me disappointed. We found ourselves face to face with the mechanism that prevented institution to be made accountable for what was going on and people's disappointment to be voiced.

Such contacts with the recipients allowed me to grasp few elements around the ways in which some of them presented their needs and their expectations around food aid. The use of the language of needs reverberates with the analysis of Matos (2020, 116) who writes about a progressive "retrenchment of people's sense of citizenship entitlements" and the use of the concept of need as a "vernacular morality". It is through such morality that "ordinary people seek to access material resources and to assert the legitimacy of their claims and entitlements" (Matos 2020, 125). The fact that food aid recipients presented to me their more general needs reflected new relations between the aid giver and receiver, which derived from broader transformations of the Italian welfare. People learned to navigate such fragmented system by stressing and repeating stories about their everyday life and related difficulties to attempt to convince volunteers and non-profit organisations workers about the importance of their needs.

These mechanisms reinforced what is discussed, among others, by Tosi Cambini (2022) in terms of a specific communication system (*"impianto comunicativo"*,) which is based on "a continuous request to people to demonstrate to be saying "the truth" and to "deserve"

public assistance" (199, translation is my own). While Tosi Cambini (2022) mentions this in relation to public social services, during COVID-19, these mechanisms were reinforced by the multiplication of the arenas where people were to be assisted. Having to discuss with the social services but also many other charity-like and third sector organisations, people affected by the economic crisis, austerity and lastly the COVID-19 critical period generally adapted their language and requests to the dimension of charity, providing justification for themselves through a needs-based approach.

I argue that such language, used by food aid recipients as much as providers, also speaks of a process of depoliticization of social problems and their individualisation, as if only few households, because of their supposed exceptionally difficult situation, were affected by the crisis. Among others, the anthropologist Capello (2019, 56, translation is my own) discusses neoliberal individualistic responses to the problem of unemployment, as part of his research with unemployed subjects:

> In Turin, and particularly in the old working-class suburbs, because of the crisis and the productive transition, unemployment presents itself as a widespread social problem, to which it is given, in accordance with neoliberal policies, a partial individual response, following a principle paradoxically legitimized by the very concept of social suffering.

While the reflections of Capello (2019) focus on the dimension of social suffering, which goes beyond the scope of my analysis, his work is useful here to make key connections between neoliberalism, food aid recipients' (self-)representation, the language of needs and related morality. In particular, the author argues that the moral dimension that accompanies neoliberal reform and the creation of neoliberal subjects also creates "non-subjects" (*non-soggetti*) such as in the case of the unemployed or economically marginalised subjects (Capello 2019, 35)[141]. These "non-subjects" are those who, in this system, end up lacking a status, an income and oftentimes also remain excluded from any form of structural social help.

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[141] See also Capello (2020).

Evaluating needs

At the food aid hub, the creation of "non-subjects" (Capello 2019) occurred through the moralisation of recipients' requests. This meant that they were considered as good people if satisfied. On the other hand, they could be cancelled from the list of beneficiaries, if their behaviour was considered inappropriate (e.g., disrespectful, ungrateful). This happened, for example, when some someone was not satisfied with what they had received. Some recipients said to be expecting more and fresher food. In other words, they had claims which revealed a different vision of welfare. Such vision clashed with what was feasible at the level of the Via Agliè hub and, most importantly, with their approach.

A significant episode in this sense happened when one of the community centre's workers (which I prefer not to name directly in this case) gave me the file of Giuseppe (a pseudonym), together with the ones of few other families. She was unsure whether these people had received food aid during that week. On the files, someone had written "did not respond" or "does not want the food aid package". This worker asked me to call these people and get a clearer understanding of their situation. When I looked into Giuseppe's file, I learned that he was living by himself and that he should have had received the food box on the previous day. When I called him, he confirmed that he had received a package on the previous day but explained that he had sent it back: "I got only rotten stuff". He clarified in a calm but grave tone that he had nothing to eat: "I can only eat plain pasta and I have nothing else". He argued that there was nothing to be eaten in that box: no tomato sauce, no olive oil, no beans. As he kept complaining, he asked "tell me, do you think that this is the way to take care of citizens?". This question embarrassed me as I realised that the package had profoundly offended him and was far from meeting his expectations.

As I pronounced his name aloud, a community centre's worker run toward me, miming and whispering to cut the phone call. Then took the file of Giuseppe out of my hands and tore it up into small pieces. Meanwhile, Giuseppe kept arguing his discontent on the phone, adding here and there expressions such as "I know you are just a volunteer,

but", thinking this would comfort me or lower the tension generated by his critical remarks. He talked compulsively for few minutes more, then listened as I attempted to provide responses that did not seem convincing to neither of us. I tried to propose to wait for the next package as maybe this would include more goods. He said no and hung up.

"I am so sorry, yesterday I forgot to take out his file from the pile!" the worker exclaimed. She told me that on the previous day Giuseppe had violently reacted to the delivery of the food package, screaming at a volunteer who "had to contact the police" and the community centre, unable to find a solution by herself. She added that it was true that the vegetables in his box were in very bad conditions, but that his reaction was so violent that it could not even be considered. The words of Giuseppe kept resonating in my head, as I finished to compose the food package I had started before the phone call. I could see that the variety of products which I was inserting in that box was indeed extremely limited: only some fruits, vegetables and biscuits. How could that be enough for a family of four for a week? But that was all that was left.

Condemning anger

The case of Giuseppe, while being an exception, firstly reveals the meaning that the category of "non-subjects" (Capello 2019, 35) took at the food aid hub, namely the very exclusion from the list of food recipients. Moreover, this case brings additional questions on the perspective of food aid recipients and their "appropriate" position in such welfare configuration. While Giuseppe's complains were recognised as legitimate, his reaction was not as it went beyond what was regarded as appropriate by the workers of the community centre. His attitude framed as "violent" and "bad" was condemned to the point that they decided to remove him from the list.

Such castigation of anger is discussed by Palazzi (2021), among others, who reflects on the way in which the anger of the oppressed is often represented as inappropriate and criminalised by authorities and the media. Building on numerous examples in Italy and beyond, Palazzi (2021) demonstrated how this is to be contextualised as part of

an increasing individualisation and psychologising of social issues which also implies that "appropriately behaving citizens" should remain silent, avoid forwarding claims or any form of social conflict, despite the various forms of oppression they might be experiencing.

Particularly interesting in this sense is Palazzi (2021)'s opening example about the protests organised by the Senegalese community in Florence in March 2018, following several racist acts of violence and murders of Senegalese and black people. After being refused to be heard by the mayor, the protesters continued their spontaneous demonstration and broke six public flower planters found on their way. These "acts of violence" were condemned by the mayor and local media, seemingly put on the same level as racist murders (Vicentini 2018). As argued by Palazzi (2021, 14, translation is my own):

> A modest externalisation of anger, when forwarded by specific subjects, produces a scandal which proportions frankly appear as incomprehensible. […] Not all forms of anger are regarded equally: the one of Salvini [far-right politician, member of the Lega party], whether we like it or not, is a form of anger that we expect, which in a way is in the nature of things. On the other hand, the anger of the Senegalese of Florence, is presented as obscene and hardly comprehensible because unexpected.

I have touched upon these themes - also representatively discussed by Bukowski (2019) in terms of "the good education of the oppressed" - in the previous chapters from other analytical angles, namely by delving into the notions of silenced confrontations (chapter two) and "deserving citizenship" (Ong 2003) (chapter five) and their meaning in the context of other collective food procurement networks in Turin. In the case of food aid distribution, such moral imperatives became particularly visible in the transformation of citizens into needy. In fact, intrinsic to this process is the delegitimisation of social anger and the mechanisms that silence important social issues by reducing them to the inappropriate discontent of a single, problematic recipient. Such analytical perspective is in line with the role played by the community centre in terms of the attenuation of social conflict in all its forms and the downplay of the expectation of local inhabitants.

