

TANTA GENTE SENZA CASA, TANTE CASE
SENZA GENTE:

The Urban Politics of Immigrant Squatters' Movements

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Tanta gente senza casa, tante case senza gente: The Urban Politics of Immigrant Squatters' Movements.

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“Why write this book? No one has asked me for it. Especially those to whom it is directed”.

(Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks)

“It is important to remember that our freedoms, such as they are, were never given to us by any government, they have been wrested by us. If we do not use them, if we do not test them from time to time, they atrophy”.

(Arundhati Roy, An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire)

“The world was born yearning to be a home for everyone”
(Eduardo Galeano)

“If they close the door, we enter our home through the window” (Interlocutor).



DEDICATION

To all people on the move who have been forced to leave their homes

Abstract

The present doctoral thesis explores some current debates about housing precarity by looking at the politics of immigrant squatters' movements. This research is set in Turin but explores a wider urban question regarding spatial inequality, marginalized social groups, and activism. Drawing upon the ethnographic fieldwork in the *Ex-MOI Occupation*, this research sets out a framework for the analyses of immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling. The present research addresses this issue considering how illegalized immigrants appropriate marginalized spaces in the city to gain access to and sustain some degree of political power as city makers. Throughout the article-based chapters, this analysis seeks to grapple with how collective squatting in vacant buildings has caused it to become a social battleground from which subversive performativity may emerge through acts of radical solidarity. This thesis advances scholarship by examining the modes of collective action through squatters' movements and invites readers to rethink the condition of one's dispossession in exile. It offers an empirically grounded analysis of the role of squatting-autonomous movements which stands up for undocumented immigrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum, and more importantly, produces a compelling theoretical account of to whom housing justice should apply. People on the move that live on the margins and their struggles for becoming political are ultimately fascinating matters for today's urban politics. They remind us that grassroots movements play an important role in determining how urban life is experienced and negotiated. Moreover, they remind us of the centrality of home, and that we are entitled to make claims over our own bodies, regardless of immigration and citizenship status.

Resumo

Esta tese de doutorado explora alguns debates atuais sobre a precariedade habitacional, analisando movimentos de ocupação por moradia realizado por imigrantes. O estudo etnográfico baseia-se na ocupação por moradia, na cidade italiana de Turim. A tese enquadra a procura por moradia das migrantes como uma questão urbana. Com base em uma reflexão crítica sobre as condições informais de moradia realizada, se discute como os imigrantes se apropriam de espaços marginalizados na cidade para ter acesso e sustentar algum grau de poder político como atores urbanos. De forma específica, trata-se de teorizar o encontro subversivo entre cidadãos e não-cidadãos, redefinindo os limites da política enquanto arena de lutas pelos direitos por parte de pessoas migrantes e refugiadas. A tese nos convida a repensar o papel político dos despossuídos pela questão da busca por moradia, destacando os movimentos de ocupação autônomos que defendem direitos aos imigrantes indocumentados, refugiados e pessoas em busca de asilo. Discute-se, assim, em que medida os modos de coletividade e assembleias públicas, que se opõem às formas de exclusão, desafiam os entendimentos convencionais sobre a cidadania. Isso quer dizer que, a solidariedade entre cidadãos e imigrantes, forja novos atores urbanos e abrem espaços importantes para um protagonismo radical. A vulnerabilização e exploração das pessoas em mobilidade que vivem à margem e suas lutas por moradia são, em última análise, uma problemática central no nosso cenário sociopolítico contemporâneo. Os movimentos de moradia desempenham um papel importante na determinação de como as lutas urbanas são vividas e negociadas; nos lembra a centralidade do lar, e que temos o direito de fazer reivindicações sobre nossos próprios corpos, independentemente do status de imigração e cidadania.

Abstract

L'attuale tesi di dottorato esplora alcuni dibattiti attuali sulla precarietà abitativa esaminando la politica dei movimenti degli occupanti abusivi degli immigrati. Questa ricerca è ambientata a Torino, ma esplora una questione urbana più ampia per quanto riguarda la disuguaglianza spaziale, i gruppi sociali emarginati e l'attivismo. Basando il lavoro etnografico sul campo nell'"Occupazione ex-MOI", questa ricerca definisce un quadro per l'analisi della ricerca di immigrati per la casa e altri luoghi di abitazione in esilio. La presente ricerca affronta questo problema considerando come gli immigrati clandestini hanno appropriato spazi emarginati della città per ottenere e sostenere un certo grado di potere politico come produttori di città. In tutti i capitoli basati sugli articoli, questa analisi cerca di fare i conti con il modo in cui l'accovacciamento collettivo negli edifici vacanti l'ha fatto diventare un campo di battaglia sociale da cui può emergere una performativity sovversiva attraverso atti di solidarietà. Offre un'analisi empiricamente fondata del ruolo dei movimenti squatting-autonomi e si schiera per gli immigrati privi di documenti, i rifugiati e le persone che chiedono asilo, e, cosa più importante, produce un resoconto teorico convincente di cui la giustizia e i diritti dovrebbero applicarsi. Le persone in movimento che vivono ai margini e le loro lotte per diventare politiche sono in ultima analisi questioni affascinanti per la politica urbana di oggi. Ci ricordano che i movimenti di base svolgono un ruolo importante nel determinare come la vita urbana è vissuta e negoziata. Inoltre, ci ricordano la centralità della casa, e che abbiamo il diritto di fare affermazioni sul nostro corpo, indipendentemente dall'immigrazione e dallo status di cittadinanza.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Chapter I - Home, Neither Here nor There	16
1. From the Recognition of the Struggle to the Struggle for Recognition	24
2. Methodology: (Un)Doing Urban Ethnography?	31
3. Ethnographic Encounters	39
4. Researcher’s Positionality	43
5. The Digital, the Auditory, and the Visual	47
6. Ethnography with Adjectives	51
References	56
Chapter II - The Social Function of Forgotten Spaces	65
Introduction	67
1. Ex-MOI Occupation: Event-Led Regeneration and Post-Industrial City	69
2. The Urban (In)Formality	72
3. Urban Decline and Abandonment	75
4. Property, Ownership, and the Right to Evict	77
5. The Social Function of Property	80
6. Concluding Remarks	86
References	89
Chapter III - The Urban Politics of Immigrant Solidarity	93
Abstract	94
Introduction	95
1. Crisis, Uprisings, and Historical Riot	99
2. Struggles Over Abandoned Urban Spaces	103
3. Immigrants’ Engagement and Grassroots Movements	106
4. Solidarity Against Austerity	113
5. Mobilizing, Contesting, Reclaiming, Navigating.....	119
6. Solidarity as Agonistic Politics	126
References	129
Chapter IV - Being Out of Place: Immigrant Squatting as Precarious Emplacement	135
Abstract	136
Introduction	137
1. People Forced to Leave	140

2. People Forced to Stay Illegally	144
3. Feeling at Home?	147
4. Immigrants' Struggles for Home.....	154
5. Precarious Emplacement	157
6. The Immigrants' Search for Home.....	162
References	166
Chapter V - The Immigrant's Struggle for Home: Toward a Subversive Cit(y)zenship	169
Abstract	170
Introduction	171
1. Defining the Political and Political Community	173
2. Redefining the Political and Political Community.....	178
3. Acts of (Urban) Citizenship	181
4. Neither Insurgent nor Transgressive	186
5. Acts of Urban Citizenship	190
6. Solidarity-Making Toward a Subversive Potential?	194
7. The Right to (the Just) City	196
8. Setting the Agenda, Moving Forward	200
9. Concluding remarks.....	207
References	212

Introduction

The contemporary landscape of immigration is viewed as both essential to Europe and a polarizing political issue. In this scenario, harsh anti-immigration policies—from criminalization to deportation and widespread surveillance—and practices have also had effects on mainstream discourses and political leaders, who aim to restrict noncitizens' access to rights and benefits. This background of resource scarcity and increasing societal divisions imposes cumbersome challenges and reinforces inequality based on immigration and citizenship status. In the present research, I outline the complex political situation of searching for home in which undocumented immigrants as marginalized and racialized urban residents find themselves today. This thesis stimulates forward-thinking in public and policy debates on the nexus between (forced) migration and (radical) housing. It asks under what conditions have solidarity-based movements been embracing immigrants' housing struggles into their collective action (discourse and practice), and which are their broader significance for housing justice debate and urban citizenship literature?

This thesis provides a framework for understanding disruption of collective action that continuously express themselves in immigrant rights mobilizations and housing struggles. It brings together and combines subaltern urbanism, transgressive citizenship, and radical interactionism as the basis of its theoretical approach. Further, it aims to unpack concepts of the social function of property, immigrant solidarity, precarious emplacement, and subversive citizenship in the hope to build analytical pathways for social justice struggles. The question arises regarding how undocumented immigrants themselves shape and appropriate abandoned spaces elsewhere after displacement. This subversive encounter between citizens and noncitizens redraws the limits of the political. The extent to which modes of collectivity that oppose forms of dispossession challenge the conventional understandings of what national standards of the political mean, lies at the heart of this reflection.

This research takes up the challenge to elaborate on the fundamental issues in the domain of urban studies by focusing on people on the move who are illegalized (undocumented, unauthorized, or lawbreakers) and their search for home elsewhere in exile. It aims to build on and contribute to the knowledge production of the migration-housing nexus. This research contains important insights for political psychology, with an emphasis on emotion-driven collective actions that influence social change through urban politics. The point of departure is to call into question illegalized immigrants and their search for home and other places of dwelling, as a theme of social research. I analyze how squatters' movements prefigure a potentially more egalitarian politics based on the solidarity between citizens and noncitizens. In recent years, this solidarity has been claiming housing-related rights regardless of immigration status. As I argue, housing is much more than a roof over one's head. That is to say, housing struggles create a mode of becoming political subjects.

In this thesis, I focus on immigrant squatting and, by immigrants, I mean the undesirable non-European and non-Western population, the foreign-born framed under the figure of undocumented or "illegal" migrant. Most of them, are people from previously colonised and marginalised countries. As cheap labor, they face the permanent risk of policing, arrest, incarceration, and deportation, revealing the white supremacy logic of the state violence over all those labeled "outsiders". Important to note that the historical and geographical production of whiteness and its supremacy enacted violence, genocide, land appropriation, and labor exploitation (Bonds & Inwood 2016). The analysis is informed by ethnographic fieldwork in the immigrant squatting site known as the Ex-MOI Occupation in the Italian city of Turin. Vasudevan remember us that "[s]quatting can be defined as 'living in – or using otherwise – a dwelling without the consent of the owner'" (2017 p. 7). As a post-industrial city in progress, Capelo (2018) argues, Turin finds itself under uncertainty about its economic, political and identity. Turin has been predominantly shaped by neoliberal policies and faces a 'liminal

condition' (condizione liminale) which outlines an in-between, undefined, or ambiguous urban experience marked by the growth of precariousness and unemployment, and this is so both "because the post-industrial transition is still in progress, but on the political-economic level, because neoliberalism is now predominant" - perché la transizione post-industriale è ancora in corso, ma sul piano politico-economico, perché il neoliberismo è ormai predominante. (Capello 2018 p.48)

The post-industrial 'liminal condition' of Turin plays a part in the the background of the urban politics of immigrant squatters' movements. This contentious politics points to the social struggle against this state violence based on criminalization and imprisonment of migrants takes many forms. The urban politics of immigrant squatters' movements, for instance, remind us that housing has always been an epicenter for movement-based action. The approach here encompasses an array of aspects about the search for home and other forms of shelter, and as well as the notion of home as emotional ties and people's attachment to places. This reveals that housing also includes performative and interactive meanings. The search for home becomes aligned along a future-oriented horizon, leading people to choose one path over another. The pursuit or promise of home, eventually, is more imagined than actual; it is not always linked to a specific, built environment.

This brings us to a very important question, which is that of a political conscience for those who are forced on the move and attach themselves to forms of collectivity, such as squatters' movements. The question remains, where, why, and how "meaningful" everyday interactions and encounters are taking place between migrants and "established" inhabitants of cities. The immigrants' search for home itself is of particular importance for the contemporary urban citizenship debate. It is through this search that migrants are gaining a deeper political conscience on right-claiming possibilities as dwellers, regardless of their citizenship status. How people on the move gain this political conscience as right-claimers and how they succeed

in solidarity work with citizens is essentially changing the contemporary life on the margins, creating new forms of political life and an entirely distinctive viewpoint on immigrants' participation in urban life.

Alongside these issues, the question of the role of translocal networks of solidarity in encouraging immigrants' participation in the realm of urban politics is raised. Ultimately, it is time to have a greater view regarding how illegalized immigrants themselves define, shape, and appropriate marginalized space in the city. I explore the political condition for the autonomy of one's dispossession in exile, while also unleashing new forms of conflict and resistance. Implications emerge from the unfolding human rights violations suffered by immigrants seeking asylum as well as the opportunity to build and maintain their lives. By searching for home, they are creating a mode of becoming political subjects in exile that hold a certain power of resilience and social struggles against oppression and deep inequality. I am not concerned with 'host cities' and 'guest communities' once they are understood here as part of the security-surveillance apparatus, subjects of command-control space over immigrants to be managed by stockholders. Rather, I focus on collective resistance, migrant organizing, and civil disobedience through one of the most vulnerable urban populations worldwide: undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

We cannot ignore the far-right nationalists enacting race-making regimes through hate discourse, public policies, and immobilizing people under the rhetoric of fear. People die on the move because of the state violence apparatus and its ruling class ideology from Western states (former colonial powers of Europe, for instance) enacting targeted border policies. Kingston (2019) outlines how state sovereignty produces 'hierarchies of personhood' excluding people from human dignity, social protection, and political membership. I pay attention to immigrants' search for home within the activist organizing that seeks to challenge

the discourse of fear and discrimination by fostering an inclusionary perspective at the intersection of housing rights and immigration justice.

This urban politics may reflect a grassroots approach to migration politics. It may refer to politics by and for racialized people on the move contesting the practices making and mobilizing violence based on the anti-migration racism in Europe. These same anti-migration sentiments legitimize and permit procedures for exploration and exploitation of the Global South resources and labor force. In response to that, solidarity movements challenges bordering practices as anti-migrant measures (Della Porta 2018). Drawing from this grassroots politics, we can find a way to rethink subjectivity, agency, assemblage, and the possibility of a transformative agenda for policy change. Nyers and Rygiel (2012) talk about migrant citizenship ‘from below’ as a constitutive form of being political. It implies a productive relation between (non)citizenship statuses and subjectivities. The migrant citizenship ‘from below’ includes strategies, tactics, and knowledge of claims-making of noncitizen migrant groups. I relate the immigrants' search for home within this idea of migrant citizenship ‘from below’. All this teaches us about citizenship under racial capitalism.

Robison (2000) argues that the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society capitalism is about racial dispossession. This racial dispossession based on racial hierarchies allowed the growing of urban centers in western Europe, and the expansion of empire abroad, and further accumulations of power and wealth (Robison 2000). The racial-capitalist accumulation is a fundamental organizing logic of the racial and socioeconomic inequities in seek of profit. For instance, governments have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring housing regulatory policies that favor profit over human rights-based approach (Rolnik 2019). Today, in face of fear of migrants in the context of the globalization of indifference (Bauman 2016), we are facing a growing anti-immigration sentiment merged with the securitization and criminalization of immigrant “illegality” normalized by the hegemonic

discourse (Heath *et al.*, 2020; Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2014). To unpack the meaning of the category of “immigrant illegality,” it is vital to underline the socio-political condition and production of illegality, making it increasingly a matter of policing of immigrants and immigrant communities in the name of law enforcement (Menjívar & Kanstroom 2014). However, pro-migrant protesters, advocacy groups, and social movements have been mobilizing for changing policies, organizing resistance, and challenging the asylum and deportation policies and their narrative (Rosenberger *et al.*, 2018). For these reasons, Paspalanova (2008, p. 83–84) asserts that:

“It is a well-known fact that the issue of undocumented migration is one of the main weapons used in the political campaigns of extreme rightwing parties across the world, particularly in Europe. ... labeling the undocumented migrant in a derogatory way, which implies criminality, has negative consequences, primarily for the migrant and particularly when society experiences anti-immigrant sentiments”.

In such a context, the point of this research is to explore unconventional opportunities for urban social movements to leverage the conditions of illegalized immigration to catalyze social change. It is important to note that this thesis does not aspire to comprehensively discuss the field of housing studies and migration as a whole; rather, each article-based chapter provides a specific research program reviewing a selected topical area. Levy, Pisarevskaya, and Scholten (2020) pointed out the “cultural turn of migration research,” which indicates the formation of epistemic communities. They also argued that the field of migration studies has been experiencing “a shift from predominantly quantitative and demographic approaches toward [those] of epistemic communities centered around broader qualitative studies of migration” (p. 21). Following that, I also situate my work within the migration-home nexus, that is, “the ways of constructing home—involves the study of the cognitive and emotional

bases of the home experience” (Boccagni, 2017, p. 111) focusing on informality and precarious housing.

In this research, “illegalized immigrants” points to the rhetoric linking immigration to criminality or illegality. Also, it has to do with human mobility framed under the broad umbrella of the state-imposed labels and categories of people who flee their homes, which often implies crossing the border of a given state. The concept of people on the move who flee their homes outlines a migratory experience grounded in the loss of place and refers to the policies making immigrants unprotected and vulnerable in exile. The loss of place results from systematic displacement, which gives the background for those people who feel obliged to leave their homes or do so, either temporarily or permanently, undertaking the search of a new home elsewhere. In Italy, Faedda (2014) highlights that:

“[p]art of the right-wing success in the Italian elections of April 2008 lies in fostering this general climate of fear (...) The widespread fear is also closely connected to the concept of 'emergency'. Since the 1980s, the term 'emergency' has always, been related to immigration, and in 2002 Silvio Berlusconi declared the status of immigration a national emergency (...) The government of Italy is now using the political and legal systems as its primary tool of racialization and associated subordination. A country of strong regionalism, parochialism and north-south divisions, Italy seems to find a renewed unity by rejecting immigrants and forgetting (or pretending to forget) many other social and economic problems that preceded the new immigration, such as the (Italian) mafia, unemployment and widespread corruption. The deep divisions among Italians are seemingly erased in order to (re)create a homogeneous community that is united against the Other.” (p. 119-124)

Indeed, I am fully aware of what Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020) underlined as the “Eurocentric geopolitics of knowledge production” in the field of migration studies. Drawing

on the idea of “imperial reason and scientific racism” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Tafira, 2018), she reminds us that “‘imperial reason and scientific racism’ has constituted certain places, peoples, ways of knowing, and ways of being as inferior to or void of hegemonic (read Western/Northern) systems of meaning” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020, p. 9). She argues that it “requires transcending the model of ‘recentering’ the South or of ‘decentering’ the North/West” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020, p. 9). In other words,

“It becomes necessary to challenge rather than reproduce the assumption that migrants and refugees merely experience, are affected by, and/or respond to migratory processes, and that it is only through critical scholarly attention that these experiences can be analyzed, for “us” to make sense of “their” lives and worlds” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020 p. 12).

The importance of irregular migration associated with “illegality” in Europe has an impact on policy discourse and institutional responses, which are linked to immigration enforcement bureaucracies with their political aims and resources. Under the label of “illegality,” people on the move face state-led forms of violence, practices of control, and surveillance justified by anti-immigrant discourses. Recent research approaches the multi-layered vulnerabilities people on the move. It traces the multiple forms of get-tough enforcement practices and violence toward people on the move—for instance, undocumented immigrant workers in the agricultural sector have been facing sub-standard and exploitative working conditions in Southern European Union member states as well as Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden (Palumbo & Corrado, 2020). Beyond that, they are under many other social and mental health-related vulnerabilities, from the in/visibility of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children produced by state services (Humphris & Sigona, 2019) to women sex workers within the politics of sex work migration and human trafficking economies (Plambech 2017). I see people on the move as a racially marginalized population under the exclusionary

political agenda and discriminatory institutional practices. In this context, it is important to consider that:

“recognizing the ways in which people with displacement backgrounds interact with and respond to their own needs and those of other displaced people; barriers interact to create new forms of precarity; and situations from the past and present, and from different parts of the world, connect to and constitute one another”. (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020a, p. 17)

Following these perspectives suggested by Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020, 2020a), this thesis offers a critical piece of socio-psychological analysis covering crucial aspects related to immigrant squatters’ movements, and their everyday spatial practices and political aspirations. This analytical framework explores the tensions, conflicts, and potentialities of immigrant squatting. It is concerned with how people who are forced to migrate elsewhere and in exile are shaped by social movement. This exile is symptomatic of the much wider subject of wealth accumulation in the context of state-led violence, surveillance, and repression through the (discourse on the) crisis of global capitalism, shaping regulations, and policies under urban neoliberal development. In this thesis, forced migration is not only about refugees. I am not concerned with any Eurocentric conception of 1951 refugee convention, so that

“[s]ome states’ insistence on the restriction to European refugees reveals how they deliberately subordinated, marginalized and even entirely ignored refugees outside of European states – particularly (de)colonized ones. This is also reflected in the final definition referring to events in Europe or elsewhere. While Europe is made central, all other parts of the world are made merely “elsewhere.” (Abuya, Krause & Mayblin 2021 p. 266)

We do not need to restrict our understanding of forced displacement through the lens of the Eurocentric definition of refugees and international protection also because “[e]qually,

feminist and queer critiques of the 1951 Convention have cumulatively led to the expanded interpretation of the originally androcentric and heteronormative refugee definition, leading to the development of key guidelines and legal jurisprudence” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2021 p. 262). For those who have been displaced, the materiality of their struggles for places of dwelling and the manner in which this may contradict the sense of how a “home” is created instead of found, are central aspects of the migratory experience. Therefore, in problematizing the notion of national citizenship and its discourses, this thesis signals the awareness that a political–emotional nexus is relevant for our understanding of illegalized migration and squatting movements. It is through urban encounters between citizens and noncitizens that new forms of political subjectivity are enacted, embodied, and shared. They may enhance endurance to contest and resist dispossession through the politics of homemaking in exile.

From crisis to crisis, we experience orchestrated mass hysteria in increasingly complex relations between systems of governance, austerity, and surveillance that reflect and reinforce capitalist exploitation. This state-led repressive response is largely fueled by public communication and political and institutional leaders associating immigration within the discourse of fear, security, and conflict (Cap, 2017). This is also a product of misinformation, historical ignorance, and the campaign of nationalist projects that pits people against each other. To this point, I argue that we need to reimagine the role of resistance and the meaning of civil disobedience in creating a more habitable future in the contemporary world organized around “equaliberty” (Balibar, 2014).

Balibar (2014) calls for a “democracy without exclusion” looking at the demand for equality and freedom, and coins the notion of “equaliberty,” which requires “a refoundation of the political conditions of democracy” (p. 121). This refoundation of democracy follows “the insurrectional principle that universally claims the right to have rights” (Balibar, 2014, p. 123). His proposal consists of a vast project of social-democratic revolution, so that “[e]quality and

freedom therefore have to be imposed by the revolt of the excluded, but also reconstructed by citizens themselves in a process that has no end” (Balibar, 2014, p. 207). As I see it, this idea of democracy draws mainly on urban insurgencies in line with the egalitarian and emancipatory invocation of right-claiming in confrontational participation against governmental decisions regarding mobility control and illegality. Clearly, this means to rethink the project of the exclusive model of the citizenship regime. I do so by discussing issues of dwelling, informality, and local political membership of noncitizens in today’s world. The political subject that emerges from the forms of dispossession is at stake; for instance, one’s being dispossessed of one’s home.

The loss of home and the efforts to remake it in exile via collective forms of resistance shed light on the instrumental type of urban insurgencies. This acknowledges that residential dwelling goes hand in hand with the production of space by its own inhabitants. The collective squatting in vacant buildings and land, either public or privately owned, and its relationship with immigrants’ search for home and other forms of dwelling, are among one of the most pressing issues in city-making today. They reveal a dimension of conviviality, resistance, and political action. They concern the appropriation of urban space as a social battlefield between people’s struggles for emplacements and the dispossession imposed by the normative and normalizing state-led violence wider processes of neoliberalism, globalization and deregulation.

The immigrants’ struggles for emplacement conceptually integrated with prefigurative politics of space inform us about “promising spaces”, as noted by Cooper (2014), referring to a prefigurative politics of space based on everyday utopias and actions. This prefigurative politics of space constitutes counter-normative ways of living, which are oriented to alternative sites that enact socially transformative actions (Cooper, 2014). Prefigurative politics is defined as “politics as oriented to more egalitarian, freer, and democratic ways of living” (Cooper,

2014, p. 23). This type of politics develops as a “space of disruption,” argues Trott (2016), which means the emergence of a “collective experimentation and political meaning-making” (p. 274). I see immigrant squatting through the lens of prefigurative politics (Cooper, 2014) around “equaliberty” (Balibar 2014), that is, the designation of the transformative potential of ways of living committed to alternative political meaning-making toward an emancipatory horizon for illegalized immigrants by bringing together citizens and noncitizens in the struggles for recognition and the possibilities of living.

It is important to clarify, however, that immigrant squatting often refers to an informal, inadequate, and improvised accommodation. In the Ex-Moi, migrants lived under substandard dwelling conditions characterized by severely overcrowded and dilapidated units. Such precarious accommodation was one source of domesticity, so that one interlocutor said: "I try to keep all my things here. (...) I cook and sleep here" (Data collected in May 2018). It should also be emphasized that these renewed urban politics emerge from the context of the loss of home and lack of public policy, both of which are backgrounds of political action and inspirations for social struggles. Losing a home causes physical injuries and painful experiences that send people to shelters, abandoned houses, and the streets. As such, the loss of home concerns being dispossessed of rights, domestic space, and modes of belonging. It enacts the condition of uncertainty and multiple dislocations. This research explores the urban politics of the loss and search of home as the housing question for illegalized immigrants. It puts racial capitalism and its logic of dispossession and subordination at the heart of its discussion.

The thesis is organized into four thematically oriented, article-based chapters. The compilation of the four article-based chapters frames key issues of illegalized immigrants with forcibly displaced backgrounds and their search for home via squatters' movements. Nevertheless, my effort is to flesh out key theoretical issues of the embodied experiences of

searching for home. Together, the chapters address the key features of the urban politics of immigrants squatters' movements. I narrow my focus and concentrate first on the (re)conceptualization of property's social function; second, on immigrant solidarity; third, on precarious emplacement; and finally, on subversive citizenship. Normative ideas about citizenship lead us to overlook the dynamism, complexity, and diversity of the political agency of the noncitizens. A goal of my thesis is to push back against this normative assumption linking political participation only to citizenship by analyzing solidarity movements of justice and rights supporting immigrants' struggles for housing. Many instances of political participation and activism arise from forced migration.

Illegalized immigrants reshape the marginalized urban space of cities. In this doctoral dissertation, I develop a close reading of immigrants with a forcibly displaced background who undertake their search for home via squatters' movements. This is an emerging and distinctive issue concerning the critical approaches used in urban research that acknowledges the need for a more nuanced, ethnographic approach. In large part, this thesis examines the immigrants' struggles for housing as part of their search and making of home. It is, therefore, an analytical work of immigrants' political engagement through squatters' movements. Immigrants have always organized themselves and struggled for emplacement in exile, and in this thesis, attention is directed to how the immigrants' search for connects them with a common thread. This common point links housing informality studies to forced migration studies, through research on collective action and protest.

This thesis reveals the political and affective role of these encounters of solidarity within housing movements. I seek to learn from the frontlines of political resistance and transformative action that are undertaken by both ordinary citizens and illegalized noncitizens. I contend that the most significant theorizing, acting, and making of contemporary urban life has come and will come from encounters within a scheme of recognition. As Goffman (1961,

p. 18) reminds us, “[e]ncounters are everywhere, but it is difficult to describe sociologically the stuff that they are made of.” I look at encounters in everyday life to make sense of their transformative potentialities. People assembling in their search for home are the basis of the meaningful experience of encountering.

Each article-based chapter provides a selected overview of the state-of-the-art literature and offers a comprehensive set of analysis on the migration–housing nexus. The chapters theoretically explore significant issues related to the fieldwork carried out in the squatted buildings at Turin’s ex-Olympic village, bringing together different dimensions of the immigrants’ search for home via squatters’ movements, which is the central theme of this thesis. Within each article-based chapter, I draw out several key features that correspond to the analytical components of home, solidarity, and activism. Through this thesis, I propose to foreground the people’s experience of the socio-spatial for home via squatters’ movements, we can obtain a greater understanding of the role of noncitizens living on margins through their lived experiences, within urban politics in contemporary cities.

Chapter I - Home, Neither Here nor There



Picture 1. Ex-Moi picture by the author, 2018.

All over the world, people migrate. They do so throughout the life course and sometimes across generations. Even if they have no or limited opportunities to prepare for the multiple processes of this journey. Others never migrate, even if they could do so with safety and incentives. The migration-driving factors are complex and dynamic, and they cover economic, financial, political, social, environmental, and psychological dimensions (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020). These dimensions shape people's willingness and ability to change their livelihoods (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020). The migratory experience intertwines aspiration, decision-making, and human agency (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2020). People undertake the agency of mobility under the assemblage of spatiality and relations or becoming through migration (Collins, 2018). This tells us about migration-resilience interplay as a coping strategy for trauma, violence, and material hardship (Ventriglio & Bhugra, 2015). Migration tells us about the multiplicity of forms of human (im)mobility (Schewel 2020). The migrants' lives are shaped by the social forces of (im)mobility (Schewel 2020).

The migratory experience involves (im)mobility dynamics with transformative potentialities and helps establish a wider contemporary situation of people on the move resisting injustice, inequality, and exploitation. Here, forced migration has not only both social and economic dimensions but also connects to social trauma (Hamburger 2019). This thesis considers a perspective of forced migration in which people-place relations connected to everyday life practices and influenced by traces of trauma. The traumatic migratory experience changes people's identity and their sense of place and belonging. People on the move and their relationships to places are socially and historically mediated by the geopolitical organization of capital and the dispossession. It opens distinctive forms of politics and public spheres. Human mobilities lead to intense emotional and transformative experiences, combining attachments and detachments (Svašek, 2012). This thesis looks at people on the move with forcibly displaced backgrounds and their search for home in exile. It draws on the ethnographic

fieldwork conducted based on the Ex-MOI Occupation. When studying forcibly displaced people, it is necessary, at some level, to ask both about the loss of home and their search for home. This research speaks directly to forced migration and refugee studies, focusing on the question of immigrants' housing struggles. Building on ongoing debates, I conduct analysis from people's social interaction in everyday life. In this thesis, the migratory experience reveals the myriad of power relations and social struggles as an ongoing process of place-making.

We might look at the illegalized immigrant and their search for home to understand the processes of social control, which govern immigrant (im)mobility toward and within Europe. This entails not only a model of "immigrant integration" governance, often a result of city branding strategies (Teixeira, 2020), but also a political process of the racialization of particular populations, including the criminalization of the mobility of the poor. Indeed, the illegalized immigrants inform us about the global neoliberal capitalism and liberal democracy, under what Dabashi highlighted as the historical implications of "Europe and its colonial shadows":

"Europe was an illusion that soon made itself forget of what it was, and now refugees are bringing back its own repressed memories. Europe is aging and it needs young labor – but does not like the laborer. It likes them to stay where they are—in Asia, Africa, Latin America, at the mercy of its superior sense of mercy and generosity." (2019, p. 41)

Furthermore, following what Dabashi (2019) remarks, it is important to be aware of what the issue of undocumented immigrants shows about Europe; the challenge is "to see how the inner dynamics of Eurocentric imagination sustains an organic hold on our humanity—and the manner in which white supremacy is internalized" (2019, p. 57). In the present research, this is done by looking at the immigrants' search for home and places of dwellings that provide a reflective account of the housing–migration interplay. This interplay carries on the emotional tie, linking forms of attachments and detachments concerning home-making. From this, we can

begin to understand how the (lack of) emplacement is an additional (dis)empowering experience for those who have found themselves displaced. Fundamentally, the search for home is part of the struggles for emplacement. It relates to a deeply political context and relies on it to construct acts of solidaristic behavior a way to reimagine the urban politics.

By discussing a broader and older political debate about urban politics with a focus on citizenship, rights, and squatting, this thesis adds to significantly current literature on the production of urban informality in Italy (Chiodelli et al 2021, Grazioli 2021, Grazioli & Caciagli 2018) and migrants struggles (Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2017, Martínez 2017) and local (or urban) citizenship (Gargiulo 2017, 2021, Baubock 2003). It explores the connections between those who decide to remain in the city and those who walk away from it. In doing so, it highlights the problems of immigrants as the racialized Other, as the body as a *site* of racialization and *locus* of racial identities (Ahmed 2002), and how immigrants struggle to reinvent their lives in the face of institutional violence, racism, and exclusion. In this sense, it is pivotal to discuss under what conditions the social function of the property may be viewed through the lens of urban commons. This helps us to understand the immigrant squatting in empty buildings as a mode of precarious emplacement. Such precarious emplacement is based on immigrant solidarity. From this, the immigrant solidarity calls attention to a “subversive turn” within the urban (local) citizenship debate.

Even though urban citizenship is only one, albeit a significant and necessary component of a vision of spatial justice and rights in the city, it raises enough questions to understand the lived experiences of those in exile and their struggles to assert themselves as right-holders to constitute a sufficient subject for analysis here. For Gargiulo (2021), the residence status has implications in terms of justice and equality within the Italian system. Many municipalities deny civil registration to individuals by selecting based on extra-legal features who can have the right to obtain residency, “by avoiding enrolling “undesirable” persons in their registries.”

(2021 p.4). Importantly, Gargiulo notes, at stake is the discretionary power of local control over residency policies, “[m]embership statuses, moreover, are both explicit and implicit mechanisms of migration control (2021 p. 32). He argues that local recognition of membership is both pathway to rights and tools for surveillance and control, highlighting that “[t]hose who do not “merit” residency, in short, are marginalized persons or else persons who are politically active” (2021 p. 210). This perspective of municipal residency and its invisible bureaucratic practices of selection and inclusion/exclusion plays a part in the context of immigrants’ search for home in exile. Consequently, I shall argue throughout my doctoral thesis that the concept of subversive citizenship plays a central role to understand the claim-making of illegalized noncitizens’ category of membership. The importance of the search for home for illegalized noncitizens allows us to rethink the basis of political community membership at the local level.

After discussing the theoretical issues, my approach is to consider “undocumented immigrant activism” (Nicholls and Uitermark 2016; Nicholls 2019) and their struggles for housing (Maestri, G. 2018; Gonick 2015) with focus on Turin (Canning and Iliadou 2016; Belloni, Fravega and Giudici 2020) and its implications for urban citizenship, social justice, and housing rights. From this, I draw mostly on the literature of insurgent citizenship and transgressive citizenship as a topic in itself. My claim, which will be detailed later, is that both insurgent citizenship and transgressive citizenship cannot capture the complexities of “immigrant illegality as dispossession” in the idea of the struggle for a place in the city. In response to this issue, this doctoral thesis explores how immigrant solidarity—the encounter between noncitizenship and citizenship political—sheds light directly on the housing question for illegalized immigrants. That opens a new view of the social function of property.

A consequence of this is that we should not focus only on references to the city when we talk about urban citizenship. I argue that the immigrant’s search for home, a journey wherein people are often unprepared for the contradictions and ambivalences involving it, is

essentially an experience of belonging as the basis for urban citizenship. This belonging through dwelling coexists along with the background of political membership at the local level. The domicile principle of residence is a key form ensuring that we receive essential access to local services, resources, and rights. This allows us to consider dwelling to serve as a channel for the realization of establishing a home, either temporarily or permanently. Recognizing housing as a basic human right, a web of belonging and identity moves our current understanding of the role of informal socio-spatial relations and the emotional dimension that determine equality between citizens and noncitizens. The search for home, as a form of outward-directed political expression, is both a material and imaginative radical urban praxis. This calls for a new approach of political membership at the local level that can no longer be reduced to the national citizenship model, just for the sake of nation-states.

This research calls for rethinking the systematic dispossession of peoples concerning the “illegality” of undocumented migrants. It is a necessary task to tackle the new modes of collective belonging and justice and forms of political power, thus requiring careful analysis and in-depth reflection on how precarious and vulnerable lives are intertwined as well as the opportunities involved in such transformative processes. Conventional channels of socio-political association—such as political parties, trade unions, and employers’ organizations—are now challenged by a heterogeneous plurality of new collective agency and new political strategies due to the massive use and pervasive influence of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In today’s politics, biased information and fake news are an integral part of the left and right political spectrum (Froio & Ganesh 2019). I argue that undocumented immigrants as dispossessed subjectivities are relatively autonomous from the state, and the solidarity-based movements play an important role in this scenario.

