

An alternative image of the city: maps by migrants to explore contemporary urban landscape

Una imagen alternativa de la ciudad: mapas hechos por inmigrantes para explorar el paisaje urbano contemporáneo

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Abstract: This paper presents the result of an empirical study on mapping three Italian cities from the point of view of migrants during the first period of their stay. It aims at exploring an emerging issue in the contemporary government of a city that is increasingly inhabited by transitory populations: the relationship of its new inhabitants to the urban landscape. Drawing upon a method introduced by Kevin Lynch, 150 maps of the ‘landfall city’ came to life; in the first part the research method and its first application in Milan are presented; in the second part other two surveys, in Rovereto and Bologna, are introduced within the project “Migrants Mapping Europe”, aimed at incrementally building an European map of the present that brings to surface the meaning and forms of the transitory living conditions in the territories of contemporaneity.

Keywords: Contemporary city, mapping, multicultural city, migrants, inclusive policies.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta el resultado de una investigación empírica realizada en tres ciudades italianas sobre la capacidad de mapificar su espacio por parte de migrantes recién llegados. El objetivo es explorar un tema emergente para el proyecto y la gestión de la ciudad contemporánea, habitada cada vez más por poblaciones transitorias: la relación entre el paisaje urbano y sus nuevos habitantes. En la primera parte se presenta el método de investigación, basado en la reelaboración del trabajo de Kevin Lynch, y su primera aplicación en Milán; la segunda parte describe otras dos fases, desarrolladas en Rovereto y Bolonia, en el marco del proyecto “Migrants Mapping Europe”, con el objetivo de construir progresivamente un mapa europeo que ponga en evidencia el significado y las formas de vida transitoria en los territorios de la contemporaneidad.

Palabras clave: Ciudad contemporánea, mapificar, ciudad multicultural, migrantes, políticas de inclusión.

1. MOVEMENT AS A CONDITION OF CONTEMPORANEITY

The contemporary city is increasingly inhabited by moving populations. Europe and the whole world are becoming a land of migrants. Today, approximately 37 million persons born outside the EU reside there, making around 7% of its total population, and further flows of migration will likely remain a feature of the 21st century (European Commission, 2019).

Interpreters of an uprooted existence from the land of origin, and not yet belonging to the destination territories, these new inhabitants introduce a relationship to the city which is based on a condition of instability.

In urban studies, the issue of movement is currently chosen as an access key to investigate the relationship between inhabitants and space, seizing on movement as “what shapes the new city” (Balducci, 2008). As argued by the most recent urban transformations’ scholars, speaking about movement seems to constitute a privileged entry key for telling contemporary society (and the city) (Amin & Thrift, 2005; Fedeli & Pasqui, 2008). In sociological and anthropological fields, the literature on a sense of living linked to movement and instability is extensive and by now consolidated: from Bauman’s liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) to Sennett’s exile man (Sennett, 2011), or to Attali’s nomadic man (Attali, 2002), some descriptions have taken on the role of mapping our era.

In urban planning, however, movement and temporariness remain underexplored. Disciplinary tools are still oriented towards permanence.

The research presented in this article starts from the hypothesis that the condition of instability, to which the growing mobility of urban populations seems to give a voice, is inherent to contemporary living. It concerns a way of relating to the city that involves all its inhabitants even if with different intensities. This hypothesis leads us to focus on people with migration backgrounds as exemplary of this transitory living, and of a relationship with the city more characterized by assigning meaning to urban spaces rather than appropriating the latter.

1.1 Investigating migrants’ gaze

If the migrant is an emblematic symbol of contemporaneity, his uprooted living is a central issue for an urban project that aims at responding to the current demand for habitability. In the attempt of facing this issue, it is necessary to introduce within urban planning new tools for spatial readings and for the definition of relevant policies to govern the current urban condition.

The tools and methods of urban planning analysis, in order to produce an objective representation of spaces, are based on observing the territory from the top of a panoptic vision, taking into consideration only what is in front of us, what that can be looked at and described (Decandia, 2000). With the purpose to

provide an “objective” knowledge of the territory, town planning maps propose a zenithal and comprehensive description that returns the image of an immobile, homogeneous, measurable and codified space. This space does not contain the complexity of the relationship dynamics with those who live there, and does not give voice to the singularities of the elements that compose it (Boeri, 2003; Farinelli, 2009; Gabellini, 1996).

On the level of the disciplinary tools used to observe the urban space, as well as on the level of the logic of observation, an irreversible gap opens up in the interpretation of the city when the sense of centrality proper to the rooted inhabitant is challenged by the foreign presence.

Anticipator of the changes that have their apogee in the 21st century, the century of mobility par excellence (Lonni, 2003), the presence of migrants breaks down the idea of a defined and recognizable city as it was formed in the course of a linear and shared history; it multiplies languages and brings new layers of meaning to living in it.

The living of migrants finds in the discontinuity and experimentation of new habits the key to its relationship with the environment; it opens a crack in the way of thinking and observing the city itself. Dense of cultural contamination, disjointed in the many facets induced by the plurality of ways of living and crossing it, deconstructed (and reconstructed) by the social practices that subvert its consolidated forms and meanings, the contemporary city is no longer comprehensible (in the double meaning of this action: to understand and to keep together) with a synoptic gaze.

The instability of the migrant, his discontinuous belonging, provide a new angle and perspective not only with respect to the way of relating to urban spaces but also, consequently, to the way of observing them.

In the research presented below, migrant’s gaze is the clue proposed to an urban planning that aims at placing itself on the trail of a wandering condition, always excluded from its planning horizon precisely because it is not considered within the paradigm of permanence. It is the attempt of urban planning to propose a new perspective of investigation, which is at the same time an extension of its object of study and a way to get closer to it.

The migrant’s gaze offers a possibility in both directions.

1.2 “How does a stranger build an image of a new city?”¹

The research hypothesis is that rethinking the city, and any attempt to consider temporary living in urban planning, cannot be separated from the observation and experience of people who live under the condition of transiency.

¹ Lynch, 1960: 157-158.

How migrants represent the city also provides an opportunity to listen to people who are at the same time “guests” of the new city and are architects of its transformation.

Starting from the question asked by Kevin Lynch fifty years ago to deepen his study on *The image of the city* (Lynch, 1960), an empirical research has been introduced choosing the medium of mental maps as the most adapt instrument to bring to the surface the lived space of a transitory living, both in the mind of those who draw and in the resulting drawings.