Pervasiveness of the needs approach and biopower

During collective discussion within the Rete Zona Aurora Solidale, some members attributed to the community centre a partial responsibility for the maintenance of the status quo. In their analysis, while providing aid, such organisations also made people go along with the lack of appropriate food for all, without providing a space for developing a collective reflection - let alone a critique – of social services in the city. While grassroots initiatives like this network attempted to create a different model based on public discussions about these themes, this was not always easy in the face of a culture of non-profit welfarism (*assistenzialismo*) that had developed in the area over the last decades. As argued by Andrea, one of the members of Rete Zona Aurora Solidale, such pervasive assistance-like approach to poverty alleviation in the area carried important socio-cultural consequences:

> This approach is very present in Aurora and consequently it can represent an obstacle to self-organisation. I mean that people expect an intervention from someone else and it takes longer for them to really do something for themselves. And we realised this during our food distribution, right? […] Often, we were confused with people from the municipal network, I mean many people told us "Should we give you our income certificate or our name?". And we had to say no and to explain what we were doing and why and say that we needed their help. And that eventually this thing [the food distribution] needed to be organised directly by the people that we were helping.[142]

To overcome their difficulties in communicating these differences and making them an integral part of their approach, Rete Zona Aurora Solidale members often distributed leaflets about other themes that could be relevant for people in vulnerable socio-economic conditions. These included contact details of housing rights or migrant

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[142] Andrea – a pseudonym, Rete Zona Aurora Solidale activist, interview, 19/09/2020.

information grassroots collectives to invite people to talk about their situation and act. These activists also organised public distributions to:

> bring together all the people that received the food package, to do it openly […], show to local inhabitants what was being done and that it was possible to do it together. But also, to prove to institutions that this was a real problem. [143]

Going back to the contrasting approach of the Via Agliè food aid hub and the case of Giuseppe, it is important to highlight how that situation also revealed the discretion and "biopower" (Foucault 1978) that is left in the hand of non-profit organisations. I build here on the Foucauldian definition of biopower to discuss the discretionary needs approach as a control technique impacting the very subsistence of the population. Similar to the social advisors observed by Tosi Cambini (2022), also non-profit workers become, in this process, part of the system through which power is reproduced. The folder of Giuseppe was removed from the list of food recipients probably because it was too difficult to be managed by volunteers and workers of the centre. These were not social workers and already struggled to manage the many other requests forwarded by whom played along the standards and could be considered as a kind and disciplined person. Many anthropologists have talked about the categorisation of poor and discussed how there are "categories of poor who are deemed appropriate to neglect" (Gupta 2012, 63 in Dickinson 2016) or whose poverty makes them criminalised and penalised (Wacquant 2001). To further examine what the Via Agliè food aid hub can make us understand in terms of the new forms and trajectories of "biopower" (Foucault 1978), in the following section, I report more specifically on the discontinuous involvement of Turin municipal administration and consequent new tasks of non-profit organisations.

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[143] Andrea, interview, 19/09/2020.

The return of the state?

Spring 2020: the emergency phase

As mentioned before, during the first months of operations, the majority of the institutional food aid management tasks were left in the hands of community centres (and similar non-profit organisations). Beneficiaries received their food packages at home, approximately every ten days, and no detailed information was asked about the households' economic situation. The presence of the municipality was not very visible during the everyday work at the community centre. Even when the delivery of food stocks was delayed, it was never openly held responsible for such misfunctioning. All emerging issues seemed to be managed directly by the network of community centres and throughout direct communication between these and the donors. Occasionally, part of the courtyard at Via Agliè hosted small meetings between the leaders of the community centres and other food aid hubs. As explained by Erika, the communication between the various hubs was important for finding ways to proceed more efficiently. They shared contacts - of potential food donors, for example -, good management practices and, exceptionally, some food products, when these arrived in large quantities[144].

In this first phase, the municipality was present only in the background, for example in the communication made at city-level about the development of the emergency response. Such background position was clearly exemplified by the mayor's visit to the community centre on April 24, 2020. The at-the-time mayor Chiara Appendino was there together with a small filming crew to document the ongoing activities of the hub and the work of the volunteers. The video was posted on the YouTube channel and Facebook page of the mayor to showcase the work of the hubs. In the video, she presented the network of food aid hubs (*Torino Solidale*) as the way in which many volunteers and local organisations had set in motion solidarity relations. She did not refer to the contribution of the public administration in any way and the word was quickly given to the community centre director and to a volunteer. Their speeches referred

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[144] Erika Mattarella, informal conversation, 01/09/2020.

to - and, in a way, normalised – the vital role played by the volunteers and the limited intervention of the public administration.



[Images 39. The former mayor Chiara Appendino at the community centre of Via Agliè. 24/04/2020. Screenshot retrieved from the video "Solidarious Turin: here is how a food hub works": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWGS8eZRpY4&feature=emb_logo (accessed 11/02/2021)]

The visit was overall well received by the volunteers. Few of them, however, mentioned their discontent in the WhatsApp group, criticising the mayor for taking the merit over the work of volunteers[145]. That visit appeared as a paradox also because of the limited quantities of food available, especially as the number of food recipients had reached 735 households (2334 people) in June 2020. The situation was so critical that the community centre started a fundraising campaign addressed to the city inhabitants. It asked for cash or in-kind donations through a video[146] and flyers that were shared across all volunteers and employees' networks.

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[145] See also the interview excerpt above as part of which the volunteer Giacomo refers to the visit of the Mayor, highlighting the superficial dimension of her presence.

[146] Video available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVZTgmYnsa8 (accessed 30/05/2022).

At that time, some people said that the food stocks received were also bought by the municipality, therefore did not consist of donations only. This information was later confirmed by the director Erika, who once mentioned that the funds of CSP and the in-kind donations had not been sufficient to respond to the many requests for food. Moreover, after a few weeks from the start of the activities, the municipality asked to the centre to hand-in their complete list of beneficiaries. It was while I was volunteering to call recipients that I was asked by one of the community centre employees to add some bureaucratic questions to my calls, such as starting to ask for their social security number. This was when I realised that eventually more selection criteria would be set and only some people would continue to be entitled to food aid.

Summer 2020: a new management

From June/July 2020 onwards, the municipality took control of the organisation of the food aid and reorganised the lists of food aid recipients by applying several selection criteria. In July, the municipality had operated changes in its budget allocation and redirected some of its funds into COVID-19-related relief activities. Moreover, national funds were transferred to the municipalities and fed into such networks (Comune di Torino 2020b)[147].The changes which occurred from July onwards transformed the set of activities conducted at the centre. Data management increasingly became a key component of the work of volunteers and employees at Via Agliè. In this second phase, the municipality was directly managing the preparation of the food packages. The support of the community centres was still key in their distribution or served as pick up locations, as most beneficiaries were asked to come to pick up their package autonomously. As municipality was taking over, it was also starting to ask and systematise information about beneficiaries' income and apply residency selection criteria.

This new phase also represented a turning point in terms of how emergency responses such as food aid were narrated in the media and institutional communication channels. In January 2021, the official