Within the immigrant squatting, the migrants’ home experience is partially shaped by the solidarity-based movements through everyday interactions as a response to unmet housing

needs. Of course, solidarity-based movements do not have all capabilities and resources targeting action on housing improvement. Such as the case of the Ex-MOI, many solidarity-based movements do not have a coherent local strategy of advocacy between partner organizations and agencies. Further, they lack reliable long-term funding and coordinated service response to the on-the-ground issues of housing quality. However, they do offer crucial information about rights and local authorities, and they support the built environment with repairs, some maintenance, and adaptations. Solidarity-based movements offer assistance to the vulnerabilities associated with informal housing. Also, they try to minimize potential risks of displacing/evicting these residents.

The current European political situation of right-wing populist parties, white supremacists, and fascist movements, in fact, seems to call for a critical reconsideration of the relation between formal and substantial democracy and social justice. In Italy, where this research was carried out, this issue is prominent in the present-day political landscape. These are just some preliminary points about what this thesis will discuss in some detail in the chapters to come. A thorough and fruitful in-depth analysis of the many issues surrounding contemporary democracy, which are becoming more and more necessary, and impelling will also be carried out. As these ideas of democracy and social justice are being challenged in today's world once again, we might ask about the basis for feelings of commonality between human beings, and about the grounds for radical solidarity that can offer us ground to transformative change of the urban future.

We can no longer postpone the debate about what is necessary to deepen democracy and overcome housing injustice. Obviously, we cannot continue to think about citizenship in the same old days. Citizenship is changing, it is for sale through programs such as citizenship by investment and the potential access to visas (Shachar *et al.*, 2017). Citizenship, however, cannot be reduced to the interests of the wealthy people benefiting from citizenship and

residency “solutions.” Rather, it is a domain of social struggles on part of the oppressed and dispossessed. There is a growing body of literature about the causes and impacts of displacement, crises, and local challenges of irregular migration, keeping in mind that “a continuum between regularity and irregularity, ranging from situations where one is a regular foreign resident allowed to work and with a formal employment contract to cases in which one is an irregular foreign resident with an undeclared job” (Triandafyllidou & Bartolini, 2019, p. 18). Less is written on the emplacement issues with a focus on the role played by (illegalized) immigrants’ activism in informal settlements. Immigrant squatting is a political web of home-making practices and domesticity on the margins themselves.

The work of solidarity on behalf of the poor and insecurely housed deals with issues to build a coalition to act on forced-migration topics including immigrants’ right to housing. Immigrant solidarity plays a part in decommodifying housing. Although my point is not to glamorize immigrant squatting or deny its degrading conditions, much less to discourage the critical perspective of the different ways of immigrants’ political participation in the public sphere, I see my work as a critique for the limits of grassroots movements in their collective efforts to produce a degree of organization, safety, comfort, and belonging for illegalized immigrants. There is a need for grassroots movements to engage in the advocacy landscape for advancing equality to ensure basic levels of housing quality for illegalized immigrants, ensuring the national policies, local infrastructure, and targeted initiatives.

An important component of grassroots movement activism is not only to influence the range of decision makers and stakeholders on public policy making but also to change the immigrant law, the institutional manifestation of inequality between citizens and non-citizens. Without strategies of cooperation with other social movements and nongovernmental organizations, the claim-making agenda of solidarity-based movements may be limited in its effectiveness, if only based on confrontational politics. Importantly, policy influencing to

change governmental behavior matters within the bounds of the possible to develop workable solutions. We can build upon accumulated knowledge and understanding of solidarity-based movements to design public policies in the field of migration and housing. This point is informed by my analysis of the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee, grassroots movement supporting the daily life of the Ex-MOI Occupation site.

Solidarity-based movements covering core social and political rights outline emerging frontlines of social justice. Often, they engage with campaigns to amplify the movement's calls for action for immigrants' rights and adequate policy responses. It has been an additional challenge for the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee, supporting the daily life of the Ex-MOI Occupation, launch a strong local coalition putting long-term pressure on the government and policy change. As a non-centralized decision stance with no hierarchical authority structures, the Solidarity Committee found itself dealing with resource issues to foster more coordinated collective action to translate claim-making in the drives of policy change. This was done so it could speak to a large audience and key actors in the field across the political spectrum (including nonprofits, philanthropies, and companies), focusing on how to change the policy response to housing needs and other forms of essential state support, no matter your immigration status. The fact that the Solidarity Committee could not develop a strategy to channel its daily support to the Ex-MOI Occupation with other actors or community-based organizations and synergize into effective advocacy to provoke governmental action, does not mean that its political action was not remarkable. The Solidarity Committee did instrumental activism work by standing up for immigrants' rights to housing, regardless of nationality or "status."

1. From the Recognition of the Struggle to the Struggle for Recognition

At first glance, the Ex-MOI Occupation seemed to be a landscape of abandonment and decay; a place inhabited by people who were not only excluded but above all, unwanted and

illegalized. It was just through the fieldwork that I could note issues happening on the ground. Abandoned buildings squatted in by people on the move turned into a distinctive web of urban politics, as well as new ways of relating to and enacting solidarity. Such urban politics of solidarity articulated and resisted the invisibility and silence imposed on those illegalized immigrants. The immigrant squatting site served as a grassroots initiative, contesting, and confronting very unequal relations of power over people's lives under state-led suffering. This gave me the central issue to ponder in this research, namely, the fact of being illegalized and becoming political through collective action around housing struggles. It led me to consider the political agency of disenfranchised dwellers living in marginalized communities.

In this thesis, I see the illegalized immigrants' search for home as part of their political consciousness experience. These are the consciousnesses lived performatively by collective movements that tell us about the selves and lives of those resisting and standing up against oppression. In doing so, the lived experiences of being illegalized and the search for home are explored as key dimensions of struggles for housing. Searching for home has become a constitutive component of immigrant consciousness. First, I refer to consciousness as a meaning-making process—a constant reinterpretation of the world, created through our ongoing social interaction of the social self with otherness. Second, such consciousness is political in the sense that it is shaped by very unequal relations of power.

As in the case of the Ex-MOI Occupation, the everyday lives of the squatters involved works of discourse efforts and collective action explicitly recognizing the issue of immigrants' needs for housing. It was a way of developing the knowledge and tactics to strengthen the social struggles against the domination and oppression that they were committed to challenging. Drawing on the notion of "mestizo consciousness" coined by Kusch (2007), Mignolo (2010) talks about "immigrant consciousness" as a condition of existence out of place. He argues that such a condition results from the coloniality of knowledge and of being

(Mignolo, 2010). He defines the immigrant consciousness as the “awareness of coloniality of being; the awareness of being out of place with regard to the regulations (i.e., the cosmology) of modernity; the awareness, in short, of the colonial wound” (2010, p. xvii). To him, the immigrant consciousness contains an “awareness of the colonial wound”, and he points to the central aspect of coloniality as a condition of existence. Such an existential condition intersects race and racism.

Fanon’s political psychology addresses the many ways in which race and racism shape consciousness. He offers an account of consciousness that looks at power relationships of domination and/or resistance through the lens of racialized human subjectivity. The relevance of Fanonian thought on Blackness and whiteness is that it sheds light on how the colonized people hold a traumatic experience of the zone of nonbeing:

“I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world”. (Fanon, 1986, p. 98)

The suffering condition of nonbeings indicates an experience of racialized subjectivity. Fanon’s Black consciousness helps us to make sense of how struggles for recognition play a central part in the logic of alienation, self-estrangement, and “mental subordination. The struggles of recognition may be considered as a project of liberation. Martín-Baró (1998) provides a social psychological approach to struggles for recognition and liberation. He indicates liberation as a political movement, noting that the dialectics between the oppressors and the oppressed inform us about the political consciousness of the self and otherness (Martín-Baró, 1998). Consciousness is embedded in social praxis, able to transform the oppressing reality (Martín-Baró, 1998). The role of socio-historical consciousness (*concientización socio-política*) carries a project of the liberation of people oppressed and colonized, so that:

“Decimos, ante todo, que la concientización es un proceso. Concientización no es, por tanto, un dato, ni mucho menos un estado; ni siquiera una situación personal. Concientización es el movimiento dialéctico, personal y comunitario del hombre frente a la realidad histórica en sus dimensiones esenciales. Concientización es movimiento, dinámica, cambio. La concientización no es un ser, sino un devenir. Un devenir cuyo ser surge dialécticamente de la reflexión y de la praxis que va ejerciendo el hombre frente al hombre, pero sobre todo junto al hombre y frente a la naturaleza. Parece importante subrayar este aspecto dinámico de la concientización a fin de desenmascarar ciertos intentos de mitificación mágica del término. Concientización es un proceso y, en la práctica, un proceso que implica movimiento, y lo que es más, conflicto. Si nuestra sociedad es conflictiva, sólo a través del conflicto, doloroso las más de las veces, se puede realizar ese devenir que es la nueva conciencia operativa de una sociedad nueva. En segundo lugar, la concientización es un proceso psicológico; es decir, un proceso actualizado y sufrido por las personas en su más profundo ser psíquico. Por el proceso de concientización la persona va forjando una nueva conciencia de su propia realidad frente al mundo, entendido éste en un sentido muy amplio. La persona se va sabiendo a sí misma sabiendo a su mundo. Este ir sabiendo y sabiéndose no es un proceso meramente pasivo, sino primordialmente activo. Recordemos: la concientización se constituye en la dialéctica de praxis y reflexión que enfrenta al hombre y al mundo. Proceso de transformación activa del mundo, transformación que refleja del hombre”. (Martín-Baró, 1998, p. 138–139)

Recent literature on political consciousness points to the relationship between the ongoing crisis of democratic representation and looks at participation, involvement, and activism (Sandoval & Silvia, 2016). Sandoval and Silvia (2016) explore the role of social movements and collective action and their implications for political consciousness. Drawing

primarily on Mead's theory of self and identity (1934) and Heller's critique of everyday life (1987), they point to the contribution of the emotional dimension as one of utmost importance for the study of political consciousness (Sandoval & Silvia, 2016). Political consciousness helps us to link the immigrants' search for home as political lived experience within social movements. It informs us about how the agency of people on the move under everyday activism extends into the utopian domain.

Speaking of everyday utopias, Cooper (2014) indicates alternative sites where counterhegemonic practices can socially transform politics. The author contends that the contemporary ideal of social transformation is, at its very core, linked to the material practice of utopias (Cooper, 2014). The utopian sites and their political implications help us understand the agency of asylum seekers and refugees. The utopian experiments of asylum seekers' and refugees' agency are based on radical hope. Kallio, Meier, and Häkli (2020) talk about radical hope, arguing that "'radical' refers to breaking away from linear temporalities, which acknowledges the subject in a formative state of becoming. 'Hope' instead stands for the open-ended future as potentiality, in contrast to future as a set of expectations and set parameters" (2020, p. 7). In their study, radical hope is the political agency of people seeking asylum involved with activism, looking also at "forms of passivity, withdrawal and disengagement from organized activities" (Kallio et al., 2020, p. 13).

Kallio et al., (2020) provide a very accurate view of complexity regarding (the lack of) participation and emotion experienced by asylum seekers and refugees in their everyday life. By focusing on the conceptual pathways of agentic passivity and radically hopeful action, they call for the importance of the "present as possibilities for dynamic future-making" (Kallio et al., 2020, p. 13). The everyday lives of the refugees and asylum seekers' political agencies based on radical hope shed light on the Ex-MOI Occupation as well. The immigrant squatting

site has repoliticized how illegalized immigrants perform acts of political agency but has also meant “passivity, withdrawal, and disengagement,” as noted by Kallio et al., (2020).

The urban politics of radical hope have turned the abandoned place into an alternative mode of living, what could be and what is, particularly when it comes to emphasizing on-the-ground issues of collective decision-making and action. Alliances and articulations are the two key tactical aspects of squatting. The solidarity tie with ordinary citizens was instrumental to the Ex-MOI Occupation. It is true that different struggles mobilize different approaches and social groups with different interests and a complex array of means of struggling. Quassoli (2013) traces the discourses and practices surrounding immigrants in Italy. He draws on the immigration policies and control to look at how they serve as a strategy to reproduce social order. Over time, he shows how these discourses and practices have established “*clandestino*” (clandestine) and “*irregolare*” (irregular) as the basis for the mainstream public debates on immigration and their exclusionary effects framing the anti-immigrant discourse. Belloni (2016) explores the cooperation between Eritrean refugees’ and natives’ squatting practices in Rome. She argues the local housing movement merged its struggles to immigrants’ rights so that:

“they have learned “how to squat.” The ongoing interaction with political groups active in the housing rights’ movement, even if conflictual at times, has led to a socialization of refugees to the discourse and the practices of claim-making, but not necessarily to the underlying political agendas and values.” (Belloni, 2016, p. 17)

The Ex-MOI Occupation is an example of the lack of long-term strategy and articulation for advocacy together with more established social movements and local actors. This scenario played a substantial part in the squatters’ lack of resistance to the eviction process in July 2019. That is by no means to deny the vital importance of this immigrant squatting site. It informs us about different ways of being and becoming from challenging the understanding

of dwelling characterized by the experiences of displacement and precarity. The Ex-MOI Occupation was, to some extent, a learning experience of political consciousness, struggling to resist a refugee identity and its stigmatization. For instance, the practice of home-making within the squat offered a further dimension for their presence in the city, as dwellers.

Like much of my previous work, this thesis has its origins in the social struggles, in the frustration that I felt expecting policymakers, politicians, and stakeholders to respond to people's claims. The illegalized immigrants' struggles for housing today are at stake here. The illegalized immigrant as squatters under conditions of continuous displacement have become distinctive racialized "minorities." This results from the state-led violence as a domain producing precarious living conditions that foster racial divides. The dispossessed condition is socially manufactured and politically sustained by the need for cheap undocumented labor (Choudry & Hlatshwayo, 2016). This cheap undocumented labor is marked as the non-European, the reified Other. We may understand their search for home due to insecure housing conditions as an act of transformative political consciousness toward social change, perhaps suggesting a pathway to a wider call for an "equaliberty" uprising.

For the illegalized migrants, the search for home offers a medium to re-signify power relations by right-claiming. They reshape their immigrant consciousness from the grassroots activism expressly organized, oppositional, and with a focus on the struggles concerning housing. As I see it, this calls for exploring the search for home for its relevance for processes of subjectivization within contentious politics. In other words, the immigrants' struggles for home and their role in squatters' movements tell us about the right to co-exist in the city, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status. In this thesis, I reflect on the political in-the-making who struggles for recognition and self-recognition beyond citizenship, not against citizenship, not after rights, but despite rights. This is a kind of bottom-up subaltern standpoint of subject-formation based on the spatial conditions of resisting dispossession and its

implications for urban politics. For me, urban studies and related epistemic communities connected with this rubric have ever been spaces for a robust discussion of ideas, projects, and practices; epicenters of collective reasoning and imagination about our time, its historical processes, and how it raises vital questions about the lived experience of being political shaping urban life. I am by no means alone in my attempts to engage with global migration and squatting. Taken together, all scholars cited frame the focus and set a robust analytical foundation for the approach of this thesis.

Those of us who want to reclaim an “equaliberty” politics (Balibar, 2014) need to look into forms of collectivity that oppose forms of dispossession and reimagine the recognition of the urban copresence in a meaningful manner. These inspiring grassroots initiatives of immigrants’ activism are an enclave of resistance and confrontation against a dystopian future managed by the neoliberal malfeasance of our time, reinforcing racism, poverty, and xenophobia. Most significantly, what I therefore propose is how immigrants’ search for home has been relating and enacting solidarity and has become deeply informative about the very fabric of urban politics. The next chapters elaborate on it, and such is the major task that this thesis has set for itself.

2. Methodology: (Un)Doing Urban Ethnography?

Conducting research for this thesis involved spending months with squatters to bring in firsthand observations. As much as possible, I spoke to residents and local people, taking notes and writing down about the days’ events in the squat. Ethnography always refers back to writing. As noted by Trinh T. Minh-ha, “[w]riting reflects. It reflects on other writings and, whenever awareness emerges, on itself as writing” (1989, p. 23). Although there is a trend of multi-sited fieldwork in migration studies, the anthropological viewpoint produced in the course of my fieldwork in the Ex-MOI Occupation was done at a “place of transit,” so that:

“it is not compulsory that all migration research has to be multisited: excellent research can be done in one place. Examples of such single-sited research would be those carried out at the migrants’ place of origin – for instance, studies of the factors leading to migration, or on the impact of remittances, or of return migration; the migrants’ place of destination – for instance, studies of integration, ethnic community formation or residential segregation; or at a place of transit such as a border site or a refugee camp, or a city of transit such as Istanbul where migrants aim to pass through but often stay longer-term”. (King, 2018. p. 40–41)

As I developed such a single-sited project, I got involved with a network of scholar-activists and framed my theoretical approach in a dialog with such scholarship, with a focus on studying the formation of political subjects and the connection between bodies and space. It was an opportunity to see a new configuration of collective mobilization and insurrection concerned with the multiple dimensions of inequality oppression (politically, historically, and conceptually). The fieldwork was the form through which to analyze who resists and challenges these various forms of oppression and how both spaces and bodies are reimagined. As noted by Butler and Athanasiou, “we can track this corporeal politics of ‘making space’ and ‘taking place’ in various forms of civil disobedience and struggles against contemporary antidemocratic configurations of power” (2013, p. 180). While in the field, an essential part of my work was to capture this political dynamic of “taking place” and “making place.”

The research fieldwork carried out in the immigrant squatting site was the contextual process in which I performed, learned, and applied practices of constructing data, but also involved a learning experience, from which I developed reflexive expertise about my presence in the field. As a researcher in-the-making, I realized that the fieldwork itself is not a terrain of organized and well-planned actions and interactions. Rather, it entails the unexpected and unwanted and requires permanently negotiating and making decisions. Mistakes, also, are

inescapable aspects of it. I felt a sense of an ethical continuum, thinking about the consequences of my presence and the possible implications of my research. Also, I felt tedium and was anxious many times doing the fieldwork. I was fascinated by the idea of getting data firsthand in the research setting, quickly. However, the everyday life of research is frustrating. During the fieldwork, I dealt with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings, boredom, and was perhaps also angry. I felt the lack of resources, experience, and discipline to cope with the fieldwork.

After hours of fieldwork every day, I was exhausted and hardly in the mood to write anything. The routine of interacting with people in the field required me to be friendly and approachable most of the time, which was also challenging. As noted by Cerwonka and Malkki (2008), the fieldwork holds ethical and strategic choices with emotional dimensions where people's lives shape our intellectual process of knowledge production. Haraway's concept of "situated knowledges" helps us to think about knowledge production and its relation to our fieldwork positioning. This demands a practice of positioning that acknowledges how embodied, partial, and, above all, situated our knowledge is, which "allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway, 1988, p. 583). In other words:

"So, I think my problem, and "our" problem, is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world, one that can be partially shared and that is friendly to earth wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness". (Haraway, 1988, p. 579)

The fieldwork in the Ex-MOI Occupation was a way to see informal settlements, displacement, and the failure of most states to comply with their human rights obligations, particularly the right to adequate housing. I draw on the field to analyze the urban politics in

their struggle for immediate, basic needs vis-à-vis the lack of longer-term public policy responses, which establishes an important part of the theoretical debate of the thesis. I wondered how social inequalities are formed and maintained. This is especially relevant when urban planning under human rights grounds is poor and the public policies thereof are the products of historically entrenched, institutional systems of domination and violence.

At the national level, authoritarian nationalists of the populist right and more centrist politicians addresses issues of immigration as a matter of public security, law enforcement, and border control. This meets the hampered and overstretched local capacity to respond to it. Austerity measures shape the formal and legal regulation of policy response backed by legitimate coercive apparatus of enforcement. It was in this context that the fieldwork in the Ex-MOI Occupation was carried out. As a situated and embodied knowledge, my presence in the field was an opportunity “for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well” (Haraway, 1988, p. 585). As pointed out by Haraway, the fieldwork is an opportunity to understand “how to see from below” (1988, p. 584). Further, this vision “is always a question of the power to see and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices” (1988, p. 585).

One of the main challenges of this research was to negotiate this perspective search “from below”, involving the search for a place-based site of analysis. This issue is particularly relevant when migration, as a field of research, refers to different spatial–temporal features. The key role of the ethnographer’s gaze turns objects and subjects into sources of knowledge and determines how, what, and to what extent the behavior of people within places reveals knowledge. This remains central to the reflexivity within migration studies and what must be included in the analysis, based on urban ethnographic work. At stake is doing/thinking urban ethnography differently. This means more than just “being there” (Geertz 1988) to provide a

deeper and more informed account regarding particular features of social life. More importantly, it involves:

a source of knowledge that makes possible the transformation of what we know, specially of the anthropologist's own self-understanding. Misunderstanding, tricks, double-meaning, opaque metaphors, and self-interested distortions are always present in communication, but what is important is that the engaged ethnographer learns something of the "grammar" that guides the actions of his interlocutors. (Borneman & Hammoudi, 2009, p. 14)

Ethnography is not reduced to a technique of data-gathering, once "ethnography is more than a method" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 66). As noted by Wolcott (1999), it is "matters of details" under the ethnographer's way of seeing the field, which encompass the fieldwork (experiencing and enquiring) and the mindwork (how to make sense of this way of seeing through writing in context). This research was inspired by this ethnographic approach. For the most part, the fieldwork was concerned with how to see and learn something of the "grammar" guiding the interlocutor's actions. It is clear that "in the conduct of our research, we meet people" (Ingold, 2014, p. 386). This refers to the encounter or face-to-face interaction that is ethnographized (Ingold, 2014). According to Ingold, "'ethnographicness' is not intrinsic to the encounters themselves; it is rather a judgment that is cast upon them through a retrospective conversion of the learning, remembering and note-taking which they call forth into pretexts for something else altogether" (2014, p. 386).

By (un)doing urban ethnography, I do not mean to reduce the fieldwork by "being there." In my fieldwork, I realized that I was dealing with instances of what Ingold (2014) calls "becomings" or "humans are humaning," that is, "they are corresponding—as letter writers do, scribing their thoughts and feelings and waiting for answers—living lives that weave around one another along ever-extending ways" (Ingold, 2014, p. 389). This invites us to reflect on

how ethnographic fieldwork is largely other-oriented and to what extent we can abandon the interlocutor as the categorical other. The fieldwork itself is part of narrative creation in which the anthropologist themselves plays an instrumental role. From the fieldwork, I framed that “Ex-MOI” immigrant squat as a site for “becoming.” This “becoming” is associated with the search for home and how it claims what is most desirable and worthwhile in a person’s life. I argue that this says much about the social, economic, and political conditions in which it emerged. My focus during the fieldwork, most prominently based on field notes and conversations with interlocutors, was on how the search for home figures as an idea, behavior, or motive shaping illegalized people’s day-to-day lives.

Rather than seeking definitive answers concerning the immigrants’ search for home, I intended to ask what we might learn about immigration, in particular, and the urban conditions, in general, when considering how illegalized journeys that are purportedly undertaken to find greater safety in exile, so often lead to dispossession and resistance instead. From the fieldwork, the relationship between migration and housing became more apparent. The immigration within the urban context was no longer a matter of the simplistic utilitarian causality inferred by economics and metrics and neither a matter of security-oriented practices of law enforcement and border control. I focused on how it is imagined and shaped by the routes taken to reach it, both involving aspects of over the course of their lives. The immigrants’ search for home reveals an enterprise that shapes people’s lives into the chance to reclaim different futures for themselves.

The anthropological insights over the course of fieldwork were based on ethnographic encounters, including interviews and field notes. As noted by Fabian (1983, p. 28), ethnographic knowledge “is affected [by] historically established relations of power and domination between the anthropologist’s society and the one he studies. In that sense, all anthropological knowledge is political in nature.” I agree with Fabian (1983) that “the social

interaction presupposes intersubjectivity” (p. 30). Taking this seriously, this fieldwork, too, is historically located and subjectively constructed. To me, it was somehow a power-laden medium for elaborating and describing the socio-cultural processes of becoming. As ethnographers, we need to provide not only the contextual picture concerning how we are constructing data from the field but also key issues and challenges in gaining access to the field. Perhaps, most importantly, it is central to reflect upon the researcher’s positionality within the research setting.

Analyzing my daily experiences from the field notes during the ethnography-oriented fieldwork in the Ex-MOI Occupation, I realized how hard is to repeat encounters with the people we write about. Often, the field notes were a central tool to rekindle that back-and-forth engagement with the people and the place. For me, this was a productive approach to deal with the richness of fieldwork and complexity to translate it ethnographically. By reading the field notes and going back to interviews, I could better understand the commitment between my ethnographic work and the people’s lives. There is a tension between our own reality as ethnographic researchers and the reality of the people we meet from all (different) walks of life, whose lives we are so fortunate to have been allowed to participate in, observe, analyze, and share.

It is important to underline that my fieldwork was a medium for the analysis of social issues lived and experienced by ordinary people. As a medium of analysis, we can learn from the experiences of others and the meanings things have in our experience, as experienced from embodied action, emotion, and everyday activity to document the particulars. I was not aware of immigrant squatting sites in Europe until I attended a conference on urban planning in the Italian city of Florence in January 2016. Although immigration had become a central theme in mainstream media and public debate at that time, I only paid attention to this issue during a roundtable about the Italian asylum system. A few months later, I had the opportunity to

interview some people asking for asylum in Italy. That activity, which was related to a summer school program on migration in July of the same year in the city of Trieste, was my first contact with people on the move who were illegalized in their migratory experience. At that time, however, I was interested in immigrants' routes and cross-border movement processes.

I was trying to look at the local street-level bureaucracy and its impact on the lives of these people, who arrived in illegalized conditions in the city. Conversing with these people, I saw that the process of contacting public authorities is usually a much more complex matter. This is the case particularly when one is undertaking an illegal journey, facing deportation or imprisonment. One interlocutor said to me that before contacting any social facility or public authorities, it is instrumental to find some shelter. The shelter, rather than only serving as a provisional solution for a material need of a dwelling, is also a kind of hub for networking. In other words, a major issue for those people on the move undertaking their journey outside the laws and regulations is not only to find a physical place to spend the night but also to organize what their next move the following day could be. From this, I broadened my view, paying attention not only to physical but also inter-relational and interactive aspects of dwelling and the social life that inhabits them. This task becomes harder when you are under-documented or undocumented and have no credit cards or local currency.

Within this context, the internet and social media play an instrumental role in the immigrants' journey to access basic information on how to go, where to stay, and eventually, whom to talk to. In several situations, informal settlements become temporary alternatives to illegalized immigrants' search for dwelling. One interlocutor talked about the journey toward Austria, and they mentioned that they used to live in Turin, in a place known as the Ex-MOI Occupation, before going to Trieste. After this encounter, I decided to learn more about this immigrant squatting site. Similar to the interlocutors of this previous research, I searched online for basic information on the Ex-MOI Occupation—how to go, where to stay nearby, and whom

to talk to. That was when I accessed the Facebook page and web page of the “Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee” (*Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti delle occupazioni Ex-Moi e La Salette—Torino*). I approached the Solidarity Committee via email and explained to them my interest in studying their activism work and visiting the squat as part of my doctoral research. One activist of the Solidarity Committee replied, accepting the first conversation in 2017. This ethnographic encounter was instrumental to the research. During the fieldwork, I realized that the extraordinarily difficult context of solidarity challenging the hostile environment and standing up for immigrants’ rights was neither expected nor encouraged. Volunteers, citizens, researchers, advocacy organizations, and social movements have been facing criminal prosecutions for helping refugees and immigrants across Europe. Writing this thesis, I have understood how often solidarity-based movements perform their role under the rise of racial violence and extreme-right parties, security-oriented asylum and immigration policies, human rights violations, policing, and security policies, and the “integration debate.” Solidarity-based activism is on the frontline of the fight against anti-immigration and racist discourse.

3. Ethnographic Encounters

The fieldwork benefited mostly from ethnographic encounters with immigrant-squatters and activists; they are the baseline of analysis, adult males (18 to 42 years of age) and adult females (under 35 years of age), several interlocutors were from sub-Saharan countries like Libya, Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia, and Gambia. The Ex-MOI Occupation was carried out by ordinary people, families, children, forced on the move, who had already suffered tremendous trauma during the migratory experience. The fieldwork period occurred between January 2018 and July 2019. It was during this period that I made several visits to the Ex-MOI Occupation and long-term stays in the hostel nearby. The stays ranged from a few days to two months and included 17 interviews with interlocutors, such as squatters, activists, local

community, police officers, and other researchers. They lived for years in the squatting site without any standard hygiene system and adequate long-term health-care service adapted to their needs, inhabiting an overcrowded and unsanitary space. They were people fleeing without food or water, in need of aid, and were uprooted, forcibly or voluntarily, from home. They were people who faced serious risks to their safety, well-being, and basic rights. They were people fleeing insecurity, hardship, and persecution, and ended up in Libya to reach Europe, undertaking this journey in life-threatening conditions. They were survivors of torture, sexual violence, and human rights abuse.

The Ex-MOI Occupation informs us about the postcolonial condition of many squatters' movements in Europe. Furthermore, it is in light of this that I see the immigrants' search for home in exile as a tension between Western and non-Western elements. It should also be emphasized that one central aspect of the squatting site in Turin is not only the policy termination for people fleeing Libya, but it also calls for a wider historical background of colonial exploitation and violence, and dictatorship afterward, such as that noted by Dabashi (2015, p. 121):

“Like Tunisia and Egypt, Libya has arisen in a collective act of deferred postcolonial defiance, to demand and exact what is Libyans: their national sovereignty, predicted on democratic institutions, rule of law, and the human decency of a just economic distribution of their national resources and the wealth they generate – the prerequisites of the dignified life that was due to them in the gruesome aftermath of the obscene and ludicrous era of Italian colonialism (1911-1951). Like all other Europeans, the Italians packed and left Libya having not only plundered its natural resources; they also left it bereft of any enduring institutions of democracy. Gaddafi was the nativist aftertaste of European colonialism – the bastard son of its militarism, charlatanism, and barefaced barbarity”.

The Ex-MOI Occupation tells us about the postcolonial condition of Italy. Martin and Haller (2018) speak about the intersubjective and relational aspects of social dramas of ethnographic encounters within the domains of sex, sexuality, and erotic subjectivity. This idea of ethnographic encounters encompasses diverse strategies, discourses, and practices within the fieldwork settings, which are insight-bearing situations (Martin & Haller, 2018). The encounters with others can tell us about and assume an essential role in the ethnographic enterprise. This ethnographic encounter is based on dialogical negotiation, adopting strategies in terms of methods and ethics (Martin & Haller, 2018). When they asked me about my research topic, I said that my original interest in this research project was to focus on aspects of the immigrants' everyday lives. Eventually, I said to them that an initial idea was to look at the decision-making process of collective action within the squat, focusing on the role of immigrants. However, that initial subject changed along the way.

This first interview was combined with my first experience in the Ex-MOI Occupation. At that time, I was not necessarily concerned with the practice of squatting itself or housing struggles as discourse. It was only after a few weeks of conducting the fieldwork there that I realized how this migration–house nexus emerged as a central issue for analysis. Talking to interlocutors, mostly squatters, with whom I worked was fundamental in clarifying that the Ex-MOI Occupation was not an end itself, but part of a wider struggle to build a decent place to live. The Ex-MOI Occupation was not only the immigrants' aspiration for home on the edge of the city of Turin but also a place for people—ordinary citizens and noncitizens—to stand up for immigrants' rights and wonder how we might imagine an alternative future. The Ex-MOI Occupation as a setting allowed meaningful interaction between ordinary people—some citizens, some noncitizens—producing a distinctive urban praxis, a process of reflection and action, a way of engaging with (utopian) spaces.

As Hammersley (2006 p. 10) indicates, "what informants say in interview contexts is always socio-discursively constructed in a context-sensitive fashion, and indeed that it is only through such local processes of social construction that informants are themselves constituted, or positioned, as having particular identities." I used the interview data to illustrate the discursive strategies, rhetorical devices, and resources deployed by the interlocutor to find out more about the lives and behaviors of people on the move. For the most part, the interviews were my way to build relationships and trust with the interlocutors while in the fieldwork. It entailed several minutes or hours of constant interaction between the interlocutor and the environment in the pursuit of data collection. In my own fieldwork, I see ethnography as both reflective and alienated forms of symbolic experience (Rock 2001), including the socio-discursively interaction of interviewing, with mistakes and gaps defining the spatial and temporal boundaries of what I've study. I maintained contact with the Committee throughout the fieldwork period, interviewed its activists, and, most important, closely followed the daily lives of the people in the Ex-MOI Occupation.

It is relevant to note that the bulk of my research was based on observation, field notes, and conversations with immigrant-squatters. Also, I did not perform any voluntary work in the squatting site, nor did I join any internal meetings of the Committee. My approach for building trust was to spend regularly several hours a day at the squatting headquarters, "being there" in everyday life, and chatting with squatters, observing, and also being observed by the inhabitants of the squat. Approaching immigrant-squatters required me to make the Ex-MOI Occupation a part of my daily life as well. It was through the experienced and imagined landscape of informal settlers who become displaced due to several reasons that I gained my understanding of the Ex-MOI Occupation. In the process of writing, I navigated through my memories of the field as I tried to give some theoretical form to arguments built on the work

of scholars and dialogued with what I framed as “material” about the lives of the people among whom I conducted research and about whom I was writing.

The experiences that I had in the field introduced me to the reality of people on the move who were illegalized in Italy. My fieldwork was not unique. I share the same interest with many other researchers who have, by one means or another, come to Ex-MOI Occupation with their interests and perspectives, approaching the inhabitants. The encounters with immigrant squatters and supporters convinced me of their significance for rethinking citizenship and civil disobedience. It was a way to understand squatters’ movements as a nonviolent resistance movement. Although immigrant solidarity in the Ex-MOI Occupation is no longer enough to disrupt mainstream political discourse, neither influencing local stakeholders for fostering immigrants’ rights or advocating policy change, it offers us a grassroots vision to reclaim democracy differently. It was through the analytical work over course of the fieldwork that I was able to realize their claim-making toward social justice and equal rights for all, regardless of their citizenship status. This was non-negotiable for them. The fieldwork was a web of encounters with people engaging in alternative approaches to illegalized immigration. Encounters appear as simply a set of ordinary situations to people who have them, yet they create the reality of those people, tacitly encourage certain behaviors, feelings, and emotions, shape agency, and are a complex meaning-making process, taking place in the everyday lives and social interaction that have always mediated the cultural relationship.

4. Researcher’s Positionality

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Teixeira 2020), it is instrumental to reflect on the ethical dilemmas, epistemological choices, and researcher’s positionality in forced migration studies during the research lifecycle. Doing ethnography puts into question the researcher’s positionality. To begin with, the “researcher’s self” is part of doing ethnography (Collins & Gallinat, 2010). Writing ethnography has the voice of the anthropologist (Collins & Gallinat,

2010). However, the reflexive anthropology literature challenges this idea of the potential of the researcher as “a self-conscious position(ing)” (Robertson, 2002) by outlining that positionality may be both a form of self-stereotyping and a form of stereotyping others. The point is to discuss the reflexive positionality as more than the “authors’ reflexive self-report” and its relation to external validation of knowledge (Salzman, 2002). It is critically argued that positionality comprises “ready to wear identities” (Robertson, 2002, p. 789) that can be understood as:

“Positionality, as practiced by anthropologists, is premised on ever more specific categories of identity that can invoke a kind of cultural relativity. Positionality is also a key component of the so-called Western self-critique. “So-called” because critical appraisals of anthropology and the colonial encounter so often, in their critiques, retain an asymmetrical relationship between “the West” and “the Third World.”

