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International urban design
and planning experiences

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Architecture Department, University of Ferrara

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La collana raccoglie esperienze internazionali di progettazione urbana e territoriale promosse dal laboratorio CITER dando conto di workshop internazionali, tesi di laurea e ricerche svolti a partire dal 2010. Le pubblicazioni proposte riguardano le pratiche della progettazione urbana con una attenzione agli aspetti metodologici, alla problematizzazione di questioni inerenti la condizione della città contemporanea, nei suoi multiformi aspetti, le procedure di lettura e interpretazione delle dinamiche urbane, le modalità di rappresentazione delle strategie e dei progetti urbani.

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Housing Policies, Migrants and Integration

Reflections on Italian and European cases

edited by

Alfredo Alietti
Alfredo Agustoni

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Housing Policies, Integration and Immigration in the European Context

General Introductory Considerations

ALFREDO ALIETTI, ALFREDO AGUSTONI*

1. The Housing Welfare, its Crisis and the Immigrants Inclusion

As an introduction to our work, we could point out that housing appears as a marginal element in the framework of the integration policies of many European countries and, despite being as important as all other aspects, such as employment, health, language training, the latter are more extensively dealt with and receive better funding (Tosi, 2010; Edgar, 2004: 87–89). It is easy to observe, for instance, that social policies handbooks do not discuss housing issues, which are considered mainly part of city policies, despite the growing importance of housing deprivation in a crisis context and the considerable amount of necessary resources to tackle it (Cesareo, 2013). The interventions as a whole aimed at solving the housing issues are among the most significant aspects of intervention within social policies. It is therefore necessary to consider these interventions within the framework of social policies, as well as within the equally crucial framework of city policies. It clearly appears that the housing issue, as noticed by Pierre Bourdieu, is the product of a dou-

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ble social construction, strongly determined by the state in two ways: from an economic perspective it shapes the universe of builders and sellers by means of fiscal levers, funding policies and market regulation policies and, from a strictly social perspective, it creates the consumers propensity and ability (including the tendency to rent or buy: Bourdieu, 2005, cit. in Wacquant, 2006).

A second essential remark is about the relations among urban contexts, poverty and especially housing poverty. In this respect, reference is made to the contribution of an American economist, Edward Glaeser (2011), who claims that cities have experienced, through their history, the creation of pockets of deprivation, owing to their capacity to attract individuals in search of better conditions: cities can actually offer a series of emancipation and social mobility opportunities. However, as Glaeser continues, in a context characterized by decline, urban poverty can no longer be interpreted as the product of the capacity to attract from the outside a population in search of opportunities, but rather as the result of a growing impoverishment. In the first case, we face a marginal population, mainly made up of immigrants, who settle in a new territory. In the second case, on the contrary, population groups (autochthonous as well as immigrants) that, becoming poorer, are increasingly unable to maintain their former housing conditions, and slide towards a progressive marginalization within the housing market, or are even excluded from it.

Housing policies in their earliest stages may date back to the beginning of the 20th century, and reached their maturity in the post-war decades, in a context that reflects the first scenario, in which city suburbs become populated by people are encouraged to come from elsewhere by the industrial growth. Glaeser's second scenario is more similar to the current situation, in which housing deprivation and demand originate not only in a population that continues to be

attracted by non-European countries, but also, and increasingly, in local population groups, that suffer the difficulties of the labour market and job insecurity.

Behind the interventions that characterized the golden age, we can perceive the ambitions and limitations of a certain “social engineering”, of policies, aiming at social regulation models through intervention on spaces. The limitations of such policies and of the underlying “spacial behaviourism” seems to lay in the contrast between the “thought space” (from the side of the experts) and the “lived space” (from the side of the *layman*), between the “representation of space” and the “representational space”, quoting Henri Lefebvre (1974).

This reflects what has been defined by a critical town planner as the « conflict between the typical attitudes of the different professional groups, their perceptions of the public opinion and of what the public opinion should have been » (Appleyard, 1976: 293), but it also reflects the fact that « the illusion that professionals are merely engineers, unconcerned by value considerations has been dispelled in more recent years, but the mirage of an objective perception persists » (Appleyard, 1976: 1). From this standpoint,

one of the most significant distinctions of roles is the one between the individual responsible of transforming spaces and the individuals only expected to have a passive experience. There is a hierarchical relationship, in which the designer, the planner or the architect that have these responsibilities actually try to interfere with the relationships between people and places (Canter, 1987: 54).