[147] See also the previous reference to the decree *Ristori Ter.*

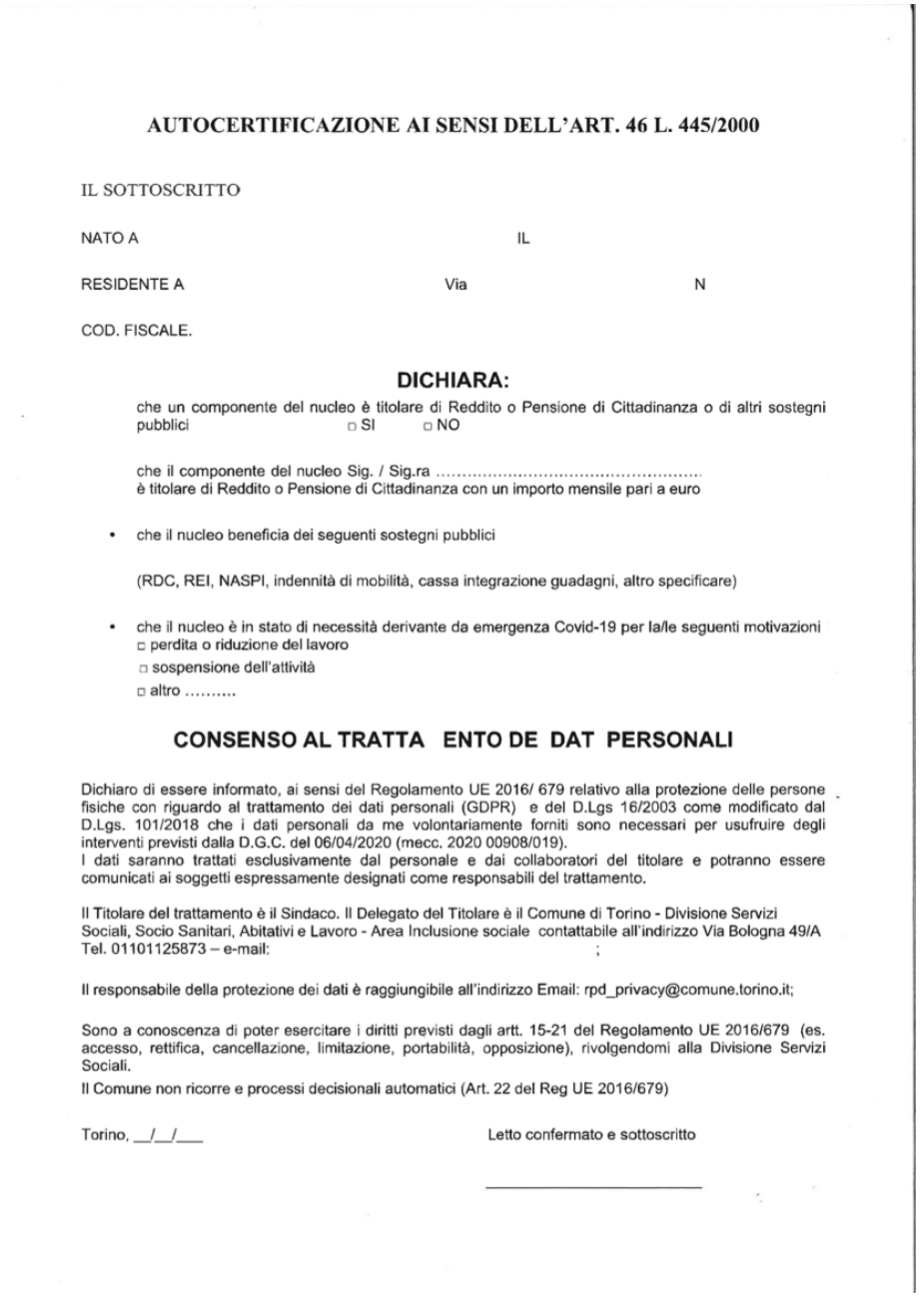
website of the municipality presented the food packages and food vouchers initiatives as a coupled intervention managed by the public administration. While these two interventions had been managed separately and differently, also at Via Agliè, we witnessed a progressive criss-cross between these two forms of food aid. In particular, from July 2020 onwards, the hub started to contact households who had asked for vouchers in the previous months and whose requests were left unattended. The volunteers of the hub proposed to them the possibility to receive a monthly food package instead of the vouchers (as the latter were finished).

I take this transformation as an example to analyse the complexity of the changing role of the non-profit sector. As revealed by these shifts, the intervention of these organisations was framed within the margins set by the local administration in terms of its needs and (in)ability to intervene. The fact that the non-profit sector was given or taken away specific responsibilities in these processes speaks of its moving boundary and its need to constantly adapt its features - and increasingly take over some of the bureaucratic and data management tasks. This was also pointed out by Pusceddu (2022) who pointed out to the feelings it generated among local volunteers and their perceptions about the changing relations between state and citizens. Similar aspects were also discussed in the British anthropological literature about austerity-driven welfare reforms, among others in the work of Koch (2021) which examines the figure of new "frontline workers" (245) that "come to act as a de facto welfare state as they engage in balancing acts allocating limited resources against ever growing demands for subsistence and advice" (256).

In practical terms, these shifts also involved changes in the tasks and skills performed by non-profit workers and volunteers as well as the downsizing of the service they ensured. At the community centre, the reorganisation of the initiative translated into changes in the tasks to be performed as well as in the delivery and composition of the packages. In July, the packages were assembled somewhere else and arrived at the centre already sealed with a sticker on all of them with written "Municipality of Turin". They had varied sizes according to number of people but were all bigger as the delivery was now reduced to one package per household per month. This excluded the month of August

2020 during which the community centres were closed to the public. The centres continued to oversee the distribution of the packages and management of the relation with the food recipients. Once the packages were delivered at the Via Agliè hub, the employees and volunteers stocked them in the courtyard, where beneficiaries came to pick up their package. This was also linked to the end of the lockdown most restrictive measures and the possibility for people to move again freely across the city. The households were contacted by the centre and asked to come within precise time slots to avoid mass gathering.

Once at the centre the food recipients now needed to fill in a self-declaration sheet confirming to be in state of necessity and fill some more information about their income. The self-declaration sheet (reproduced below) contained the following questions: "Are you or any of your household member receiving basic income (*Reddito di Cittadinanza*)? Enter amount; Are you or any of your household members benefitting from other support measures? Why are you in state of need? Check one of the following options: work loss or reduction; suspension of the activity; other necessities, detail."



AUTOCERTIFICAZIONE AI SENSI DELL'ART. 46 L. 445/2000

IL SOTTOSCRITTO

NATO A IL

RESIDENTE A Via N

COD. FISCALE.

DICHIARA:

che un componente del nucleo è titolare di Reddito o Pensione di Cittadinanza o di altri sostegni pubblici □ SI □ NO

che il componente del nucleo Sig. / Sig.ra .....
è titolare di Reddito o Pensione di Cittadinanza con un importo mensile pari a euro

- che il nucleo beneficia dei seguenti sostegni pubblici

  (RDC, REI, NASPI, indennità di mobilità, cassa integrazione guadagni, altro specificare)

- che il nucleo è in stato di necessità derivante da emergenza Covid-19 per la/le seguenti motivazioni
  □ perdita o riduzione del lavoro
  □ sospensione dell'attività
  □ altro .....

CONSENSO AL TRATTA ENTO DE DAT PERSONALI

Dichiaro di essere informato, ai sensi del Regolamento UE 2016/ 679 relativo alla protezione delle persone fisiche con riguardo al trattamento dei dati personali (GDPR) e del D.Lgs 16/2003 come modificato dal D.Lgs. 101/2018 che i dati personali da me volontariamente forniti sono necessari per usufruire degli interventi previsti dalla D.G.C. del 06/04/2020 (mecc. 2020 00908/019).
I dati saranno trattati esclusivamente dal personale e dai collaboratori del titolare e potranno essere comunicati ai soggetti espressamente designati come responsabili del trattamento.

Il Titolare del trattamento è il Sindaco. Il Delegato del Titolare è il Comune di Torino - Divisione Servizi Sociali, Socio Sanitari, Abitativi e Lavoro - Area Inclusione sociale contattabile all'indirizzo Via Bologna 49/A Tel. 01101125873 – e-mail: ;

Il responsabile della protezione dei dati è raggiungibile all'indirizzo Email: rpd_privacy@comune.torino.it;

Sono a conoscenza di poter esercitare i diritti previsti dagli artt. 15-21 del Regolamento UE 2016/679 (es. accesso, rettifica, cancellazione, limitazione, portabilità, opposizione), rivolgendomi alla Divisione Servizi Sociali.
Il Comune non ricorre e processi decisionali automatici (Art. 22 del Reg UE 2016/679)

Torino, __/__/___ Letto confermato e sottoscritto

_____

[Images 40. Copy of a self-declaration sheet distributed at the hub in July 2020.]

I use this document as a tool to analyse yet another way for externalising the everyday management of welfare and its bureaucracy, namely a way for passing over responsibilities directly to the citizens themselves. Through this type of bureaucratic procedure, the food recipients were asked to assess their situation directly and formally declare to be entitled to the food package. This meant that if there were some mistakes these would be the responsibility of the recipient and not of the administration. In a way, this also was revealing of the limitations of the bureaucracy monitoring system of the administration as one would expect the municipality to have an overview of this information already (namely an overview of who benefited from which services). In the next section, I delve deeper into data management as a task and responsibility passed over from the local administration to the non-profit sector and citizens.

