

## Inhabiting the rural space. Reflections on the housing emergency of seasonal workers in agriculture

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### Abstract

The intensification of migratory movements towards the European context from the global South is a clear sign of the unstoppable prospect of international mobility, legal and illegal, of populations as a result of changed geo-political conditions, environmental crises and disasters, poverty and economic uncertainty (Blasco, et al., 2023). These dynamics produce reverberations in terms of demographic transition, imbalance in local economies towards parallel and opaque labour circuits, and spatial transformations in the territories where refugees reside and transit. The contribution intends to focus on the informal settlement of Borgo Mezzanone, where about 4,000 migrants reside on a temporary and permanent basis, engaged in the activity of harvesting agricultural products according to the cyclical nature of the agri-food chain. The contribution is the result of the action-research work carried out by the ArCoD Department of the Polytechnic of Bari for the technical-scientific support of the Apulian Municipalities beneficiaries of Measure 5C2 investment 2.2 Integrated Urban Plans for the overcoming of illegal settlements to combat the exploitation of workers in agriculture.

Keywords: informality, migration, housing policy

The presence of migrants, increased by the intensity of legal and illegal flows along maritime and land routes in the Mediterranean basin (Zupi, 2023) (Eurostat, 2023) (IOM, 2024) (Fondazione ISMU, 2024) (Frontex, 2024), imprints on the territories signs, movements and changing transitional practices due to the variety of legal conditions of individuals (asylum seekers, migrants under international protection, refugees, deportees awaiting repatriation), the diversified needs, including labour needs, that underlie as many life projects. These factors are also associated with the ineffectiveness of migrant reception and integration policies in guaranteeing indispensable rights, today still oriented towards emergency, securitarian and incongruous approaches concerning the minimum standards expected (ISPI, 2018) (Caritas Italiana, 2022).

The conditions of arrival in first landing territories such as Italy, often with illegal landings (Frontex, 2021), together with the scaled-down institutional response, trigger a short-circuit such that migrants without legal status have limited access to fundamental civil and social rights, finding in 'opacity' the adaptive survival solution. This opacity can be recognised in the inscrutability of informal settlements and in the separateness of the lives migrants lead within them, far from the urban space of rights; together with the unpredictability of individual choices and paths, these are the conditions that determine a state of resistance and protection of identity from the outside. The same legal-administrative indeterminacy that ousts migrants from the rule of law persists despite the relevant traces they produce in the territories to satisfy their needs (housing, work, social), and it is what allows them to disregard hetero-imposed orders and preserve individual integrity and autonomy (Glissant, 2019) (Rondot, 2022).

In rural contexts, the self-construction of shelters and shacks with makeshift materials reduces 'hyper-visibility' (Cancellieri & Ostanel, 2015) and inserts migrant workers into circuits of labour exploitation in the fields. The state of housing uncertainty and precariousness (Cannari et al., 2000) is thus catalysed by the demand for work in the agricultural economy to which they respond to an attempt - in vain - of self-determination and acquisition of autonomy concerning a system that offers them limited possibilities of social mobility and improvement of their quality of life (Doctors Without Borders, 2018) (Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto FLAI-CGIL, 2022) (Directorate General for Immigration and Integration Policies, 2023). It is a complex phenomenon, which has acquired relevance and public, as well as political, domain following the first extensive survey on the phenomenon of squatter settlements in Italy returned in the Research Report on The housing conditions of migrants working in the agri-food sector (Giovannetti, Miscioscia, & Somai, 2022), carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and ANCI in collaboration with Cittalia<sup>1</sup>.

The survey provides a nationwide cognitive framework of the housing conditions of migrant workers and, as the results show, it challenges the widespread belief that exploitation of migrants in agriculture is a stigma of the South; rather, it highlights how it also affects northern agricultural districts, according to product harvesting cycles and the periodic mobility of workers (Placido Rizzotto FLAI-CGIL Observatory, 2022). This aspect is not secondary in the phenomenon representation, usually polarised in circumscribed geographical areas and through defined settlement categories that reduce the spatial domain in which migrants act and normalise the repertoire of produced housing practices. The report provides a new snapshot of the housing vulnerability of migrant workers engaged in agriculture, although it is affected by partiality and incompleteness because it is built on voluntary participation by municipal administrations in completing the administered questionnaire<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the choice to consider the municipal administrative dimension for studying the phenomenon and the subsequent allocation of the NRRP resources to Municipalities with settlements in critical conditions overlooks both the observation of the phenomenon on a large scale, where the dynamics of migrant mobility in rural areas emerge, from settlements to agricultural fields, and the regional institutional level in defining territorial strategies with the integration of actors, assets, and local resources.