Indeed, the question suggested by Lynch seemed to be very current in the city nowadays and had never been answered since it was asked (Andriello, 2002).

The survey explores a re-reading of the elements (paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks) introduced by Lynch to define the contents of mental representation (Andriello, 1997; Banerjee & Southworth, 1995; Lynch, 1985) at the same time focusing on the migrant’s specific condition in today’s city². A condition where the perception of the place is aimed at finding a direction in the urban landscape, and in this strain, at taking possession of the urban space, making sense of it, and making it familiar.

In the re-reading of the elements introduced by Lynch,

- “landmarks” are the places of reference which identify the city or which are used to get one’s bearings in the city;
- “living Spaces”, deriving from the category of “districts”, are the places where migrants live and have lived since their arrival in the new city;
- “paths” are the everyday movements in the city, the most frequently used paths by foot or public transportation;
- “nodes” are the most popular places, where the main activities take place and where migrants meet other people;
- “boundaries” are elements of a border between a known (or knowable) city and a city considered off limits, where the newcomer does not go or feels he cannot go; they are inaccessible, impenetrable spaces, the imaginary walls of the city³.

On the basis of these five elements, around 150 migrants in three different cities were asked to draw a map representing their perception and experience of the city.

² For the definition of the five elements of Lynch's image, see Lynch, 1960: 47-48.

³ For an exhaustive definition of the five elements of Lynch’s image transposition, see Pezzoni, 2013: 87-91; and Pezzoni, 2017: 172-174.

2. MENTAL MAPS AS A CITY KNOWLEDGE DEVICE

In addition to the reason to investigate the migrants' gaze, there are two main reasons for using migrants' mental maps as a city knowledge device.

The first has to do with the hypothesis that newcomers' representation would provide a fundamental clue to build an urban plan in a multicultural context, and it is linked to the function of mapping in geographical knowledge.

Every map is primarily a plan for the world, as various meanings of the Anglo-Saxon word *plan* still testifies, and the project of every map is to transform –playing in advance, that is preceding it– the face of the earth in its own image and likeness (Farinelli, 1992: 77).

Giving the pencil to the newcomers means giving them the possibility to propose their ideas of the city through its representation, as the representation itself is expected to produce a particular vision of reality, in contrast to a scientific, objectifying vision, which sees the map as a reflection of reality. It is a reason linked to the need to introduce new tools in order to read the contemporary city, as well as to expand the audience of subjects who can express an idea about the city.

The second reason is the opportunity to listen to participants' point of view with the intention of building a level of equality between the expert and the disorientated gaze: it is an attempt to overcome the prerogative of power over the other that has always divided those who belong (to a territory, to a right, to a system) from those who are excluded.

These two main reasons were developed in two different steps.

In the first phase of research, the main goal was to test a dematerialized representation of the city, where the activities of newcomers take place along with the multiplicity of points of view that each new citizen brings to the city. This objective was deriving both from the need of representing transitory living, and from Farinelli's critical considerations on the function of mapping (Farinelli, 1992, 2009): according to these observations, another topography, which is not limited to the morphological appearance of urban elements, may include depictions of the city under transformation through the impermanent presence of the new inhabitants.

The second phase of research, in the framework of an epochal migration crisis, took on an ethical aspect within urban policies. Maps become, in this context, tools to try to describe European cities differently from how they have always been represented and conceived (Bocchi & Ceruti, 2009). A migratory phenomenon of unthinkable proportions until ten years ago found in Europe inhospitable land (Allievi, 2018; Khosravi, 2011) unable not only to host the populations that press on its borders, but also to see their possible contribution

in the wider horizon of ideation and planning. As such, maps represent a city knowledge device in terms of building of a new awareness of the city itself.

The first phase was developed in Milan; after that first experiment, the hypothesis of rewriting all the landing cities through the gaze and the sign of migrants took shape in the perspective of shifting the point of view on the entire Europe.

A new project was conceived, “Migrants mapping Europe”, aimed at applying the method introduced in Milan in other Italian and European cities, starting with the exploration of Bologna and Rovereto. This is the second phase of research, aimed at incrementally build a European map of the present time that brings to surface the meaning and forms of the first landing and of the transitory living conditions in the territories of contemporaneity.

2.1 The construction of an empirical research

In all the three cities so far involved, the sample of interviewees included people from all over the world and who had not settled in the city yet. Thus, they had a mobile point of view, characterized mainly by instability.

The instruments used for each interview were a sheet of A4 paper, pens, crayons and markers, which were left on the table available to the interviewees to choose the most appropriate graphical tools to draw their map. On the back of the map, newcomers were asked to write their name, age, country of origin, the location of their hometown, and duration of stay in that city.

The interview also included information, if participants were willing to share, on the migratory path and the current working situation, so as to build a more complex picture of their condition. On the other hand, as said earlier, the survey did not focus on the reasons for migration, nor the living conditions in the original country: the idea was to bring the newcomer directly to his current condition, to open up a reflection on the arrival city.

The locations of interviews were different in the various cities, depending on the context in which the research sprang. While in Milan they were chosen to reflect the heterogeneity of places where newcomers have their main activities, in the other cities interviews took place where the participants involved lived (Bologna) or where they attended school (Rovereto).

In each city, the choice to project the interviewees into the current experience within the landing city, without looking back towards their origins, has proved to be a determining factor for the actual creation of the maps.

The initial disorientation, disbelief, incomprehension, often the opposition of the interviewees in front of the request to draw, left room for the surprising acceptance of that improbable challenge that induced 150 migrants to a creative observation of the city, fully participating in a project that has no purpose with immediate evidence.

3. MILAN: THE EXPERIMENT OF A WORKING METHOD

In Milan, the empirical research was carried out in 2011 with a sample of one hundred newcomers; the results and the maps collected were published in 2013.

The locations of interviews were related to the services of initial access to the city; in each of these places, the operators that manage the activities were also interviewed, so as to draw the geography of the non-institutional actors who manage the city of the first landing in Milan.

Among these places, the Help Centre of the City near Central Station was chosen for “orienting” activity, where newcomers were given very first information to orient themselves in the city. For “sleeping” activity, different hospitalities were analysed, such as public dormitories and a railway station as an example of informal housing. With regard to “eating”, the most popular canteen in Milan was chosen, while regarding help for “legal assistance” and for “health services”, a volunteer association that promotes and protects the rights of foreign people was identified, together with a clinic that provides medical care to migrants and asylum seekers⁴.