Data management

Together with these changes, the list of beneficiaries also undergone some variations. In June, the municipality had gathered all the list of beneficiaries and operated a first selection of the ones which would continue to receive the package. The main criterion was that all food recipients should be resident in Turin. This meant that some had to be crossed off the lists. However, in several cases, these recipients continued to get some support because of the sensibility of the community centre's employees, who decided to provide them with the private donations they kept receiving. This also meant a variation in the size of some packages as the number of household members communicated by the families was not always matching the one on the municipal list of residents. Some families therefore started to receive smaller packages compared to what they had received in the first place. Finally, what was presented as the new "list of the municipality" ("*la lista del comune*") also included some new households, namely the ones who had originally requested food vouchers and had remained for months on a waiting list.

When I volunteered at the hub in August 2020, I also got to directly discover the changes in the ways in which the data of the beneficiaries was managed. I experienced the consequent change of tasks for volunteers. I was asked to help digitalise the data included on the self-

declaration sheets, including information on the reasons for needing assistance and on other forms of benefits received at household level. Entering the data in this system called "Municipality of Turin – SOLIDAPP - citizenship support applications" was not always an easy task. Partly because the information, handwritten on paper, was often hard to decipher. After entering a series of passwords to get into the system, I needed to decode and put in food recipients' social security number to find their profile. After a long series of attempts, changing Ss for 5s or Ns for Ms, the combination was finally right and I could transcribe the information.

Some sheets had been accurately filled in, in all their sections, others were missing information. However, in this digital environment it was not possible to close someone's file without entering information in all fields. When one of the community centre's employees passed by, I asked her for guidance on cases in which the question on basic income was checked, but the amount had not been specified. She explained that these were usually people who had benefitted from basic income but, for some reasons, had stopped receiving it: "they took it back from them" (*glielo hanno tolto*). "So… just put that they do not receive that income. In this way, you can move to the next question"[148]. Her answer and confident attitude made me think about the many different understandings and skills that social workers needed to develop to navigate and simplify Italian bureaucratic processes. It also made me feel, hands-on, these workers' margins for discretion, as also underlined by Herzfeld (1993) in his theorisation of bureaucracy.

Overall, in this section I asked if the presence of the municipality indicated a return of the state in the field of food aid. However, I revealed how the presence of the public administration remained linked and highly reliant on non-profit organisations. The fact that the municipality took over certain tasks such as the composition of the packages corresponded to a further restraining of the intervention both in terms of the quantity of food recipients and food distributed. Moreover, it came with new tasks being devolved from the municipality to non-profit workers, volunteers and food recipients

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[148] Fieldnotes, 04/08/2020.

themselves as examined in relation to bureaucracy and data management. With these final examples about data management at Via Agliè, I want to highlight the role of non-profit workers and volunteers in bureaucracy. As stressed before, the mediation of these actors extends the question of "biopower" beyond the state administration. I argue that this is an important consequence of contemporary welfare configurations such as community care: non-profit workers and volunteers play a central role in the evaluation of requests for support and in the management of personal data. They have the power to transform this set of information into bureaucratic keys that can guarantee or limit people access to certain services. Hyatt (1997, 219) highlighted that in certain regimes of welfare, the "government of the poor" takes place "through the mediation of an array of 'experts'" while in others it is devolved to the poor themselves. In this and other hybrid cases similar to such Italian arrangement of community care, it is important to question what expertise is deployed by volunteers, if any, how they feel about their growing responsibilities (e.g. Pusceddu 2020), and the consequences of such management of citizens' data.

Conclusion

In this final part of the dissertation, I aimed at adding to the previous analyses of civic engagement and urban transformations with a more detailed immersion into the examination of welfare (in the form of poverty alleviation and food aid). I did not aim at proposing a definition of welfare but at unpacking contemporary trends such as the growing role of the non-profit sector and the popularization of the notion of "community care" (e.g. Rimoldi and Pozzi 2022; Hyatt, 2001). Following a diachronic approach to the analysis of welfare, I retraced the history of a neighbourhood community centre situated in Barriera di Milano. I discussed its role as a broker (Koster and Van Leynseele 2018) between citizens, non-profit organisations, private and public institutions, but also as the active promoter of the culture of active citizenship (see also de Wilde and Duyvendak 2016) and volunteerism. The centre also functioned as a mitigation body to flatten social conflict as well as the requests for and debate around public intervention in the area.

Such configuration of welfare as community care set the ground for the response that was put in place during the COVID-19 emergency. I examined how a food aid initiative was organised at the centre and I argued that this response represented a natural continuation of long-term processes of welfare reconfiguration in the area. This was particularly visible in relation to the role of private foundations and the responsibility left in the hands of the non-profit sector and citizens themselves. Delving into the materiality and morality around the composition and distribution of food aid packages, I described the structural weaknesses of these contemporary forms of welfare, including the lack of adequate food for all and their high reliance on volunteerism. I stressed how the more critical outlooks did not find a space for expression at the hub and little debate emerged around the way in which aid was being carried out, making it also a depoliticized form of intervention.

I examined how the "postwelfarist morality" (Muehlebach 2012) reconfigured local inhabitants' right to food into social needs necessitating only partial responses, which were deemed good enough. Through the food packages, local inhabitants experienced their relation

to institutions, and I argued that the use of food surplus should be problematised in relation to the issue of dignity (e.g. Kenny and Sage 2019) and to the reproduction of a stratification of citizens. In terms of the dynamics within the community centre, I underlined how the construction of the idea of a community of volunteers held essential functions in the representation of such initiatives as a form of social cohesion and solidarity which does not question the status quo but, on the contrary, can coexist with austerity and neoliberal reforms. I juxtaposed several of my observations at the Via Agliè community centre with the case of the Rete Zona Aurora Solidale grassroots food aid distribution to point to some of these mechanisms more clearly, including the lack of space for debate, social critique and anger at the centre.

Finally, I questioned the presence of the municipality (and the quality of such presence) giving more complexity to the analysis of welfare state retrenchment. The different organisational stages of the food aid hub revealed the various forms of engagement and retrenchment of the municipality. While it kept control of the list of food recipients and related selection criteria, its limited contribution remained inseparable from the one of non-profit organisations and the work of volunteers. Overall, I argue that this example is revealing of a process of invisibilisation of the public administration behind the non-profit apparatus, which make it always more complex for citizens to voice their claims and make anyone accountable for their rights.

Conclusion

Epilogue

Almost two years and a half have passed since I finished my fieldwork. As I conclude this dissertation it is now January 2023. While I wrote, Italy continued to be hit by the pandemic and its socio-economic consequences, which expanded with the war in Ukraine. With the crisis of the national unity government led by Mario Draghi, a right-wing parties coalition won political elections in September 2022. Meanwhile, the slow arrival of the funds of the Recovery Plan (approved in 2021 to boost the economic recovery of the country after the pandemic) inaugurate a new, different wave of austerity yet to be analysed. The allocation of these funds, mostly employed for the digitalisation and "sustainability transition" of the country, did not come without controversies. For example, only limited funds seem to be allocated to public policies supporting the economic, social and health needs of the population mostly hit by the crisis.

A few days ago, I decided to walk through my neighbourhood to try to visualise the changes which have occurred. Porta Palazzo market was still lively and colourful. I bought some red cabbage and green leaves at the farmers' market. "They don't look very good because of the cold" explained to me my favourite farmer, while cutting part of the red cabbage away, before he put it on the weighing scale. I had heard many similar comments in the last months, as local farmers were highly impacted by extreme climate events. Among other things, last summer's drought jeopardised their production and reduced their offer. I then moved to the other section of the market, where one finds a greater variety of fruits and vegetables coming from global supply chains. I bought some oranges from Sicily. I also got some homemade bread from a Moroccan lady selling it on the street, right at the margins of the market. She said that she had to ask me twenty cents more than usual, because the costs of flour and oil had increased. Everywhere at the market food prices increased.