Thus, if the survey methodology at the municipal scale made it possible to obtain the precise location of settlements and the indicative presence of habitual residents, neglecting the periodic fluctuations towards productive enclaves along the national territory, the empirical survey<sup>3</sup> is

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<sup>1</sup>On 29 July 2021, the Directorate-General for Immigration and Integration Policies of the Ministry of the Interior signed an agreement with ANCI for the implementation, in collaboration with Cittalia, of an «Action Plan to support local authorities in the processes of inclusion of foreign citizens and interventions to combat labour exploitation in agriculture and caporalato», which provides for among other things, the creation of a national mapping of the presence of foreign workers employed in agriculture, with a focus on precariousness and housing hardship, in order to provide the cognitive basis for the adoption of the ministerial decree of distribution in fulfilment of the specific NRRP Measure, discussed below.

<sup>2</sup> From October 2021 to January 2022, the survey aimed at mapping was conducted by administering a questionnaire to all 7904 Italian Municipalities, of which 3,851 Municipalities responded, with an average participation rate of 48.7%. In the South, the participation rate stands at 45.1%. Out of the total surveyed, only 608 Municipalities reported the presence of migrant workers employed in the agri-food sector. It is noteworthy that about 70% of the municipalities where the workers' presence had been identified in previous research and had already been recipients of specific interventions and policies (the so-called Super-Priority Municipalities) responded to the questionnaire (Giovannetti et al., 2022)

<sup>3</sup> In the absence of detailed information, the questionnaire administered to the Municipalities provided a numerical figure «that roughly takes into account the fluctuations of the phenomenon over the course of the year» (Giovannetti et al. 2021; p.39).

imprecise, also about the variations of seasonal residents and the social (singles, families with children present) and legal (regular/irregular status) composition of the subjects.

The municipal dimension is limiting and reductive concerning the complexity of the dynamics taking place in rural territories, moreover, precisely in the institutional perspective of defining public policies (social, housing and labour) for migration management and the provision of resources to overcome the usual emergency and discontinuous responses over time.

From these general reflections, the contribution focuses on the Apulian regional territory, where the case study under consideration is geographically placed and concentrates on possible operational modalities to respond to the condition of absolute housing emergency (e.a.a.) (FEANTSA, 2005) of migrant workers by assuming informality as a condition to define a new settlement strategy.

### **How to overcome illegal settlements of migrant workers in agriculture**

It is relevant to recognise that the opportunity offered by the NRRP with Measure 5C2 investment 2.2 *Integrated Urban Plans for overcoming illegal settlements to combat the exploitation of workers in agriculture* is the first national policy oriented towards the problem of settlement and labour illegality, which allows to use of funds to prepare solutions for improving housing conditions and exiting the circuits of illegality for seasonal workers<sup>4</sup>. The Measure effectly finances an ambitious housing policy, which, while ignoring the complex legal status of the target subjects (asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons), is aimed at recognising the 'right to housing' within a regulatory and institutional framework that is indifferent to the construction of labour, social and migration policies. This action marginally addresses the issue of immigration, since actions to overcome illegal settlements and combat undeclared work provide a response circumscribed only to the housing and employment problems that concern migrants in the process of integration into the new society. Therefore, the first critical issue concerns the migration policies underlying this measure, traceable in subcategorical form to the investment axes with which the plan is organised, but vague in focusing on the social target of these interventions, consisting to a significant extent of irregular migrants, whose number has increased due to the rigidity of the Bossi-Fini Law of 2002 (Caritas Italiana, 2022). The indistinct treatment of individuals with different personal situations, united by the double condition of immigrants and workers, in addition to eluding systemic ways to address the issue, complicates the implementation of interventions with respect to the variability of numbers between regular and irregular migrants and therefore between those entitled and those not, according to the Italian legislative statute. A second critical aspect is given by the institutional and territorial level assumed for the interventions, which are attributed to the competence of the municipalities benefiting from the resources due to the location of the illegal settlement, without taking into account the movement flows to reach the neighbouring countryside, where the migrants work<sup>5</sup>, as well as the procedural and spatial complexity of

