

Edited by
Maurizio Bergamaschi

The multidimensional housing deprivation

Local dynamics
of inequality, policies
and challenges for the future



SOCIOLOGIA DEL TERRITORIO

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Index

Introduction. The multidimensional housing deprivation. Local dynamics of inequality, policies, and challenges for the future, by <i>Maurizio Bergamaschi</i>	p.	9
Local models and processes of ethnic residential segregation by <i>Maria Grazia Montesano, Luca Daconto</i>	»	13
Hospitality and segregation in Turin. An ethnographic perspective on migration, reception policies and urban conflicts, by <i>Erasmus Sossich</i>	»	15
The localization models of secondary reception structures for refugees and asylum seekers in Italy. First results from the MIGRATE project, by <i>Luca Bottini, Simone Caiello, Luca Daconto, Sara Giunti</i>	»	28
The issue of housing and migrants. The role of women in social movements for housing rights, from stereotypes to social activism, by <i>Francesca Colella, Giovanna Gianturco, Mariella Nocenzi</i>	»	39
The residential dynamics of foreign populations at the metropolitan scale. The cases of Bologna and Milan (2001-2011), by <i>Luca Daconto, Maria Grazia Montesano</i>	»	50

From housing deprivation to housing policies. Distinctive elements in the territory by <i>Manuela Maggio, Alice Lomonaco</i>	p.	63
The gap between supply trends and access to affordable housing in Italy. The need for new lines of public action, by <i>Alice Selene Boni, Liliana Padovani</i>	»	67
Public housing policies and the secondary aid network of Caritas Diocesana in Bologna, by <i>Beatrice Acquaviva, Gloria Bonora, Gianluigi Chiaro</i>	»	79
Assessing assisted tenancy as a tool to promote affordability in the Italian private rental market, by <i>Igor Costarelli, Silvia Mugnano, Aurora Cortazzo</i>	»	92
Living in a rental in Bologna between housing dynamics and migration trends, by <i>Alice Lomonaco, Manuela Maggio</i>	»	106
Widespread hospitality and social inclusion of migrants: an opportunity to regenerate rural areas, by <i>Karen Urso</i>	»	121
Genoa's Biscione from the 1960s until today. From a stigmatised neighbourhood to a place where "it is nice to live", by <i>Francesco Gastaldi, Federico Camerin</i>	»	134
Resilience & adaptation: social housing and mixité in post-Covid Milan, by <i>Silvia Mugnano, Alessandra Terenzi</i>	»	148
Housing rights, migrant integration, and the role of ICT solutions by <i>Teresa Carlone, Carolina Mudan Marelli</i>	»	157
Beyond emergency housing and social exclusion. The integration of territorial actions and good practices into ITC tools: Greece and Italy, by <i>Giulia M. Foresti, Anna Lauricella, Dimitris Demertzis, Kalliopi Kati, Alessandro Pollini, Alessandro Caforio</i>	»	161

Limits and opportunities of ICT in access to the housing market for the migrant population. Considerations starting from the Bologna case in the MICADO project, by *Carolina Mudan Marelli, Teresa Carlone*

p. 177

Living in a rental in Bologna between housing dynamics and migration trends

by Alice Lomonaco, Manuela Maggio¹

Introduction: Home and foreigners, a binomial to be further explored

The city of Bologna is a highly attractive urban reality. The historical presence of the university, job opportunities, quality of services, mass tourism and health tourism are all elements that contribute to its growth. From 2008 to the present, the municipal population has recorded a percentage increase of almost 4% and, in the same period, the foreign resident population has increased by more than 50%. The dynamics of housing constitute one of the major urban issues.

