Post-suburban arrival spaces and the frame of 'welfare offloading': notes from an Italian suburban neighborhood

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon the debates on 'suburbanisms' and 'arrival space', this article explores the complexities for welfare governance in multiethnic peripheries.

The paper bridges two themes of the contemporary 'suburban century': the intensified global migration flows and the peripheral condition of suburbs worldwide; the work refers to the Municipality of Pioltello, a multiethnic suburban area in Milan's region. This double-sided perspective reveals governance dynamics, here discussed through the concept of 'welfare offloading'. In the observed neighborhood, governmental complexities disclose profound interdependencies with the region's urban core and across municipalities; welfare tensions are 'offloaded' from the central core to peripheral regions.

1. Introduction

Diverse global socio-demographic and economic changes involve today not only big cities but also suburban areas. Here, global social-demographic processes intersect and express themselves at a local scale; in this sense, there is evidence to suggest that suburbs are meaningful to study the global urban peripheries today (Harris and Vorms 2017; Güney, Keil, and Üçoğlu 2019; Keil 2017a, 2018). The recent conceptualization of post-suburbia stresses the importance of the suburban regions, and the related ways of living, to understand broader urban development trajectories (Phelps et al., 2006, Phelps, Wood, and Valler 2010; Phelps and Wood 2011). In the urban studies literature, the role of these areas has been discussed under different perspectives (see Monte-Mor, 2014; Phelps, Wood, and Valler 2010; Sieverts 2003), concerning how global socio-demographic changes impact and develop within these areas (Ekers, Hamel, and Keil 2012; Moos and Walter-Joseph 2017).

However, to our knowledge, for a long time, these changes have been discussed in the literature mainly through separate debates, and rarely through cross-disciplinary perspectives (De Vidovich 2021). The paper attempts to bridge this gap and it steers an interplay between different streams of literature at the intersection between urban, suburban, and migration studies. We observe a suburb in Northern Italy inhabited by

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many diverse ethnicities, drawing on the contemporary concepts of 'suburbanism' and 'arrival space' to explore the connections and interdependencies at a metropolitan, city region, or mega-city regional scale (Hamel 2013). In so doing, we introduce the concept of 'welfare offloading' to describe the process of shifting welfare tensions and persistent fragilities from the city to its urban edges, and we subsequently discuss some related governance implications. 'Welfare offloading' is not to be seen as a political or governmental action, but rather, as a process resulting from complex welfare transformations observed at a metropolitan scale, by involving both the city and its outskirts in the analyticalframework. We focus on the field of welfare referring to the body of policies, governance arrangements, and inter-institutional efforts for services delivery, especially the social services.

This work stems from the intersection of different research projects, dealing with the two mentioned research themes and a case study. The research is mainly based on the collection and elaboration of qualitative materials, such as interviews, fieldwork observations, and institutional documents. Following the introduction, in section 2 we outline the theoretical debate leaning on suburbanisms and arrival spaces; in section 3, we briefly display the research question and the methodology underpinning it. The case study of the Italian suburb of Pioltello is thereafter illustrated, with particular reference to its relation to the surrounding metropolitan region. Drawing on this analysis, section 5 introduces the concept of 'offloaded arrival space' by also discussing some related governance issues. Finally, the conclusive remarks stress the significance of the outlined governance implications in shaping public action in suburban areas and hint at possible future research paths. Overall, this article aims at unfolding a number of territorial dynamics concerning both the suburban ways of living and the features of typical arrival spaces, with reference to an in-between context.

2. Key concepts between suburban and migration studies

Internal and international migration processes have always been one of the main drivers of urbanization (Cremaschi 2016). In recent international migration flows, the arrival destinations of numerous migrants are frequently and willingly identified with big cities and large urban areas inserted in the global network of movements that led to the study of multiculturalism as a peculiar urban phenomenon (Briata 2019; Marconi and Ostanel 2016; Müller 2011; Noble 2009; Vertovec and Cohen 2002; Tzaninis 2020). In this sense, urban studies entwine migration studies when addressing ethnicity and multiculturalism, and the related segregation tensions occurring across urban areas (Musterd 2005). Over the past decades, suburbia and peripheries beyond urban cores seem to have very much become a potentially multicultural space (Balbo 2015; Kling, Olin, and Poster 1995; Saunders, 2011), raised from the ideological, cultural, and political 'hybridization' associated with the contribution of international migration to contemporary urbanization (Dear and Dahmann 2008). Such reflections lie behind the theoretical construction and the socio-political production of post-suburbia (Phelps, Wood, and Valler 2010).

