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**Migrants’ reception and settlement in Italian cities: exploring
migrants’ precarity, temporalities and integration during the
“refugee crisis”**

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ABSTRACT

Migration represents one of the epoch-making themes in recent European and Italian policy and political discourses, particularly during the recent soi-disant “refugee crisis”, with many countries coming out with a remarkable range of internal and external restrictive measures to contain and deter further migratory inflows. These have created many livelihood challenges for the migrants’ inclusion and integration into the host society, including reception, housing, legal, employment, education and healthcare. While many scholars have problematised the migration question in several ways recently, there is a comparative lack of in-depth empirical and theoretical research on the reception, settlement and housing dimension of migrants in European cities, particularly in mid-sized cities.

This thesis thus aims to contribute to the migration scholarship, exploring how (public) institutions — specific policies, laws and practices — shape different migrant groupings’ daily-lived experiences. In particular, I investigate the institutional production of migrants’ housing precarity, temporal aspects of “assistance” embedded in reception policies and their effects on refugees’ housing outcomes, and local reception policy for asylum-seekers and integration outcome dynamics. Much of the study and conceptual framework is rooted within the qualitative research tradition, drawing on literature from sociology, geography, urban studies and migration and refugee studies. A qualitative approach is used to analyse the empirical data gathered through conversation, observation, documentary analysis and 92 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (from public and private institutions) and sub-Saharan African (SSA) migrants — ‘economic’ migrants, refugees, (refused) asylum-seekers and irregular migrants — in the mid-sized city of Bergamo, Italy.

The thesis comprises a collection of three scholarly articles, investigating separate but interrelated issues using three concepts discretely in each paper: precarity, temporality and integration. *Article 1* investigates the migrant housing question in Italy, focusing on the causal factors internal to the housing regime and how their interplay with public institutions shapes precarious housing outcomes. I extend the precarity concept’s usage beyond the labour market to the field of housing, mobilising two main epistemological dimensions of the concept: its identification of different, concurrent causes of such conditions and its political and institutional production. To give “life” to our arguments herein, quotations from the SSA migrants (‘economic’ migrants, refugees, (refused) asylum-seekers and irregular migrants) in Bergamo are used. The findings show that all migrant groups face precarious housing situations

during their migration process, albeit to varying degrees. *Article 2* explores the longitudinal housing experiences of refugees (people with political asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian protection status) within the city of Bergamo. It looks at how temporalities and temporariness embedded in reception programmes shape refugees' housing outcomes. The findings suggest that state limitations on the length of housing and economic support, lack of post-reception policy, and legal and bureaucratic barriers negatively affect housing quality and stability post-exit reception. The study contributes to our understanding of the effects of temporariness and temporalities in deterring settlement and integration. *Article 3* explores integration outcomes of a “unique” and novel local asylum-seekers' integration model, “l'Accademia per l'Integrazione”, in Bergamo. Employing a “scout/militaristic” approach, the *model* seeks to integrate asylum-seekers starting from their arrival through obligatory Italian language classes and civics, “socially useful” work, acquisition of skills and access to the labour market. The findings show mixed and multifaceted results, including a questionable approach and below-par integration outcomes. Notwithstanding these upshots, the model's conceptualisation of integration of asylum-seekers as a “two-way” process that starts upon arrival in the host society is worth implementing in other local settings in Italy and beyond.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

Samuele and Jonas for surviving the onslaught of my three years absence; the good news is that 'Dad no longer lives on the plane, train and bus' — at least, for now.

Alessia – I owe it all to you.

I love you all.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Setting the Context — The Many Facets of Migration during the “Refugee Crisis”

The twenty-first century has seen the movement of over 1 billion migrants to date, the highest number in recorded history, of which — as of 2016 — 22.5 million are refugees (Laczko and Lönnback 2013; UNHCR 2017).¹ This surge of mass movements of people across space pertains in Europe as well: approximately 4.3 million people immigrated to one of the EU-28 countries in 2016, of whom 2 million are citizens of non-EU member states (Eurostat 2018). This migration flow to Europe has gained public, political and policy attention, in particular since the beginning of the so-called “refugees crisis” in 2015 (Geddes and Scholten 2016).

Since 2010, there has been an increase in mass movements of people into Europe, particularly from Africa and the Middle East, with root causes in the Arab Spring, political instability, militant Islamist insurgency, humanitarian crises and deepening poverty in these regions. This has consequently led to the oft-quoted European “refugee crisis” marked by the entrance of over one million people in 2015 (Banulesku-Bogdan and Fratzke 2015; IOM 2016). However, it was rather a “refugee reception crisis” (Rea et al. 2019) as the EU lacks a unified and effective asylum and immigration system to contain the influx (Wagner et al. 2016). Many EU member states have witnessed the diffusion of the discourse of crisis, invasion and closure in response to this phenomenon, with many of them taking unilateral restrictive measures to discourage people entering their territories. Migration has, thus, become part of what Bigo (2002) called a ‘governmentality of unease’ with an increasing interpretation of the recent inflows through a security lens in Europe (Ehrkamp 2017; Geddes and Scholten 2016; Nash 2015).

More importantly, the crisis has led to the politicisation of anti-immigrant migration discourses at all levels, including an increase in territorial security and externalisation of migration (asylum) policies (Geddes and Scholten 2016; Kuusisto-Arponen and Gilmartin 2015). It also resulted in systematic unwillingness of states to provide ‘protection’ to asylum-seekers across Europe, deployment of differential treatment of migrants and changing of national asylum and migration policy frameworks, including restrictions on access to social welfare and family

¹ See below for notes on the use of the word ‘migrants’ in this study.

reunifications, and issuing of temporary protection status to regulate and deter mass migration and asylum inflows (see Konle-Seidl 2018; Puggioni 2017). Germany, Austria and Sweden, for example, adopted the ‘temporary status’ approach during the recent “refugee crisis” to deter further inflows, a strategy which significantly affects refugees’ desire to integrate and employers’ hiring decisions (Konle-Seidl 2018). Most EU countries have also responded in the last few years by investing in temporary housing provision to asylum-seekers and refugees with no post-reception policy, with many of them lacking permanent and holistic immigration housing policy measures (IFHP 2015). All these institutional policies, laws and practices have pushed many asylum-seekers, refugees and even established immigrants into positions of precariousness, vulnerability, uncertainty, (permanent) temporariness, with consequent effects on their integration process in the host society.

The increasing number of individuals coming to Europe has drawn attention to the role of cities (local authorities) in reception and integration processes. With political ambivalence towards the subject and lack of response by many European states, cities have always been at the vanguard of dealing with the arrival of asylum-seekers, refugees, and (more generally) immigrants (see Barber 2013; IOM 2015). Cities play significant roles in citizenship acquisition, legal status determination, housing, education, healthcare and employment of migrants in the host society, though national asylum and migration policy frameworks condition their scope of influence. Importantly for this research, we look at the migrants’ reception and housing conditions in the host society. Housing has been used as one of the chief indicators of migrants’ integration into the host society. In essence, access to sufficient, affordable, and stable housing is an important first-step in the settlement process for migrants into the new society. Housing serves as the precondition for newcomers’ long-term integration prospects and is essential in shaping their job search and language training, reducing stress and promoting psychosocial well-being and access to other services, thus underpinning many of the vital life events along the entire migration trajectory (Carter et al. 2009; Turner and Hedman 2014; Rosenfeld 2017). As such, the absence of housing affects newcomers in several ways: limited security of tenure, health, education, employment, social and family life problems (Carter et al. 2009). Given the significance of housing in the migration and integration process, there is a surprising lack of in-depth empirical and theoretical research and policy on the reception and housing dimension as compared to other markers of integration (Psoinos and Rosenfeld 2018) justifying the need for and selection of this research focus.

Among European countries, Italy in particular, along with several other Southern Mediterranean states, has been especially affected by these flows due to its geographic position, which makes it one of the main doors to access the continent and the role of the Dublin Accords. While geography positions Italy to receive a large number of migrants, the Dublin Accords — the signature migration agreement of the EU — governs how Italy is required to respond. The policy forces migrants to register in the first landing spot, making it difficult for those who want to move on to other countries and forcing Italy to find ways to address and incorporate asylum-seekers. The EU has provided some financial assistance (“financial burden-sharing”) to help countries at the forefront of the crisis in coping with the burden; however, most countries have made half-hearted efforts in the call for “physical burden-sharing”, a process that, if fully adhered to, would have appreciably alleviated pressures on countries such as Italy and Greece, which have recently become significant entry points for the forced migrants into Europe.²

Additionally, the Italy has witnessed a growing presence of ‘economic’ migrants and refugees with permanent residency over the years, whose presence presents new political, spatial, economic, cultural, and social questions. The country was (and is still) unprepared to handle in a structured and coherent way these flows for both historical and contingent political reasons, with the Italian public and political discourse continuing to view these flows as engendering “temporary populations”. This has resulted in a public approach to recent migration flows based on a series of emergency and extemporaneous measures, mainly crafted through a security lens (Caponio and Borkert 2010; Hermanin 2017; Triandafyllidou 2010); this is done within the framework of a contemporary public environment which is very hostile towards the reception of refugees (and immigrants more generally; see Ambrosini 2018), whose arrival is often framed in terms of ‘invasion’.³ These scenarios have

² The EU countries have agreed to relocate about 160,000 people who reached Italy and Greece in 2015 migration crisis; however, only about 21,000 have been relocated. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, for example, have outright refused to take part in the EU relocation programme (Geddes and Scholten 2016). Efforts to revise the Dublin policy have so far proved unsuccessful.

³ There is the need to move beyond the “myth of invasion” discourse (de Haas 2007), in that poorer countries, for example, have hosted more forced migrants over the years than wealthier nations (UNHCR 2017). For example, as of mid-2016, Turkey sheltered the highest number of refugees, hosting 2.8 million with Pakistan (1.6 million), Lebanon (1 million), Iran (978,000), Ethiopia (742,700), Jordan (691,000), Kenya (523,500), Uganda (512,600), Germany (478,600) and Chad (386,100) following suit.

shaped various aspects of migrants' daily-lived experiences and their integration process in Italy, with the state leaving many aspects of migrants' incorporation to the efforts of local administrations (cities) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Caponio 2010; Spena 2010). Indeed, the recent increases in migration numbers have shed light on the unprecedented role of cities in their reception and integration process (IOM 2015; OECD 2018); and thus need to focus on these local contexts.

1.1 EU Migration Governance and the “Refugee Crisis”: an Overview

The influx of over 1 million people in 2015 into Europe through Mediterranean routes and the scale of migrant deaths (around 6,600 reported deaths in 2014 and 2015) have questioned the common (or lack of) EU migration and asylum policy response. The crisis in Mediterranean shows the relevance of the EU, but also underscores the challenges facing EU Member States and EU institutions in fashioning common solutions. One dilemma making it difficult enforcing and coordinating migration policies at the supranational EU level is legal (Bordignon and Moriconi 2017; Geddes and Scholten 2016). The EU thus lacks a single comprehensive policy on immigration: migration and asylum policies in the current legal and institutional framework are defined as internal affairs and at the discretion of member states. While some progress has been made in adopting new directives, there is much more needed to be done in strengthening the EU's role in the migration governance (Bordignon and Moriconi 2017).

The European Agenda on Migration in 2015 sought to develop a comprehensive approach to the “refugee crisis”, calling for immediate and determined actions in response to the migration question in the whole Mediterranean. These included: saving lives at sea; targeting criminal smuggling networks; responding to high-volumes of arrivals within the EU--relocation; a common approach to granting protection to displaced persons in need of protection: resettlement; using the EU's tools to help frontline Member States.⁴

Part of the European Agenda on Migration was the ‘hotspot approach’ — first reception facilities — introduced during the increasing influx of people into the EU.

⁴ For details, see https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf

The ‘hotspot approach’ aims to better coordinate EU agencies’ — e.g., the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol — and frontline Member States’ efforts at the external borders of the EU in initial reception, identification, registration and fingerprinting processes of protection seekers. Greece (the Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos) and Italy (the island of Lampedusa and the ports of Pozzallo, Porto Empedocle, Augusta, Taranto and Trapani) are the only two countries currently hosting hotspots. These processes, particularly fingerprinting, were initially largely absent in Italy, thus encouraging and making it easy for asylum-seekers to move on to other EU member states to claim asylum.⁵

The EU shapes Italy’s migration, immigration and policy change (Geddes and Scholten 2016). The relationships between Italian and EU policy are “systematic and profound” (Pastore 2001:1), particularly in the case of restrictive aspects of policy such as external frontier controls. EU often considers Italy, together with other Southern European countries, as the weak underbelly of the EU immigration control system (Finotelli and Arango 2011; Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Geddes and Scholten 2016). The repressive component of Italy’s migration policy is one of the ways to show the EU of the country’s commitment to immigration control. However, lack of support from the EU in managing migration during the “refugee crisis”, particularly in ‘physical burden-sharing’, has led Italy to renege on some of its obligations and taking unilateral measures like other countries illustrated earlier. For instance, to stem the high inflows of irregular migration, the Democratic Party-led coalition government introduced the security-driven law 46/2017. The law aimed at speeding up the asylum-seekers’ application process and then separating them from unauthorised migrants (for details, see Law 46/2017). Further, the government also struck controversial bilateral agreements with Tunisia, Libya, Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan and other West African Countries in areas such as border control, judicial cooperation, protection, development support, returns and assistance (see Palm 2018).

⁵ See http://www.epgencms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/0dcf8b85-5e3d-42ae-aa4c-ebf9fd4bf3ba/Session_1_-_Explanatory_note_on_the_Hotspot_approach.pdf

1. 2 Research Objectives, Questions and Structure of the Articles

This thesis explores how (public) institutions have shaped different migrant groupings' daily-lived experiences during the recent "refugee crisis" in Italy through the lens of sub-Saharan African migrants in the mid-sized city of Bergamo. The institutional context is dictated by the policies, laws and practices at different levels (e.g., supranational, national, regional and local) of the host government. The thesis explores the ways in which their execution by public and private institutions can have positive or negative impacts on migrants' lived experiences. In particular, the specific objectives of this research are threefold: investigate the use of the precarity concept in migration and housing dynamics; examine the use of temporalities in reception policy and how this shapes refugees' housing outcomes; and explore local reception and integration outcomes for asylum-seekers and their implications on integration policy formulation. This study comprises three scholarly articles. In the remainder of this section, I briefly problematise the various research articles, document the research questions and then provide an overview of the articles.

Article 1 investigates the migrants' housing question through the precarity lens. Unlike other markers of integration like citizenship, education, employment, and health provision, housing as a core foundation of integration has received scant consideration (Phillimore 2013; Psinos and Rosenfeld 2018). This (un)intentional oversight is unfortunate as housing is a recognised "precursor or precondition for other forms of integration" (Turner and Hedman 2014: 270). And while many scholars have explored migration and housing issues in recent years, there is a lack of in-depth research on precarity, migration and housing dynamics. *Article 1* addresses this research gap by bringing the concept into the analysis of housing. The following research questions guided the study: What are the main sources of migrants' housing precarity? How and how much do public institutions shape housing precarity with reference to migrants in different legal situations, so that migrants' housing precarity can be seen as publicly — and politically — produced and shaped?

*Article 1: The roots of migrants' housing precarity in the midst of the "refugee crisis"*⁶

Although housing is one of the most critical conditions for the settlement and integration of migrants, there is comparatively scant research on migrants' housing issues in European cities. This paper investigates migrants' housing problems in Italy, focusing on their causal factors that are internal to the housing regime: the shortcomings of the public housing system and of the accommodation support for asylum-seekers and refugees, the marginality and low-affordability of the private rental market, discriminations and the spread of illegal renting. Specific attention is paid to the connection of all these factors with the functioning of public institutions, thus showing that the difficulties of immigrants in achieving housing stability in Italy are mostly institutionally constructed, maintained and shaped. Within this framework, the paper employs precarity as the main conceptual tool, extending its use — usually confined to the analysis of the labour market — to the field of housing. Four main epistemological dimensions of the concept of precarity are mobilised in the text: firstly, its identification of different, concurrent causes of such condition, which are situated at the crossroads between personal features and structural forces, between local and global situations; secondly, the emphasis on its political and institutional production; thirdly, its stress on the prolonged existential uncertainty and vulnerability that characterise many spheres of life; and, fourthly, its focus on migrants' potential agency in countering such conditions.

Keywords: *housing, migration, refugees, precarity, policies, Italy*

* * *

There has been little attention paid to temporality and migration more generally, either empirically or theoretically. Several scholars have signalled that temporality is missing in the study of mobility and migration (Cwerner 2001; Griffiths et al. 2013; Griffiths 2014). Temporality is deeply embedded in policy and the state apparatus of migration governance, such as temporary status and reception programmes. The use of these temporalities contributes to differences in housing and employment outcomes in several ways. *Article 2* is in response to Mountz (2010) and Robertson's (2014) call for the need to move analysis of temporality into practices of the state in regard to migration governance. Thus, this article is shaped by the following question: How do

⁶ This article is co-authored with Francesco Chiodelli and is under review in the **City** journal.

temporalities and temporariness embedded in reception programmes shape housing outcomes?

*Article 2: Temporality, refugees, and housing: the effects of temporary assistance on refugee housing outcomes in Italy*⁷

While scholarly interest in forced migration has grown in recent years, the analytic focus has primarily been a spatial one. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to incorporate the temporal dimension into analyses of forced migration, in particular concerning the governance of refugee processing, reception and settlement. This recognition is based on a desire to better understand how states use time and timing to create borders, to define state membership, and to limit access to resources. This research addresses this gap in the literature, focusing on how temporality within Italian national refugee reception programmes shapes housing outcomes for refugees (people with political asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian protection status) in Bergamo (Italy). In an analysis of housing outcomes for 33 refugees, it was found that in the two to three years after exiting state-run facilities, refugees in Bergamo experienced multiple forms of housing instability, including homelessness, sleeping rough, doubling up, and using temporary structures. This article argues that the observed housing outcomes are a product of the temporary and transitional nature of the housing and employment programmes provided through the reception system. Refugees exit these programmes without long-term housing or employment placements, and as a result of bureaucratic barriers, the majority are unable to secure legal housing contracts. Based on the findings, this article calls for future research exploring the use of temporality in refugees' reception programmes and the effect on integration outcomes across space.

Keywords: *temporality, refugees, reception programs, housing outcomes, Bergamo, Italy*

* * *

Article 3 explores the city of Bergamo's 'novel' local reception and integration model for asylum-seekers, which was formulated within the national migration policy framework. Cities (local authorities) have been proactive in forced migrants'

⁷ This article is co-authored with Audrey Lumley-Sapanski and is currently accepted with minor revisions in **Cities** journal.

reception, with many developing their own approaches to refugee integration within or outside national policy frameworks (see Anagnostou et al. 2016; Lethbridge 2016; Villa 2018); therefore, the need to focus on local integration policies and practices. This approach follows that of previous scholars who have identified the local level as the appropriate analytic focus for integration studies. The following questions guided the study: How does the local reception and integration model, “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione”, work in terms of outcomes? What are the implications of the findings for integration in Italy and beyond?

Article 3: Cities, Reception and Integration: the case of “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione” in Bergamo, Italy⁸

The “refugee crisis” has drawn attention to the role of cities (local authorities) in asylum-seekers and refugees’ reception and integration processes, with many developing creative and innovative policies. This study comes at a time when the Italian governments have made significant changes to the country’s migration system, changes which have affected asylum-seekers’ reception and integration process and cities’ integration efforts. The article explores the ‘integration’ outcomes of the asylum-seekers who participated in a peculiar, experimental local integration model, “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione” [Integration Academy], in the ‘progressive’ mid-sized city of Bergamo (Italy). Using a “scout/militaristic” approach, the model seeks to lay the foundation for asylum-seekers’ successful integration upon arrival through obligatory “socially useful” work, language acquisition and civics, traineeships and possible employment placement. The results are multifaceted: a questionable approach and under-par integration outcomes. The study shows that the city’s conceptualisation of integration of asylum-seekers — a multidimensional, two-way process that starts from arrival — is stifled by the national migration legal framework. The findings have implications for migration and local integration policy.

Keywords: *asylum-seekers, cities, reception, integration, policy, Bergamo, Italy*

⁸ This article is submitted to the **Refugee Review Quarterly** journal for consideration for publication as an exploratory article. An excerpt of this study is submitted to **Forced Migration Review**, after passing initial proposal/screening stage, for consideration for publication as a short article.

* * *

Before moving to the individual articles and the general conclusions, the rest of this introductory section provides an overview of the conceptual lenses through which the themes of this thesis are explored, documenting an overview of the normative legal and reception system, fleshing out the terminologies used and the research design and methodology, provides a brief note on SSA migrants, and then indicates the structure of the study.

1.3 Analytical Framework: Multiple Frameworks

This research is grounded in the interdisciplinary qualitative social science research tradition, drawing on myriad literature from sociology, geography, urban studies, and migration and refugee studies, among others. The three articles are underpinned by an analytical framework using multiple concepts: precarity (*Article 1*), temporality (*Article 2*) and integration (*Article 3*). While these concepts are used discretely, they are however interrelated in practice, as evident in how they appear throughout the thesis. To illustrate, the question of uncertain temporality of migrants' stay often shapes integration policy and settlement programmes (Vrăbiescu 2019). The perceived temporality of migrant groups, to an extent, discursively justifies governments from investing in long-term social inclusion programmes. States may use migrants' uncertain temporality as a justification to exclude them from accessing services. Migrants' temporariness leads to systematic exclusion from a wide array of rights, including access to citizenship, employment, and social support (Hari 2014) — creating precarious conditions — negatively impacting individuals and obstructing their permanent structural integration (Bloch 2004; Stewart and Mulvey 2014). Within these contexts, (public) institutions — laws, policies and practices — are significant in shaping, producing, reinforcing and mediating temporalities and the precarious conditions at the heart of migrants' lived experiences, which subsequently affect their (lack of) integration and settlement in the host society. Thus, while rigorous engagement with the three concepts in each article might have yielded nuanced analysis, using them separately allows for the provision of non-superficial, detailed and robust arguments. The discrete conceptual engagements pursued here have thereby resulted in characteristic but complementary insights into the issues under investigation. While the concepts are developed in each article, a brief overview of them is provided below.

Precarity has been conceptualised in differing and overlapping ways over the years, with the most widespread use being in reference to economic insecurity (irregular, risky, precarious, insecure, uncertain, part-time work) within the context of ‘market-driven’ globalisation (Bourdieu 1998; Kalleberg 2009; Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Standing 2011). However, alternative and expansive approaches to the concept that go beyond the world of work to encompass the broad dimensions of human experience and non-human conditions have emerged recently. Precarity has now come to be appreciated as shaping everyone’s lifeworlds, and now seems to be everywhere (Bourdieu 1998; Ettliger 2007: 324; Millar 2017). The concept and its associated terms, such as ‘precarious’, ‘precariousness’ and ‘the precariat’, have grown in popularity in academic and public discourses over the last few years. However, as Banki (2013: 450) observes, “[...] the term, in its eagerness to encompass all those who experience precarity, fails to properly capture the challenges of one of its subset populations: that of noncitizens.” While other groups face precarity, the concept is chiefly applicable to migrant populations as they frequently experience multiple forms of vulnerability (Anderson 2010; Fantone 2007; Paret and Gleeson 2016: 280). Also evident is that precarious, uncertain, and insecure (temporary and marginal) work produces subject positions that negatively affect all areas of policy and life, including housing (Kalleberg 2009: 8; Neilson and Rossiter 2006; Sager 2015). Citizens have indeed come to face housing precarity in recent times; however, non-citizens face continuous precarious housing conditions (see Tosi 2001a), which is an intrinsic component of their legal status and their economic and structural condition, with undocumented migrants facing the greatest housing challenges. The novelty of this study lies in the framing of the understandings of migrants’ precarity through housing lens. Precarity is ubiquitous, inherent and increasingly profound feature of cities, from employment, housing to security (Jordan 2017), and related scholarships on precarity among migrants tend to focus on global cities (see Coe 2013; De Verteuil 2015). This dominant view of the characteristics of labour markets in global cities has exerted a hegemonic effect on the comprehension of precarity, thus inhibiting the exploration of other forms of precarity and scale (see Jordan 2017: 1456). *Article 1* contributes to breaking that cycle by extending precarity analysis to migrants’ housing conditions outside the gateway cities.

Article 2 employs temporality in the analysis of reception programmes and refugees’ housing outcomes. Migration has tended to be viewed principally as a spatial process. There has been little attention on temporality and migration more generally, either empirically or theoretically. This focus recognises the role that

temporality plays in the governance of migration more broadly. States employ temporal ‘devices and rationalities’ (Anderson 2010b) for their own purposes and goals at different levels throughout the migration process. Temporality is embedded in laws and policies at the national, regional and local level, which directly shape integration programmes’ structures and outcomes, with local authorities and private organisations acting as the state’s proxy in policy implementation in local settings. Further, one could argue that states’ employment of temporary devices of governance such as temporary status and reception programmes both limit and force the mobility of migrants.

For refugees (and other forced migrants) whose immigration experiences are mediated by state or non-state actors, the issue of temporalities — as a bloc and in competition with each other — affect migrant inclusion, exclusion and marginality (see Vrăbiescu 2019). In particular, a body of scholars have looked at the effect that the programmatic emphasis on rapid employment has on the structure of the programmes and service provision. An element of this is temporal. Scholars have considered how the rush to rapid employment fosters economic exclusion and occupational downgrading (see, e.g., Potocky-Tripodi 2003). Less attention has however been paid to the temporary nature of housing provision on refugee outcomes (the focus of this study). In particular, few studies have analysed how post-reception housing access is affected by the temporary nature of the structure of the refugee reception programme. This analysis conjoins refugee reception and temporality dynamics, drawing attention to the need to examine the aspect of time in the governance of refugee reception.

The increasing inflows of people across space, particularly from diverse cultural backgrounds, and their consequent settlement over the years, have brought integration (or lack thereof) of newcomers centre-stage in host societies (de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016; Kurthen and Heisler 2009), with cities playing critical roles in their reception and integration (see OECD 2018). Recently, immigration scholars have called attention to the complicated ways in which integration policy is negotiated and enacted at the local level (Bolzoni, Gargiulo and Manocchio 2015). These scholars have identified the ways that local specifications and context determine how policy is practised, and how they differently affect its actualisation (Vianelli 2017). The variation in implementation at the local level produces noted differences in integration outcomes, which are observed in a host of domains including socio-economic, political and legal, and cultural-religious (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016).

Scholars of refugee integration have highlighted the fact that, despite increasing attention, relatively little is known about the effect of integration policies on the outcomes experienced by refugees (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011). In particular, scholars have raised concern about the lack of understanding of the processes and mechanisms through which refugees are integrated. However, even with a local focus, understanding the mechanisms and processes through which policy affects integration outcomes has proved challenging (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli 2015; Ersanili and Koopmans 2011). The practical challenge here is due to conceptual misalignment on the term: integration is a problematised concept as it lacks a precise definition. Though there is no universally accepted definition of the concept, Castles et al. (2002) offer a broad definition of integration that involves both the newcomer and the receiving society and incorporates critiques of prior scholars. To Castles and his colleagues: “*Integration is a two-way process*: it requires adaptation on the part of the newcomer but also by the host society. Successful integration can only take place if the host society provides access to jobs and services, and acceptance of the immigrants in social interaction. Above all, integration in a democracy presupposes acquisition of legal and political rights by the new members of society, so that they can become equal partners” (Castles et al. 2002:116-117). *Article 3* uses this exposition of integration as a two-way process, which starts upon the arrival of newcomers, to explore the local asylum-seekers reception and integration model dubbed “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione” in the city of Bergamo, Italy.