We can see positionality as part of reflexivity—a kind of “epistemological vigilance” (Bourdieu 2004). Bourdieu’s “epistemic reflexivity” underpins the partial and (socially) positioned nature of knowledge produced by actors within intellectual fields (2004). Moreover, positionality helps us to accept that “there is a darker side to ethnography, which involves imbalances in reciprocity, a degree of predatory manipulation of relationships and chameleonic opportunism on the part of the ethnographer” (Neves et al., 2018, p. 255). Recognizing our positionality in the field offers us a more nuanced sense of the knowledge gained to obtain access to or information that involves human subjects. In fact, by putting our positionality into question, we can better discuss the kinds of representation through which we frame the field and the research subject. As noted by Armbruster and Lærke (2008, p. 17), “ethnography is best used as a tool for analyzing intercultural brokering and (mis)representation rather than a means of representing a particular brand of ‘otherness.’” In this sense, we need to keep in mind that “representation in terms of ‘speaking for,’ or ‘speaking on behalf of’ has become

problematic. But the possibilities of ‘speaking with,’ debating over, ‘diverging from and converging with’ still need exploring” (Armbruster & Lærke, 2008, p.18).

The fieldwork carried out in the immigrant squatting site allows me to “debate over” and “diverge and converge with” analyses of people experiencing poverty and many other forms of exclusion as noncitizens. At any moment, this thesis speaks for or on behalf of people who were interlocutors in the research setting. It was an instrumental concern of mine to take into account this context of vulnerabilities, reflecting on my presence in the field and ensuring to avoid any potential harm, prejudice, and discrimination. Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz (2020) outline the need for ethical awareness in the qualitative migration research context, identifying methodological and epistemological debates regarding power relations between the research participants and researchers, and the issue of objectivity/subjectivity. Further, in this sense, I highlight Glissant’s “right to opacity” (1997), as noted by Britton (1999), which means to “respect the opacity of Other’s difference, which resists attempts to assimilate or objectify it” (p. 18). That is to say, I was committed to respecting the “Other’s difference” (Glissant, 1997), which also indicates that I am not concerned with arguing that the analytical approach adopted here deals with all the complexities of the fieldwork.

The reality of immigrant squatting cannot be reduced to Western readings. It is, indeed, a way of reading and clarifying it, but no more than that. Many things were and still are not clear to me even after the fieldwork. During the fieldwork, I felt emotional responses to the harsh conditions of poverty and the unsanitariness of the immigrant squatting site, in particular, the vulnerability of children living there. Moreover, I faced ethical questions regarding the extent to which I should gather additional information about their everyday lives; for instance, by pursuing data on their domestic lives, how they organize themselves to add more people into the squat, or how they mediate internal conflicts among inhabitants. That was my way of respecting a “right not to be understood” (Britton, 1999, p. 19). The fieldwork done through

their everyday lives involves embodied the experiences of people's lives amidst locally situated scenes of sociality and intimacy. They all influence the fieldwork, but as a researcher, it is instrumental just to focus on what informs the subject of analysis. This is ethical decision-making, as well.

In my fieldwork experience, my co-presence was a medium for encounters with interlocutors. This co-presence as an ethnographer involved being seen, heard, and touched. The idea was to somehow make that immigrant squat a part of my daily life. However, even after weeks, I felt like a complete "outsider" in the research setting. In part, one key challenge was to mitigate this. For instance, I was concerned with my fluency in speaking Italian during the interviews and chats along the day. I was far from being a native speaker. To my surprise, that was an aspect of empathy with the interlocutors. Most squatters possessed a basic level of Italian. All interviews and conversations were carried out in Italian and, eventually, only a few questions were addressed in English. Although I did not develop any personal relations with the movements' members or intimacy with any interlocutors, my co-presence in the everyday life of the squatting site helped me to gain some degree of trust among its inhabitants.

It was important to try to record every conversation with interlocutors, although that was not an easy task or always possible to do so, tough. After a few attempts, I decided not to insist on this approach because the act of recording, for many interlocutors, was a matter of concern. Often, they requested me not to record our conversations, or eventually, they just moved away. When I decided to conduct my interviews without recording them, I had more relaxed conversations. Because of this, I started to take frequent notes immediately after each interaction. This helped greatly to register key points and remember the conversations afterward. I was not trying to follow any rigid questionnaire. With key questions in mind, the starting point for any conversation was always just to talk about everyday life in the squat. To

talk about the everyday life of an immigrant squat clearly involves migration- and housing-related issues.

The topic of squatting and migration emerged as part of the conversations. I believe that spending my days walking into the squat and living in the hostel nearby was crucial for gaining a preliminary trust and facilitating contact with the people in the Occupation. I added different techniques for constructing information from this ethnography-oriented fieldwork. The information-gathering procedure was based on digital methods, observation, interviews, and visual research. In the chapters that follow, I seek to provide a snapshot of each approach and its contribution to inform the research. My reflection on the improvisational and contingent aspects related to sensitive fields of research such as people experiencing poverty and other forms of exclusion in their everyday lives is also a part of the same.

5. The Digital, the Auditory, and the Visual

The material available on the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee's website and Facebook page was central to attain a broader picture of the movements' activism, issues, and discourses. Hine (2008) argues that the use of the internet, communication, and information technologies have deeply impacted the scientific disciplines and shaped their theory, method, data, and analysis. In part, my fieldwork was informed by the digital social research, including data collected from the technology-based activism of the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee. It is pivotal to understand the relationship between migration and social media technologies. Digital technologies have permeated the everyday lives of immigrants and this research itself is associated with digital migration studies (Leurs & Smets, 2018).

Digital migration studies highlight the impact of digital technologies on forced migration, focusing on the "many different ways in which digital and migratory experiences interconnect and materialize under certain local, regional, and national circumstances" (Leurs & Smets, 2018, p. 12). As a researcher working in a digital era, a significant part of my work

relies on search enigmas, keywords, databases, and terms that produce different kinds of logic and thinking, and therefore assert epistemic control over the research possibility. It is thus unsurprising that this use of information and communication technologies in migration studies underpins many dimensions of sociological theorizing, in response to digital technologies. Indeed, the process of gathering online data available in the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee webpage and Facebook profile was instrumental in gaining familiarity with the Ex-MOI Occupation. From their Facebook page and website, I could understand the interlocuters' viewpoint on the occupation process and their narrative of it. The Facebook page and the website were the first digital sources of information for analyzing this squatting site. There is an impressive amount of data available that I could benefit from. Not only is the story of the squatting site available but also many notes, comments, public declarations, photos about the activities, and issues of everyday life related to the squat. The use of information and communication technology was a fundamental starting point to better frame my research design. In this sense, the use of the digital as a phase of data-gathering was based on the social media environment of the Committee and served as the basis for preparing myself for interviews and formulating questions.

By analyzing the online content, I was able to identify topics and subjects addressed by the Ex-MOI Occupation. I divided the information into three themes. First, I organized a set of information about the process of the squat, looking at its narrative drawn from public comments, images, and texts available on the Facebook page. Second, I compiled a set of information about the daily life of the squat itself, mapping the kind of activities, events, and achievements that took place over the years. Finally, I organized a set of information about the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee including their discourse concerning migrants' rights and housing struggles. I benefited from the digital phase of the research by getting access to the key features of this squatting. Based on this, I obtained a solid foundation for formulating

an open-ended set of questions for interviews. I aimed to bring a part of the interlocuters' voice, conjectural perception, and worldviews of the squatting-related matters to the research. However, that was not possible only by digital means.

When I was familiar with the online content of the Ex-MOI Occupation, I decided to start the interviews. In January 2018, I undertook the first interview with activists from the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee. From that time to July 2019, I talked with and interviewed over 20 people including squatters, activists, and researchers. More than “collecting data,” the interviews were a way of becoming familiar with the fieldwork and adapting my gestures, language, and questions. I realized that fieldwork was not “mine.” Many researchers before me as well as activists have been working there. It was only after this understanding that I saw my interviews as part of a process mapping the actors, viewpoints, and discourses about the squat within the migration issue.

With the interviews, I was able to identify interconnected topics including the lack of documentation for migrants and the difficulties for formal jobs. I was somewhat defensive about the fieldwork and after I realized that I was “part” of the Occupation as the subject of analysis composed by different perspectives and actors, I start to become more comfortable with my role and presence in that place. Through the interviews, I was also introducing myself. I talked about myself and about where I was born and raised. I talked about the issues that I faced living in Italy. Through the interviews, I was also asking for permission to be there, and the squatters certainly knew something about me, although my purpose in being there remained unclear to most of the squatters. Indeed, the squat was not made up of a huge number of people. At least, if you spend weeks there you can be acquainted with a few faces and routines of the people there, and sometimes, their voices. This period where I focused on non-formal interviews was what I call the phase of voices. In this research, I left all interlocutors unnamed and selected a few insightful sentences and comments from them to illustrate my academic

understanding of the same. The idea was less to show any connection to theoretical frameworks and more to bring attention to how meaningful their viewpoints are to frame analytical paths.

From this point onward, I decided to stay in the Occupation, aiming to observe their daily lives. That was when I decided to book a room in the hostel surrounded by the squat. A significant part of my fieldwork was done in that hostel. Living in the hostel, I changed my focus from listing to the squatters to seeing them. Of course, I was spending the whole day around the squatting site, and I talked to many squatters. I did my best to explain or perhaps justify my presence there. I told them that I was a researcher from Milan conducting studies about the Ex-MOI Occupation. However, this created some confusion. Often, since my Italian was weak or because I was unable to clarify that the Occupation itself was my subject of analysis, I got the impression that my research topic about the squat did not interest them at all. In my case, I was associated with the Committee, at least initially. However, I would say that one year after the first interview, it changed. I was the “*fratello brasiliano*” (Brazilian brother, in the sense of being member of a community or organization, not as a sibling) as some people used to call me.

After the digital and the auditory, I had not planned to engage with visual research. However, when I was interviewing an activist, they pointed out graffiti in the squatted building that faces the main street. When I asked for taking a picture of that, they said that we could walk around the squat and taking some photographs. Although I have not used any photographs in this report, they are part of the data. I gathered visual material, pictures and short videos from news. From this visual material, I could register the spatial transformation that the squat has been undergoing over the years and this helped to create my narrative of that squatting site. Based on it, I could realize also how the squat was implicated with mundane practices of working, cooking, chatting, playing, home-making, cleaning, dressing, and so on. I have used a part of this material for illustrating the presentations at conferences or academic events.

6. Ethnography with Adjectives

Our conceptions of research are not value-free. They are rooted in our normative commitments coupling between political concepts and social values. Considering that ethnography holds a polysemic meaning, I consider the fieldwork as ethnographically-committed social research. It is simultaneously social action and embodied experience. It is made relevant by morally and ethically framed relationships with others and oneself. More broadly, ethnography involves acts that communicate affect, attention, empathy, and co-presence into culturally distinct ways of being, conditioned by the historical circumstances. Against this background, I paid attention to issues of power and inequality in everyday practices, cultural imaginaries, and emerging subjectivities at the expense of the urban poor and the racialized powerless.

Recent scholarship on anthropology examines the multiple meanings of ethnography dealing with emotions, feelings, and sentiments; for Skoggard and Waterston (2015), feelings are instrumental in the human consciousness and behavior and play a central role in the description and analysis of cultural behavior. For them, the “affect” turns in anthropology and “suggests multiple dialectics: the individual and the collective, habitus and identity, emotion and relationship, consciousness and action” (Skoggard & Waterston, 2015, p. 112). They call for an empirical focus and theoretical formulations under the view that the anthropology of “affect” can “recognize our own humanity and that of others” (Skoggard & Waterston, 2015, p. 114). This view illuminates a key aspect of my fieldwork as a setting that is emotionally charged with an uneasy relationship with poverty, marginalization, stigma, and discrimination. For instance, the permanent risk of eviction mediates the militarized police presence near the squat and the bomb attack in the area against the squatters; all this was an integral part of the fieldwork. Considering the emotional constitution of social behavior, I talk about the

immigrants' search for home by attaching meaning through their feelings, beliefs, and behaviors.

Looking at the harsh and brutal dimensions of human experience, Ortner (2016) speaks about the rise of “dark anthropology” as the study of neoliberalism and its effects on people’s lives. This becomes a central subject of contemporary research, drawing on the array of theoretical views such as colonialism, patriarchy, and racial inequality under the emergence of neoliberal capitalism (Ortner, 2016). The “dark” dimension of anthropology, however, is not the only one. It is important to also consider the caring and ethical dimensions of human life, that is, the anthropology of resistance (Ortner, 2016). This work situates itself somewhere in between the dark anthropology and anthropology of resistance, providing an ethnographically thick account of resistance under the neoliberal order. As Ortner (2016) puts it:

“Ethnographically thick accounts of resistance in all these categories are important not only for understanding the extraordinary range of creative ways in which challenges to the existing order can be constructed, but also for understanding the alternative visions of the future embedded in such movements”. (p. 66)

Although at least in part influenced by the idea of “being there” and the “thick description” as a mode of analysis and writing (Geertz, 1989), this ethnographical fieldwork is not restricted to such a culturalist dimension of human experience. In this sense, it is a politically engaged piece of research that looks at empirical issues of grassroots movements for social change and generates critical theoretical insights. Juris and Khasnabish (2013) explore the field of politically engaged ethnography, arguing that the language of insurgency has reshaped the way anthropology relates to the ongoing struggles for radical social change today. It is important to note that they employ the term “insurgent encounters” to explore “new forms of activism,” where ethnography becomes a tool for generating insights and understandings. In this sense, ethnography

“suggests the clearing of a path for new forms of sociopolitical imagination and construction. An insurgency is always a provocation, a forceful intervention that aims not to constitute a singular new order from whole cloth but to radically destabilize authorized forms of power, knowledge, and organization ... the language and imaginary of insurgency because we believe the engaged ethnographies collected here represent a form of critical social research that can contribute in multiple ways to social change as opposed to simply archiving, commenting on, or dissecting the efforts of grassroots social movements”. (Juris & Khasnabish, 2013, p. 7–8)

All these viewpoints discussed above are central to articulate, interrogate, reformulate, and broaden the meaning of the ethnography and its contribution to the field of forced migration studies and housing informality through the lens of the urban theory, which has prioritized socio-psychological accounts of identity and the lived experience of the dispossessed as core subjects. The analytical approach here avoids thinking about the idea of “true”, which suggests some connotation of uniformity or prescription. It is not about finding any conformity with a certain scientific discourse. It is perhaps keeping this perspective in mind that one may better understand the challenge of this research, translating anthropological insights into urban theory. The understanding of the fieldwork as modes of learning through the domain of experience, action, and interaction renders a significant approach to make sense of other lifeworlds. These racialized other lifeworlds have come to be seen as being out of place and as space invaders, as “bodies belonging to ‘other’ places are in one sense out of place as they are ‘space invaders’” (Puwar, 2004, p. 33). Perhaps, the complexity of becoming political as a lived experience poses questions about multiple forces, materialities, processes and entities, beliefs, and forms of life. It was through the fieldwork that the conceptual and theoretical premises of this thesis were informed. To order reality into ideas manageable for us also means to affirm an epistemological and political legitimacy of being otherwise.

From this perspective, the immigrants' search for home and the solidarity-based activism of citizens is central to inform challenges for progressive politics today. Therein precisely lies the immigrant consciousness. The search for home and other places of dwelling as a performative action or as a performance turn into an occasion for the struggles of the self with and against the norms. I am interested in ways we could think of the search for home as part of the immigrant consciousness. From nobody (dispossessed subjectivities) to everybody, as a recognized subject of rights. In-between, immigrants are right claimers. They are becoming political subjects of rights. The immigrants' search for home invents new forms of political subjectivity. As such, their search for home in exile, among other things, raises the backdrop for immigrant consciousness to become political in our modern-day socio-political landscape.

It will be a key challenge of our time to offer a radical, original rethinking of our relationship to the built and abandoned environment. Most of all, we must build an intellectual solidarity rethinking and expanding our understanding of the urban spectrum in relation to space-making practices beyond West-, North-, and Euro-centrism, creating an occasion for making sense of it on the ground. This *problematique* prompts us to confront the dialectical relationship between concrete and abstract theorizations and their epistemic injustice, a label for prejudices against peoples' capacities as potential conveyors of knowledge or as epistemic subjects (Fricker, 2007). This calls for acquisition of theoretical and analytical tools for those of us invested in confronting and challenging the state-led violence, an expression of embedded racial power rooted in state violence, beliefs in racial hierarchy, capitalist, and imperialist forces. The point is that we can contest the urban as part of a wider political and socio-economic structures of inequality and exploitation and its consequences for the perpetuation of structures of privilege. Dussel's (1977; 1974) critique of Eurocentrism and Western philosophy may help us to elaborate on urban studies as a liberation praxis. This calls for an urban studies of liberation praxis which stands as a potential research agenda grounded in the urban making as

a project of liberation and political space for all people in all communities and global liberation from systemic oppression.

I am aware of this urban bias in my perspective and research. Indeed, there is certainly much to be added to this conversation about immigrants' search for home in suburban and rural settings. Further, I do not mean to glorify immigrant activism or activists. It is also possible that some of the people I write about would not characterize themselves as activists or undocumented subjects. From my perspective, however, this is the way I describe their role to interrupt and challenge the status quo. The people I write about in this thesis are doing important work that is worth our attention, and their worldviews provide others who are interested in questions of housing justice, activist resistance, and undocumented migrants' struggles over citizenship with new ways of thinking about grassroots politics right now. I write about people on the move located in the margins not only migrants categorized - labelled – as refugees with a focus on urban movements and contentious politics through in-depth analysis of immigrants' squatting movements. A discussion on immigrants' search for home and the spatial presence and appropriation of spaces in the city is relevant to radical housing and critical migration studies. Putting these points together, the central theoretical focus of this thesis is to demonstrate the commitment to overcome oppression is part of a wider logic of organizing across borders collective action, inspiring thoughtful debate and move the conversation forward on how to address the systematic issues that lead to the violence and unjust treatment of people on the move.

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Chapter II - The Social Function of Forgotten Spaces



Picture 2. Ex-Moi picture by the author, 2019.

Abstract

This chapter focuses on defining the social function of property through a case study of immigrant squatting in the Italian city of Turin. It provides a critical account of property abandonment in connection with urban shrinkage and traces the role of the property's social function within the link between the interplay of property abandonment and informal settlements. The urban commons debate and spatial justice literature shed light on the meaning of the social function of property regarding abandoned city properties. From this formulation, the property's social function emerges as the basis for squatters' rights and refers to the efforts of the "decommodification" of properties. It concludes by arguing that the social function of property as a political foundation for adverse possession is closely bound to the right to home (as a dwelling) and not necessarily to housing (as homeownership).

Keywords: Property's social function, urban commons, informal settlements, urban decay, property abandonment

Introduction

This chapter delves into the question of what is meant by the social function of property. This question has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary struggles for housing via squatters' movements. At the center of the analysis is the view that the social function of property establishes a dialogue between informality, urban commons, and spatial justice in the contest for housing. It is instrumental to look at vacant lots and empty buildings to see how squatting lies in a wider background of social struggles, conflicts, and violence to wrest the right to the city from the dominant classes. I focus on people on the move—immigrants—living in inadequate housing within informal settlements, facing daily the risk of forced eviction.

The illustrative case for analysis is the immigrant squatting known as the Ex-MOI Occupation in the Italian city of Turin. Upon closer examination, this immigrant squatting reveals a remarkable experience in which both illegalized immigrants and activists' supporters stand up for immigrants' rights, including the right to adequate housing. I argue that this claim-making opens more progressive and transformative ways of understanding the social function of empty buildings. Here, I explore how the practice of squatting done by illegalized immigrants not only challenges the issue of vacant buildings within the property regime but also expands the notion of political agency to noncitizens in the city. By studying this housing activism done by illegalized immigrants in solidarity with citizens supporters, we can understand the means, forces, and strategies used in resisting the emptiness of urban infrastructures destroyed by years of neoliberal assault. I seek to look at the implications of a profit-driven view of housing production in capitalist societies and move beyond mere conceptions of market-oriented urban development that frame housing as a profitable commodity. This chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the immigrant squatting in marginalized spaces of the city and the vacancy caused by abandonment.

The first part of this article introduces the Ex-MOI Occupation in greater detail and explicates its relation to the so-called European migration crisis and event-led regeneration of post-industrial cities. I highlight the shifts in which this immigrant squat is embedded, drawing on the fieldwork with squatters and supporters. The social function of property, then, appears as a presupposition, shaping and influencing squatters' political claims despite being rarely invoked explicitly. In the case of immigrant squatting, what is expressed is not so much an equality to access and use the commons already materialized through a set of organizing principles that govern what *is* but rather a set of normative claims about what *could* (and *should*) be the empty property that refigures the nature of property ownership. In the second part of this chapter, I draw on subaltern urbanism (Roy, 2011, 2005) and urban informality studies (AlSayyad 2004) to explore the city-making process of people on the move in uneven urbanization dynamics, power relations, and exclusion. The third section concerns property abandonment—vacant lots and empty buildings—discussing its connection to urban decay and urban shrinkage. The final part conceptualizes the social function of property through the lens of the spatialized social justice of urban commons. With the Ex-MOI Occupation as the background, I argue that property's social function is an oppositional contention to property abandonment, a human rights-based coping strategy in the contest for housing for all, regardless of their citizenship status.

The objective to define what counts as the social function of property, based on urban commons literature—immaterial or collectively shared sites—lies at the heart of this chapter. I point out the relation between housing commodification and urban abandonment through the example of the Ex-MOI Occupation. Moreover, I look at the social function of property inseparable from the commons, that is, the social as a “common good” within “relational practices of commoning,” which does not need to assume citizenship as a core concept of the practices of commoning. As Federici (2019) states, the emergence of the politics of the

commons holds a consciousness-raising effect that requires contestation and confrontation. Further, commons raise issues of self-management, collective labor, and collective decision-making to be able to maintain a sense of collective purpose (Federici, 2019). The social function of property raises both ethical and political issues. It is also concerned with the politics of discontent—those who have been experiencing precariousness and for whom dwelling is always at stake—under the private property ownership regime. The social function of property poses a human rights-based approach alternative vis-à-vis the commodification and financialization logic of housing led by real estate markets and global capital investors. It challenges at once the dominant understanding of housing as a financially profitable commodity and the empty or vacant urban space for real estate speculation.

The social function of property questions the property left behind (abandoned). It engages with possibilities for use that emerge from these forgotten spaces. It is conceivable only assuming that housing cannot be reduced simply to a financial commodity or wealth accumulation within the private property regime. We may read it as political will that calls for greater justice; for instance, it calls for housing for all regardless of their citizenship status. It also opens a horizon of alternative property regimes and land-use regulation initiatives addressing vacant or abandoned urban land and empty structures. It may justify a set of necessary and urgent range of bureaucratic and judicial changes in institutions, procedures, and regulatory mechanisms regarding property and land governance, and how more inclusionary forms of commoning practices could look like.

1. Ex-MOI Occupation: Event-Led Regeneration and Post-Industrial City

The Ex-MOI Occupation was squatting done by immigrants, localized in the former 2006 Winter Olympic Village in the city of Turin in the Piedmont region of Italy. According to one interlocutor, “This place is temporary... But I care about it. For now, it is all I have” (Field Notes, March 2018). Turin has been rebuilding its economy since its automotive industry

collapsed over three decades ago. Sport- and event-led regeneration was a central strategy to overcome its economic issues, on the assumption that hosting large events including major sports championships may lead to the regeneration of the city. For decades, the industrial background played a major role in the economy of the city known as an “Italian prototypical one-company town” (Governa et al., 2009). The Winter Games in 2006 were held in Turin and with it, the built environment received new and upgraded facilities constructed all over the city that sought to maximize economic and social opportunities related to the post-Olympic legacy. This established the most important policy response to lead the urban transformation toward a new economy of the post-industrial city. It was noted that event-related regeneration played a significant role in transforming the city’s industrial image to a more creative, touristic, and cultural one (Bondonio & Guala 2011); this was a form of “destination branding” that reshaped local identity and the city’s image (Ferrari & Guala, 2017).

The scholarship has discussed mega-events such as Olympics as a way for tangible and intangible legacies, promoting economic transformation and political change (Ferrari & Guala, 2017; Dansero et al., 2012; Governa et al., 2009; Gold & Gold, 2008). The post-Olympic legacy has become a way of fostering urban redevelopment, boosting a city’s economy involving large-scale and high-risk investments (Gold & Gold, 2008). Cities have been hosting these high-status international festivals to benefit from the infrastructural improvement associated with non-sports legacies (Gold & Gold, 2008). The Olympics raised a pivotal set of changes in Turin’s profile, impacting its broader image as a more cultural and touristic venue, even if it failed to provide a meaningful channel for transforming the local economy toward a creative center.

The apparent consensus related to the rhetoric of the post-Olympic legacy in Turin was a locus of conflicts of interest and spatial disputes (Dansero et al., 2012). The view of the mega-event as a disputed place is at stake here (Dansero et al., 2012). It underlines the role of

movements, protests, and demonstrations in criticizing the impacts of mega-events linked to the globalizing processes of neoliberalism operated by corporate, media, and political elites (Dansero et al., 2012; Hayes & Karamichas, 2012). This post-Games usage has turned into a spatial issue in the city with expensive and underused venues. After the Winter Olympic games, some facilities and buildings were left to decay for years and the Turin Olympic Village was one of them. The once-unused buildings of the Turin Olympic Village became an informal settlement for more than 1,000 people on the move during March 2013. These immigrants had faced a lack of accommodation services with the termination of the North Africa Emergency Plan, a public policy for the accommodation of undocumented immigrants fleeing from the civil war in Libya since 2011. The Ex-MOI Occupation was known as one of the largest squats in Europe, and the squatters were evicted by local public authorities in August 2019.

The Solidarity Committee for Refugees and Migrants comprised a group of citizen supporters assisting the Ex-MOI Occupation during these years. According to one interlocutor,

“I saw them living there every day. Kids, women, young people ... A friend of mine from the university said that there were some folks helping them ... It was easy for me, I helped immigrants before at my hometown. I went to the first meeting and got involved ... Here, we are all volunteers”. (Data collected in June 2018)

It was organized through an immigrant solidarity network formed mainly by students and workers. The purpose of this solidarity-based movement was to support the squatters' daily lives through activities such as Italian classes, legal support for accessing identification, cultural events, distribution of food, health care, and political protests. This immigrant solidarity movement was connected to other social movements in the city (Pogliano & Ponzo, 2019). Initially, the Ex-MOI Occupation was approached as an opportunity to build a socialist-anarchist alliance claiming both immigrants' rights and housing rights. Such an alliance project, however, did not last for too long (Pogliano & Ponzo, 2019). The committee turned

into an autonomous social movement that played a pivotal role in the daily lives of the squatters.

2. The Urban (In)Formality

Chiodelli *et al* (2021) explores the plurality of urban informal practices with a focus on housing and squatting in Italy and highlights two major types, such as need-based squatting and politically-motivated occupations (Esposito & Chiodelli 2021). We can see The Ex-MOI Occupation as both types. This is so because the squatting addressed a concrete and urgent need for housing to undocumented migrants but also articulated a stance of contention and protest. Grazioli (2021) argues that housing informalities and squatting create new spaces of solidarity networks. Solidarity network played an instrumental role in the daily life of the Ex-MOI Occupation. The Solidarity Committee for Refugees and Migrants developed an understanding that the squat was a web in which the everyday practices of care and justice were enacted in diverse ways:

“It was through the Committee that I learned a lot about the Italian bureaucracy ... We work together with them ... going together in the public facilities. ... Without us, they signed papers that they didn’t know the content [of] ... Now we have people making sure that they understand what is going on”. (Data collected in Jun 2018)

We see learning process related to solidarity work. As noted by Mudu & Chattopadhyay (2017), solidarity-based movements and networks intersect with migrant activism and enact social radical struggles in the context of the occupation of spaces. The relationship between squatters and citizen supporters offers insights into how the empty physical buildings become sites of meaningful encounters that may constitute and affect people’s relationships with the commons as property. Over the years, the immigrants’ agency and its relation to informality—for instance, the immigrant squatting—became a pressing issue both to local and national media (Pogliano & Ponzio, 2019). That was influenced by the rise of anti-migration in public

discourse and the return of right-wing populism in the Italian government. The narrative framework of the immigrant squatters in Turin was often associated with illegality (Pogliano & Ponzio, 2019), suggesting it to be an unsafe space prone to criminal activities. Contemporary informal settlements are not detached from a wider historical process of urban growth and wealth accumulation involving dispossession, exploitation, and expulsion.

A recent approach to urban (in)formality has been that of questioning the dichotomy between the formal and the informal. Informality is a descriptive qualifier for conditions, laws, and currency (Marx & Kelling, 2019). Informality as a condition refers to the labeling logic of the spatial categorization of housing and land applied to a “state of being living in it”. It is a governmental tool for mapping what is “outside of formal” according to policy interventions aimed at property rights. Informality as laws acknowledges different “sources” of law; a kind of political authority. Informality as currency looks at the spontaneous and unorganized aspects of social relations within the spatiality of cities. The view is that (in)formality takes place in power relations around property rights and is manifested in daily life by creating and recreating social practices through the city’s economic, social, and spatial organization (Marx & Kelling 2019).

AlSayyad (2004) talks about informality as a “new way of life,” how it plays a meaningful role in people’s sense of themselves, and shapes lived and imaginative urban experiences that influence attitudes and ideas of individual and collective behavior (AlSayyad, 2004). For Pratt (2019), informality refers to “the Other” under the “timed and placed” norm. As Pratt (2019) has argued, informality is about the most human experience and formality is an exception. It is an essential part of the everyday life of the city (Pratt, 2019). Herrle and Fokdal (2011) discuss the ambiguous meaning of informality in urban development discourse and how it plays a role in negotiating power, legitimacy, and resources:

“Cities are being produced by not just one group nor are they planned and implemented by planners or politicians alone; they are rather the common product of a wide range of actors, some of which are known and understood, others are less known, but play an equally important role”. (Herrle & Fokdal, 2011, p. 9)

Instead of a singular view of the informal, indeed, we might talk about distinct forms of informalities shaping city-making practices beyond the state-centric organization of the urban space. There are informalities as city-making practices of the subaltern, acting at the margin or forms of popular agency (Roy, 2011, 2005). Roy’s work on informality connects wealth distribution and unequal property ownership of land use to the gentrification and displacement of the poor. It is a kind of sovereign, both belonging to and outside of the formal/judicial order describing the process by which it establishes an alternative logic of organization as a mode of urbanization. It is the domain of “unplannable” wherein “the use-value claims (that) constitute the right to the city” (Roy, 2005, p. 155). Central to Roy’s view is to put the slum habitus and periphery at the center of urban theory (2011).

Informality leads us to the occupation-based practice of urbanization. For Benjamin (2008; 2014), “occupancy urbanism” is the politicization of urban economies and its territorialities. It draws on varied realms of the material and relational practice of land claims, which pose a political consciousness based on the subaltern agency in the city challenging the formal economy and land tenure regimes (Benjamin, 2008). Both subaltern urbanism and occupancy urbanism put the social and legal order of the state into question by challenging the public norm apparatus and the institutional actors operating from these norms. Urban (in)formalities inform us about the agency of bodies that assemble to stand up for rights and to oppose laws and procedures. Urban (in)formalities point out a way of analyzing the subaltern city-making and urban lives have been shaped by “fuzziness of property boundaries and complex tenures” (Benjamin, 2014). Urban (in)formalities are intervened by class, gender,

sexuality, margins and centers, insides and outsides, poverty, and privilege. They are a source of urban politics that reveal collective action, engendering a process of spatial transformation and processes of political subjectivation. The urban politics of (in)formalities lie in the possibility of subaltern city-making practices of the precariat's struggle against specific socio-historical contexts of vulnerability, dispossession, and violence.

3. Urban Decline and Abandonment

One interlocutor said, "Everything here was vacant for years ... They used to say that there was a plan for this space ... Years after, we never saw anything" (Data collected in May 2019). They pointed out how the former Winter Olympic Village was left behind by the local government. The Ex-MOI Occupation sheds light on the flipside of event-led regeneration. The 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin aimed to induce local development and right after the end of the Games, that Residential Village was left to decay for years. During the conversations with citizen activists, the issue of the empty buildings of the Residential Village was central to understand why they decided to squat that place to offer shelter to illegalized immigrants searching for shelter. It leads us to interrogate this very idea of the mega-event legacy implying a consensual long-term impact on urban facilities and local development (Andranovich et al., 2002). "The desire to create a world-class image presents an important opportunity for a city's economic development strategy" and this is at stake here (Andranovich et al., 2001, p. 114). As Andranovich, Burbank, and Heying noted, "the decision-making process for hosting the games is dominated by the private organizing committees, effectively limiting public accountability" (2001, p. 124). The post-Olympic use venues are often abandoned and left crumbling as they go unused. These buildings lie empty; they are completely unused and decaying and emerge as a visible feature of the city's landscape.

The long-term vacancy of urban properties is a relatively common occurrence (Accordino & Johnson, 2000) and a growing body of empirical and theoretical work has been

analyzing it as a set of practices, interests and regulations, laws, policies, and market practices (Herbert, 2016; Cunningham-Sabot & Fol, 2009). The urban abandonment of properties (lots, land, or buildings) means that privately owned properties or land, or assets owned by federal, state, or local governments have been intentionally left to deteriorate for whatever reason or become unused instead of being put up for sale and rent. The publicly owned land, buildings, and corporate-owned properties that do not have sustained maintenance for years are abandoned rather than reused. This is part of a larger property management strategy encompassing a process of commodification of property and its vacancy. Property abandonment is related to shrinking due to the reorganization of production processes including deindustrialization, suburbanization, decreasing attractiveness, and a decrease in residential population (Haase et al., 2014). In other words:

“Under these investment conditions, shrinkage (like gentrification) is movement by capital, not people: whilst some places are successful in attracting investment, others fail to do so and are plagued by abandonment, decreasing attractiveness, and, eventually, a decrease in residential population. Moreover, because capital—once invested into a particular spatial setting—quickly devalues, today’s investment might become a barrier to further accumulation tomorrow, so that urban spaces are continuously remade by a new round of spatial fixes”. (Haase *et al.*, 2016, p. 1522)

Urban regeneration policies or renewal programs have become the key approach to address the issue of shrinking for meeting and bolstering the needs and interests of property developers (Sassen, 2016). This involves politically induced changes in the rules of land use and building constructions, modifying the zoning code for architectural quality or urban design to ensure the achievement of project profit-driven goals—often based on public–private partnerships (Sassen, 2016). The city space becomes a matter of landowners and land-related interests (Molotch, 1976; Logan & Molotch, 1987). The idea of the city as a growth machine

argues that the urban space has been historically organized by a land-based, elite-leading urban transformation founded on land values (Molotch, 1976; Logan & Molotch, 1987).

Herbert (2016) argues that declining cities are the flip side of the growth machine. To her, once the city space is no longer profitable, it is abandoned (Herbert, 2016). This results from urban decline, as the mix between spatial disinvestment and meaningful decrease of population size reduces the demand for land (Herbert 2016). As has been noted by Reckien and Martinez-Fernandez (2011), urban decline results from economic shifts based on the Western industrial model of urban development, connecting industrialization to urbanization. It refers to the socio-spatial dynamics linked to the urban transformation driven by the spatial displacement of capital (Herbert, 2016; Reckien & Martinez-Fernandez, 2011).

The urban decline marks the downturn of the local economy, lack of maintenance of urban infrastructures for landowners, and land-related interests. This means that the urban properties and facilities (such as land, housing, and other buildings) become underutilized, under-maintained, and are eventually abandoned. Property abandonment, urban disinvestment, and deterioration call attention to Western industrialization and its fall, which are often related to the post-industrial contexts (Dewar & Thomas, 2012). Laursen (2009) contends that such urban transformation led by urban shrinkage calls for the recognition and production of alternatives of property management as place-based potentials for responding to it.

4. Property, Ownership, and the Right to Evict

The Solidarity Committee for Refugees and Migrants supported both the everyday life needs of the squatters and helped to frame a narrative of the Ex-MOI Occupation, questioning the property abandonment of the Winter Olympic Village. Squatters and citizen supporters called to attention the interplay of property abandonment and the need for shelter as a great contradiction. This contradiction informs us about the immigrants' rights to housing. The Committee's discourse fleshed out the injustice created by the property abandonment, calling

to attention the squatting in response to the immigrants' needs for shelter. Neither the immigrant squatters of the Ex-MOI Occupation nor the Solidarity Committee for Refugees and Migrants could establish a channel for advocating the rights by setting out the local agenda. Their political mobilization could not advocate for a view of the squat as a common resource pool based on dweller-managed commons or press the local entities for projects of affordable rental housing for these immigrants. The discourse of the immigrant squatting did not address any claim for shifting the ownership rights (private or public); rather, it claimed the right to use properties that have been abandoned. According to their website, "Short[ly] after the Olympic Games, serious structural problems revealed the ineptitude of the building complex to be converted to other uses. Other municipality plans to reuse the area failed" (Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti delle occupazioni Ex-Moi e La Salette—Torino). The temporary utilization of these abandoned buildings through squatting was the major issue at stake for the solidarity-based movement. The Ex-MOI Occupation sheds light on key aspects of the social function of property, that is, its critique of vacant land and vacant infrastructure vis-à-vis the need for housing.