In addition to being influenced by the expansion of the city, the expansion of the city is certainly connected to the history and dictate of the local Regulatory Plans, which organised the urban extension. The Regulatory and Enlargement Plan of 1889, considered the first real town-planning instrument adopted by the municipality, included, among its objectives, “...to make the city’s enlargement limit unnoticeable” in the face of the doubling of the building area and the presumable increase in population. The plan also designed the expansion of the neighbourhoods outside the city walls: «the aim is to create “working-class neighbourhoods” according to orthogonal grids, with wide streets and vast squares and gardens, capable of providing all the abundance of light and airiness that hygiene prescribes»². The Regulatory Plan of 1955, having overcome the emergency phase dictated by the aftermath of the Second World War, envisaged the reorganisation of the entire territory and set as one of its objectives that of ensuring that the outer neighbourhoods would have churches, schools and squares, providing them with a real centre of life, imagining both an expansion of the suburbs and the

¹ Alice Lomonaco, Manuela Maggio, Department of Sociology and Business Law, University of Bologna.

² www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/cronologia/bologna/1889/il_piano_regolatore_e_di_ampliamento.

placement of social housing settlements in the very periphery³. The General Variant to the 1970 Regulatory Plan finally aimed at the diffusion of greenery and services, ‘in a suburb of a new kind’⁴.

Although one of the main objectives of the local regulatory plans was to avoid or mitigate forms of territorial inequality, today in the city there is a certain lack of homogeneity concerning the diffusion of housing titles, with particular reference to rents and especially social housing. At the same time, the migrant population is unevenly distributed throughout the city: in Bologna, the migratory phenomenon has been growing since the 1980s; there were about 2,000 foreigners in 1986 and 61,984 today (data updated to 31/12/2021). Foreign residents account for 15.78% of the total population, a percentage above both the national and regional average, with more than 150 different nationalities (although there are a total of 13 nationalities that exceed the quota of one thousand residents). For these reasons, therefore, the issues of housing and the settlement of foreign communities at the local level seem to us to be connected and the home/non-native binomial is full of aspects to be explored.

In the period immediately following the Second World War, the housing sector was the most productive: between 1951 and 1961 the city of Bologna recorded a 58% increase in housing. The absolute numbers of dwellings owned (or owned by homeowners) have always grown over time, and ownership, which in the 1981 census survey involved 44% of occupied dwellings, in the 2011 census survey involved 62% of resident households. Renting for its part involved 62% of dwellings in ‘71 and 30% of resident households in 2011. Thus, what has occurred over time is the intensification of the spread of ownership, to the detriment of renting, which is, moreover, going through a phase of severe crisis. With the increase in short rentals in particular, it is possible to estimate an unfulfilled demand of 6,000 rented dwellings (Gentili *et al.* 2018), and it should be considered that a segment of the resident population that is particularly fragile on the economic side (but not only) is today in public housing lists without being able to find its place either in this housing sector or within the private market (Municipality of Bologna, 2018; 2021).

There are territorial implications to all this, although not all resident populations and not all urban spaces are affected in the same way. Today, in Bologna, in particular, there is an important demand for rented housing that

³ www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/bolognaonline/cronologia-di-bologna/1955/il_nuovo_piano_regolatore_generale_prg.

⁴ www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/bolognaonline/cronologia-di-bologna/1970/la_variante_generale_al_piano_regolatore.

neither the private nor the public market can fully satisfy, there are discrepancies between those who live in rented and those who own, and between native and non-native residents. Between these two segments of the population, inequalities occur in terms of accessibility to housing, housing conditions and available living space, location of housing in urban space. At the micro-spatial level, this has implications in terms of vulnerability and potential fragility (Maggio, Bergamaschi, 2020). In addition, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, ISEE values of some households residing in Bologna point out a worsening of income and housing conditions at the local level. There has been an increase in ISEE presentations by the so-called ‘grey area’, i.e. that population that does not fall within the economic poverty canons required to access public housing but at the same time, is unable, on its own, to compete with today’s housing market. While between 2018 and 2019, in fact, in the province of Bologna the number of rented households that had presented an ordinary ISEE had decreased (-10.5%), between 2019 and 2020 a positive variation of 11.7% was recorded, demonstrating that this title of housing enjoyment represents an important area of observation and that there has presumably been a worsening of general economic conditions⁵.