To set out the theoretical framework wherewith to develop our argument, we rely on two key concepts to bridge the gap between suburban studies and migration studies. On the one hand, within the conceptualization of post-suburbia, we stress the importance

of suburbanisms, i.e. 'the suburban ways of living, as central to understand the everyday experiences of the migrants' (Tzaninis 2020, 4). Suburban ways of living result from the diverse everyday lives that characterize the social fabric of settlements at the edges of cities, i.e. literally, the suburbs (see Keil, 2018a). On the other hand, we ground the contribution on the notion of arrival space, due to its significance to study migrations with a focus on spatial implications. The reflection across these two concepts opens up an alternative understanding of migratory arrival in suburban areas, undertaken in this paper through a case-study from the urban region of Milan. Furthermore, we identify the insightful process of 'offloading' behind such observations, as a feature of the welfare complexities related to arrival spaces in post-suburbia. In particular, we define 'offloading' as a shift of welfare tensions from city to suburbs, by stressing its relevance to observe pivotal issues of a post-suburban arrival space.

2.1 *Post-suburbia and suburbanisms*

We are witnessing a changing time in the understanding of urban peripheries, as suburbanization – the process of non-centric population and economic growth within spatial expansion (Ekers, Hamel, and Keil 2012) – continues unabated, and many societal, ecological and governmental implications are globally epitomized by suburbs (Keil, 2018). Moreover, many scholars noticed how new everyday suburban ways of living (suburbanisms) are central to grasp the trajectories of contemporary suburbanization (Keil 2017a; Moos and Walter-Joseph 2017; Walks 2013). In this framework, the identification of peripheries moved beyond the strict reference to the large public housing estates and the deprived urban neighborhoods that received growing planning and governmental attention over the last three decades. In other words, peripheral conditions might be searched in the suburban realm. Suburban studies are today nurtured by many theories and perspectives (De Vidovich 2019; Hanlon and Vicino 2018), although they persist as a secondary order of studies. For two decades, the term 'post-suburbia' – firstly coined by Teaford (1997) and tested in a North American case by Lucy and Phillips (1997) , – captures the profusion of terminologies related to the heterogenous suburban forms and features. While Teaford (1997) used the term to express a break with past patterns of suburbanization through economic development objectives, Lucy and Phillips (1997) refer to a transition period that succeeds the suburban including different spatial forms, exurban sprawl in rural landscapes, and farmland conversions. Today, 'post-suburban' spaces signify the contemporary era after the archetypical suburbia (Charmes and Keil 2015; Phelps and Wood 2011; Phelps, Wood, and Valler 2010). Within the contemporary framework aimed at understanding the new epistemology of the urban (Brenner and Schmid 2015), post-suburbia calls for approaches beyond the common city/suburb dichotomies that often lack a deeper, qualitative understanding of the meanings of how the contemporary relationship between city and the (post) suburb has evolved and is evolving (Tzaninis 2020). Furthermore, the post-suburban framework entails a close interplay with politics issues. Pagliarin and De Decker (2018) point out that post-suburbia stresses the current political inconsistencies inherent in the emergent uneven development of different sizes, timings, and diverse geographical contexts. According to Phelps and Tarazona Vento (2015), post-suburbia is a key to understanding contemporary suburbanization

in its heterogeneity, by tackling the variety of capitalisms, welfare, planning, housing systems, land ownership, industry structures, and ideologies present. In other words, the post-suburban ultimate aim is to provide a geographical and conceptual framework for political action (Keil and Young 2011). As argued by Charmes and Keil (2015), post-suburbanization in Europe involves a slight shift in focus from the discourse on the traditional (dense, centralized, politically integrated) European city (see Le Galès 2002), to a model that acknowledges a rural-urban blurring, as posited in the literature of the 'in-between city' (Sieverts 2003). Against this background, the paper navigates the contemporary post-suburban analytical framework to observe and discuss insights from a new urban periphery located at the edges of a crucial urban node in Italy. Such insights are strongly associated with suburbanisms, seen as the suburban ways of living shaping everyday lives in such urban outskirts, or rather, the meta dialectic producing new, hybrid, ways of life in the contemporary metropolis (Walks 2013).

2.2 Definition of arrival spaces

The concept dialoguing with the post-suburban framework and the related focus on suburbanisms is that of 'arrival space,' borrowed from the migration studies in an interplay with the spatial implications of migration flows. Over the last decade, the urban and migration studies debate has returned on the theme of arrival spaces in relation to the growing diversification and complexity of recent migration processes (Harvey, 2000; Fioretti and Briata 2019; Hans et al. 2019; Millington 2012). The concept was already introduced by the Chicago School of Sociology, in the early 1920s (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925), that theorized the presence of 'zones of transition,' i.e. urban areas with the function of 'ports of first entry' in the city and transition to other districts.

Today, with the term 'arrival space,' scholars refer to a range of different spaces (Bovo 2020). Some discuss the role of local contexts (border islands or crossing), working as nodes in international migration networks (Agier 2016; Agier et al. 2018; Bontemps, Makaremi, and Mazouz 2018; Cremaschi 2016). Others refer to urban neighborhoods (Kurtenbach 2015; Saunders 2011; Schillebeeckx, Oosterlynck, and De Decker 2018). Others suggest that arrival spaces may be defined as all those parts of the urban fabric with which newcomers interact at the moment of arrival (Meeus, Arnaut, and Van Heur 2018). Among these different perspectives, the dimension of the arrival neighborhood remains the most investigated.