The property and how it is owned and controlled has been part of our political imaginary for centuries (Rose, 1994). The regulatory regime of property involves the claim of ownership that protects property owners and the claim of ownership that typically refers to a set of practices and symbols defining conditions for the rule over things that can be justified by individual ownership—acts of possession (Rose, 1994). Property is "the machinery of societal control" based upon state-driven coercion (Shaffer, 2009). Property is part of the institutionalized system of social-order expressed discourses of inviolable (privately owned) property (Shaffer, 2009). Property has been historically constituted through ownership and it is ultimately a matter of wealth-producing institutions (Shaffer, 2009; Rose, 1994). For Rose, (1994, p. 20), ownership "reflects the attitude that human beings are outsiders to nature," both

as property-as-thing and property-as-relationship (of domination). Property over something is an act with political meaning through institutions somehow ensuring a stable system of entitlement (Rose, 1994). Possession plays a central function in property regimes:

“Possession as the basis of property ownership, then, seems to amount to something like yelling loudly enough to all who may be interested. The first to say, “This is mine,” in a way that the public understands, gets the prize, and the law will help him keep it against someone else who says, “No, it is mine.” But if the original communicator dallies too long and allows the public to believe the interloper, he will find that the interloper has stepped into his shoes and has become the owner”. (Rose, 1994, p. 16)

Possession as the basis of property ownership is about how it is imagined and spatialized as an exclusive right to possess. For Blomley (2004, p. 4), property mediates social relations of power in the construction of a place through which the “rights of the private owner are seen as legitimately trumping those of the collective.” Blomley (2004) clarifies that ownership is both a spatial model and legal arrangement; it frames entitlement, which is ensured by the state’s right to expel, and this means that “the very institution of private ownership depends upon the collective. Ownership requires the assent or recognition of others” (p. 13). Private property combines both the right to possess and the right to expel. The power relation between the owner and the thing that is owned means that property relations—also a subset of legal relations—are fundamentally acknowledged by the state, regulating the owner’s use of the property and granting rights—status authority to the owner (Blomley, 2004).

Ownership, the strongest right to possession, is the central institution for entitlement recognized in the law under the property regime (van der Walt, 2009). Accordingly, ownership indicates both legal control and possession as the factual control of things as well as the right to evict as lawful exercises of the police power (van der Walt 2009). Ownership is an exclusive power “because it allows the owner to exclude everybody else—both the state and other private

parties—from access to and possession of the property” (van der Walt, 2009, p. 34). This perspective highlights that property takes an instrumental role in the control of territory in the spatiality of possessions. However, van der Walt (2009) argues that justice-inspired changes can be conducted within a property regime; the view is that certain policy and justice-driven qualifications of and amendments to the property regime are needed, benefiting the perspective of the oppressed and marginalized property holders and users.

For van der Walt (2009, p. 221), the right to evict cannot be exercised abstractly; it cannot be “usually exercised without any reference to contextual factors such as the general socio-political context or the particular personal circumstances of the occupier.” Rethinking a meaningful shift in property rights in the established property system means to look at the marginal or powerless perspective. A meaningful shift in the property system, argues van der Walt (2009), requires a decentering of the subject in the marginal theoretical perspective in law for the sake of marginal groups. It requires the recognition that property law is not reduced to owners and holders of rights, and as such, might look at “those who do not own property and whose lives are shaped and affected by the property holdings of others; those who are required to respect property and who are owned as or through property” (van der Walt, 2009, p. 238).

5. The Social Function of Property

The role of squatting as a means for claiming social justice regardless of citizenship status was a central issue raised in the fieldwork. Interlocutors talked about immigrant squatting as a channel for rethinking equality in the city. According to them, immigrant squatting can be incorporated into discussions about empty spaces. It seems that they perceive the squatting as a clear political project that will transform or revitalize the debate on property regime, considering the collective responses that have wider societal benefits, which are not only about profit-making, as one interlocutor underlines:

“The real problem is not the occupation itself. We all know that... The thing is that vacant buildings are not considered a problem. ... I am not sure if to them, the problem is the immigrants or the empty space that is no longer vacant”. (Data collected in February 2019)

From decentering the subject in law (van der Walt, 2009) to urban commons (Williams, 2018; Foster & Iaione, 2016; Kornberger & Borch, 2015), private property ownership and its legal and judicial regulatory regimes of possession have been questioned. For instance, Foster and Iaione’s work on the “idea of city space as a commons” maintains that the city is a contested space resisting the privatization and/or commodification of urban resources (2016). Drawing on Hardin’s view of commons (1968) and Ostrom (1990), a pluralistic account of the urban commons is discussed to think about the urban resource:

“The claim is to open up (or to reopen) access to a good—i.e., to recognize the community’s right to access and to use a resource which might otherwise be under exclusive private or public control—on account of the social value or utility that such access would generate or produce for the community”. (Foster & Iaione, 2016, p. 288)

Further, the “city itself as an urban common is a way to assert that the key resource belongs to all of its inhabitants” (Foster & Iaione, 2016 p. 288). This view suggests a management approach of urban common with minimal involvement of the state or private structures on it (Foster & Iaione 2016). It recognizes a new normative of collective resource and claim for land use regulation, including vacant land and vacant structures, by reminding us that:

“The land or structure is transitory, both in the sense that the land has been abandoned and not yet reclaimed (at least not formally in terms of transfer of title), and because the land is moving away from a past use and towards a future use that is unknown and unplanned”. (Foster & Iaione, 2016, p. 301–302).

The framework of “commons” sets an inclusive and normative claim for more equitable forms of city-making rather than exclusive private or public control (Foster & Iaione, 2016). Such a critique fits well with the property that has been abandoned. Abandoned properties are open-access resources (Foster & Iaione, 2016). It is this element of the vacant or underutilized property that makes the claim to an open-access resource, as being qualitatively different from that of privatizing it or exercising monopolistic public regulatory control over it. From a resource-management perspective, the abandoned property becomes a matter of urban commons where such urban resources can be collaboratively managed by groups of heterogeneous users or user-managed approaches and not user-owned approaches (Foster & Iaione, 2016). It is urban commons-based governance experimentalism including “occupying the commons” through which the people’s possession of a vacant, abandoned, or under-utilized property is part of the social function of property, so that “[p]reventing the enclosure —through exclusive ownership rights—of resources that communities are able to make productive in ways that support the ability of those communities to function and to flourish helps to mediate contestations over some urban resources” (Foster & Iaione, 2016, p. 310).

The meaning of the social function of property highlights a human rights-based approach of the urban nature of commons; as Williams (2017) puts it, urban commons are “more-than-property” and contends that urban commons “can be owned privately, publicly, collectively, or not at all” (2017, p. 18). The perspective of urban commons as more-than-property offers a twist on the view that a city is a set of shared resources belonging to all its inhabitants, not only a matter of owners and non-owners. Further, commons are shaped by relational everyday practices of communing (access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility). For Stavrides (2016), urban commons open emerging potentialities of resistance and creative alternatives to the property regime. Stavrides (2016) indicates the potentialities of commoning practices to reveal processes of spatial transformations and political subjectivation through the

collective action of those who are already subjugated and/or excluded, marginalized communities. Stavrides (2016) also fleshed out space-commoning as a self-regulating system and sharing process that opens politically meaningful ways of imagining a new, contestatory understanding of the city.

Blomley (2008, p. 316) argues that property (both private and collective) “is a frequent basis for political claim-making in the city and a site of contestation.” Not only is property a site of contestation but also abandonment. The property abandonment tells us much about the power relations emerging from the property ownership regime and how they have been detached from any sense of social justice or commitment to fairness. The interplay of property accumulation and property abandonment produces geographies of center and margin through which it mediates dwelling in a place that refers to certain social advantages, benefits, or degrees of prestige and respect in terms of race, gender, and socio-economic status. Living on the margin implies the constitution of oppression as a result of discriminatory decisions, policies, and practices. In fact, property abandonment is also a site of contestation and plays a role in power relations for people experiencing oppression and exclusion regarding their dwelling.

The literature on the social in the property theory and urban commons connects a wider debate on “locating justice in the city.” According to Williams (2016), justice is becoming, performative and grounded practice, and an ongoing process through which a “multiplicity of ways people are responding to injustice and attempting to do/be/think urban life differently” is emerging. The social role of property highlights the critique of the ownership regime and property abandonment under neoliberal city-making. It creates new thoughts, ideas, and perceptions about the foundations of property and discusses the political, economic, and cultural implications of the socially constructed meaning of property as domination, control, and privilege. Indeed, the social dimension of property challenges reveals struggles for

reframing contemporary possibilities of the usages of property based on the critique of the ownership-focused rights paradigm. The social function of property is a site of politics, always in-the-making. We may conceptualize the role of the social in property theory as a relational category embedded in its context-dependent struggles for spatial justice.

Marcuse et al. (2009) speak about the “search for a Just City” by looking at the production of urban spaces in which ordinary people mobilize themselves to challenge exploitative relations. The spatially informed notions of social justice hold both pragmatic and utopian aspects with transformative potentials (Marcuse et al., 2009). Such a view calls for collective efforts to claim and assert rights and to understand how social justice struggles take place and are negotiated in space. The meaning of social justice reflects an experience of urban space mediated by the spatial organization of political powers as a response to the forms of oppression in the uneven urban development. Soja (2010) maintains that the production of spatial (in)justice is historically and geographically materialized in urban configurations of segregation. It is part of hierarchical control, subjugation, and discrimination that “seems initially to be a fundamental feature of the production and urbanization of (in)justice, and chance a principal target in justice struggles” (Soja, 2010, p. 55).

The (re)production of spatial (in)justice enables “to create a shared consciousness of oppression that can generate concerned resistance” (Soja, 2010, p. 55). This implies a spatial perspective of consciousness shaping contentious political actions in existing geographies of privilege and power (Soja, 2010). It invokes an active notion of seeking justice as a new spatial consciousness that transforms people’s experience into collective action through interactions and practices. Soja (2010) fleshes out the significance of social justice as a “struggle over geography,” a “socio-spatial dialectic” notion that emerges from the spatiality of social justice struggles. This implies a shared identity based on justice-oriented existential spatiality. Further,

seeking justice recognizes the efforts and struggles over geography for more progressive and participatory forms of democratic politics as a response to the urbanization of (in)justice.

The spatiality of social struggles is then a key feature for questioning the concentration of wealth and power. I argue that the rubric of “social” in the property theory has become encompassed with the justice-thinking literature in the city. We might see the social function of property as a critique of both private and public property abandonment under uneven spatial development. It is closely intertwined with Soja’s work on seeking spatial justice in urban life (2010). The social function of property problematizes the existing forms of injustice and oppressive power linked to the regulatory property frameworks that allow the practice of abandonment. It refers to the efforts of decommodifying property. The social function of property speaks to the usage of rights in a territorial claim. When we talk about property’s social function, we disrupt the private and public uses and draw attention to contested claims on it—a place for radical politics in our daily lives.

Therefore, property’s social function fits with the literature on the city as an urban commons because it opens a way of rethinking property abandonment beyond the regulation and management protecting property rights. The social function of property may open possibilities for non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, and rights-based grassroots movements to play a pivotal role in the management and control over those urban resources. The social function of property points to a political vision of resource management in the city. It captures a constellation of anti-elitist practices emerging from shared urban goods and resources grounded in spatial struggles that inform us what the social function is about. For instance, it seeks to undo the socially produced geography of property abandonment.

The conception of property’s social function leads a call-and-response to abandoned or underutilized public and private structures and buildings in the city, transforming them into commons. Based on Soja (2010), I argue that the social function of property is the “new spatial

consciousness” that realizes new ways of being and living together in the city. This can be amplified and fostered by “commoning community practices” to regulate access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility of the commons in the urban context’s boundaries extending beyond the bounded territory and property (Williams, 2018). The social function frames a meaningful spatial battleground, seeking greater democracy, equality, and justice to adjust the property regime accordingly.

We can view the social function of property as a justice-oriented claim, such as van der Walt (2009) argues, for those on the margins of a societal experience. We can understand it as a state of power rather than the power of the state. Put differently, such a conception invites us to think much more broadly about what a property regime should look like toward a shared and collaborative governance approach (Foster & Iaione, 2016). In other words, it is part of a set of efforts to rethink forms of organization and management of commons, drawing attention to the possibilities that the alternative social production of space brings to the capitalist modes of production and accumulation under the class-based structure of society.

6. Concluding Remarks

Property plays a role in the behavior regulatory system within the governmental apparatus through the specific historical- geographic formation(s) of the urban itself. My reading of property and ownership is that it has emerged within the logic of domination, privileging certain visions of the way the socio-spatial organization must be, and “is.” The social function of property draws attention to it as the site of the existing socio-spatial injustices, and perhaps more importantly, may encourage further explorations of narratives beyond the “private” or “common” properties as key components of the status quo. Further, it may move forward from this to challenge the right to exclusion and reflect upon its practical and political implications, institutional expressions, and everyday consequences, decommodifying the institution of property. Put simply, the social function of property moves

us toward the transformation of our understanding of what is meant by city-making, perhaps looking at and reexamining the city itself as an urban commons.

It seems to be helpful to discuss property abandonment through the lens of the social function of property for two main reasons. First, the concept evokes a set of social implications to discuss the right to exclusion. As noted by van der Walt (2009), the right to exclude can no longer be uncritically inherited by private ownership regime or public (state) ownership. Second, it has led to consider factors beyond the logic of private and public ownership that confers power to owners as the core feature of the political imaginary of security shaped by the Western bourgeoisie's model of liberty. At the very least, the social function of property becomes the overriding theme for all scholarship working at the interface of politics, spatial (in)justice, and urban movements in the replication of our present economically homogenized world-systemic order (Williams, 2018; Soja, 2010; Marcuse, 2009).

As Martínez (2017, p. 76) notes, “the abolition of private property is not the main goal underlining their claim to empty property. They rather criticize their exclusion from the private property system.” This seems to be the case for the Ex-MOI Occupation. This immigrant squat has marked the exclusion of undocumented people, refugees, and asylum seekers to both public facilities of accommodation and access to private property relations of housing services such as renting. The squatting was a way to respond to it. The property's social function, broadly conceived, brings property back into the social battleground in the rise of a society increasingly dominated by the power of capital and a state-led social order. This means that the social function of property somehow remains an oppositional category—something to resist.

The social function of property represents a conceptual challenge describes the transformation of ongoing struggles through solidarity relations and urban communing practices into new political urban imaginaries. Often, this new political imaginary is founded on more inclusive, equitable, and reciprocal relations. They can be frequently co-opted by the

state or controlled by the market (Federici, 2019). In the making of a new urban imaginary, the immigrant squatting of the Ex-MOI Occupation reveals a critique of the failures of the private- and state-owned systems of property, making visible the need for alternatives. In doing so, the social function of property tells us “how powerful is the demand coming from the grassroots for the creation of new forms of sociality and provisioning under communal control and organized on the principle of social cooperation” (Federici, 2019, p. 89).

The social function of property can strengthen our collective power of reappropriation of the marginalized, regardless of citizenship status. The social function in its newness, its potentialities, and its limits, then, invites to reconsider property rights embedded in a capitalist economy through the political implications of urban abandonment, both physically and socially. It also resonates with the broader transformational possibilities long held to be central to the co-production of urban life and reconfigures webs, assemblages, and bundles social relations according to certain historical problems, challenges, struggles, contradictions, limits, and opportunities.

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Chapter III - The Urban Politics of Immigrant Solidarity



Picture 3. Migrants' demonstration in Bologna picture by the author, 2018

Abstract

The chapter contributes to the study of the political significance of immigrant solidarity with undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. It attempts to offer a coherent and somewhat comprehensive analytical approach to solidarity-led squatting. It invites us to reconsider the meanings and content of the urban politics of immigrants' squatting through the lens of immigrant solidarity. Drawing on the Ex-MOI Occupation in the Italian city of Turin, the chapter looks at grassroots responses and alternatives to austerity, a "politics of fear," and the migration crisis narrative. People on the move fleeing armed conflicts, prosecution, and economic hardship are not assumed to have political agency. However, they play an active role in the realm of urban politics, rather than serving as mere targets of policy. This opens a distinctive political subjectivity, resistance, and collective action. Housing has always been a site for socio-spatial conditions of conflicts over urban space, but this perspective has overlooked the role of noncitizen engagement in social movements for decent housing. The central aim here is to flesh out the agonistic urban politics of squatters' movements and interrogate the adequacy with which solidarity can be addressed in understanding the political agency of illegalized immigrants.

Keywords: Solidarity, squatting, social movements, immigration, housing rights

Introduction

The responses by grassroots activist groups play a significant part in the growing debate on the irregularization of migration in the European context at the local level (Burciaga et al., 2019; Robinson & Graham, 2018; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013; McNevin, 2011). Grassroots initiatives of (ordinary) citizens, activists, and (illegalized) noncitizens collectively organized together in solidarity-based movements are addressing the everyday basic needs of shelter, including food, clothing, language services, legal assistance, and health services. These initiatives are key aspects for the analysis of urban politics because they speak to debates related to the recent global crises, neoliberalization, and austerity (Featherstone, 2015; Harvey, 2012; Peck, 2012; Purcell, 2008) focusing on the migration–squating nexus (Montagna & Grazioli, 2019; Cattaneo & Martínez López, 2014; Martínez, 2013, SqEK, 2013) and centrality of social movements in claim-making (Karaliotas & Swyngedouw, 2019; Featherstone, 2015; Arampatzi & Nicholls, 2012).

This chapter develops an empirically informed account of immigrant solidarity based on the fieldwork conducted between 2018 and 2019 in the immigrant squat in the city of Turin known as the Ex-MOI occupation. The notion of “immigrant solidarity” sheds light on the spatial practices of contemporary housing struggles of both illegalized noncitizens and ordinary citizen supporters. It allows us to understand their empowering relation through solidarity vis-à-vis the “politics of fear.” It brings the marginalized city dwellers and abandoned spaces to the center of urban politics. As noted by an interlocutor, “we are at risk, but we are not alone. There are people assisting us. And we try to help out each other ... This place is no longer an empty place anymore. It is all we have for now” (Data collected in April 2019). The contestation of empty (and abandoned) spaces is the basis for claiming immigrants’ rights to housing. This socio-political perspective draws on the fieldwork carried in the Ex-MOI occupation. The Solidarity Committee primarily provided support to squatters living in the

immigrant squat. It was through this Solidarity Committee for Migrants and Refugees that noncitizens and citizens had a channel to politically mobilize the squatting. The role of solidarity within immigrant squatting framed acts of resistance in the contest for housing and immigrants' rights. Solidarity was seen as a means for collective action, bringing noncitizens and noncitizens together. This chapter seeks to reappraise the struggle for housing by illegalized immigrants (that is, squatters) in solidarity work with citizen supporters, capturing the shifting features of social justice activism. Equally importantly, it theoretically explores these new and distinctive forms of contestation through the urban experience of solidarity and how they respond to challenges accentuated by urban austerity under housing commodification and financialization.

Immigration and ethnocultural relations have become heavily politicized issues in recent years in Western liberal democracies. Dancygier (2010) points out several contexts in which the immigrant-related conflict across Europe; further, Givens & Maxwell (2012) relates the ways in which immigration backlash has merged with the rise of far-right nationalism against immigration. Despite this surge of interest in immigrant-related diversity, relatively little systematic research has been conducted on how illegalized immigrants themselves have understood and actively responded to their displacement.

Immigrant solidarity helps us think about it. In the immigrant squats, you find all sorts of people searching for shelter and other needs. They may be undocumented, refugees, or asylum-seekers (Data collected in February 2019). However, they come together in the squat, and somehow share a collective identity, emerging from their everyday lives. This relies on solidarity between the squatters themselves and supporters who are citizens who have committed to aiding them. The squatted space served as a web of conflict and dissent over housing and immigrants' rights, moving the attention to issues regarding housing needs without reducing immigrants to aspects of illegality. However, the solidarity tie between citizens and

noncitizens have shaped new understandings of rights, protest, and resistance; therefore, “we need to support the building. They live there and they have rights. Every day, we learn how to struggle for their needs ... As citizens, we just take [rights] from granted” (Data collected in February 2019).

For many squatters who have lived through the Ex-MOI Occupation, the work of solidarity was instrumental to support their material needs and shape a discourse of claiming their rights. The resistance against dispossession remained important not only to the squatters themselves but also for supporters (Field notes, February 2019). In this sense, solidarity unmakes boundaries between citizens and noncitizens. Recent literature on solidarity or allyship highlights the relationship between illegalized immigrants and supporters through squatters’ movements (Bauder & Juffs, 2019; Ataç & Arampatzi, 2017; Rygiel & Stierl, 2016; Kelz, 2015; Wild, 2013, Featherstone, 2012). Solidarity is both moral and political terminology (Bayertz, 1999).

For della Porta (2018), it is central to talk about acts of resistance and acts of solidarity together as a mode of action for social change through which social movements ground their repertoires of contentious politics by way of autonomous organizations. Solidarity with displaced people mobilizes emotions for collective action (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). Squatting goes beyond the practical response for those living in forced displacement who are facing the lack of shelter, accommodation, or an (adequate) housing policy in their receiving societies. Therefore, solidarity is not reduced to charity and humanitarianism. In fact, “we are doing something different from the [catholic] church. This is political, not charity. We dispute the narrative about [immigrants] their presence in the city” (Field notes, April 2019). Here, the politicization of solidarity-based squatting is at stake.

It is in this context that solidarity emphasizes the agency of (illegalized) immigrants. Solidarity highlights how identities of displaced people change when performing an alternative

role as claim-makers. This invokes a set of sociabilities, commonalities, discussions, discourses, and conflicts that take place in the daily lives of those in informal settlements. It raises questions about how we see urban activism, including issues of rights-claiming, grievances, concerns, and demands, from the noncitizen viewpoint. Immigrant solidarity interplays with the possibilities of “becoming” political. The urban politics of squatters’ movements help us to analyze how illegalized immigrants may turn into squatters through the work of solidarity.

People are role-holders (Burke & Stets, 2009). We are acting in a role according to our social identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). From the radical interactionism perspective, we perform different role-based identities in the context of dominance (Athens, 2009). The operation of power shapes a person’s behavior and identity (Athens, 2009). Nevertheless, we can redraw this identity and behavior. If we can transform the interaction from which this identity emerges, another role is created. This is so because of the potentialities of bodies that assemble in abandoned buildings. This assemblage under the symbolic display of solidarity operates at the organizational level and within interpersonal interactions that facilitate belongingness, specific bonds, and alliances of the people within it. By looking at how illegalized immigrants perform the role of squatters, we examine persons performing different identities, which are interacting in a social setting. It can bring forward urban politics tied to the role-based identities and group-based identities; urban places may emerge, which can adapt according to the interactions and activities that take place in formerly abandoned places.

Assemblage thinking contributes to the symbolic interactionism view of social identity. This means that a person, as a role-holder, may shift their own identity through political (inter)action. Immigrant solidarity reframes the power relations among the interacting bodies. As squatters, immigrants can assert their presence in the city. Solidarity ties between citizens and noncitizens have political implications in the contest for housing. This displaces

conventional conceptions of the “housing movements” or “immigrant activism” based on (marginalized) citizens. In this perspective, immigrant solidarity sheds light on a distinctive feature of the squatters’ movements in which the struggles for adequate and affordable housing take place in the city, regardless of citizenship status.

1. Crisis, Uprisings, and Historical Riot

Harvey (2012) elucidates the urban city as a battleground for who controls access to urban resources. The urban fabric, as a political and social force over space, is the frontline for struggles and radical social change, contesting forms of domination posed by global capitalism. Harvey (2012) asserts that the urban fabric connects these struggles to the shaping power over the process of urbanization that takes place at the city level. Such a process of urbanization is historically organized by the neoliberal project—the hegemonic market logic ensured through modes of legality and state action (Harvey, 2012). Peck (2012) notes that neoliberalism as a process of urbanization frames urbanism under conditions of austerity involving a set of significant reductions in the state and local government expenditure. According to this stance,

“Cities are therefore where austerity bites—but never equally ... Many of the effects are politically, socially, institutionally, and fiscally cumulative. More than a temporary bout of fiscal fasting, successive purging has resulted, historically, in the cumulative incapacitation of the state”. (Peck, 2012, p. 3–4)

The urban development agenda—the regulation of capital, investment, and labor—based on neoclassical and neoliberal discourses fosters privatization strategies as the major fundamental response to deal with inefficient public enterprises. Featherstone (2015) highlights the resistance to neoliberalism or what he calls the “geographies of solidarity.” This is significant because it shows the relations between space, neoliberalization, and resistance (Featherstone, 2015). The struggles against the neoliberal austerity measures and their economic reforms are at stake here. The Arab uprisings are an illustrative example of the

significance and implications of the neoliberal agenda. The neoliberal agenda establishes a class strategy of accumulation shaping the production of urban space. According to Bogaert (2013), the outbreak of the Arab uprisings was deeply connected with the political dynamics of neoliberal globalization:

“Neoliberal reforms reflected a profound shift from (some form of) state-developmentalism toward intrinsically authoritarian modalities of neoliberal government. As a result, authoritarianism in the region has been transformed by the ways in which the interests of ruling domestic elites and (global) economic elites became increasingly intertwined”. (Bogaert, 2013, p. 215)

It was the death by suicide of a 26-year-old Tunisian street vendor on December 17, 2010, that marked the beginning of the urban riot (Saidin, 2018). In early 2011, the Middle East and North Africa (mainly Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya) had become the central places of various popular uprisings and mass protests (Bayat, 2017). These anti-government protests that stood up against the authoritarian political regime across the “urbanizing villages and ruralizing cities” were called the “Arab Spring” (Saidin, 2018; Bayat, 2017). The Arab Spring refers to demonstrations against the neoliberal economies under an autocratic rule that “turned the urban space into a site of constant contention between the urban subaltern (the poor, youth, socially excluded, and politically marginalized) and the authorities” (Bayat, 2017, p. 22). According to Bayat’s (2017) comprehensive review of the Arab Spring, millions of demonstrators turned a mass movement driven by the use of new communication technologies for mobilization by ordinary (and marginalized) people into a significant social and political influence in the Arab region and Western world, in particular, Europe.

Further, Bayat (2017) stresses popular politics (independent activism or street protests), which opened a new realm for political contestation in the face of autocratic Arab states. This new political realm formed by the middle-class poor can be identified as one key popular mode

of dissent and in this sense, “cities then inculcated in the urban dwellers a sense of entitlement, making them increasingly insurgent citizens” (Bayat, 2017, p. 144). For many scholars and intellectuals (Bayat, 2017; Žižek, 2012; Badiou, 2012), the Arab Spring has strongly influenced the contemporary politics of the Middle East and beyond. These authors share common ground but not a unified view of the Arab Spring and its (geo)political implications. The Arab Spring designated new stages of claims for social justice and autonomy driven by massive urban riots in major Arab cities. Badiou (2012, p. 35) argues that a riot becomes historical when “its localization ceases to be limited ... its composition stops being uniform ..., finally, the negative growling of pure rebellion is succeeded by the assertion of a shared demand, whose satisfaction confers an initial meaning on the word ‘victory.’” Considering that the Arab Spring was a historical riot, we can outline what Žižek noted as follows:

“None of the countries involved in the Arab Spring was formally democratic: they were all more or less authoritarian, so that the demand for social and economic justice was spontaneously integrated into the demand for democracy—as if poverty was the result of the greed and corruption of those in power, so that it would be enough to get rid of them”. (2012, p. 74)

Protesting for social justice as the demand for democracy in the face of autocratic governments under neoliberal regimes played an instrumental role in challenging the established order of the elites. They did so by undermining its dominant linkage between religion and politics, as well (Bayat, 2017). The Arab Spring remains a controversial issue and its meaning is contested, but it serves as the contextual framework through which to understand the ongoing violent conflict in Libya. According to Asseburg (2013, p. 49), “the internationally-backed armed uprising in Libya that led to the breakdown of the Qadhafi regime directly contributed to the destabilization of the Sahel region.” Looking at the case in Libya, an oil-rich region with Africa’s largest proven oil reserves, what started as an urban riot turned

into a matter of international (Franco-British led) militarized intervention under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 17 (Asseburg, 2013; Badiou, 2012). It is important to emphasize that the European geostrategic interests in the region lie at the heart of the Western military interventions in the (Pradella & Rad, 2017; Asseburg, 2013; Badiou, 2012). One obvious implication of this is the militarized intervention for humanitarianism in Libya. Against this backdrop, it is also important to note that Libya has become one of the major routes for those fleeing civil war or poverty in Africa, crossing to Europe via the Mediterranean.

Libya had become the second-largest country of immigrants branded as “illegal” who were heading to Italy after Tunisia. The route across the Mediterranean region for most migrants and asylum seekers trying to reach European shores was mainly through the sea via the departure of migrant-laden boats from Libya. Under human smuggling and trafficking for exploitation, the journey to Europe was risky. For Pradella and Rad (2017), the illegal border crossing is an integral part of a historical process of migration management and geopolitics that goes beyond the results of the “Libyan Revolution” of spring 2011. From the early 2000s, Italy and Libya have been signing a series of bilateral agreements, seeking to enlarge the migration control in the Mediterranean, including the practice of the externalization of European borders (Pradella & Rad, 2017). As Bialasiewicz (2012, p. 855) underlines:

“The institutional (and practical) arrangements guiding the deportations and the “outsourcing” of the assessment of asylum claims to the Libyan authorities were, indeed, far from “black and white.” And it is precisely in this ambiguity that they found their space of possibility—using bilateral agreements (and, in the case of Italy and Libya, also informal agreements) to circumvent existing EU legislation, while “getting the job done”; that is, protecting European shores”.

In Libya, human smuggling is a profitable and institutionalized activity and it is important to note that “human smuggling is now more liberalized and closely connected with formal state institutions and militias—very often militias manage the illegal business and control the detention centers themselves”(Pradella & Rad, 2017, p. 2420). European migration control involves border militarization, supervision of detention conditions, and deportation procedures. European Union (EU) has partnered with Libya in migration control efforts to bolster the country’s detention infrastructure. This has resulted in “migrant-related crimes” in Libya and “by continuing to support Libyan detention efforts, EU countries, starting from Italy, are deeply involved in these human rights abuses” (Pradella & Rad, 2017, p. 2422).

2. Struggles Over Abandoned Urban Spaces

The Italian response to a growing influx of immigrants from sub-Saharan African countries was carried out under the (rhetoric of) an emergency situation. As Paoletti (2014, p. 136) has observed, the “Italian migration policies in 2011 present numerous inconsistencies, alternating between short-term, emergency-oriented approaches and long-term ones going beyond irregular arrivals from North Africa.” The Emergency North Africa program (Piano Emergenza Nord Africa) launched by the Ministry of the Interior in February 2011 aimed to provide assistance facilities to asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants arriving in Italy by sea from North African countries through the reception system organized by both national and regional public authorities. The system has two approaches. The first line of reception includes the Centers for Accommodation of Asylum Seekers (CARA), Accommodation Centers (CDA), First Aid and Accommodation Centers (CPSA), and Temporary Centers (CAS). The second line of reception is the System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR). It is managed by the Interior Ministry and offers accommodation and programs for the social-economic integration of asylum seekers and those already granted

international protection status. The problem arises when these services for people end, or people are moved out from accommodation facilities (Field notes, June 2019).

The North Africa Emergency Plan ended in 2013. Therefore, thousands of people who were left without institutional support and faced the risk of homelessness. Some of these people decided to cross the frontier to France. However, France reinstated stronger border control with Italy, making it harder and more dangerous to cross illegally. Turin is the major Italian city in that region and thus became the place of arrival for many of the people seeking to continue their journey to France. The lack of adequate local shelters and the risk of homelessness was the background against which the squatting of the former Winter Olympic Village took place. It was a landscape of decay with four empty buildings. In March 2013, immigrants squatted these empty buildings. This immigrant squatting known as the Ex-MOI Occupation has since become an issue of Italian mainstream media debates on migration:

“Despite the length of the occupation and its direct connection to an important story (the North Africa Emergency and its political management), the journalists engaged in the local narrative were not able to deal with the problem by connecting it in a relevant way to migration issues and to policies concerning migrants and refugees. One of the main reasons is due to the lack of specific skills on the issues being discussed. Local journalists moved from one local event to another, but did not focus on a central theme. When they were engaged in telling the MOI story they were out of their comfort zone”.

(Pogliano & Ponzo, 2019, p. 125)

The initial phase of the occupation was supported by the Gabrio and Askatasuna social centers and by the Migrants and Refugees Movement (Movimento Migranti e Rifugiati appoggiato dal sindacato di base Usb) (Pogliano & Ponzo, 2020). However, after the initial period, a group of people, mostly ordinary citizens, unconnected with these social centers or any other urban social movements, organized themselves to assist the Ex-MOI Occupation.

The Solidarity Committee for Migrants and Refugees was a grassroots organization formed by ordinary people, students, and workers, and it played a central role in organizing the Ex-MOI Occupation (Field notes, June 2018). The method of self-organization based on horizontal management was adopted by the movement to deal with issues regarding the everyday lives of the immigrant squatters (Field notes, June 2018). Over the years, they also supported several claims-making activities and organized events such as demonstrations and protests (Field notes, June 2018). The Solidarity Committee for Migrants and Refugees assisted what was considered the largest immigrant-led squatting in Europe, with over 1,000 inhabitants. The Ex-MOI Occupation became a site for analysis through the lens of the adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings (Fard & Mehan, 2018), the informal obstacles created by public authorities for supporting refugees' access to housing (Bolzonio et al., 2015), and issues of eviction (Rossi, 2014).

Immigrants play a role in the city-making process and drive urban transformations at the local level. The Ex-MOI Occupation can be understood as a site of conflict wherein the social structures and relations of power, domination, and resistance intersect in these urban transformation processes. Immigrants without legal status who struggle for rights for residence emerge as pressing concerns because their presence points out how noncitizens can engage in collective action through social movements. Said an interlocutor,

“We are all learning here. What should be done is not written in anywhere ... Case by case, we try to cope with [the] problems and needs of people living here in the occupation ... we are not their voice, they speak for themselves. And we work together from this” (Field notes, April 2019).

Solidarity involves a learning experience wherein citizens and noncitizens cooperate. This informal tie requires a sense of trust between squatters and those who support them (Field notes November 2018). Noncitizens engage in urban politics from peaceful protest

demonstrations to civil disobedience, such as squatters' movements. As Stopani and Pampuro (2018) note, the Ex-MOI Occupation reveals a meaningful initiative of collective grassroots organization detached from citizenship, with practices of self-organization and solidarity-making. The most salient feature of the Ex-MOI Occupation is the migration–housing nexus based on the solidarity movement. At the heart of this immigrant squatting is the perspective of every person's right to live in dignity and to have a secure, adequate, and affordable place to live, regardless of their legal status. The practice of squatting gives rise to both (de)commodification of housing and immigrant solidarity. The Ex-MOI Occupation challenges us to think about the migration–housing nexus and struggles over abandoned spaces in the city.

3. Immigrants' Engagement and Grassroots Movements

Immigrants' engagement in politics poses the question of who forms the *demos*. Much of the debate on democracy is concerned with more opportunities to expand the *demos* or questions regarding who forms the *demos* (Dean et al., 2019). However, such literature takes the role of citizens in a democracy for granted, overlooking noncitizens. In recent years, the immigrants' political participation has received renewed attention in the scholarship (Pedroza, 2019; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013). This debate includes both conventional forms of political participation such as immigrants' rights to vote (Pedroza, 2019) and its impact on integration processes (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2013), and migrants' participation beyond electoral politics and political parties (Nicholls, 2019). Here, the immigrants' engagement in the host country politics is at stake. This increasing demand for participation from migrant groups marks an important emergent feature of contemporary democracy.

Some scholars have focused on non-electoral and extra-parliamentary modes of immigrants' political participation, particularly immigrant rights movements and their relationship with cities (Nicholls & Ultermark, 2017, Ultermark et al., 2012). This focus on immigrant rights movements contributes to understanding how immigrants resist the

exclusionary state power and legitimize their activism. It is through collective action that they give voice to their grievances and concerns about their rights, welfare, and well-being.