As it was the first city analysed from the migrants’ viewpoint, Milan has been explored in a deep way, also looking for public spaces occupied by the newcomers through un-coded forms of living, places that are not usually significant in the perceptions of permanent residents, but where people arriving from elsewhere often identify themselves with.



Figure 1: Milan, the end of Ramadan in an area of reclaimed industrial buildings. Source: Provided by the author.

⁴ Both the locations of interviews and the places occupied by newcomers with informal activities have been reported in the “First landing map” of Milan.

Some parts of the city are reserved for public activities by newcomers as, for example, the square in front of the Central Station that on Sunday becomes a meeting place for foreigners; the parking area of Cascina Gobba that becomes the reference point for Eastern European people to send or receive parcels and to stage a market for local products; the square in front of a theatre in an area of reclaimed industrial buildings that becomes a place of prayer for the Muslim population during the feast at the end of Ramadan.

The deconstruction of the meaning of a place and the reconstruction through new interpretations and new uses takes place by the appropriation of urban public spaces, departing from the original intention. This process also generates new urban space in the city, where a new sense of belonging takes place.

In these informal spaces, throughout the city, interviews were carried out asking to migrants to draw the map of Milan.

3.1 Interpreting the maps

The maps were analysed with several lenses to focus on different aspects of the survey.

First of all, each map was classified on the basis of the most relevant category among the five elements deriving from the transposition of the Lynch's elements. For example, if a map showed mainly landmarks (such as the cathedral, or the castle) it belonged to the landmarks category. This analysis provided the fundamental information to draw the city of migrants, where all the places indicated on the mental maps appeared with different levels of intensity according to the number of times each element had been drawn.

The next step in the analysis concerned the relevance of the category with different time periods. In the first period of stay newcomers have indicated mainly landmarks, which are the urban elements that helped to orient themselves in the city; in the second period of stay (from one to three years) a greater number of paths were added, showing that migrants started to go through the city; after three years, the living places and the nodes appeared, suggesting an initial involvement in the city.

The third analysis was based on the number and variety of elements that appear in each map, which allowed us to understand the different levels of knowledge of the city. Four different levels were identified: 1. basic maps with only one or two places and sometimes a link between them; 2. maps with a sequence of homogeneous places; 3. the representation of places for a typical day; 4. the advanced maps, representing the system of experienced and known places. Most newcomers (45 percent) drew the places of a typical day, using maps that represent their daily movements and the most visited places. Through these maps, it was possible to understand the migrants' most frequent trajectories through the city.

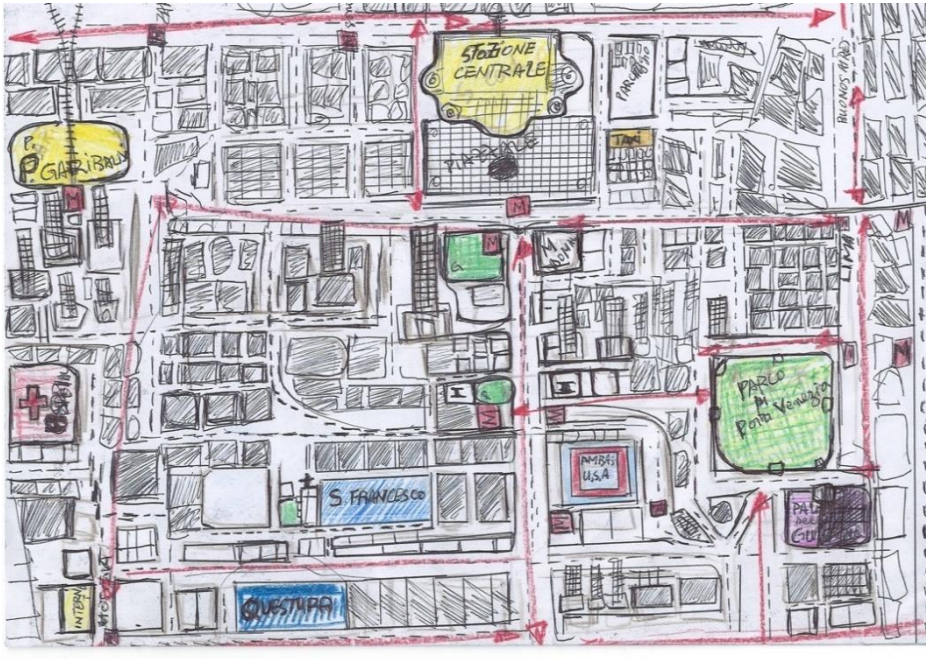


Figure 2: Map of Milan. Source: Ako, Togo.

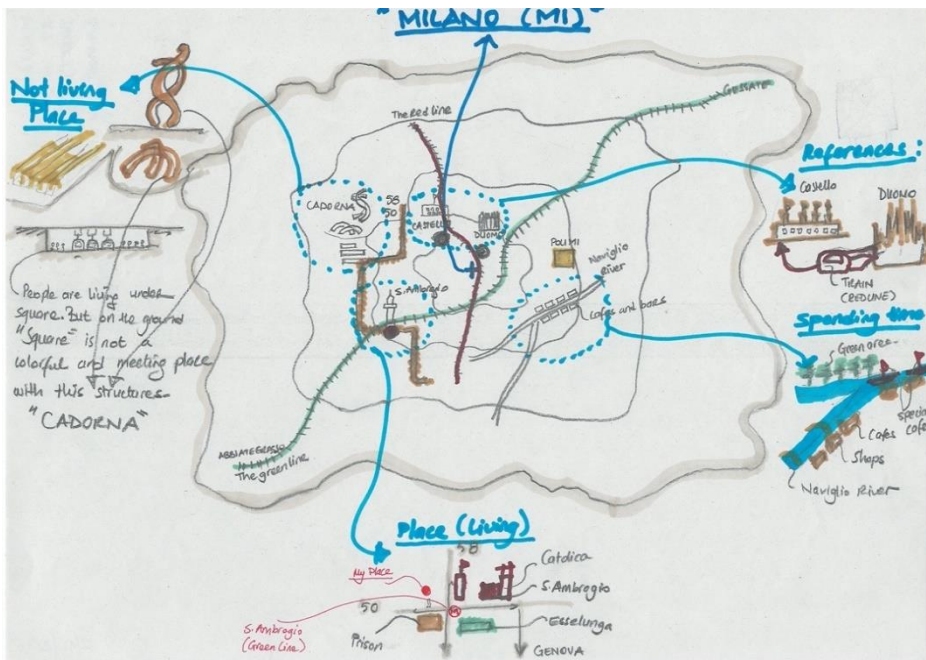


Figure 3: Map of Milan. Source: Murat, Turkey.