The essay, therefore, aims to retrace some of the key elements of the dynamics of housing in the local context, focusing primarily on the world of renting and more specifically on the access to rental housing of the non-native population with respect to some of the issues mentioned and the main problematic aspects.

1. Rental market and migration dynamics in Bologna

Despite the fact that in our country, already since the 1970s, the number of available housing units has exceeded the number of households (Baldini, 2010), allowing at the same time an improvement in housing standards (Baldini, 2010; Poggio, 2009), situations of discomfort persist, which, as the literature points out, tend to be recorded more frequently among households living in rented accommodation or coming from the most disadvantaged strata of the population (Filandri, 2012; Filandri, Autigna, 2015).

Emilia-Romagna Region stands out for having recorded a different rental housing curve from the Italian one: in fact, starting from 2006 the trend of

⁵ These data were presented on 12 April 2022 on the Seminar “Rent support in Emilia-Romagna between past, present and future”, promoted by the Regional Observatory of the housing system (ORSA) - Urban regeneration and housing policies area of the Emilia-Romagna Region (realised in cooperation with ART-ER).

rented housing in the Region follows an increasing curve reaching 20.60% in 2011; then there is a decrease until 2015 (18.50%), followed by an increase that has its maximum value in 2017 (20.70%). At the national level, the trend, initially with a linear tendency, shows an increase in 2009 (19.20%), followed by a subsequent decrease until 2012 (18.20%), after which there is a constant growth until the last available value of about 20%⁶. The city of Bologna, in turn, is characterised by having a percentage share of rented housing out of the total number of inhabited or available dwellings. Although it has decreased over time, it still involves around 30% of the total number of resident households, a higher share in respect to the national value, which is precisely 20%. In 2017, about 83 thousand residents in the city lived in private rented accommodation (of which about 35 thousand university students) and about 24 thousand lived in social housing (in public housing)⁷. Such peculiarities certainly have an impact on the forms of local housing deprivation. In the whole Region between 2018 and 2021, for example, the demand emerging from the *bando affitto* “call for rent”⁸ are in considerable increase. It is recorded an augmentation in the overall housing tension, about half of which distributed in the provinces of Bologna and Modena alone⁹.

In spite of a phase of surplus housing with respect to households, in terms of quantity at least in Italy, a not irrelevant quota of the demand for housing still remains unsatisfied and involves increasingly large segments of the population. Regarding housing offer, the gap between the cost of housing and households’ disposable income has grown “wider”: between 1991 and 2009, urban market rents grew by an average of 105%, while household disposable income grew by 18%. In the last decade, rents have increased, on average, by 130% for renewed contracts and by 150% for new contracts” (Lodi Rizzini, 2013, pp. 240-241) and at least 9% of Italian households are in a state of housing-dependent poverty (Palvarini, 2010). The existence of a ‘housing issue’ is attested by the economic distress that involves over time increasing shares of rented households in the country (35% in the period

⁶ From “Tendenze del fabbisogno abitativo a seguito dei cambiamenti demografici”.

⁷ All the data presented at the seminar “Bologna. Politiche abitative in una città che cambia” by Marco Guerzoni at the University of Bologna.

⁸ The Fondo Locazioni (Lease Fund) was introduced in Italy by Law No. 431 of 9 December 1998 (‘Disciplina delle locazioni e del rilascio degli immobili adibiti ad uso abitativo’) and was set up as a fund of a state nature intended to issue supplementary contributions for the payment of rents. It is an economic fund aimed at supporting residents with a regular lease that evolves annually according to the availability of resources.

⁹ For further information visit <https://territorio.regione.emilia-romagna.it/osservatorio-delle-politiche-abitative/fabbisogno-abitativo>.