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<sup>4</sup> Out of a total funding of 200 million euro, about 96% of the amounts are destined to the South of Italy where agriculture and product processing are the driving economic sectors that have absorbed a substantial share of human resources of foreign origin who have arrived in Italy and are included in irregular labour circuits (Leogrande, 2008) (Macri, 2022). See the distribution table annexed to the Ministerial Decree of 29 March 2022, no. 55, Decreto di Riparto Risorse relativo all'intervento M5C2 Inv. 2.2, GU Serie Generale n.108 del 10-05-2022, available at the link: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2022/05/10/108/sg/pdf>

<sup>5</sup>In the case of Borgo Mezzanone, an administrative offshoot of Manfredonia in close relation with the Municipality of Foggia, workers' movements are of the order of tens of kilometres to agricultural fields in

exceptional works, which are therefore of supra-local rank, connected to the construction of large numbers of beds, to be carried out in a shorter time than the ordinary administrative procedures, interacting with other institutions (*primarily*, the public housing authorities)<sup>6</sup>.

In this perspective, the overcoming of informal settlement, understood as the spatialisation of survival using 'dwelling wiles', in contrast to regulatory systems and shortcomings in the externalisation of reception management (Rahola, 2003) (Ippolito et al., 2021), tries, with the limits already outlined, to define a condition of entitlement given by two prerequisites: the allocation of housing and the support of social infrastructures to overcome the state of segregation. Therefore, the terminological choice of characterising migrant workers' settlements as 'squatters' seems inappropriate, as it associates this phenomenon with the practice of uncontrolled building that has been inverted in the Italian context since the Second World War. Connoted in the disciplinary literature as a practice of necessity in response to housing hardship in the post-war years and subsequently speculative in areas of scenic value, squatting, as a mode of individual self-determination, constituted the initial spontaneous response of the less well-off classes to social fragilities and the ineffectiveness of housing policies, then the pervasive individualisation of valuable coastal areas (Chiapperino, 2023); it was carried out in contrast to regulatory and urban planning regulations and availed itself, above all, of political connivance, manifesting an evident concurrence of guilt between individuals and institutions (Clementi & Perego, 1983) (Cremaschi, 1990) (De Lucia, 2006) (Zanfi, 2008) (Curci et al., 2017). The settlements of migrant workers in rural spaces, although the outcome of spontaneous construction production outside of regulatory apparatuses, encapsulate an attempt at survival and resistance to the formalised system of rights and norms that has sclerotized the residents' condition of subordination and segregation. In contrast to the contexts of building squatting dominated by individualism expressed by one's housing unit, ghettos constitute collective spaces of coexistence of informal practices (Laguette, 1994) (Roy, 2005), with a flexible and adaptable character even in accommodating temporary residents, and forms of resistance to rigid institutionalised statutes. In recognising multiple points of contact and overlap between the concepts 'informal' and 'abusivo'<sup>7</sup>, often used as synonyms ascribable to the sphere of 'everyday life'<sup>8</sup>, it is possible to trace informality as a broader and more capacious field in holding together not only the building and housing dimension but also the cultural and social one, also because it better represents the precariousness and instability (physical, temporal) of migrant workers' existence.

The belief, based on what has been said previously, is that an effective project for overcoming migrant workers' squatter settlements should assume two conditions: i) improving settlement

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other Municipalities; in the absence of private and public means of transport, recourse to forms of subordination to the 'caporale' is the practice.

<sup>6</sup>In addition to the criticalities highlighted above, the national programme has a strong constraint, dictated by: (i) the timeframe of the NRRP, which envisages in 3 years the implementation of the planned and financed interventions, (ii) the limitations related to the institutional process initiated, which was initially very rigid also about (iii) the objectives and expected results that over time have become somewhat blurred, given the cancellation of the mission unit initially identified and the uncertain transfer of the management of the programme from the competence of the Ministry of Labour, (probably) to the Ministry of the Interior or perhaps Defence (with an obvious shift to the security dimension), both equally lacking in adequate competences in the field of public works.

<sup>7</sup> These two conditions also differ in their treatment in the literature; in fact, squatting has a clear geographical connotation in the Italian and Mediterranean context and affects the building process. The informal is investigated in the territories of the Global South characterised by poverty and backwardness as a condition that permeates different aspects of existence.