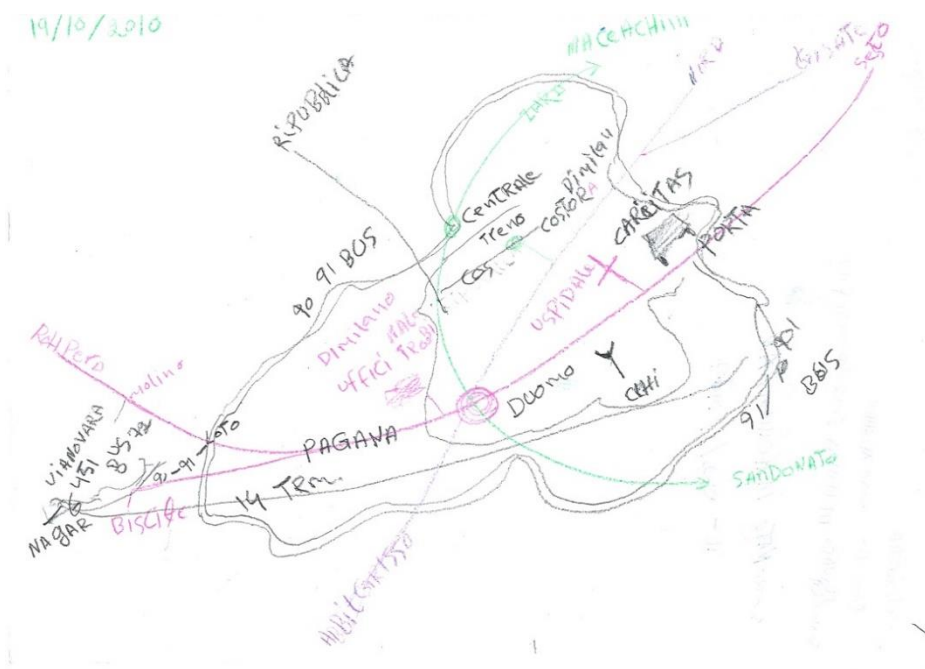


Figure 4: Map of Milan. Source: Kairucca, Afghanistan.



Figure 5: Map of Milan. Source: Romalyn, Philippines.

3.2 Milan in migrants' maps

The image of Milan emerging from migrants' maps could be analysed through the same five elements that guided the representation: landmarks, living spaces, paths, nodes and boundaries.

Landmarks revealed an "image of the city" made up of few elements, first of all, the Cathedral and the Central Station. On the other hand, other elements shown were places where migrants find their bearings, constituted above all by the hubs towards the inhabiting areas.

Living Spaces revealed an "inclusive city", embracing different populations and yet putting them, for an undetermined time, in a condition of impermanence, with alternative housing solutions identified in many maps as a continuous search or a list of different homes; among them, dormitories are considered as one of the most stable solutions.

Paths revealed the "city of connections", where public transport is used by many migrants, it appears in any map indeed, and yet a difficulty of movement emerges, due to the financial constraints, leading to isolation in the suburbs where most dormitories are located.

Nodes revealed the "attractive city", represented by the various experiences of the public space where newcomers were attracted: 1. places connected to their initial arrival (help centre, canteen, outpatient clinic); 2. places for habitation (city hall, police headquarters, Italian language schools, markets, and internet points); 3. meeting points (parks, main square, Central Station). Each category responded to a different level of integration to the city. The prevalence of nodes connected to the primary needs of inhabiting denotes a symbolic change of the role of public space. In fact, public space has always been represented as the place where most abstract inhabiting activities are carried out (meetings, public discussions, exchange). In the city of migrants, public space became the place closely connected to most basic inhabiting functions.

Boundaries revealed the "separating city". This element also led to different interpretations: 1. the locations of negative experience –dangerous places– due to the high crime rate around the Central Station; 2. the places that are perceived as inaccessible places because of a negative reputation –marginal places– inhabited by many migrants, which are perceived as ghettos and thus to be avoided, regardless of the fact that the locations were occupied by themselves or by people from other origins; 3. the feared places, including the police headquarters and the prison; 4. the places with no access, where newcomers cannot go due to their long distance or to the perception of not being able to access it as in the central areas of the city.

Overall, through the reading of urban objects and paths identified on the maps, we can observe a city that actually appears as a fairly permeable place, in the way it connects its new inhabitants. From the maps, the connections between the services for migrants emerge: they draw the network that holds

together the different places of welcoming. Feed above all by voluntary activities and private social structures, it is nevertheless a network that finds in the Help Centre, which is a public service of the Municipality, a fundamental node. The Italian schools and the dormitories that, in some cases, host them, or from which migrants are directed; the doctor's surgery and the hospitals that support, thanks to a non-formalized solidarity practice between doctors, the care of patients who would not have the right to public health care; libraries and day centres up to some employment agencies, which provide help and advice to compile and address the curriculum vitae: they are the nodes of a network that shapes the solidarity structure of the city, which creates connections between places and services otherwise isolated and self-referential.

With all the places obtained from the survey, a “first landing’s map” has been realized (Figure 6), a useful tool for migrants to find their way in the city and that the city still does not have, in order to make explicit the network of solidarity and to include its new inhabitants (Pezzoni, 2016a).