Immigrants have been organizing and expressing collective grievances and claims in their host societies. This collective behavior sheds light on the agency of noncitizens. Typically, noncitizens are not considered legitimate players in the policy arena. They are considered to be outside of the polity. However, there are occurrences of immigrants joining social movements, redefining possibilities of urban activism. The immigrants' engagement refers to modes of collective political action. Thus, rather than discussing the literature on social movements and political participation, I first look at noncitizen activism, taking into account the distinct forms and degrees of organization. It is the array of behaviors that fall under the collective action umbrella of the forms of collective or joint action that are considered social movements. Here, the aim is to highlight civil disobedience as a non-electoral mode of political mobilization.

For Melucci, social movements are collective social and political processes linked to everyday life and individual experience; "they translate their actions into symbolic challenges to the dominant codes" (1989, p. 12). This means that social movements hold messages for the rest of society connected to their modes of organization and collective action; they "construct their action by defining in cognitive terms these possibilities and limits, while at the same time interacting with others in order to organize (i.e., to make sense of) their common behavior" (Melucci, 1989, p. 24–25). His view is that collective action is produced by the interaction by negotiating and adjusting (short and long) goals, (the choice of) means, and (relationships with) environment. He further highlights that social movements are produced through the actors' consensus, entailing solidarity and involving transgression (Melucci 1989):

“[A] social movement is a form of collective action which involves solidarity, that is, actors' mutual recognition that there they are part of a single social unit. A second

characteristic of a social movement is its engagement in conflict, and thus in opposition to an adversary who lays claim to the same goods and values ... Conflict presupposes adversaries who struggle for something which they recognize as lying between them. Third, a social movement breaks the limits of [the] compatibility of a system. Its actions violate the boundaries or tolerance limits of a system, thereby pushing the system beyond the range of variations that it can tolerate without altering its structure.” (p. 29)

The Ex-MOI Occupation became a laboratory for experimenting practices of self-organization developed through solidarity ties with citizen supporters. The initiative of collective action of squatting based on immigrants’ rights to housing regardless of citizenship can be framed as a key to the collective identity of the Ex-MOI Occupation. Melucci (1998) defines collective identity as a shared and interactive meaning linking peoples’ discontentment and mobilization. From the collective identity perspective, social movements may formulate goals and active relationships, and make emotional investments that “enable individuals to recognize themselves in each other” (Melucci, 1998, p. 35). For Melucci (1998), solidarity plays a meaningful role in social movements and influences the collective action as part of a building process of identity, which is based on emotional ties as the basis for organizing behavior. Identification of social movement-type activities depends on the ongoing interaction of solidarity networks; these solidarity networks are forces of social change.

At its most elementary level, Sztompka (1994) points out that social movements are forces of social change. This means organized collectivities act together to participate in changing political discourses, perceptions, and actions, and express discontentment with further social change as their vision of the future. The Ex-MOI Occupation was a setting for claiming some response to (undocumented) immigrants’ needs in terms of rights, including housing (Field notes, April 2019). It carried out some sense or vision of the future because it staked a claim for the need to include people in the right to housing regardless of citizenship

status. Take, for example, this viewpoint of an activist “it is not because they are foreigners that they don’t need a space for them ... there are kids here, families ... they need a place as I do” (Data collected in February 2019). In this sense, the Ex-MOI Occupation was a force for social change, constituting an alternative discourse to include immigrants. As an immigrant squatting site, it combined both the right to housing and immigrants’ rights. An interlocutor stated, “we need to turn our fear into something else” (Field notes, Supporter, April 2019). This is important because it brings us the perspective that social movements are not reduced to claim-oriented organizations. Social movements are drivers of social change (Sztompka, 1994) within emotion-laden action (Goodwin et al., 2001). Emotions shape collective action, transforming moral indignation and feelings into actions in the domain of politics (Goodwin et al., 2001).

The collective action relies on a set of emotions embodying the beliefs of participants who have participated in the movement’s activities. Emotions arise in and around social movements (Jasper, 1998; Goodwin et al., 2001). According to Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2001), emotions and feelings have a powerful and enduring effect on the political and are an integral part of the solidarity-building functions of collective action. For Allahyari (2001), social movements that engage with the politics of caring frame the “felt politics,” that is, they highlight “the importance of experiencing, or feeling, politics and its implicit morality as embodied participants in organizational cultures” (p. 196). The Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation speaks to the politics of caring and emotions play a part in it. As pointed out by one interlocutor,

“People are afraid of walking around here ... But something was not right ... I *felt* bad wondering how they could live in these buildings without assistance, no basic services ... I feel better now doing more than just feeling sorry for them”. (Data collected in April 2019)

Emotions that shape and influence people's behavior in acting in solidarity allow us to consider social movements with emotion-laden interactions to act for social change. Social movements draw on emotions, organizing collective identity toward political action.

More recent social movement scholars have addressed key aspects for defining social movements, including issues of organizations (Bakker et al., 2017), place-based politics (Creasap, 2012), resistance (Lilja et al., 2017; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014), and city makers (Martínez, 2017). Bakker, den Hond, and Mikko (2017) explore social movements through organizational analysis, suggesting the notion of "partial organizing" to discuss the social movements' rejection of formal structures, hierarchies, and representation. This notion helps to understand the social movement concerned with potentially oppressive forms of decision-making. The Solidarity Committee was a leaderless movement, and the "anti-organizational" element was central to the establishment of their organization and collective action. The Ex-MOI Occupation was also a localized and particularistic contention with reference to Turin. Scholarship on urban social movements focused on the significance of places, territories, and city-based contentions:

"[A] city in these ways is a place where people experience disenfranchisement, driving some to make it a frontline arena for battles for general rights. Thus, high concentrations of marginalized people in places provide a critical mass of recruits to sustain and power larger mobilizations. Once engaged, people target the specific institutions or people that are the immediate source of grievances". (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017 p. 28)

Creasap (2012) argues that squatting illuminates how urban social movements make their claims to space and place, highlighting that "squatters' responses to gentrification and privatization of public space are both symbolic (a rejection of corporate values) and practical (offering an affordable alternative to consumers or residents)" (Creasap, 2012, p. 185). Once again, this fits with the work done by the Solidarity Committee in the Ex-MOI Occupation by

both transgressing property rights and addressing immigrants' needs for shelter. The Solidarity Committee supported nonviolent resistance as a tactic of contention (Field notes, May 2019). Resistance is not reduced to reactions to forms of different powers (sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower), although they are linked (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). The Ex-MOI Occupation was a space of resistance against biopower—the governance or control over life or society—through the refusal of property laws and by organizing an autonomous movement of alternative housing projects. It was a place of resistance. Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) contend that resistance is a kind of self-subjectivity.

Subjects respond to power relations from obedience to subversion, and resistance emerges and may be a productive power that creates forms of counter-conduct against disciplinary power and biopower (Lilja & Vinthagen 2014). This means that resistance frames agency that invokes challenging and alternative discourses (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2017). The immigrant squatting site created a space where resistance flourished for those who were forced into subalternity. Solidarity activism created the possibility of resisting subjectivities and of everyday resistance. The Solidarity Committee played a part in organizing and supporting squatters as agents of interrogating the institutional control over immigrants' behavior. This active role of squatters turned into identities or everyday behavior, resisting state-led domination to some degree. The immigrant squatting site offered a setting for political resistance. In doing so, people on the move were virtually no longer a matter of 'illegalized immigrants'; they performed a different role by being squatters. As squatters, they established some sense of equality that is lacking in the wider economic and political context of migration so that "we don't call each other refugees or migrants (...) We all live here now." Field notes, March 2019).

Of course, domination and power shape the meanings of the behavior in a given (symbolic) situation as it is perceived (Athens, 2009). Burke and Stets (2009) examine the

identity theory based on the symbolic meanings in the situation, looking at how people act as agents for identities. According to this view, the “self as an occupant of different roles” (Burke & Stets, 2009) uses identity (being what you are supposed to be) to operate resources and frame the agency of the person (what makes it happen). We play roles in interaction, which are tied to identities that an individual occupies (Burke & Stets, 2009). For Burke and Stets (2009, p. 114), we play out the role of being something in interaction with others, wherein a “role is the set of expectations tied to a social position that guide people’s attitudes and behavior.” Identities merge the correspondence between the role-holder and a person’s behavior in relation to someone with counter-identities—a student–professor relationship, for instance (Burke & Stets, 2009). Power and dominance during social interaction are what bring roles and behaviors together (Athens, 2009).

However, a solidaristic encounter is a way of rethinking and remaking social interaction itself. This is so because this solidarity may be a way of joint action between identities and counter-identities; for instance, citizens and noncitizens. The joint action under solidarity may be a way of subverting behaviors tied to each identity and counter-identity. They act differently but under a shared political agenda. Encounters based on solidarity can modify others’ identities, which can make possible a politics of social transformation. Immigrants’ engagement through resistance is one form of noncitizen activism. This invokes a diversification of channels for participation in urban politics.

Immigrants collectively mobilize and protest to gain some degree of political power or to protect themselves from police violence and racism-related violence, for instance. Immigrants’ engagement through resistance often involves urban social movements. For Martínez (2017), urban social movements are city makers. He outlines the urban struggles from the grassroots organizations and actions shaping the city-making processes. These kinds of urban social movements do not depend on institutionalized tactics and routinized relationships

with the government, neither are they focused on electoral channels of the public sphere. These kinds of social movements often advance demands that are unheard of or unaddressed by governments and political parties.

The mobilization of these social movements is related to the emergence of conflicts and contentions in society that are not (yet) articulated in institutional politics and their representative functions. The Solidarity Committee, as a nonhierarchically organized collective movement, supported the immigrant squatters rather than creating more formal pressure to influence public opinion in favor of policy changes or to influence elections, for instance. The political consequences or outcomes of solidarity movements are not concerned with standard institutional actors. The political implication of their collective action is about grassroots organizations committed to social justice and human rights, acting in solidarity with migrants and refugees. This raises issues of urban democracy as substantive democracy and urban resistance (Purcell, 2008).

4. Solidarity Against Austerity

In the words of an interlocutor, “what is happening in [the] Ex-MOI is about all of us ... not only immigrants” (Field notes, Supporter, January 2019). Considering this viewpoint, we can see that the squat was not just a space for those who were looking for shelter. In fact, the Ex-MOI Occupation intersected issues of significance for both citizens and noncitizens. From this intersection, solidarity may be constituted. Purcell (2008) reminds us about the role of resistance in cities and their social movements in creating alternatives to neoliberalization toward a better urban future. He posits that democratic resistance and alternative futures are connected, engendering a new way of thinking about political identity and belonging, as well as producing new sets of urban politics vis-à-vis “state-centric” views of politics. Oppositional social movements resist neoliberal disciplining tools leading to the increasing globalization of governance (Purcell, 2008). To a certain extent, fostering democratic urban futures based on

democratic politics “as the mobilization of social movements that struggle for democratization” is at the forefront of urban struggles (Purcell, 2008, p. 73). It entails a spatial imagination to resist the neoliberalization agenda and its austerity measures by radically extending democratic relations. For this reason, social movements may play an oppositional role in relation to neoliberalization, implementing the agenda of radical democratization wherein all people are included (Purcell, 2008).

Purcell (2008) connects the geographical account to political theory. To him, it is relevant to radically democratize the polity for all, regardless of citizenship status. resist the systematically hierarchical exclusions and inequalities, rethinking “material wealth, political power, and cultural esteem” (Purcell, 2008, p. 85). Oppositional movements are committed to cry for and respond to claims for social justice. Oppositional movements based on radical democratization, argues Purcell (2008), resist the ongoing project to neoliberalize cities and generate alternatives to active, greater social justice at the urban level. People worldwide embrace collective mobilization, contesting the neoliberal agenda and its austerity measures through protests, demonstrations, and social movements. For della Porta (2015), most of today’s social movements engage in anti-austerity mobilization. Their collective agency responds to neoliberal capitalism and its misery with an inclusive vision regarding civic and political rights (della Porta, 2015). This is particularly of note in the case of (im)migrant solidarity movements.

The debates on migration with a focus on the aspect of solidarity emphasize the role of solidarity-based movements and how they stand up for the moral equality of citizens and foreigners (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Domaradzka, 2018; Featherstone, 2012). In doing so, they challenge the methodological nationalism and the security-oriented approach of exclusionary immigration policies based on the so-called “European migration crisis” (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). Solidarities raise new imaginaries and alternatives in response to

depoliticized narratives of Europe's migration crisis. Agustín and Jørgensen (2019) speak about the politics of dissent. They contend that the politics of dissent are oriented toward a different way of understanding migration politics. This invokes the language of justice and injustice in the mobilizations and emerging solidarities (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019).

The politics of dissent, in short, provide practical alternatives that enable new political subjectivities and collective identities, which are decisive in the problematization of the refugee crisis narrative. Therefore, they are open to maintaining a contentious relationship with the government and revising how imaginaries of solidarity are invented (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). Agustín and Jørgensen (2019) develop an analysis of solidarity, both in relational and spatial terms, exploring the practices and performances through which new forms of collective action have been sustained in the context of the "refugee crisis." This analysis strongly emphasizes solidarity as a relational practice and spatialized phenomenon, as follows:

"Solidarity is contentious; emerges strongly in moments or conjunctures; is generative of political subjectivities and collective identities; entails alliance building among diverse actors; is inventive of new imaginaries; is situated in space and time and organized in multi-scalar relations; and it is linked in different ways to institutions ... Solidarities are shaped and shape spaces in which social relations are produced, and they can upscale and connect different spaces and geographies through trans-local networks and imaginaries". (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, p. 25–26)

For Domaradzka (2018), solidarity-based movements open a new wave of urban contention, both objective and subjective, mobilizing factors that shape forms of social engagement and collective action. They are grounded in more inclusionary and progressive views of the city from the bottom-up perspective. Urban activism that enables collective mobilization around the possibilities and limitations of an alternative vision for the future of cities, contesting power-holding elites through which the scope and meaning of democracy

have been extended and deepened is at stake here (Domaradzka, 2018). At the same time, this approach questions the well-established assumption of a state-centered perspective of political membership, reconsidering the nature of dwelling and access to rights and services at the urban level. Leading activism, place, and rights to bear on existing conceptualizations of urban democracy, the solidarity-based movements pose normative questions of democracy, justice, and legitimacy at the center of critical urban analysis of contemporary human mobility.

Featherstone (2012) theorizes on solidarity and argues that it allows agency from below. It is constructed, practiced, enacted, and forged. Solidarity shapes agency and enacts new forms of politics and political subjectification. Solidarity agency asserts place-based political activity that leads to organized mobilizations, which can reshape power relations and bring unequal relations into contestation within places (Featherstone, 2012). Experiences and practices of solidarity reimagine politics and power relations to resist the urban future offered by austerity and neoliberal politics. On top of that, spaces of solidarity—mobilizations and everyday practices—are attached to a cosmopolitan moral position with a spatial project of the inclusiveness of a democratic community, particularly those suffering from increasing precariousness (Agustín & Jørgensen 2019; Featherstone, 2012).

There is transformative potential in solidarity for conducting political activities and social struggles (Featherstone, 2012). Indeed, solidarity shapes collective identity-making (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). Immigrant solidarity remains explicitly focused on locally based needs, issues, and conflicts in stark opposition to the neoliberal agenda (Domaradzka, 2018). It brings contestation of austerity within places (Featherstone, 2012). The departure point is that solidarity appears as a moral disposition that intersects morality and politics, implying an idea of community (Bayertz, 1999). For the present-day political context, solidarity poses questions about movement-organizational dynamics and influences collective-action groups' decision to struggle for other's rights.

Solidarity can serve as a means of recognition and belonging that sustains practices of tolerance, respect, and acknowledgment. Solidarity has been the subject of debates in migration and refugee literature ((Martínez-López, 2017a; Ataç et al., 2016). For instance, some recent scholarship has looked at solidarity as a Eurocentric concept embedded in historical and geopolitical contexts within the “Western” lines of philosophical thought of the Enlightenment tradition (Bauder & Juffs, 2019). The literature review suggested the notion of “recognitive solidarity” in the context of migration and refugee literature (Bauder & Juffs, 2019). Bauder and Juffs (2019) outline the “recognitive solidarity” regarding the relationship between migrant and “native” squatters, and this serves as the basis for critical citizenship studies. The idea of “solidarity as political action” can be viewed in three forms of responses to the “refugee crisis” (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). First, autonomous solidarity, as seen in the case of Hotel City Plaza, an immigrant squatting site in Athens, Greece; second, civic solidarity, as illustrated in the case of Venligboerne, a civil society organization supporting refugees’ needs in collaboration with the authorities; third, institutional solidarity, as noted in the case of Barcelona as a Refuge City based on public policy and urban planning (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019).

The Ex-MOI Occupation is considered a case for autonomous solidarity (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019) within “recognitive solidarity” (Bauder & Juffs, 2019). Within this framework, the Ex-MOI Occupation is an example of autonomous solidarity at a local scale, responding to the “refugee crisis” in solidarity-based work (through the Solidarity Committee) toward alternatives for immigrants’ needs for housing. It is an illustrative initiative of a local grassroots movement (involving the supportive citizens mobilizing in solidarity with squatters) addressing immigrants’ needs through the practice of squatting of empty buildings to rearticulate the so-called “migrant crisis.” It poses a new spatial imaginary and practical

alternative approach to somewhat cope with the lack of citizenship status, putting forward claims of housing for noncitizens.

People on the move—undocumented immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees—are often treated as guests in the “host” society. Typically, there is no room for noncitizens’ claims and grievances. However, (im)migrant solidarity reframes this by reaffirming the political significance of the concepts of otherness. Once that solidarity “implies that we might put the interests of the other, the stranger or non-member, above the (assumed) interests of our own, pre-established, community” (Kelz, 2015, p. 16), it may become a form of resistance. It is at the basis of the politics of solidarity that a social struggle for recognition emerges. This social struggle is done through the practices, strategies, and mobilization of people on the move assisted by solidarity-based movements including those for citizens’ supports. For della Porta (2018), this is about acts of solidarity. It can enact political subjects, mobilizing contentious politics toward asylum seekers’ and migrants’ struggles for rights. Acts of solidarity have a transformative potential in urban politics (della Porta, 2018). They may contribute to the day-to-day struggle for livelihood, and often life, food, shelter, and basic rights, which work both within and beyond citizenship (della Porta, 2018).

As della Porta (2018, p. 332) argues, “invisibility as illegality is challenged by making oneself visible.” (Im)migrant solidarity calls for reconceptualizing who is visible and entitled to being political. It interrogates the hierarchical dichotomy dividing people between citizens and noncitizens in daily life (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019, della Porta, 2018; Ataç et al., 2016). As an interlocutor pointed, the solidarity work aims to support their stay here, so that “All of it [buildings] were abandoned for years. (...) Most of our time is addressing the daily issues of food, clothes, medicines, maintenance, and information of squatters. (...) Over the time, we organized events as well”. (Field notes, July 2018). The idea of acts of solidarity is instrumental because it responds to violent outcomes of the irregularization of migration. It is a part of the

ongoing work of resistance done by immigrants themselves within social movements. Together, citizens and noncitizens are contesting discourses and practices of “bordering,” “illegalization,” and “irregularization” that regulate migration in Europe.

5. Mobilizing, Contesting, Reclaiming, Navigating

With the Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation as an illustrative example, we can shed light on the solidarity between noncitizens and citizens. It is from the solidarity tie that a new mode of political mobilization emerges and the diversification of channels for participation and engagement in urban struggles takes place. Solidarity as a radical praxis not only brings people together—citizens and noncitizens—but also highlights a set of social struggles that people are engaged in regardless of their citizenship status. Arampatzi (2017) argues that is central to look at “urban solidarity spaces” within the autonomous practices of grassroots groups and initiatives. Grassroots movements are viewed as the spatial practice of contestation and alternative in the context of austerity through which sites of broader contested power relations, internal contradictions, antagonisms, and creative tensions emerge based on solidarity-making through everyday practices (Arampatzi, 2017). The Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation can be seen through this lens of contentious practices that discuss the impact of austerity politics (mostly housing) and the need for the inclusion of disenfranchised immigrants, and organize a practical response to it via squatting.

The Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation was active through self-organization in broader campaigns and contestations for immigrants’ rights around housing issues. Their activism was engaged in experimenting with alternatives to housing in times of austerity (Field notes, May 2019). The solidarity tie between citizens and noncitizens raises questions concerning the spaces within which democratic politics take place at the local level. I argue that solidarity-making plays a central role as a formative-context for political action. This brings us to an idea of migrant solidarity de-centering and de-naturalizing the national

scale of political power. This view is further developed in four key aspects. In light of the Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation, I unpack the (im)migrant solidarity concept as a social encounter framed by four entwined analytical foci: a) mobilizing, b) reclaiming, c) negotiating, and d) contesting.

For Arampatzi (2017), solidarity is praxis, that is, solidarity-making, which differs from charity for its transformative potential. It concerns how to empower the disempowered, both in narrative and in practice (Arampatzi, 2017). This empowerment process has been done in the context of austerity, in which the meaning and practice of charity is contested by grassroots movements (Arampatzi, 2017). It is based on embodied interactions that involve the development of reciprocal relations (Arampatzi, 2017). In the case of the Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation, the solidarity praxis was built through everyday practices and direct interactions among citizen supporters and immigrant squatters: “Living so close to them, I felt a connection to their needs ... And the Committee was the way to work with and for these people” (Field notes, September 2018). In the case of the Ex-MOI Occupation, solidarity was a place-based relation including things such as ordinary conversations, gestures, positionings, and verbal statements. Consider this perspective, for instance, in which an interlocutor says, “At the beginning, I was helping out by going with them and talking with public authorities ... mediating the conversation ... helping out with the language ...” (Field notes, March 2019). From this, we can see that the Solidarity Committee played a part in assisting these immigrants to deal with the bureaucratic issues. Solidarity not only has a moral aspect but also a spatial one.

Immigrant solidarity may be viewed through the lens of social encounters, bodies that assemble in crying for rights. Jayne and Hall (2019) pointed out the centrality of urban assemblage in “temporary” explorations of the (in)mobilities, (un)comfortable materialities. Such a view pays attention to how vacant properties may be reappropriated in conversation and

negotiating with property owners (Jayne & Hall, 2019). In fact, vacant sites can be sources of performative assemblages. Butler (2015) argues that performative assemblages are embodied forms of expression with political implications. The assembly of bodies, as a performative enactment, implies an effort of solidarity (Butler, 2015). This demands the sharing of responsibility in which the solidarity work stakes a claim that dispossessed lives matter and they exist (Butler, 2015).

The Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation attempted to mobilize against this exclusionary nature of immigrant control, assisting them in their search for home, shelter, and accommodation (Field notes, May 2019). For the most part, these autonomist practices challenged the migration management facilities that assisted the everyday lives of the squatters directly (Field notes, May 2019). The Solidarity Committee questioned the invisibility imposed on the undocumented status of immigrants (Field notes, May 2019). As noted by Darling (2016, p. 183), “cities and their inhabitants are denied the agency to shape the dispersal process, and asylum seekers are denied the agency to shape the city.” The activist citizens empower the “excluded” (undocumented migrants and refugees) by mobilizing people into forms of broader anti-austerity struggles and political strategies, detaching political activism from citizenship. Migrant solidarity pays attention to migrants’ grievances and gives them visibility. According to Darling (2016, p. 190), this is connected to the politics of presence, which means that “presence as an orientation point for political claims is not necessarily or inherently urban. However, it has been argued that in the urban we see the political possibilities of presence most readily.”

The value of this perspective is that solidarity-based movements are engaging with the politics of presence, combining both social justice and hospitality within the city. Darling further underlines that “presence, in its urban manifestation, might thus denote a point of political potential that can be mobilized by different causes and concerns in drawing on an

engagement with authority localized in the city” (2016, p. 190). Migrant solidarity holds a feature of mobilizing engagement for the noncitizen agency to shape the city. Solidarity practices serve as the backdrop to political actions taking place in an urban context. The governmental approach produces a marginality toward urban experiences for refugees and the living conditions of undocumented migrants (Darling, 2016). This means that citizenship, as the regime of exclusive belonging based on classificatory mechanisms of filtering and selection, assigns an uncertain legal status and insecurity to asylum seekers since they are not typically right-holders (Darling, 2016). However, informal practices of grassroots movements test the limits and conditions of the formal and this is politically significant, especially to undermine the separation between citizens and noncitizens in the domains of rights at the local level (Darling, 2016).

This type of grassroots activism through squatting is a way to contest the top-down management of migration flows. To a certain degree, activists of the Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI Occupation and squatters were able to contest the exclusion of undocumented immigrants. By considering migrant solidarity as a site of agonistic understandings of urban space, I seek to highlight the significance of the informal–formal continuum at the same time alongside how grassroots activism can foster shared experiences of agonistic engagement and mobilization to contest this dichotomy. Autonomous solidarity-based movements engaging with migrants’ political claims do not only mobilize resources and people in activism and inspire collective action through compelling political imaginaries. They also contest the order founded in the citizenship norms and project radical alternatives in work with irregular migrants’ struggles. The migrant solidarity activism relies on citizenship’s dynamic and performative dimensions to contest exclusionary mechanisms at play for people whose movements are “unauthorized” in the host society toward the formation of new claims for inclusion and belonging.

Nevin (2013) suggests, in times of the people whose movements are “unauthorized,” the role of migrants’ political claims, activists, and social movements beyond national borders test the limits of citizenship. This insight is important because it identifies struggles based on claims to inclusion in the everyday life as the core point of solidarity activism. The view is that irregular migration as the outcome of people whose movements are “unauthorized” may engender the citizens-in-the-making (Nevin, 2013). The complexity of contentious urban politics is seen by how immigrants’ political claims are shaped by acts of solidarity. Solidarity is key for collective mobilization and alliance-building strategies that can encourage unexpected uses of abandoned spaces. The socio-materiality of immigrant squatting expands our understanding of thinking about social struggles and citizenship. If, as a result of those critiques, we reject the national understanding and the pursuit of sovereignty as it attempts to “manage migration,” we open the door to an entirely different urban politics toward “the potential of the city as a sanctuary for irregular and forced migrants” (Darling, 2016, p. 184).

We can conceive of urban politics that advocate for housing rights regardless of citizenship status through solidarity. Solidarity-led struggles potentially enable a new imaginary and a practical alternative to the so-called “migrant crisis” at the local level. As Balbo (2009, p. 14) contends, “space plays a major role in urban inclusion,” and most importantly, spaces are “reshaped both physically and culturally by the presence of immigrants” (p. 17). The irregular migrants’ political claims as spatialized forms of social inclusion are at stake here. According to Nevin, irregular migrants’ political claims become a crucial and contested matter in the government of migration:

“Whether migrants’ political claims are engaged from a position that is understood as inside or outside sovereign order is a less revealing question than whether and how such claims transform what it means to be political. It is entirely possible for ambivalence towards the strategies open to migrant struggle to operate less as a handicap or a prelude

to becoming political than as a productive resource that plays a part in being political”.
(2013, p. 197)

Autonomous solidarity-based movements engaging with migrants’ political claims address their needs in practical terms through the occupation of vacant buildings. The practice of squatting is a defining feature of the contemporary immigrants’ struggles in Southern Europe (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Dadusc et al., 2019; Roussos, 2019; della Porta, 2018; Arampatzi, 2017; Martínez, 2017). Recent literature has been focused on migrant solidarity and immigrants’ struggles for housing via squatting (Montagna & Grazioli, 2019; English et al., 2019; Rossi, 2014). Thousands of refugees and migrants live in occupied buildings and are often assisted by solidarity groups. The migrants’ political claims in connection with squatted spaces serve as spaces of encounters and political engagement. By organizing immigrant squatting, autonomous solidarity-based movements dispute the empty spaces and how they may be appropriated and/or reclaimed in the city. For instance, the tension between the empty spaces and the need for home emphasizes reimagining the spatial complexity of immigrants’ inclusion and how such a process may be embedded in urban politics of solidarity.

The immigrant solidarity outlines an activist organizational form to respond to the legacies of colonialism in terms of power imbalances and racism (English et al., 2019). Moreover, migrant solidarity “strengthens the autonomous capacity of people on the move, by materially helping people sustain themselves by their self-organization” (English et al., 2019, p. 196). Migrant activists engaged in both autonomous migrant organizations and local solidarity initiatives have used a range of repertoires and narratives against the exclusion of migrants, including the practice of squatting. This involves the organization of empty spaces that were left to decay and to encourage the involvement of immigrants squatters in their struggles against marginalization. The spatial organization of the squat itself involves struggles in the face of the risk of eviction by a collective experiment of home-making practices in the

context of informality. Ex-MOI Occupation is one example of a self-organizing alternative practice to manage the immigrant squatting to deal with the lack of social protection.

Grazioli and Martignoni (2019) argue that squatted areas and spaces play a major role in migrants' autonomy. Squatting offers an emergency shelter to people whose movements are "unauthorized" and its relation to the urban commons debate is the basis for responding to migrants' housing needs (Grazioli & Martignoni, 2019). In other words, commons are defined "in terms of social practices based on mutuality, solidarity, care and decommodified exchange that aims to facilitate migrants' autonomous mobility and settlement" (Grazioli & Martignoni, 2019, p. 579). They further define migrants' squatting and informal settlements as communing. This reminds us of the relationship between mobility and self-made forms of inhabitancy and highlights the centrality of understanding that urban informality and solidarity-based movements are contemporary features of city-making.

Reclaiming a perspective of space beyond the "private" and "public" that associate solidaristic relations between citizens and migrants (people on the move who are excluded and outcasts or strangers) is at stake here. As a result, the immigrant squatting reclaims both socially and spatially, with political implications. The Solidarity Committee of the Ex-MOI occupation employed spatial strategies (occupation) and the reclaiming of empty spaces as part of immigrants' support for autonomy. It turned empty spaces into social and political spaces, thereby opening up new political possibilities.

Immigrants are marginalized by official channels and institutions in the context of austerity measures (Roussos, 2019; Arampatzi, 2017). Solidarity-based grassroots movements within the leftist, anarchist, and autonomous political spectrum have been playing a major role in the political strategies of resistance. Karaliotas and Swyngedouw (2019) talk about the role of social movements in creating "urban insurgencies." Solidarity-based movements are developing other modes of "being-in-common." These experiences of "being-in-common"

construct a political community, forming new political subjects. Thus, urban insurgencies rely on the work of solidarity (Karaliotas & Swyngedouw, 2019). It is a pivotal feature for organizational structure, communicative strategies, as well as alliances between migrants and refugees. The Ex-MOI Occupation can be framed into this process of political subjectivation of “acting-in-common.”

The work of solidarity has defined an important collective identity for the Ex-MOI Occupation through which progressive struggles get enacted and performed in the squatting sites. As Karaliotas and Swyngedouw (2019, p. 380) note, an urban social movement is a “key political actor that invariably engages with the state as the arena of struggle is no longer politically performative.” Urban, as defined by them, is the domain of political encounter. Collectivities acting in this urban context innovate and create “ways of being together” (Karaliotas & Swyngedouw, 2019). These solidarity-based movements engaging with migrants’ rights are challenging a nation-state-centric account of asylum and refugee geographies. Their urban insurgence is to diversely assert a political community that is based on the embodied experience of inhabiting the city, to resist the state’s violence of exclusion via a divide between “us” and “them.”

6. Solidarity as Agonistic Politics

It is time to explore solidarity-based activism in contemporary immigrants’ struggles in terms of the emergence of agonistic understandings of urban space production. Immigrant squatting involves immigrants’ political claims based on solidaristic ties with citizen supporters. This solidaristic encounter frames “place identities” within the agonistic urban space. This perspective of the agonistic urban space of solidarity combines a relational understanding of spatiality with an agonistic understanding of collective action; it is based on the assumption that the resistance that mobile bodies enact as well as their political significance are linked to some experience of spatiality. This entails addressing rights-claiming beyond the

reification of the “citizenship” of urban spaces and places, and related analytical and normative “spatial struggles” concerning its political nature.

The political meaning of immigrant solidarity in urban spaces defines an experience of agency, of social encounters through which interaction mobilizes collective action. According to an agonistic understanding of urban space, migrant solidarity can foster shared experiences of agonistic engagement and the mobilization of political subjects in their becoming. This entails the exploration of spatially constituted collective understandings and practices for navigating the tensions between inclusion and exclusion, governing and being governed, and control and resistance. Migrant solidarity navigates through geographies of resistance that are enacted by unwelcome bodies. Navigation is infused with contradictions, ambiguities, and ambivalences, and has become defining elements of agonistic forms of political subjectivation.

Spatiality is critically significant for understanding practices of politicization by solidarity-based movements. The spatiality of urban politics and political agency links citizens and noncitizens as a constitutive dimension of the dynamics and trajectories of an agonistic urban space of solidarity. This invites us to look at immigrant squatting as a way of collective meaning-making in the agonistic experience of urban space and to expand this perspective of emergent counter-austerity politics, in the context of the Italian city of Turin. The ways in which people contest and subvert the social order of domination on the ground bring a variety of forms of resistance. The Ex-MOI Occupation faced issues for moving to the next level, that is, working in greater collaboration with other social movements, institutions, and local actors in the advocacy for policy change. However, that was one way to establish equality between citizens and noncitizens (Field notes, March 2019). This immigrant squatting enacted a political message, performatively. By organizing illegalized bodies without hierarchy, the residents of the squat were no longer “illegalized immigrants” seeking shelters, rather, they were squatters claiming housing rights and disputing abandoned sites. No longer illegalized

individuals, immigrant-squatters performed a different role by enacting a collective identity (power-in-common) in the form of resistance.

In this power-in-common connecting ordinary citizens and illegalized noncitizens, solidarity navigates an agonistic urban politics contesting the social invisibility and socio-spatial segregation of immigrants. Immigrant squats as a web of assembled illegalized bodies are a by-product of solidarity ties among people seeking empowerment and political alternatives. Grassroots solidarity movements are navigating the new political horizons by pointing out the issue of immigrants' rights to housing. This reveals the contemporary agonistic politics of squatting under the neoliberal logic of austerity, organizing forms of exploitation, oppression, and racism within this mode of production.

Immigrant solidarity was a channel for the interaction between citizens and noncitizens. It was a way of shifting the agency of people on the move from the (passive) illegalized immigrants to the (active) squatters. This radical praxis organizes a collective assembling of bodies that establishes an alliance for political action, regardless of citizenship status. It is this search for equality that makes immigrant solidarity in squatters' movements an illustrative aspect for analyzing the urban politics of welcoming illegalized bodies to resist the unequal forms of the bond between oneself and the other.

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Chapter IV - Being Out of Place: Immigrant Squatting as Precarious Emplacement



Picture 4. Ex-Moi image by the author, 2019

Abstract

This chapter explores the immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling in exile. Drawing on the fieldwork in the immigrant squatting for housing in Turin, it looks at how domesticity and home-making as key aspects to reflect upon the reality of immigrants. It involves both excluded and emancipated ways of being to legitimize their role within the squatting. We may think of precarious emplacement, which is a way of reinventing a home that falls outside the bourgeoisie domestic ideal. This highlights how home-making plays a part in transforming the squatting site into a livable space. Despite this surge of interest in immigrant-related diversity governance, relatively little systematic research has been done on how immigrants themselves have understood and actively responded to their displacement. Indeed, the literature has been overlooking the noncitizens' agency. This chapter illuminates the complexity of the relationship between unwanted mobilities and forced immobilities by analyzing squatters as home-makers. Housing has always been a site for socio-spatial struggles and conflicts over urban space. However, the nature of home-making linked to tactics and resistance of immigrants' agency has not been explored as fully as possible in the literature; its contribution to a closer view on the complexity of the meaning of home and its search for those who have experienced displacement has been ignored. This analysis of the immigrants' search for home through the lens of precarious emplacement informs us about how domestic actions are fraught with danger, experimental, and hold political implications. Immigrant squatting as precarious emplacement is the foundation on which home is imagined, performed, and made visible as a mundane experience of marginalized spaces.