1.4 War of Words: The 2015 Migration Inflows — A Terminology Dilemma

Asylum and immigration were discrete concepts and processes during the greater part of the post-war era, and were closely tied up to the Cold War in the West, where ‘protection’ meant protection from communism; and the meaning of the concept of immigration varied according to individual countries. However, over the last three decades, these two concepts have amalgamated, and this process is almost complete in Europe where politicians, media and the public often speak of “‘immigration’ and ‘asylum seeking’ interchangeably” (Gibney and Hansen 2003: 1-2). In recent years, however, we have witnessed increasing categorisations of vulnerable populations on the move, categories that often shape the possibility of being embedded in the host society.

During the recent mass inflows to Europe, politicians, the media, researchers and practitioners have been searching for the most appropriate term to illustrate the ‘crisis’. Given the fervid political climate of the current migration discourse, words matter; thus leading to debates on how best to describe the ‘mixed flows’ of people across space: refugees, forced migrants, humanitarian migrants, asylum-seekers and economic (labour) migrants (Ehrkamp 2017). These groupings are highly fluid and mutable throughout the migration process, with the boundaries between these categories often ill defined. These categories often move from legality to illegality, humanitarian migrant to asylum-seekers to refugee and to (ir)regular or economic migrant, depending on the geographical context and receiving countries’ legal frameworks (Ehrkamp 2017; Schuster 2005). In essence, there is increasing recognition of the complexity of migration dynamics and flows, and the consequent emergence of the notion of ‘mixed migration’ — an analytical concept that conjoins the continuum of ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ migration. This, however, poses a wide array of challenges to migration policy (Papadopoulos 2016; Van Hear 2011). Indeed, individuals moving across space have multifaceted and overlapping motivations for leaving their home countries that flout the (legal) categories into which they are often pigeonholed. Hence, it is difficult to identify one triggering push factor responsible for people fleeing conflict, oppressive regimes and adverse conditions, particularly one that is in accord with the legal grounds, as stipulated in the 1951 Geneva Convention, for claiming asylum. As article 1A(2) of the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons states, a refugee is a person who

“[...] owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Perruchoud and Redpath-Cross 2011: 79).

This outdated and narrow definition does not capture the complex reality of the current migratory process, as “the international treaties on which asylum law is based were written in response to Nazi atrocities, that is the atrocities of the West” (Shuman and Bohmer 2014: 952). While many Western countries have used instruments such as humanitarian and subsidiary status to provide protection to individuals who do not meet the standards of the Refugee Convention, but who would risk life upon returning home, this outdated and narrow definition does not capture the complex reality of the

current migratory process. International law draws a sharp line between refugees and migrants; however, this distinction is nuanced in practice. As Gibney rightly argues:

[A]ttempt[s] to escape situations of famine and below subsistence poverty are obviously economic reasons for migration. Yet they are every bit as violent and life-threatening as political or military causes of departure and thus can be constitutive of refugee status ... Moreover, in many states political instability and civil war are often inextricably associated with — if not the direct result of — economic underdevelopment (Gibney 2004: 13).

It is imperative therefore to recognise the complexity of movements, legal limitations and dangers involved in categorising people on the move across space. Yet, there is also an important rationale why we should maintain certain terms such as political asylum or refugee to hold contemporary nation-states responsible for abiding by their humanitarian and legal commitments, as these states find more excuses to evade their commitments to the refugees' cause (Ehrkamp 2017: 815; Gibney and Hansen 2003); thus resisting the “temptation to define all threatened peoples as ‘refugees’” (Gibney 2004: 8).

I am aware of the fact that migrants groupings such as ‘economic’ migrants, asylum-seekers, refused asylum-seekers, irregular migrants and refugees are highly contentious and nebulous terms, particularly during the recent so-called “refugee crisis”. In this study, the term ‘migrants’ is used to encompass all groupings unless otherwise specified or stated individually for purposes of showing comparison, emphasis and/or distinction. Finally, in order not to inflict epistemological violence, these contentious terminologies are highlighted in each paper. Thus, *article 1* deals with all the aforementioned groupings, *article 2* focuses on refugees (political asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian status), and *article 3* looks at asylum-seekers.

1.5 Normative Migration Legal Framework and Reception System in Italy

Until late 1986, Italy lacked a comprehensive policy for entry, residence, rights of foreigners, and integration. The country framed (and still considers) the immigration phenomenon predominately as a threat to public order. Increases in immigration in the 1970's led to the formulation and promulgation of the first significant ministerial directives and legislative amendments. These directives and amendments, in the words of Veugelers (1994:35), lack transparency, consistency and are full of lacunae,

thus encouraging “administrative discretion and arbitrariness” (see also Freeman 1995; Morris 2002). The non-existence of legal framework in the early part of Italy’s immigration history produced a kind of ‘limbo’ for the immigrants (Campani 2007).

Immigration laws and bureaucracy in the period since have been in a near-constant state of flux within Italy. As a result of political instability and the country’s fragmented, ephemeral and unstable party system, Italy lacks a coherent and comprehensive immigration policy. Recurrent political and administrative reorganisation has contributed problematically to this outcome with new significant pieces of immigration legislation introduced by various administrations in: 1986 (the so-called ‘*Foschi Law 1986*’ - *Law 943/1986*), 1990 (*Martelli Law - Act 39/90*), 1998 (*Turco-Napolitano Law - Consolidation Act 40/1998*), 2002 (*Bossi-Fini law 189/2002*), 2008-2009 (*Maroni Law 94/2009 - well-known as the ‘security package’*), 2017 (*Minniti-Orlando Decree - Law 46/2017*) and 2018 (*Salvini Decree - Law 132/2018*). Though immigration laws have oscillated between left and right-wing poles with governmental transitions, security tropes have permeated the discourse. Over the years, immigration laws help in constructing and preserving immigrants’ ‘otherness’ through temporary, contingent and precarious legal statuses. Consequently, Calavita’s (2005:45) seminal work shows that “[...] Spanish and Italian immigration laws, anchored by temporary and contingent permit systems, build in illegality and, this “institutionalized irregularity” is part and parcel of the labour function of immigrants in these countries.”

There are different types of permits for foreigners coming into Italy, which largely depend on their national status, mode and reasons of entry, and length of stay in the country. There is no space for an in-depth analysis of these groups and their socio-legal statuses here. However, one could say that ‘economic’ migrants, other than asylum-seekers and refugees, who use the legal route often receive ‘permits of stay’ (this comes in various forms with limited validity, say, from a few months to five years and thus have to be renewed over time, depending on determining factors like the category and length of stay); permanent residence card and possible citizenship acquisition (there are three major ways of gaining Italian citizenship: *jure sanguinis*, marriage to an Italian and application for ‘naturalisation’ by a foreigner or non-EU citizen who has resided in Italy for ten years or four years for EU citizens) (for details on this, see e.g., Dotsey 2018). This study will not explore each migrant group status and concomitant legal precarity and livelihoods challenges. However, suffice to posit here that these groupings experience uncertain and precarious legal conditions often related to their temporality. Further, there are many pathways to precarious legal

status in Italy, including (threat of) deportation, relapse into ‘illegality’ as a consequence of overstayed visas, change in migration laws or loss of status, continual temporary status.

Within the framework of asylum migration, the country lacks robust asylum migration governance with the state often deploying differential treatment of forced migrants. The Italian government treats refugee status (5 years, resulting from the 1951 Geneva Convention), subsidiary status for those who do not precisely qualify for political refugee protection under the UNHCR Convention (5 years, based on the EU legislation) and humanitarian protection status holders (2 years, legislated at the national level) as temporary populations. In theory, refugees can acquire citizenship after legally residing in Italy for at least 5 years (Articles 9 and 16 L 91/1992 Citizenship Act), while subsidiary status holders are subject to the general rule that governs third-country nationals: they can apply for naturalisation after 10 years of legal residence in Italy (Article 9(1)(f) Citizenship Act). Yet, in practice, these groups find it difficult to secure citizenship due to a discretionary evaluation approach, and administrative and bureaucratic constraints. The recent influx of asylum-seekers has resulted in governments across the political spectrum formulating and implementing new restrictive laws, problematising their reception, asylum determination process and legal status acquisition.

Italy has worked towards improving its immigration(asylum) policy and reception system in recent years due to pressure from the EU; however, the country’s system is still based on short-term emergency measures and is highly fragmented (see Morris 2002; Puggioni 2005). Legislative Decree (LD) 142/2015 provides the framework for the latest national reception system in force, of which integration programming is a component part. The system is administered in two phases: first-stage accommodation and the second-stage accommodation, System for the Protection of Asylum-seekers and Refugees (*Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati* - SPRAR) structures.

The reception system is practically directed at individuals who enter Italy through the Mediterranean and thus apply for asylum immediately on arrival. Therefore, upon arrival in Italy, asylum-seekers may be placed in any of the following first-stage reception centres: first aid and reception centres (*Centro di primo soccorso e accoglienza* - CPSA) with legal basis in LD 563/1995, now *hotspots centres* — six establishments whose objective is to identify and sort out those who have a right to request protection and those who must be repatriated (see Sciarba 2017); collective

centres (*Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo - CARA*)⁹ and accommodation centres (*Centro di accoglienza - CDA*), with legal provision in art. 9 LD 142/2015. These are supplemented by emergency (temporary) reception centres (*Centri di accoglienza straordinaria - CAS*), activated by Prefectures in case of unavailability of places in the first-or-second-stage structures. Article 11 of LD 142/2015 provided their legal basis.

CAS form the greater part of the asylum-seekers' reception framework and are therefore meant to soak up overflows from the limited capacity intake in other reception centres (SFH/OSAR 2016). CAS facilities lack the necessary resources for minimum integration of asylum-seekers. NGOs and cooperatives run CAS centres on a direct assignment of Prefectures. Except for special cases such as health issues, all asylum-seekers are requested by law to leave the CAS upon receiving a positive or two negative decision(s) on their applications. The law does not specify any time limit for their stay in these centres, and only provides that applicants stay "as long as necessary" to complete procedures related to their identification (art. 9 (4) LD 142/2015) or for the "time strictly necessary" to be transferred to SPRAR structures (art. 9 (5) LD 142/2015), the second-stage reception.

The SPRAR was established within the legal framework by law 189/2002 of 2002. It is a publicly funded network of local authorities (municipalities) and NGOs that accommodates asylum-seekers and holders of international protection status. SPRAR thus seeks to provide integrated services consisting of legal support, social guidance, development of individually tailored programmes to promote socio-economic inclusion, self-sustenance and integration, with a decentralised "integrated reception" system across the country. SPRAR, in theory, accommodates those asylum-seekers who have already formalised their applications but lack sufficient means to support themselves and/or their families (see art. 14 LD 142/2015). However, this largely depends on the availability of place in these centres, which are limited in supply. Before the new security decree law 132/2018 (the so-called 'Salvini Decree' discussed below), asylum-seekers and people who are living in CAS and granted any international protection status (political asylum, subsidiary and humanitarian status) can apply to stay in the SPRAR centres for an initial period of up to 6 months, which is then renewable for another 6 months, depending on individual exigencies, availability of space in the centres, and among others.

⁹ There are seven CARA facilities located primarily in southern Italy: Isola di Capo Rizzuto, Caltanissetta, Foggia, Brindisi, Bari, Mineo (Catania) and Gradisca d'Isonzo; the latter is the only one in northern Italy.

While the temporary nature of the programme, which aimed at ensuring self-sustenance and integration of recipients, is praiseworthy, it is notable that this time frame of 6-12 months is not sufficient for refugees to gain autonomy and then put their lives on sustainable footing (SFH/OSAR 2016). The SPRAR is often considered as the exemplar of best practice in refugee reception in Italy; however, its limited capacity and resources have hindered it from accommodating asylum-seekers and, most importantly, refugees, particularly from CAS. Not all refugees have the opportunity to immediately enter the SPRAR programme, or even after months of living in limbo, resulting in many living on the street (SFH/OSAR 2016: 29). And it is often case that most of the refugees who leave the SPRAR project often fail to attain “socio-economic integration” thus facing new, recurring housing precariousness and homelessness.

The security-driven decree law 113/2018, converted with amendments into law 132/2018 passed under the previous coalition government of the populist and anti-immigrant parties, the Northern League and the Five Star Movement, has brought drastic changes to the design of the Italian legal framework and reception system, which under the LD 142/2015 had articulated reception for asylum-seekers in different phases discussed above.¹⁰ On the legal front, the law reformed the types of statuses (abolishing the humanitarian protection status and replacing it with ‘special permits’). The ‘special permit’ is awarded only in six special cases illustrated in Table 1 below. Within this framework, most asylum applicants do not meet these requirements.

¹⁰ For an overview of the new system, including the purview of reception conditions and services, see https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation#_ftn10

Table 1. ‘Special permits’: conditions for issuance, duration, renewability and possible convertibility

Preconditions for issuing the ‘Special Cases’ permit:	Duration of permit (Months)	Renewability	Convertibility to work permit
Critical health conditions	12 (max.)	Yes (until health conditions remain critical)	No
Natural disaster in country of origin	6	Yes (max. 6 months)	No [It allows you to work but cannot be converted into a work permit.]
Special protection (no refoulement)	12	Yes (It can be renewed subject to a favorable opinion of the Territorial Commission)	No
Domestic violence victims	12	Not stated	Yes
Victims of labor exploitation	6	Yes (Max. 12 months: this gives you the right to work)	Yes
Heroic acts /Valor to the society	24	Yes	Yes (Allows you to study and work)

The passage of law 132/2018 is a significant blow to asylum-seekers, as the majority of them receive humanitarian status in the worst-case scenario. This is illustrated in the result of 2018 asylum applications and status granted at the first application: out of 53,596 applications 7,096 (7 per cent) received refugee status, 4,319 (5 percent) received subsidiary status, and 20,014 (21 per cent) received humanitarian protection.¹¹ Protection holders have faced precarious socio-legal status as a consequence of law 132/2018; here, the law’s effects on the lives of asylum-seekers has been acute (particularly for those who have started their asylum determination process after 5 October 2018), creating considerably uncertain and

¹¹ See

http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/quaderno_statistico_per_gli_anni_1990-2018.pdf.

precarious socio-legal conditions for asylum-seekers and cities' efforts to integrate them.¹² For instance, as of June 2019, 7,898 applications were examined (regardless of the date of asylum requests): 899 received refugee status (11 per cent), 493 received subsidiary protection (6 per cent), 92 got humanitarian protection (1 per cent; decided before 05 October 2018, that is the date of decree-law 132/2018), 6,394 received a negative decision (82 per cent) and 20 obtained other results (0 per cent).¹³

Law 132/2018 also affected the reception system, thus taking a heavy toll on the asylum-seekers' daily-lived experiences. It replaced the SPRAR system with the so-called 'System for migrants holding international protection and unaccompanied minors' (*Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e minori stranieri non accompagnati* - SIPROIMI), narrowing its scope to make it inaccessible to asylum-seekers, humanitarian status holders and recent 'special case' permit holders. Asylum-seekers and humanitarian status holders already hosted in the former SPRAR system as of 5 October 2018 were permitted to remain in this accommodation system until the end of their project cycle. The law has limited the resources available for the reception of asylum-seekers while increasing funding for their detention and expulsion. The first-stage accommodation facilities will not be required to align their standards to the SPRAR system, as the new law does not provide for any integration measures for asylum-seekers. The law, for instance, considers the teaching of the Italian language and vocational training in CAS as superfluous (see Galera et al. 2018).

It is noteworthy that given that a large part of this research was carried out before the approval of the security-decree law 132/2018, particularly *articles 1 and 2*, the study will keep referring to the SPRAR system and not to SIPROIMI. Further, the asylum-seekers explored in *article 3* started their integration process in the academy before the passage of law 132/2018. Consider also that, recently, the current national government declared its intention to return to the SPRAR system.

¹² In this context, it is also worth noting the effects of the law 46/2017 on asylum migration. In particular, the abolishment of the second appeal process, for example, is in contrast with 'right to an effective remedy in the event of a negative decision, the right to an effective remedy before a court, as in Directive 2013/32 / EU, CHAPTER V, art.46. This change in the asylum process has created precarious legal conditions for asylum applicants as over 70 per cent of them often receive some form of international protection status during appeals (Facchini 2017).

¹³ For details, see http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/giugno_2019.pdf

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

1.6.1 Qualitative Approach

Given the nature of research that focuses on ‘everyday lifestyles’, ‘lived experiences’, ‘biographical accounts’ and the ‘ordinary’— ‘naturalistic inquiry’— the study employs a qualitative approach. This follows in a tradition of using qualitative methodologies to analyse ‘precarious migrations’ (see Squire 2018). As such, this research is rooted within the interdisciplinary qualitative research tradition, using a case study that focuses particularly on SSA migrants in Bergamo, Italy. The qualitative approach allows for in-depth analysis of individual experiences, as well as a broad overview of the processes and complexities, than could be gleaned from solely using quantitative approaches (De Tona 2006). Here, the inductive approach is used in analysing the qualitative data (Creswell 2014).

1.6.2 Research Methods

I used several methods to collect data and to facilitate triangulation of diverse sources of information. This synthesis of methods enabled me to provide in-depth, thick descriptions of the research under investigation (Warren and Karner 2005: 117ff.). In collecting data for this research, I drew on (informal) conversations, in-depth and semi-structured interviews and observation. Additionally, I also carried out documentary analysis. This involves the study of primary (policy and project reports from the third-sector and public institutions) as well as secondary sources (quantitative data from the Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity Foundation (ISMU), CARITAS, Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), academic research reports, scholarly peer-reviewed articles and books) relevant to the research under investigation. The use of multiple sources and methods also allowed me to validate findings.

The study sample was drawn principally from male sub-Saharan African migrants — ‘economic’ migrants, (refused) asylum-seekers, refugees — and stakeholders: personnel of the third-sector and public institutions in Bergamo. The primary justification for focusing on males is that they have dominated the recent inflows into Italy. However, I also interviewed some female participants who were not part of the study sample to provide alternative perspectives and points of departure.

The sampling frame for the semi-structured and in-depth interviews was drawn from the above groups. I conducted this research from December 2017 to February 2020. In December 2017, I undertook a feasibility study for the first-two articles in the study area (see subsection 1.6.4 below) where I made contacts with non-governmental organisations and had (informal) conversations with some migrants and stakeholders. A pre-pilot interview was undertaken in early February; this exploratory interview helped me in developing ideas and research questions and exploring possible ways of gathering relevant data. I then developed a full research plan. These processes helped in revising the concepts proposed for use in the first-two papers. The data for the first-two articles was collected from May 2018 to June 2019, with the majority of interviews conducted before the passage of law 132/2018. The data for *article 2* was a result of intermittent fieldwork between November 2018 and February 2020. I conducted 10 stakeholder interviews with local actors in the public and private sector, including religious associations, NGOs and city council officials. Further, I conducted about 82 semi-structured and in-depth interviews with migrants in Bergamo (20 with asylum-seekers in *the academy* and 62 with asylum-seekers, refused asylum-seekers, regular ‘economic’ and irregular migrants). The participants came from Guinea, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, the Gambia, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Apart from the SSA migrants, who were the primary focus of this research, I also interviewed other migrant groups from Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Albania, whose views broadly shaped the research outcomes. The majority of my participants were of working age, between 18 and 60, living in uncertain and precarious conditions. This group was highly mobile, with aspirations of onward movement in search of better lives. The participants were working in factories and restaurants, held cleaning jobs, were students, worked in import-export services, and were amateur footballers, cultural mediators, camp operators, and translators. Additionally, some were self-employed. Below, I document the sampling techniques used in selecting the research participants for the interviews and the data collection tools.

Sampling Techniques

Snowball sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used in sampling. Snowball sampling was employed for semi-structured and in-depth interviews. This method produces a sample through referrals from people among the study population who may share the same characteristics, have a special understanding of the

phenomenon and/or know people with similar experiences who are of research interest. This method is suitable for researching sensitive topics and hard-to-reach and/or hidden populations, thus requiring insiders' knowledge in identifying them (Biernacki et al. 1981). Given that the research focuses on research groups who are quite hard to reach, and on sensitive issues such as their legal standing, housing conditions and livelihood strategies, this technique is quite appropriate. I am aware of the pitfalls associated with this technique — that of over-sampling refugees who are well connected; to reduce distortion, I drew on identifying and selecting potential migrants and refugees through different gateways such as markets, workplaces, churches, camp operators and volunteers, recreational centres and refugees/migrants' popular spots of convergence such as social services provision centres and train stations. The diversity of gateways reduced the problem associated with this method, and subsequently improved the quality of information gathered (see, e.g., Dotsey 2018; Mazzucato 2007).

Concerning key informant interviews with the personnel, institutions and individuals working with these groups, a purposive sampling technique was adopted. This judgemental sampling technique helped in selecting informants who know the issues under investigation and the organisations working in this field. The purposive sampling was used to solicit information from some key informants (Kumekpor 2002), thus maximising information gathered in order to explore heterogeneity of experiences (Kissoon 2010).

Data Collection Tools: Conversation

The research revolved around everyday 'conversation' with the participants through the above-mentioned gateways. Thus, the study revolved around repeated 'conversations' with participants — the (economic) migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and stakeholders from the social cooperative and public organisations — in Bergamo (Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2015). The research was enriched by continuous and repeated informal conversations and follow-ups with dozens of formal and informal key-informants (Kissoon 2010). This informal method gave me the opportunity to access nuances and record details of complex discourses, helping me to test the boundaries of debate and discussion.

Data Collection Tools: Interviews

The primary data collection tool was the interviews. In migration studies, “interviews have proved indispensable when researching vulnerable groups of people on the move, and collecting data about various aspects of irregularity, grey economic activities, and the autonomy and agency of mobile people” (Fedyuk and Zentai 2018: 171-172). Thus, I conducted semi-structured (for acquiring socio-demographic characteristics of the informants) and in-depth interviews with SSA migrants, and key informant interviews with local actors (public entities and NGOs). The qualitative interviews are considered appropriate because they take the form of a conversation, where the interviewers share their life histories, views, and understanding (Fedyuk and Zentai 2018: 173; Kvale 1996). An audio recording was used based on prior permission. The audio recorder was used to allow space to take brief field notes on basic themes emerging and to pay closer attention to non-verbal expressions of the participants (Denscombe 2008). The interviews were conducted in English and Italian. The average length of the interviews was about 45 minutes.

The interview questions revolved around the following themes: migrants’ background — socio-demographic and economic data views, motives, expectations, experiences; (uncertain and precarious) legal status, economic conditions, housing conditions and history (longitudinal housing data); experiences in and outside reception camps; and coping mechanisms. I left the most sensitive questions until some rapport had been developed (see Warren and Karner 2005). Given the sensitive nature of the topic, the one-to-one nature of the interview process allowed me to reinforce several times that this is an academic work, with the intention being to get people to open up and discuss issues freely, which generated nuanced data.

Data Collection Tools: Observation

Linked to the above method is observation. This approach helped me achieve the balance between the issue of ‘being there’ (Devereux and Hoddinott 1993), or ‘experience-near’ and ‘experience-distant’ (Geertz 1976). To have a clearer picture of how the migrants live their quotidian lives, I moved from individual biographical anecdotes to how this was evidently normalised in reality by participating in some of the daily activities of these groups (like Sunday church services, popular spots of convergence, refugee camps, and other areas of interest). By visiting homes, camps, dormitories, and workplaces, I was able to contextualise their interviews and better understand their living conditions. I also participated in the staff weekly equipe of an

NGO and *the academy*. Additionally, from mid-2018 to late 2019, I participated in the daily activities of one of the religious charities that provide temporary housing and socio-legal support to over 300 migrants (asylum-seekers, refused asylum-seekers, refugees, regular and irregular ‘economic’ migrants). This allowed me to participate in the interview process of new arrivals looking for accommodation, interact and observe hosts in the structure. Further, I dined with them and then took part in some of their cleaning activities in the structure. In fact, I should add that my involvement in most of these activities gave me the insights necessary to corroborate some noticeable dominant themes. The observation method allowed me to tease out nuances and record the details of complex discourses that would otherwise have been provided to me second-hand by my interlocutors.

1.6.3 Research Ethics and Positionality of the Researcher

Positionality

Researching migration using qualitative methodologies brings to the fore ‘the role and positionality of the researcher’ and the need to reflect on the role of the researcher in the production of knowledge (De Tona 2006). One dilemma of the research is that of a Ghanaian researcher in the diaspora researching on other migrants, particularly SSA migrants, a situation that Borkert and De Tona (2006) call “the stuff of life”, thus raising the question of my research positionality. Given that I am a Ghanaian, researching on other SSA migrants makes me both an outsider and insider.

On the one hand, I am considered as the son of the land, Africa, and part of the big family in a foreign land, thus becoming one of the insiders and disrupting the asymmetrical power relation between the researcher and the researched. During the research, many of my participants treated me like one of their own with phrases like: ‘I’ve granted you the interview because you’re African; You know I don’t know you enough but I’m telling you these things, my life history because you’re one of us — I can’t narrate these things to other people.’ Many wanted to share their experiences with me with some hoping for instant support and others for making their situation known to authorities and policymakers — to give them ‘a voice and create their (our) own narratives’. However, this was not always the case. My position as a minority facilitated easy access to migrant groups; however, this is not to say that my experience of being a minority gave me *better* access to and understanding of the migrant groups.

On the other hand, I am that distant Ghanaian researcher in a known university who wants to carry out research on his fellow SSA migrants, therefore, belonging to the other side of the divide — an outsider (see Ganga and Scott 2006). In this context, many of my research participants, even Ghanaians, refused to participate in the research process. They were sceptical about my source of funding; the nature and purpose of the research and how it would affect their lives; and even my legal status, going as far as sometimes labelling me an imposter. The foregoing created a sort of ‘power differential’ and ‘outsider’ discourse. Thus, as Naples (1997: 89) noted, this bipolarisation discourse “sets up a false separation that neglects the interactive processes through which “insiderness” and “outsiderness” are constructed. Insiderness and outsiderness are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members” (in Borkert and De Tona 2006: 7). Within this context, throughout my preparations to conduct this research, I was guided by research objectivity and reflexivity in designing the research, choosing the methodological approach, analysing and interpreting the data outcomes.

Ethics: Researching Precarious Migrations and Organisations

Researching sensitive and emotionally stricken vulnerable groups, such as migrants, and on sensitive topics about their lived experiences, incites emotions and poses some risks to the research subjects and the researcher. Migrants’ accounts during the interview and conversation processes were replete with harrowing experiences and precarious situations, which are often difficult for the participants to recount. And listening to these harsh realities has equally taken a heavy emotional and distressing toll on me. This consequently raised the ethical dilemma of a knotty and unbalanced relation, the researcher’s emotional involvement and the role that s/he can play in bettering the situation (Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer 2009: 10). In this context, during fieldwork, I strived to follow ethical principles, maintain mutual respect and strike a balance between my academic research interest and advocacy roles like providing information to my interviewees on how and where to access social and welfare services.

Further, sensitive research such as what I undertook can function as an exposé of migrants’ livelihood strategies, precarious legal status as well as organisations operating in this field. Revealing personal details may increase the likelihood of detection and its subsequent consequences. To address such dilemmas, I was guided

by ethical principles to ensure my informants' anonymity: names and titles were not used. Therefore, most names referred to are pseudonyms. In the places where a few titles or names were used, these were done only with prior approval. I declared several times to participants that this is an academic research and will be used as such (Holloway 1997).