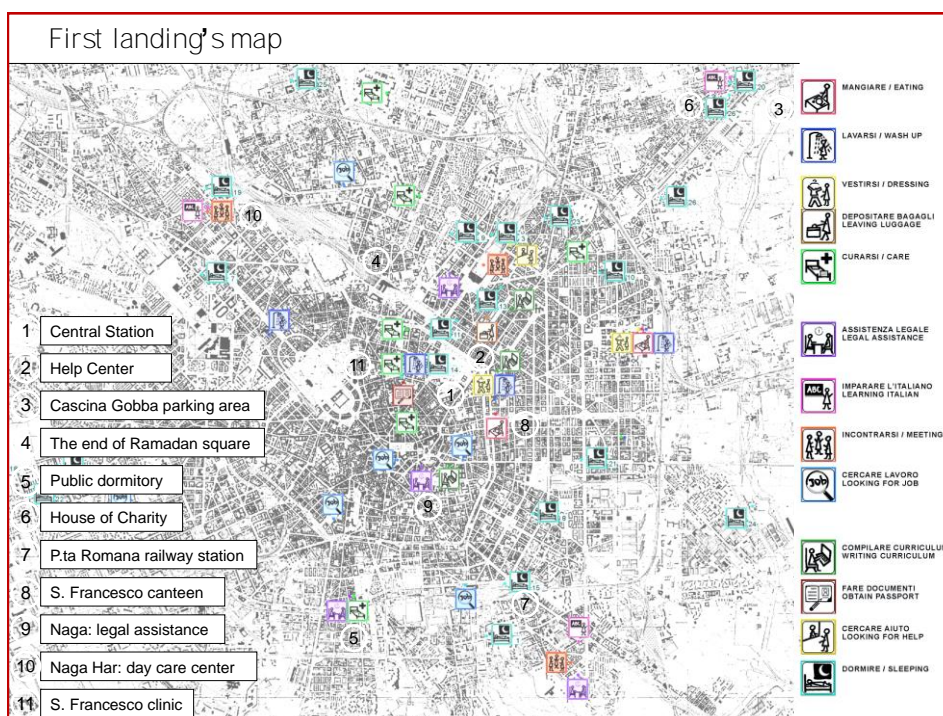


Figure 6: The “first landing’s map” of Milan. Source: Provided by the author.

4. ROVERETO AND BOLOGNA: THE PROJECT “MIGRANTS MAPPING EUROPE”

The surveys carried out by interviewing groups of migrants at the first landing in other cities fall within the perspective of diffusion and further questioning of the migrant gaze.

Both located in urban regions with a high incidence of foreign population, the two first cities of the project “Migrants mapping Europe” enter, from a temporal point of view, in a period in which the number of migrants and refugees in Europe undergoes a strong increase.

The exodus caused by the Arab Springs and the escalation of the conflict in Syria causes an exponential increase in migratory flows that mainly involves Greece, Italy and Spain as entry points for the Mediterranean routes. Italy, in particular, between 2014 and 2017, the most critical period in the trend of flows, comes to welcome over 600 thousand migrants, more than they have been accepted in the previous twenty years. 2015 is the year that registered the arrivals record: more than one million people arrived in Europe by sea (UNHCR, 2017).

It is in 2015 that the work on welcome and integration of new groups of migrants carried out by some local organizations was intertwined with the exploration of the landing city.

With the aim of introducing a new learning that accompanies the linguistic one, as well as offering migrants the opportunity to live a particular experience of relationship with the territory, two associations engaged in training and cultural mediation decided to use the method mapping developed in Milan.

4.1 Rovereto: “Inhabiting without habit”

In Rovereto, the empirical research was carried out in summer 2015 with a sample of 22 newcomers landed in Lampedusa the same spring; the results and the maps collected were published in 2016 (Pezzoni, 2016b).

The location of interviews was the Town Hall, where the Information Centre for Immigration (Cinformi) and the association Architetti senza frontiere organized a series of meetings with a group of migrants.

The project title, “Inhabiting without habit”, was taken from the first survey in Milan, and the method introduced and practiced there was applied. The program consisted of four sessions: two workshops of mapping the city, a field trip to know the territory, and a final presentation of the project in a public meeting.

The sample of interviews was composed by asylum seekers, mostly Africans, who lived in a refugee camp outside the city.

While in Milan the interviews were always carried out personally, explaining every time the sense and method of the research, in Rovereto the

instructions were given collectively during the lesson. Since the group of interviewees consisted of people with various backgrounds, the framework of the workshop was explained in different languages: Italian, English and Mandinka with the translation of some participants.

Explaining the five concepts of landmarks, living places, paths, nodes and boundaries and asking the participants to represent them on a sheet of paper always involved a leap into the void; it was implied during the interviews in Milan, and it was even more intense with a group people who apparently did not understand what was going on. The first reactions of perplexity and often opposition to draw, made people think that no map would have been drawn. Yet in Rovereto, all newcomers were involved in drawing their own town, accepting the challenge to express and create the idea of the city, even in this case where they were true strangers to the cultural, geographical and linguistic context.

4.2 Rovereto in migrants' maps

The first distinctive element emerging from Rovereto's maps was the difference between asylum seekers representing a spread territory and those representing an urban space as enclosures.

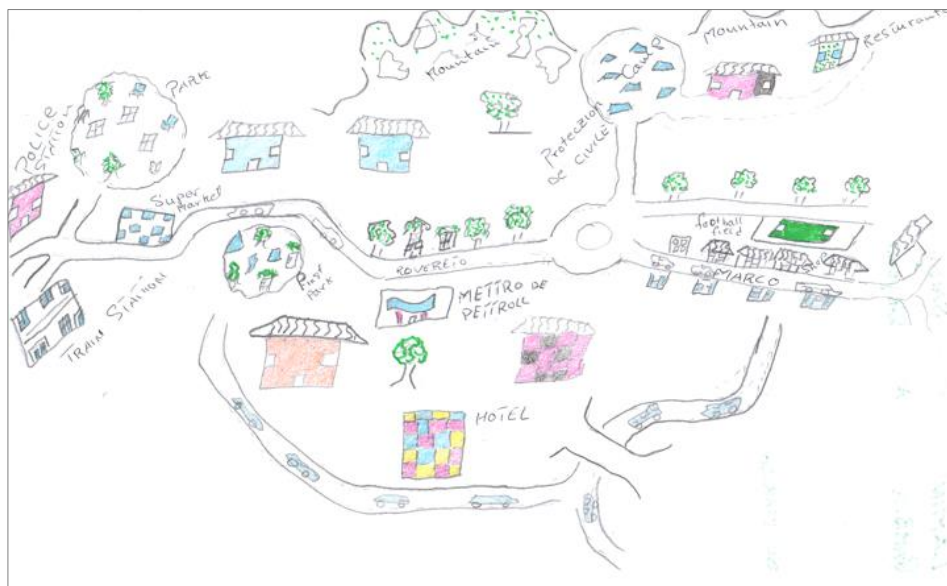


Figure 7: Map of Rovereto. Source: Lamin, Gambia.