2010-2014) (Monti, Chiaro, 2017) and by the increase in the number of evictions that have risen, for example, from 26,937 in 2001 to 61,718 in 2016, the latter largely due (54,829) to a state of arrears, which highlights the decidedly critical economic conditions of those who are no longer able to sustain housing expenses.

Housing conditions, related to its title and type, get even worse when it comes to migrants' especially non-native migrants' dwellings spaces. These worsening conditions are determined by the building's location, dimension, year of construction and its state of conservation

In 2011, 5% of the dwellings in Italy were occupied only by foreigners: at the national level, although we are talking about very small shares, among non-native households the conditions of 'cohabitation' are more widespread (0.8% vs. 0.5% in the case of Italians) and the shares of those who live 'in another type of accommodation', i.e. not in a traditional dwelling, are higher (0.8% vs. 0.2% in the case of Italians). Among foreign families, as is well known, renting is more widespread, and based on the 2011 census data we know that it is precisely this target population that lives more often in older buildings and in a less than optimal "state of preservation". In fact, the 2011 survey gives us a picture in which

- 41% of the foreign population (as opposed to 30% of the Italian population) live in residential buildings built before 1960;
- 47% of the same (compared to 53% of the Italian population) live in buildings constructed between 1961 and 1990;
- 12% (compared to 17% of the Italian population) live in buildings constructed since 1990;
- 18% of foreign residents live in poorly preserved buildings (compared to 13% in the case of the Italian population) and 30% of them live in poorly preserved and old buildings (i.e. built before 1960) compared to 23% of Italians;
- a significant proportion of resident foreign households in Italy (26%) live in housing of less than 60 square metres, which is 9% for Italians, while an equivalent proportion live in housing of at least 100 square metres, which is 47% of Italian households;
- finally, 7% of foreigners residing in Italy live in overcrowded conditions¹⁰.

¹⁰ In this paper, taking up the work of Dragana Avramov, Report on housing exclusion and homelessness, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press, 2005, the threshold of 'severe overcrowding' is set at 2. The figure is also updated to the 2001 Census as the information is not available for 2011.

Similar dynamics occur in the Bolognese territory, with all these conditions improved in the case of mixed family units (a category made up of people living in the same dwelling, with or without affective relations), which is a condition confirming that foreign residents are characterised by higher housing precariousness (Lomonaco 2020). Renting is most common among foreign residents in the city. It involved 76% of all households in 2011. The Italian population, on the other hand, was involved in 25% of cases and the share rose to 38% in the case of mixed households. The foreign population, in addition to having more difficulty in gaining access to housing ownership, resides in older dwellings and is over-represented in dwellings built before 1960. Foreign households, as at the national level, inhabit the worst-preserved housing stock. In fact, they live in smaller houses and are more exposed to overcrowding compared to the native population (with an average surface area of less than 80 square metres).

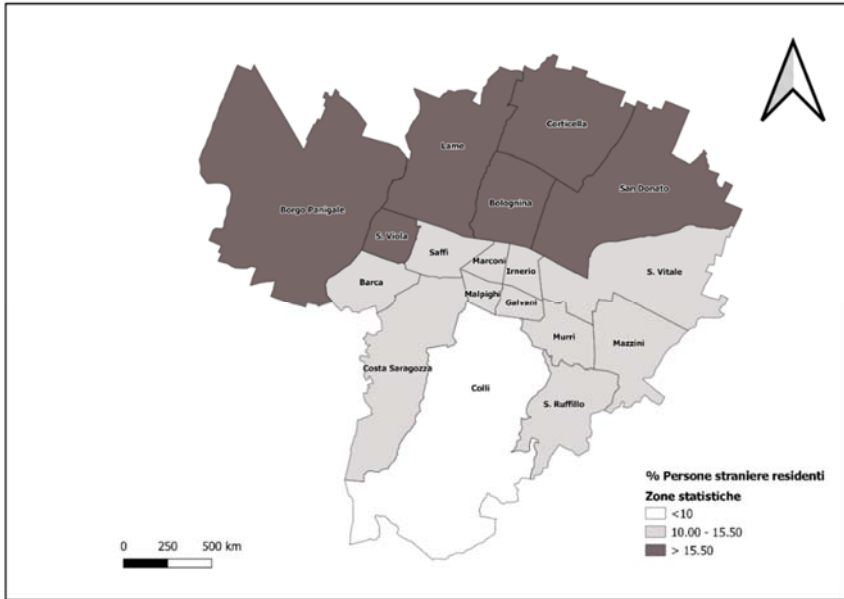
Tab. 1 - Non-native housing conditions - Italy and Bologna