1.6.4 Case Study: Bergamo, a Mid-Sized City

Over the years, migration researchers and urban theorists have focused almost exclusively on the so-called 'gateway', 'macro', and 'global' cities (Barberis and Pavolini 2015). Space and place matter in refugee reception and integration policies, in that states, regions and cities respond differently to much the same problems and offer different chances for integration. Here, 'top-scale or upscale' cities might offer a vast array of possibilities for migrants and refugee integration and transnational relations as compared to 'down-scale' cities (see Schiller and Çağlar 2009). These contextual differences shape the size of the social infrastructure — governmental and non-governmental — in place to support migrant integration. To drive home this point, 'top-scale or upscale' cities might offer a vast array of possibilities for refugee integration and transnational relations as compared to 'down-scale' cities. However, size cannot always be used as an indicator or accurate measure of capabilities, opportunities and power of cities: "Rather than size, using a relative measure operating on a field of power, like scalar positioning, is more useful in framing the varying opportunity structures and the governance capacities of different localities, including rural areas" (see Çağlar 2014:19; Schiller and Çağlar 2009).

As such, there is an emerging trend of immigrants settling outside 'gateway' or 'global' cities (Barberis and Pavolin 2015), thus raising sociological questions regarding immigrants' mobility patterns and incorporation in these new localities (Schiller and Çağlar 2009). This trend, settlement within 'micropolitan' areas, is understudied, and the mobility patterns are under-theorised in both migration and urban studies research (Bell and Jayne 2009). While migration to rural areas and/or smaller municipalities in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia is pronounced, migration research on small and mid-sized cities is a new, understudied phenomenon in Italy and Europe in general, as researchers tend to focus on big, metropolitan, or gateway cities (see Barberis and Pavolini 2015). Consequently, Italy, like other EU member states, has witnessed an appreciable flow of migrants to local and small cities in recent years (see Balbo 2015). Indeed, "immigrant settlement

outside gateway cities is evolving and becoming more and more important for both migration and urban studies” (Barberis and Pavolini 2015: 1).

Foreign residents are not distributed evenly across the country. 59.5 per cent live in the North, 25.4 per cent in the Centre, and 15.1 per cent in the Mezzogiorno (CGIL-Sunia 2016). As of 2014, about three-quarters of the regular resident population are concentrated in six regions, all in the north-centre of the country (Baldini and Poggio 2012: 576; ISTAT 2015). However, newly arriving migrants who are part of the reception system tend to be somewhat scattered across the country (ANCI et al. 2017; IOM 2017: 2). Whereas migrants are concentrated in bigger cities and metropolises such as Rome, Milan, and Naples, Italy has witnessed an appreciable growth in the flow of migrants to local and small-scale towns or municipalities in recent years (see Balbo 2015; Barberis and Pavolin 2015). The increasing migration flow to Italy and their stabilisation over the years have raised questions about immigrants’ diversified socio-economic and cultural needs. There is evidence that migrants are leaving large urban centres for peripheral and ‘micropolitan’ areas due to the availability of better basic services (Antoniucci and Marella 2016; CGIL-Sunia 2016; CENSIS 2005). It is notable that in Italy at least a quarter of migrants live in small municipalities of less than 10,000 inhabitants (ISTAT 2018: 310), which most probably explains the growing recent research on these small cities, inner or remote areas (see, e.g., Balbo 2015; Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2015; Galera et al. 2018). This research seeks to contribute to this ongoing explosion of research on immigrants’ incorporation in local contexts, using a case study of the mid-sized city of Bergamo, an under-researched area. The case study approach provides the necessary context for deep research and gives room for a detailed exploration of the issues under investigation. Focusing on one case study sounds reductionist and does not allow for theory building due to its non-generalisability (Denscombe 1998). However, it has the potential to contribute to theoretical innovation when one explores it in-depth and addresses its similarity to others of its kind. As Gluckman suggests, “one good case can illuminate the working of a social system in a way that a series of morphological statements can never achieve” (Gluckman in Mitchell 2006: 23). Further, a detailed exploration of a particular case study could help in problematising the migration question within a particular socio-political context.

Bergamo embodies particular features that justify its choice as a site for migration research. Bergamo is about 40 kilometres northeast of Milan. It is the capital city of the Bergamo province, which has a population of 1,113,170 — of which 120,263 are foreigners — and 244 municipalities. It is the fourth-largest city in Lombardy, with

its metropolitan area extending far beyond the administrative city limits, and is part of the broader Milan metropolitan area, which is home to over 8 million people. Thus, the city has used its proximity to the Milan metropolitan area to its advantage: it provides cheaper rents than Milan and it has arts and entertainment centres amongst other draws (cf. OECD 2001). Bergamo, one of several areas where industrial districts first developed in Italy, forms part of the robust industrial legacy of the province's economic evolution. Its economy comprises a rich mix of manufacturing, services and agricultural activities; however, the economic crisis of 2007 severely affected productivity in Bergamo (OECD 2001, 2016). The economic crisis notwithstanding, the unemployment rate in the province was 4.2 per cent, putting it among the lowest in Italy in 2017, second only to Bolzano.¹⁴

On the immigration front, Bergamo has a comparatively long history of serving as a site of migrants' reception. Bergamo has, in general, been a hotbed of left-wing politics in recent years and is somewhat open to migrants' reception, although recently there has been an increase in hostile right-wing sentiment in certain municipalities in the province. The city also has a strong Catholic presence (with a history of sponsoring and aiding migration) and religion-related organisations. These religiously inclined organisations have been very active in social services provision. This has attracted migrants and marginalised groups to the province. There exist several NGOs — such as CARITAS, Patronato San Vincenzo, Cooperativa Sociale Ruah, Cooperativa Pugno Aperto, Casa Amica Foundation — that provide support to immigrants and marginalised population. Some of these organisations, in partnership with charity organisations and the municipality, provide services to the migrants, and particularly implement the national asylum reception policy. All these features have combined to serve as pull factors for migrants and marginalised groups from all municipalities in the province and across the country. These attributes mark Bergamo out as a progressive city, thus making it an ideal context for relatively easy integration for migrants. As a result, there is substantial concentration, of both internal and international migrants. As of January 1, 2019, it had a population of 121,834 people, of whom 20,420 (16.8 per cent) were foreign residents. The main foreign communities were of Bolivian (18.1 per cent of total foreigners), Romanian (9 per cent), Ukrainian (8.5 per cent) and Chinese (6.7 per cent) extraction. African migrants constituted

¹⁴ This is much lower than the Italian unemployment rate (11 per cent), and six times lower than the unemployment rate (24 per cent) in some southern provinces (ISTAT 2018).

around 21.6 per cent of the total population (circa 4,400 people, of which around 2,400 of them are SSA; Comune di Bergamo 2019).

1.7 Sub-Saharan African Migrants

Africa's contemporary emigration came as a result of serious economic and political crises starting from the late 1960s through the 1980s, which motivated migration to Western countries such as the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France to search for greener pastures (van Dijk 1997). African migration has encompassed all social classes: high-skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled migrants (Adogame 2013). The initial intercontinental African emigration flows to Europe tended to generally follow historical and linguistic trails of colonialism, with Great Britain and France as the ideal migrants' destinations (Adogame 2013: 30). Over recent years, however, there has been a shift and surge in SSA migration flow patterns to Europe with root causes in the Arab Spring, political instability, militant Islamist insurgency, humanitarian crises and deepening poverty in the region. As a result, countries like Germany, which had a brief contact with Africa, or Sweden, with no colonial ties (Adogame 2013), and Italy, which had had few colonies (Bakewell 2007), have become key destinations for refugees in recent years, particularly from SSA. In fact, SSA migrants constitute an important segment of recent inflows to Europe, with Norway, Switzerland and the EU countries receiving about 1 million asylum applicants between 2010 and 2017. Europe was home to 4.15 million SSA migrants in 2017. Nigeria, South Africa, Somalia, Senegal, Ghana, Angola, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Ivory Coast are major sources of SSA migrating to Europe (Conor 2017). Italy has been home to African migrants since the 1970s, and as at January 2018, there were 1,096,089 African migrants, of which 466,250 were SSA, with the most prominent SSA countries represented in Italy being Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Eritrea, Gambia, Ethiopia, Somalia and Togo (ISTAT 2018).

The study sample is drawn from sub-Saharan Africans because they are one of the most prominent communities of asylum-seekers and refugees, a highly "(in)visible minority" that has been the focus of copious public discussion in Italy in recent years. For example, there were 123,370 asylum applicants in 2016, of which more than half

came from SSA, with Nigeria dominating the list.¹⁵ To shed light on SSA migrants is also a very relevant endeavour, since — on the whole — they have faced increasing anti-immigrant sentiments in an increasingly hostile environment (Horowitz 2010), and their employment opportunities prove to be rather scanty, often channelled into occupational sectors requiring low-or-under-skilled profiles (Lapov 2017). As a consequence, SSA migrants are particularly prone to dependence on the support provided by the public authorities in particular via the national migration system. Therefore, studying this population allows us to better capture precarity in the lived experience while running the rule over the integration question and the temporal dimensions of the Italian asylum and migration system, and its associated failures, to generate (proto-)generalisable conclusions.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

As illustrated earlier, this thesis is a collection of three scholarly articles investigating housing and reception conditions of asylum-seekers, refugees, refused asylum-seekers, regular and irregular ‘economic’ migrants in Italy, using discrete but interrelated concepts in examining each article. The three independent scholarly articles follow this introductory section; in turn, there is some restatement of research design and methodology, normative legal and reception framework, the case study in this introduction and the three articles. After presenting the articles, a brief conclusion appears in the final section, discussing the main findings, contributions to scholarship, limitations, future research directions and a short reflection on the possible effects of the COVID-2019 pandemic on migrants’ housing and reception in Italy.

¹⁵ See <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/reception-conditions/short-overview-italian-reception-system>.

Article 1

The Roots of Migrants' Housing Precarity in the Midst of the “Refugee Crisis”

‘I worked in Bergamo for 13 years. I was in a shared rented four-room apartment with other 3 people. I left this place after losing my job. I moved to another apartment with two other people after getting another job. I then lost my job again and had to leave. After here, I went to a charity association and got a place in a homeless dormitory for 3 months. This is my third time of coming to the dormitory. I’ve slept rough — in the streets, train station, parks, airport — for months while I waited for my turn to enter the dormitory,’ (Kofie, economic migrant, interview, July 2018).

1. Introduction: Migrants' Housing Problems Beyond Poverty

The political construction of migration flows witnessed since the beginning of the twenty-first century (recently framed in terms of ‘refugee crisis’) has put at the centre of public and academic attention in many European countries different political and policy questions related to immigration (e.g., stresses and strains in multiculturalism, rise of xenophobic discourses and movements, erection of new physical and legal walls and borders). This has contributed to making reflection on other migration-related themes rather marginal, as in the case of housing issues, which have received comparatively scant consideration, within a framework of overall disinvestment in questions related to migrants’ integration (some exceptions are: Arbaci 2019; Boccagni 2017; Darling 2017; Kissoon 2010; Phillips 2006; Teixeira 2008; van Kempen 2005). This has happened even though “housing represents perhaps the most important of urban conditions for the settlement of immigrants and is certainly the most critical” (Tosi 2001a: 1). Against this backdrop, the present paper focuses on migrants’ housing problems in Italy. The purpose is to identify their multiple causal factors — which, as we will argue, cannot be reduced to economic problems alone. Specific emphasis is

placed on the causal factors internal to the housing regime, and on their connection with the functioning of public institutions. Our research seeks to answer the following research questions: what are the main sources of migrants' housing problems in Italy? How and how much do public institutions shape such problems, so that migrants' housing issues can be seen as publicly — and politically — produced and shaped?

It is within such framework of a composite analysis of the multiple causes of migrants' housing problems beyond mere poverty that we think it is worthwhile mobilising the notion of precarity. The concept of precarity was born, and is still used, mainly with reference to the labour market, in order to denote a prolonged condition of job insecurity. However, its use can be extended to other significant spheres of life, thus becoming an 'ontological condition' (Butler 2004). As we will argue in this paper, its extension to the analysis of migrants' housing conditions is pertinent and useful for four epistemic reasons, which induce us to prefer this concept to other notions such as risk, vulnerability or exclusion. Firstly, the concept of precarity emphasises the complex roots of migrants' (housing) problems (Butler 2004). Secondly, it stresses its politics and its related institutional production — which emerge at the crossroads among the political exploitation of migration flows, dominant social discourses nurturing racism and discrimination, and the public construction of migrants' overall precarity (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016). Thirdly, it highlights the fact that housing problems are part and parcel of a broader condition of prolonged existential uncertainty and vulnerability that characterises many spheres of life of all migrants (Fantone 2007). Fourthly, differently from other concepts, it underlines migrants' agency in countering that condition, both in an individual way and, potentially, in a collective one (Jørgensen 2016).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: after a short methodological note, the article introduces the concept of precarity and then presents contemporary migration in Italy, with a special focus on the public approach to managing migration flows. Subsequently, the article investigates the main structural causes of migrants' housing problems in Italy vis-à-vis the housing regime. In light of the foregoing analysis, the importance of the notion of precarity for conceptualising migrants' housing issues and for underlining its institutional roots is discussed in the penultimate section. The last section concludes.

2. A Methodological Note

The research questions that drive this paper are answered by means of a conceptual analysis rooted in the Italian context, which is carefully reconstructed through the consideration of relevant policy documents, legislative sources, statistical data and academic literature on immigration and housing. This theoretical analysis has been accompanied (and, in many cases, guided) by inputs provided by in-depth empirical research conducted from May 2018 to June 2019 in the city of Bergamo, in Northern Italy. The fieldwork focused on the investigation of migrants' housing conditions and their sources. For this purpose, we conducted forty-seven semi-structured interviews with sub-Saharan African migrants — so-called 'economic' migrants, refugees, (refused) asylum-seekers and irregular migrants — identified by means of snowball sampling. To reduce distortion associated with this sampling technique, we identified potential interviewees through different gateways, such as markets, churches, recreational centres and migrants' popular gathering places such as social services provision centres and the train station. The interviewees, who came from diverse sub-Saharan African countries, were male and of working age (between 18 and 60). Regardless of being 'economic' migrants, asylum-seekers or refugees, they were low-income people, living in uncertain and precarious conditions. The interviews were conducted by a Ghanaian researcher in the diaspora, a condition which facilitated easy access to sub-Saharan African migrant groups and helped, in the majority of cases, to reduce the perception of an asymmetrical power relation between the researcher and the researched.

However, despite the empirical nature of our research work, this article is intentionally not structured as an ordinary empirical paper based on a case study. In fact, we wanted to give the text an eminently conceptual character. Hence we used only some quotations taken from our fieldwork to give life to our picture of migrants' housing problems and their sources in Italy.

3. The Concept of Precarity

The term precarity derives from the Latin word *precarius*, which has its root in *prex*, prayer. *Precarius* therefore means 'obtained through prayer' and indicates a condition that does not last forever, existing only as long as the person who grants this condition wants. Therefore, such a condition is a temporary concession, not a stable right.

The concept is widespread especially in the neo-Latin languages (*precarietà* in Italian, *precariedad* in Spanish, *precarité* in French), while its use is less common in English. This is probably the main reason why the international academic community considers precarity as a relatively new concept. Despite starting to gain traction in academic and policy circles in the 1970s as part of efforts to develop a multifaceted approach to poverty that extended beyond the sole focus on employment conditions (Barbier 2002; Millar 2017), the term precarity proliferated in public and academic discourses during the 2000s in particular (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016), mainly due to the seminal 2011 book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* by Guy Standing.¹⁶ However, it still lacks conceptual clarity and a shared definition (Banki 2013; Millar 2017), partly because of the ambiguities in its usage as a ‘condition’ or a ‘mobilisation tool’ by those experiencing it (Waite 2009).

Before becoming widespread in academic discourse, precarity emerged as a mobilization tool — or a “strategic point of departure for political subjectivities” (Jørgensen 2016: 962) — employed by social justice movements, activists and proponents of alternatives to capitalism. The concept gained popularity in the early 2000s, particularly in Europe, as reflected in Milan’s May Day 2001 protests and subsequent EuroMayDay mobilisations against labour and economic insecurity (Millar 2017; Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Standing 2011).¹⁷ In this context, precarity is understood as identifying situations which have political potential and are possible reference points for mobilizing disparate groups (including skilled, low-skilled and inexperienced workers struggling to find secure employment; see Banki 2013) that have been marginalised by neoliberal exploitation (Waite 2009) and are usually not represented (or even abandoned; Standing 2011) by traditional working class organisations (e.g., trade unions) and their main mobilisation strategies.

¹⁶ Though many scholars have criticised Standing’s (2011) work on several grounds (see for instance Millar 2017 and Jørgensen 2016), as Paret and Gleeson (2016: 278) document: “Not only did this book expedite the popularity of precarity as an analytic concept, but it also encouraged usage beyond the European context.”

¹⁷ Milan’s Mayday was a political parade organised from 2001 (until about 2015) in Milan by a network of political and social actors of the radical Left (e.g., squatted social centres, radical Left parties, grassroots trade unions). It was born in opposition to the demonstration of the confederal trade unions on Labour Day, with the aim of giving voice and visibility to the subjects of precarious work. It has always seen a wide participation (several tens of thousands of people), especially young people. On the wave of the success of the Mayday Parade in Milan, a European network was created in 2004, which replicated the event in several European cities (e.g., Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, Vienna).

Although this interpretation of precarity as a mobilisation tool is significant, the more widespread academic use of the concept equates precarity to a *condition* primarily linked to the labour market and imbued with economic insecurity (Bourdieu 1998). Precarious work is “employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker” (Kalleberg 2009: 2). The understanding of precarity as a condition usually brings with it the idea that precarious work is a product of neoliberal reforms and market-driven globalisation which have eroded full-time job guarantees (Neilson and Rossiter 2008).¹⁸ “[Precarity] serves an essential purpose in a disjointed political economy of neoliberal globalization within which the excluded are unsafe and vulnerable — but not superfluous” (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016: 948). According to this view, precarity is not a ‘systemic error’, an unintentional mistake, but a mode for providing the neoliberal economic system with an army of exploitable people, who are valuable exactly because they are vulnerable (Bauder 2006).

Though the dominant academic approaches to precarity tend to focus on economic and labour insecurity, there have been interpretations that expanded the use of this notion. Further scholarship on precarity has extended the concept beyond the ambit of work to include new affected social groups including precarious youth (Means 2015) and precarious academics (Thorkelson 2016), new sources such as insecurity and vulnerability in terms of legal status (Goldring, Berinstein and Bernhard 2009) and new spheres of life including the ability to build affective social relations (Neilson and Rossiter 2006). In this way, precarity has become a sort of ontological experience (Butler 2004), whose peculiarity is that it “connects the micro and the macro, situating experiences of insecurity and vulnerability within historically and geographically specific contexts” (Paret and Gleeson 2016: 280).

Within this framework, for the purpose of this paper, we consider precarity as an existential condition of prolonged uncertainty and insecurity, which refers at the same time to many pivotal spheres of life (i.e., precarity cannot be reduced to labour insecurity). As such, precarity emerges at the crossroads of individual features and structural conditions, so that the notion “incorporates the political and institutional context in which the *production* of precarity occurs, rather than focusing solely on individualised experiences” (Waite 2009: 421). Precarity is simultaneously an individual status (it affects individuals) and a collective condition (it refers to people

¹⁸ Some scholars have critiqued this unilateral connection of precarity with neoliberalisation and globalisation, pointing to the fact that “precarity has a much longer trajectory” (Paret and Gleeson 2016: 279) and characterised Keynesian-Fordist capitalism, too (see Ettliger 2007; Millar 2017).

who share similar structural conditions, for instance in terms of labour insecurity). The epistemological value of the concept of precarity for the analysis of migrants' housing conditions rests on four elements: firstly, the entanglement of personal features and structural forces, of local and global situations in terms of their causes; secondly, the emphasis on their political and institutional production; thirdly, the understanding of housing problems as part and parcel of an ontological condition of risk and uncertainty that characterises many aspects of the migrant's daily life; and fourthly, the mobilisation potential of such a condition shared by the majority of migrants.

4. Migration Flows and Policies Italy in the Midst of the 'Refugee Crisis'

Italy became an immigrant destination country quite recently — in the mid-1970s, with an upsurge in the 1990s. Today, Italy is home to many foreign migrants from diverse origins: Eastern Europe (e.g., Romania, Albania and Ukraine), Asia (e.g., China, India, Pakistan and Philippines) and Northern Africa (e.g., Morocco and Egypt) in particular. As of 1 January 2018, there were 5,144,440 regular foreigners resident in Italy — representing 8.5 per cent of the total population — of which 3,714,934 were non-EU foreigners (ISTAT 2018a). These data do not account for unauthorised immigrants, who were estimated to be between 500,000 and 700,000 in 2017 (Blangiardo 2018).

Among migrants in Italy, refugees and asylum-seekers have always been a negligible segment, in particular when compared to their share in countries such as Germany, the UK and France (Ammendola et al. 2005). However, things have started to change during the past few years: from 2010-2018 Italy witnessed increasing inflows of asylum-seekers in which around 800,000 people entered the country mainly through the Mediterranean route, of whom over 500,000 applied for asylum with 208,000 receiving international protection. Some African states (particularly sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria), Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are the main source countries of asylum-seekers (Ministero dell'Interno 2018). While an increasing number of migrants have applied for asylum in Italy in recent years, to be stressed is that only a portion of asylum-seekers that enter Europe through Italy remain in that country (Basevi and Conti 2017).

In this regard, Italy has been (and still is) rather unprepared institutionally to handle migration flows. Overall, the Italian policy approach to immigration been

characterized on the one hand by uncoordinated measures focused in particular on regulating labour recruitment at the national level — through a mix of occasional annual entry work permit procedures, sporadic regularisations and emergency decrees (Hermanin 2017; see also Ambrosini 2015, 2020) — and, on the other hand, on leaving the remaining aspects of migrants’ inclusion to the discretion of and management by local administrations and civil society organisations (Cancellieri and Ostanel, 2015; Caponio 2010). In the past few years, within the context of the so-called “refugees crisis”, regularisation decrees in favour of irregular migrants and ordinary channels for entering for work reasons shrank or ceased, and emergency decrees framed in terms of national security became the main means to handle migration flows in general, and the question of asylum-seekers in particular (Russo Spena 2016).¹⁹

The foregoing policy and regulative approach has produced a complex legal stratification of migrants which *on paper* deeply shapes their social rights and access to key sectors (Da Lomba 2010) (see Table 1). Among these key sectors is housing, which represents an important indicator of (and prerequisite for) integration, stabilisation and social inclusion (Tosi 2017). However, as we argue in the following sections, *in practice* the relation between legal status and migrants’ housing conditions is less linear than on paper, for different reasons.

¹⁹ The main legal instrument for migrant workers who have wanted to enter Italy during the past few decades is the so-called Decreto Flussi. This is a measure that the Italian government introduced in 1990. It determines the quota of non-EU foreign citizens who can enter Italy each year for reasons of work. Since 2010, the Decreto Flussi has almost exclusively concerned seasonal workers. Currently, family reunification is the most important regular migration channel to Italy. For instance, almost half of the 227,000 new permits issued in 2016 were for family reunification purposes (IOM 2017).

Table 1: A typology of migrant groups according to their socio-legal status and related rights

Category	Status	Right to stay in Italy	Right to work	Welfare rights	Housing rights
Authorised	(Economic) migrants with legal documents (e.g., EU citizens, non-EU citizens with a work permit)	<i>Yes</i> . The duration of this right depends on the specific status (e.g., European Commission Long-Term Residence Permit, which is valid for an indefinite period; temporary work permits of stay, which has limited validity – from a few months to five years)	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i> . Access to welfare rights is very similar to those of Italian citizens	<i>Yes</i> . In theory, foreign nationals with an EU residence permit and immigrants with at least 2 years valid permit and engage in regular work can access public housing on a similar footing as Italian citizens without any discriminations whatsoever. Migrants can access other forms of public support or housing provided by municipal and regional authorities, with some constraints introduced at the regional level
	Refugees (e.g., people granted international protection, including refugee status, subsidiary and humanitarian protection)	<i>Yes</i> . From 2 to 5 years permit in the first instance, depending on the specific refugee status	<i>Yes</i>		
Unauthorised	Refused asylees and (Economic) migrants without a permit (including those who enter the country without a genuine document and those who enter with the right paperwork and then overstay their visas)	<i>No</i> . They are expected to return to their home country	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i> . They are not entitled to any social assistance. However, people with health problems or in vulnerable conditions are provided with the right to access to basic services support (e.g., hospitals) on a case-by-case basis. Some NGOs and charities do provide limited services to some.	<i>No</i> . However, people in vulnerable conditions are provided with basic short-term accommodation on a case-by-case basis by municipalities or NGOs
Waiting for Authorisation	Asylum seekers	<i>Yes</i> (during the entire asylum determination process)	<i>Yes</i> . They are allowed to work two months after the submission of their asylum application	<i>Yes</i> . They have access to specific welfare support. The services offered vary according to calls, but they are generally essential: entry services (identification), cleaning, meals, basic needs (sheets, clothes, etc.) and linguistic and cultural mediation services. Other calls may also include the provision of social and legal assistance services	<i>Yes</i> . Asylees are provided with first-stage temporary housing to carry out the operations necessary for establishing their legal status. Asylees are often permitted to stay in the camps until the final decision has been made on their application, or they are expelled after the second negative decision. Those with legal recognition are allowed to stay for the “time strictly necessary” to be transferred to SPRAR structures, if a place is available, where they receive housing for 6-12 months

Source: Authors' Construction

5. Migrants' Housing Precarity in Italy

Housing precarity is an increasingly global problem — which, in many Western countries, is linked to the commodification of housing in the context of the retreat of the welfare state (Forrest and Hirayama 2015), with this situation worsening during the recent global economic crisis and its aftermath (see Edwards 2016; McKee et al. 2017). As such, it affects several segments of the population. However, migrants are by far the hardest hit by housing precarity. Two decades ago, Antonio Tosi (2001a) argued that, in Italy, “despite the great variety of conditions [...] the general picture is that of huge numbers of immigrants suffering housing hardship and exclusion. Many immigrants who are not poor are badly housed and ordinarily poor immigrants are often without housing”. Twenty years later, the housing situations of several migrants have improved, for instance, thanks to their stabilisation. However, generally speaking, many immigrants in Italy still suffer very harsh housing situations — and, in any case, “their accommodation tends to be worse or more expensive than that of the native population with the same level of income” (ibid.). A few data items suffice to illustrate this situation in Italy. Firstly, a survey estimated 50,724 people without shelter in 2014, of which 58 per cent were foreigners (ISTAT 2015), with the situation worsening recently (Poggio and Boreiko 2017). Secondly, the number of migrants owning their own home is extremely low, if compared to Italian citizens: in Italy, 76.5 per cent of households consisting of only Italian citizens live in owned homes; by contrast, households with at least one foreign member who enjoy the same condition are just 27.9 per cent of the total (ISTAT 2018b).²⁰

Overall, it is possible to state that precarious housing is one of the difficulties that migrants *always* have to endure during the initial settlement phase in the host society, and sometimes throughout the entire migration trajectory — even if, in the majority of cases, at some point migrants manage to reach acceptable and ‘normal’ housing conditions (Samers and Collyer 2010; Tosi 2001b). Housing precarity is manifested in many, extremely different circumstances, including: homelessness; living in

²⁰ There are significant differences among migrants' subgroups. Among the dominant foreign communities in Italy, the Tunisians (85.2 per cent), Moroccans (75.9 per cent) and Albanians (67.7 per cent) have the highest percentages of households in rented homes compared to the total number of households with foreigners. The Chinese households are those that more than others live in their own homes (on average about a third of the families). Filipinos, on the other hand, are less often owners of the home in which they live (just 12.1 per cent). This is because more often than other subgroups they live in a home that coincides with the workplace (these communities, mostly specialised in the professions of care and personal assistance, are often employed full time directly in the home of their employers) (ISTAT 2018b).

emergency and transitional housing facilities provided by non-governmental organisations or public authorities; living in the workplace; staying with relatives or friends in overcrowded spaces; living in sub-standard housing structures; renting without a formal contract; using a large portion of the salary to pay monthly rents (Shier et al. 2016). While these diverse housing conditions of migrants in Italy are characterised by radically different features and problems, all of them exhibit the presence of similar causes that prevent many migrants from achieving housing stability, for instance in the form of homeownership. The following sections are devoted to a detailed analysis of these complex causes of migrants' housing precarity in Italy.