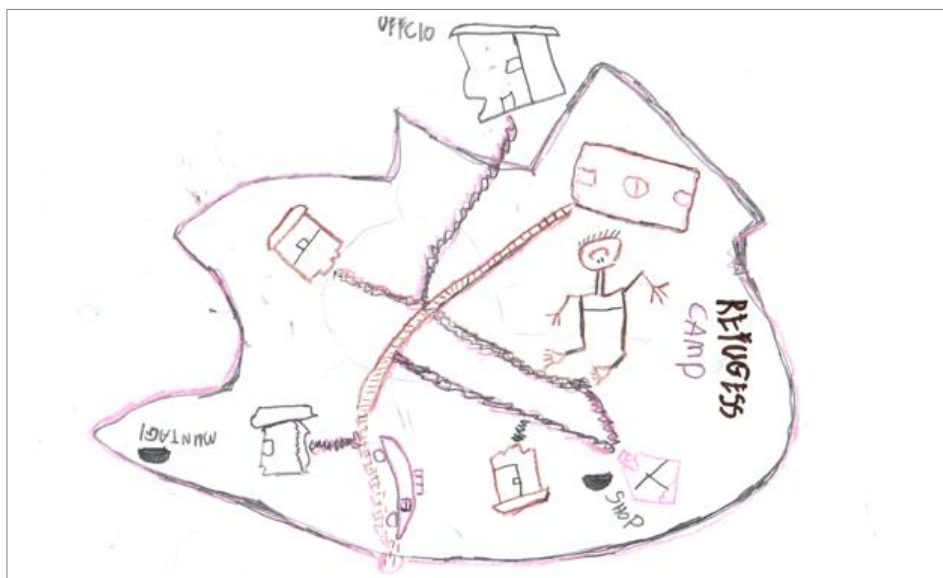


Figure 8: Map of Rovereto. Source: Abubacar, Senegal.

The refugee camp where most of the interviewees lived was located in the suburbs of Rovereto, and the asylum seekers commuted every day from it to the town. The representation of the relationship between newcomers and urban space was mainly divided into two types: those that reinforced isolation of the living place from the city, and those that showed an urban tissue defined by the routes that they took every day to cross the territory.

In one map (Figure 9), the separation of the living place from the rest of the city is represented by a gate, which clearly separates the space occupied by the refugee camp from the space of the urban elements (the church, the station, the school, the shop) that identify the city.

In others maps, the perception of isolation defines the shape of the whole city: encircled by different kinds of perimeters, what emerges from these maps are closed urban spaces where it is hardly get out whether the encircled space is the refugee camp or the whole city of Rovereto.

Most maps reproduced the image of an open and continuous space where roads and buildings were represented together with trees, rivers, and mountains, which characterize the landscape of Rovereto. In these maps the most common element were the paths: an element that shows a high mobility of migrants over the territory and a detailed knowledge of the geographical context despite the short stay on that territory.

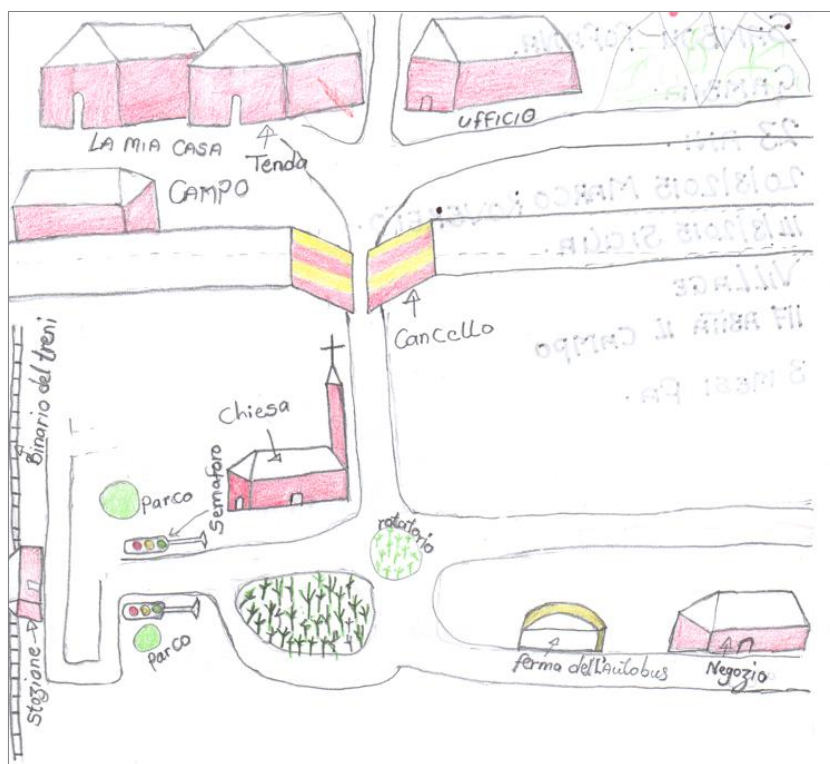


Figure 9: Map of Rovereto. Source: Sambou F., Gambia.

Both where there was only one road and where the paths formed a complex system of streets and squares, the daily routes were marked by recurrent reference points: a gas station, a supermarket, an industrial area, a park and roundabouts, which clearly describe the typical spread of the landscape of Northern Italy.

What the migrants' point of view revealed in the geography of these places presented the importance of the new inhabitants' references who live in the margins of the city.

First of all public transport as key elements of using space: in all maps buses and their stops appeared, as well as trains and rails and many walking routes, as we can observe in maps drawn by those who walk and stop under a big tree or near a bridge, or by those who caught suburban area details. These are the elements that convey the rhythm of the road, but first of all these are crucial elements in addressing urban policies. They question in fact the policies of access to public transport and, more in general, they ask to rethink to the development of an adequate habitability for people who are temporarily living in this territory.

In Rovereto maps, there is a particular element which reveal the geography of first arrival, and it is represented by the boundaries, which is the most abstract among the five elements that guided the representation. Boundaries are the inaccessible places, the off-limits places, the areas that are to be avoided because danger or fear, the imaginary walls of the city.

The boundaries in Rovereto are the mountains, that appear on most maps not only as a landscape but also as a border: they seem to be close and at the same time they are inaccessible to those people without a document, who therefore cannot move from the living place. The boundaries for most of migrants coincide with the fencing of the refugee camp which one would like to escape.

The boundary is, in the map of Lamin (Figure 10), the channel which crosses the city, with the water flowing quickly. “Running water” is written on the caption identifying it. It is a boundary because it separates the place of living, the refugee camp where asylum seekers live, to the town, where all the other people live.

But it is a boundary for another, dramatic, reason, which is related to the recent history of Lamin and which gives us information that goes beyond the represented city: the water canal reminds him the sea he crossed to reach Europe, and the trait of water he had to swim through to escape from shipwreck.