<sup>8</sup> The sociology of everyday life, of which de Certeau is one of the main exponents (de Certeau, 2010), recognises practices in social existence that escape legal and institutionalised orders.

conditions by identifying housing solutions that facilitate processes of 'familiarisation with "diversity"', ii) pursuing legalisation processes by avoiding the extensive elimination of any non-institutionalised form; that is, preparing to experiment and test the negotiation spaces currently allowed by informality to subjects caught in the grip of the migrant category.

Unfortunately, the rigid target and milestone architecture of the NRRP, necessary to define a *timeline* governed by relevant national and European goals, has projected the settlement solutions project from preparation to implementation, avoiding relevant intermediate phases of sharing (on technical solutions, on the process) with the super-ordinate bodies (Region, Superintendence, Basin Authority), and on the real needs with the third sector associations active in the squatter settlements, the trade unions constantly engaged in integration actions and support to labour regularisation (in particular FLAI CGIL), and the representatives of the slum residents. The absence of a process aware of the plurality of issues at stake and stakeholders and, due to the tight timeframe of the Plan, the preclusion of opportunities for mutual listening between those implementing the intervention, migrant workers and settled communities does not allow for the triggering of integration processes that could on the one hand avoid the abstention of participants, and on the other the triggering of social conflicts (Annesa et al., forthcoming).

#### **Action-research for Borgo Mezzanone: spatial and settlement strategy**

In this framework, there is the contribution of the three regional universities (Polytechnic of Bari, University of Bari, University of Foggia) involved in a framework agreement for the technical-scientific support to Apulia's local administrations, beneficiaries of resources for overcoming informal settlements of migrant workers, in the definition of Local Action Plans (LAP)<sup>9</sup>. The work, initiated at the intermittent urging of the Apulia Region and the Prefectures, was addressed to four municipal administrations and continued only with the Municipality of Manfredonia<sup>10</sup>; from the outset, it aimed to develop a territorial strategy coordinated by the Municipality of Manfredonia (FG) itself, which was entrusted with 54 million euro resources, but oriented towards investments and transformations in the territory of the Municipality of Foggia. The primary objective was to intercept the dynamic dimension of the settlement phenomenon and its territorial fluctuations with the strategic vision of supra-local sectoral plans, thus increasing the complexity of the process, but aiming at the valorisation of an already existing heritage and the underlying territorial system. The experience has represented an opportunity for synthesis between wide area objectives and the local dimension of the problem, as in the practice already established by the new territorial management tools defined in Apulia since 2001 (Apulia Region, 2007).

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<sup>9</sup> The Local Action Plan thus foresees a share of residences (infrastructural part) to be realised as new construction but also conversion of existing under-utilised assets (equal to 70% of the funding) and intangible actions (social integration, provision of services and forms of community welfare, equal to 30% of the funding) to support populations. Subsequently indicated LAP.

<sup>10</sup> As a result of the technical round table with the beneficiary Municipalities of the NRRP Measure in question, the support of the ArCoD Department of the Polytechnic of Bari was provided to the Municipality of Manfredonia and for the initial application phases of the Municipalities of the Capitanata of San Severo and Cerignola and Turi in the Bari area. This is a significant figure when compared to the size of the economic resources allocated by the distribution these are Municipalities with highly critical situations and huge and exceptional funding compared to the technical capacity of the municipal offices. The Municipalities benefiting from ordinary amounts operated autonomously, often in continuity with previous actions, such as the Municipality of Carpino.

The consultancy work carried out from 2022 to the present<sup>11</sup>, identified the key elements of the vision, expressed in the infrastructural and non-infrastructural components, for overcoming the informal settlement located along the disused runway of the former military airport of Borgo Mezzanone, seeking to provide a housing, employment and social integration response to the migrant workers living there.

Thanks to the support of the most committed forces on this front (scholars, trade unions, and the Third Sector), the references to these territorial strategies have been outlined in the candidate LAP by the Municipality of Manfredonia (FG). The informal settlement is located on the border with the Municipality of Foggia and close to one of the hamlets built during the agrarian reform of the 1930s, a strategic location concerning the Tavoliere agricultural production areas and the infrastructure network that innervates it. Along the former aeronautic runway, shacks and temporary housing modules hybridise the formal and militarised space of the CARA and the container settlement (Tarsi & Vecchiarelli, 2021) (Vecchiarelli, 2023), and, particularly during certain periods of the year characterised by greater demand for labour, arrive to host up to 4,000 foreign farm labourers, including permanent and nomadic workers. These conditions lead to phenomena of marginality, physical and social degradation and illegality, as well as fuelling the phenomenon of 'caporalato'.