6. The Roots of Migrants' Housing Precarity in Italy

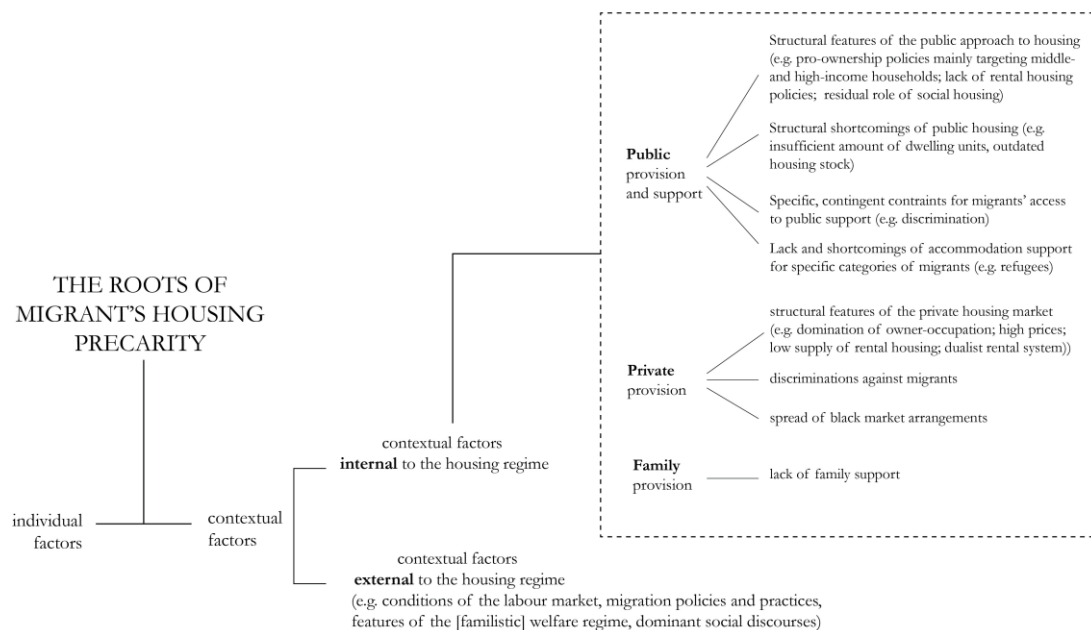
Despite the variety of circumstances in which migrants' housing precarity is manifested, the majority of migrants in Italy live in rented or subleased dwellings (ISTAT 2018b), leading to the conclusion that problems of access to housing for migrants are essentially problems of access to the *rental* market. As we will explain in this section, the *public* rental market is ineffective in answering the housing needs of many migrants, so that foreigners must resort to the *private rental market*. However, this market in Italy has always been residual (owner occupation has historically been the main means of gaining access to a home; Allen et al. 2004) and characterised by high rent premiums (Arbaci 2019).

Against this backdrop, we can state that migrants' precarious housing situation in Italy is the result of the interaction of individual factors specific to each individual migrant (e.g., economic, human and social capital) with the complex interplay of a series of structural arrangements (see Figure 1). Some of these structural arrangements are *outside the housing regime*. This is the case, for example, of migration policies and laws (which shape migrants' legal status and the associated citizenship rights; Ambrosini 2020; Gargiulo 2020), and of dominant social discourses (which foster "utilitarian, non-inclusive and repressive attitudes"; Arbaci 2019: 139). Consider also the role of the labour market,²¹ whose conditions are crucial in determining the income of migrants and therefore their chances of accessing housing — as epitomised by the fact that the most common cause of immigrant eviction is rental arrears due to changes

²¹ Migrants in Italy are predominantly clustered in low-paid work — mainly in the service sector (56.5 per cent) and in agriculture (16.6 per cent) (ISTAT 2018c).

in employment status (IDOS 2016).²² Other sources of precarity are, on the contrary, *internal to the housing regime*, with reference both to the complex system of public institutions (e.g., laws, policies and practices at different levels) governing the public provision of and support to housing, and the characteristics of the market-based housing system.

Figure 1 — The causes of migrants' housing precarity in Italy



Source: Authors' elaboration

What are precisely the variables internal to the housing regime that shape migrants housing precarity in Italy? We answer this question in the remainder of this section. Nevertheless, before doing so, two specifications are needed to complete the picture of housing provision in Italy. Firstly, unlike many Italians, migrants cannot usually

²² 'They usually terminate my contract in August and then renew it in September in order not to pay me for the holidays. I always live in constant fear, anxiety, the uncertainty that they might not even call me again. Tell me, how can I rent an apartment with this contract and then try bringing here my family?' (Mike, economic migrant, interview, Aug. 2018). Working conditions also affect housing insecurity in a second way: they affect the legal status of migrants (e.g., their ability to renew the residence permit) and, consequently, their ability to access certain forms of housing (e.g., migrants without a regular residence permit cannot rent accommodation in a legal way).

rely on family support to access housing. In a Southern European housing system like Italy's, the family plays a pivotal role in securing housing for younger generations in particular (Allen et al. 2004; Arbaci 2007, 2019). This 'familistic model' helps Italians in marshalling credit facilities to purchase homes and cope with the high cost of house rents (Poggio 2012). However, a similar strategy cannot be utilised by the majority of migrants (Dell'Olio 2004) who, on the contrary, in many cases support relatives and family members economically in their home country.

'I have to send money to my wife and my son, my sisters and brothers back home. If I spend about €300-€400 for a room, how can I? I get €700 per month which I receive in instalments,' (Rashidu, refugee, interview, May 2018).

Secondly, different forms of illegal housing are in widespread use even among Italians (Chiodelli 2019), and informal housing has been a structural feature of the Italian urban environment since the Second World War (Chiodelli et al. 2020). Illegal practices in the form of unauthorised housing construction on agricultural land played a key role in providing housing access and driving social inclusion for many internal migrants (e.g., migrants from rural to urban areas, or from southern to northern regions) between the 1950s and the 1970s in Italy (Coppola 2013). However, this role for illegal housing ceased in the 1980s and never benefitted international migrants (Arbaci 2019; Chiodelli et al. 2020), which, as we will argue later, are currently nurturing mainly the exploitative sector of illegal renting.

6.1. The Public Provision and Support of Migrants' Accommodation

In Italy, there is a lack of national legislation and policy specifically addressing the housing needs of immigrants (Dell'Olio 2004). This takes place within a context in which, in Italy as well as in several European countries, migrants' integration measures are usually disconnected from regular housing measures, and housing is not a central component of integration policies (Edgar et al. 2004). On paper, regular migrants should receive assistance through the conventional system of public housing support, mostly promoted at the regional and municipal level, while specific accommodation policies should cover asylum-seekers. Both situations, however, are dogged by numerous critical challenges.

Public housing and support for regular migrants

Italian housing policies for low-income households have focused historically on the supply of public dwelling units. Other measures like rent-supplement schemes have always been marginal, as has social housing (Bargelli and Heitkamp 2017a).²³ The public housing system in Italy is, on the whole, inadequate to meet the needs of the entire national population — and not only of migrants. Since the 1990s, this sector has been marked by a progressive reduction in public investments and by a privatization process that in twenty years has led to the sale of 22 per cent of the public housing stock (Puccini 2016). This inadequacy is epitomised by the fact that there are 650,000 households on municipal waiting lists for public housing in Italy — against around 770,000 benefitting households (Federcasa 2016). In 2014, non-EU foreigner households in public housing were 10.2 per cent of the total; at the same time, they represented 37.3 per cent of the nuclear families on the waiting lists (EU-migrant households on the waiting lists were 8.2 per cent of the total) (Federcasa 2016). This disproportionate number of migrants on the waiting list is linked not only to the fact that the share of migrants who started to apply for access to public housing has grown a lot since the 1990s, but also to the structural characteristics of the public housing stock. In fact, many public homes are small in size and therefore cannot be assigned to large households, which represent a significant part of the households of migrants on the waiting list (Federcasa 2016).

These problems are aggravated by the fact that many local authorities have introduced restrictive and discriminatory measures related to migrants' access to public housing (see Ambrosini 2013; Baldini and Poggio 2012; Cerretelli and Enwereuzor 2003; Tosi 2001b). For example, the municipality of Milan adopted discriminatory eligibility procedures in assigning public housing in the 2002 call for applications by attributing five points to possession of Italian citizenship. These occasional cases of overt discrimination are complemented by a situation that is often characterized by requirements that prevent or discourage many migrants from applying for public housing. This is the case of the requirement, set by a regional law

²³ By 'public housing' we mean housing promoted directly by public authorities and assigned at very low rents to households that fulfil specific socio-economic criteria; access to public housing occurs through rankings compiled at municipal level, which prioritise more disadvantaged households. By 'social housing' (*edilizia convenzionata*) we refer to housing built by private developers with their own funds on the basis of specific agreements with public authorities. Social housing is sold or rented at below market rates but, despite this, it is not economically accessible to low-income households, but mainly to middle-income households.

in Lombardy, that the applicant for a public housing unit must be registered as a regular resident, and/or have carried out work in the Lombardy region for at least five consecutive years in the period preceding the date of application.²⁴ Far from being trivial, this requirement is a major constraint for many migrants:

'I've been staying here on and off for the past 11 years but I'm not a resident [...] I've been living in shared housing and emergency structures since I came. You see, if I'm hosted somewhere they said hospitality is not accepted for residency. How can I have a residence without having a regular house and then ask for public housing?' (Yarat, refugee, interview, May 2018).

More generally — and independent from cases of discrimination — the criteria for accessing public housing are not set on the specificities of a significant portion of migrants, that is, people who arrive in Italy alone and of working age (who represent the majority of asylum-seekers and refugees). In fact, such criteria tend to favour older people or households with dependent minors. While such criteria are reasonable from a general, allocative, viewpoint (they prioritise fragile groups), the lack of any other kind of help for migrants who arrive in Italy alone and are of working age makes their housing situation usually very difficult.

'I went to the municipality several times, but nothing [...] It's a common trend that if your wife and/or children aren't here, it's difficult to get public housing. I've worked for many years in this municipality, but my housing history over the years has been precarious. It's difficult for young individuals to access public housing ... ,' (Philip, economic migrant, interview, May 2018).

Difficulties in obtaining specific information compound the problems mentioned above. In fact, many migrants do not know the public assistance system and the criteria for accessing it. This is linked not only to migrants' knowledge deficit, but also to the limits of the bureaucratic system of accessing public housing: almost all documents are available only in Italian and the complexity of application procedures requires knowledge of different aspects of local administrative environment.

²⁴ The same requirement also refers to the access of other forms of public support for housing, such as the 'rental fund' (*fondo affitti*; i.e. a financial contribution to the lease reserved for families in poverty) of the Lombardy Region. This requirement was declared unconstitutional in January 2020 (Constitutional Court ruling 44/2020).

'I haven't changed my residence; I still have my residence in Parma until 2022. But can I change it before that date? I arrived in Bergamo in 2013 and have been here ever since,' (Musah, refugee, interview, May 2018).

Although these information access problems are very evident, public authorities have rarely put in place specific actions to deal with them (assistance is provided only by specific NGOs, such as *Unione Inquilini*).

Accommodation support for asylum-seekers and refugees

In Italy, the extensive system of allocation of asylum-seekers and refugees throughout the country should ideally guarantee them adequate accommodation. Asylum-seekers are provided temporary shelter mainly in *Centri di accoglienza straordinaria* (CAS) while their claim is evaluated. CAS facilities are temporary structures that provide minimum services while the asylum-seeker's claim is evaluated. Then, when a bed is available, refugees (households, unaccompanied minors and people with health problems in particular) are transferred to a secondary structure, within the framework of the System for the Protection of Asylum-seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), where they receive housing for 6-12 months as illustrated in the introduction of the thesis.²⁵ SPRAR locations are distributed widely across the country, in agreement with local authorities, to facilitate migrants' integration. They offer services designed to facilitate integration, including job training, language coursework and community mediation. The SPRAR system has been often considered as a best practice in refugees and asylum-seekers' reception in Italy — even if, unfortunately, it includes only a tiny minority of the total number of asylum-seekers due to the low number of available places.

This Italian asylum system does not prevent many migrants from falling into housing precarity once they leave it — even people who have had the chance to stay in SPRAR accommodations. In fact, refugees spend time in the SPRAR system that is often too short to allow them to attain complete autonomy from the work and housing points of view. In some cases, moreover, specific management problems or sudden changes of regulation or law oblige migrants to leave the asylum system

²⁵ As illustrated earlier, the law 132/2018 introduced new measures regarding refugees and asylum-seekers. Among other things, the law replaced the SPRAR system with the so-called SIPROIMI, narrowing its scope to make it inaccessible to asylum-seekers, humanitarian status holders and recent 'special case' permit holders. Since a large part of this research was carried out before the approval of the law in December 2018, the article will keep referring to the SPRAR system and not to SIPROIMI.

without sufficient notice.

‘The organisation informed me that in two days I’d have to leave [the SPRAR] camp. So I went out and started sleeping outside. I asked them why now and why they didn’t inform me much earlier. They told me they changed the law. They said if I didn’t go they’d call the police. I can’t tell you how bad I felt,’ (Dzuglu, refugee, interview, July 2018).

To this must be added the fact that the whole asylum system allocates asylum seekers on a ‘no-choice’ basis and that the majority of available places are located in southern Italy – while the large majority of job opportunities are offered by northern regions. The consequence is that, once they exit the asylum system, refugees move to areas of the country completely different from where they lived while they were within the asylum system, thus having to rebuild their networks from scratch to find work and a home.

To these specific organisational and management characteristics of the asylum system, we can add the difficulty of communication by public authorities with many refugees. Many of them are unaware of their rights and the opportunities for assistance provided by public institutions.

‘I don’t know how the reception system works, so I left the camp after the first week to go to other EU countries. And I now find myself without a place to stay,’ (Abubakar, asylum-seeker, interview, July 2018).²⁶

The complex housing situation of refugees is attested by the fact that many asylum-seekers and refugees live rough, squat and utilize homeless services, with an estimated 10,000 protection holders and asylum-seekers believed to be residing outside the state’s institutions or camps with no access to basic services (EOH 2016; MSF 2018).

6.2. The Private Housing Market

The lack of adequate, migrant-focused housing support policies forces migrants to turn almost exclusively to the private rental market, which, however, is characterised by a serious problem of affordability and marginalisation. This problem is a permanent, structural condition of the Italian housing system, and it is a direct

²⁶ If a migrant leaves the accommodation centre without a formal request (e.g., for medical reasons), s/he loses his/her place.

consequence of decades of dominance of the promotion and production of owner-occupation on national and municipal agendas (Arbaci 2019) — currently, in Italy, homeownership refers to 79.9 per cent of the housing stock. Therefore, access to the rental market is inherently problematic for anyone suffering from precarious working conditions and low income. This is epitomised by the fact that 34 per cent of all tenant households were in a situation of housing deprivation in 2014 — that is, they spent more than 30 per cent of their income on rent (Nomisma 2016). “This financial burden concerns about 1.7 million households [...]. They run the risk of falling into arrears with payments [...], as shown by the marked increase (+62 per cent) in eviction measures undertaken between 2006 and 2014” (Pittini et al. 2017: 76). The seriousness of migrants’ problems in the private rental market is highlighted by the fact that 25 per cent of the evictions carried out due to arrears in the past 5 years (about 100,000 in total) involved immigrant households, despite migrants representing only 8.5 per cent of the national population (CGIL-Sunia 2016).

For migrants, access to the private rental system is even more difficult than for natives, not only because they suffer from more precarious job conditions and poverty than the indigenous population, but also due to two other factors: firstly, the presence of discrimination; secondly, the legal status problems that induce them to use the informal market.

Discrimination

Migrants can face problems in accessing the private rental market due to prejudices and racism — either real or perceived. Recent data showed that the highest percentage of cases of discrimination, within the context of migrants’ daily lives, was related to the search for a home (about 11 per cent believed that they suffered discrimination; ISTAT 2018b). Some landlords, in fact, refuse to rent to foreigners because of prejudices such as the fear that immigrants lack the necessary economic means to pay rent or create coexistence problems with neighbours, or simply due to racism (Baldini and Federici 2011; Coin 2004; Membretti and Quassoli 2015).

‘They refused to rent an apartment to me more than 20 times [...] I searched for a house for a year in Bergamo [...] It happens that I called the agency one day and they asked about my country of origin, and I said I’m from the Congo. If you aren’t Italian, then no,’ (Francois, economic migrant, interview, May 2018).

Furthermore, in some cases landlords are unwilling to rent to foreigners at the normal market price, instead charging higher fees (10-20 per cent higher than in the case of Italian tenants; Daminato and Kulic 2013) — or, as we explore below, renting without a proper legal contract.

Illegal renting

The temporariness or lack of migrants' regular documentation can make securing regular housing very difficult or impossible. Irregular migrants cannot legally rent or buy a house. Consequently, illegality is an almost obligatory option for them to secure accommodation. In some cases, they can resort to squatting, which is however a criminal offence in Italy and is usually characterised by very low-quality dwelling conditions (Nur and Sethman 2016). Illegal renting is thus the main way to access housing for irregular migrants. This state of affairs generates several negative outcomes, such as exploitative prices, low housing quality and lack of legal recourse and rights associated with regular tenancy (Mazzucato 2007).

'My South American landlord makes me pay too much. I pay €250 for a room, apart from the bills ... so I pay almost €400 per month. The house is cold because he doesn't want to turn on the heating system. The house is old, almost abandoned [...]. I accepted this place because I didn't have any other choice,' (Rufutus, refugee, interview, Oct. 2018).

However, not only irregular migrants must resort to illegal housing; so too must regular immigrants, due to the unavailability of other options (e.g., the impossibility to rent legally due to high prices). This has contributed to creating a flourishing informal housing market involving migrants. Accurate and reliable data on this phenomenon are not available. However, to illustrate, according to SUNIA (2009), about 39 per cent of migrants in Italy in 2009 had unregistered contracts (while 46 per cent had contracts registered for an amount lower than the one paid).

7. Concluding Thoughts: Housing Precarity, between Institutional Construction and Potential for Political Mobilisation

7.1 *The Public Production of Migrants' Housing Precarity*

Precarity is a condition inherent in being a migrant, which is not engendered only in the working sphere, but extends far beyond it, invading the entire life of a person. The housing sphere is one of the crucial fields in which migrants' precarity takes shape. For many migrants in Italy, in fact, it is not only challenging to access housing stability through the purchase of a house, but it is also complicated to access the rental sector, public or private. The result is that many migrants are forced to change housing constantly, occupy low-quality or overcrowded living spaces, rent in the shadow market, or sleep on the street or in temporary structures made available by NGOs. Such conditions of (varied) housing precarity are in one form or the other typical of the majority of low-income international migrants in the first phase of their migration trajectory. However, over the last decade in particular, there has been an increase in cases where housing precarity — even in forms of serious marginality such as homelessness — has become a prolonged and recurrent condition for people in Italy who are not at the beginning of their migration career (Tosi 2017). This attests to the growing importance of the housing question for many migrants in Italy.

As argued in this paper, widespread housing precarity is the result of the complex interaction of a series of factors. Foremost among them is the role played by various public institutions. This is attested by the fact that, while migrants with a different legal status should *on paper* suffer varying degrees of housing precarity, this is not the case *in practice*. Even regular migrants and migrants awaiting authorisation suffer from a profound housing precarity, often very similar to that of unauthorised migrants. This is not only because in Italy there are no housing policies aimed at addressing the specific problems of migrants — or of certain categories of these (e.g., refugees). It also happens because the public housing support system at the local level presents many shortcomings that, together with specific local practices (e.g., discrimination in public support), push migrants into the difficult private housing market. Within this framework, it can be argued that migrants' housing precarity is mostly (even if not only) produced and maintained by public institutions — at different levels (e.g., national, regional and local) and through different instruments (e.g., laws, regulations, policies and practices) (Coin 2004). Also the shortcomings of the private rental market (such as a low supply of rental housing, high costs and widespread illegal renting) are directly or indirectly linked to actions (e.g., the constant support for homeownership)

or inactions (e.g., the lack of effective controls and sanctions on illegal renting) of the state across all levels. Such institutional production of migrants' housing precarity occurs at the intersection between the political system that exploits precarity as a tool — in order to discourage migrants' settlement and further inflows, as well as a source of political bargaining and consensus building (Coin 2004; Dell'Olio 2004; Tradardi 2004) — and the bias and shortcomings of the (housing) welfare system that it is shaped exclusively (sometimes unwittingly, as a result of an outdated housing stock, sometimes wittingly, as a result of intentional discrimination) by the needs and preferences of natives (Tosi 2017).

These institutional factors at the basis of the public production of migrants' housing precarity are complemented by other features of the host environment, both internal and external to the housing regime (such as social perception of foreigners, labour market and welfare regime), which contribute to shaping migrants' uncertainty and vulnerability. All these elements interact in a complex way in determining the modes of incorporating migrants in a certain environment (Portes and Zhou 1993) and, entangled with individual characteristics (i.e., socio-demographic, biographic and human capital factors), shape the various forms and degrees of precarity experienced by migrants.

Given the foregoing, it can be asserted that the features of migrants' housing problems can be better understood through the epistemological lens of the concept of precarity, which highlights the centrality of political and institutional mechanisms in its production (Waite 2009), while contextualising such production within the framework of several other driving forces, both individual and contextual, local and global.

To be stressed is that, although our research has focused on the Italian case, our reflections may also be relevant to other countries, especially in Europe. Precarity, in fact, is a structural condition of migrants' contemporary lives in many European countries (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016). At the same time, several European countries are characterised by a housing crisis situation for large shares of the population, linked for example to the progressive reduction of welfare state protection (Poggio and Whitehead 2017). Therefore, despite the contingent differences among countries in terms of characteristics of migration flows, housing regimes and public policies, it is plausible to assume that migrants' housing precarity is a unifying feature in Europe. Within this framework, our reflections on Italy can serve as guidelines to analyse the institutional causes of migrants' housing precarity in other European areas, with the aim of understanding what specific forms are assumed by housing

precarity and how they are influenced by the distinctive characteristics of each context (for example, in terms of housing regime and migration policies).

7.2. Precarity as a Mobilisation Tool?

Among the four epistemological dimensions of the concept of precarity that were identified in the initial part of this paper, only three have been addressed by our analysis, while the fourth has been neglected: the mobilisation potential of the condition of precarity. This does not mean that this latter dimension is less important. On the contrary, it is a crucial one, because it allows researchers simultaneously to avoid depicting migrants as only victims of precarity (thus recognising their agency and voice) and to trace an explicit — conceptual, material and political — connection between migrants and other subaltern subjects who live in a prolonged condition of instability, uncertainty and risk in western societies (e.g., precarious workers of platform capitalism). Compared to the latter, migrants represent a sort of hyper-case of the precariat: “The ‘migrant’ is the quintessential incarnation of precarity” (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016: 949). This extreme state of precarity, which is somehow intrinsic to the condition of being a migrant, questions the possibility of immigrants being political agents of transformation. While some authors downplay their role in political and social struggles (e.g., Standing 2011), according to other scholars the migrant precariat has a central role in refreshing political mobilisation, so much so that “migrant struggles prefigure the struggles of the precariat because migration tests the limits of capitalist control [...] and because the precariousness of migrant labour can spread to the entire workforce” (Jørgensen 2016: 960; see also Casas-Cortés 2009). A series of mobilisations of precarious migrants in several countries (see, for instance, Trimikliniotis et al. 2016 on Athens, Nicosia and Istanbul) seem to support the thesis that the migrant precariat can acquire a political agency and, more generally, that, even if “precarity does not necessarily designate a common cause (nor a class-in-the-making), [...] it *can* function as a social space in which struggles are articulated and united” (Jørgensen 2016: 967). How central can housing issues become in this framework of migrants’ political activation? In some cases, migrants have been the main actors of struggles for the right to housing (see Oliveri 2018 on the Italian case), but such struggles have never been able to unify different subgroups of the contemporary precariat. What are the reasons for this? Are they related to factual differences (e.g., differences in the housing conditions of different precarious subgroups, so that precarious natives seem to live in less harsh conditions

than immigrants, thanks to family support or residual welfare state protections)? Or are they related to other reasons, such as the greater difficulty of building mass mobilisations on housing than on other questions? This is a relevant topic for future research aimed at better understanding if precarity can function as a point of departure for the production of new political subjectivities and new political struggle and what role housing questions can play in this framework, in Italy and beyond.

Article 2

Temporality, Refugees and Housing: The Effects of Temporary Assistance on Refugee Housing Outcomes in Italy

1. Introduction

The field of migration studies has predominantly analysed migration through the spatial lens, with particular attention paid to causes and consequences of human movement in sending and receiving societies (see, e.g., Massey and Denton 1993). Of late, borders and bordering practices have received more attention by scholars interested in the confluence of security and migration policy, in particular its effects on limiting or controlling human mobility (Brun 2016; El Shaarawi 2015; Haas 2017; Little 2015; Tazzioli 2018). An aspect of this is the use of time or temporal practices in creating borders, and the effect that temporal regulation has on excluding migrants from normative experiences of life (El Shaarawi 2015; Fontanari 2017; Hainmueller et al. 2016). In the field of forced migration, temporality has been incorporated into analyses of the experiences of asylum-seekers awaiting processing, and of refugees in conditions of protracted displacement (Brun 2016; Fontanari 2017). In both cases, scholars have used the lens of temporality to describe a socio-spatial condition marked by subjectification, indeterminacy and precariousness. Scholars have identified the independent effect of temporal liminality or limbo on an individual's psychosocial well-being. Depending on the stage of the life cycle during which refugees 'wait in limbo', individuals lose years of productivity or reproductivity, families dissolve and health — both physical and mental — deteriorates, as refugees remain excluded from normative social interaction (cf. El-Shaarawi 2015; Hainmueller et al. 2016).

Mountz (2010) and Robertson (2014) have both called attention to the need to extend and incorporate analysis of temporality into analyses of state practices of migration governance. Robertson in particular has highlighted areas in which this analysis is needed, including practices of state actors, interactions between migrants and the state, and the use of temporal governance by migration institutions. Such

analysis would expand on our understanding of the use of temporality in migration governance at many scales, and the impact of temporal governance on migrant inclusion, exclusion and subject making. In line with this, this research calls attention to the temporal aspect of assistance provided to refugees in the formal Italian refugee reception system. We incorporate temporality into the analysis of housing outcomes for 33 refugees who participated in the state-run reception programme in Bergamo (Italy): the emergency (temporary) reception centre (CAS; first-stage accommodation) and a System for the Protection of Asylum-seekers and Refugees (SPRAR; second-stage accommodation). We explore herein the impact that the limitations on the length of housing and employment support, and use of temporary programmes has on housing outcomes. In doing so, this research addresses the following research question: How do temporalities and temporariness embedded in reception programmes shape housing outcomes?

Findings indicate that after exiting temporary state-run facilities, refugees in Bergamo experience difficulty finding and affording housing, leading to temporary homelessness, residence in temporary shelters and doubling up. Refugees exit state facilities without permanent job contracts and as such are often unable to obtain formal housing contracts. Consequently, refugees rely on informal housing without legal protection or social benefits. We explain the outcomes, focusing on the impact that the emphasis on temporality — in this case used as an indicator of temporariness, a restricted period of accommodation in temporary, assigned facilities and employment services (e.g., traineeships in the SPRAR programme) — has on housing outcomes. In doing so, we explain how the programme's structure itself contributes to observed socio-spatial exclusion.