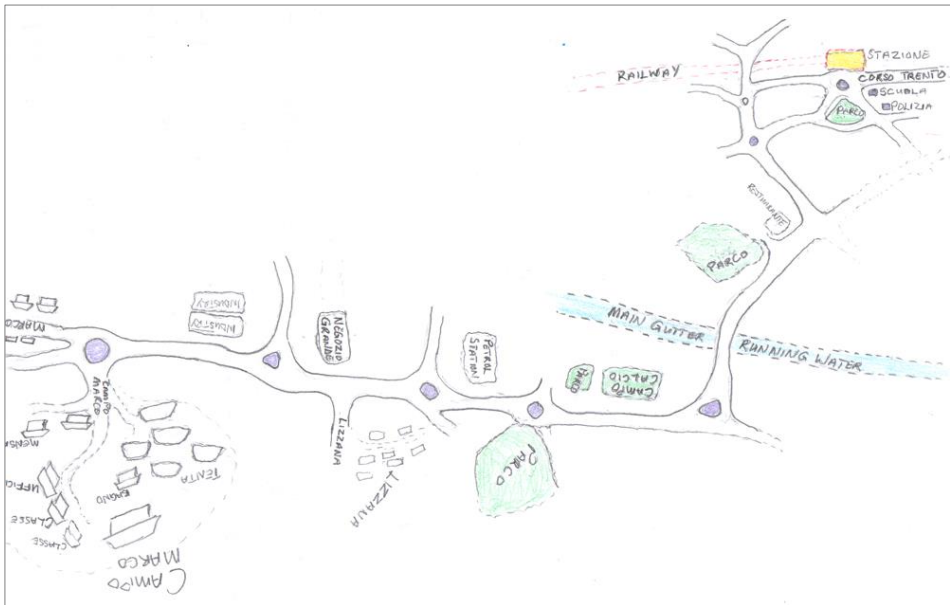


Figure 10: Map of Rovereto. Source: Lamin O.D., Gambia.

4.3 Bologna: exploring a “Land of Everybody”

In Bologna, the empirical research was carried out in autumn 2015 with a sample of 23 asylum seekers; the results and the maps collected were published in 2016 (Pezzoni, 2016b).

The location of interviews was Villa Aldini, a neoclassical building on the top of the Hill Colle dell'Osservanza, where one can view the entire city. Owned by the Municipality of Bologna, it was used as refugees' first housing since 2011; and since 2014 it has housed migrants and asylum seekers rescued by “Mare Nostrum” from Central Africa, Pakistan, and Bangladesh⁵.

In October 2015 the Film and Art Festival “Terra di Tutti” (“Land of Everybody”) took place in Bologna: performing arts and social films from the Global South promoted by the ONG for the international cooperation and development GVC (Group for Civil Volunteering) and COSPE (Cooperation for the emergence of developing countries). In occasion of the ninth special edition for 2015 European development, the association “Yoda” proposed an exploration of the territory to a group of asylum seekers: the survey method introduced in Milan was once again applied in Bologna.

The program included three meetings: a first workshop for mapping Bologna with the newcomers; a bicycle route organized on the basis of the places identified on the maps, which the participants were to follow; at last a public presentation of the maps in one of the festival locations, Teatro Permanente Occupato (TPO).

Asylum seekers interviewed in Bologna represented a sample relatively homogeneous: since their arrival in Bologna, they had been living in Villa Aldini, waiting for the documents to receive the status of refugee. All the interviewees shared a common knowledge of the city, the everyday paths from the living place to the major landmarks of the urban space, as well as the places where public activities took place (nodes): this is a factor distinguishing Bologna case, making it an independent study-case.

Here, the first reading of the maps was aimed at identifying the places represented by the newcomers and locating them to their exact positions on a technical paper to construct the cycling route for the festival. The target of the cycle path was to drive together along a route which included the places identified on the maps with other points of cultural and historical interest, useful to obtain a better knowledge of the city. The itinerary was therefore made by integrating those places identified by migrants in their maps with other main interest points in Bologna, chosen for the cultural importance and necessary supports that would help the newcomers to integrate.

⁵ “Mare nostrum” is the name given to a year-long naval and air operation commenced by the Italian government on October 2013, to tackle the increased immigration to Europe during the second half of 2013 and to rescue migratory ships off Lampedusa. During the operation at least 150,000 migrants arrived safely to Europe.



Figure 12: Map of Bologna. Source: Narif, Bangladesh.

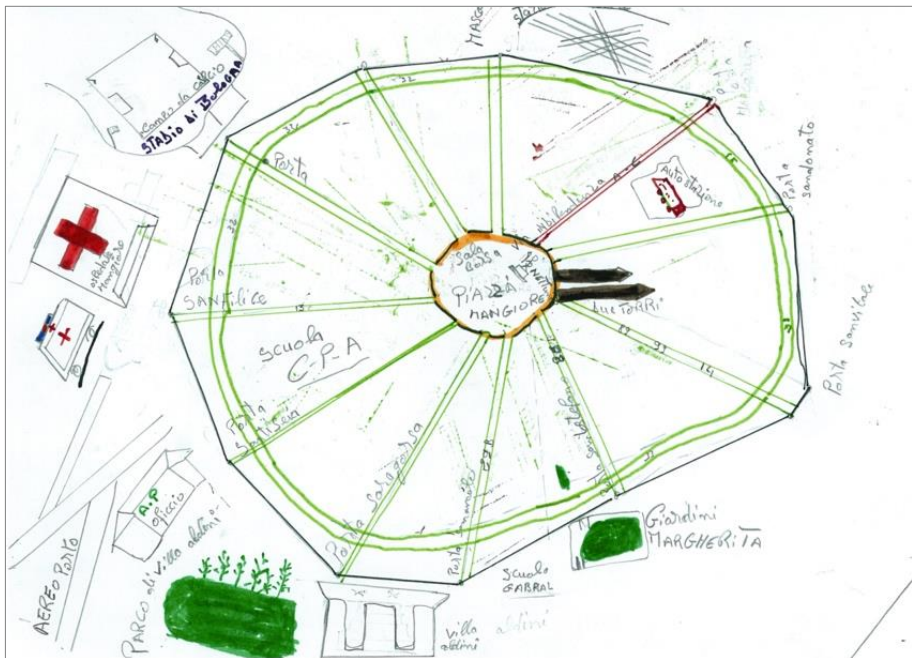


Figure 13: Map of Bologna. Source: Mamadou, Mali.

Among the five elements that led the representation, two are those that appear in all maps: Piazza Maggiore, often accompanied by the main city reference identified in the fountain of Neptune, and Villa Aldini.