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Bologna</i>
Total occupied dwellings	4,84%	7,01%
Rent-occupied dwellings	65,76%	75,74%
Coexistence	0,8%	1,90%
Residents in residential buildings built before 1960	27,06274	30,18067
Residents in residential buildings built between 1961 and 1990	20,42895	29,5042
Residents in residential buildings constructed since 1990	19,48617	19,24959

Bologna's foreign resident population is not homogeneously distributed throughout the city, but resides mainly in certain statistical areas and is more concentrated where the housing stock has a lower value (Lomonaco, 2020). If we look at the administrative division of the six neighbourhoods of Bologna which have an average population of about 65,000, we note that only two of them have had a 'constant' and persistent foreign presence since 2001: Navile, with its 22% in the northern part and San Donato-San Vitale, with its 17% in the eastern part of the city on 31/12/2019. If as the territorial scale of observation we adopt Bologna's statistical area (a territorial portion with an average population of about 28,000 units) we see (Map no. 1) that only some territorial realities inside the mentioned neighbourhoods report a greater presence of migrants: Bolognina and Corticella in the Navile neighbourhood, respectively with 26% and 18% of foreign residents out of the total resident population, and San Donato in the San Donato-San Vitale neighbourhood, with 20%. In these two areas which are both located in the northern part (Maggio, Bergamaschi, 2020), the foreign presence is over-represented compared to the city average of 15% (at the city, neighbourhood and area level).

In the historic center, non-native residents' presence has been decreasing over the years. In the 1990s, they were particularly present in the historic city centre (Bergamaschi, 2012) and distributed more equally throughout the city. Today they are more concentrated outside the walls that surround and separate the historic core from the suburbs.

Fig. 1 - Territorial distribution of the foreign population - Bologna, statistical zone level (y 2019)



Source: Maggio, Bergamaschi, 2020

These dynamics contribute to the spatialisation of resident populations. First and foremost, units are made up exclusively of foreigners. The most disadvantaged units occupy more intensely certain urban areas, creating vicious circles that make portions of the territory increasingly fragile from a socio-economic point of view and generating urban interstices where the older, qualitatively inferior and physically reduced stock is the only housing opportunity and may therefore become the obligatory choice for certain social groups.

2. The role of social housing

Social renting is today in Italy the minority housing tenure par excellence: only 5% of housing is in fact counted among those with social rent and this

rental stock has been thinning over time as a result of actions and policies aimed at alienating the public housing stock (Guerzoni, 2013). In several countries, the number of applications for social rented housing has increased in recent years, while in the same time period the share of available social housing in the total housing stock has decreased (Pittini, 2012). Italy is among the last positions among the European countries both for the amount of social rented housing and for public investment in housing the sector. These factors, as time goes by, feed the unmet demand for social housing (Housing Europe, 2015; Lodi Rizzini, 2012).