Keywords: Home-making, precarious emplacement, immigrants, squatting

Introduction

The central theme of this chapter is the search for home and other places of dwelling for forcibly displaced people living outside camps or official accommodation facilities. It is, in short, an exploration of the forms and meaning of home for immigrants in exile. This chapter investigates immigrants' struggles for places to (re)home through squatting and is based on fieldwork conduct in the Ex-MOI Occupation in the Italian city of Turin. The ethnographic fieldwork conducted between January 2018 to July 2019 informs this analysis. It is central to this analysis to flesh out the immigration–home nexus, given the essential role it plays in constituting lives that have been disrupted by displacement. As I will argue, the immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling is a pivotal source of meaning, emotions, and experiences through which a radical urban praxis may emerge. This implies the construction of shared meanings to which people respond in social interaction practices that (re)constitute the relationship between displacement and emplacement.

This chapter aims to argue that domesticity (domestic spaces and domestic labor) plays a role in squatting as part of the search for home. The search for home involves acts of domesticity that transform abandoned buildings or shelters into places of dwelling. Of course, this transformation is not merely spatial because it also acknowledges a set of practices. It is not an ideal search based on order, comfort, and beauty; rather, it is a precarious process. This spatial transformation is a way of “thinking home as a kind of space ... home starts by bringing some space under control” (Douglas, 1991, p. 288–289). This kind of space under control is constituted through collective work. In the case of the Ex-MOI Occupation, the solidarity between the illegalized immigrants and ordinary citizen supporters did the same.

Squatting as a precarious emplacement allows us to see how the illegalized immigrants can take the space of squatting under their control to some extent. As I understand it, precarious emplacement belongs to the realm of lived experience and is bound together with the privacy

of a domestic space, including the practical, aesthetic, and emotional aspects of home-making. It provides a notion of domesticity that cannot be taken away by property rights. It offers oppositional politics in which squatting is the main instrument of structuring the collective efforts of home-making, empowered by searching, by imagining, by claiming, and also, by interacting in the (marginalized and abandoned) spaces in which people dwell. Precarious emplacement concerns how to make spaces habitable and involves the production of interiority. Precarious emplacement is not passively received but actively cultivated and practiced. Further, it is in this manner that the search for home is envisioned, handled, and renewed, and as an incomplete project of things, bodies, and spaces.

The immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling brings together processes of social and urban sociabilities to deepen or challenge our understanding of the interplay of domesticity and politics. I rely here on notions such as "struggles for home" (Jansen & Lofvig 2009), "experience of being-at-home" (Jacobson, 2012), and migrants' homing (Boccagni, 2017) to discuss the immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling within social movements. This search is about efforts (struggles, conflicts, and tensions) and prospects (planning, intentions, and hope) for possible, probable, and preferable urban futures that can be achieved in the lived experience of exile.

The search for home is a journey (Kabachnik et al., 2010). It can be seen in its direct link to the shared aspirations of immigrant newcomers seeking to become city dwellers. By accepting the immigrants' becoming city dwellers, it is possible to identify the connections between agency and hope that occur during the lifetime work of producing home. The search for home as a set of struggles performed through collective action is embedded and negotiated by individuals. From a radical interactionist perspective, this chapter re-centers "dominance and power" (Athens, 2013) as a central problem of any social movement wherein people interact with one another within systems of violence and disenfranchisement.

Housing is somehow one of the clearest examples of how the domestic sphere (domesticity) intersects with a wider urban context (urbanity) in everyday life. Based on its social-political relationship with the built environment, it articulates the spatial and subjective perspectives. In cities across the world, housing is increasingly precarious and uncertain. Housing crises, from racialized spatial segregation and financialization of housing to the criminalization of poverty, are experienced mostly by marginalized communities in the city, which include, but extend beyond, people forced on the move as undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Rolnik, 2019; Aalbers, 2016).

The dimension of forced displacement as a forced–voluntary spectrum of decisions mediated through the migrants’ agency (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018) is important because it reminds us of the significance of the violence, trauma, and loss that forces people to leave or flee their (home)land. It also acts as a way of categorization that produces margins—people who are represented as marginalized (Lancione, 2016) as part of the current securitization and illegalization of human mobility. For the most part, they are undertaking a kind of migratory experience often marked by harrowing journeys, alongside the enforced immobility of many others incapable of moving out from that situation. The forced displacement implies a traumatic disruption of a sense of home(land), both in terms of emotional and interpersonal relationships, and material settings. Therefore, the search for home and other places of dwelling becomes central for those who have been displaced and seek sanctuary.

It is crucial to develop an account of immigrants’ search for home and other places of dwelling in the receiving city through the lens of precarious emplacement. In this chapter, I do so by focusing on grassroots activism in squats. To be clear, that is to say, the immigrants’ search is a social battlefield involving complex socio-spatial relations of class, gender, and ethnicity in which people on the move hold a spatial imaginary imbued with feelings that extend beyond the built form of a house, household, or housing. The immigrants’ search for

home and other places of dwelling reflects a nuanced way of resistance in the everyday lives of people on the move who remake home elsewhere in a marginal context and subjectivities. The meaning of immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling takes place in the daily negotiations (conflicts and cooperation) of belonging through the behavioral choices and decisions made within the lived experience of immigrants' homing in the squat. Ultimately, I argue that this search foreshadows the transformation of the dominant struggles for housing into a new form, embodied in noncitizen agency. Noncitizen agency transforms the struggle for home from a theoretical approach to a practical organizing and political strategy. The immigrants' struggles for home show the power of the assemblage of life at the margins.

1. People Forced to Leave

The migratory movement of people traveling by boats across—and eventually drowning in—the Mediterranean and Aegean seas to Europe has become a central political issue in recent years (Dines et al., 2018). Europe's "migration crisis" or "refugee crisis" leads to a reflection on the responses by the international community in terms of migration management, governance of mobility, and border control. For Dines, Montagna, and Vacchelli (2018), the perspective of migration as both an object and subject of crisis frames a powerful narrative device that has been the dominant issue in the public discourse, political debates, and academic research. Indeed, it applies to people on the move arriving mostly from Africa and the Middle Eastern countries, and it is connected to a racialized rhetoric in the production of the "refugee crisis" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018).

As Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2018, p. 20) puts it, Europe's refugee crisis has involved the categorization of people "into different statuses attached to the process of application and recognition of asylum produces a hierarchical order, a nomenclature reminiscent of the orientalist and racialized practices of European colonialism and imperialism." Within the rhetoric of "Europe's refugee crisis," the migration–crisis nexus has posed a central question

in terms of policy decisions and governance structures on how to view and manage migration in the language of crisis (Dines et al., 2018). The European migration crisis is racialized and developed through migration regulation and control (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018). The secularization of immigration as an organizing principle plays a significant role in the interplay of racialization and migration, fundamentally shaping asylum and migration policies as the normalization of racial violence (Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016).

In Europe, the securitization of immigration has been politicized by nationalist and populist radical-right parties and movements (Dines et al., 2018). Also, it has raised the question of the migration crisis as an “unresolved racial crisis” (De Genova, 2018); to elaborate:

“Anyone concerned with questions of race and racism today must readily recognize that they present themselves in a particularly acute way in the European migration context, haunted as Europe’s borders are by an appalling proliferation of almost exclusively non-European/ non-white migrant and refugee deaths and other forms of structural violence and generalized suffering”. (p. 1768)

De Genova (2018) speaks about migration in Europe as a socio-political production of racialized distinctions. It is concerned with defining non-European and non-white migrants vis-a-vis the “European” identity. This process is carried on through institutional arrangements that embed particular norms of formation of postcolonial whiteness in the migration management (De Genova, 2018). This is particularly the case for the conceptualization of the migrant–refugee “crisis” (De Genova, 2018), a key issue in determining the identity of non-Europeanness (through terms such as “migrants,” “refugees,” “asylum-seekers,” “foreigners,” “minorities,” and “Muslims”). This socio-political production of racialized distinctions is associated with the uprising in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, or the so-called “Arab Spring.”

The migratory experience in the context of “Europe’s migration crisis” meant the displacement induced by political conflict (in the wake of the Arab Spring and the Libyan war) that lead to a shift from internal to cross-border movements in search of safety, livelihoods, services, and/or humanitarian assistance. The migratory experience under this context of the Arab Spring is understood as forced displacement because it often involves human trafficking and smuggling toward European shores.

There is, of course, a certain degree of migrants’ agency in the decision-making process for undertaking such a journey. However, the term “forced” refers to people who decided to move across borders, fleeing violence, persecution, famine, environmental catastrophe, or poverty, in the pursuit of livelihood opportunities. Indeed, migrants’ agency is mediated by the forced–voluntary spectrum (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018). Nevertheless, by labeling migration as forced displacement, we identify a specific migratory experience tied to a wider context of what “being forced to leave” means, which shapes migrants’ agency. For instance, to be forced does not mean that there is no agency for displaced and war-affected populations. Rather, the migrants’ agency has different degrees of volition; this means that “in relation to migration decisions [it] is closely tied to available acceptable alternatives and the agency to act on those options” (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018, p. 987).

The riots and protests in Libya started in February 2011. This was one pivotal feature that characterized the geopolitical backdrop of the unexpected migratory flow of people through irregular channels to Italy. In response, the Italian government announced the North Africa Emergency Plan (Piano Emergenza Nord Africa), a public policy targeting the immigrants crossing the border and claiming international protection. This policy was the major response to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean, ranging from the provision of accommodation facilities to health care, employment services, and language courses, and it resulted in the illegalization of and destitution paths for migrants and refugees. The policy

ended in 2013 and with this, the immigrants found themselves facing the risk of deportation, which increased their vulnerability because of the lack of social protection. Buxton (2020) reminds us that temporary protection or assistance constitutes an injustice. She argues that this is a harmful political choice to refugees in liberal democratic states.

These immigrants had to find (informal) ways of accommodation and shelters, including through the practice of squatting. Vacant buildings played a central role in accommodating these marginalized populations in the city (Field notes, March 2019). Also, it involved the efforts of (re)establishing a home experience or a safe place to stay (Field notes, March 2019). In many cases, the lack of documentation implied the search for home, and other dwelling places were framed by the label of “illegal immigrants.” However, people’s lack of proper documentation was not the only reason why they were illegalized. Their search for home was deemed unlawful because they were framed as “unwanted” and “undesirable” immigrants in different ways.

For Ulbricht (2019), the social construction of wanted and unwanted immigrants has to do with a symbolic boundary-making process, evaluating the otherness assigned to them by mainstream politics. Those considered “unwanted” are “forced” to live and work outside the law. They are foreign-born noncitizens who are not legal residents of their host countries. The fact that they lack permanent legal residence shapes the possibility of migrants’ homing and how it can still be imagined, attempted, and for a small number, succeeded in attaining. In the eyes of law, they are labeled as “illegal immigrants.”

The point is that forced displacement, (im)mobility, and emplacement have asserted themselves as issues within the city and are mutually constitutive of the contemporary urban landscape, especially for those who have experienced displacement—been forced to leave—and now face the restrictive immigration regime and exclusionary character of social security

benefits based on citizenship. Such migrants are forced to stay illegally; they are deemed to be “illegal.”

2. People Forced to Stay Illegally

The people on the move, including refugees fleeing persecution and seeking asylum, are also forced to stay illegally in Europe. For instance, they need visas for travel to any Schengen-zone country and were hardly able to qualify for it (De Genova, 2018). Their presence on European shores has been linked to the production of illegality of the newly articulated securitization of the migration. De Genova (2002) has called this “the border spectacle,” noting that border enforcement renders migrant “illegality” as a result of practices, images, and discourses; further, it convincingly argues that the spectacle of migrant “illegality” converts them into “illegal” and deportable “migrants” (De Genova, 2013).

The violence experienced by those who have crossed the borders of the EU outside of authorized channels is generally considered to be the basis for becoming legally “vulnerable, precarious, and thus tractable labor” (De Genova, 2013, p. 1181). Contemporary European regimes of “migration management” are concerned with the production of illegality, shaping contemporary migratory experiences. This important connection between the production of illegality and “migration management” includes the violence of border and migration control to acknowledge, first, the reality of reaching and living as an undocumented migrant in Europe. Second, it demonstrates how forms of struggle and resistance against such a system take place through daily practices.

Recent scholarship concentrates on the importance of immigrants’ self-organized strategies in relation to housing in Europe and explores how space is embedded in these processes of political subjectivation from the margins (Maestri & Hughes, 2017). These findings look at place-based struggles of marginalized subjects. The many studies around practices of solidarity and strategies for claiming and enacting rights have investigated

“citizenship as a continual process of (re)negotiation and contestation” (Maestri & Hughes, 2017, p. 627). According to Maestri (2017), squatting as a social movement started in Italy in the 1970s and involved leftists’ organizations committed to working-class claims. This has changed recently, with the practice of squatting also being undertaken by undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers that have appeared in the aftermath of Europe’s migrant crisis (Montagna & Grazioli, 2019; Dadusc et al., 2019; Maestri, 2017; Martínez, 2017). The solidarity-based movements caused the emergence of supporting immigrant squatting sites, combining issues of austerity protests and migrants’ right to housing in Spain, Italy, and Greece (English et al., 2019; Martínez, 2017).

However, the dynamics of migrants’ homing in informal settlements remain under-analyzed. Little is known about the immigrant squatters and their living conditions to construct either their own complementary understanding or alternative understandings around issues of migration and rights. Living in squatted buildings, they constitute an autonomous urban space and are “making citizenship-associated rights accessible to everyone regardless of their status” (English et al., 2019, p. 522). Thus, I argue that the immigrant squatters experience an intersectional burden based on their representation of multiple marginalized identities. This burden makes it more difficult for the immigrant squatters to develop a politically resonant discourse around the meaning of work for illegalized migrants.

I agree with English et al. (2019) in their contention that the practice of squatting by illegalized and marginalized migrants challenges the normative discourses and practices of citizenship, expanding its boundaries. Drawing on Lefebvre’s concept of inhabitance (1996, as cited in English et al., 2019), they see migrants’ struggles as a bottom-up production of the urban space. Not only are the housing rights at stake but also ways of creating alternative socio-spatial relations. Ultimately, new ways of living together through autonomous forms of solidarity between citizens and noncitizens are being elaborated (English et al., 2019).

Citizenship is no longer the precondition framing political subjectivity. The inhabitation as the production of the urban space and new political subjectivity (English et al., 2019) do not come ready-made but are constructed over time, as meaning is ascribed to space through the daily practices of transforming marginalized subjects—immigrants’ outsider positionality —into the claimants of rights.

That was the case for a few empty buildings that comprised the former 2006 Winter Olympic Village of Turin, which was occupied by immigrants with the assistance of local activists or citizen supporters in March 2013. The local activists or citizen supporters organized a social movement known as the Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee to support the inhabitants of the squat. This solidarity-based movement assisted the daily lives of the squatters and supported political struggles (demonstrations and protests), demanding greater social justice toward immigrants and mediating relations between the squatters and police and public authorities.

Over the years, this immigrant squatting site became known as the Ex-MOI Occupation and turned into one of the biggest occupations in Europe with over 1,000 inhabitants of more than 30 nationalities. The Ex-MOI Occupation resulted in both the wider context of forced displacement linked to Europe’s migration crisis’ and the production of illegality that labeled people on the move as “illegal migrants.” However, the immigrants’ search for home and other places of dwelling took place at the local level and often through grassroots movements.

Solidarity-based movements play a central role in the immigrants’ search for home. English et al. (2019) argues about the immigrants’ home-making practices and their sense of home. In fact, immigrants create homes and forms of inhabitation and can engender social change, developing a sense of belonging through squatters’ movements. They maintain that immigrant squatting can be viewed through the practice of home-making, enacting an alternative to being housed (English et al., 2019). Moreover, immigrants’ involvement in

squatting and their practice of home-making bring about new possibilities of commoning and resistance toward the politics of inhabitation (English et al., 2019). I argue that such politics of inhabitation involve home-related expectations or aspirations, including ways of homing and feeling at home, both symbolically and materially.

3. Feeling at Home?

“This place is where I live now. It is where I handle to work and to rest” (Field notes, April 2019). The search for home intersects the challenges of finding a job. The squatting site is home to thousands of illegalized immigrants seeking employment. In the early mornings, you find inhabitants of the squat having machine coffee and cigarettes for breakfast. Some go out seeking a job, others go back to the squat. Because most of them lack proper documentation, adequate language skills, and access to local networks for seeking an established position, one way to make a living is to become part of the cash-paid labor force as day-laborers. “You can find a job talking to other people here [in the squatting], with folks from the Committee, and you can try [to] walk around and asking people,” according to an interlocutor (Field notes, April 2019). Although they are not covered by standard legal protection, they regularly work in the city for already-low wages under illegal conditions. They work as seasonal farm laborers for little pay. In some cases, “there is no room for negotiation. It up to you whether you do it or not” (Data collected in April 2019).

Over the years, the inhabitants of the squat have become remarkably entrepreneurial. Some self-led entrepreneurship initiatives include a barber’s shop and restaurants serving traditional meals from their homelands. Additionally, a small grocery shop was opened not far from the furniture repair shop. Said an interlocutor, “I am a bike(s) mechanic to make a living. I learned it here ... We have customers from outside of the Ex-MOI too (Field notes, February 2019). The Ex-MOI Occupation was not only a temporary shelter or a provisional arrangement

for those who were seeking a home in exile and lacked documentation but also a web of informal business activity among squatters and, eventually, in the local community.

For instance, since they cannot rely on crucial tools such as access to credit, informal immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship plays a part in their income. An interlocutor attested, “We do not live without costs. We need to repair everything here. And if you want to find an affordable place somewhere else to live, you need to make money at [sic.] the first place” (Field notes, March 2019). For many squatters, the way to make money in the first place was by trading cans for cash. Aluminum cans, plastic containers, and glass bottles become the means for squatters to earn money. Another interlocutor stated, “with this money, I buy things for myself and for my place” (Data collected in March 2019). The precarious built environment of the squatting site is transformed by the process of daily home-making. Indeed, it reveals a tension between the day-to-day home-making efforts of the squatters and their somewhat traumatic loss of home.

The loss of home lies at the heart of the migratory experience-forced displacement (Taylor, 2013). The lived experience of the loss of home and its subsequent search in exile is part of a wider context, revealing geographies of rootedness, urban-dwelling, and mobility (Blunt & Sheringham, 2018). The Ex-MOI Occupation concerned both the loss of home and its search. It responded to the immediate materials needs such as shelter for immigrants. This was done through the occupation of vacant buildings based on self-managed spaces for political organization, which become the setting for social life that enabled migrants’ agency, emotions, and practices of home. It was from the practice of squatting that people on the move developed some sense of being dwellers instead of just immigrants.

It is also the case that just as such immigrants’ experience of home was constructed through the experience of dwelling within that squatting site, so could it be constructed at an informal level and through the absence of rights. However, this was a precarious condition,

even though the immigrant squatting turned the empty space into a particularly meaningful and emotionalized setting within which their personal biographies were (re)framed as dwellers. A dwelling place as a noncitizen highlights precisely what the politics of inhabitation concerns: a process of becoming. We must look at how people forced to migrate have been struggling for housing and how an instrumental part of this struggle is about how homes are understood, made, lost, and remade. The understanding of what feeling at home means for migrant squatters is the first step that goes beyond the informal and unlawful dimension of squatting.

The immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling is inevitably a process of becoming. It is a central issue for people forced to migrate that are illegalized in the receiving countries. Although their struggles go beyond that to topics including access to labor, education, and the healthcare system, it seems that housing poses the most pivotal challenge to their everyday lives in exile. The Ex-MOI Occupation allows us to think about how empty spaces can be actively and strategically used within multiple processes of political subjectivation. This enacts a meaningful relationship with empty places for immigrants in search of homes and other places of dwelling. It is where homes may emerge and are made, lost, and remade by people on the move. The squatting site represented the spatial transformation of the formerly empty buildings of the 2006 Winter Olympic Village into an informal residential dwelling managed through autonomy and self-organization.

Boccagni (2017, p. 18) asserts that immigrants' home experience is about "being-away-from-home and searching-for-it-again." What emerged from the narratives and conversations with migrant squatters who had lived for months and eventually years in the Ex-MOI Occupation was a complex and contradictory picture of loss and dislocation, and therefore, the search for home and other places of dwelling. It was a multiple and ongoing expectation of the creation of a new home elsewhere involving elements of loss of home, identity, and desire. Their search for home and other places of dwelling allowed the forging of affective

relationships mediated by interactions, negotiations, conflicts, hostilities, intimacies, and exchanges that linked them to those specific urban spaces. The immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling is relational, socially constructed, and constituted by various intersecting trajectories of (non)institutionalized networks of power, whether they are categorized as migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers. The analysis of the inhabitants of the Ex-MOI Occupation elucidates the implications of both illegalized migration and the lack of adequate housing policies. The illegalized migration reinforces the precarious journey, setting the immigrants' home experience as disenfranchisement and placelessness. Whether one feels at home or not in the host society is at stake here.

Research on homes in forced migration and refugee studies has questioned the established binaries between migrants' former and current homes in exile (English et al., 2019; Boccagni, 2017; Taylor, 2013). For Taylor (2013 p. 132), migrants' homes hold "on-going connections" that have come to be comprehended as "deep, emotional attachment to the lost home, while at the same time making a new home in the country of exile, or indeed in another country altogether." Taylor (2013 p. 132) further argues that home is part of transnational practices that "may have been adopted as much out of necessity as desire, "as a way of managing the crisis of exile", so that forced migration is also about forced transnationalism.

The separation of migrants' former and current homes in exile is collapsed altogether with transnational home-making practices. On the face of it, the migrants' former and current homes in exile may be recognized as an integral element of the home experience for grappling with the contemporary search for feeling at home. A closer look at the Ex-MOI Occupation reveals the social life of the squatting within the immigrants' homing practices as the lived experiences and relationships that take place within them.

The immigrants' home experience, however, is not just connected to the former dwellings. Boccagni (2017) contends that immigrants' home experience is a meaningful

relationship with the place amid the ever-changing aspects of everyday life within the reproduction of power relationships and inequalities. He approaches the link between material (physical form) and subjective (socio-emotional) realities of a home as a driver of interaction over time. For him, homes and their inhabitants are intimately bound up with the configurations between relationality and materiality, including domesticity, materiality, spatiality, and temporality on a daily basis. Boccagni's view of immigrants' homing is central here because it highlights the interpersonal relationships and emotions connected with the forms of immigrants' home-making. This enables us to see the immigrant squatting for housing as a home-like setting or space, as a source of domesticity embedded in the material living conditions of dwellers.

The search for home carries its meaningful dimensions of the home experience that places human and nonhuman perspectives and interactions on the same plane. The immigrants' search for home might be differently configured and socially emplaced across various contexts of ideas and practices of home. He reminds us that a more nuanced understanding of the home–migration nexus is needed. Our gaze toward immigrants' home-related research can benefit analytically from home-related views and everyday practices.

The migrant everyday life can be perceived as a social relationship with a place that speaks directly to a processual and interactive experience of home (Boccagni, 2015). Further, the migrants' homing processes have a spatial dimension that is mediated by emotions, aspirations, and dilemmas. Moreover, “migrants' need to keep anchoring their sense of home to some fixed or at least material basis, rather than cultivating home as an indefinitely fluid or de-territorialized postmodern entity” (Boccagni, 2015, p. 50). By looking at the meaning of the search for home and other places of dwelling for migrant squatters, it is possible to identify how forced displacement impacts not only the migratory experience but also the idea and practice of imagining and constructing a sense of home.

The forced feature of the migratory experience has an impact over space and across state boundaries as well on the sense of home. The forced displacement may tell us something about the meaning of home, and therefore, home is localized in a variety of locations. Indeed, it seems that the search for home and other places of dwelling for those whose relationship with their homes is disrupted by exile relies on meaningful social relationships that dictate the ways in which home may be (re)made in multiple ways and encompasses more than the built, physical form of a home. Migrant squatters in the Ex-MOI Occupation expressed sorrow for the loss of their former houses, tastes, and lifestyles, which they had left behind years ago.

The home experience becomes a central source of feelings and attachments that influence identities, which rely on the geographical and material bases of a dwelling space. For Cieraad (2010), the sense of home encompasses a recreation of home from reviving memories of past homes to the reinvention of future homes. Cieraad (2010) asserts that memories and projections are connected to home-building activities. Against this background, I want to underline that the immigrants' search for home and other places of dwelling is charged by both memories of past homes and future-related aspirations for future homes.

The interplay between material and subjective (i.e., the emotional and affective) enables relationships with the built form of squatting as well as with the wider city of Turin and draws out the key dimension of the sense of home. As noted by one interlocutor, "our challenge is [to] help them to take care of this place. And they can take care of themselves too" (Field notes, September 2018). This seems instrumental in the efforts to create a sense of belonging and how it is experienced concerning the dwelling space. This has biographical significance. The search for home is part of our biographical journey in the city. The squat plays a role in this process, assisting and negotiating a new sense of home in face of housing precarity. The home experience itself within the squatting site allows a kind of connection to the place and with

other residents, as well as with people and homes in the surrounding areas in Turin. The squatting becomes a driver of the construction of a place of dwelling for migrants themselves.

The buildings in the Ex-MOI Occupation were physically transformed and refurbished during the years of occupation. Moreover, the built environment of the former Winter Olympic Village was reinterpreted by its inhabitants. The squatting site was a major domain of commonality between inhabitants rather than predefined categories of groups such as refugees, asylum seekers, or undocumented migrants (Field notes, March 2019). “We all know each other by nicknames,” one interlocutor explained (Field notes, January 2019). In the Ex-MOI Occupation comprising people from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the role of nicknames was instrumental in communication.

As a researcher, I referred to them as “squatters” in my analysis. However, in the fieldwork, that simply would not work. It felt unfair to call them “squatters.” I realized that in these buildings, the Ex-MOI Occupation was narrated, perceived, and imagined differently by their inhabitants. “I used to live here. Now I live in a room in the city center. I have a job. But that was my place for years. I have friends here,” elaborated an interlocutor (Field notes, April 2019). It was a place of intimacy and privacy, for instance. The immigrant squatting site plays a role in the search for home carried out by illegalized immigrants. Even after considering the provisional and precarious condition of that dwelling space, in the squatting site, they were dwellers rather than categories such as squatters, immigrants, or undocumented migrants.

The squat provided some grounds for feeling at home. Under the migrants’ living circumstances, feeling at home indicates an emotional experience of dwelling spaces through homing practices (Boccagni, 2017). Further, this holds a sense of future aspirations, hopes, and expectations in this search for (feeling at) home. A dwelling place is connected to a broader process of exclusion or marginality through personal relationships, kinship groups, and networks as well. The search for home holds feelings and material aspects attached to a home.

It involves an embodied experience of belonging to possible lives that people may imagine or for which they may aspire. It is interconnected with the space/place of both origin and exile. It is shaped through the embodied home experience of looking for a future for themselves, mediated through interaction between people's everyday lives (Boccagni, 2017).

The search for home and other places of dwelling lies in the possibility to de-link the past experience of home and recreate a new sense of the same. This process of negotiating the terms of new a sense of home includes the domestic relationship with home-related feelings. Doing so involves the ways of emplacing a home, both in a biographical and socio-spatial sense (Bocaggi, 2017). This demonstrates how the spatial dimension of (feeling at home) does not exist in isolation but rather acquires meaning through a series of interrelated connections with dwelling places and its inhabitants, formed out of the particular set of social relations that interact at a particular location in ordinary people's daily lives. Upon deeper analysis, I argue that the Ex-MOI Occupation as a way of emplacing home indeed reveals the precariousness of the Other and the squatters' lives at the margins.

4. Immigrants' Struggles for Home

With the immigrant squatting as a way of emplacing home, we move toward a home experience and domesticity from the margins, to understand how people on the move with precarious legal situations attach a sense of home to informal dwelling spaces. It involves a subjective definition of the marginalized practice of immigrants' homing that "holds a relational, appropriative, and future-oriented side which should not go unnoticed" (Boccagni, 2017, p. 23). Boccagni highlights the relationship between immigrants' homing and marginality and suggests that "migrants' 'search for home' is an inherently political and politicized question" (2017, p. 88). Marginality plays a significant role in how international migrants search for home. According to Giardiello (2016), the theoretical basis of what the term "margin" means goes back to the Chicago School, particularly with Park's formulation of

the marginal man (1928). Marginality becomes a key feature in framing the urban experience of a subject of urbanity, a person who lives on the border between two cultures and fails in the adaptation to urbanity. Marginality, as noted by Giardiello (2016, p. 5), is related to a whole body of literature that explores the processes of spaces and spatial differentiations within a city's organization, shaping the behavior of its inhabitants.

From this point of view, the emergence of marginality is rooted in forms of segregation and processes of social exclusion that are bound to structural changes in the modernization process (Giardiello, 2016). Within this theoretical perspective, a recent perspective has pointed out the notion of "life at margins" (Lancione, 2016). In this approach, marginality means both the structural processes of dispossession, exclusion, and exploitation and the relational level of daily life interactions connected to a place-specific context. This approach also adds a post-colonial analytical lens of the social construction of knowledge around "being marginal" (Lancione, 2016).

The idea of "life at margins" is important here because it sheds light on marginality through the lens of assemblage thinking. The space and people of the margins, as Lancione (2016) puts it, articulate the multiplicity of life and potential of becoming through the assemblage of power. The Ex-MOI Occupation challenged the marginalization as a dynamic of dispossession, exclusion, and exploitation by (re)assembling the experience of marginalized people in their search for home and other forms of dwelling. As noted by one interlocutor, who was supporting the squatting, "it is often surprising to outsiders that we are organized here. By ensuring some space for dwelling, they also realize new claims" (Data collected in April 2019).

The literature that discusses marginality and migration has mainly explored the limitations of immigration laws and policies toward integration and social inclusion (Faedda, 2013; Kretsedemas et al., 2013). It is central to this critique to understand how migrants become a minoritized population that is excluded through racialized, gendered, and sexualized power

exercised by the host society to protect insiders against outsiders (Faedda, 2013; Kretsedemas et al., 2013). Analyzing the Italian context of immigration laws and policies including those of prisons and detention centers, Faedda (2014) argues that the combinations of excessive bureaucracy, a confused corpus of law, and harsh security-oriented policies have established exclusionary mechanisms over immigrants, producing their vulnerability “as a crucial tool of control and coercion” (p. 115). Her view is that there is an institutional background that makes immigrants unprotected and vulnerable, and this is associated with the anti-immigrant rhetoric that links immigration with threats to public safety as part of a political (and electoral) strategy based on nationalist discourse. I build upon this scholarship to posit that there is an implicit association with the idea of migration and marginality (correlating criminality to it), which is one of a continuous line through which a state traces its control over a population and “contains” it.

The migrant illegality is a visible outcome of the political order and a horizon of surveillance, identification, and detention, regulating the domain of (an)authorized otherness, of foreignness. Lancione is right in arguing that the city “is alive, and the marginal subject is alive through it and with it” (2016, p. 12). It is in this alive city that marginalized migrants and natives encounter each other. Immigration laws and policies produce marginal spaces and subjects to manage the urban poor (Faedda, 2013; Kretsedemas et al., 2013). This production of illegality (De Genova, 2002) is addressed as a matter of “public order” or a “security problem,” and immigrants’ mobility is framed as “irregular.” Because the migrant mobility is “unregularized,” their search for home is transformed into social struggles.

Migrant mobility is, fundamentally, people’s movement for (re)making their home (Jansen & Lofvig, 2009). The struggle for home is mediated by practices of attachment to and detachment from a place endowed with hope and a sense of possibility (Jansen & Lofvig, 2009). The search for home implies the political agency “where subjects’ capacities to put

themselves and others into place articulate with the power relations that unequally distribute this capacity” (Jansen & Lofvig, 2009). The struggle for home entails the power to emplace; focusing on home, Jansen and Lofvig (2009) underline how the power to emplace oneself shapes subjectivities.

The struggle for home is a distinctive and potentially transformative appropriation of the materiality of the space embraced by political subjectivation through which to recontextualize the marginalized immigrant agency. The search for home as a struggle may be understood not only in both spatial and socio-political terms but also as how the possession or lack of power influences the way people think, feel, and act in this struggle. The search for home concerns how power is negotiated in interactions between persons and groups in multiple social contexts. This search is both material and imaginative; these realms and processes are always under construction. It is loaded with the meaning-making practices of belonging and everyday home-making practices. The immigrants’ emplacement of home via squatting is an inherently precarious process.

5. Precarious Emplacement

“They built all these buildings without observing the standards safety regulations of civil construction to the Olympics games. It was unregular since the beginning anyway,” an interlocutor asserted (Field notes, January 2019). The notion of squatting as precarious emplacement is important for two reasons. First, it looks at squatting for housing as part of the immigrants’ search (as struggle) for home and other forms of dwelling in exile as a form of emplacement. This search for home emplacement is mediated by interactions in everyday home-making practices. Second, it highlights how this search for home emplacement takes place under conditions of precarity. The immigrant squatting constructed and embedded in relations of power invoke *what* as an unlawful practice, challenging not only urban policies and property regimes but also the limits of citizenship as a channel for claim-making. The

practice of immigrant squatting, however, is also a way of emplacement that is produced and articulated through lived experience and as spatial imaginary framing the ways in which immigrants' agency may deal with their marginalization—which may be disempowering—in the receiving societies. As squatters, however, these illegalized immigrants are actively fighting for rights, including the right to housing.

The conception of squatting for housing as precarious home emplacement through the lens of the “assemblage theory and dwelling” (McFarlane, 2011) allows us to think about organizational power from below (i.e., the grassroots level), produced through informal inhabiting. I look at the grassroots assembling as the basis for power. Such grassroots assembling must be understood as being politically produced by a differential operation of power relations. It is a building process through sharing, cooperation, and agnostic interactions that overlap behavioral relationships with which people on the move engage, operate, and intervene in the city-making process. McFarlane (2011, p. 653) notes that assemblage covers “indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality, turbulence, and the sociomateriality of phenomena.” Her perspective is that assemblage is done through interactions that “generate new encounters with people and objects, and invent new connections and ways of inhabiting everyday urban life” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 654).

The Ex-MOI Occupation as a spatial form of socio-material dwelling conditions was one way to constitute urban assemblages, which, under certain conditions, can generate the power relations of agnostic interaction dynamics. The critical point, argues McFarlane (2011), is that dwelling produced through the labor of assembly makes up the continuities and discontinuities of the possibilities of dwelling in urban life. As she puts it, urban assemblage “brings to a conception of dwelling a processual and mobile conception of urban spatiality. This mobility and translocality of dwelling are crucial, and it unsettles the heavy connotations of localism and rootedness that dwelling carries” (McFarlane, 2011, p. 663). The emplacement

of immigrants' home relates to the wider context of the emplacement of migrants in a city. The emplacement of migrants in a city is not a direct product of public policies or state institution actors (Schiller & Çağlar, 2013; Schiller, 2014). It can be defined as the social processes that may be locally situated and through which migrants build or rebuild networks in the daily practices of sociality (Schiller & Çağlar, 2013; Schiller, 2014). For Schiller and Çağlar (2013), network building is a major feature of emplacement that allows forms of connection to a specific city. Network building is done within the constraints and opportunities that emerge from the everyday lives of those targeted as "foreign." The Ex-MOI Occupation serves as a network-building web, connecting citizens and noncitizens together.

This Occupation was the site of a set of shared aspirations among immigrants: "It is not because we have different walks of life that we don't have anything in common ... At the end of the day, we came to the same place" (Field notes, January 2019). The squat is a field of sociabilities and with some degree of autonomy for its inhabitants. It is a setting marked by different ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Field notes, February 2019); these include a set of distinctive home-making practices, relationships of respect and affection, and also conflicts and violence. For the most part, the limitations were linked to the illegal aspect of the occupation. "We look for [a] job in other places ... because If they know you are living here [Ex-MOI Occupation], they don't want to talk to you" (Data collected in February 2019).

Along with police presence and police action in the squatting site for the purposes of surveillance and control, an aspect of constraining was the total lack of support from the state and public policies to address the migrants' key needs in their precarious living conditions. In this sense, precarious emplacement helps us to elaborate on how new kinds of political action emerge from dispossession. According to Çağlar and Schiller (2018), "migrant emplacement allow[s] us to highlight claim-making practices, situations, sites, institutions, and social

relations in which displaced people, migrant and non-migrant, build sociabilities that can form the basis for new kinds of political action” (p. 13).

Çağlar and Schiller (2018) also turn to the role of migrants within the city-making process as social actors in the urban landscape. The focus on those who have crossed international borders may consider the dynamic of multi-scalar actors, including institutions, procedures, and regulatory mechanisms that have been regulating the processes of dispossession and displacement. They have been organizing policy regimes of governance, ensuring the uneven distribution of wealth and power. Çağlar and Schiller (2018) see these as dehumanization processes for international migrants. They identify that the main issue is to think about the racialization and stigmatization associated with migrant emplacement and its effects on city-making. The immigrant emplacement, then, is an integral feature of city-making. The living conditions of squatters are, by its very nature, precarious ones.