After this introductory section, we situate the article within temporality, temporariness, governance, and migration literature. We provide the research context in section three, and then document the research methodology, with the main empirical findings in section four. The discussion of outcomes appears in section five, and the final section concludes the paper, including limitations and a signpost for future study.

2. The Temporality Housing Nexus

2.1 Temporality, Temporariness and Migration

Migration is both a spatial and a temporal undertaking for a migrating person. As Fontanari (2017) summarised, migration is a process in which subjects construct themselves through moving (Knosrari 2010), waiting (Bissell, 2007), being stuck (Brekke and Brochmann 2014), and, crossing borders (Countin 2005). This is to say that the journey is both physical travel, and a series of experiences of temporalities including travel time but also processes of queuing, waiting, repeating, accelerated time, and interrupted life courses (Griffith et al. 2013), which demarcate the periods of the journey and the construction of the migrant subject. Increasingly, nation-state regimes govern and control cross border migration and intrastate mobility using temporalities in addition to spatial borders (Cwerner 2004). These temporal ‘devices and rationalities’ take a number of forms (Anderson 2010b). States may, for instance, selectively use time and spatial bordering processes to limit who has access to entitlements or rights, to deter migration, and to define national identity — for example, states moderate the flow of migration and immigration from arrival to settlement, culminating in naturalisation (Griffiths et al. 2013). In this way, states regulate and define who belongs. Other such examples of state temporal migration governance include the use of indeterminate spatial confinement, speeding or elongating processing times (Cwerner 2004), limiting or elongating the duration of the permit of stay for foreigners, and creating new forms of ongoing permanent unresolved migration status (e.g., temporary protective status or deferred deportation) (Baas and Yeoh 2019; Simmelink 2011). The effect of these policies has particular implications for vulnerable asylum-seekers and labour migrants who experience both social and spatial exclusion from normative temporal rhythms of society as a result (Caritas 2019).

At a macro level, states use time and temporality to determine state membership, specifically who qualifies for citizenship. They do so, for instance, through the use of qualification times (Anderson 2010b; Hari, McGrath and Preston 2013), determining how long one must be present in order to be eligible for citizenship. States may also use temporal reference points to determine who is eligible for membership, and therefore, who is included and excluded (Clifford 1994). Those present, for instance, prior to a certain date may be defined as citizens while those not present are defined as foreigners (see, e.g., Vang and Trieu 2014). These black and white differences defined by a reference date rather than life course trajectories, participation in state

institutions or any other factor, affect who is eligible and, more importantly, the obligated provision of rights associated with membership by the state.

The state also employs temporalities to create boundaries between populations and the state. As Robertson (2014) has noted, the state increasingly prioritises temporary and partial citizenship. Migrants are often neither citizens nor permanent residents. Migrants with temporary or revocable status have fewer entitlements or rights, making them more vulnerable and their lives more tenuous. Further, migrants are asked to continuously reapply for status and to justify their claims, requiring both time and cost (Simmelink 2011). The temporary statuses that they receive limit their ability to integrate, decreasing their stability and increasing the ongoing need for mobility (Fontanari 2017). This condition of legal liminality creates a condition of uncertainty which has been shown to decrease personal stability, limit employment trajectories and contributes to increased mobility (Anderson 2010; Fontanari 2017). This has implications for society more broadly. The utilisation of temporary status for migrant populations undermines the formation of attachment to place and the production of a cohesive society (Anderson 2010). Scholars have suggested that states intentionally disrupt attachment formation processes, in order to encourage outmigration and discourage further inflows (Konle-Seidl 2018).

Migrants' awareness of the limitations on their time in the receiving context and perception of their own temporariness may affect their expectations and the fulfilment of their ambitions (Anderson 2010). In places where migrants can work while awaiting the resolution of their legal claims to residence, the migrant's perception of their own status and length of stay may degrade the type and quality of work they are willing to accept. This uncertainty conditions a migrant to accept a degraded level of work, temporary in nature and of lower quality, where exploitation is more prevalent (Anderson 2010; Bastia and McGrath 2011). The quality of these initial jobs impacts both their initial experiences of inclusion, or rather marginalisation within the secondary — and often temporary — labour market, and their long-term trajectories (Dwyer et al. 2016). This environment limits migrant social experiences and their quality of life is reduced by the conditions of their work (Clayton and Vickers 2018). Migrants, fearing reprisal from their employers, given their tenuous status, are less likely to be advocates for good working conditions and more likely to be exploited (Anderson 2010; Bastia and McGrath 2011). In effect, the temporary nature of their status contributes to further socioeconomic exclusion and ongoing insecurity.

At a more local level, states may use temporalities, including qualification times, to determine (award) access to particular rights or benefits. For instance, migrants

may be asked to demonstrate continuous presence within a receiving location or society to qualify for public benefits, to apply for a bus pass, or for eligibility for social housing (Anderson 2010b; Vrăbiescu 2019). In doing so, the state employs administrative categories in which eligibility is defined by time or timing, affecting access to rights and the conditions of integration or exclusion (see Ambrosini 2013). Access to these rights or entitlements, like public housing or cash assistance, shapes the context of reception, particularly socioeconomic advancement and civic status.

2.2 Temporalities and Consequences for Forced Migrants

Temporalities and the effect of governance through the use of temporalities have been examined by previous scholars in relation to processing times and the psychological effect of waiting and uncertainty caused by said processing times on forced migrants' lives.

States use processing and administrative times both as an element of behavioural control and exclusion. States like Australia²⁷ intentionally elongate asylum or status processing times, or the period of detention in order to deter further migration (Griffiths et al. 2013). Migrants with asylum claims await results indefinitely — in some cases for several years. This period is neither 'neutral' nor 'benign' (Haas 2017) but rather a kind of 'existential limbo' in which forced migrants lack control over their being and are often denied the right to work or freedom of mobility (Brun 2016). Individuals who are awaiting processing of their asylum claims also await the ability to participate in normative temporalities, like work and school (Hartley et al. 2017). This occurs for migrants who are physically detained awaiting processing and those awaiting processing in accommodation or reception centres. In both cases forced migrants are kept from participating in routines of life and social interaction, what Jeffrey (2008a) has called "enforced idleness".

The exclusion caused by this protracted uncertainty, liminality, or waiting time, has implications for inclusion in everyday life. The migrant's liminal position impacts their domestic or private lives. Forced migrants or migrants with temporary status with uncertain futures may choose to delay or speed their decision to form partnerships or to do so legally. Uncertainty can also affect the decision to have children (Robertson 2014). Further, the extended period of waiting marked by unresolved legal status has implications for mental and physical health (El-Shaarawi

²⁷ See <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/detention-policies/>.

2015). The fear of outcome and the threat of deportation or refoulement associated with a negative outcome contribute to a “downward spiral of invisibility, marginalisation and division” (Bailey et al. 2016: 135).

Further, the protracted nature of this condition acculturates humanitarian migrants awaiting resolution of their asylum claims to their marginal position. Humanitarian migrants with unresolved status may be less willing to seek state services, or public assistance as a result. Scholars have suggested that this contributes to poorer health and housing outcomes (see, e.g., Bailey et al. 2016; Griffiths et al. 2013). States may exploit this feeling of marginality intentionally by increasing the speed of deportation and deportation processing in order to condition behaviour (Griffiths 2013). The state uses these actions both as demonstrations of power and border making. In essence state policies and actions use time to exploit weakness and create a more docile and invisible subject (Ehrkamp 2017).

2.3 State Service Provision: Temporality and Temporariness

A separate set of literatures exists that addresses the use of time in the practice or governance of post-arrival integration and reception programming for refugees. In particular, prior scholarship has explored the effect of temporal limits on service provision for refugees and forced migrants (Lusk 1984; Potocky-Tripodi 2003; Majka and Mullan 1992). This focus has been predominately on the consequences of limiting financial assistance to refugees and the implications of neo-liberal policies, which prioritise rapid employment over other forms of adaptation. Scholars have found that the limits on length of support have negative implications for long-term adaptation and quality of life (Majka and Mullan 1992; Potocky-Tripodi 2003).

Several European and North American states that receive refugees have adopted a post-arrival refugee reception policy that limits financial support in order to encourage rapid economic self-sufficiency (Bruno 2011, 2017). The argument behind this approach to adaptation is that refugees and humanitarian migrants will be more easily incorporated socially and culturally if they are economically self-sufficient (The Refugee Act of 1980). Yet, scholarship has shown that the push to rapid economic self-sufficiency comes at a cost to long-term integration (Allen 2009; Majka and Mullan 1992; Potocky-Tripodi 2003). Placing refugees in employment shortly after arrival — and eliminating accompanying cash assistance and support — degrades the quality of work (Lumley-Sapanski 2019). Refugees are placed in lower quality work where their skills are less relevant. In these jobs, they have fewer opportunities for

upward mobility, contributing to downward economic incorporation (Potocky-Tripodi 2003).

A smaller body of work has shown that this push for rapid economic self-sufficiency, and the accompanying lack of time allotted for adaptation, has implications for housing outcomes. Rushed into work, refugees lack opportunities to adapt, e.g., grow their human and social capital. Consequently, they are limited in their job options over time (Carter et al. 2008). Limited incomes in turn limit the ability of refugees to cover cost of living expenses, placing constraints on the location and environment of adaptation. Refugees without other resources may remain trapped in low income housing in neighbourhoods with poor quality amenities as a result (see Carter and Osborne 2009).

The effect of a housing and employment policy (and more broadly integration policy) utilising dispersed, transitional and temporary housing and employment itself is less well studied — less attention has been paid to the temporary nature of reception services in relation to refugee housing outcomes. Thus, we examine the impact that limitations on length of housing support and employment placement have on housing outcomes. Our analysis highlights the impact that the temporary nature of the reception programme and accompanying accelerated pace of enforced departure from said housing locations has on housing outcomes.

The use of temporalities as an analytic tool allows us to see how forced migrants are constructed as a temporary phenomenon and the implications for service provision. In particular, this research explores how the constructed temporariness embedded in the system shape the delivery of available services and limit the opportunities for permanent settlement (and integration). The use of the concept as applied to the system is novel but builds on prior scholarship engaging with temporalities and migration more broadly.

3. Background Research Context: Housing and Economic Conditions in Bergamo and Italy

The CAS and SPRAR programmes are reception programmes mainly aimed at asylum-seekers and protection holders, respectively.²⁸ SPRAR and CAS sites are distributed throughout Italy, including in Bergamo, the research site. In order to contextualise the individual experiences of refugees, it is important to understand the Italian reception programme, national housing and employment contexts, as well as the local conditions within Bergamo.

3.1 The Italian Reception Programme: The Function and Structure of Housing and Employment Programmes

The national population of Italy is approximately 60.360.000 million people, of whom 6.222.000 (8.3 per cent) are foreign born (Blangiardo and Ortensi 2019). According to the Italian Statistical Agency and UNHCR, of the total foreign population, there were 490,000 people who were undocumented (approx. 8 per cent), a further 186,648 pending asylum claims (approx. 3 per cent), 167,335 people who were refugees or in a refugee like situation (2.7 per cent), and 5.3 million persons with permits of stay (87 per cent), of whom 3.7 million were from outside the EU (61 per cent) (Caschi 2019). Historically, Italy has been a country of net emigration (Del Boca and Venturini 2003), but increases in immigration flows over the last two decades brought attention to the question of migration. This has led to the recent creation of migration regulation and integration programming, including those targeting humanitarian migrants. As documented earlier in the thesis introduction, the core refugee reception programme was created in 2002 within the legal framework of law 189/2002, amended in 2015 by legislative decree 142/2015 and then recently modified by law 132/2018.

In Italy, individuals seeking asylum or humanitarian protection typically enter Italy through a water or land crossing and apply for refugee status. Asylum-seekers are provided temporary shelter in CAS while their claim is evaluated.²⁹ CAS locations

²⁸ We focus on refugees, and then make reference to asylum-seekers when and where necessary. Individuals who receive humanitarian protection status were offered similar benefits during the study period (this was subsequently changed by law 132/2018), including short-term housing and legal protection.

²⁹ Due to the surge in arrivals in the 2013-2017 period, SPRAR centres filled up quickly and, as a consequence, many asylum-seekers were held in CAS.

are large shelters that provide minimum services. They are designed to be temporary and have no formal mandate to provide long-term integration assistance. The time spent at a CAS is indefinite and undefined, contingent on the time spent processing the claim for asylum and bed availability in a SPRAR (for those who receive protection status). Due to limited space, some forced migrants remain in a CAS for two to three years (or more) and may never be transferred to a SPRAR. Except for special cases such as health issues, all asylum-seekers are requested by law to leave the CAS upon receiving a positive or two negative decision(s) on their applications or expelled for flouting camp rules. If transferred to a SPRAR centre, refugees receive housing for 6-12 months. In contrast to the large-scale buildings and structures provided in CAS, SPRAR facilities are small, and distributed widely to facilitate spatial integration. They may be single unit apartments or group occupancy facilities. Refugee hosting centres/agencies received €35 per day per asylum seeker to provide services (the amount was reduced to around €21 by law 132/2018).

SPRAR and CAS centres provide housing and are responsible for facilitating inclusion and integration (NIP 2017). The National Plan for Integration states that integration should be achieved through employment, and the provision of basic rights and services like housing, healthcare, access to education, language acquisition and civic participation (NIP 2017: 8). SPRAR facilities offer services designed to facilitate this process, including job training, language coursework and community mediation, while CAS centres are obligated only to provide basic services including entry services (identification), cleaning, meals, basic needs (sheets, clothes, etc.), linguistic and cultural mediation services.

Table 1: Asylum-seekers and refugees' reception system in Italy

*Occupancy of the reception system as of 31 Dec. 2018: these statistics are incomplete due to different and complex accommodation systems in Italy, including, e.g., individual homes.

	Alternative Structures	Primary Structure
First Aid and Reception	<p>CPSA (Centro di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza)</p> <p>Established with legal basis in LD 563/1995, and were created in 2006 for the purposes of first aid, accommodation, food and identification of new arrivals, particularly through the sea routes before they are transferred to other centres, which is now officially operating as Hotspots.</p>	<p>Hotspot</p> <p>(453)*</p>
First-Stage Reception	<p>Collective Centres</p> <p>These structures include the existing governmental centres for accommodation of asylum seekers (CARA) and accommodation centres (CDA), with legal provision in article 9 of LD) 142/2015.</p> <p>(8,990)*</p>	<p>CAS</p> <p>Emergency (temporary) reception centres (CAS), put in place by Prefectures in case of unavailability of places in the first- or second-stage reception centres. Article 11 of LD 142/2015 provides their legal basis.</p> <p>(138,503)*</p>
Secondary Structure		<p>SPRAR</p> <p>(25,657)*</p> <p>A publicly funded network of local authorities (municipalities) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) established by law 189/2002 of 2002 to accommodate refugees and subsidiary status holders (until law 113/2018), it also hosts asylum seekers and people with humanitarian protection)</p>

Source: Authors' construction based on data from Langastro and Liscinadro (2019)

Asylum-seekers are generally able to work two months after arrival and accordingly, job services are provided by SPRAR and, to a lesser extent, CAS locations in order to facilitate job training and placement. In the SPRAR programme, job readiness traineeships are offered to identified SPRAR residents. These apprenticeships are short-term, subsidised jobs that are designed to give refugees work experience. They typically last three to six months. In rare instances, companies may choose to extend the internship. The trainees are paid allowances ranging between €400-500 per month (the region establishes this benchmark), depending on the number of hours assigned; these are not salaries, but a participation allowance (Interview 2019). The ability of a refugee to participate in an internship varies by their skill set, often most importantly their knowledge of Italian. The sectors in which most of the internships are available include production (industry), agriculture, construction, catering and trade/services, depending on the receiving local context's economy or employment demand. In theory, SPRAR agencies are to link traineeships to employment placement. CAS structures are not mandated to provide employment services and, as such, residents are far less likely to receive job support services or traineeships.

While the persons interviewed here were processed prior to the passage of law 132/2018 (during the research period), it is important to note the changes to the system which occurred after December of 2018 as a result of 132/2018. The law abolished humanitarian protection and modified the SPRAR system, barring asylum seekers, humanitarian and 'special cases' permits holders from entering SPRAR structures. (Consequently, the name changed from SPRAR to the System for migrants holding international protection and unaccompanied minors — SIPROIMI). In addition, the law reduced the daily refugee maintenance cost as illustrated earlier. In addition, the first-stage accommodation facilities (CAS) are no longer required to align their standards to the SPRAR system, as the new law does not provide for any integration measures for asylum seekers. The law, for instance, considers the teaching of the Italian language and vocational training in CAS as superfluous (see Galera et al. 2018).

3.2 Housing Conditions in Italy: An Overview

The housing sector in Italy is dominated by owner-occupied dwellings with a smaller rental segment and a decreasing public sector housing segment. State policies encourage home ownership and, as a result, owner occupied dwellings represent 79.9

per cent of the housing market (ISTAT 2017; Tradardi 2004). Of the remaining households, one-fifth live in rented dwellings, sixteen per cent in the private rental market and five per cent in the public sector, of which four percentage points represent social housing (Poggio and Boreiko 2017). Immigrants are disproportionately clustered in the rental market. A recent report on immigrant housing conditions (2017) estimated that 64.7 per cent of immigrants live in rental housing, 8.9 per cent in the workplace, 7.3 per cent with relatives or co-nationals and 19.1 per cent in owner-occupied dwellings (Scenari Immobiliari 2017).

There is an acknowledged shortage of public and social housing units — an important sector for the intake of migrants (Pittini et al. 2015) — and accordingly the wait time for public housing is several years (Pittini et al. 2015; SFH/OSAR 2016). The shortage of affordable housing stock adversely affects the ability of low-income families, inclusive of migrants, to find housing. Around 2.5 million people exhibit one form of housing need or another; 650,000 qualified households are on the municipality waiting lists for social housing. While native-born populations also face affordability challenges leading to housing precarity, migrants are arguably the most vulnerable (Tradardi 2004).

The housing opportunities and conditions of migrants are shaped, together with other factors documented below, by local economic conditions. Within Italy, unemployment rates are high across all populations and many workers are employed in the shadow economy. As of 2017, the unemployment rates were the third highest in Europe for natives, 11.0 per cent, and sixth overall for foreign born, 14.2 per cent (OECD 2017). Foreign workers are clustered predominately in the service sector (56.5 per cent), and in agriculture (16.6 per cent), with significant representation in manufacturing, retail trade and services (IOM 2017). The employment irregularity rate is particularly high in areas where migrant workers tend to be clustered including: the personal care services sector (47.2 per cent), agriculture (18.6 per cent), construction (16.6 per cent) and trade, transport, housing and food services (16.2 per cent) (ISTAT 2018). In the informal sector, wages are often insufficient to cover housing costs (SFH/OSAR 2016). This may be a factor in the differences in household incomes between foreign and native-born populations: OECD data (2017) on well-being shows that migrants have lower household incomes than the native-born population; foreigners earn on average €294 less per month than Italian employees, with an average monthly salary of €987 – €1,135 for men and €797 for women (Leone Moressa Foundation 2012).

3.2.1 Refugee Specific Housing Challenges: Administrative and Bureaucratic Barriers

Securing adequate housing is made more difficult by the required Italian administrative and bureaucratic processes associated with receipt of humanitarian status and housing (Bolzoni et al. 2015; Fontanari 2017). In Italy, migration status is temporary and mutable. Refugees must reapply for status every two years (previous humanitarian status) or five years (subsidiary status/political asylum). It may take 18 months for the Questura (Office of Immigration Police) to re-authorise and release an individual's document. Consequently, refugees sometimes lapse into irregularity or 'liminal' status due to delayed processing, minor crimes or infractions of bureaucratic rules. Refugees without status, cannot apply for regular work, rent apartments legally, or receive governmental assistance (Dell'Olio 2004). These factors often combine to force refugees to rely on housing in the informal market and recurrent temporal housing conditions. Additional factors are strict residency rules that prevent many refugees from accessing housing, particularly (limited) public housing.³⁰ The applicant for public housing, for instance, must hold a residence permit valid for at least two years, demonstrate regular work activity and be registered and/or carry out work in the Lombardy region (in the case of Bergamo for instance) for at least five consecutive years in the period immediately preceding the date of application, among others.³¹ This puts refugees at a disadvantage for gaining public housing, given the recentness of their arrival and high rates of mobility. (This residency requirement was declared illegitimate and unconstitutional in 2018 by the Milan's Court of Appeal ruling 166/18).³² Thus, the state and local governments often employ administrative categories through explicit or implicit practices in which eligibility is defined by time or timing and meeting strict requirements, measures which affect access to welfare services, socio-legal rights, citizenship and the preconditions of integration (Gargiulo 2013, 2020).

³⁰ Regions have the power to legislate on housing and territorial management issues; hence, they regulate the assignment, management and determination of municipal public housing rentals.

³¹ See <https://territorio.comune.bergamo.it/servizio-gestione-alloggi/istanza/domanda-di-assegnazione-di-alloggio-erp>

³² See <https://www.asgi.it/discriminazioni/discriminatoria-la-delibera-della-regione-lombardia-sul-fondo-affitti-gli-stranieri-illegittimamente-esclusi-saranno-ora-ammessi-alla-presentazione-delle-domande/>

3.3 The Research Site: Reception, Housing and Economic Conditions in Bergamo

Bergamo, a city in the Lombardy region of northern Italy, is about 40 km northeast of Milan. Bergamo is the fourth largest city in the region with a population of 121,834 as at January 1, 2019 (Comune di Bergamo 2019), and is a part of the broader Milan metropolitan area, which is home to over 8 million people.

Bergamo has been governed by left-leaning politicians recently and, as a result, has been more open to migrants' reception than other locations in the province and region. This builds on a history of welcoming migrants. Bergamo has a long history of serving as a site of migrants' reception and there is a substantial resident migrant population as a result, including humanitarian migrants. There are 20,420 foreign residents, representing 16.8 per cent of the total population (Comune di Bergamo 2019). The city hosts 38 SPRAR available spots (34 male and 4 female). From 2011-2018, 155 people entered the SPRAR, of which 16 are asylum-seekers and 139 refugees: 13 female and 126 male.

In Bergamo, affordable housing is a challenge. Bergamo is classified, according to the clusters adopted by the Lombardy regional government, as one of the municipalities with high housing needs (Tripodi 2010). Besides, like other metropolitan areas of Italy, it has a lack of low-income housing and has seen major disinvestment in its public housing since the 1980s (Novara 2011). Cost is a major barrier: the mean average one-bedroom apartment in the city centre is estimated to cost €500 per month, or €380 outside the city centre.³³ These costs, given income levels, are prohibitive for low-income workers, often including refugees.

In contrast to housing, the employment opportunities are quite good. Bergamo's economy comprises a rich mix of manufacturing, services and agricultural activities. The unemployment rate in the province was 4.2 per cent, putting it among the lowest in Italy in 2017. In Bergamo, the average annual income in 2016 was €27,483, nearly twice the national average (L'ECO DI Bergamo 2018). Income levels for refugees, however, were far lower as a result of their irregular or informal employment. Within the interview sample, refugees with regular jobs earned between €500-€1,100 per month.

³³ See <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Bergamo>

4. Empirical Research

4.1 Methodology

Our analysis of housing outcomes in Bergamo is based on interviews and observations primarily undertaken during 2018-2019 in Bergamo as part of larger projects exploring migrants' housing conditions, focusing on asylum-seekers, refused asylum-seekers, 'economic' migrants and refugees. Having identified the study area, we then worked to identify key informants with knowledge of the refugee reception processes and housing outcomes. We focused on identifying protection holders, administrators and stakeholders. We then met with and conducted semi-structured interviews with identified persons. The qualitative approach allowed for in-depth analysis of individual experiences as well as acquiring a broad overview of the processes of reception from the institutional perspective.

Through this process we conducted 43 semi-structured interviews: 33 with refugees and 10 with stakeholders. We interviewed sub-Saharan African refugees who have recently received their refugee status (3 with political asylum, 25 with humanitarian status, and 5 with subsidiary status). At the time of the interview, four refugees had irregular status. Interviewees were from the countries of Ghana, Benin, Senegal, Guinea, Somalia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo and Sierra Leone. This included refugees who had participated in the SPRAR and refugees who had left CAS and did not have the chance to enter the SPRAR programme. The majority of our informants were of working age, between 18 and 50, living in precarious conditions. The interviewees overall were well educated: no education (4), basic (7), middle (8), high (8), college dropouts (2) and college graduates (4). Interviewees worked in/as factory workers, agriculture, cleaning jobs, import-export services, as amateur footballers, and restaurants.

Interviewees were predominantly identified through snowball sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). To reduce distortion from over-sampling refugees who are connected to each other, we identified and selected potential migrants through different gateways including train stations, churches, camp operators and volunteers, recreational centres and migrants' popular spots of convergence such as social services provision centres. We believe that the diversity of recruitment gateways reduced the problems associated with this method, and subsequently improved the quality of data gathered. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to solicit information from key informants, maximising information gathered in order to explore a heterogeneity of experiences (Kissoon 2010).

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were crosschecked with field notes, and then coded using open coding. We then used axial coding to group, reread, examine, compare and validate coded texts in order to determine main categories. We identified connections between the emerging themes, and clustered them into superordinate groups where relationships were noted. Shared themes are explained and illustrated in the following sections using quotes from the texts; while interviews are quoted extensively here, the names of interviewees have however been changed within the manuscript to preserve anonymity.

Interviews were paired with participant observation and in this context, informal ‘conversation’. The participant observation approach helped us achieve the balance between the issue of ‘being there’ (Devereux and Hoddinott 1993), or ‘experience-near’ and ‘experience-distant’ (Geertz 1976). Participant observation offered insight into the migrants’ lives. By visiting homes, camps, dormitories, and workplaces, we were able to contextualise their interviews and better understand their living conditions. In addition, participant observation helped us move analytically from individual biographical insight (in interviews) to a more broad understanding of the normalised migrant lived experience. In this context, the research involved everyday ‘conversations’ with the participants through the above-mentioned gateways. The research was enriched by continuous and repeated informal conversations and follow-ups with dozens of formal and informal key-informants (Kissoon 2010). This informal method gave us the opportunity to access nuances and record details of complex discourses, helping us to test the boundaries of debate and discussion.

4. 2 Research Findings

Migrants exhibited high rates of mobility during and after their time in the formal reception system. The use of temporary facilities which led to multiple relocations during the reception process interrupted place attachment and limited local network formation. After exiting the accommodation centres forced migrants had difficulty transitioning from the temporary traineeships provided by the system and into permanent employment. The combination of a lack of permanent work contract and lack of a locally based social network contributed restricted housing options increasing reliance on temporary and informal housing.

4.2.1 Refugees Housing Outcomes post CAS & SPRAR

The length of time forced migrants lived in CAS and SPRAR structures varied significantly. This period lasted an average of 1.5 years but ranged between (6 months) and (3.5 years) in CAS and six months in a SPRAR. It is important to note here that approximately half of interviewees went from an emergency reception centre to a CAS, and then to a SPRAR. This represents three dislocations and relocations during the accommodation period (with some moving CAS or SPRAR locations on several occasions). Consequently, through state dispersal policies refugees were often interrupted twice in the process of place attachment while living in temporary accommodations centres.

Table 2 shows refugee housing types in their first move after exiting CAS and SPRAR, and then again at the time of interviews 1.5 years later. Interviews indicate high rates of housing transience after exiting CAS/SPRAR.