In Bologna, public housing has been widespread since the end of the 19th century. It accounts for about 6% of the total housing stock and hosts about 6% of the city's resident population (Municipality of Bologna, 2018). Recently, several local studies have underlined the current evolution in access to public housing; in particular, the following trends have been verified (Bergamaschi, Maggio, 2020; Municipality of Bologna, 2016; 2018)

- the reduction in the number of Italian residents involved in the demand for public housing;
- the different involvement of different nationalities;
- the greater involvement of young people and large households;
- the lack of homogeneity regarding the economic condition of applicants with Italian citizenship and those with non-Italian citizenship.

With respect to the first point, while until 2009 most of the lists for access to Bologna's ERP were made up of Italian applicants, since 2016 the percentages have been reversed and today 60% of applicants are non-native¹¹. Although Italian citizenship remains the majority within public housing, a similar dynamic occurs among the most recent allocations of social housing: over 50% of new allocations in the 2012-2016 period involved households with non-native applicants.

Concerning the second point, it has been verified that, although people of foreign origin are more involved than the native population, it is not possible to homologate the total ERP applications and allocations of non-native applicants to a single 'set'. There are some nationalities that would appear to be strongly dependent on the public housing system: in particular the Moroccan and Tunisian residents in Bologna. Recently, also Eritreans, Egyptians, Nigerians, Bangladeshis and Peruvians, are very much involved in public housing (Table 2).

¹¹ Even though an evolution from this has been recorded by the Municipality of Bologna (Municipality of Bologna 2021), it is a dynamic to be verified in the medium term in the aftermath of the Covid19 pandemic.

Tab. 2 - Residents in ERP, by citizenship, Bologna, year 2016

Cittadinanza (Paese)	N/a (%)		
	a Bologna	In ERP	
Marocco	3.927	2.014	51
Tunisia	1.204	489	41
Eritrea	485	185	38
Egitto	661	130	20
Nigeria	828	154	19
Bangladesh	4.917	813	17
Perù	1.314	182	14
Sri Lanka	1.378	157	11
Albania	2.643	293	11
India	763	76	10
Pakistan	4.062	343	8
Ucraina	3.736	277	7
Moldavia	4.011	296	7
Romania	9.450	662	7
Polonia	1.099	62	6
Filippine	5.277	294	6
Italia	328.721	16.913	5
Cina	3.670	149	4
Altra cittadinanza	10.221	1.478	14
Tot.	388.367	24.967	6

Source: Municipality of Bologna 2018

Similar dynamics, with other communities at the centre, also occur in the case of ERP demand (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3 - ERP applicants residing in Bologna, by state of origin and number in Bologna, year 2020

Stato di provenienza	ERP11-2020 (solo richiedenti con residenza a Bologna)		N/a residenti a Bologna	% su comunità di riferimento (2020)
	N/a domande	N/a persone		
Romania	278	839	10.300	8,15
Filippine	154	566	5.002	11,32
Bangladesh	456	1.628	4.916	33,12
Pakistan	236	1.049	4.087	25,67
Cina	22	85	4.006	2,12
Ucraina	134	264	3.816	6,92
Marocco	242	787	3.467	22,70
Moldavia	111	322	3.296	9,77
Albania	59	201	2.658	7,56
Sri Lanka	75	244	1.345	18,14
Perù	56	190	1.224	15,52
Tunisia	60	204	1.121	18,20
Italia	1.713	4.442	330.905	1,34

Source: Municipality of Bologna, 2021

Regarding the third point, it was verified that over time young people and households with four or more members are increasing among ERP applications and new allocations. Although a large proportion of ERP beneficiaries in 2016 were in fact elderly people aged 64 or over, only 13% of new assignees were in this age group. This polarisation between elderly Italians and young non-Italians is particularly evident in public housing: there is a high presence of elderly people among Italian residents, which in the case of the foreign resident population is replaced by young people, especially minors. Similar dynamics concern family units, among which the most numerous are more frequently formed by non-native residents.