The strategy, therefore, had the primary objective of proposing alternative solutions to the 'temporary' ones dictated by the emergency, in favour of lasting strategies, discarding the housing experiences so far realised in Italy of large settlements in which to 'concentrate' a large number of agricultural workers, which have often proved to be a total or partial failure (Mira, 2022), as the experience of the 'Gran Ghetto' located in this territory (between Rignano Garganico and San Severo) teaches us. The orientation, therefore, was for the identification of housing solutions distributed throughout the territory, capable of activating processes of inclusion and integration of workers that could lead them to attain the status of 'inhabitants' and 'citizens'.

#### *The Territorial Strategy*

The research action, therefore, started from the long-standing territorial structure of the Tavoliere, present in descriptive traditions, of the *Pentapolis*, centred on Foggia, which dialogues in a sort of *Christallerian* model with the *agrocities* of Lucera, San Severo, Manfredonia and Cerignola (fig.1). On this system, in turn, is inscribed the lower-ranking settlement system, also conceived 'as a crown' in the phase of populating 'the latifundial desert' of the Capitanata cereal-growing areas by the Opera Nazionale Combattenti (ONC) between the late 1930s and the early years of the new decade, at the height of the war (Pennacchi, 2010). These were small 'foundation towns', such as Segezia and Incoronata, and rural hamlets, such as Borgo Cervaro, Borgo Giardinetto, San Giusto and Arpinova, which are now underused hamlets. Designed and built as 'service centres for an agricultural community, they developed around a square, having all the features, including architectural ones, to best fulfil their function' (Pennacchi, 2010), in these settlements Concezio Petrucci and the other designers selected by the ONC emphasised as they had already experimented on a national scale in other founding villages (Aprilia, Fertilia, Pomezia) the public and collective parts (square, main street, church,

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<sup>11</sup> Now, the strategy defined from an infrastructural point of view has not been supported by the analyses and interpretations of social and economic data, attributed to the other universities participating in the protocol.

Casa del Fascio, schools, commercial arcades) around which the city would progressively grow with its residential fabric.

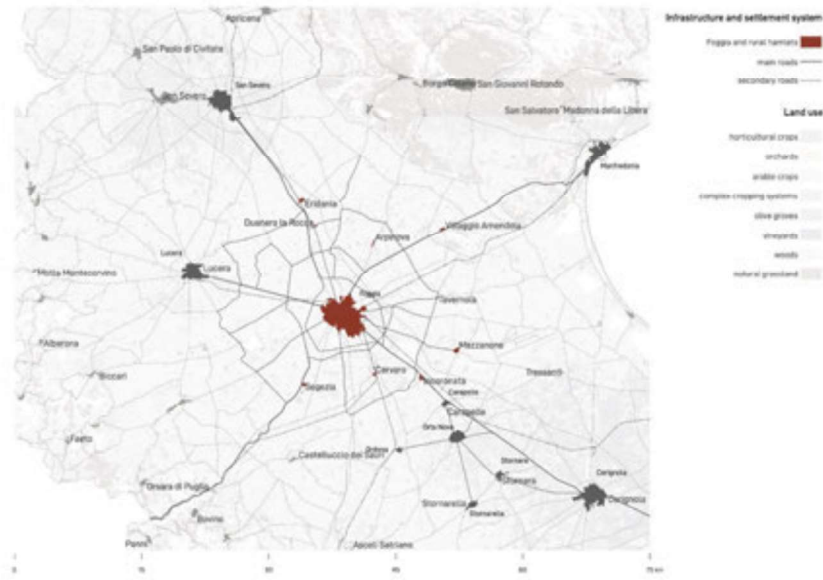


Fig. 1. Territorial system, Pic by Letizia Chiapperino

This 'crown' settlement system (fig.2) was well integrated and has a strong character in the deep countryside of the Tavoliere, which led in the palate to the shared choice with local institutions, to nominate the centres built to the south of the Foggia territory in the redistribution hypothesis of the 4000 migrants of the Mezzanone ghetto. Starting from the east, these were the arch formed by Borgo Mezzanone (a hamlet of Manfredonia), Incoronata, Borgo Cervaro, Segezia and Borgo Giardinetto, later reduced in the course of the project sharing processes on national and local inter-institutional tables, to just the three centres of Segezia, Borgo Cervaro and Borgo Mezzanone (fig. 3 - 4 - 5).