The inertia and lack of a truly comprehensive project, beyond generic declarations of intents, bring about a growing conflict potential among different populations, all the more so as certain local population groups live their discomfort in

the form of economic marginalization and the erosion of their rights and living conditions. The negative outcomes of neo-liberal policies, therefore, clearly show that there are no market shortcuts to curb housing exclusion in terms of *chances* of access for individuals with limited economic resources. The central and the local governments action still represents the main tool for the promotion of social equity and a fairer allocation policy for housing as a commodity, initiating a *governance* strategy that can extend the ability of intervention.

The “public disengagement” in the housing sector produces, as a consequence, more propensity for the defence of “poor resources”, as much as in the case of other welfare policies. The fear of having to share the advantages of an increasingly tight-fisted welfare is connected, in turn, to easy forms of political manipulation, centred on the stigmatization of the foreigner as a competitor in respect of social policies, leading to a kind of “war among the poor”. The growing deterioration of housing conditions and, more generally, of social security, similarly brings about reactions of defence of one’s own existential space, where the arrival of *newcomers* easily becomes an indicator of marginalization and downgrade, as underlined by several ethnographic researches (Agustoni, 2003; Agustoni and Alietti, 2009, Agustoni, 2015). The symbolic downgrade produced by the presence of foreigners can, in turn, affect the value of real estate assets, thus triggering further resistance on the local level: as it has been highlighted elsewhere, with reference to the concept of “recognition” (Honneth, 1995), within the context of urban and territorial conflicts, the economic and the symbolic variables, related to the defence of social and local identity, appear inextricably linked to each other (Agustoni, 2015). Consequently, there seems to be a sort of *nimby* syndrome against the virtual arrival of marginal segments of population and, particularly, of immigrant households (Whitehead and Scanlon, 2008). The impact

of negative prejudice arising from autochthonous landlords has been highlighted by a series of empirical studies at the European and national levels (Eumc, 2007).

Within the complex dialectics between the host society and the integration process, therefore, the housing condition of the immigrated groups is crucial, as it is an important indicator of the positive or negative outcomes of such relationship. The implementation of policies in this sphere is a substantial part of the social policy on a local and urban scale, with a strong impact on the integration paths of future generations (Clip, 2007). From this standpoint, the issue is even more central, since access to housing as a commodity and the quality of settlement areas are considered unavoidable steps to multiply the *chances* of sociocultural interaction and the opportunities of socioeconomic integration (Dorr, Faist, 1997).

The above considerations are associated with the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights on the recognition and right to social and housing welfare for all those who do not have sufficient resources, and the call of the European Parliament to the Member States to cooperate in order to implement the right and access to *good housing* for everyone, a necessary condition to guarantee social cohesion (European Parliament, 1997).

2. Housing Policies and National Contexts: General Aspects

The above assumptions create the need to examine the general features of the policies aimed at implementing the “housing integration” of immigrants into the European urban areas. Such a process will show the efficacy of those policies in achieving satisfactory results in terms of general inclusion

goals¹. Looking at the extensive range of situations that must be taken into account, it is not an easy task: different social, economic and cultural contexts, political and institutional frameworks that have in turn promoted or hindered such policies, different welfare systems (in particular the housing regulations), dominant integration models (assimilation vs pluralism), legislative restraints related to residence permits, and, last but not least, the different temporal patterns of migration that have affected the rules of the state and its responsibilities over the decades.

All these elements interact with each other, determining a variety of different *policy* directions, based on the national specific area they pertain to and the related issues they target, as is reflected in the detailed results of comparative studies carried out in Europe. Consequently, housing systems are characterized, and differ, in terms of specific features. The main ones are: entitlement to the ownership of the house, in accordance with the level of public allowances (subsidies for the purchase and rental, size of social housing and private market regulation) and the particular ways of provision (promotion and production) of housing as a commodity (Arbaci, 2007)².

1. In our analysis we will use the term immigrant and/or migrant in all its forms, being aware that this unifying category includes situations which are very different among one another and need proper specification. For example, in the anglo saxon world, the presence of ethnic minorities modifies the scope of integration legislative tools and issues regarding the legal status of the people who belong to such minorities; or, in the European societies with a longer history of immigration, *newcomers* must be considered differently from second or third generation families of foreign origin. The same housing policies change in their strategy, according to the specific definition that applies to each case. Wherever possible, such distinction has been highlighted.