As I walked back home, I saw different posters glued or taped at bus stops, which called for mobilisation, and more precisely, for people to

stand up for their rights and self-organise in the face of the increasing costs of living. One was related to the local right-to-housing movement. In a few words, it explained about the possibility to get some support and organise collectively in the face of evictions. Housing (e.g., in the form of access to appropriate housing and accessible housing costs) grew as a widespread social problem in the area. The number of evictions increased after the pandemic together with structural problems such as the lack of investments in social housing (Redazione Info Blackout 2022). While grassroots collectives such as the right-to-housing movement had pointed to these issues for several years, in the last months, some third sector organisations in Aurora also started to take a political stand. As I walked, I was reminded of one of their latest interventions in this sense, namely a motion which they forwarded to the municipal board asking to request, at national level, the reintroduction of economic support for housing in the budget law (Comune di Torino 2022).

More generally, the worsening of the economic situation in the area made it difficult for anyone to avoid talking about it. I greeted one of my neighbours as we crossed each other. A few days before, I had surprised him while having a heated conversation at the bar, together with another man living in our building. The issue was that many of our neighbours were unable to pay their bills. Electricity, gas, heating, shared maintenance costs: they argued about who paid and who did not and what to do about our shared debts. The increase in prices (especially for gas in autumn 2022) complicated the economic situation of many households, created tensions between people in the building and accentuated economic disparities.

Meanwhile, new construction sites were inaugurated. After crossing the bridge over the Dora River, I passed in front of one of these sites. There, an entire building was demolished over the summer to make space for The Student Hotel – a Dutch business present worldwide recently renamed The Social Hub. The construction phase had started not long ago and new blue barriers made it difficult to observe what was going on in that large area of almost 25 thousand square meters. Similarly to many other public areas and buildings in Turin, this space was sold off to the private sector in recent years (Redazione Monitor Torino 2022). The way in which this project was presented was

exemplificatory of the narrative adopted by local institutions around urban renewal. This hostel was promoted as an opportunity for a future physical and economic renaissance of the area, bringing with it the possibility to ameliorate its image and to create new economic opportunities for local businesses[149][150].

With the start of the new year, the promise of urban renewal seemed present more than ever in the local news. As I opened the local section of the newspaper La Stampa, I found updates about many construction sites planned for 2023. The article, titled "the year of revival: here are the ten projects which will make Turin transform in 2023", referred to large scale events, tourism and restored infrastructures. The centrality of physical urban renewal was also highlighted in another article about the allocation of the Recovery funds in the city, mostly targeted to the "restoration of symbolic venues" (D'Arcangelo 2023). These (long-dated) plans represented a continuity in the promise of a greater, more beautiful tomorrow, and confirmed the centrality of city branding in the municipal agenda.

I was almost home and stopped in front of the new graffiti covering the walls around the abandoned industrial plant *Officina Grandi Motori* (OGM). Huge representations of teeth, angry animals and colourful graffiti tags with no clear meaning. These were made a few months ago by professional taggers paid to cover these walls with "new street art"[151]. Their intervention completely obscured the many writings made over the years by local inhabitants. These ranged from writings against the police to political statements such as "From Colombia to Palestine, rebel people are writing history! Against any imperialism, let's mobilise". Other writings also explicitly contested gentrifying projects in the area – similarly to what observed on some walls of Rotterdam by Walstra (2020). While these illegal writings were categorised as part of the urban *degrado* in Aurora, the new mural was

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[149] E.g. Fieldnotes, 28/01/2022. IV Commissione Circoscrizione 7: Area Ponte Mosca: Progetto "The Student Hotel".

[150] To learn more about the debate and critics around The Student Hotel project, see Berton (2021) and Comitato di Zona Aurora (2021).

[151] Informal conversation with one of the street artists involved, 04/10/2022.

proposed to beautify the area. As highlighted by Heck (2021), in many cities, street art became a tool for developing the image of the creative city: it can play with the idea of a young and undisciplined suburb, while appropriating and reinterpreting it for urban branding purposes. In Aurora, it now covered and, to a certain extent, prevented expressions of discontent and protest over the use of the public space.

Sustainable Turin?

With this dissertation I took the reader around different, what we called, Collective Food Procurement networks in Turin. I discussed the case of urban gardens (part one), open-air food markets (part two) and food aid initiatives (part three). In the different chapters, I described related sites, people, practices and narratives. Ethnographic observation allowed me to call for diversifying our outlooks on certain areas of the city as well as certain practices and for moving away from incautious optimism around widespread understandings of urban renewal and sustainability. To problematise these aspects, I focused particularly on two sets of considerations around civic engagement and morality, which represented red threads throughout the text.

The first set of reflections highlighted the continuities between urban transformations and changing notions of civic engagement. As revealed through several examples, Turin urban renewal interventions occurred through the circulation of new understandings of the role of citizens and related practices, such as volunteerism. Put differently: in a context characterised by a problematic entanglement between welfare state retrenchment and the need for diversifying the city economy and reviving its spaces, urban renewal was mostly forwarded thanks to the direct and active engagement of citizens. In most of the cases which I analysed, engagement happened thanks to the intermediation of non-profit organisations, whose professionals framed the way of going about urban renewal as well as the margins for citizens' direct intervention and "right to the city". I argued that these forms of mediated engagement should be problematised in terms of some of their features namely the way in which they might silence discontent, exclude marginalised practices and knowledge and limit citizens' possibilities to be part of actual decision-making, ownership and governance processes.

The second and consequent set of reflections related to the morality that surrounds these processes. I used morality as a common denominator to investigate the similarities and differences between the various cases - and examine their linkages with broader processes such as welfare reconfiguration, precarious labour and gentrification. I highlighted how, through morality, certain working cultures and related features, such as low remuneration as part of the non-profit sector, are justified - and became interrelated with contemporary understandings of urban sustainability. I problematised the idea that one initiative can be regarded as sustainable while based on precarious labour or discretionary understandings of deservingness. I highlighted how several practices considered as sustainable are embedded in mechanisms of discrimination, dismantlement of the welfare state, dependency from private funding and reinforce a shift away from a right-based approach to the city and welfare provision. I have shown how, in this context, specific moral apparatuses, such as community care, play a crucial role for creating and ensuring consensus around these practices. To refer to the title of this work, I named these tensions "silenced paradoxes" because of their invisibilisation. Silencing was also part of the cultural and moral process of subject-making within many initiatives, as part of which no collective space was given to debate, to voice discontent, diversity of opinions and forms of knowledge. In this way, as part of neoliberal urbanism, sustainability and renewal most often became a "civilization-based project" (Newman 2015, 128) based on global standardised language and aesthetic features and implanted in urban suburbs with the idea of transforming uses and users.

Moving forward

How to talk about Turin? For decades, scholars, journalists and politicians have attempted to describe Turin around key words such as the "factory city" (*città-fabbrica*) or the "city laboratory" (*città laboratorio*). This last term was often employed in relation to the fact of it being a site of experimentation (such as in the case of public policies or new economic investments) to be eventually reproduced at national level (e.g., Tropeano 2022). Similarly to other post-industrial cities, Turin attempts to affirm its new identity as a green, smart, young and attractive city and its role as part of a supposed vibrant European economic market. As part of these processes, the transformation of the urban space and, more specifically, the renewal of its peripheral areas are to be critically analysed. Many scholars and critical urban dwellers have invited already to examine how funds are allocated, to what is given priority, and who benefits (and who does not) from these plans. In other words, to look at processes of privatisation, gentrification and financialisation of the city and the inequalities these reproduce and increment (e.g., Semi 2015; Lofranco and Zanotelli 2022; Portelli 2021).

With this dissertation, I argued that unpacking how people mature their understanding of their rights and duties as citizens and urban dwellers is key to examine contemporary urban transformations. I suggest that it is important to investigate the social, cultural and moral dimensions which create consensus around these processes, and the role of the non-profit sector in this sense. It is important to keep a critical eye on the widespread rhetoric of participation (e.g., but who participates in decision-making and how?), ownership (e.g., who owns and who has access to these renewed spaces?) and the context of the intervention (e.g., meanwhile are public goods and services available, accessible and maintained?). In particular, I find important to further investigate why these transformations do not generate (if not to limited extent) critical debate or reactions, while they represent open conflicts over resources and space use. Among the many potential reasons, I mentioned the intermediation of the non-profit sector because, while it holds a vital role in welfare provision, it also reinforces the stratification of citizens. Such stratification occurs through the normalisation of the transition from an entitlement to a need-based

approach to welfare. As part of this shift, it becomes increasingly difficult for citizens to reconfigure city space as a right and self-organisation as a potential. At the same time, the presence of the third sector contributes to the invisibilisation of the public administration and their responsibilities in the social realm. This calls for a critical debate within and about non-profit organisations, on their internal functioning but also on their political positioning within urban renewal processes (e.g., which organisations take a position? When do they have the margins to do so? Through which forms of engagement and what is their leverage potential?). I believe that these themes are key elements that remain to be further investigated to critically analyse contemporary urban transformations.