Table 2: Refugees housing types at the time of interviews, their first move after exiting CAS and SPRAR (n=33)

	Housing Type at Interview No. of refugees (n=33)	Post CAS Housing Type No. of refugees (n= 33)	Post SPRAR Housing Type No. of refugees (n=16)
Doubling up	4	3	1
Independent rental housing units (market rate)	1	0	1
Charitable individuals (co-refugees, friends, Italians)	5	3	4
Emergency and free temporary dormitories	16	5	5
Subsidized non-market rate housing	4	1	1
Sleeping rough	3	6	4
SPRAR	NA	15	NA

Here, the subsidised housing includes social and affordable housing. During the research, social housing meant: long-term rent contract with a duration of 4 years, renewable (4+4) or a three-year contract, renewable for another 2 years (3+2); purchase price agreement (subsidised housing); rent to buy (usually at the end of the lease, maximum 8 years). The non-governmental organisations which provided housing were primarily Catholic Church-affiliated organisations occasionally in collaboration with the municipality. Additionally, some NGOs offer temporary lease agreements, from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 18 months for affordable houses (second-stage accommodation).

Interview findings suggest that refugees left the CAS (33) and SPRAR (16) housing facilities, often without adequate housing and as a result were most likely to use temporary housing or emergency shelters in the immediate period after exiting SPRAR/CAS. Only one individual found market-rate housing at the time that they exited the SPRAR facility,³⁴ of the others, sixteen interviewees found housing in emergency and temporary shelters provided by non-profits, four found subsidised non-market rate housing in non-profit facilities, four refugees doubled up with peers, five lived with charitable individuals (refugees employ personal networks created through peers or Italians) and three refugees were homeless or ‘slept rough’.

‘I didn’t enter SPRAR after CAS... They asked me to leave the CAS facility after receiving a positive decision on my application [...]. I slept rough in Bergamo for almost two years: gardens, parks, train station, streets, airport. I didn’t know that they’ll leave [you] on the street just like that knowing that I don’t have money and a job to rent a place. ...They explained to me that I had to move out for other asylum seekers to move in. And I’ve to move on with my life,’ (Mathew, interview, Sept. 2018).

The differences in housing structure reflect differences in family composition and program. Families, versus individuals, were more likely to find temporary housing through social services and NGOs. Refugees who want to husband their limited resources or cannot afford full cost housing and/or meet the requirements for renting

³⁴ This was possible after having met all requirements. However, the research reveals that some refugees manage to secure housing on the private market through the support of personal social networks either peers or Italian friends.

in the housing markets were more likely to double up or rely on a charitable individual.

Refugees faced ongoing difficulty maintaining housing both initially and over time. Refugees unable to find temporary housing hosted by an organization or charitable individual, were forced to sleep in untenable temporary conditions. Forty-five percent of refugees interviewed had had to sleep rough one or more times in the period since leaving CAS and SPRAR and ninety percent had doubled up, lived in shelters, or been hosted by a charitable individual.

'I'm living with this Senegalese (a subletter) and other three subtenants (Moroccan, Senegalese, Gambian) in a two-bedroom apartment. We're five in all. The room is damp with mold everywhere. The heating system doesn't often work well. We're paying €150 each, but he wants to increase it. I'm here because I don't know any other place to go,' (Babloh, interview, May 2018).

In addition to degraded housing quality and conditions, refugees also exhibited a high rate of mobility. After exiting the system, refugees moved sleeping places (or apartments), on average, three times in the first one to two years, and four times in the first three years. Refugees moved throughout the country, region and city in order to secure affordable housing; refugees had lived in neighbouring municipalities, the city centre, and city outskirts. Refugees were hyper mobile during their time in reception centres and after, negatively affecting their place attachment and demonstrating housing instability (see also Fontanari 2017).

'I've been moving from one affordable and social housing to another for the past 5 years, paying €175 — €200 a month; I think about four of them. I've slept with friends for free or doubling up, slept rough in-between these periods when I lost jobs or my housing contracts end. If I try another place in the private market, they'll ask me a lot of money, and I don't meet the requirements too [...],' (Toure, interview, Aug. 2018).

Refugees had difficulty locating permanent or stable housing. As a result, many refugees relied on the resources available to them, which are often temporary measures.

‘When they asked me to leave the facility, I didn't have any place to go. I really felt bad because I didn't know anyone here and didn't have enough money to rent an apartment. SPRAR didn't solve my problem. You see some landlords don't like us; others want you to have a permanent contract. In the housing agencies, they told me that I couldn't rent without a permanent contract. Then some homeowners don't like Africans because of prejudice. And the houses are expensive, so I share apartments with other migrants or friends,’ (Fred, interview, June 2018).

4.2.2 Apprenticeships and Employment

Finding permanent housing was made more difficult by the SPRAR programmatic approach to job placement. The primary mechanism for finding work through the Italian reception program is the traineeship. Yet for interviewees this rarely provided a successful pathway to permanent employment or housing. Table 3 contains the employment status of refugees post-CAS/SPRAR and at the time of interviews. Immediately after exiting CAS/SPRAR, most refugees were either unemployed or job seeking, nearly all of the others had short-term contracts and or worked in the informal economy. The refugees worked in the following sectors: industry (high concentration), construction, catering, agriculture, and services.

Table 3: Post-SPRAR/CAS and at the time of interviews

	Post-Exit	Interview
Short-term contract (renewable)	6	8
Indeterminate or Permanent contract	2	1
Informal economy (no contract)	7	7
Fixed-term contract	1	0
No employment history	7	7
Cannot work (no work permit)	1	0
Unemployed/Work-seeker	9	9

From Fieldwork (2018-2019)

At the time of interviews, three to five years later, the employment situation was largely unchanged. Findings indicate that refugees stayed in temporary work over time, rarely advancing to permanent work. Most refugees either had short term temporary contracts (8), worked in the informal market (7) or were out of work (16). The refugees working in the shadow economy were generally paid less (about €250-750 per month) and had fewer opportunities for upward mobility. In the intervening period, employment was circular: many refugees moved in and out of temporary contract jobs to the shadow economy to unemployment.

'I got occasional part-time gardening work for 3 months while in CAS with no contract. I then moved to SPRAR after exiting CAS. I wasn't able to undergo traineeship but got a job in the last stages of my stay in the SPRAR as an animal keeper through an Italian friend but left it after a month because the employer underpaid me and refused to offer a contract. Then I got short-term jobs in factories as a labourer with a contract. I'm currently without a job,' (Flopau, interview, Aug. 2018).

This research finds no strong link between the SPRAR facilitated traineeships and finding long-term work. The programme design contributes to this outcome, viewing these positions as traineeships to promote future employability rather than a mechanism to facilitate job placement. Consequently, for most refugees, the traineeship functioned as a training opportunity rather than a work placement opportunity. Interviews indicate that when traineeships did lead to jobs, traineeships became temporary jobs

An additional aspect of the temporality embedded in the program is the temporary nature of legal status itself. The temporary and revocable nature of refugee and humanitarian protection status in Italy adds a particular challenge to the process of locating and securing *stable housing*. Refugees live with legal liminality while awaiting the resolution of their claim. This makes it difficult to make long term plans, like investment in education or marrying. Further, even after receipt refugees are subject to reversible legality. Refugees can lose their temporary status for violating a set of rules that govern travel and conduct. They can also lapse into irregular status while awaiting a renewed permit of stay. Without a legal permit of stay, refugees faced challenges securing a lease or new job. Consequently, refugees within the interview population often relied on the informal job and housing market out of necessity.

‘[...] The officials told me that they won't renew my permit because I returned to my country [country A], and that the war is over. But I said that I wasn't born in [country A] but in [country B] and that I just went to [country A] to visit my wife. The permit expired in October 2017. Now I can't work because I don't have a document. Lost my room because I couldn't pay the rent. I hope my lawyer will help me secure a temporary permit to work.’ (Sahu, personal communications, Aug. 2018)

Refugees, unsure whether they would be permitted to renew their permit of stay, began to embody their state of temporariness, moving frequently between places. Strict residency and bureaucratic rules limited housing options, combined with unstable, temporary employment encouraging this response. Legal uncertainty conditions migrants to accept a level of work, temporary in nature and lower quality where exploitation is more prevalent (Anderson, 2010; Bastia and McGrath, 2011), accordingly our research suggests that the quality of housing is in turn affected.

5. Discussion: Temporality and Temporariness

This study explored the temporal dimension of migration governance, focusing on the use of time and timing in refugee reception programs in Bergamo, Italy. Our analysis focuses on the impact that the temporary nature of housing and employment *programmes* have on post-programme housing outcomes. Refugees are largely abandoned by the ‘system’ at the time they leave state-run facilities, and often their housing quality suffers as a result. We explain these outcomes as a result of the temporary and transitional nature of the reception programme.

The findings of the present study indicate that the structure of the reception program, in particular the temporal structure of the programme, is a significant contributing factor to observed poor housing conditions. This occurs for three notable reasons. First, there is no larger logic to the CAS/SPRAR site assignment. Refugees are arbitrarily assigned to a SPRAR or CAS facility without concern for social or economic conditions at site. Refugees often arrive there without familial support or the skills needed to find employment within the local economy (spatial mismatch). It has been noted that forced migrants have weak or lack local social networks, particularly family support (the so-called ‘familistic model’), which are commonly employed by Italians in mobilising resources to buy houses or cope with high rental costs (see Poggio 2012). This lack of local contacts limits the ability of migrants to

use either social or economic capital to facilitate transition into permanent employment or housing. Migrants are then often relocated a second or third time, disrupting social network formation which may have been taking place and sacrificing social capital formed in any of the temporary communities.

Refugees are instead reliant on alternative networks to find housing and work centrally including that of the reception centre. However, interview evidence suggests that the network of temporary apprenticeships is insufficient to find employment for participants and are consequently inadequate bridges to formal employment. Most employers use the traineeships as an economic benefit, and training tool, but not hiring device. Consequently, after a period of temporary employment, refugees either cycle to another temporary apprenticeship or compete in the open job market. As a result, refugees were vulnerable to labor exploitation in the informal market where wages insufficient to cover cost of living expenses. We note that over time migrants developed networks that they relied on for monetary and non-material resources. Through these networks, migrants were provided essential housing and financial support in lieu of formal supports by the state or non-profits. These connections help migrants to cope with and circumnavigate discrimination and bureaucratic issues in the housing market. However, these networks were rarely successful in providing a pathway to structural inclusion for forced migrants as evidenced by formal housing or work on contract.

Second, refugees are exited from temporary housing and employment traineeships without regard for readiness to transition from SPRAR/CAS location. Refugee eligibility ends when they receive permanent legal status. This means that whether the refugee has a work contract, or not, Italian language skills or capital to pay for an apartment, they must secure their own housing. This dislocation forces refugees onto the open housing market at a time when they are unprepared financially. With no accrued resources or a transition plan, they are vulnerable to housing precarity made worse by a bureaucratic system that asks prospective tenants to demonstrate financial stability with a permanent work contract.

The findings support prior scholarship which has found that although limits on the timeframe for eligibility and the length of public support are designed to encourage employment, this approach degrades the employment options of refugees and often leads to downward socioeconomic incorporation—impacting housing quality (Allen 2009; Lusk 1984; Potocky-Tripodi 2003). Our results suggest that the system's emphasis on economic adaptation and reliance on employment as a conduit of adaptation — importantly including housing location and receipt — is ineffective.

This is in part because the temporary traineeship is not utilised as a placement mechanism but a job training activity. These traineeships often did not provide ‘useful’ skills to help propel economic mobility. Instead, refugees typically were placed in fixed term, low skilled traineeships. Consequently, refugees left the intensive (but temporary) state-supported reception facilities without work. They moved into precarious, often temporary and degraded housing in part because they lacked work contracts required to secure a housing lease. This affects other aspects of quality of life: without a formal housing contract, refugees cannot fully access other public goods like the health system, residence permit or school enrolments which require documented residency (see Ceretelli and Enwereuzor 2003:27; UNHCR 2017).

Third, refugees may be exited from CAS rapidly if they are not transferred to a SPRAR. Migrants were given as little as a day or two notice, finding legal market rate housing within the allotted timeframe significantly more difficult. The enforced rapid departure from transitional and temporary housing has a disruptive effect on adaptation and integration — in particular, concerning housing stability and quality. Migrants indefinitely housed at CAS centres, unsure of when they will exit, are limited in their ability to plan or pre-emptively secure housing. This forces them to rely on immediately available housing, which is often not market rate or tenable.

Our findings indicate that the absence of post-reception policy combined with the inability to secure stable housing leads to ‘permanent housing temporality’ (see ActionAid 2019). Like prior scholars (see, e.g., Fontanari 2017; Somma 2004), we find that this permanent state of temporality contributes to observed social exclusion and socio-emotional limbo identified in prior scholarship (Anderson 2010; Fontanari 2017). Refugees attempting to embed themselves within the local context are often interrupted by the need for continuous relocation to find work or housing. Again, in line with previous scholars (see, e.g., Kissoon 2010), we find that refugees who cycle through housing and employment face difficulties settling in stable housing and that this affects integration prospects. Refugees in legal liminality and temporary CAS/SPRAR housing are unable to plan or set goals for their future, even at a base level of where they will be. This, in turn, contributes to their social marginality. The transitional nature of housing without a long-term plan negatively affects access to a range of benefits inclusive of housing which are necessary preconditions for full participation in the larger society (see Boccagni 2017; Bolzoni et al. 2015).

A significant underlying problem is that while Italy has an extensive system of allocation for refugee and asylum-seeker distribution throughout the national territory,

there are no specific post-reception or national immigrant housing policies (Dell’Olio 2004), and no established informational support in finding second-stage accommodation nor well-implemented monetary assistance to refugees exiting the formal system (Scholten et al. 2017).³⁵ Instead, Italy’s refugee policy which provides only temporary and transitional services is, to a great deal, constructed based on the assumption that many of the refugees would move on to other EU countries. There exist a series of temporary interventions — such as traineeships and temporary housing in accommodation centres that seem to not build on themselves to produce housing or economic stability. This disjuncture has contributed to the treatment of refugees as a temporary phenomenon and the inadequacy--or lack of--long-term services (Tradardi 2004). The increasing number of asylum applications and refugees permanently settling in Italy in recent years, however, questions the efficacy of the emergency intervention approach to reception and integration (Scholten et al. 2017). In essence, the analysis of refugees’ housing outcomes in Bergamo fundamentally highlights the problematic role of temporality within the system. The impact is that while some of the refugees have managed to access and maintain adequate housing over time, many of them live on the margins of society without real opportunities for social inclusion or integration.

6. Concluding Remarks

The state’s employment of temporality, as embedded in laws and devices of migration governance, has a negative impact on refugee housing conditions. The temporary nature of the support system contributes to a condition of ongoing housing precarity and socio-economic instability. Findings demonstrate that the system’s reliance on temporary housing and the accompanying enforced rapid departure is particularly significant within Italy, where the administrative barriers to securing formal housing are particularly high, and there are fewer low-income or affordable alternatives.

In particular, this study showed that the housing outcome is embodied in the reception program design, which treats refugees as a temporary phenomenon of the presumed temporariness of the refugees’ presence is built into the integration policy

³⁵ While in theory there seems to be a financial support package post SPRAR system on case-by-case basis, this is not always implemented in practice. In any case, many migrants interviewed here (17 of 33) did not enter a SPRAR.

(Scholten et al. 2017). The temporality of the reception programs and disinvestment in post-reception projects creates a condition of post-program housing precarity for refugees. While the historical temporality of forced migrant groups has prevented governments from investing in long-term social inclusion programs, we could also argue here that states often deliberately use refugees' uncertain temporality as a justification to exclude them from accessing services.

While our research highlights the issue of temporality within the reception system, it also points to a host of other contributing factors which affect the experiences of housing and economic. The recent economic crisis, for example, has worsened working conditions and explains in part some of the economic and its accompanying housing difficulties observed here. The recession made work more difficult to keep and find for both Italians and migrants (see Dotsey 2018). This has been especially hard on the migrant population who occupy a weaker position in the labor market and consequently often are the first to lose their employment (Busetta, Campolo and Panarello 2018). This combined with the unemployment rate amplifies the problems finding work and housing for forced migrants. Migrants are leastwise at a disadvantaged position in the housing market as refugees cannot locate and secure a housing unit in the formal market without fixed-term employment (Strang, Baillot and Mignard 2018). Other factors identified in interviews which contributed to difficulty finding employment and housing include employer discrimination, landlord racism and xenophobia, and migrant exploitation by peer landlords. These factors duly contribute to the socio-spatial exclusion of migrants.

Our work has acknowledged some limitations. We focus only on the housing outcomes of refugees in one city in Northern Italy. This city has higher than average employment rates, a large foreign-born presence, and somewhat strong third-sector organisations, particularly the Catholic Church-affiliated organisations. A further longitudinal and comparative study on how the temporality of refugees reception program shapes integration outcomes, incorporating more livelihood variables (e.g., legal, housing, employment, health, education, daily sustenance) and research sites would be highly welcome. Such an approach would offer further insight into the mechanisms through which temporal asylum governance functions to affect an array of forced migrant integration outcomes.

Article 3

Cities, Reception and Integration: The Case of “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione” in Bergamo, Italy

‘The current asylum reception system functions this way: upon arrival, the asylum-seeker fills the asylum application form (the so-called C3 form) and then starts the journey as an asylum-seeker. More than two years will pass before s/he receives a decision on the asylum application. During these two years, the asylum-seeker has the right to reception and therefore lives in structures like CAS. But these structures aren’t able to provoke better integration outcomes for the guests. Asylum-seekers initially study a bit of Italian, but then after a while, they don’t go to school anymore; they don’t do any activities during the whole day [...] Or someone will find regular or informal work for a few hours or months. But, in these two years, they don’t learn the language and undergo any job traineeships. Therefore, even if they get a residence permit, they don’t have the tools to integrate or navigate the system. Since the city doesn’t have the resources, we can’t force people to go to school, so we create a structure like this. The academy is thus an ‘intermediate model’ [...]. The model seeks to equip the asylum-seekers with the necessary tools to face life in Italy, a process that will benefit them and the city.’ (Mayor’s Chief of Staff and Director of the Academy)

1. Introduction: Cities, Asylum-seekers' Reception and Integration Dynamics

The increase in the number of arriving individuals seeking asylum within Europe, which grew to over one million people in 2015, has shed light on cities and local authorities' reception and integration processes. Cities are the entities that receive migrants and thus integrate them, with mayors playing an active and leading role in choosing policies to be implemented at the local level (Ministero dell'Interno 2017; see also IOM 2015; Ray 2003). Indeed, two-thirds of migrants have settled in metropolitan areas, in particularly within capital cities (OECD 2018). Conversely, however, asylum-seekers hosted in reception centres tend to be more distributed across regions and in some European countries, some small and medium-sized cities and even rural areas are becoming destinations for asylum-seekers (see Galera et al. 2018; OECD 2018). Consequently, several European municipalities are formulating their own local integration policies 'either as part of the process of implementation of national policies or as a reaction to their absence at national government levels' (Lethbridge 2016: 6; see also Anagnostou et al. 2016; de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016; Villa 2018). Some have taken (implicit or explicit) exclusionary and restrictive approaches (see Gargiulo 2013; Testai 2015). More importantly, some cities have taken progressive stands to counteract repressive national government policies (see, e.g., Huang and Liu 2018 for 'welcoming cities' in the US; Darling 2017 on 'sanctuary cities' in Europe and the US).³⁶

Italy is no exception. This recent migration influx into Europe has particularly affected the country, given its geographic position and role as a main entry point to the continent. As many as over 800,000 people have reached the Italian shores by boat, with circa 500,000 applying for asylum, following the Arab Spring in late 2010.³⁷ These high inflows have pushed the country to a 'tipping point' with overflowing temporary refugee camps in the South. The country lacks a robust and

³⁶ To illustrate, after the passage of the recent security-driven Law 132/2018 in Italy, which included evicting asylum-seekers and humanitarian protection holders from second-stage reception accommodation, some cities including Bologna, Turin and Rome have refused to execute the measures of the law, arguing that this practice will increase homelessness and risk social unrest.

³⁷ See the document at www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/quaderno_statistico_per_gli_anni_1990-2018.pdf.

coherent national policy framework in engaging with what is happening (Colombo 2013; Puggioni 2005) and, suffice it to say that, the migration-related policies have to an extent tended to focus on “ex post regularisations, control of new legal entries and repression of irregular ones” (Colombo 2013: 157). The lack of a national approach has left the ‘migration question’ in the hands of local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Morris 2002; Puggioni 2005). Consequently, as elsewhere, cities are at the forefront of receiving forced migrants and, without national guidance, many have developed their own approaches to refugee integration within or outside national policy frameworks (Gebhardt 2014; Lethbridge 2016).

This study therefore explores a ‘unique’ experimental integration project for asylum-seekers referred to as “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione” (the Integration Academy; hereafter *the academy*) in the ‘progressive’ mid-sized city of Bergamo, Italy. This model is designed within the national asylum reception and integration framework, providing integration services for asylum-seekers that go beyond the current established national first-stage reception centres (CAS). Employing a contentious ‘scout/militaristic’ approach, the model seeks to provide what I call ‘minimum integration measures’: obligatory Italian lessons and civics, “socially useful” work, professional traineeship, and possible work placement after the apprenticeship to the asylum-seekers upon arrival, to build the necessary conditions for a possible integration based on autonomy and legality (Comune di Bergamo 2018). Progressive cities (or generally the Left) are unproblematically presumed to be supportive of immigrants’ cause given their inclusionary rhetoric and humanitarian approach to immigration. The findings, however, show that the integration outcomes were non-linear and multifaceted.

The study contributes to our understanding of integration as a “process” that begins with asylum-seekers having successfully submitted their asylum applications after arrival, not after gaining protection status. Asylum-seekers indeed have to communicate in the new language, use services and interact with the local people as they come into contact with a new culture. In this context, asylum-seekers cannot avoid integration upon arrival in the host state (Bakker, Cheung and Phillimore 2016), and the quality of integration services provided during the initial asylum process profoundly shapes refugee integration. This experimental local integration model presented here contributes to the literature that conceives integration as a multidimensional, two-way process that starts upon arrival in the host society (Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010; Malloch and Stanley 2005), and seeks to answer the

following research questions: How does *the academy* work in terms of outcomes? What are the policy implications of the findings for integration in Italy and beyond?

The article is organised as follows: section 2 briefly situates the paper within the integration literature and then explores cities and migration scholarship; section 3 details contemporary migration in Italy and the methodology employed; section 4 provides an overview of the model and integration outcomes; and section 5 reflects on the outcomes and then discusses the findings within the broader integration concept and its implications for policy. The last section concludes and then set an agenda for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework: Migration, Integration and Cities

2.1 Conceptualising Integration

For the past few decades, countries have witnessed increasing inflows of asylum-seekers and refugees, and have been faced with the unabating question of how to facilitate their settlement and participation in the new receiving societies. The use of several terms such as “absorb, assimilate, incorporate” to describe this process implies that integration is a complex, ambiguous, and contentious subject (Korac 2003: 52). Integration is a widely accepted and central concept in migration studies, thus becoming widespread in public-policy debates and formulations for the settlement of newcomers in host countries (see Favell 2005; Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016). Notwithstanding its importance in migration discourse, it has recently been heavily critiqued (see, e.g., Favell 2019; Schinkel 2018), though several other scholars are in support of the concept (see, e.g., Klarenbeek 2019; Penninx 2019). Thus, integration is a contested term in the literature (see, e.g., Korac 2003; Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002; Phillips 2006; Robinson 1998:118), as scholars do not seem to agree on a shared understanding of the meaning, nature and goals of integration (Da Lomba 2010). The lack of a generally accepted conceptualisation of integration has made assessing it equally problematic. The challenge here is not only conceptual but also practical, in that researchers not only define the term in varied ways but also approach refugee settlement policy formulation and definition differently (Korac 2003: 52;

Phillips 2006). Thus, there is a lack of standardised criteria for operationalising and measuring the concept.³⁸

Policies and popular discourses often view integration as a one-way process, in which the newcomers have to adapt to the host society, with the latter having no responsibilities in their adaptation process (Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010). Within this context, integration is somewhat in consonance with the assimilation model, which supposes refugees and immigrants abandon their cultures, norms and values and then adopt those of the host society (see Alencar 2018; Castles et al. 2002), in what Castles et al. (2002: 116) described as a ‘watered down form of assimilation’. Critics of this approach posit that those unable to meet the adaptation goals, thus failing to integrate, become a burden of the host country (see Strang and Ager 2010). Further, the lack (or absence) of sufficient support at all levels of government shifts the ‘burden’ of integration on to refugees and immigrants (Da Lomba 2010).

In recent years, however, there has been a gradual move from a one-dimensional, linear, and simple process for attaining positive outcomes for all resettled migrants in new societies (within the frameworks of classical assimilation and acculturation theories) to an increasingly multi-faceted and ever-evolving process (Psoinos and Rosenfeld 2018). Therefore, integration has emerged as an alternative concept used to describe a two-way process of immigrant incorporation in the host society (Da Lomba 2010; Penninx 2009).³⁹ Unlike assimilation, integration is used to describe the process “through which newcomers become a part of society” (Castles et al. 2002; Korac 2003; Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas 2016). This way of defining integration is important to refugee and immigrant integration (Da Lomba 2010) as it shows the adaptation and adjustment of both the newcomers and the host society (Ager and Strang 2004; Castles et al. 2002; Korac 2003; Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002). This perspective underscores the crucial roles of both the newcomers and the host society. The former plays important roles in their integration process, for example, in

³⁸ The literature highlights a wide array of domains, or measures, of integration that policymakers can utilise to assess an individual’s degree of integration or the adaptation of the receiving society to the presence of the newcomer. In academic and policy circles, researchers have focused on one or many integration dimensions, including legal and political, socio-economic (access to the labour market, education, housing, healthcare), cultural-religious aspects (Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas 2016; see also Ager and Strang 2004, 2008; Alexander 2007). These different domains should be somewhat treated as interrelated and mutually reinforcing elements, in that changes in one level can result in changes in other domains (Ager and Strang 2008).

³⁹ It is notable here that there is an ongoing debate and conception of integration as a ‘three-way process’ (Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx 2016)

acquiring the necessary technical/vocational skills, linguistic, civic and cultural knowledge. Similarly, scholars and policy documents have identified the significance of the actions of the host society in facilitating the integration of newcomers, including the provision of legal status and associated entitlements (e.g., access to employment, healthcare, housing, institutions and public and private goods and services) on a basis equal to natives, and that they feel part of and accepted into the new society. “Integration is often assumed to be a similar, universal, stage-sequential and regularly paced process to which all immigrants and refugees are exposed” (Castles et al. 2002: 126). However, much of the literature underscores the view that integration is a multidimensional two-way process that starts upon arrival into the host society (Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010; Phillimore and Goodson 2008). In this context, integration does not follow a linear pattern. It can take many forms, as it is not a quantifiable outcome in itself but a process — a long-term process that has to be sustained (Craig 2015; Penninx 2009), and which “ends when refugees are in an equal position to the majority” (Phillimore and Goodson 2008: 309). This exposition sees integration as an active process and not passive on the part of state and local actors (Ager and Strang 2004; Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010).