2. Regarding the provision of social accommodation, it is also important to analyze the public supply of building land and the power of negotiation of public authorities with private investors in granting quotas of

The impact of this overall market structure on individuals and families (immigrant and autochthonous) that lack sufficient resources to ensure housing access and stability, offers a different perspective on the observed context. With reference to the settlement and integration of foreign populations, housing conditions in Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece) show the same critical elements. Indeed, as we have widely reported, existing housing systems in the main areas of Southern Europe primarily encourage purchase, tend to reduce the impact of the social sector in a dual rental system and are unable to face the issue of *housing affordability* and migrants inclusion (Arbaci, 2008: 590). The limited size of the public sector and the limited opportunities to rent from the private sector at affordable prices mean few chances to obtain a suitable and stable accommodation and the tendency of the demand from low-income groups (including most immigrants) to be directed towards inadequate housing conditions.

The various national personal support policies are structurally too weak to make up for the structural deficit of *low-cost* housing building and provision, both by local governments and no-profit organizations, and their partnership.

On the contrary, in the so called social-democratic countries of Northern Europe (The Netherlands, Sweden and Germany), the state has assured a balance between the different entitlements (ownership, private and social rent) and a strong integration between the private and social rental market. The persistence of a huge public/social sector has hindered the rise of rental prices, increasing the accessibility to the entire rental market for all social categories (Arbaci, 2007).

In a dual rental system, which is dominant in countries such as Italy and in Southern Europe in general, the state controls

new buildings to be rented also to the lower-income social classes. Where property prevails, a speculative approach is more frequent compared to contexts that account for a larger-scale rental market (Arbaci, 2007).

and limits the social sector in order to protect the private competition market, guiding choices towards the ownership option. On the contrary the single system, more common in Northern Europe, the two sectors, social and private, are integrated in a single market, which improves competition and the overlap of profit and non-profit, thus offering a suitable alternative to home purchase (Arbaci, 2007: 416; Arbaci, Malheiros, 2010; Kemeny, Lowe, 1998; Kemeny 1995). The intervention of public regulation, in this case, has been crucial to minimize the differences between the social and private rental market in terms of costs of renting, housing quality and social attractiveness (Whitehead, Scanlon, 2008). Within the single system the role of social housing allows a less polarized access to the housing market and, as a consequence, lower levels of differentiation of the *socio-tenure mix* (mix of social groups and tenure statuses of households) and ethnic residential segregation (Arbaci, 2007: 408).

Over the time, a neoliberal evolution of the welfare system has brought about hybrid elements in the French and British contexts, which have promoted, on different levels, the privatization of part of the public property. However, at the same time, the state's decisive intervention has, on the one hand, increased the social housing supply, with the involvement of the diverse world of *housing associations*, with financial aids and management autonomy and, on the other hand, with specific actions to preserve a part of social housing within urban development programmes.

Regardless of the particular features of welfare systems and national markets, in the context of housing policies, most European countries are going through a process leading to a neoliberal system, marked by the state's disengagement from the supply of *social housing*, the encouragement to purchase, the removal of rules and restrictions in the private rental sector, the privatization of public housing stock

and the gradual shift from supply (housing construction) to demand (personal support) in the policy strategies (European Parliament, 1997; Edgar, Doherty, Meert, 2002; Arbaci, 2007; Whitehead, Scanlon, 2008). As pointed out by Harloe in his comprehensive analysis of *public housing* in the 80's and 90's, in Great Britain, Germany, France, The Netherlands, Denmark and the United States, this residual model was mostly oriented towards the so-called "new urban poverty", typically made up of individuals that have been cut out of the labour market and of the private housing supply. Therefore, this model of public housing results in a stigmatizing form of access to housing as a commodity related to politically, economically and socially marginal groups (Harloe, 1995: 523).

3. Housing Welfare and Immigrant Condition

After all, as mentioned before, the housing issue has always been the *wobbly pillar* of welfarestate in the European context (Toergersen, 1987). The extensive analytical literature and the numerous empirical studies about housing deprivation affecting migrant populations, show common features that have triggered public intervention and outline national and local policies.