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Summary

This dissertation takes the reader around different Collective Food Procurement networks in Turin (Italy). It discusses the case of urban gardens (part one), open-air food markets (part two) and food aid initiatives (part three). In the different chapters, I analyse related sites, people, practices and narratives and I call for diversifying our outlooks on urban peripheral areas and moving away from incautious optimism around widespread understandings of urban renewal and sustainability.

To critically engage with these themes, I focus on civic engagement and morality, which represent red threads throughout the text. In particular, I highlight continuities between urban transformations and changing notions of civic engagement. As revealed through several examples, Turin urban renewal interventions occurred through the circulation of new understandings of the role of citizens and related practices, such as volunteerism. Engagement often happened thanks to the intermediation of non-profit organisations. I argued that these forms of mediated engagement should be problematised in relation to the way in which they might silence discontent, exclude marginalised practices and limit citizens' possibilities to be part of actual decision-making, ownership and governance processes. I use morality as a common denominator to investigate the similarities and differences between the various cases - and examine their linkages with broader processes such as welfare reconfiguration, precarious labour and gentrification. I highlight how, through morality, certain working cultures, such as low remuneration as part of the non-profit sector, are justified - and became interrelated with contemporary understandings of urban sustainability. In this way, practices considered as sustainable might be embedded in mechanisms of discrimination, dismantlement of the welfare state, dependency from private funding and reinforce a shift away from a right-based approach to the city and welfare provision.

This dissertation builds on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2019 and 2020. The fieldwork was based on longitudinal, native language and multimodal ethnography, following the methodological framework of the project "Food citizens? Collective Food Procurement in European Cities: Solidarity and Diversity, Skills

and Scale" (2017-2022). Through participant observation, I followed closely and, in most cases, became part (as a participant, volunteer or collaborator) of eleven collective food procurement networks. The research output included fieldwork notes, fortnightly field reports, 75 semi-structured interviews, mostly audio recorded, as well as the (co)production of audio-visual material such as cultural maps and a considerable amount of video footages and photos.

In the first section of the dissertation, I discuss the transforming management and use of a peri-urban green area called Parco Piemonte (Mirafiori Sud neighbourhood) – and, in particular, the development of an urban gardening project called Orti Generali (General Gardens) led by the non-profit organisation Coefficiente Clorofilla. The transformation of the area represented a privileged arena to study the ways in which specific visions and moralities of a "good urban space" (e.g. open and beautiful) and of a "good citizen" (e.g. active and obedient) are articulated together. In chapter one, I explore the ways in which local inhabitants and workers were directly involved in the transformation of the area. I point to the premises of such participatory approach, which I contextualise as part of a broader genealogy of urban renewal plans in the neighbourhood. I argue that while the new users of the area are key actors of its transformation, their ability to intervene remains confined to limited levels of decision making. In chapter two, I explain about the diverging visions that emerged during the park transformation process. I point to the issue of silenced confrontations to argue about what I analyse as a key feature of urban renewal guided by local non-profit organisations. Their intervention, while being participated by the local population, does not come without power relations and becomes a way of redefining, based on moral standards what is appropriate, legal, beautiful, in need of renewal and what is not. In chapter three, I report on the perspective of citizens who remain partially excluded from such process of renewal namely the long-term occupants of the area: spontaneous gardeners and a family of errant shepherds. I focus on their skills to explain how their forms of right to the city (such as land self-appropriation and itinerant labour) do not find a space for legitimisation in the new configuration of the park. In fact, these do not align with neoliberal visions of the urban space nor with the production of hegemonic images of urban sustainability.

In the second section of the dissertation, I continue to discuss how urban renewal is interrelated with changing notions of citizenship, sustainability and welfare, proposing further reflections based on my ethnographic investigations at open-air food markets. Markets represent interesting entry points to look more specifically into other complex forms of labour precarity and citizens engagement. Chapter four revolves around the traditional open-air food market of Piazza Foroni (Barriera di Milano neighbourhood). Focusing on the perspective of long-term market vendors, I present the market life in relation to the history of immigration in the area as well as its current transformations, among which the impacts of the economic crisis and the globalised market economy. I discuss some of Piazza Foroni vendors' diverse experiences as well as their collective organisation and engagement in local social activities and various forms of political contestation. Chapter five reports on the case of an initiative for food surplus collection and free redistribution at open-air food markets, coordinated by a non-profit organisation called Eco dalle Città. I particularly focus on the perspectives of asylum seekers and refugees involved in these activities as workers and volunteers in Aurora and Barriera di Milano neighbourhoods. I contextualise their experiences as part of socio-cultural interactions that characterise diverse and low-income neighbourhoods at the intersection between unemployment, austerity, the promises of urban renewal and risks of gentrification. I also delve into the organisation of Eco dalle Città activities: I report on workers and volunteers' different perspectives on their labour and power relations. As part of the latter, I show how the idea of urban dwellers' deservingness of rights is entangled with structural racial disparities and precarious working conditions.

The third and final part of the dissertation discusses institutional food aid during the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, it examines its premises, organisation, agents and representations. I focus my analysis on the food aid hub which was developed at the Via Agliè community centre (Barriera di Milano neighbourhood). I propose to step back from the normalisation of the Italian welfare mix and the growing role of non-profit organisations in the delivery of social services. In particular, I advance a detailed investigation of the morality upon which it is premised and that it reproduces. In chapter six, I retrace the genealogy of the Via Agliè community centre to unpack the social and cultural

features that brought to a specific set of responses during the pandemic. I also introduce other forms of solidarity that emerged during COVID-19, explaining the various responses to urban poverty and food insecurity that were put in place. Chapter seven explores the functioning of the food aid hub, delving into the description of its materiality such as the food managed and distributed. I discuss decision-making around how to compose the packages, highlighting the ways in which food aid can reproduce a stratification of citizenship. I problematise how the figures of the volunteer and the food recipient were constructed through internal and external accounts of the hub's activities, extending previous discussions around the concept of deservingness. I conclude with an analysis of the evolution of the organisation of food aid at Via Agliè over time and the changing levels of intervention of the municipality.

I conclude that unpacking how people mature their understanding of their rights and duties as citizens and urban dwellers is key to examine contemporary urban transformations. I suggest that it is important to investigate the social, cultural and civic dimensions which create consensus around these processes, and the role of the non-profit sector in this sense. It is important to keep a critical eye on the widespread rhetoric of participation (e.g., but who participates in decision-making and how?), ownership (e.g., who owns and who has access to these renewed spaces?) and the context of the intervention (e.g., meanwhile are public goods and services available, accessible and maintained?). In particular, I suggest to further investigate why these transformations do not generate (if not to limited extent) critical debate or reactions, while they represent open conflicts over resources and space use. Among the many potential reasons, I mention the intermediation of the non-profit sector because, while it holds a vital role in welfare provision, it also reinforces the stratification of citizens. Such stratification occurs through the normalisation of the transition from an entitlement to a need-based approach to welfare. As part of this shift, it becomes increasingly difficult for citizens to reconfigure city space as a right and self-organisation as a potential. At the same time, the presence of the third sector contributes to the invisibilisation of the public administration and its responsibilities in the social realm.

Samenvatting

De stilgezwegen paradox van stedelijke vernieuwing

Moraliteit, welvaartshervorming en precaire arbeid in Collectieve Voedselvoorziening in Turijn.

Dit proefschrift neemt de lezer mee langs verschillende netwerken van collectieve voedselvoorziening in Turijn (Italië). Het bespreekt stadstuinen (deel één), voedselmarkten (deel twee) en voedselhulp initiatieven (deel drie). In de verschillende hoofdstukken analyseer ik verwante locaties, personen, activiteiten en verhalen en doe ik een oproep om onze kijk op peri-urbane gebieden te verbreden en af te stappen van het ondoordacht optimisme rond wijdverbreide opvattingen over stedelijke vernieuwing en duurzaamheid.