The conception of precarious emplacement draws on Butler and Athanasiou’s recent work on the biopolitics of dispossession. To them, violence, vulnerability, and mourning are key elements of precariousness. In other words, it is about “exploiting an existential condition, since precarity, understood as a vulnerability to injury and loss, can never be reversed (this I tend to call precariousness)” (Butler, 2013, p. 20). The Ex-MOI Occupation can be seen through this lens of precariousness. On the one hand, the migrant squatters face a permanent risk of eviction. On the other, in many cases, they are exposed to and affected by other vulnerabilities such as the lack of proper documentation, racism, and police violence. The squatting as precarious emplacement is a response to this, made for those who have been dispossessed of their rights or denied institutional modes of belonging. Precarious emplacement sheds light on the migrants’ agency, exposure to violence, and rights privation.

The modes of belonging of migrant squatters were reduced because of their vulnerability to social forms of deprivation and dispossession. Butler and Athanasiou (2013)

argue that the biopolitics of dispossession is connected to a wider logic grounded in the present-day global market economy of neoliberal capitalism. Such a system of domination and exploitation is currently in charge of the politics of economic precarity and is driving measures of austerity and the violent appropriation of labor. Precariousness as an existential condition is shaped by the neoliberal frames of instrumentalized bodies. Butler and Athanasiou point out that this reveals the major feature of our times: the biopolitical governmentality. In part, it refers to the crisis-management in the political imaginary. That is, the production of crisis and its management measures become a fundamental technology of biopolitical governmentality. they contend that the political imaginary of crisis and its management lies at the heart of the biopolitical governmentality, forming the contemporary occasion of subjugation. This discussion takes us to the topic of the centrality of dispossession.

For Butler and Athanasiou (2013), the existential condition of dispossession was historically turned into a domain of power and control. They address the production of (laboring) bodies that are politically and socially disenfranchised. It becomes a major regulatory and subordinating process in the formation of the subject in the ways through which the biopolitical agendas of the nation-state operate primarily in the body and subjectivity. It is exactly the categorization of bodies without control over their own lives that marks the being to be dispossessed by norms. This means that (dis)possession reveals the normative power, racism, violence, displacement, and performativity associated with the bodies that are politically and socially disenfranchised. Butler and Athanasiou (2013), however, also highlight those dispossessed subjects may resist the disciplining effects of subjugation “by performatively enacting alternative modes and sites of belonging” (p. 159). As a result, the biopolitical governmentality cannot avoid the political conditions of subversion and resistance.

6. The Immigrants' Search for Home

Stated an interlocutor: "I'm lucky in having find [sic.] this place. It is a lot of people, you know? But there's some organization around here. And you can be part of it, if you will ... But I don't attend meetings all the time. (Field notes, May 2019)

My understanding of the role of solidarity in the Ex-MOI Occupation suggests a range of circumstances and meanings. For some squatters, solidarity has shaped the way to see themselves as a collective with shared interests and purpose. The squatting was a way to organizing collective capacity to improve their circumstances. It possessed the sentiment of being part of collective action as a hedge against the precariousness of everyday life. From the perspective of political capacity, they felt they belonged there. However, for most residents, solidarity was perceived as exchanges between people trying to meet basic material needs. To those people, the foremost goal was to leave and not to struggle for decent housing and change things as a direct result of demonstrations and protests.

Solidarity was a caretaking relationship that also served to move away from the squatting site, not to stay longer. Solidarity, for them, was a matrix of interpersonal relationships constituting people's daily lives. As solidarity-based movement, squatters' movements can socially negotiate visions of ourselves that we collectively constitute but also constantly revise and reconsider, a different picture emerges. As stated by an interlocutor: "The EX-MOI is not the same place as it was when I first arrived here. What you see now is about organization. In fact, it is about how we have learned to organize our everyday life". (Field notes, March 2019)

People's daily lives shape informal settlements, and they are also shaped by them; immigrant solidarity plays a part in this process. The housing-based activism in the Ex-MOI Occupation was not marked only as a matter of squatters who were connected to a wider network of opposition and dissent; rather, it was an attempt to support and create a space for

people whose sense of home had fallen apart. Squatters were aware that the Ex-MOI Occupation was always a vulnerable and provisional place of dwelling. Nevertheless, being there as a squatter meant that they could deal somewhat more freely with their experiences of dislocation, non-belonging, and attempts to remake home-like experiences, which involves practical and emotional labor. It allowed them to be themselves and partake in domestic activities including cooking, dressing, and housekeeping. The squat allowed them to have some degree of housing stability and self-esteem. It intersected with their path in search of home in an explicit manner; they were acting subjects. In both cases, in a political capacity or as a caretaking relationship, immigrant solidarity places special emphasis on expressions of group identity, through which they were no longer judged to be socially disorganized, disaffiliated, and disempowered because they were forced to flee their homes. As agents of action, they were searching for a home in the local context of emplacement.

The immigrants' search for home involves collaborative labor. This labor is linked to a situated and interactive endeavor, revealing that some degree of domesticity and political organization are required in the pursuit of a decent place to live. This search mingles and overlaps with vulnerability and uncertainty; it is often carried out through a precarious path of emplacement in exile. The immigrants' search for home is negotiated over time and space, they seek a home-like experience of domestic life in the city. Boccagni (2017, p. 91) reminds us that home serves as an "anchor to the past" and is "projected into the future." Boccagni also argues that migrants' ways of homing are an ongoing process of place appropriation. This place appropriation to (re)make home, as Jansen and Lofvig (2009) point out, implies power relations and collective experiences of the home-making efforts. These home-making efforts often involve struggles regarding "the power to emplace oneself" (Jansen & Lofvig, 2009).

Our experience of being at home is a learning process "characterized by familiar and localizable ways of being—through which the outside world can be temporarily set aside. It is

a place where one feels sheltered from outside intrusions and considerations and given a place to recollect oneself in a space of familiarity” (Jacobson, 2009, p. 358). In the immigrant squatting sites, the space of familiarity is in a precarious position. It is not official and is not respected by authorities but is somehow the way to establish some privacy. It is a web wherein the “outside world can be temporarily set aside.” It may be a place of changing roles for undocumented immigrants. Further, it is a web of home-making. It is a web that allows people to tell more about themselves performing home-making practices than fleeing home. Squatting as precarious emplacement tells us about the bodily actions of home-making. It is an urban assemblage of the embodied social actions of migrants’ homing practices. They seek some being-at-home experience. It appears as a form of resistance against the vulnerability of those who suffer discrimination, exploitation, and violence. The immigrants’ search for home looks to the collective power to emplace; people acting through informal, unofficial, and/or illegal venues tie themselves to domesticity. It provides shelter for people searching for somewhere to live, gaining access to a dwelling place, corresponding to a social practice of becoming political in their otherness.

To understand squatting as precarious emplacement is to understand the agency of the squatters in informal settings and their embodied performativity in the contest for housing. Squatting, under such condition, is seen as precarious emplacement both because squatters are illegalized immigrants who are deportable and because they are living on the margins, mostly in informal dwellings, where they are also at particularly high risk of eviction. As squatters, people on the move remain exposed to abandonment, precarity, and vulnerability. However, through the work of solidarity linking ordinary citizens and illegalized noncitizens, the squatting offers some sort of emplacement to take form, even though it is under the context of precarity. The precarious emplacement turns into an alternative strategy for coping with the

needs that all individuals experience when confronted by a lack of integration and adequate housing provision.

Squatting as precarious emplacement holds embodied political practices that turn into channels for searching for home elsewhere. This account allows us to capture the moments of squatters becoming political in exile through performative practices that co-constitute political subjectivities. Squatting as precarious emplacement is an embodied spatial practice, in which illegalized noncitizens constitute themselves as those making claims. They struggle for the right to dwell, regardless of their immigration status. The domestic space in the squat points to a symbolic and material break from the existing conditions of one's dispossession. It engages in aspirational (if not utopian) imaginary of the life at margins. It elucidates the centrality of domesti(city) by informing us that an individual being political is not merely a matter of national law in terms of state membership. This space is to be preserved but mostly to be (re)constructed, searching-for-it-again to unpack changes in (non)citizenship practices. If this immigrant squat as precarious emplacement has taught us anything, it is surely the fact that the unauthorized making of political spaces at the margins points to significant efforts to (re)instate the noncitizenship as a matter of rights-holding persons.

The squatters' movements offer the collective construction of people on the move as actors in their own lives by the practice of constructing home. With illustrations from Ex-MOI Occupation, squatting as precarious emplacement sheds light on how struggles over space, place, and human rights may confront the idea of citizenship as a fixed entity; those who are undocumented, unhoused, and do not control their housing shake the very foundation of the concept of citizenship and its relation to nationality itself.

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Chapter V - The Immigrant's Struggle for Home: Toward a Subversive Cit(y)zenship



Picture 5. Ex-MOI image from the Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti website

Abstract

This chapter reflects on the immigrants' rights activism to justify building occupations. The immigrant squatting known as the Ex-MOI Occupation in the Italian city of Turin illustrates an initiative of housing-based activism standing up for immigrants' rights. Central throughout this chapter is the conceptualization of "subversive cit(y)zenship." Inspired by Bauböck's work on urban citizenship and Butler's performative theory of assembly, I try to distinguish it carefully from both Holston's work on "insurgent" and Earle's concept of "transgressive" citizenship. From identity politics to reflective solidarity, a distinctive feature can be identified in housing movements. It calls to uphold immigrants' right to housing and legitimizes the occupations of abandoned buildings. The analysis of the subversive potential of reflective solidarity practices between citizens (rights-holders) and noncitizens (claims-makers) is at stake in this chapter. This subversive feature allows illegalized immigrants to assert themselves as city-makers. Existing literature on housing-related issues has long assumed citizenship as a core concept for the mobilization of people against negation or deprivation of rights. The role of noncitizens' struggles, however, remains underexplored in urban studies literature. The question of identifying the alternative approaches of mobilization that have been adopted by housing-based movements as a response to austerity measures, dispossession, evictions, displacement, and homelessness will be addressed. Immigrants' activism helps us understand the recent alliances of resistance against the violation of housing rights. This chapter addresses the question raised in housing movements research that calls for attention to the noncitizens' struggles in the search of home in the city.

Keywords: Subversive, solidarity, housing movements, noncitizens, immigrants

Introduction

On March 30, 2013, a group of people undertook the first squatting in the former Olympic Village in the peripheral area of Turin, Italy. The Olympic Village was built to house participating athletes and other officials related to the Winter Olympic Games in 2006. However, after the game, a few buildings of the residential facility were left to decay. Some years later, these buildings were occupied by immigrants. It was a practical response to immigrants' needs for shelter in face of the state's failure to ensure accommodation adequately for them. With the termination of the North Africa Emergency Plan in February 2013, a public policy offering accommodation facilities to people fleeing from the Arab Spring in Libya, people were left without any formal shelter.

Although only a few families and individuals squatted in these empty buildings in the beginning, the Ex-MOI Occupation became the place of dwelling for hundreds of immigrant squatters, most of them refugees and asylum-seekers. The perceived success of the first building's occupation and the growing number of newcomers—mostly migrants and refugees—arriving in Turin led to a set of four more occupations in the empty buildings of the Winter Olympic Village in the city of Turin. The Ex-MOI Occupation was an overcrowded, poorly maintained place where inhabitants shared washing and sanitation facilities. It was situated in the Lingotto neighborhood, a working-class residential district in the city of Turin. This immigrant squatting turned into a crucial place for illegalized immigrants in search of a place to dwell.

This immigrant squatting was assisted by a solidarity-based movement for six years. The solidarity movement played a pivotal role in supporting the immigrants' needs. It was through the work of solidarity that the everyday lives of the squatters were turned into an autonomous organization on a local scale. The Ex-MOI Occupation is an example of how a local initiative can articulate a distinct spatial imaginary and a practical alternative to address

Europe's so-called "migration crisis" at the local level. The movement insisted on a different response from the exclusivist approach taken by the states, especially in Europe, through anti-immigration movements and in right-wing political parties. The solidarity-based movement rejected a humanitarian approach which had framed some sense of the victimization and securitization of the immigrants. As an interlocutor stated, "It is a challenge for us, I know, but we don't want to reproduce this idea of suffering all the time. The idea here [in the squat] is to show another side of these people. They make decisions. We take care of this place somehow" (Field notes, January 2019). Also, it articulated the commonalities between local people, refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as a diverse range of voluntary activities. The supporters of the immigrant squatting were committed to fostering autonomy and communing urban, social, and political spaces, rather than offering institutional social protection. The immigrant squatting itself was a political act about the membership of political communities.

The Ex-MOI Occupation reveals a significant aspect of the question of illegalized immigrants including refugees and asylum seekers. The occupation of the Winter Olympic Village in the city of Turin was a practice of contentious and spatialized politics, challenging the boundaries between citizens. Solidarity was the basis for a radical urban praxis that shaped and organized political action, which supported immigrants' rights. By and large, the work of solidarity at the local scale generated autonomy and, somehow, elicited a unified grassroots response in conflict with the institutional realm. This was especially contentious for those who argue that notions of "nationality" or "national identity" are essential for the cohesiveness of political communities among the European nations. This immigrant squatting challenged the relationship exclusively between populations considered native and part of the national community and those considered foreign who were racially or culturally stigmatized. The Ex-MOI Occupation calls for an understanding that that looks at the practice of dissent beyond civil disobedience. As an interlocutor pointed out, the immigrant squatting cannot be reduced

to an unlawful practice (Field notes, April 2019) Rather, it was a site of collective action fighting against the injustice perpetrated against people on the move who lacked the proper authorization. They were supported by citizens, so that “As an Italian, I took for granted that rights are for everyone. Clearly, that is not the case. I can use what I know to help them out ... Actually, I’ve learned a lot about my own citizenship because of the work we do at the squat” (Field notes, July 2018).

The existence of solidarity assisting the “noncitizens’ political participation,” in whatever form they take raises profound problems for the membership question in the liberal democratic project. I argue that the work of solidarity between citizens and noncitizens renders squats something more than merely symbols of protest. It may refer to the emergence of a distinctive form of contentious politics with transformative potential, political subjectivities, and communities. It opens ways of thinking about citizenship in a liberal political polity. I put forward the idea of “subversive citizenship,” which is founded on the struggles of illegalized immigrants and those citizens mobilizing in solidarity with them. This theoretical account informed by a year’s fieldwork in the Ex-MOI Occupation between 2018 and 2019 draws on field notes and interviews with immigrant-squatters and members of the Solidarity Committee for Refugees and Immigrants.

1. Defining the Political and Political Community

A significant issue that emerged from the analysis of the Ex-MOI Occupation was concerned with how to frame the immigrants’ activism as squatters in terms of citizenship. These people on the move labeled “migrants” and “refugees” played the role of squatters and their activism indicated more than a reductive view of squatting as an unlawful practice. Their activism was done in the face of and in response to illegalization, securitization, and criminalization in the context of “antiterrorist” surveillance and political repression. The squatters of the Ex-MOI Occupation challenged what De Genova et al. (2018) call “the politics

of asylum,” that is, the nexus between protection and nonfreedom. The conventional assumption of national citizenship was not adequate to understand it. In practice, this means that the illegalized immigrants’ activism or political participation in the city-making process destabilizes the conventional understanding of citizenship rights and political communities. But how does this take place?

We know that citizenship ultimately defines the notions of the political and its community. It establishes the members of a political community within a particular territory and socially constructed history (Isin, 2002). Hence, it ensures a set of rights and obligations that are attached with members; it articulates the sense of political community upon which it relies. At the most general level, “citizenship” refers to a special kind of membership (with rights and mutual obligations) in a polity. The historical background of citizenship as a ruling principle for the right to be part of a political community was invented and inherited with reference to Ancient Greek and Roman societies. The features of this imagined political community are regarded as the basis for a rights-bearing person. Cities as political spaces (the polis) have historically been the locus of being political.

The invention of citizenship, Isin (2002) argues, concerned the construction of a privileged minority vis-a-vis the establishment of the other as a stranger, outsider, or barbarian. That was an essential strategy for defining who was entitled to be a citizen and who was not. Citizenship is deeply rooted in the imagination of being political. It is just within a community that a person may be recognized and validate their claim of belonging. his ancient institution remains a pivotal starting point to think about the Western traditions of political thought. Such political imagination serves as the foundation of political and social beings. Part of this view of citizenship, however, was transformed during the modern era. This involved historical processes of state formation, the project of modernity, and (post)colonialism illustrated by revolutionary events such as the American War of Independence and the French Revolution.

What is remarkable about the modern conception of citizenship, then, is that being political is meant to be recognized by an external power, such as a nation-state. Citizenship by birth (*jus soli*), by being born to parents (*jus sanguinis*), by marriage, or eventually, through the length of residence within the state established assumptions about who counts as a subject of rights (Isin, 2002).

This recognition follows the logic of bureaucratic regulation of membership in a political community, which is taken to be an essential element of state sovereignty. The modern conception of citizenship is linked with being political to the state and its strategies of sovereignty and space. This membership, typically associated with the nation-state, is defined by the institutional and legal requirements for its realization within a given territory in which the politicization of the space “as a continuous means of differentiation between insiders and outsiders” occurs (Bartelson, 1995, p. 37). It mediates the combination of rights and duties to membership in a political community (Isin, 2002). This political community or polity holds a normative framework of what constitutes being recognized as a rights-bearing subject, defined only by the state apparatus. This definition of rights and duties is central to modern sovereign-state practices that are linked to the standard form of nationality-based political community (Bartelson, 1995).

Sovereignty as an organizing principle from the 19th century onward separates what is inside the state and what is outside of it (Bartelson, 1995). In this way, citizenship refers to the internal subject of a state as the institutional mediation of rights and duties, defining subjects of politics within its polities. Such a view covers what being political under citizenship entails. The discourse on sovereignty regulates political subjects with the polities attaching to citizenship, as the presence of sovereignty over people or exclusion of what is considered outside. Interpreted as the presence of sovereignty over people, citizenship is an integral part of the nation-building project and its strategies of spatial sovereignty (Bartelson, 1995). The

authority of the nation-state enacts citizenship and rights-bearing individuals are citizens of nation-states.

Hannah Arendt's famous theoretical aporia of the "right to have rights" (1951) problematized this state-led status of being a rights-bearing individual. Arendt suggests that rights are political artifacts and nationality has been creating rightless individuals. She posits that "to have" rights is to challenge the state's territory to withhold citizenship and its alignment to national identity prerogatives. Arendt calls for rethinking the framework of the nation-state and who is entitled to rights. Benhabib's reading of Arendt's analysis of "to have" rights as a moral imperative recognizes that everyone holds equal conditions of being a rights-claimer (2004). Benhabib (2004) summarizes Arendt's view that "states began to practice massive denaturalizations against unwanted minorities, thus creating millions of refugees, deported aliens, and stateless peoples across borders." In other words:

"Arendt's critique suggests that what it means "to have" rights is to help create and sustain a political world where rights-claiming could be possible for everyone. Put differently, we "have" rights in the way we "have" a convention or a party: by helping to organize, stage, and maintain a collective space of equality. We become part of the project "to have" rights, for example, when we engage in protest, legislation, institution-building, and creating associations that help to build a world where everyone can be heard as legitimately claiming rights". (Maxwell, 2018, p. 45)

Turner (2001) talks about the "erosion of citizenship" in its nationalist and welfare forms. As pointed out by Turner (2017, p. 14), the national-state was a "top-down political strategy to form a nation out of societies that were culturally diverse in terms of language, religion, and ethnicity." According to this insight, citizenship was historically part of the "politics of identity" at the national level, or the national identity was at least considered a major driver of the process of civilization (Turner, 2017). There is a growing body of literature

on the study of migration, globalization, and rights that debates the limits of the conventional institution of citizenship as national membership, defined by the relationship between political subjects and the national polity (Faist & Gerdes, 2008; Benhabib, 2004). Citizenship refers to more than an articulation of legal-institutional and socio-political stances that have included different levels of governments that escape from this traditional approach, reinventing the public sphere and public declarations against marginalization (Parvati, 2012).

It is a call for transforming the relationship of borders and citizenship as related to sovereign territories, and the bureaucratic membership at the local level to deal with the presence of illegalized migrants inside the national territory through local “citizenship” policies (de Graauw, 2014; Varsanyi, 2006). De Genova (2009) speaks about quasi-citizenship through which non-citizens can articulate political demands and make claims. According to Holston (2009), there is a need to conceive citizenship as a multiple and significant contemporary urban experience.

Central to this view is to point out the possibility of being politically detached from the national state-centered arena of politics. From this background, the idea of citizenship as the membership of a local, regional, urban polity that would be extended across the national territory emerges. Challenging the national exclusionary power of citizenship is at stake here. As McNevin (2011) puts it, irregular immigrants policed as illegitimate outsiders are political actors. It is through irregular immigrants’ activism that new claims for citizenship emerge as the new frontiers of the political. As a result, noncitizens’ activism appears as the major question for rethinking citizenship, justice, and rights. Noncitizens’ activism redefines notions of being political and a political community. For the interlocutor, such as citizens, immigrants can claim their rights and, in fact, the EX-MOI would be important example of how the matter of housing struggles plays a central part on it (Field notes, 2018 September).

2. Redefining the Political and Political Community

It is important to highlight that the squatters of the Ex-MOI Occupation were illegalized noncitizens, “I had the papers, you know? Documents and stuff. But every year you need to get them renewed. There is no easy way to understand what you need. And if you do not have one document, I don’t know, it is just better to avoid the authorities. (Field notes, April 2019). As such, no autonomy of movement and freedom of choice was expected from them. The lack of adequate documentation and the absence of citizenship combined with their illegality discourse should have been a solid limitation to their political presence in the city. However, that was not the case in the Ex-MOI.

As an interlocutor pointed, “Even for us, Italians, it is hard to understand what documents immigrants need. Each case is different. Many of them, we know, have signed documents without being fully aware of its content (Field notes 2018 Jun). From the fieldwork, it was possible to understand better how citizenship and noncitizenship are related concepts. For Tonkiss and Bloom (2015), noncitizenship is far more complex than simply the lack of citizenship. Noncitizenship is a new venue for theory, where it emerges in and as the very event of illegalized immigrants’ activism. If citizenship means to be included within a national political community or society, it holds an exclusionary power of formalizing who is in and who is out, that is, determining the alien, the foreigner, and the immigrant to be noncitizens. Noncitizenship sets up a more complicated relation between membership and rights in contemporary societies. In this way, immigrants’ political participation brings issues for this idea of citizenship status as a means for the state to assert territorial sovereignty.

We learn over and over that citizenship is about political power. But political power is a forward march, drawing other kinds of social changes, where people enter and act in social life with identities into its dynamics. We might look at squatting practices, both in success and failure, through the social dynamics of interpersonal encounters in which agency within

assemblage plays a key role. Making politics is not limited to citizens. “We are not deciding for them. They make decisions by themselves and we assist the way we can. Sometimes is more political, that is true... most of the time, our work is to provide services in the squat, such as clothes, food, job” (Data collected in November 2018). The solidarity work between immigrants and citizens allows us ask about how the agent’s own perspective is framed by the historical processes.

Taking the Ex-MOI, the solidarity between immigrants and citizens has the power to destabilize the conventional view of citizenship and redraw the extent and expanse of political subjectivity. Following the autonomy of the migration thesis by which migrant mobility itself becomes a political movement, migrant mobility is primarily about making polity (De Genova et al., 2018). After all, it can be said that “the human freedom of movement as an elemental and constitutive force in the ongoing unresolved struggles that are implicated in making and transforming our sociopolitical world” (De Genova et al., 2018, p. 243).

The solidarity work done in the Ex-MOI Occupation show us potential autonomies in the making. Doing so, I argue, it opens a new framework for agency and assemblage thinking as the stage for collective struggle targeting social protection, rights and justice come into question, the conventional national model of citizenship is also put into crisis: It becomes unclear how to distinguish what is the background that grants rights to the holder. Seen in this way, the work of solidarity within immigrants’ squatting movements can function as the locus of interpersonal respect and reciprocity to socio-historical selves. It is in the assemblage in multiple temporalities and possibilities, and in terms of interaction with others that squatting movements guide and shape (and justify) its own power structure.

Tonkiss and Bloom (2015) identify the centrality of theorizing noncitizenship, looking at the role of noncitizens in contemporary societies. This perspective embraces the challenge to discuss to what extent justice and rights should be applied to those who are right-holders as

citizens. Such a perspective makes visible the politics of noncitizenship and debates it as a category of membership. Noncitizenship is the potentiality of political stances, creating new relationships, political subjectivities, and communities as well as ways of rethinking about the spatial understanding of political belonging and identity (Golding & Landolt, 2013; Nair, 2012; Rigby & Schlembach, 2013; Sigona, 2015). Noncitizenship is no longer a matter of simply the absence of citizenship (Tonkiss & Bloom, 2015). These scholars have explored how to address the question of noncitizenship both as an analytical category and as a lived experience, including the political agency of the protagonists of migrant and refugee narratives (De Genova et al., 2018; McNevin, 2011).

The nature of noncitizenship within liberal political theory, argue Tonkiss and Bloom (2015), challenges the dominant models of citizenship and their relation to justice and rights. Indeed, persons who participate in a noncitizenship relation have diverse experiences and belongings (Tonkiss & Bloom, 2015). These experiences and belongings take place in different historical contexts, and because the noncitizenship relation intersects with racial, class-based, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursiveness, these relations constitute identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate “noncitizenship” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is produced and maintained as a category justifying the exclusion of the Other. This Other (i.e., the people who move across state borders), however, is transforming the socio-political world of rights and belonging, and identity and membership.

Isin (2008) maintains that citizenship has turned into practice or an “act.” Other scholars have contributed to a body of work, from a global citizenship regime (Cabrera, 2004, 2010; Held, 2004) to liberal migration rights (Benhabib, 2004; Carens, 2013; Nyers, 2006; Shachar, 2009). This literature looks at how citizenship should be reframed in face of the transnational ties in a mobile and interconnected world wherein the absence of citizenship tells little about migrants’ and/or refugees’ claims and struggles for rights and access to services.

By classifying noncitizenship as the absence of citizenship, the autonomy of immigrants is underestimated. I follow the idea of noncitizenship as a “membership category in its own right” (Tonkiss & Bloom, 2015) that needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality to become complete. I argue that this category, articulated with urban/local citizenship, sheds light on the emergence and possibilities of forms of political belonging at the city level. This perspective seeks to extend our understanding of citizenship agendas, drawing from initiatives and experiences to gain access to rights and public services implemented at local rather than national- and state-level arrangements. Building on urban/local citizenship literature (Gargiulo 2021, de Graauw, 2014; Varsanyi, 2006; Baubock, 2003) and “acts of citizenship” as defined by Engin Isin (2008), I contend that noncitizenship can also be conceptualized and investigated as the emergence of new identity concepts in and through politically engaged actions. Noncitizenship contests the place and authority of the extent of the national model of citizenship to define the right to constitute the noncitizens’ membership.

3. Acts of (Urban) Citizenship

By acts of urban citizenship, I mean how subjects—who are noncitizens—enact themselves as rights-claimants through various acts primarily in urban settings, which may promote a local turn of membership. To understand this point, however, we must look at the act of urban citizenship as a transformation of socio-historical selves through encounter. It is through the work across differences that the self-and-other transformations can take place. The Ex-MOI Occupation was a way to fight back the systematic inequalities and the power differentials that shape our history, identity, embodiment, life histories. As argued by an interlocutor, many squatters here could see themselves differently, something else beyond immigration status (Data collected in September 2018). Urban citizenship has become a key topic in thinking about local-based modes of incorporating policy and membership rights,

regulating access to polity beyond the national closure (de Graauw, 2014; Varsanyi, 2006; Baubock, 2003). The origins of citizenship in cities faced a deep transformation led by the dominance of the nation-state and its sovereignty project (Baubock, 2003). As a result, citizenship has turned into a domain of the national realm rather than urban (Holston & Appadurai, 1999). The link of urbanity to citizenship looks at cities as a critical and privileged site of contemporary politics (Baubock, 2003).

Baubock (2003) notes the need for reforms to contribute to fostering the municipal self-government, reflected in norms and rules of citizenship and political representation. According to this view, the local territorial bases and boundaries of democratic self-government are the bases for urban citizenship, ensuring the status of equal membership in a shared political space. Urban citizenship is crucial to strengthen city autonomy vis-a-vis the state. Urban citizenship calls for a territorial scope of its jurisdiction. Central to this argument is the notion that “by contrasting the city with the nation-state, we can describe the rules by which local governments allocate rights and membership to the populations within their jurisdiction” (Baubock, 2003, p. 149).

This literature focuses on the context of the city and its social processes and spatial form as the realm of human practice in which forms of social control, domination, and oppression take place. Also, it is in this context that progressive forces, socially just activism, and collective action for social change resist the people involved in radical politics. Fundamentally, the social struggles around rights redefine the notions of the political and political community. For instance, Isin (2009) follows the city view of the urban as a site of conflicts over resources, representation, and right-acknowledgment that the role of citizenship-making claims challenges the existing social orders, practices, and statuses. Isin (2009) asserts a distinctive meaning of citizenship questioning its view as a uniform, consensual, or homogeneous set of practices and regulations. The urban becomes a site for polities that talks

to a wider political constellation that works both within and beyond state-centric citizenship. As observed by Baubock (2003), this new polity and its self-government require reforms.

Baubock's formulation of urban citizenship asserts local polity based on the subnational self-government (2003). The rule regulating it will be based on the principle of *ius domicili*. This means that the local membership may be acquired and lost through residential status (Baubock, 2003). The shift toward local membership based on inhabitation rather than nationality is at stake here. That would be a significant transformation of peoples' daily lives living in countries where they lack citizenship. From an urban citizenship-like approach, they could access public services; they could participate in trade unions, local political institutions, and voluntary or religious associations; they could live a "decent" life in the same way as many citizens. However, for someone who lacks legal citizenship or "nationality" of the state in which they live, the lack of documentation often means social and political disenfranchisement. Urban citizenship as a critique of national citizenship is connected to immigration (Holston & Appadurai, 1999). This connection plays a central role in influencing people's political consciousness and imagination:

"Immigration is a central link between classical issues of citizenship—imagined as a right-bearing form of membership in the territorial nation-state—and the city as this dense and heterogeneous lived space ... the politics of immigration is closely tied to the politics of cities" (Holston & Appadurai, 1999, p. 195–196)

The literature on cities, illegalization, and migration explores links to the normative vision of urban citizenship. For de Graauw (2014), the possibility to introduce municipal identification cards for city residents through local bureaucratic membership opens an inclusive, feasible policy response to undocumented populations, including immigrants. This does not imply any conflict with the federal level once the local governments are free to formulate their own rules and public policies regarding their local power over the municipal

territory (de Graauw, 2014). Gargiulo (2021a) explores the migrants' exclusion from residency at the municipal level and argues that dynamics of discrimination and selection are mechanisms of exclusion from the civil registry. He talks about 'administrative borders' to the undesirable categories of the municipal population. Importantly, he clarifies that:

“In Italy, therefore, local citizenship is a status inserted within a multilevel system—the lower level is not autonomous, but answers to rules and criteria decided at higher levels—and located throughout the entire state territory: each municipality, and not only the large cities, is called upon to manage the procedures for recognizing residency. This forms a legal status whose attribution clearly rests on pre-legal motivations. These motivations, however, have nothing to do with the sphere of public action and with political participation—in other words, with acts of citizenship.” (Gargiulo, 2021 p.72)

Varsanyi's (2006) reflection upon undocumented immigrants in the city elucidates the need for exploring alternative models of membership and belonging at multiple scales. Both de Graauw (2014) and Varsanyi (2006) exemplify how to think about citizenship from an urban standpoint, addressing the production of immigrant illegality. They refer to institutional responses against the illegalized immigrant presence in the city (de Graauw, 2014; Varsanyi, 2006). Turner (2016) analyzes the autonomy of migration literature, suggesting that marginality is (en)gendering the political “acts.” The immigrant marginality evokes a subject “disempowered and constituted as not belonging” (Turner, 2016, p. 147). From this perspective, the resistance emerging from “dispossessed” subjects become struggles, oppositional coalitions, and refusals that underlines how citizenship “remains an unfulfilled and failed project” (p. 152). What makes this critical analytical groundwork necessary is precisely the fact that “while legal and political discourses and practices marginalize the paperless, their embodied presence makes them crucial to debates around citizenship and political belonging” (Nair, 2012, p. 786). This marginalized condition of the immigrant as the

body of the displaced gives rise to action and resistance. Nair (2012) articulates the immigrants' simultaneous experience of dispossession and protest, arguing that the disenfranchised body of the immigrant may perform transgressions. This performance of embodied transgressive "presence" makes the immigrants' activism a way to defy regulations and express dissent (Nair, 2012).

In the Ex-MOI Occupation, the squat was the place for performing the defiance of regulations and expressions of dissent. As a resistance, the squatting organized through the practice of solidarity provided an alternative way of living in the city. Rather than an institutional policy response, it was from the grassroots-level collective action that the "acts of urban citizenship" emerged from the Ex-MOI Occupation. There are, of course, common grounds linking the institutional response to the grassroots response; that is, both hold a view that "citizenship is tied to the politics of cities" (Holston & Appadurai, 1999). Citizenship tied to the politics of cities may be understood as an embedded practice that produces and consolidates new subjects through various sites and scales (Isin, 2008). As Isin clarifies, the idea of "acts" refers to an "assemblage of acts, actions, and actors in a historically and geographically concrete situation, creating a scene or state of affairs." (2008, p. 24). Further, the concept of "acts of urban citizenship" sheds light on the noncitizen agency in city-making.

With the Ex-MOI Occupation as an illustrative case, I argue that "acts of urban citizenship" are tied to forms of solidarity between citizens and non-citizens, transforming subaltern social subjects into claimants of rights. It enacts a distinctive feature of citizenship, which challenges conceptual boundaries between institutional forms of urban citizenship and its insurgent and transgressive critique at once. I want to recognize and analytically explore the acts of urban citizenship challenges to the socio-historical logic of exclusion to understand how subaltern social subjects such as illegalized immigrants become claimants of justice and rights through solidarity-making.

4. Neither Insurgent nor Transgressive

I argue that the “acts of urban citizenship” are neither explained in Holston’s insurgent citizenship (2009) and nor in Earle’s transgressive citizenship (2012, 2017). Holston’s insurgent citizenship has contributed to putting forward a critical discussion of differentiated citizenship, inequality, and rights-claiming. Based on the case of the Brazilian city of São Paulo, Holston argues that citizenship can perform a “regime of legalized privileges and legitimated inequalities” (2009, p.4). Moreover, he looks at the auto-constructed urban peripheries, analyzing the struggles related to it as a new setting for the practice of citizenship. The role of residents of peripheral neighborhoods of Brazil’s large cities provides the historical analysis of the organizational dimension of the urban poor—mostly working-class population—standing up for rights to land and property in the context of informal conditions of residence.

According to him, the insurgence was a response to the different treatment among diverse categories of citizens or differentiated citizenship. In his words, differentiated citizenship “is harsh: it means a lack of rights and powers and, as a result, vulnerability” (Holston, 2009, p. 19). Differentiated citizenship talks about how the development of citizenship can maintain forms of inequality, exclusion, and subordination (Holston, 2009). The insurgent response to it is the basis for the collective action of the urban poor to gain a set of claims and demands such as political rights, to become landowners and modern consumers (Holston, 2009). Holston’s work on Brazilian citizenship pointed out how such legal status excluded certain groups of citizens. The citizenship established a differentiated dynamic over people, which was a distinctive feature in relation to the French or American experience in which the noncitizen was the subject of exclusion (Holston, 2009).

Holston argues that “insurgent citizenship” played an instrumental role in the urbanization of the peripheries of Brazil’s large cities. The insurgence marked a set of power

relations and its practices of self-organization and mobilization asserted people's rights to the legal ownership of property and urban services within the illegal subdivision and sale of plots in peripheral areas (Holston, 2009). Holston (2009) highlights the centrality of the political agency of the urban poor in the city-making context. The experience of "auto-construction" turned into the basis for insurgent citizenship, allowing us to understand how citizenship as a regime of differentiation, produced the insurgence in the peripheries (Holston, 2009). The poor residents through their insurgent practices formulated alternative projects of citizenship vis-à-vis the context of differentiation formulation of citizenship (Holston 2009). Holston (2009) argues that the insurgent citizenship introduced a new form of urban citizenship based on poorer residents' struggles.