As a matter of fact, owing to the continuous migratory flow and the varied housing conditions, entitlement and housing strategies, many of the signals that can be detected in the European and Italian metropolitan areas (difficulties to match supply and demand in the housing market and the problems related to the settling processes) appear to be quite similar.

In comparison with the autochthonous households, immigrant households, in particular those with the shortest migration experience, in most cases have poorer housing

conditions. This means lower accommodation and residential quality and high rates of *homelessness*. This is associated with access to the worst housing stock, overcrowding, fewer sanitation facilities and, in comparison, a higher degree of vulnerability and insecurity in their housing status (Eumc, 2005; Musterd, 2005; Tosi, 2001; 2010). Furthermore, as mentioned before, the urban areas marked by a strong presence of foreigners show a growing social and spacial marginalization that may lead to segregation. It is important to note the presence of a widespread indirect and direct discrimination within the housing market, which inevitably leads to fewer choice opportunities and the need to turn to solutions that are less desirable for the autochthonous. These conditions have been defined as the *new migrant penalty* (Jayaweera Choudhury, 2008), precisely to highlight the structural weakness to obtain a “good accommodation”.

Regardless of the dynamics of settlement and diversity of housing careers of foreign populations in cities, that will be extensively discussed³, an “urban crisis” seems to be taking shape, determined by the difficulties of providing adequate, exhaustive responses to the persisting segregation experienced in certain areas and neighbourhoods and to the growing demand of low-cost housing expressed by vulnerable individuals, or those with the least available resources, in most cases migrants.

In the long history of European immigration, housing is a recurrent social issue. By comparing the situation of immigrants in countries such as France, Great Britain and Germany (where migration is strong) between the 60's and the 70's when productivity was rising and now, there appear to be no significant changes. The typical comparative survey by Castles and Kosack about the conditions of migrant workers

3. See chapter 4.

and their families, published in 1973, focused on the weakness of the property market, the discrimination in terms of access, overcrowding and the poor quality of houses. Moreover, the authors noted how:

immigrants usually live in the most decaying areas that, due to overcrowding, lack the basic social services (...) Since houses in other city areas are beyond the reach of immigrants, these latter become increasingly numerous and settle in these neighbourhoods in ever increasing numbers (..) [and eventually the authors come to the worrying conclusion that] in the absence of drastic changes in the type and distribution of housing to immigrants, real ghettos will form (Castles, Kosack, 1973: 287).

As already mentioned, this is the current situation for most immigrants, calling for a serious consideration about the limits and difficulties of facing the problem, regardless of the differences in the national frameworks of reference. The situations of housing marginality for *newcomers* multiply, while the evolution of the European societies after the so-called 30 glorious years of socio-economic development shows the signs of a deep change that has weakened the ability to guarantee or improve the conditions for inclusion and social housing integration, not only for immigrants, but also for part of the autochthonous populations.

Starting from this introductory notes, in the following chapters, we will discuss all these issues in detail, trying to outline the possible *policy* trends that have been developing through the decades in Europe as a response to the emerging issues (access to housing and segregation). Our aim is to show, through comparisons, the ability to manage the contradictions between the principles of equal opportunities and support to housing access, envisioned by the European Union directives, and intervention practices that are not

always in line with them or efficient enough to achieve the objectives set. Moreover, taking into account the different nature and weight of public dynamics against housing exclusion and socio-spatial segregation processes, their innovation features will be highlighted in comparison to the traditional instruments typical of the past.

Obviously, this analysis does not involve the whole field of policies and intervention tools, since it would require an analytical reconstruction and a detailed study that go beyond the purposes of this chapter, which is intended as a concise snapshot, focused on the most relevant aspects of the problem.

Starting from this introduction, this volume is about housing policies in the European Union and some national contexts. Following a general chapter on the housing issue in Europe, by Alfredo Alietti, two chapters describe the examples of two European countries, Sweden and Denmark, respectively by Veronica Riniolo and Roberta Cucca. The next chapter, by Paola Pologruto, discusses the French case, while the last two chapters cover Italy: the first one, by Alfredo Agustoni, is more in general about the evolution of housing welfare, while the second, by Fabrizio Plebani, is focused on *social housing*, including a description of the concept of social housing itself and a more specific analysis of the Italian case.