2.2 Local Context: Cities, Migration and Integration

Cities have played considerable roles in migration (see Barber 2013; de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). They are becoming increasingly interconnected and able to react pragmatically and innovatively to problems, for instance, rising populism and nationalism particularly in the US and Europe (see, e.g., Kratz and Nowak 2017), thus promoting inclusionary local integration policies (Garcés-Mascareñas and Chauvin 2016; Walker and Leitner 2011). Yet cities have also been noted for serving as the state’s proxy in promoting and implementing exclusionary and restrictive measures, with some exacerbating or formulating their own local exclusionary instruments (Gargiulo 2013; Garcés-Mascareñas and Chauvin 2016; Walker and Leitner 2011). There is increasing interest in scholarship on migration and integration processes at the local level, especially at city level (Ambrosini 2012; Caponio and Bokert 2010; Emilsson 2015; Zapata-Barrero, Caponio and Scholten 2017), driven in part by critiques of ‘methodological nationalism’ (see Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003), globalisation and loss of the significance of nation-states, decentralisation processes (Schmidke 2014), or increasing migrant settlement in cities and ensuing challenges (Penninx 2009). There is, therefore, the drive to move integration policy analysis

beyond the state and to understand how these are executed in local settings, and whether local authorities are formulating their policies (Emilsson 2015). Local settings have become innovative grounds for migrant integration and policy development, a process that has been described as a “local turn” in migrant integration policies (Caponio and Bokert 2010; Myrberg 2015; Scholten and Penninx 2016; Zapata-Barrero, Caponio and Scholten 2017). In this context, “[...] “local turn” can contribute to a more in-depth understanding of why and how cities and regions respond differently to similar challenges, and of why and how these different answers can affect state-based models of immigration management” (Zapata-Barrero, Caponio and Scholten 2017: 2). While integration policy formulation and approval is mainly national in scope, cities are where a substantial number of migrants reside and these policies are implemented (see Penninx 2009), and newcomers’ integration processes and outcomes are influenced by the particular local environment they reside in, including the structures of the local economy, local housing market, socio-cultural peculiarities, the public discourse on immigration and the state of local inclusive civil-society institutions (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 113). Therefore, the local environment is important in supporting or hindering asylum-seekers and refugees’ reception and integration (Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015).

While integration policy formulation and approval are mainly national in scope, cities are where a substantial number of migrants reside, and these policies are implemented. Cities respond differently to the same problems, and offer different chances for integration, developing (implicit or explicit) progressive or repressive approaches to reception and integration. Cities, particularly left-wing ones, have always been at the forefront of receiving asylum-seekers, formulating and implementing integration policies while opposing the national government (cf. de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). Thus, since cities are clearly in the vanguard of receiving migrants, with many developing their own approaches to refugee integration within or outside national policy frameworks, there is therefore the need to focus on local integration policies and practices. This study thus investigates the role of cities in asylum-seekers’ reception and integration through the lens of the “unique” local reception and integration model, “l’Accademia per l’Integrazione”, in a robust local economy and comparatively progressive city of Bergamo within a comparatively less progressive national government context. The findings show that integration outcomes are multifaceted. The explicit ‘scout/militaristic’ approach adopted, which is used as a tool for discipline and control applied via the ‘technologies of power’ of

the asylum camp (see Foucault 1979; Malkki 1995), questions the city's 'progressive' attributes.

3. Setting the Context: An Overview of Contemporary Migration in Italy and the Methodology

3.1 Contemporary Migration in Italy and Reception Conditions

Italy, a country with over one hundred years' experience of mass emigration, has recently become a 'de facto' country of immigration in the 1970s, thus posing new socio-political questions (see Del Boca and Venturini 2003; Morris 2002). The country is now home to many foreign migrants from diverse origins, ranging from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa to Latin American countries. As of 1 January 2018, there were 5,144,440 foreigners residents in Italy — representing 8.5 per cent of the total population of 60,589,445 — with a residence permit (ISTAT 2018a). Refugees and asylum-seekers were a negligible segment of migration flows to Italy in the last century. However, as illustrated earlier, Italy has witnessed an increasing number of asylum-seekers in recent years since the Arab Spring in 2010.

Against the backdrop of over four decades of migrations and a (rather) recent influx of asylum-seekers, Italy has been (and is still) rather unprepared culturally, institutionally and legislatively to handle these inflows. Over the years, the country has always governed the migration question outside of an explicit integration model at the national level (Schmoll 2006), so that 'conflicting approaches have prevailed in different moments, characterizing different laws' (Allievi 2010a: 91), with the state leaving the migrants' inclusion to the discretion of local administrations and NGOs (Caponio 2010; Spina 2010). Cities have had the opportunity to develop different 'models' and, in some cases, have become laboratories of policy innovation from the 'bottom-up', rather than from the 'top-down' (Caponio 2006). Thus, in the Italian context, one cannot speak about an explicit national integration model, but of differing local models that are often formulated within the national asylum policy framework (see, e.g., the Riace Model).

Italy's approach to refugee integration is decentralised, with the national government setting the "minimum standards and the key priorities of integration policies [...]. However, it is at the regional, and local level that actual policies and measures take substance" (Scholten et al. 2017: 29). Local institutions often cooperate with third-sector organisations. Here, NGOs have always been at the heart of

integration discourse in Italy: health, language, housing, employment and legal assistance, among others (Campani 2013).

As indicated earlier, the Legislative Decree (LD) 142/2015 provides the framework for the latest national reception system in force, of which integration programming is a component part. And prior to the passage of law 132/2018, the system is administered in two phases: first-stage accommodation and the second-stage accommodation, System for the Protection of Asylum-seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) structures, which is now renamed as the System for Migrants Holding International Protection and Unaccompanied Minors (SIPROIMI). According to the National Integration Plan (NIP), the goals of the two systems are to promote inclusion and integration. While this is the case in theory, particularly for civic integration programmes, they are not available or actualised in practice (Scholten et al. 2017). The NIP suggests this can be accomplished through employment and the provision of basic rights and services, like housing, healthcare, access to education, language acquisition and civic participation (NIP 2017: 8). Italy has worked towards improving its asylum policy and reception system, as seen in the LD 142/2015: for example, it introduced the change of the asylum-seeker being given a residence permit valid for 6 months and renewable, and allowed to work two months after the submission of his/her application, rather than the previous six months (EMN Factsheet 2015). Asylum-seekers use this temporary permit until they receive the final decision on their asylum applications and thus able to seek employment in the labour market.

The services offered in the CAS vary according to call for bids, but they are generally limited to essential services: entry services (identification), cleaning, meals, basic needs (sheets, clothes, etc.), and linguistic and cultural mediation services. Other centres may offer social and legal assistance services.⁴⁰ There are often no guarantees for language courses, and it is not mandatory for asylum-seekers. Further, there are no standards for measuring individual achievements and no sanctions for failing to reach any particular integration goals (Scholten et al. 2017). The reception standards vary significantly among hosting facilities, due to differences in the organisational approach to migration management. To illustrate, while the NIP (2017) indicates the need of CAS to align the quality of their services and activities (e.g., language courses) to those offered by the SPRAR system, some organisations running CAS often provide only basic services with substandard or no language courses and, in some

⁴⁰ See <https://www.unhcr.it/risorse/carta-di-roma/fact-checking/rifugiati-4-luoghi-comuni-smentire>.

cases, appropriate the reception funds (Però 2005) due to lack of proper monitoring systems (UNHCR 2017). Italy thus lacks a fully-fledged civic integration programme for asylum-seekers and refugees (Scholten et al. 2017).

Thus, in the absence of robust integration measures in the CAS structures, *the academy* seeks to enhance asylum-seekers' integration prospects through the adoption of appropriate programmes. Before providing an overview of *the academy*, it is imperative to explore the research methodology underpinning this study.

3.2 Methodology

The design of this study draws on qualitative research traditions. My exploration is based on interviews, observations, documentary analysis and repeated occasional conversations with asylum-seekers and stakeholders undertaken from 2018-2020. The qualitative approach allowed for in-depth analysis of individual experiences as well as a broad overview of the processes of reception from the institutional perspective. I used several methods to collect data to facilitate triangulation of information and its validation.

I conducted 27 in-depth interviews: 20 with asylum-seekers in *the academy*, and 7 with stakeholders (2 camp operators, the project coordinator, the mayor's Chief of Staff, the vice president of the Social Cooperative Ruah and 2 Italian language instructors). The majority of the interviewees came from sub-Saharan Africa, while two of them hailed from Pakistan and Iraq (see Table 2). The majority of my informants were of working age, between 20 and 44. The interviewees' educational background ranged from no education (4), Quranic (5), basic (2), middle (6), high (2) to college dropouts (1) (see Table 2). The interview questions focused on the participants' backgrounds, views, motives, expectations, and experiences vis-à-vis the integration model.

Linked to the above method was observation. This approach helped me in achieving the balance between the issues of the researcher's presence there and experience afar (Devereux and Hoddinott 1993; Geertz 1976). Additionally, the research revolved around repeated 'conversations' with the participants — asylum-seekers and cooperative staff — in *the academy* (see Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2015).

After data collection, I listened to the tape recordings several times, transcribed and crosschecked them with field notes and data from *the academy*, and then inductively coded dominant themes. This was then followed by noting connections between the identified emerging themes. Themes were clustered into superordinate

groups where relationships are noted, and then checking them with the initial transcript to ensure that these outcomes reflected participants' initial meaning. Shared themes are explicated and illustrated using quotes from the texts.

4. The Academy: Bergamo's Model, a New Approach to Integration?

4.1 Objective(s), Rationale, Rules, and Administrative Structure of the Academy

The integration model, "l'Accademia per l'Integrazione", embodies peculiar features, thus making it a compelling case worth researching: the use of the "scout/militaristic" approach as a control and discipline tool, with policy practices implemented through paternalistic, patronising and deserving discourses; and its conceptualisation of integration as a "two-way" process, starting upon arrival, and with a set of explicit predetermined integration goals guiding progress. The model seeks to provide an alternative first-stage reception system to effectively manage the migration inflows.

The founding of *the academy* is as a result of the "migration emergency" in recent years, which has particularly affected cities. This resulted in the mayor, Giorgio Gori, creating an experimental alternative "intermediate model" of reception and integration between the SPRAR and the current "dysfunctional" CAS system. It is a one-year programme, which has similar characteristics of CAS, though with additional rules and features. The model focuses on the "minimum integration measures" illustrated earlier. In theory, the first six months are dedicated to volunteering, training, Italian language classes and civics, and in the third quarter, professional training is carried out by the Azienda Bergamasca Formazione (ABF) — the Bergamo Training Agency — to match the needs of companies to the skills of each asylum-seeker.

The City Council, a centre-left leaning administration, has assumed the leading role in formulating the experimental model for asylum-seekers' reception and integration, in partnership with the local Manufacturers' Federation (Bergamo Confindustria), and the third sector (the Diocese, through the Diakonia association and Social Cooperative Ruah). The City Council coordinates the partners, scouts asylum-seekers, and liaises with the Confindustria for internship and job placements. The Confindustria plays a facilitatory role in aligning the partners on the training needs of the companies, promoting contacts for the internship phase and simultaneously indicating to their associates the names of those who have completed

the training course and are therefore ready for possible job placement. The Diakonia association, along with the Cooperative, participates in calls for funding for asylum-seekers' reception. In particular, the Cooperative oversees *the academy's* day-to-day activities and basic services.

The *academy* is run by the director (the mayor's Chief of Staff), two educators, two operators, one coordinator and two language instructors (all from the Cooperative), and specialised trainer(s) (engaged in teaching the usage of tools, security, first aid and accident prevention). Using the same budget allocated for CAS structures, the experimental model intends to demonstrate that changing migration governance is possible and that, without additional economic resources, it is feasible to build integration pathways that allow the asylum-seeker to share the rules and culture of the host society, to be 'useful' to the communities through voluntary activities and to prepare themselves, should their asylum request be accepted, for the world of work (Comune di Bergamo 2018).

Employing the "scout/militaristic" approach, *the academy* became operational in September 2018 with 30 male asylum-seekers (students) aged between 18-44, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa (see Table 2). Only eleven asylum-seekers joined *the academy* in the ensuing months rather than the expected additional 30 asylum-seekers, ten left the structure and one is deceased. The 30 asylum-seekers were hosted in a structure in Gleno in the Celadina neighbourhood,⁴¹ on the second floor of the former Carisma retirement home, east of the historic centre, for a year. It is a three-storey building that can host circa 350 people. The *academy* shared the structure with CAS (the largest reception centre in the city, hosting about 250 asylum-seekers) with the majority of its students coming from this centre. The structure's interior has a passageway, a dining room at the end of the hallway, a small kitchen for preparing breakfast (as lunch and dinner are provided by external catering service), bedrooms on both sides of the corridor, a laundry room, a storeroom for asylum-seekers to deposit personal effects not allowed in the structure, an operators' room, an infirmary, an office and a classroom with a small hall in front for table football.

Asylum-seekers voluntarily joined *the academy* after orientation and having passed three selection processes: one with the municipality and the other two with the Cooperative. During the interview process, the asylum-seekers are evaluated mainly

⁴¹ The neighbourhood has a population of 5,142 as of 1 January 2019, of which 1,408 are foreign residents (Comune di Bergamo 2019).

on their knowledge of the Italian language and readiness to follow *the academy's* rules.

The *academy* is governed by strict rules aimed at the discipline, containment and cohabitation of the asylum-seekers. In general, the student is obliged to behave formally. Therefore, he is required to formally greet the staff (director, coordinator, educators, tutors, operators and class leader) and visitors, standing on his feet if he is in the bedroom, classroom or sitting in the table football hall; during lunch and dinner, the student is required to behave courteously and observe table manners. Asylum-seekers are engaged in rotating role-play to empower and teach them how to shoulder responsibilities. To illustrate, the capoclasse (class leader), for example, is responsible for *the academy* in the absence of the operator, directs all activities carried out by service students, organises gatherings and checks that all the activities take place in perfect time, among others.

There are rules prescribing attires for the various activities of the week except for Sundays, thus making the asylum-seekers look more like cadets or scouts than students. They have different types of kits, with a logo and the inscription “Accademia per l’Integrazione. Grazie Bergamo” (“Integration Academy. Thank you Bergamo”). Additionally, *the academy* controls asylum-seekers’ mobility: they are free to leave the building on Saturday afternoons after *the academy's* activities (if there are any) and on Sundays, but must return by 22:00. Further, asylum-seekers can only use their mobile phones for a few hours a day, and the Wi-Fi connection is disconnected at 23:00.

More importantly, the students follow a strict timetable, thus radically changing their way of life. The day starts at 6.30 and ends at 23.00. The following provides an overview of *the academy's* schedules: 6.30 (wake up: cleaning of the structure, personal hygiene); 7.00 (breakfast); 7.45 (roll call); 8.00 (3 hours of linguistic and civic education per day each week); 11.00 (break/lunch preparation); 11.30 (lunch); 12.15 (change of attire/school suit folded and put on the bed); 12.30 (an hour of professionalising laboratory: use of tools, safety, first aid, etc.) and transfer for volunteering; 13.30 (voluntary work); 17.30 (moving back to *the academy*); 18.30 (cleaning: personal hygiene, kits); 19.30 (dinner); 20.30 (individual or group study, homework); 22.30 (room and cabinet inspection); 23.30 (general lights off). The programme is repeated from Monday-Friday, except Saturdays when activities end at 16.00 and Sundays, which are free.

4.2 Model's Integration Measures: an Overview

In a context characterised by the lack of (long-term) integration and inclusion measures, particularly in the first-stage accommodation centres for forced migrants, *the academy* seeks to facilitate asylum-seekers' integration prospects starting from their arrival through "minimum integration measures". Below, I briefly provide an overview of these measures.

4.2.1 Italian Language Course and Civics

One of the principal objectives of *the academy* is that, seeing as the asylum-seekers acquire a good working knowledge of the Italian language and civics after the programme, it provides tuition on the same, with the expected output being Italian Language B1. While this is what *the academy* hopes for, not all asylum-seekers were able to make it, given their varied educational backgrounds. The *academy* considers language acquisition as the first goal because anyone living in a foreign country must know the host country's language, as this is the first element that allows that person to be free.

Table 1 shows the situation of students upon arrival at *the academy* and their condition after a year. The indicated levels refer to the scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (where A1 and A2 stand for "elementary" levels and B1 and B2 for "intermediate" levels). The "pre-A1" or "pre-basic" level corresponds to that of a "beginner" and refers, in this context, to those students who at a written level have deficiencies due to poor schooling: they are not real illiterates; however, they write and read with great difficulty and slowness. "Illiterate" students are those that need to be taught reading and writing, starting from the alphabet and syllables.

As evident from the table, on the whole, the progress has been quite notable, thanks not only to the school but also to the internship and job placements of many asylum-seekers and other measures, including the incorporation of the obligatory use of Italian as the only medium of communication, use of qualified instructors in teaching Italian as a second language, bi-weekly assessment, and extra assignments (e.g., for homework and vacation breaks). The progress is more evident at the oral level; it is remarkable, especially for students who started with no knowledge of Italian. As the instructors documented and illustrated in the table, the "real" illiterates remain at that level even after a year, though they have made some progress in their instrumental

reading and writing skills; they can read a few single words and some simple sentences independently, but no more. They have, however, made good progress orally. The *academy* has registered 18 students to sit for the Junior High Diploma exam this year, including one of the asylum-seekers who joined the model as an “illiterate”.

Table 1 — Asylum-seekers’ educational and language characteristics before and after the one-year project cycle

Nationality	Initial Level (end of 2018)	Written language level (end of 2019)	Oral language level (end of 2019)
PAKISTAN	Pre-A1/no Italian	A1	A2
NIGERIA	Pre-A1/no Italian	A1	A1/A2
GHANA	Educated/ A1	A2	B1
MALI	Illiterate/no Italian	Unclassified *	Unclassified
MALI	Pre A1/Italian A1	A1	B1
SENEGAL	Illiterate/no Italian	Pre-A1	A2
MALI	Illiterate/no Italian	Unclassified *	Unclassified
GUINEA (Conakry)	Educated/B1	B1	B2
MALI	Educated/A2	A2	B1
SENEGAL	Educated/A2	A2	B1
NIGERIA	Educated/A2	A2	B1
NIGERIA	Educated/A1	A2	B1
IVORY COAST	Illiterate/no Italian	Illiterate	A2
SENEGAL	Educated/A2	A2	B1
MALI	Pre A1/A1	A1	A2
GHANA	Education/no Italian	A2	B1
SENEGAL	Illiterate/no Italian	Illiterate	A2
CAMEROON	Educated/B1	B1	B1/B2

GHANA	Pre-A1/no Italian	Pre A1	A2
NIGERIA	Pre-A1/no Italian	A1	A2
NIGERIA	Educated/A1	A2	A2
GAMBIA	Pre-A1/no Italian	A1	A2
NIGERIA	Educated/A1	A2	B1
NIGERIA	Educated/A1	A2	B1
SENEGAL	Pre-A1/A1	A1	B1
SENEGAL	Pre-A1/A1	A1	B1
IVORY COAST	Illiterate/no Italian	Illiterate	A2
LIBERIA	Educated/A1	A1	A2
BENIN	Educated/A1	A2	B1
GHANA	Educated/A1	A2	A2/B1

Source: Fieldwork (2018-20)

*Unclassified: these two students are unclassified because of their recent arrival, thus rendering any evaluation insignificant.

4.2.2 “Socially Useful” Work

Asylum-seekers are obliged to undertake unpaid “socially useful” work during their initial stage in *the academy* to help the city, and for asylum-seekers to build networks, get occupied and have work experience, in theory, for six months. On the one hand, the asylum-seekers’ undertake voluntary activities in the city of Bergamo: e.g., cleaning of parks, oratories, neighbourhoods, local market ground, cemetery, roads; picking and collection of leaves; maintenance of bike lanes; census of the state of roads (holes, pavements, road signs); painting and arrangement in schools and oratories. About three-quarters of asylum-seekers have undertaken voluntary activities, completing stints of voluntary work in old age and elderly care homes: basically, asylum-seekers go to these structures, for instance, to lend a hand at the bar. It is a programme designed to promote integration, in that the students interact with

and learn from older adults while playing card games. Additionally, asylum-seekers have provided voluntary services in other areas, including the City Council conference (custodian) and SERMIG Peace Day (security support).

4.2.3 Job Traineeship and Work Placement/Contract

To *the academy*, integration comes from the economic autonomy of the asylum-seekers. Asylum-seekers have previous work experience as house painters, coachbuilders, bricklayers, tilers, general workers, window makers, plumbers and tailoring, among others; however, *the academy* and Confindustria are yet to valorise these experiences.

Table 2 shows traineeships, employment and socio-demographic features of the asylum-seekers. The data reveals that while the majority of the asylum-seekers are able to undertake occupational safety and health courses, they however find it challenging to get apprenticeships and eventual job placements. Currently, the *academy* has three main areas for traineeships: industries, catering and cleaning. Framar SpA, Valtellina SpA and La Nuova Gastronomia SRL are the first three member companies of the Confindustria to give the asylum-seekers traineeship placements. The majority of the internships is concentrated in the cleaning sector, with a few asylum-seekers finding placements in the food industry. Further, the table shows that two asylum-seekers received an indeterminate contract with nine other asylum-seekers on the way to receiving the same soon after their traineeships.

The *academy* aims to prepare the asylum-seekers for the job market, based on the labour market needs of the local economy, through apprenticeships with local industries and possible eventual work contracts. It is, however, not automatic that once an asylum-seeker enters *the academy*, they are going to get a job. The goal here is to give asylum-seekers the necessary tools to face life in Italy: training plus the internship that will put them in front of companies and, if at the end of the internship, the employer is satisfied with their work then they will offer them a work contract. This will allow asylum-seekers to go to the Territorial Commission or the appellate court with a resume that contains a “real job”, facilitating their chance of obtaining a residence permit for “proven integration”, as the acquisition of legal status is not guaranteed at the end of the asylum-seekers integration process in *the academy*.

Table 2: Traineeship, Employment and Socio-Demographic Features of the Asylum-Seekers

Nationality	Age	Entry Date	Professional Traineeship Courses	Traineeships		Salaried Employment				Interview (date by which they should be hired)
				Months	Allowance	Job Type	Months	Hourly Pay	Effective Hours	
Nigeria	44	24.9.18	Basic safety course (ABF) cleaning course			Cleaning (FraMar)	3(Jun.-Sep.)+2 (Oct - Nov)	6,66670 € lorde all'ora	Part-time contract, extra hours are paid as overtime	14.4.2020
Ghana	21	24.9.18								10.11.2020
Nigeria	25	24.9.18								27.5.2020
Cote d'Ivoire	32	24.9.18								8.9.2020
Ghana	34	24.9.18								18.12.2019*
Senegal	26	24.9.18								1.4.2020 *
Ghana	37	24.9.18								14.7.2020
Nigeria	29	24.9.18	Basic safety course (ABF)			Cleaning (FraMar)	3 (Jun. - Sept.)+ 1 (only Oct. due to "punishment") + 1 (Nov.)	6,66670 € lorde all'ora	Full-time	27.5.2020
Nigeria	26	24.9.18								30.6.2020
Mali	27	24.9.18								6.10.2020
Mali	25	24.9.18	Basic safety course (Tempor)				15 days (12/08 - 25/08) + 1 (25/08 - 30/09) + 2 (Oct. - Nov.)			16.12.2020
Guinea C.	26	24.9.18	Basic safety course (ABF) furniture assembling (ABF)				3 (Jul. - Aug. - Sep.) + indeterminate contract			11.3.2020 ***
Senegal	37	24.9.18	Basic safety course & kitchen job (ABF)	4 (Jun.-Oct) + 2 (Oct. - Dec.)		Restaurant (Da Mimmo)	Indeterminate contract		More than 45 hours (no work on weekends, depending on the number of	7.4.2020 *
Senegal	23	14.2.19		4 + 2						7.4.2020 *
Senegal	24	24.9.18		3 (Jun.-Sep.)	€500.00					26.9.2019 **

								customer s)		
Mali	27	24.9.18							19.5.2020 *	
Senegal	35	24.9.18		4 (Jun - Oct.) + 2 (Oct. - Dec)					5.1.2020 *	
Senegal	25	24.9.18							18.11.2020 *	
Benin	22	24.9.18		4 (Jun.- Oct.) + 2 (Oct. - Dec)					13.5.2020	
Gambia	30	24.9.18	Basic safety course (ABF)	6 (Oct. - Apr.)	Cleaning (FraMar)	15days (12/08 - 25/08) + 1 (25/08 - 30/09) + 2 (Oct - Nov)		Full-time	11.12.2019*	
Pakistan	39	24.9.18				Valtellina spa	Contract starts 28/10/2019 (6 months)		Full-time	3.3.2021 *
Ghana	20	24.9.18	Basic safety & cleaning course (ABF)		Cleaning (FraMar)	15days (12/08 - 25/08)		Full-time	25.11.2020	
Cote d'Ivoire	22	24.9.18	N/A						6.5.2020	
Nigeria	35	28.2.19	N/A						3.2.2021	
Cameroon	29	11.3.19	N/A		Cleaning (FraMar)	15days (12/08 - 25/08)		Full-time	20.10.2020	
Nigeria	22	11.3.19	N/A			15days (12/08 - 25/08)		Full-time	6.5.2020	
Nigeria	23	11.3.19	N/A			15days (12/08 - 25/08)		Full-time	3.2.2021	
Liberia	24	11.3.19	N/A							24.2.21
Mali	24	28.6.19	N/A							
Mali	32	28.6.19	N/A							

Source: Fieldwork (2018-20)

* Asylum-seekers soon to be employed with an indeterminate contract after the traineeships

** Indeterminate contract + humanitarian permit

*** Indeterminate contract

5. Good Intentions, (Un)desirable Outcomes? A Critical Reflection

Notwithstanding the good intentions and the timely and much-needed nature of the model in an increasingly anti-immigration environment, and the stakeholders' overall positive outlook on the integration measures, the findings presented a mixed picture: pockets of successful integration outcomes and a contentious approach. Below, I critically reflect on the integration outcomes and the approach adopted.

5.1 Model's Outcomes and Approach

To start with, the most successful outcome of the model, based on the findings, is the Italian language course, particularly for asylum-seekers who had no prior "education". The *academy* has achieved this through the adoption of multiple approaches illustrated earlier.

'Before joining the academy, I didn't know how to read and write. I don't understand anything. But now I can read; I can write. I understand if you speak. So if one day I go back to my country, they'll be surprised; they'll say, huh, see this brother. He can't read; he goes to school in Europe, and he can now read. What I've achieved in one year in the academy is far better than what I achieved in all my time in CAS, that's almost 1 year and 8 months. Look, before I can't say or don't know the meaning of these things on that board: STO, STAI, STA [...]', (Felix, interview, Aug. 2019).

Language instructors are, however, cautious about the strong emphasis on the 'compulsory element' as it can equally have negative impacts on asylum-seekers' language acquisition in the long run; hence, the need to find the right balance. Also, asylum-seekers have expressed their displeasure at the obligatory content, though they think it is a necessary component.

'Everything is obligatory here, but I knew it before joining. I sat for a Junior High exam in CAS — it's my initiative — and the school wasn't obligatory there. When I don't feel like going to school, I don't go. But I usually go to school. But you know being a human, sometimes, especially when you've loads of thoughts, I don't go to school. However, here even if I don't feel like going, I've to — no option,' (Kone, interview, Mar. 2019).

On the whole, asylum-seekers found the civic integration courses to be particularly helpful for learning a language, understanding the host society's culture, navigating a

particularly complex web of administrative and bureaucratic environments, and seeking internship and employment placements.

Secondly, the traineeship and employment outcomes of the model's integration domains are below expectations. As illustrated earlier, *the academy* considers economic autonomy of the asylum-seekers as the basis of their integration. Yet, the research reveals that they find it difficult in getting internship and employment placements. Many reasons have accounted for the delay. The *academy* makes language proficiency an essential component of the internship placements. This is however difficult for some of the asylum-seekers to accept, in that the majority of asylum-seekers outside this model often secure jobs without any language skills. Additionally, the Confindustria, which is supposed to play a critical role in matching skills to internship placements and job opportunities, was absent for a large part of the project until recently. The *academy's* staff is visibly disappointed with this development as the delay has increased anxiety among the asylum-seekers, some of whom are yet to undergo internships after a year in the structure. While some did find internships and jobs, the overall employment outcomes fell short of expectations.