Fig. 2. Territorial strategy, Pic by Letizia Chiapperino



Fig. 3. Borgo Segezia, Pic by Nicola Cavallera ©



Fig. 4. Borgo Cervaro, Pic by Nicola Cavallera ©



Fig. 5. Borgo Mezzanone, Pic by Nicola Cavallera ©

In the proposed settlement strategy, these villages constitute an important spatial capital in the deep countryside capable of accommodating new agro-urban communities, based on a polycentric system of small settlements, placed 'in proximity' to one another and related to the

Tavoliere's *agro-towns* through a dense network of roads. This system, of which Foggia constitutes the fulcrum, still retains its settlement and 'infrastructural' value, since it best interprets the Tavoliere as a plain garrisoned by a constellation of 'poles' of different rank.

This choice is not based on a banal neo-Enlightenment vision, which sees in the origin of the construction carried out by the ONC, with the cultivation and populating of the countryside, the hypothetical renewal of a strategy that is now outdated by time and history, but rather a 'patrimonialist' vision of this territorial system, neither merely historical nor aesthetic, which from the front of its proactive potential for territorial transformation can offer an answer to overcoming the ghettos, avoiding the failed experiences of the large container camps.

Hence, small foundation towns and hamlets are not a mere testimony of the past, but an important presence that establishes links between different places and times: the long life of these extraordinary urban nuclei and the tight timeframe provided by the NRRP for the implementation of the Integrated Urban Plan. Ultimately, this option looks at the heritage theme in the sense of the *Heritage of Living*, which poses the question underlying all interventions that have a relationship with the modern, questioning how, today, we can consider ourselves heirs of that season and at the same time how the notion of heritage is being rewritten, at a time when we can no longer call ourselves modern (Andriani, 2010).

This territorial strategy linked to settlements then hinges on the vast Daunia area in the great landscape enhancement design of these areas outlined by the PPTR (Regional Territorial Landscape Plan) (Apulia Region, 2015), which proposes the territorialist vision of its scientific coordinator Alberto Magnaghi, which programmatically addresses the 'regional landscape producers' and offers an open tool that goes beyond traditional reconnaissance and constraint visions to the benefit of a proactive position, which is articulated in five Strategic Scenarios as five 'Implicated Projects' of the regional landscape in strong integration with each other.

Of these Scenarios, the LAP's proposal mainly crosses two, because they are pertinent to the long-lasting settlement structure referred to in the previous paragraph: *The City-Countryside Pact* and *The Slow Mobility Infrastructural System* (Apulia Region, 2015).

The integration and overlapping of elements referable to these strategies, to their visions, to pact forms and resources put in place by the Region for the realisation of specific sectoral projects (landscape and mobility) suggest the territorial design of the new settlement system underlying the IUP instrument. The cereal-growing 'deep countryside' can be progressively transformed into 'peri-urban countryside' with the new conditions created by the necessary enlargement of the residential areas of the ONC hamlets, through specific zoning plan modifications, for a new housing offer that is structured between the extremes of new residential complexes for the demand for permanence and the bivouac of temporary and reversible dwellings for the needs of nomadism. Worker-inhabitants, in perspective, would thus be located in a diffuse way in the territory they refer to, in proximity to working contexts, in spatial conditions that can favour productive autonomy for self-subsistence as much as for proximity trade, being able to stimulate new supply chains and entrepreneurship in the space.

Indeed, the peri-urban countryside lends itself to direct and cooperative forms of cultivation, as well as the provision of new ecosystem services<sup>12</sup>.