These differences are evident between applicants and beneficiaries, among whom the average ISEE is in the first case 4,930 Euro for Italians and 3,729 Euro for non-Italians, and in the second case 9,854 Euro for natives and 4,076 Euro for non-natives. This data confirms that non-Italians, compared to Italians, are in a more disadvantaged position with worse economic conditions, and more and more apply to access social housing. However, they continue remaining in a disadvantaged position despite their access to social housing.

Local public housing is not evenly distributed within the municipal territory. In 2016, there were 10,629 inhabited ERP dwellings (6 per cent of the total number of inhabited dwellings in Bologna) and housed 24,967 individuals (6 per cent of the total number of city residents and about 18 per cent of rented households). Bologna, which is administratively divided into 6 neighbourhoods, 18 Statistical Zones, 90 Statistical Areas and 2,333 census sections, has a highly uneven territorial distribution of social housing. There are zones, but above all areas, that differ considerably in the share of current social housing, thereby creating real ERP neighbourhoods. In the Lame and San Donato areas, public housing exceeds 15% of the total and accounts for a very high share of rented housing: 48% in San Donato and 47% in Lame. Public housing is also concentrated in only a few census sections: this type of housing is therefore effectively confined to specific districts and often located in old buildings. In this regard, it should be noted that 44 per cent of the examined public housing was built before 1962, and 52 per cent between 1962 and 1999. A recent study (Maggio, Bergamaschi, 2020) has also shown that in Bologna, the neighbourhoods with the highest ERP concentration are the same ones in which the foreign presence increased with the greatest intensity between 2011 and 2016. In addition, during the same period the foreign presence intensifies and the share of foreign residents increases as the ERP percentage grows up (Table 4). Taking as an example what happened in the year 2016 alone, we can verify that where public housing

accommodated at least 50% of the households, the foreign population was 26% of the total; where public housing accommodated at least 60%, the foreign population reached 27%; where public housing accommodated at least 70% of the resident households, the foreign population was 29%; and finally, where public housing accommodated at least 80% of the households, the foreign population increased to 31% of the total. In these territorial micro-portions, there is a decisively higher presence of the non-native resident population compared to both the rest of the city and the micro-spaces without public housing or with a quantitatively contained presence of it.

Moreover, even within public housing, foreign beneficiaries are more likely to be in overcrowded situations. In 2016, 1,147 households were in a situation of potential overcrowding, specifically: 299 households with more than 2 members lived in housing of less than 50 square metres; 329 households with more than 4 members lived in housing of between 50 and 75 square metres; 199 households with more than 5 members lived in housing of between 75 and 90 square metres; 320 households with more than 5 members lived in housing of less than 90 square metres.

Tab. 4 - Evolution of foreigners' share by macro-groups of census sections in Bologna - years 2001, 2011, 2016

	N/a sezioni censimento interessate	% stranieri residenti			Variazione		
		2001	2011	2016	2001 - 2011	2011 - 2016	2001 - 2016
Sezioni con ERP	212	4,20	14,95	19,32	10,75	4,37	15,12
Sezioni senza ERP	1.716	3,70	11,22	14,49	7,52	3,28	10,80
ERP <10%	1780	3,67	11,22	14,44	7,55	3,22	10,77
ERP ≥ 50%	59	5,31	19,28	25,92	13,97	6,65	20,61
ERP ≥ 60%	45	5,78	19,74	26,87	13,96	7,13	21,08
ERP ≥ 70%	35	5,45	20,82	29,36	15,38	8,53	23,91
ERP ≥ 80%	22	6,45	21,63	30,81	15,18	9,18	24,36
Totale sezioni utilizzate	1.928	3,79	11,88	15,35	8,09	3,46	11,56

