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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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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.