The slow mobility system, on the other hand, reinterprets the road connecting the three centres as an infrastructure for cycling and public transport, guaranteed by intersecting regional mobility policies (Regional Sustainable Mobility Plan, Regional Tratturi Plan). The ONC villages road starting from Segezia stops at the other end in the passenger and freight railway junction of Borgo Cervaro, and crosses the Tratturo Regio on its route, which branches off into this territorial system starting from Foggia. This is the infrastructural system that could allow new residents to reach the regional capital, as well as to join the regional rail transport system. The hypothesis of activating subsequent actions capable of making workers self-sufficient in both work and individual mobility, for example by providing bicycles or defining a dedicated bike-sharing service, also appears consistent with the hypothesis of breaking free from recourse to the Caporale, which today represents the only possibility of getting out of the informal camps for all travel needs (Tarsi, 2020).

#### *The settlement strategy*

The absence of residential heritage to be rehabilitated in the above-mentioned Hamlets ONC imposes the need to intervene with new buildings to meet the housing demand of Borgo Mezzanone's residents, who could acquire an active role in the definition of the domestic space, but above all of the relational space. This perspective stands in discontinuity with the approaches followed so far, with settlement solutions that are recurring emergency model of the camp through the use of containers, and with the modalities defined by Measure 5C2 of the NRRP, which eludes the direct and active involvement of the recipients of the interventions<sup>13</sup>

Within such a complex territorial system, the settlement strategy intends to measure and accommodate the informality of migrant workers' spontaneous settlements by experimenting with design flexibility as a principle of spatial organisation capable of accommodating the socio-cultural diversity and permanence/temporality needs of the inhabitants, distancing itself from hetero-imposed assertive modes, and as an opportunity to recognise the aptitude for space production, as witnessed by the different practices of living in informal slums. This perspective can be found in the reflections and experiments developed in the 1970s, by Habraken in Holland<sup>14</sup> (Habraken, 1974) and Maurios and Kohn<sup>15</sup> in France, in contrast to the city of the Modern Movement by proposing a building process that reduces the technical and formal control of the designer in favour of the active involvement of the future inhabitant (Bianchetti, 2020). This new conception, developed mainly at the building scale in the period of innovation of the construction process with prefabrication, disrupts the predetermined character of the

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<sup>12</sup> The planned establishment of an Agrarian Multifunctional Park supports the physical and infrastructural connection of the three centres involved in the redistribution of the Mezzanone ghetto workers.

<sup>13</sup> This closure to opportunities for confrontation, as well as increasing the condition of *protracted displacement* of migrants forced to leave the ghetto and move to accommodation that does not meet their personal needs, could limit the effectiveness of interventions.

<sup>14</sup> Founder in 1964 of SAR (Stitching Architecten Research), his studies on residence according to 'support/infill' principles were followed up in the non-profit 'Open Building' movement that is still active today. See website: <https://www.habraken.com>

<sup>15</sup> Authors of the *Les Marelles* intervention carried out in Val d'Yerres in France used constructive experimentation to achieve maximum architectural flexibility of residences (Herrou et al., 1975).

modern space defined on «...uses corresponding to normalised groups of needs» (De Carlo, 1973) in favour of a space of relationships in which social activity and capacity for appropriation are fostered through the flexibility and modularity of spaces (Viganò, 2023). If transposed to the urban dimension, it allows the inhabitants to recognise margins of action and responsibility and to exercise claims and appropriations of space that contribute to defining the 'right to the city' in Lefebvre's conception.

The outlined elements try to clarify the directions along which the research work is trying to intervene on the condition of invisibility of workers and informal settlements. In this sense, one agrees with the thesis that invisibility is a condition, perhaps resulting from the desire for opacity, but certainly, tension is «between what one wants to make visible and what one wants or cannot but keep invisible» (Balducci, 2023:339), which shifts the responsibility for leaving subjects in oblivion into the realm of political will (and action).

The proposed solutions, on the technical-administrative feasibility of which the study will continue, try to enhance the attention and prospects for change, i.e. to offer the opportunity of the choice of solutions (housing, mobility) different from those we have had so far, which show new attention, and thus support the emergence in the visible of individuals. The research thus aims to stimulate a political culture of intervention that does not devolve to voluntary work, and which in turn can foster cultures of integration and sociability, as a tentative - but not protracted - way of responding to the problematic dimension represented by the informal ghettos of workers in the agricultural sector.

Equally, we are aware that this strategy cannot be decisive, but the governance identified is the optimal institutional condition for achieving further results, notwithstanding the need to innovate welfare and labour policies.

**Attributions:** although they are the result of common reflections and research work, are to be attributed to M. Annesa §1, L. Chiapperino § 2, M. Annesa and L. Chiapperino § 3.

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