'Thanks to the academy, I did 4 months internship as an assistant chef. Last month, I had an indeterminate fixed-term contract ['contratto vero'— 'real contract'] in the same workplace. I'm the first person to have this type of contract. My challenge now is to look for a document. Voglio essere un Italiano nero (I want to be a black Italian). I don't know if I'll get the document or not. I know it's difficult to have it,' (Marouni, interview, Sep. 2019).

In this context, asylum-seekers with employment contracts often face uncertain and precarious legal conditions as this is not guaranteed at the end of the integration process even if they are fully integrated with proof of an indeterminate work contract, language acquisition, civics and “socially useful” work.⁴² During the research period, all interviewees who did the first Commission have received negative decisions on their asylum determination process. And it takes an average of 1.5 years for the asylum-seekers to go for the appeal. While the judges at the Territorial Commission are aware of asylum-seekers integration process in *the academy*, as the participants who went to the Commission during their first asylum determination process

⁴² The uncertain legal status is as a consequence of the Law 132/2018 illustrated earlier. The abolition of humanitarian protection by this law for those who are not eligible for refugee status increases the likelihood of legal precarity among asylum-seekers as previously, over one-third of asylum applicants often received humanitarian status.

documented, they were only interested in their ‘migration story’, not in their experience in *the academy*. One of the asylum-seekers, however, received a humanitarian status after going to the second Commission with an indeterminate work contract (see Table 2). While *the academy* hopes the asylum-seekers can secure legal status with a regular work contract, it is difficult to establish here if there is any relationship between the asylum-seekers’ integration experience, particularly having a job contract, and legal recognition; this thus calls for further exploration to uncover nuances of the model within the national legal and migration governance frameworks.

Thirdly, the use of unpaid “socially useful” work presents mixed results.⁴³ The research shows that some of the asylum-seekers have done eight months or more of voluntary work due to delays in finding traineeships and work placement. While the introduction of the voluntary activities for asylum-seekers is not a bad thing in itself, codifying it into law, with *the academy* recently making it obligatory, however makes it a highly contentious element of an integration model as industries and businesses tend to exploit the resultant cheap labour. Further, *the academy* sees the voluntary work as a way of contributing to the free services rendered them. Some of the asylum-seekers are critical of this viewpoint; however, others have expressed a similar opinion.

‘Before entering the academy, I had an interview in the municipality. They asked me whether I’d do voluntary work. I said yes. They asked why. I told them I don’t have mamma for here, I no get papa for here. But they provide me with food and healthcare. And I want to use voluntary work to pay them. They told me that if I do the voluntary for 6 months, they’d give me work. And I fulfilled my voluntary for 8 months; they fulfilled the work,’ (Jude, interview, Sep. 2019).

The research reveals that asylum-seekers are to an extent able to build their networks and social capital during the volunteering and internship placements. This is contrary to the ongoing argument that asylum-seekers live in relative isolation, with little and infrequent contact with locals, a process that negatively affects their integration into the larger society (Ghiglione 2019).

‘Even if the academy can’t give me a job, with what they open my eyes to see, I can get myself one. You see, I’m working as a cleaner, so we go to many workplaces,

⁴³ The voluntary work component is one of the core elements of the security-driven law 46/2017 adopted by the centre-left PD-led coalition government.

industries. Now I know these industries and so and so are over there. All these things are experience for me and others,’ (Kadir, interview, Sep. 2019).

Regardless of this finding, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of free mobility in building and sustaining networks and social capital. Observation and interviews reveal that the rules restricting asylum-seekers’ movements are no longer as strict as they were at *the academy’s* inception. It could be argued here that *the academy* has put restrictive measures in place to demonstrate to the public that asylum-seekers can be controlled and disciplined during their integration process. The structure has thus become a space where power is exercised in monitoring asylum-seekers’ movements, daily routines disciplined and programmed by the institutional machinery of the Social Cooperative (for similar findings, see Hyndman 1996). However, the rules have become more liberal and relaxed because *the academy* staff recognises the students’ willingness to follow the rules, self-regulate and shoulder responsibilities in their absence. Additional factors contributing to this outcome include asylum-seekers engagements outside the camp, like going to work, internships and school in order to sit for the Junior High Diploma exam. It is notable that asylum-seekers have demonstrated their ‘agency’ by developing mechanisms to manipulate and cope with the rigid system (see Dalal et al. 2018; Sanyal 2010) to find their own “space” both inside and outside the structure: e.g., adhering to the rules only when the director or the staff, particularly the former, are around.

The foregoing analysis reveals the good intentions of the model; however, the ‘scout/militaristic’ approach adopted makes it a highly controversial model, fuelling critiques. From a practical point of view, the approach is moderately successful in civic education. Yet, the method is highly contentious from aesthetic and critical perspectives. In its current state, the model is setting a bad precedent because in trying to respond to and provide an alternative to the current anti-immigration political climate, particularly “anti-Salvinism”, it (un)knowingly underscores the existing ‘system’ in showing that asylum-seekers are ‘subjects’ (the ‘Others’) that have to be controlled and disciplined (see Agier 2011; Said 2002). Importantly, asylum-seekers have to always demonstrate their ‘deservingness’ before getting a document and being accepted into society (see Ravn et al. 2020). The model is thus based on existing solutions to convey the feeling of a politically calculated process — temporary political manoeuvres designed to give the illusion of obtaining immediate outcomes and having the situation under control to score political points, to the extent of legitimising the ‘system’ of forced migration governance through restrictive measures (see Gargiulo 2018; Khraïsse 2019). On the whole, while promoting integration

through *the academy* is a praiseworthy exercise, there is the need for more of a ‘human face’, moderating the approach adopted to align it with integration dynamics so that those in whose interest integration is invoked should not be crushed by the austere demands of the system in the name of integration.

5.2 “Seeing Like Integration”: Beyond ‘Minimum Integration Measures’ and the Limit of Local Integration

This study has shown that cities have played important roles in asylum-seekers’ reception and integration process. Contemporary migration is remarkably urban, and as such it has forced local authorities into playing increasing roles, with cities adopting new and hybrid approaches to migration to cope (IOM 2015). The findings of this research complement previous studies (see, e.g., Lethbridge 2016; Penninx 2009) in underscoring the fundamental roles of cities in developing reception policy within national asylum policy frameworks.

The research shows that *the academy* activated policy-abased measures to lay the foundation for asylum-seekers’ integration into the host society; thus, it is worth discussing the effectiveness of the reception measures utilised to facilitate integration. Here, the framing of asylum-seekers’ integration as an individual process that entails access to general social welfare services (which is already part of the CAS programme), voluntary work, traineeships and participation in the labour market, language courses and civics education led to the emergence of a ‘socio-economic dimension’ of integration. This is unsurprising, as recent local integration policies in Italy have mostly focused on ‘socio-economic integration’ over the years, including the CAS and SPRAR system (see Caneva 2014; Galera et al. 2018; NIP 2017).

In particular, the findings show that *the academy* considers economic autonomy as the foundation of integration. Employment is widely recognised in research and policy documents as an element shaping many significant aspects of migrants’ lived experiences, aiding contact with the host population, language skills development and economic self-sufficiency, among others (Ager and Strong 2008; Bloch 2004). Yet, the employment outcomes of the model are far below expectations as the asylum-seekers struggle to secure traineeship and possible job placements. Also, there are questions regarding job quality and the acquisition of transferrable skills, in that many of the apprenticeships are for low-skilled jobs that many people can do without any long-term training. Also, there is little evidence linking traineeships to employment outcomes (for similar findings, see, e.g., Bloch 2004). Further, the model failed to

valorise the employment experiences of the asylum-seekers, leading to their under-employment. These findings concur with similar cases in the literature and policy documents (Ager and Strang 2008; Garibay and De Cuyper 2013: 70; UNHCR 2017). While place and space matter in integration policy formulation, adaptation and implementation (Platts-Fowler and Robinson 2015), for all their importance, merely possessing a strong economy with low unemployment rate does not however provide the ‘magic bullet’ for asylum-seekers accessing traineeships and employment opportunities. Notwithstanding the recent economic crisis, the unemployment rate in the Bergamo province was 4.2 per cent, putting it among the lowest in Italy in 2017, second only to Bolzano (ISTAT 2018). Yet, despite a buoyant local economy and Confindustria’s engagement, asylum-seekers in *the academy* still find it challenging to secure traineeships and jobs. There is thus a significant discrepancy between the model’s rhetoric and the practical outcomes on the ground.

Further, the study shows that language instruction and acquisition is considered as a significant constituent of civic integration programmes and a facilitator for other aspects of integration (Ager and Strang 2008; Garibay and De Cuyper 2013). The effectiveness of this measure of the model is praiseworthy. This element is common in traditional immigrant destinations (e.g., the US, Canada, the UK and Australia), current, newer receiving countries (e.g., Germany, France) and the newest immigration destination countries (e.g., Spain, South Korea), and countries unwilling to integrate foreigners over the years (e.g., Japan) (see Tsuda 2006). The compulsory content and proficiency level requirement of the language course are evident in other countries across Western Europe, though to varying degrees (Garibay and De Cuyper 2013). Language acquisition plays a key role in the integration process in many spheres, including employment and social interactions. The academic literature highlighted the positive impact of language proficiency on the labour market in terms of employment placements (see, e.g., Chiswick and Miller 1995, 2003). Yet, the current study does not find any direct linkage between language acquisition and job placements. This finding concurs with Svantesson and Aranki’s (2006) study where they found statistically insignificant Swedish language practice for immigrants and its effect on the probability of finding employment.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from the research is the model’s conceptualisation of integration as a two-way process that begins with the filing for asylum, not after receiving international protection status. This is contrary to the national integration framework that seeks to provide full integration services only to international protection status holders (see also, e.g., Kissoon 2010; Phillips 2006 for

the case of the UK). However, while in theory *the academy* considers integration as a (complex) process, this is not the case in practice; this is evident in the speed and linear trajectory with which *the academy* seeks to achieve integration outcomes. The model seeks to provide post-reception support to ensure that asylum-seekers are fully integrated into society after leaving *the academy*. However, the guidelines for this post-reception assistance are yet to be stipulated. Local integration, in reality, is a complex, multifaceted, multidimensional, gradual and long-term process (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx 2016) with legal, economic, political, socio-cultural dimensions, thus thrusting considerable demands on both the individual asylum-seeker and the host community. Within this framework, integration does not occur in a linear fashion; it can take several forms, not quantifiable outcomes per se but a process which is dynamic, two-way and needs to be sustained over time to assure long-lasting success (Craig 2015:64; Da Lomba 2010; OECD 2018).

The research shows that the model's "minimal integration measures" are insufficient for promoting broader integration outcomes. While cities have been proactive in forced migrants' reception and integration policy formulation, their scope of action is conditioned by national contexts (de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016), such as the national citizenship and legal policy framework. This thus underscores to an extent the continued centrality of the nation-state in the lived experiences of immigrants (Gill 2010; Menjívar 2006). In this context, Italian cities can have good migration policies at the local level, but if they do not have national legal backing (recognition) and resources, the thrust of these policies are frail and consequently do not usually survive in the long run or contribute to any meaningful integration outcomes. Cities lack appropriate policy and normative tools as asylum and immigration policies are, for example, primarily formulated at the national and supranational (and to a degree regional) level(s) with resources⁴⁴ and legal sovereignty highly concentrated at the national level. It remains the case that *the academy* intends to build necessary conditions for a possible integration based on autonomy and legality. Yet, the research finds that there is no relationship between asylum-seekers experiences in *the academy* and legal status acquisition. This has significant implications for other integration domains, migration policy and broader integration, as legal status considerably shapes

⁴⁴ Most of the cities are not financially independent, and thus depend on the national government for implementing integration policies. The funding cut as a consequence of Law 132/2018 affects the (quality of) services provided in *the academy*, and the continuity of the model depends on the continuous renewal of its proposal by the prefecture.

all facets of forced migrants' lived experiences — access to the labour market, education, health, housing, basic sustenance, social inclusion and building of social networks (Ager and Strong 2008; Castles et al. 2002; Da Lomba 2010). Given that secure legal standing is a necessary precondition for migrant's integration, questioning *the academy's* “integration” rhetoric within an uncertain and precarious legal context is apt.

6. Conclusions and an Agenda for Future Research

The study has engaged with the role of cities (local authorities) in asylum-seekers and refugees' reception and integration processes, focusing on the local asylum-seekers reception and integration model, “l'Accademia per l'Integrazione”, developed within the national asylum reception policy framework in Bergamo, Italy. There exists considerable scholarship that has described attempts to develop local integration strategies or to put them into practice, with many developing policy domains and indicators (see, e.g., Ager and Strang 2008; Alexander 2007; Phillimore 2012). Using a “scout/militaristic” approach, the *academy* seeks to integrate asylum-seekers starting from arrival through the acquisition of language and professional skills, “socially useful” work and possible access to the labour market. Integration is conceived here as a long-term process that begins upon arrival of asylum-seekers and refugees. The study however showed that *the academy* operates within predetermined specific integration goals for the asylum-seekers within a fixed timeframe. Informed by public discourses and policy goals, integration is presented here as a linear process with definite outcomes for the asylum-seekers. It thus ignores the fact that integration is a non-linear process with the complex interplay of factors that may produce many varied results during the integration process (see Lindo 2005). The findings revealed that the ‘integration’ outcomes were below par and multifaceted. Apart from the civic education, which was somewhat successful, the rest produced results that were below expectations as the asylum-seekers struggled to secure internships and jobs.

Progressive cities are noted for inclusive and liberal policy rhetorics, thus championing the cause of immigrants. Bergamo's case presented a complex menu for analysis. While the use of the ‘scout/militaristic’ approach to integration process produced some practical outcomes, it however remains a contentious approach to migration governance and beggars belief given the city's ‘progressive’ attributes. This shows that policies and practices of the Left can be repressive not only at the “macro-structural” level but also within local contexts (see Però 1999, 2005). The case of

Bergamo is unsurprising if analysed within the national and local political climate as this plays a huge role in migration policy formulation and implementation. Repressive policies have permeated all political spectrums and immigration (asylum) policy dynamics in Italy over the years, including progressive governments (see Però 2005; Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Zincone 2006). The state and many local authorities have played critical roles in designing (explicit or implicit) exclusionary migration policies in constructing the migrant as ‘the Other’ (see Testai 2015). There exist cities that have gone against repressive national government policies, implementing inclusive policies. However, they are not the “real” alternative as they lack the political and economic weight, wary of the political costs and always under the overarching influence of the state.

This exploration of the local integration model is of great significance to the integration concept, migration literature and policy. In particular, the model’s conceptualisation of integration as a process that begins with the filing for asylum is worth implementing in all local settings in Italy and beyond. While the central focus of this study is on a local integration model, it remains the fact that national context remains fundamental in facilitating integration (de Graauw and Vermeulen 2016). The study results showed that asylum-seekers experience high levels of uncertain and precarious legal conditions and that the structural barrier — in this context, the national legal migration policy framework — contributes to this legal precarity and thus stifling the city’s integration efforts and asylum-seekers’ broader integration into the society.

Local settings have become innovative grounds for forced migrants’ reception and policy development (Doomernik and Ardon 2018; Penninx 2009). This is wholly true in Italy where local authorities are at the forefront of forced migrants’ integration in a decentralised and diversified context (Scholten et al. 2017), and the current Bergamo’s experimental model reaffirms the assertion that local levels are no longer at the receiving ends of national integration policy frameworks, but rather increasingly becoming environments for asylum policy innovation. This makes it imperative to understand this experience through critical engagement with and systematic analysis of related local integration policies. Thus, further research could be undertaken, among others, to: explore the politics that shape policy content and its implications; examining the political process and views that inspire this model, and consequent (un)intended outcomes for current and future policymaking (which could provide us with explanations as to why the model has incorporated ‘scout/militaristic’ approach); compare the model’s effectiveness to CAS structures and objectives; document the

multi-level governance approach of the model and how this can provide possible space for the formal and informal interplay between various stakeholders; and to study precarious legal status, local reception and integration policy dynamics.

Conclusions: Researching Precarious Migrations During the Recent “Refugee Crisis”

This thesis has engaged with the overarching question of exploring how (public) institutions — specific policies, laws and practices — shape different migrant groupings’ daily-lived experiences, especially during the recent so-called “refugee crisis” in Italy. In particular, we investigated the institutional production of migrants’ housing precarity, temporal aspects of reception policies and their effects on refugees’ housing outcomes, and local reception policy for asylum-seekers’ integration. We explored these puzzles using interdisciplinary qualitative data from sub-Saharan African migrants — ‘economic’ migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, refused asylum-seekers and irregular migrants — who have recently come to represent one of the most prominent asylum-seeker, immigrant communities and the focus of copious public discussion in the progressive mid-sized city of Bergamo, Italy. The thesis comprised three scholarly articles, using the analytical framework of multiple concepts: precarity (*Article 1*), temporality (*Article 2*) and integration (*Article 3*). The concepts employed in this study are used separately to explore individual articles; however, they are interrelated in practice as evident throughout the thesis. In the ensuing paragraphs, I briefly discuss the main findings, contributions to scholarship, limitations, and emerging questions for further research.

Article 1 is theoretical in character, using only a few quotations taken from the fieldwork to give life to our picture of migrants’ housing questions and their sources in Italy. It engaged with the following puzzles: What are the main sources of migrants’ housing precarity? How and how much do public institutions shape housing precarity with reference to migrants in different legal situations, so that migrants’ housing precarity can be seen as publicly — and politically — produced and shaped? The concept of precarity was born, and is still used, mainly with reference to the labour market. However, our engagement with the concept and recent works demonstrate that it is a multi-stranded concept, extending beyond the world of work. The article showed that migrants’ precarious housing situation in Italy is mainly the result of a complex interaction of a series of structural and individual factors (e.g., economic,

human and social capital).⁴⁵ These factors are interrelated and mutually-reinforcing as precarity in one domain may exacerbate or trigger other precarities (see Banki 2013). However, we argued that housing precarity is mostly produced and maintained by public institutions — at different levels (e.g., national, regional and local) and through different tools (e.g., laws, regulations, policies and practices). Thus, national policies, laws and practices used in governing migration flows and settlement are powerful forces shaping migrants' precarity in many spheres of life (Şenses 2012). While this article has focused on the Italian case, our reflections may be applicable to other countries, particularly in Europe. Many European countries have largely invested in temporary reception and housing measures for the migrants and precarity is a structural condition of migrants' contemporary life therein (Schierup and Jørgensen 2016).

Article 2 deployed the temporality concept to explore reception programmes and how this shapes refugees' housing outcomes. The article was guided by the following question: How do temporalities and temporariness embedded in reception programmes shape housing outcomes? Here we incorporated the temporality concept into an analysis of refugees' housing outcomes post-reception in Italy. We showed that refugees housing outcomes is related to the structure of the reception programme itself and the policies guiding the employment and housing rights of migrants. The tendency to view migrants as a temporary phenomenon or a crisis within Italy has had major implications for the structure and implementation of programmes at the local level. The structures in which refugees are housed are conceived as temporary and are not intended to provide long-term housing. Similarly, refugees are provided access to job traineeships which do not link to permanent employment. This creates a significant problem for refugees exiting the temporary housing system. In order to access the private housing market in Italy, a person must have an employment contract. And most refugees do not find employment in the allotted 6-12 months period. This pushes them to use informal housing market without legal protection, doubling up, using homeless facilities or sleeping rough. The refugees' housing trajectories are non-linear, but multifaceted processes. The findings revealed that the temporality of the reception system, combined with other factors including the impact of the country's weak labour market (temporary and informal nature of jobs and disadvantaged position of refugees in the labour market), legal and bureaucratic

⁴⁵ All these factors intervene differently on the various migrant categories (e.g., refugees, asylum-seekers, refused asylum-seekers, regular 'economic' and irregular migrants).

constraints required for housing, absence of post-reception support, lack of immigrants' housing policy, and inability to secure stable housing, leads to 'permanent housing temporality'.

Article 3 explores cities, reception and integration dynamics, focusing on the unique local reception model "*l'Accademia per l'Integrazione*" (the Integration Academy) in the progressive city of Bergamo. The study sought to answer the following research questions: How does *the academy* work in terms of outcomes? What are the policy implications of the findings for integration in Italy and beyond? Employing a scout approach, the model seeks to integrate asylum-seekers starting from their arrival through obligatory Italian language classes and civics, "socially useful" work, acquisition of skills and access to the labour market. This is contrary to the national integration framework that seeks to provide full integration services only to international protection status holders. The analysis showed multifarious outcomes, including a questionable approach and under-par integration upshots. Place-specific conditions matter in shaping local immigration policy formulation and implementation. The study however revealed that a mere strong local economy and somewhat inclusive policies are not enough in promoting 'socio-economic integration' of refugees as the process is complex in practice. The existing scholarship largely considered inclusive and exclusionary policies as analytically distinct. However, in reality, progressive and regressive localities sometimes use the exact same language (either explicitly or implicitly) to legitimise their policy positions, and the need to explore this within specific contexts exist. The nexus between left-wing cities and inclusive policies is nonlinear. The study showed that the scout approach adopted to integration process produced some practical outcomes, particularly civic education; yet, it remains a contentious approach to migration governance on many fronts thus questioning the inclusionary rhetorics of the model and city.

What the findings of this body of work point to is a failure of the immigration system in Italy to respond to the needs of migrants. In particular, the institutional production of precarity, use of legal temporality, programmatic and institutional temporariness, and the resulting psychological uncertainty produce a condition of systemic exclusion from normative social rhythms and the larger society. The implementation of the programmes and laws as such lead to permanent precarity. The migrants' lives detailed here demonstrate the impact that this precariousness has on housing, legal and social conditions. Migrants remain excluded, unable to settle, and exhibit ongoing mobility. The use of the framework presented here which

incorporates the three themes of precarity, temporality and integration helps identify this outcome.

The findings discovered here through interdisciplinary qualitative methods have made significant and original contributions to the migration scholarship in Italy and beyond. The research focused on a mid-sized city, which is an under-searched context in migration and urban studies. In particular, the study makes significant contributions to conceptual developments. *Article 1* makes a novel contribution to the field by building on, but also looking beyond the migrant-labour market nexus, which dominates the varied understandings of precarity, extending the concept to migrants' housing conditions and outside the gateway cities.

The concept of temporality and its implications for forced migrant experiences has not been applied to the process of refugee reception itself. Our use of temporalities as an analytic tool in this study makes clear how forced migrants are constructed as a temporary phenomenon and how that affects service provision. The research explores how the constructed temporariness embedded in the system, combined with other factors, shapes the services, and limits the opportunities, available for permanent settlement in the host society. *Article's 2* use of the concept as applied to the system is novel but builds on prior scholarship engaging with temporalities and migration more broadly.

Our exploration of refugees and local reception dynamics is of great significance to migration literature and policy. Here, the exploration of the experimental local integration model contributes to the literature that conceives integration as a multi-dimensional, two-way process that starts upon arrival in the host society, not after gaining protection status. A process which is worth implementing in other local settings in Italy and beyond.

This study must be considered vis-à-vis some possible limitations reflected in the research scope and design and the use of concepts highlighted in the analysis. Notwithstanding the limitations, the findings of this study offer significant grounds and raise new questions for future research.

On a scholarly front, there are often questions about whether one has really exhausted a research topic to draw-up conclusions, as 'in a sense no [...] research project is ever truly complete [...] it is always possible to learn more, to expand the temporal and spatial scope of one's understanding, or deepen the subtlety of that understanding' (Monaghan and Just 2000: 25). Thus, since no study can claim to exhaust all research questions, including emerging issues and, particularly, given that

this is a doctoral research study, there is much potential for further research, an acknowledgment of its limitations.

One potential limitation of the study is its focus on post-migration situations of a particular group of migrants, SSA migrants, who are in low-skilled jobs with precarious features rather than approaching a broader group of migrants with different socio-economic characteristics. The inclusion of non-migrant groups, other minorities and/or high skilled migrants of the same research group with different characteristics such as in income, education and secured employment would have produced different findings, particularly regarding housing precarity. Thus, while the exploration of migrants' housing precarity is timely and relevant to migration scholarship, even though this analysis is limited in scope, its research approach and findings may be extended to evaluating the situation of other precariats, particularly non-migrants, in multiple cities across space in order to have an in-depth yet more expansive picture of housing precarity in general. More important, the same research approach and findings could be used to frame further studies of housing precarity in the global South (see Schierup and Jørgensen 2016), exploring non-migrants and rural-urban migration, and the institutional production of precarious housing therein, given that adequate and high-quality housing is vital to well-being, economic productivity, and physical and financial security; since around one-third of the urban population in the global South lives in informal settlements devoid of basic services (King, Orloff, Virsilas and Pande 2017), exploring the housing question through the precarity lens in this context would be highly welcome and apposite.

Given that the study is designed as a collection of scholarly articles on different but interrelated issues and concepts, another potential limitation of the study is the individual treatment of the concepts in each article. The distinct conceptual engagements in this study, as documented in the general introduction, have resulted in characteristic but complementary understandings of the matters at hand. However, a rigorous marrying in future research of two or three of these concepts, and within the context of various migration phases, could add further nuance to the issues explored herein. For instance, conducting longitudinal and comparative research on the temporality of asylum-seekers, refugees and precarious livelihood dynamics (e.g., housing, employment, health, education, legal and daily sustenance) within the contexts of pre-migration, transit and post-migration, and how migrants cope with precarious livelihoods during the various phases of the migration process and subsequent (non-)integration into the host society, would be highly welcome.

What's more, there are other prominent emerging themes in this research to pursue further, particularly exploring the role of the third-sector organisations and migration dynamics. Though these organisations have significantly contributed to migration discourse, as they are often the first point of contact for (forced) migrants and active in developing and shaping migration policies, they have been relatively under-researched (see Garkisch, Heidingsfelder and Beckmann 2017). Third-sector actors have shown great agency and innovation, reducing and containing precarity in the lives of migrants, with mixed results. Simultaneously, these organisations also face precarity: they have been heavily critiqued for favouring irregular migration, turning the migration question into a "business industry", undermining state powers, and been accused of "corruption and underperformance", translating them from a space where they were perceived to be "firing magic bullets" at migrants' needs to one in which they are now "facing the bullet". Future research could move precarity from the world of work to the milieu of the 'mediating agents of the welfare state, the third-sector organisations' (Jordan 2017), exploring how these organisations cope with precarity and how they consequently contribute to reducing uncertain and precarious livelihood conditions in migrants' lived experiences.

From the foregoing illustrations, my engagement with the issues in this study is by no means exhaustive, thus offering significant grounds for further future in-depth exploration, as further signposted under each of the subsequent articles.

Post-scriptum: Housing and Reception Conditions in Times of COVID-19

This research was conducted before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in Italy. Although there is still no empirical evidence, it is likely that the public measures that have been taken to contain the virus (e.g., lockdown) have impacted migrants' housing and reception conditions. In particular, the measures may have exacerbated even more the housing precarity problems described in this study. This is also linked to the fact that the support and mitigation policies put in place by public authorities in Italy addressed housing issues to a very limited extent and, in any case, focused almost exclusively, once again, on landlords (this is the case of tax relief for energy performance improvement measures or for freezing mortgage payments). Simultaneously, the government has not taken into any account the problems of those who work or have rented their homes without a regular contract. Therefore, the housing situation of tens of thousands of both regular and irregular immigrants in Italy will be even more dramatic in the coming months and years. It is against this background that academic and policy research is urgently needed to investigate how

the COVID-19 crisis has impacted on migrants' housing precarity and to suggest possible strategies for action.

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