The implications are that the insurgence transforms and challenges the state's logic of exclusion mediated by differentiated citizenship through the people's housing and livelihood practices within the city. Further, the city is a special part of insurgent citizenship. This is because the daily life within the city space is the site for the self-organization of political movements "that develop new sources of rights and agendas of citizenship concerning the very conditions of city life. The chemistry, in turn, transforms the meanings and practices of national belonging" (Holston, 2009, p. 23). The insurgence made it possible to elaborate alternatives projects of citizenship, establishing urban citizenship of the poor, that is, a "way for the urban working class to gain access to land and housing and to turn their possession into property" (Holston, 2009, p. 207). The insurgence was done by the urban practice of the marginalized citizens. This idea has characterized the struggle "from bellow" for a place in the city. Insurgence and its link to citizenship allow the identification of the political agency of low-income residents who are also mobilized around rights in contexts in which the city is illegally occupied and constructed.

Earle (2012, 2017) draws on Holston's work, arguing that low-income housing movements undertaking occupations of abandoned buildings in São Paulo's city center have been negotiating their grievances with public authorities through a discourse linked to text-based rights. According to her, it is no longer an act of insurgence that frames contemporary urban social movements' rights discourse. Holston's fieldwork was concerned with irregular self-building on the peripheries, whereas Earle (2012, 2017) looks at housing movements squatting in empty buildings at the city center. This shift takes up a new perspective by which housing movements draw on the right to housing in the Brazilian Constitution and the City Statute in the city of São Paulo—which also established the social function of property in 2001—to support and justify their activities. Earle (2012, 2017) posits that housing movements in São Paulo combine formal channels of interaction with representatives of the state and organize collective actions of squatting, targeting abandoned buildings.

The practice of squatting is an integral part of the housing movements' strategy of putting forward their political agenda for their members and engaging with public authorities. In this sense, Earle (2012) notes that housing movements establish their political agenda of providing housing rights in the city center to the low-income population both by legal and formal channels by taking part in participatory committees and the unlawful practice of squatting. Thus, housing movements combine the formal and the unlawful together in their wider campaign for providing housing rights to the poorest (Earle, 2017). The housing movements stress the state's failure to uphold the right to housing and organize their collective action based on the Constitution and the City Statute (2001). As a result, the text-based approach of housing movements' collective action may be viewed through the lens of "the politics of rights," as follows:

“Essentially, the politics of rights approach is based on a disconnect between rights on paper and rights in practice. This disconnect is used both to mobilize members to the

movement, producing a change in legal consciousness, and to generate general support from society in favor of the movement's rights claims, thus potentially bringing about adequately implemented public policy and real social change". (Earle, 2012, p. 114–115)

The practice of squatting undertaken by housing movements is a transgression in the sense that it involves going beyond the law. As Earle puts it, "To transgress is to go beyond the limits of what is morally, socially or legally acceptable; thus, breaking the law is a transgression" (2012, p. 121). The transgression is a strategy to reinforce the need for a response to the housing crisis primarily affecting the poorest population, which is a claim based on the constitutional right linked to the social function of property. The introduction of the concept of transgressive citizenship outlines the housing movements' strategy of crossing the limits of the expected and changing the accepted behavior to assert changes in the context of the inegalitarian distribution of citizenship. The transgressive citizenship fosters the housing movements' political agenda of the right to housing through official channels and squatting together.

Both insurgence and transgression are relevant to shed light on how citizenship can be enacted, defined, and created into forms of collectivity that oppose forms of dispossession. At the same time, both insurgence and transgression clarify how citizenship can be contestable, surprising, conflicting, contradictory, and inventive. These two concepts consider the struggles for being political subjects through official and non-official ways, legal and extra-legal practices of making claims, or the outright transgressions or insurgencies of the dominant order. Both transgressive and insurgent citizenship lead to new social bonds and forms of collective struggle and survival that are constituted at the city level. These two concepts look at the power of city residents, mostly the urban poor, and how they have occupied spaces in the city.

Collective action and social struggles connect the urban to the core of citizenship *vis-à-vis* state-centered conceptions of the political community. It should be noted, however, that these two concepts assume that citizens perform the insurgence and transgression citizenship. There is a national citizenship background in the role of activism. Marginalized and excluded activists remain citizens; they are right holders. With a subversive account, I turn the analysis to the bodily performance of resistance by disenfranchised noncitizens.

5. Acts of Urban Citizenship

Disenfranchised noncitizens have developed collective and embodied strategies of subverting legal and state policies imposed on them via normative methods and normalizing violence. The immigrants' resistance to oppression through the bodily occupation of abandoned buildings challenges the relationship of subordination produced precisely through the regulatory practices in which national citizenship excludes people as "strangers, outsiders, and aliens." However, this national background can be subverted through solidarity. Isin (2008) highlights that solidaristic acts toward others frame the encounter between citizens and noncitizens that may be a basis for agonistic praxis. The relationship between citizens and noncitizens is not merely an exclusionary one. The Ex-MOI Occupation serves to investigate how illegalized immigrants perform struggles for rights through acts of solidarity with ordinary citizens.

As Dean (1998) argues, reflective solidarity is an act of perspective-taking that brings people together through collective political action. Dean further explains that mutual recognition is instrumental to reflective solidarity and points out an inclusionary ideal based on a communicative understanding of "we." The author's feminist critique of identity politics theorizes solidarity as an ideal tie of recognition and connection, working together on shared political concerns and driving collective political action. It leads to local politics and coalitional practices of resisting oppression (Dean, 1998). Dean talks about the third-person perspective,

which “refers to the capacity to distance oneself from the immediacy of discussion and generalize from situated claims and responses” (p. 20).

In the Ex-MOI Occupation, solidarity played a fundamental part in bringing together ordinary citizens and illegalized noncitizens on the common grounds of housing-based activism by standing up for immigrants’ rights. Moreover, the Ex-MOI Occupation allowed squatters and supporters to elaborate their situated claims and responses to concrete needs, linking them to a broader context of oppression. Reflective solidarity tells us about the influence on role-choice behavior by making people from different backgrounds work together under the common basis of political action. Identity (politics) is no longer the epicenter of political action and social support; rather, (reflective) solidarity has turned out to be key in the consciousness-raising:

“I call this perspective that of a situated third in order to stress the embodied concreteness of any perspective we take toward ourselves and our interactions: clearly, we do not suddenly end up disembodied and placeless simply because we are attempting to reflect on our situation. Reflection occurs from within a specific context. It is usually occasioned by a tension, conflict, or rupture, by a query that challenges us to think about how things could be other than they are. Because concrete issues and events stimulate us to reflection, when we self-consciously take the perspective of situated thirds we do not take just any perspective, higgledy-piggledy struggling to see from everyone’s position. First, the actual demands of the matter at hand provide guidelines and suggestions for critical sites from which to view our situation. Second, the fact of interdependence reminds us that we are talking and working together because we benefit from the contributions of others; we have already rejected the myth of a single vision. To repeat, reflective solidarity refers to the mutual expectation of a responsible orientation to relationship”. (Dean, 1998, p. 22)

My concern here is to highlight the political potential of solidarity as a critique of the identity politics perspective. Reflective solidarity plays a part in the “acts of (urban) citizenship.” Solidarity produces encounters of interacting actors to subvert norms of exclusion. As the Ex-MOI Occupation informs us, the struggle for home does not rely on national membership. This opens an urban praxis with radical subversive rearticulations of housing, dwelling, and home. For Butler (1999), subversion does not refer to a paradigm or a model of political agency. Rather, it introduces the experience of the body, which produces discontinuity and dissonance. The advent of a subversive body takes place within existing power relations, establishing possibilities for sexuality and identity (Butler, 1999). Talking about subversive bodily acts, Butler’s formulation of subversion underlines the fact that the “multiplication of gender possibilities exposes and disrupts the binary reifications of gender” (1999, p. 158). This view explores the extent to which such a subversive enactment evokes somewhat re-significatory relationships to heterosexual cultural configurations. As Butler puts it, the aim is:

“to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity”. (1999, p. 44)

Butler’s work concerns how the subversive multiplicity of sexuality is constructed and deals with the performative dimension of gender. My reading of Butler’s writing on subversion as a mode of performativity is “to make gender trouble.” As noted by Nayak and Kehily (2006), Butler’s work on sexuality and its interaction of sex/gender norms provides an ontological critique of subjecthood. This means that gender identity as a regulatory fiction may be negotiated in its constructions within subversive matrices of gender disorder (Butler, 1999).

We can consider Butler's ideas on gender, identity, and subversion to help us to understand the solidaristic tie between activist citizens and activist noncitizens. Here, citizenship as an identity is a fantasy. The acts of urban citizenship reveal ways of making "national citizenship" trouble. This interaction of the solidaristic tie between activist citizens and activist non-citizens challenges the binary relation between inclusion and exclusion in the domain of membership at the local level and from the grassroots activism perspective.

The political mobilizations by activist citizens in solidaristic work with refugees, unregularized migrants, and migrant solidarity activists in immigrant squatting offer us new forms and declarations of equality and expand our conceptions of *becoming political*. This becoming political based on reflective solidarity is not addressed by transgressive citizenship and insurgent citizenship approaches. The grassroots solidarity collective organization of the Ex-MOI Occupation created a distinctive form of political action in which rights-claiming goes beyond citizenship. Solidarity allows us to think about how subjects (illegalized noncitizens) constitute themselves as rights-claimers working together with right-holders (citizens). The Ex-MOI Occupation blurs the boundaries of political action under housing-based activism.

It is no longer a matter of *differentiated citizens* struggling for rights and services as an insurgent "auto-construction" as analyzed by Holston (2009), nor is it a matter of *transgressive collective action* in which the urban poor *participate* in formal channels with public authorities and also *break* the law by squatting empty buildings, as suggested by Early (2012, 2017). I call to attention the subversive act: a peculiar solidarity-based alliance between (activist) citizens and (activist) noncitizens. This alliance is performatively produced by refusing, resisting, and subverting the exclusion of others associated with its legal status. It is subversive precisely because the background of citizenship rights is turned into collective action in favor of the illegalized noncitizen. The interaction between citizens and noncitizens as "acts of urban

citizenship” enables us to reflect upon noncitizenship as a realm of politics. It is through solidarity that the illegalized immigrant is *becoming political*.

6. Solidarity-Making Toward a Subversive Potential?

The immigrant squatting addresses an urgent material need but makes the need for a social change toward the illegalized immigrant politically visible. The Ex-MOI Occupation calls for the human right to housing regardless of citizenship status. Immigrant squatting is therefore a way of establishing a political tie that draws on citizens and noncitizens but exceeds it. They are neither insurgents nor transgressors—they are subversives. It is through the practice of squatting by immigrants that the social function of property is upheld and enacts subversive solidarity for acting beyond citizenship. The assembly of subversive (non)citizen bodies is struggling against the exclusionary power of property laws and the national political community.

For Arampatzi (2017), solidarity-making reveals a shift in urban politics, addressing a broader anti-austerity struggle and political strategies. In this formulation, solidarity-making is “constituted narrative and practice—or ‘praxis’—‘from below’ [which] counters austerity in a practical, immediate way and aims to empower the disempowered” (p. 2161). Solidarity-making as praxis articulates activist citizens with excluded other(s) such as aliens and strangers, immigrants and newcomers, refugees, and asylum seekers into the existing local-based urban contentious politics. The Ex-MOI Occupation brings our attention to housing-based activism as the common ground for illegalized immigrants and citizen supporters. Solidarity subversively blurs demarcations between us and them, giving social function to empty properties and claiming for the right to housing that transcends the existing state boundaries of political membership.

My position then differs from insurgent citizenship and transgressive citizenship because both of them emphasize the distribution of resources and rights between individuals

holding citizenship membership. I argue that an urban approach of citizenship cannot be restricted to the struggles of just distribution and rights of the urban poor citizens; they must also incorporate a vision of polity that allows noncitizens' struggles regardless of immigration status. The point of urban citizenship is not simply to extend the recognition to all of the resident population, but rather, to change the relation of recognition itself, redefining who is rights-holder is and who is not, and this very power is enacted by assemblies, not by state territorial sovereignty. By assemblage, I mean a "form of political performativity that puts livable life at the forefront of politics" (2015, p. 18). We may look at the practices, strategies, and mobilization of refugee and migrant activism as forms of assembly. That is, "assembly can be understood as nascent and provisional versions of popular sovereignty" (Butler, 2015, p. 16). The illegalized noncitizen activism—its political participation and engagement—becomes a version of popular sovereignty for a more inclusive version of urban citizenship. Subversive citizenship looks at the solidarity interaction that links activist citizens to activist noncitizens' struggles for a place in the city.

The ways in which refugees, migrants, and citizen supporters have been engaging with notions of political-membership practices through "acts of citizenship" (Isin & Nielsen, 2008) help us to make sense of how the claims to rights and services are contested and contextualized in a distinctive version of popular sovereignty. This is enacted by both noncitizen agency and the actions of citizens within social movements, organizations, and institutions who may struggle with, for, or against them. I argue that the subversive feature of urban citizenship is a distinctive form of becoming political. It enacts an urban politics of membership based on solidarity-making. It is about contesting and negotiating this complex relationship between the rights of full membership, and therefore, the lack of it.

The distinctions between "citizens" and "aliens" that establish the "I" and its "Other" or "us" and "them" are no longer important when the residence is the reference for being-in-

common. To dwell as an illegalized noncitizen is persistence, resistance. It is a bodily act of becoming. I argue that what makes it a subversive “act” is the possibility of “re-signification” through the subversion of citizenship in its national background by calling into question the illegalized noncitizen as a medium or instrument for knowability and agency. Through solidarity-making, illegalized immigrants and citizen supporters play out political performativity against precarity, overlapping models of sovereignty and governmentality. They subversively blur the boundaries between citizens and non-citizens in the struggles for home. Considering subversive citizenship, a new departure for theorizing appears to be urban citizenship. The political theory of urban citizenship needs to directly address the question of noncitizenship. To guide us in this debate, we shall rely on the remarks that were made above, concerning subversive citizenship. So, one may ask, what has been gained by introducing the notion of subversive citizenship? If it cannot frame a category of membership in and through the urban, it at least points toward the need to imagine statuses beyond that of a citizen. Is this feasible?

7. The Right to (the Just) City

In July 2019, the last two buildings of Turin’s former Olympic Village (MOI) were evicted. The Solidarity Committee could not negotiate a coherent and transparent plan with public authorities. In a few hours, people were pushed out from their homes, mobilized to some accommodation facility (detention center), or moved to other regions. Squatters who could move before the eviction did, eventually ending up homeless. As noted by Desmond (2011), eviction is a devastating experience with traumatic implications that erase personal possessions and increases material hardship.

In pursuing a place to live, being evicted is a risk for squatters. The Ex-MOI Occupation reveals that illegalized immigration is part of a broader system of exploitation based on creating social vulnerability, where people on the move are framed as deportable and cheap labor. This

system relies on the government. The question that arises is how the cities can foster a human rights-based approach against creeping anti-migration rhetoric and authoritarianism. The immigrants' search for a decent, safe, and affordable home can be addressed differently by local authorities and stakeholders. This will require a distinctive policy response.

I want to present a concise yet comprehensive argument for the importance of rethinking illegalized immigrants through the lens of the right to the city (Harvey, 2008) and the just city (Fainstein, 2010). For Harvey, cities are at the forefront of rights-claiming and the right to the city is “a right to change ourselves by changing the city” (2008, p. 23). Fainstein (2010) talks about the just city as the standard approach for evaluating public policy and shaping decision-making in the city. Democracy, diversity, and equity are instrumental principles supporting this understanding of the city (Fainstein, 2010). The right to (the just) city combines these two concepts and helps us look ahead and respond to issues related to illegalized immigrants. If we acknowledge that they are more vulnerable to exploitation and human rights abuse, we must call for their right to (the just) city. This means to bring urban struggles of grassroots collective mobilization at the center of city-making and organize them into a local policy agenda that negotiates with its claims and cries for social justice.

The collective power of social movements to reshape the processes of urbanization meets the ideal of the just city, as a set of principles or a guideline for public policy and urban planning, including claims to and cries for an urban agenda of local development. The right to (the just) city serves as a baseline not only for claim-making but also for elaborating, implementing, and evaluating urban policies committed to the effective responses for the urban poor, including illegalized immigrants' needs. To this end, we must reflect on realistic actions that could be taken under a human rights-based approach. This includes knowledge-sharing and redistributive policies. The right to (the just) city can inform strategies of local

development, creating economic opportunities and social protection measures through the view of fairness, regardless of the citizenship and immigration status.

The key step would be to implement identification cards for all city residents. There is a growing number of initiatives providing lawful identification for the undocumented population at the local level, both in the United States (Garcia, 2019; de Graauw, 2014) and in European cities (Spencer & Delvino, 2019). It addresses the lack of lawful documentation, allowing people to access city services, driver's licenses, bank accounts, and so on. Regarding the socio-economic factors of immigrants' exclusion, immigrants under these local-issued identification cards could apply for conditional cash transfer programs. This social welfare program is to make payments to households, conditional on human capital investments in children. When it comes to housing, the design of a universal social program based on residency status can be helpful. Drawing on the migrants' own voices about the reality on the ground will offer relevant insights into the debate of under-preparedness in urban settings. This type of policy can benefit both citizens and non-citizen migrants in finding housing, enhancing the protection of people on the move.

Subnational governments can inform their policy alternatives considering the adequacy of values of transnational networks in the field of integration policies. Transnational networks such as "The Charter on Integrating Cities" inform and shape migration policy changes at the local level. They are a relevant source of lessons learned and knowledge-sharing methodologies in cooperation, particularly in labor policies and employment law. Community-driven initiatives, third sectors, or civil society organizations contribute to fostering a bottom-up social innovation approach for immigrants' needs. The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) has been launched in a non-governmental approach of actions for the inclusion of migrants and refugees.

The subversive citizenship calls for the right to the (just) city. It is possible to see how deeply unequal the city is for its dwellers in terms of status, wealth, and well-being. As pointed by an interlocutor assisting the immigrants in the squat “I think our work here [of the Solidarity Committee] is important because we assume that we all have rights. We, as Italians, and them as migrants, we all have the right to housing, health work, education (...) Nobody should live without rights. We need to stand up for migrants’ rights because the public authorities are not fair with them. It is not only a matter of speaking well the Italian language. For us, Italians, it is also hard to make sure the people from here [in the Ex-MOI Occupation] will be fairly assisted by the local authorities (...) We use our rights, resources, and knowledge to support their rights [immigrants-squatters]” (Data collected April 2019). This perspective reveals the tensions with local government bureaucracy, and this means a way of acknowledging that the urban remains a web of social struggles driven by collective mobilization, but the noncitizen plays a part in the city-making. The solidarity work can inform and advocate a local agenda that takes their claims to the next level. The local agenda based on the ideal of a just city (a set of principles or guidelines for public policy) serves as a baseline for creating and evaluating urban policies. In this way, the right to the (just) city responds to issues raised by subversive citizenship.

From the political engagement of illegalized noncitizens, solidarity-based collective action reveals a distinctive urban politics of squatters’ movements that extend beyond the boundaries of conventional institutional politics. Illegalized immigrants are becoming political through the acts of solidarity in squatters’ movements. This is reinventing the right to the city and what we want for urban life in terms of fairness. It asks what can be learned from these movements’ strategies, demands, and visions. We are talking about urban politics that extend beyond citizenship. This is about the urban as a place for imagination, solidarity, and resistance. It reveals a political consciousness in the making.

8. Setting the Agenda, Moving Forward

After completing this research, many questions remain unanswered. This means that there is room for many more researchers to benefit from the interesting new insights linked to new avenues for research on migration and housing. The major challenge is to provide bold and fresh perspectives on the relationship between migration and housing as a fundamentally political question. That is why it is necessary to draw on radical epistemology to understand social problems and social change to inform policy and practice. The work of thinking, researching, and writing about and for housing struggles plays a part in setting out the possibilities and challenges of alternative approaches and progressive alternative paths for welfare, integration, and social rights.

The challenge is how to intersect the theoretical (and empirical) approaches with the migration-related issues and the impacts of housing neoliberalization, with a focus on belonging, identity, participation, and interaction within the city. Providing an analytical account of mass displacement, informal emplacement, and evictions that help to understand the neoliberalization of housing and its political implications for immigrants as well as how their experience of urban life is imaginatively, materially, socially, and psychologically reshaped is at stake here. These can be concerned with the dramatic growth of evictions, unaffordability, substandard conditions, and homelessness, including how housing precarity illustrates coloniality in the urban sphere. Also, we need to bind the struggles for housing with the policing of the city and the politics surrounding it. We can explore the role of radical alternatives, transformations and grassroots innovations, and pathways of upscaling such practices and relations in different contexts. Therefore, the future research on housing studies, human geography, urban studies, economy, sociology, public policy, education, anthropology, urban planning, border studies, urbanism, social psychology, and other domains shall welcome topics for discussion that include (but are not limited to) asking the following question:

- 1) Where, why, and how are interactions and encounters taking place between immigrants and citizens in the contest for housing struggles?
- 2) How do gendered, age-related, or linguistic dynamics impact immigrants' participation in housing movements? How do the axes of race, gender, class, age, and/or others affect immigrants' subjectivity and agency within housing movements?
- 3) How do people on the move negotiate homes and identities in exile?
- 4) What kinds of violence and insecurity are experienced, governed, and contested by immigrants living in informal settlements?
- 5) What do we know about the role of faith-based organizations and faith leaders in immigrant squatting?
- 6) What are the implications of immigrants' housing struggles for the ways in which we think about police power and state violence?

The precarious condition of human mobility has shed light on the key functions of social movements within cities today. They resist the violent effects of migration law enforcement and police. To move away from the policies and rhetoric that limit global mobility and inflict significant harm on migrants and refugees, it is instrumental to deal with the deep-rooted injustices of urban societies. These fundamental inequalities shaping the realities of the current immigration landscape call for urgent action. Research might potentially serve in the fight against oppression, impunity, and affronts to human dignity. Social urban movements, such as the Ex-MOI Occupation, point to visions for cities to new ways of life and to alternative futures. From ideological manifestos to grassroots urban politics, social urban movements have never ceased to imagine what a future city could be, should be. What are the futures that the emerging cultures and ideological battles today's immigration-related issues are tracing?

This calls for more studies on feminist, queer, and postcolonial implications of displacement, emplacement, and city-making processes. There is a (lack of) spatial and social justice in the context of the (re)emergence of far-right and extremist radicalisms based on racialized anti-migration rhetoric. It will be up to future researchers to clarify how experiences, emotions, and interactions play a part in the way we live and in and through the issues that drive people to act in search of work and livelihoods elsewhere. Illegalized immigration has grown into the common misery of millions experiencing suffering. Researchers, protection actors, and policy-makers learn a lot from people with a displacement experience and their struggles for rights. There is a critical need to elaborate greater and improved coordination of the long-term approach of inclusive protection policies and community-based responses for people on the move exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Indeed, we can offer context-specific urban opportunities to the undocumented population, including refugees and migrants. To address the lack of government-issued documentation for the undocumented population is an instrumental step to ensure access to basic services. Access to adequate housing is another key step to renegotiate their status, belonging, and subjectivity. Under this condition, this long-term approach can focus on human rights and socio-psychological protection for all people on the move and their heterogeneous backgrounds, experiences, and life courses.

The point is to encourage accounts that bridge the structural, the institutional, and the affective, and those which allow us to think about which or whose voices and interests are represented in pursuing different conceptions of housing justice, radical urban praxis, and grassroots activism. It is crucial to clarify the role of elite formations in global inequalities. We need research to expand our notions of the housing struggles and more broadly, our understanding of dwelling and its complex interplay of (subverting) social norms and expected behaviors that reshape people's lifeworlds. It is necessary to look beyond citizenship itself,

establishing legal and symbolic differences (between class, gender, or race) to focus on the emergent antagonism that lies within. The importance of theorizing noncitizenship as a backdrop of social change offers an original and interdisciplinary perspective on the relationship between membership and rights in contemporary cities, advancing our understanding of how immigration is governed and experienced. The challenge is to theorize how housing (an increasingly financialized feature of real estate, global networks of production, trade, infrastructure, and corporate ownership) intersects with the “management” approach to global migration governance. Such a standpoint indicates a web of ongoing racial differentiation in politics and has led to new forms of collective action. This matrix of biopolitical practices of security and capitalist accumulation emerges as the background for most of the socio-spatial struggles.

We need to generate provocative ideas (e.g., subaltern, postcolonial, or decolonial) that inform us of right-focused struggles for a livable life. Even by simply rethinking the field of urban studies considering immigrants’ rights activism and its ambivalences, we will be able to explore key efforts to promote transformational justice. Within housing movements, we identify contemporary challenges, crises, and political movements for social justice that reconcile liberty and equality. The right to housing for undocumented communities relates directly to social struggles that push at the boundaries of radical political thinking. This calls for new conceptual insights, theorizations, and frameworks that bring alternative socio-spatial imaginations of performativity and grassroots politics emanating from contemporary life at the margins. In developing a liberation struggles studies in, of, and for urban justice at different scales, we may benefit from social movements by making visible our need for collective care through sharing a space of sociality.

We need to offer alternatives to the status quo based on extractive dispossession, data-driven surveillance, and control by governments. We learn from the prefigure a future centered

on collective radical hope (Kallio, Meier, and Häkli 2020) and the non-capitalist politics of care. For change to happen, it is instrumental to stand on the right to a safe and adequate home for people on the move as part of an umbrella of rights-centered responses and a more effective harm-prevention framework. The systemic oppression managing human im/mobility takes us to the relationship between housing injustice and displacement to understand the socio-spatial changes in the city. This perspective of research stimulates and feeds into broader debates of how the multi-layered performances of the political in its many guises are all around. Both theoretically and practically, we need to engage in the wider struggle of people's shared collective daily lives. If human mobility is a driver for a transition into a new urban future, what will it look like? What can we learn from all on-the-ground initiatives that challenge the public policies, which target people on the move under the discourse of national security and law enforcement, transforming cities into a highway to detention and deportation? And what impacts might today's protest movements and immigrants' squatters' movements have on the urban of the future? Finally, how can we critically assess and creatively reimagine those urban futures under a radical justice transition project that overtly engages with anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and anti-patriarchal struggles worldwide?

By no means do these points and questions cover all the key subjects related to the nexus between (forced) migration and (radical) housing studies. In this thesis, a particular insight is that a more immediate and critical understanding of squatting not only as a radical housing practice but also as part of the wider urban politics of rights-claiming will enable an analytical grasp of how we might live the urban experience differently. Squatting has been a means to search for home, live, resist, and organize collective action through the unused buildings that spill over a city's landscape. These spaces are repurposed by the interaction of people experiencing homeless, activists, and those seeking – or who are forced – into a subaltern lifestyle to respond to urban precarity.

Being undocumented becomes a defining feature of the migratory experience, a label that shapes people's search for home. It frames a sense of self as lacking the capacity for agency and collective assemblage which empowers us to act politically. It lends itself to being interpreted as a category of misrepresentation and abuse. Being undocumented becomes a mere absence or lack of political presence. In immigrant squatting, many people on the move can take greater control over their journey, at least virtually, making it less shaped by the uncertainty of asylum procedure. It emerges as the site of agency and presence through communicative interaction between multiple actors and their roles. Consciousness becomes political of itself. It emerges within the communicative interaction itself. It is imbued with power relations regarding rules, policies and institutions that shapes people's interests, motives, tactics, and strategies in the context of collective action. As squatters, undocumented people on the move occupy a different role of themselves. This can lead to a process of taking control of one's narrative of identity, agency, and belonging in exile.

Moving beyond narrow empirical approaches to pay special attention to issues in the social and political world through the interpretive, argumentative, discursive approaches lens of social change, claims-making, social movements, and policymaking help better integrate perspectives and reconcile different needs and interests. It is a key part of our analytical challenge to look at the practical aspects of urban activism that confront real-world practitioners. We learn from solidarity movements, for instance, that social change involves political agency and social assemblages, which can always be constructed in different ways to confront oppression based on racism, fascism, populism, authoritarianism, and nationalism. The contentious politics of solidarity movements underline the implications of the lack of public policies. It points the systematic oppression linked to the government's decision of labeling some social groups as a depoliticized subjectivity. Progressive social movements broadcasting the various demands, claims, and interests linking the occurrence of informal,

illegal, or unsafe housing and immigrants' daily life through the lens of social justice struggles help identify and potentially meet gaps in services to immigrant populations, particularly healthcare, housing, legal, educational, and work-related services.

The ability to make effective egalitarian demands in the context of the lack of decent and affordable housing across all EU Member States face the challenge to develop alternative ways of life. Grassroots activism can foster anti-authoritarian practices to decolonize the meaning of emancipation. Social movements are first and foremost a kind of social practice that links together and modifies political consciousness by negating or incorporating demands and grievances, which are articulated by (oppositional) projects and subjectivities promising and conferring the identity that gives rise to a distinct political subject. The urban politics of squatters' movements addressing immigrants' search for home poses an insightful way to approach this distinct political subject. What is implied here is the interplay between political subjectivity and collective action demanding the right to housing in exile.

One could say that there is a tension at the heart of the politics of squatters' movements, two practices that pull in opposite directions, toward both claiming for rights and occupying unlawfully an abandoned site. It is, however, precisely from this tension that its politics reframe the vision on the property and the world it creates, while also making us mindful of its contradiction and inequalities. A history that calls for an alternative form of urbanism from particular spaces/spatial conditions. This is, after all, the main feature in progressive squatters' movements and housing activists: it invites us to remake the city through housing justice struggles. They forge a provocative and groundbreaking praxis of radical political consciousness that the present moment demands.

The immigrants' search for home is part of the history of collective action and resistance around today's radical housing. The critical studies on social (urban) movements can bring new perspectives on the contemporary theoretical and methodological discussions, both

normative and empirical, to bear on the understanding and analysis of the urban as a matter of grassroots politics, and therefore the role of collective resistance and disobedience contesting the conservative politics of public policy in the waves of state-implemented austerity. The (progressive) agenda of solidarity-based movements offer significant insights and resources to the researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to challenge and explore alternative approaches beyond the technocratic approach of policy. It can promote a more radical understanding of democratic governance of urban issues articulated through different spaces and forms of struggle. Immigrant squatting has played a part in the radical history of contemporary city-making. The practice of occupying an empty building or piece of land as a residential place transgress and opposes the violent European border regime and its punitive measures and criminalization of mobility through institutionalized racism. There is much to reflect on here, as we learn from potentially emancipatory immigrant squatters' movements that housing is much more than a roof over one's head - making it clear by the transformative potential of collective action through practices of daily struggles regardless of their citizenship status.

9. Concluding remarks

The nexus between (forced) migration and (radical) housing lie in its symbols, claims, grievances, and collective identities in the pursuit of freedom, equality, justice, and liberation to all people on the move who have been forced to leave their homes. Institutions as a diverse set of individuals and organizations produce displacement at multiple scales and across varied contexts. Under the logic of 'expulsion' (Sassen, 2014), enforcement agencies actively reproduce harmful operations on marginalised people's lives through policing and disciplinary control. This can be seen through eviction events as the physical removal of residents from their homes and land. Roy puts forth an expansive definition of dispossession as well as of collectivism, so that "dis/possessive collectivism is a political potentiality forged in the context

of racial banishment, a banishment that is predicated on the permanently insecure possession of property and personhood” (2017 p. 9). Immigrants summarily evicted from accommodation facilities and from their informal residences connect to the racial banishment of urban space as part of a worldwide process of ‘expulsion’ (Sassen, 2014).

"They want us out. Sooner or later, this will happen. Everybody knows that. Many folks are leaving these buildings already. Family and friends, they are all looking for another place to stay. Some will wait until the police and authorities appear. I am heading to the border with France. I know some people that can help me out there too" said one Ex-Moi resident, a few days before the eviction event (Data collected in July 2019). Another resident of Ex-MOI Occupation explains to me in her way to work, “my family moved out to somewhere else before the eviction. I am here today just to collect a few belongings we still have here (...) an Italian guy suggested a new place for us in the city center.” (Data collected in July 2019). The migratory experience of people seeking asylum relates to time (waiting) shaped exhausting processes of repeated procedure and bureaucracy enacted by laws and regulations, policies, and practices.

The eviction of the Ex-MOI Occupations allows us to consider how the immigrants' search for home is not only a result of the interplay between undocumented status and living (and waiting) in unsuitable conditions of housing precarity. In this case, there was also the lack of adequate policy response to inform people and articulate with supporters the eviction process. With little notice or none at all, people living in the Ex-Moi Occupation heard about the eviction mostly as an informal notice. As people on the move who are often already in highly vulnerable conditions navigate violence, it is possible to identify the combination of multiple forms of precarity through systems of dispossession and displacement.

Before concluding my fieldwork, I decided to take a few more pictures of the walls installed by the local government to block the passage to the buildings after the event of the

eviction. An Italian local dweller approached me and said: "Nobody leaves here anymore. They are all gone. Do you know where?" (Data collected in July 2019). I replied I didn't know. The interlocutor stated: "I think it is better in this way. Hope they do something with these empty buildings. But I have to say, I miss the noise of the children playing around after school" (Data collected in July 2019). I found myself thinking about the children who lived in these buildings, and I realized that "I missed that sound too".

In today's world, the immigrants' search for home relates to contentious migrant solidarity both as an act of imagination and an act of transformation. The political potential of the subversive interaction between denizens and citizens via solidarity can open possibilities to rethink the local membership and the right to housing in contemporary urban contexts. This thesis inspires and compels us to go deeper and further with the way subaltern and disempowered groups articulate demands. Housing's transformation into a commodity follows structures of racialised power. For this reason, immigrants' search for home reflects an affective relation between space and time forged by the dynamics of political exclusion and inclusion.

This thesis tells of my experience documenting housing precarity and immigrants' search for home. Research is itself a praxis, that is, a dynamic interaction that dialectically requires reflexive imagination of the empirical realities under investigation. Immigrant squatters' movements are a reminder of the presence of the racialized and illegalized otherness in the city. Squatter settlements, informality, and social movements illuminate larger questions of the urban future as a web of rights. How we meet the challenge of establishing our future relationship with illegalized immigrants and undocumented populations may determine our potential for democracy and social justice as politically conscious beings against the rise of fascism. Under this context, cities have been the epicenters of urban activism and are the sites that must face with the consequences of immigrants' illegalization. The processes at play have

highlighted socio-spatial relations of violence and exploration that talk about the contemporary dynamics of capitalism. As the migration crisis narrative unfolds, it is important to capture the changes and processes taking place and consider new directions to understand illegalized immigrants who are engaged in collective action, and deliberately intend to disrupt and challenge the status quo through joint action.

In examining and understanding how (illegalized) migration and (informal) housing have been intersected and framed through the crisis narratives, we turn to squatters' movements in which an alternative narrative emerges. For this very reason, the daily violations of the democratic rights and dignity of millions of systematically dispossessed people is a hallmark of how urban life on the margins is constituted. Illegalized immigrants are seen as a threat and are in constant danger of arrest. For the poor, dispossessed, and displaced, the institutional violence goes on and on, driving the miserable living conditions for them. However, people on the move refuse this repression from the state-led violence through which capitalism has maintained its power, deepened racial hierarchies, and expanded the exploitation of labor. Some people on the move have formed a resistance movement against the production of misery and scarcity.

This thesis serves as a wake-up call for rethinking the urban imagination surrounding illegalized immigration through the lens of the radical politics of housing struggles. The people at stake are those who find themselves performing bodily resistance and crying for a more livable life, particularly those seeking safety from violence, harm, or death. I reflected upon what is done on behalf of and by illegalized immigrants with a focus on the self-organization as a source of social transformation of how the subaltern city works. I contended that the urban politics of immigrant squatter's movements in unequal cities offers a powerful portrait of contemporary social struggles against forms of racism and dehumanization, the emergence of

new movements of protests, and the struggles of resistance against oppression generating mass dispossession worldwide.

People on the move are rewriting the meaning of politics. This thesis situated the immigrants' search for home as a major urban question, unpacking its key features that challenge the mainstream portrayal of people on the move as a threat. It reminds us that housing is *radically* much more than a roof over one's head.



Picture 6. Ex-MOI Occupation picture by the author, 2019.

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