Om deze thema's kritisch te kunnen benaderen, richt ik me op burgerparticipatie en moraliteit als rode draden doorheen het verhaal. In het bijzonder benadruk ik de continuïteit tussen stedelijke transformaties en veranderende opvattingen over burgerparticipatie. Zoals blijkt uit verschillende voorbeelden, vonden de interventies voor stedelijke vernieuwing in Turijn plaats middels de verspreiding van nieuwe opvattingen over de rol van burgers en daaraan gerelateerde activiteiten, zoals vrijwilligerswerk. Betrokkenheid ontstond vaak dankzij de bemiddeling van non-profitorganisaties. Ik beargumenteerde dat deze vormen van bemiddelde betrokkenheid geproblematiseerd moeten worden in relatie tot de manier waarop ze onvrede stilzwijgen, gemarginaliseerde praktijken uitsluiten en de mogelijkheden van burgers beperken om deel uit te maken van feitelijke besluitvorming, eigenaarschap en bestuursprocessen. Ik gebruik moraliteit als gemene deler om de overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen de verschillende casussen te onderzoeken - en hun verbanden met bredere processen zoals hervorming van de welvaart, precaire arbeid en gentrificatie te onderzoeken. Ik benadruk hoe bepaalde arbeidsstandaarden, zoals lage lonen in de non-profitsector, door moraliteit worden gerechtvaardigd - en onderzoek hoe dit in verband kan worden gebracht met hedendaagse opvattingen over

stedelijke duurzaamheid. Op deze manier kunnen activiteiten die als duurzaam worden beschouwd, ingebed zijn in mechanismen van discriminatie, het ontmantelen van de verzorgingsstaat, de afhankelijkheid van private financiering en een beweging weg van een rechtvaardige benadering van de stad en welzijnsvoorzieningen.

Dit proefschrift is gebaseerd op 15 maanden etnografisch veldwerk tussen 2019 en 2020. Het veldwerk bestond uit longitudinale, multimodale etnografie in de moedertaal, volgens het methodologische kader van het project "Food citizens? Collective Food Procurement in European Cities: Solidarity and Diversity, Skills and Scale" (2017-2022). Door middel van participerende observatie heb ik elf netwerken van collectieve voedselvoorziening van dichtbij gevolgd en heb ik er in de meeste gevallen ook deel van uitgemaakt (als deelnemer, vrijwilliger of medewerker). De verzamelde data bestond uit veldwerknotities, tweewekelijkse veldwerkrapporten, 75 semigestructureerde interviews, grotendeels audio-opgenomen, evenals de (co)productie van audiovisueel materiaal zoals *cultural maps* en een aanzienlijke hoeveelheid video- en fotomateriaal.

In het eerste deel van het proefschrift bespreek ik transformaties in het beheer en gebruik van een peri-urbaan groengebied genaamd *Parco Piemonte* (wijk *Mirafiori Sud*) - en, in het bijzonder, de ontwikkeling van een stadstuinproject genaamd *Orti Generali* (Algemene Tuinen) geleid door de non-profit organisatie *Coefficiente Clorofilla*. De transformatie van het gebied gaf een bevoorrechte omgeving om de manieren te bestuderen waarop specifieke visies en moraliteiten van een "goede stedelijke ruimte" (bv. open en mooi) en van een "goede burger" (bv. actief en gehoorzaam) tegelijkertijd betekenis krijgen. In hoofdstuk één onderzoek ik de manieren waarop lokale bewoners en werkenden direct betrokken waren bij de transformatie van het gebied. Ik wijs op de veronderstellingen van een dergelijke participatieve aanpak, die ik contextualiseer als onderdeel van een bredere genealogie van stadsvernieuwingsplannen in de buurt. Ik stel dat de nieuwe gebruikers van het gebied weliswaar belangrijke actoren zijn in de transformatie ervan, maar dat hun mogelijkheden om in te grijpen beperkt blijven tot minimale niveaus van besluitvorming. In hoofdstuk

twee vertel ik over de uiteenlopende visies die naar voren kwamen tijdens de transformatie van het park. Ik bespreek de stilgezwegen confrontaties om een belangrijk kenmerk van stedelijke vernieuwing onder leiding van lokale non-profitorganisaties bloot te leggen. Hun interventie, ondanks dat de lokale bevolking hierin deelneemt, komt met machtsverhoudingen die tonen hoe, op basis van morele normen, wordt herdefinieerd wat geschikt, legaal, mooi en aan vernieuwing toe is en wat niet. In hoofdstuk drie doe ik verslag van het perspectief van burgers die gedeeltelijk uitgesloten blijven van een dergelijk vernieuwingsproces, namelijk de langdurige bewoners van het gebied: spontane tuinders en een familie van rondtrekkende herders. Ik richt me op hun vaardigheden om te verklaren hoe hun vormen van recht op de stad (zoals landeigenaarschap en rondtrekkende arbeid) geen ruimte voor legitimatie vinden in de nieuwe hervorming van het park. Het komt erop neer dat deze niet aansluiten bij neoliberale visies op de stedelijke ruimte, noch bij de productie van hegemoniale beelden van stedelijke duurzaamheid.

In het tweede deel van het proefschrift bespreek ik verder hoe stedelijke vernieuwing samenhangt met veranderende opvattingen over burgerschap, duurzaamheid en welzijn, en stel ik verdere reflecties voor op basis van mijn etnografisch onderzoek op voedselmarkten. Markten vormen interessante aanknopingspunten om specifieker te kijken naar andere complexe vormen van arbeidsonzekerheid en burgerbetrokkenheid. Hoofdstuk vier draait om de traditionele voedselmarkt van *Piazza Foroni* (wijk *Barriera di Milano*). Ik concentreer me op het perspectief van langdurige marktkooplui en presenteer het marktleven in relatie tot de geschiedenis van immigratie in het gebied en de huidige transformaties, waaronder de gevolgen van de economische crisis en de geglobaliseerde markteconomie. Ik bespreek verschillende ervaringen van de verkopers op *Piazza Foroni*, evenals hun collectieve organisatie en betrokkenheid bij lokale sociale activiteiten en verschillende vormen van politieke weerstand. Hoofdstuk vijf bespreekt een initiatief voor het inzamelen van voedseloverschotten en gratis uitgifte op voedselmarkten, gecoördineerd door een non-profitorganisatie genaamd *Eco dalle Città*. Ik richt me vooral op de

perspectieven van asielzoekers en vluchtelingen die als werknemers en vrijwilligers betrokken zijn bij deze activiteiten in de wijken *Aurora* en *Barriera di Milano*. Ik contextualiseer hun ervaringen binnen sociaal-culturele interacties die kenmerkend zijn voor diverse buurten met lage inkomens waar werkloosheid, bezuinigingen, de beloften van stedelijke vernieuwing en de risico's van gentrificatie samenkomen. Ik verdiep me ook in de organisatie van de activiteiten van *Eco dalle Città*: Ik rapporteer over de verschillende perspectieven van arbeiders en vrijwilligers op hun arbeids- en machtsverhoudingen. Als onderdeel van dit laatste laat ik zien hoe het idee dat stedelingen rechten verdienen is verstrengeld met structurele raciale ongelijkheid en precaire arbeidsomstandigheden.