The main element of the representation, Villa Aldini, is often described with a predominant dimension compared to the other elements, or with a higher degree of definition or with a precise coloristic connotation, but without ever occupying the central part of the sheet.

In the images of cities defined by a perimeter, Villa Aldini is always placed along its limits or outside of them: and if in the maps that reproduce the urban morphology, this choice seems to respond to the actual location of the Villa outside the historic city, in the more abstract maps the marginal position of the house speaks about a decentralization, when not about an isolation, of the place of living compared to all other known places of the city.

But it is in the contour-free maps that the decentralized position of Villa Aldini tells us more than the drawing itself does not show. Always placed at one end of the sheet, and in two cases so marginal as to leave a definition piece out of bounds, this place of shared and temporary living is the starting point or one end of all the connections.

Landing or departure place, this place of living becomes the emblem of that “living the distance” (Rovatti, 2007) that distinguishes the condition of migrants and with whom in general the contemporaneity can be described. It narrates the discontinuity that characterizes a way of relating to the environment without fixity and centrality which are essential elements for people to identify with their own places.

If mentally inhabiting the city is a process that allows one to feel part of it, the placement out of the field of the living place ultimately speaks about a territory that becomes knowable, and therefore habitable, in the paradoxical measure in which appropriating it coincides with the unveiling of that perspective necessarily decentralized from which it is being observed: a territory that becomes habitable *because* it is observed from an “out of place” position, as the only position an up-rooted condition –of an actual relationship with the territory itself–.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the representation of the city by migrants, the vision that they bring to the territory is investigated, thus verifying the initial hypothesis according to which mental maps made by newcomers bring to the surface the implicit transformative project underlying each description of the city (Farinelli, 1992).

The exploration of urban landscape through newcomers’ mental maps, introduces an experimental cognitive mode involving the three subjects of exploration: the newcomer who observes and represents the city, the city that

emerges from the representations, and the planner who observes the urban space revealed by the migrants' maps. Conclusions will be dealt with starting from each of the three subjects involved.

First, amidst widespread and growing efforts of conducting participatory research (Holston, 1995; Paba, 2004; Sandercock, 2000), this survey has a particular goal, that is to offer a possibility for migrants to appropriate the city by recognizing their relationship to the urban space. Through their drawings of the map, they develop their sense of belonging to the city. The representation of urban landscape drawn by migrants who are trying to find their bearings in the city is a gesture of self-organization within the landscape. The action of imagining and drawing the urban geography corresponds to the act of mentally inhabiting the city and in this way taking possession and transforming it from a space of estrangement into a space which is more articulated and complex, where even a person who has recently arrived can conceptualize and live within it. We can say that the gesture of mapping makes explicit the act of taking to oneself a space which, no longer about an estranging experience, changes into a space open to unpredictable inhabiting conditions.

Knowing and discovering migrants' different ways of living urban spaces, means not only to reveal unexpected places in the city, but also means having migrants involved as actors and not merely as observers of the space they inhabit, so to understand better what "the right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968) means to a newcomer (Lo Piccolo, 2014). In this perspective, the unconventional approach adopted makes it possible to achieve a notion of citizenship no longer linked to the condition of permanent dwelling; through this research trajectory, urban planning can contribute at generating a sense of belonging to the city in a context where the relationship between the new inhabitants and the city itself is characterized by temporariness.

Second, the city that emerges from migrants' representations give clues about their life, showing dormitories, refugee camps, abandoned buildings and shelters created on the road as places of temporary dwelling, which is to last for years (Wolfgang *et al.*, 2007). Migrants' maps also show, as in Milan, day-care centres, parks, and libraries, as places where one can spend the day; they reveal the canteen, the health centre, the centre of assistance as landmarks, which are services requested almost every day. A stratification of the city mostly unknown to the rooted inhabitants emerges from the maps: it is the city of first landing, which draws a network of nodes that are ignored by permanent residents, so as by researchers and urban planners, as they are outside the usual circuits of living for those who have a home. This stratification neither is evident to those who are looking for welcoming services: without a map, these services need to be discovered, place by place, always starting a new search from scratch. The "first landing's map" of Milan has been realized both to integrate the institutional cartography, and to provide migrants with an intelligible tool to find their way

in the new city, without having to decrypt lists of addresses and phone numbers as they currently do.

This map suggests the chance to realize the same tool in every city explored, with the aim of providing the municipalities with a useful map to host the new inhabitants, and at the same time offering migrants the opportunity to discover their new city independently.

Third, from the planner's point of view, this exploration enables a widening of the survey: by observing the city not from above, through a zenithal gaze (Attili, 2008; Decandia, 2000), but getting into the urban space, it collects the experiences and the visions of the city as they are reproduced by the new inhabitants. In this way, it confirms the initial hypothesis according to which the migrant's gaze offers a possibility to urban planning in both directions: as an extension of its object of study and as a way to get closer to it.

Two are also the directions taken to fathom the city's transformation in relation to its new inhabitants: that addressed to the forms of a transitory living that is changing the nature and role of some spaces, and the one focused on the ways of observing and of signifying spaces by those who live in them. Each of these two trajectories of investigation inquires into a constitutive aspect of the urban project and proposes a renewal of it: the first, the idea of structurally stable living; the second, the nature of "positive" cognitive tools traditionally linked to the object of study –the urban space– rather than to the multiplicity of the inhabitants' gazes and experiences.

Furthermore, focusing on a specific step of inhabiting –the moment before settling down– this research has been taken the condition of temporariness, which the traditional urban literature does not consider as a topic in itself, as the most meaningful moment to get a new vision of the city.

The hypothesis –and the challenge– of this work is that the contemporary city may become livable for everyone, if it will be able to include the different ways of thinking the city introduced by newcomers. According to this hypothesis, through the gesture of the "other", the city would regenerate itself reinventing its own representation, and thus it will be able to open up the way to inclusive policies.

The evolution of research with the project "Migrants mapping Europe" aims at changing the point of view on the entire territory of landing, proposing an idea of Europe which identity is not predefined. It is the possibility that its representation could be transformed by the migrants' gaze, and it is the idea and the wish that Europe may be able to transform itself in relation to the foreigner who is coming. Further extending the exploration and at the same time approaching the territories explored, the project's hypothesis is that migrants could induce every city to represent itself with another map, in a perspective oriented to make the "other" leading the narrative of the city, and unveiling new planning trajectories for the contemporary territories.

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