Source: Maggio, Bergamaschi, 2020

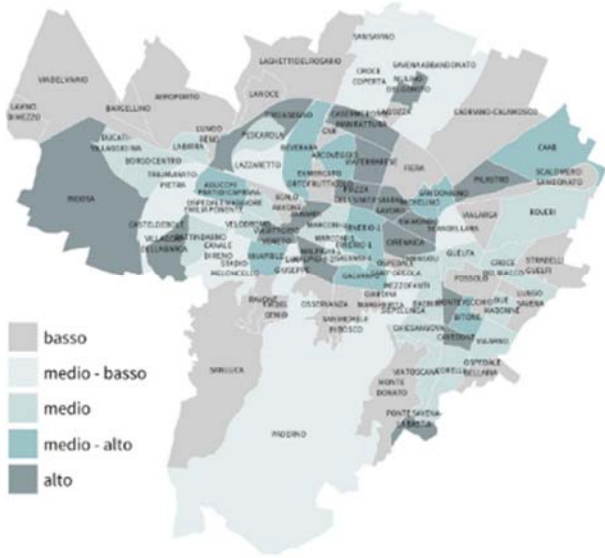
It is not possible to distinguish between foreign-only and mixed households, but we know that non-natives were involved in 41% of cases in the first group, 55% of cases in the second group, 54% of cases in the third group and 48% of cases in the last group. Although Italians and foreigners appear to be “equally distributed” regarding the condition of overcrowding, it is possible to state that non-natives, in relation to the percentage of their presence in public housing (around 32% of the total number of ERP residents), are more likely to live in overcrowded households.

Conclusions

Since the 19th century, Bologna has been an attractive city, but today this attractiveness still remains an open challenge. The ‘limit of city expansion’ is not imperceptible as it was aimed by the 1889 Regulatory Plan, the suburbs are often well identifiable, with precise ecological or socioeconomic markers. The suburbs are certainly ‘neater’ than in the past, as hoped for by a more recent Regulatory Plan. Even if they do not always have their own ‘centres of life’ and present attractiveness for neighbouring populations, they are often equipped with the resources and all the services needed by the resident population. However, the territories present various elements of inhomogeneity.

The issue of housing remains one of the main challenges for the city, so much so that the New General Urban Plan (PUG), which came into force in September 2021, includes among its strategies that of ‘habitability and inclusion’ by identifying certain urban areas that are potentially fragile from an economic-income, demographic and social perspective¹². The map of social vulnerability coincides, albeit partially, with the map of the diffusion of social housing, making it possible to emphasise precisely a link between the housing problem and fragility (Figure 2 and 3).

Fig. 2 - Map of Bologna - synthetic fragility index



¹² Further information can be found at the following link https://sit.comune.bologna.it/al-fresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/ad08c574-b57a-4863-9deb-36fde7343c75/02_ApprofondimentiConoscitivi-l_DimensioneSociale_APPRweb.pdf.

Fig. 3 - Map of Bologna - areas at risk of social marginalisation



Foreign populations turn out to be those on whom the greatest obstacles in accessing housing currently weigh most heavily. They are more precarious economically (registering lower incomes and ISEE values than natives), regarding the housing stock they have access to (often older, worse preserved and smaller in size than natives) and partially dependent on local public housing welfare.

All these dynamics risk contributing to the creation of a form of “structural housing exclusion” (Tosi 2017) and constitute forms of concentration of populations on the territory (Paone, Petrillo, 2016).

The way in which these populations find their place in the territory has inevitably an impact on the ‘neighbourhood’ system in which ‘popular’ increasingly risks becoming a summation of fragility and diversity in the contexts where populations coexist without necessarily coming into contact. In these spaces, it is evident how the urban question and the social question are intrinsically linked. The risk of peripheralisation, which implies the reproduction of segregation and marginalisation mechanisms within the urban space, is certainly one of the focal points.

In conclusion, we believe that the foreign population is subject to multiple forms of discrimination with respect to housing:

- Discriminations concerning housing traits, as seen above, recording a worsening of housing conditions from multiple perspectives;
- Territorial discrimination, understood as different access to the urban territory as a whole and over-representation in certain spatial micro-divisions.

On these aspects, there is clearly still ground for study, analysis and political-administrative action.

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