Het derde en laatste deel van het proefschrift bespreekt institutionele voedselhulp tijdens de COVID-19 crisis. In het bijzonder worden de veronderstellingen, organisatie, vertegenwoordigers en representaties ervan onderzocht. Ik richt mijn analyse op het voedselhulppunt dat werd ontwikkeld in het gemeenschapscentrum *Via Agliè* (wijk *Barriera di Milano*). Ik stel voor om afstand te nemen van de normalisering van de Italiaanse welvaartsmix en de groeiende rol van non-profitorganisaties in de levering van sociale diensten. In het bijzonder stel ik een gedetailleerd onderzoek voor naar de moraliteit waarop het gebaseerd is en die het reproduceert. In hoofdstuk zes volg ik de genealogie van het gemeenschapscentrum *Via Agliè* om de sociale en culturele kenmerken te ontrafelen die hebben geleid tot een specifieke reeks reacties tijdens de pandemie. Ik introduceer ook andere vormen van solidariteit die opkwamen tijdens COVID-19, en verklaar de verschillende antwoorden die werden gegeven op stedelijke armoede en voedselonzekerheid. Hoofdstuk zeven onderzoekt het functioneren van het voedselhulppunt, waarbij ik inga op de beschrijving van de materialiteit ervan, zoals het beheerde en uitgedeelde voedsel. Ik bespreek de besluitvorming rond het samenstellen van de pakketten en benadruk de manieren waarop voedselhulp een stratificatie van burgerschap kan reproduceren. Ik problematiseer hoe de figuren van de vrijwilliger en de ontvanger van het voedsel werden geconstrueerd door middel van interne en externe verslagen van de activiteiten van het voedselhulppunt, waarbij wordt

uitgeweid over eerdere discussies met betrekking tot het concept van 'deservingness'. Ik sluit af met een analyse van de evolutie van de organisatie van voedselhulp in *Via Agliè* in de loop der tijd en de veranderende interventieniveaus van de gemeente.

Ik concludeer dat het uiteenzetten van de manier waarop mensen hun begrip van hun rechten en plichten als burgers en stedelingen tot wasdom laten komen, de sleutel is tot het onderzoeken van hedendaagse stedelijke transformaties. Ik stel dat het belangrijk is om de sociale, culturele en burgerlijke dimensies die consensus creëren rond deze processen, en de rol van de non-profitsector hierin, te onderzoeken. Het is belangrijk om kritisch te kijken naar hoe de wijdverspreide retoriek van participatie (bv. wie neemt deel aan de besluitvorming en hoe?), eigendom (bv. wie is eigenaar van en wie heeft toegang tot deze vernieuwde ruimten?) en de context van de interventie (bv. zijn openbare goederen en diensten beschikbaar, toegankelijk en onderhouden?). In het bijzonder stel ik voor om verder te onderzoeken waarom deze transformaties geen (al is het maar in beperkte mate) kritisch debat of reacties genereren, terwijl ze open conflicten over middelen en ruimtegebruik vertegenwoordigen. Van de vele mogelijke verklaringen bespreek ik de bemiddeling van de non-profitsector omdat deze weliswaar een vitale rol speelt in de welzijnsvoorzieningen, maar ook de stratificatie van burgers versterkt. Deze stratificatie vindt plaats door de normalisering van de overgang van een op rechten gebaseerde naar een op behoeften gebaseerde benadering van welzijn. Als onderdeel van deze verschuiving wordt het voor burgers steeds moeilijker om de ruimte in de stad te hervormen als een recht en zelforganisatie als een potentieel. Tegelijkertijd draagt de aanwezigheid van de derde sector bij aan de onzichtbaarheid van de overheid en haar verantwoordelijkheden in het sociale domein.

Propositions

The silenced paradoxes of urban renewal.
Morality, welfare reconfiguration and precarious labour in Collective Food Procurement in Turin
by Maria Vasile

1. Citizens' direct engagement in urban renewal initiatives is to be critically analysed as it might involve them (unremunerated) in the transformation work, while confining their ability to intervene to a limited level of decision making. In other words, contemporary forms of citizens engagement, such as volunteering, do not necessarily represent new opportunities for local inhabitants to own urban projects nor forward their right-to-the-city.

2. In Turin, non-profit organisations are central agents of urban renewal and the delivery of services in marginalised urban areas. They fill the gap left by welfare state withdrawal and increasingly represent intermediaries between the public administration and citizens. However, their work is to be problematised as it might reproduce marginalisation, labour precarity, recast people's rights into needs, normalise neoliberal reform from the bottom-up, and contribute to gentrification.

3. Silenced confrontations represent a central dimension of urban renewal processes. While developed in the name of progress and participation, these interventions do not come without power relations and are often charged with a moral redefinition of what is an appropriate citizen behaviour or a beautiful urban space. The moral imperative of renewal contributes to hide differences across local inhabitants' visions, downplay their expectations, attenuate social conflict in all its forms, silence dissent and delegitimise social anger.

4. Sustainability (as forwarded in contemporary urban renewal, greening and local food projects) is often based on hegemonic understandings and images of this notion. Sustainability often goes hands in hands with neoliberal urbanism, urban aestheticization and growing privatisation. It might also further exclude marginalised groups and delegitimise their practices and skills.

5. Food aid can reproduce existing inequalities, among other in terms of access to appropriate food. On one hand, the quality of food distributed reproduces a categorisation of citizens following existing social inequalities. On the other hand, it is through food packages that citizens experience welfare state retrenchment and the normalisation of the conversion of their right-to-food into aid.

6. In the Italian context, during COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency response to the socio-economic crisis highly relied on the intervention of non-profit organisations and volunteers (in continuity with the pre-pandemic approach). This extends the question of "biopower" beyond the state administration and contributes to its invisibilisation behind the non-profit apparatus, making it more complex for citizens to expose their claims and make anyone accountable for their rights.

7. Anthropology is important to read the contradictions and injustices that are often part of contemporary urban planning practices. It can also support the transformation of urban planning in the direction of a more participatory approach by bring class back in the analysis of urban needs as well as account for, appreciate and work with the diversity of visions of urban dwellers.

8. Anthropology offers important tools to conduct comparative research in an innovative manner. In particular, comparing different contexts allows to anchor the researcher's understanding of the issue at stake in its social, cultural and

political history thus provide in depth explanation of similarities and differences. In this way, differences across case studies become as important as similarities, as they symbolise key entry points for an in depth understanding of a social phenomenon.

9. Visual anthropological analysis can be used to reflect in a comparative manner not only on practices, people and places, but also on the moral apparatus as part of which what we observe is premised and which it reproduces. Among other, visual analysis can enrich our understanding of changing notions of civic participation and allows for comparison starting from their materiality and details up.

10. "Anthropology at home" does not automatically imply that the researcher can have an insider status in the field. Shared national origins and language does not say anything about differences in conditions and privileges. Reflexivity (and paying attention to research participants' perceptions of the researcher and their relations) is key to critically account for the role of the anthropologist and its contributions.

Curriculum Vitae

Maria Vasile was born in Pietrasanta (Italy) on August 13, 1992 as part of a French-Italian family. She followed her pre-university education in the French school Lycée Chateaubriand, in Rome (Italy). Between 2010 and 2013, she undertook a bachelor's degree in political science at the Università degli Studi Roma Tre. Meanwhile, she worked as an assistant project manager for the NGO *Patologi Oltre Frontiera* to support the coordination of capacity building trainings in rural health facilities in Zambia. Her bachelor's thesis critically examined the representations of global humanitarian action. In 2014, she started the International Master's degree programme in Rural Development (IMRD). She studied at Gent University (Ghent, Belgium), Humboldt University (Berlin, Germany) and Wageningen University (Wageningen, The Netherlands). She conducted fieldwork in Porto Alegre (Brazil) and wrote her master's thesis on the beliefs, practices and governance mechanisms that shape local food initiatives, with a focus on the perspectives of small-scale farmers. She concluded her studies *magna cum laude* in 2016. Between 2016 and 2018, Maria worked as a social protection and rural institution consultant at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Her work focused on data analysis and project monitoring for increasing welfare provision in rural areas. In 2018, she started her PhD trajectory at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University (Leiden, The Netherlands). Maria worked under the supervision of Prof.dr. Cristina Grasseni as part of the project *Food citizens? Collective food procurement in European cities: solidarity and diversity, skills and scale*. She collaborated to the development of the research project and particularly through the case study in Turin (Italy) – where she conducted fieldwork in the period 2019 - 2020. She produced critical written and audio-visual material on the themes of urban gardening, food markets, food surplus redistribution and urban renewal. Between 2018 and 2022, she also taught in the context of the summer school *Food and Innovation in Rural Transition: the Tuscany case* organised by Pisa University (Pisa, Italy). Currently, Maria works as a researcher on urban food policies and the right to food at Pisa University's Department of Agriculture, Food and Environment.