Arrival zones of transition, or arrival neighborhoods, may be defined as urban districts, where the concentration of migrant newcomers corresponds to the specialization of some spaces on arrival and transition. Across current literature, they are described through three main features. The first one refers to their function as 'ports of first entry' in the city, namely, these areas are the most accessible for newcomers. Saunders (2011) argues that these districts' poor conditions are what render them accessible and often the only accessible points of the city. He describes it as one of the paradoxes on which the arrival city is built, the logic of the bootstrap, 'you cannot possibly afford to live in the city, but to escape being a rural outsider, you must first have a place to live in the city' (Saunders 2011, 53). The second feature of arrival neighborhoods consists in facilitating upward mobility: these areas provide the first

entrance into the city and support the transition in time and space through its districts.[1] The third feature is introduced in a recent contribution by Schillebeeckx, Oosterlynck, and De Decker (2018) and refers to the notion of arrival neighborhood's 'resourcefulness.' The concentration of newcomers draws from a series of existing accessible resources: a housing market -often residual and secondary private rental market-, a job-market, and the possibility of (self-)employment, often bonded with reciprocal social networks. At the same time, this concentration nurtures facilities, such as welfare services resulting from policy-making initiatives at various levels. In this sense, the arrival neighborhood is described as a resourceful area for newcomers and for the whole city.

Additionally, arrival spaces introduce challenging issues in terms of public action. Based on the increasing differentiation of contemporary arrival processes (Black et al. 2010; Collins 2018; Khosravi 2010), three dimensions of complexity arise: temporal, territorial, and of use. Firstly, on a temporal level, arrival processes today imply a growing uncertainty regarding the possibility of permanently settling in a specific place; hence, public action addressing newcomers has to deal with a highly variable and unstable population. Secondly, on a territorial level, arrival processes build new relations between different local contexts, crossed by the same migratory trajectories. Often arrival places deal with arrivals both at a local level, through specific reception services and programs, and at a supralocal level, as 'platforms of arrival and take-off' (Meeus, Arnaut, and Van Heur 2018) along a broader migratory path. Thirdly, the presence of different arriving populations introduces a question of uses of the urban environment, which may differ from the more established ones and produce new kinds of spaces (Crosta 2010; Werlen 1992). In this sense, in terms of public action, the question is about the ways in which these parts of the city, the actors involved at different governance levels, and the typology of tools to be deployed are enacted, with a particular focus on an in-between context.

2.3. 'Offloading': an introduction

A pivotal concept of our empirical analysis is that of 'welfare offloading.' The notion of 'offloading' may be disorienting in the first instance when navigating the urban studies, as it appears as an extemporary and improvised notion if related to the social and spatial transformation of a territory. In other words, it does not seem an easy concept to be appreciated for urban scholars. Three main definitions of offloading may be identified from three separate disciplines. First, in computer science, computation offloading refers to the transfer of resource-intensive computational tasks to a separate processor, such as a hardware accelerator, or an external platform, such as a cluster, grid, or a cloud (Dastjerdi et al. 2016; Kumar et al. 2013; Li, Wang, and Xu 2001). In the sub-field of mobile systems, mobile data offloading defines the use of complementary network technologies for delivering data originally targeted for cellular networks (see Akherfi, Gerndt, and Harroud 2018; Chen et al. 2016; Huang and Wu 2018).

Second, in the field of cognitive studies, scholars identify 'cognitive offloading' as the use of physical action to alter the information processing requirements for a task so as

to reduce cognitive demand referred to such task (Boldt and Gilbert 2019; Risko and Gilbert, 2016).

Third, in the study of marine science and technology, offloading is part of the Floating Production, Storage and Offloading (FPSO) chain. In this large process, 'tandem offloading' (Nishimoto, Brinati, and Fucatu 1996) ensures, for instance, the safe and efficient discharge of oil from an offshore production or storage unit to a shuttle tanker.

The three fields refer to offloading as a process of sorting loads, whether they are goods, digital data or information for our brain and cognitive system. Such sorting activity entails a lightening of the loads for one unit, and a 'take-over' process by a second unit, whether it is a tanker, a mobile data, or our brain when facing an information processing to be reduced by cognitive shortcuts. According to such features of an offloading process, we theorize its real-existing reproduction with reference to urban policies and policy agendas, and with a specific focus on Milan urban region as an observatory for offloading trajectories.

In this sense, concepts like welfare offloading and arrival space help in contextualizing these dynamics. On the one hand, an integration between the two concepts allows recognizing how suburban areas often play the role of arrival spaces, together with, or in the place of, neighboring urban areas. On the other hand, discussing arrival spaces in relation to the concept of post-suburbia, allows to reflect on the role of these spaces in relation to a broader territory, whereas the debate often focuses more on their functions, independently from their territorial context. After illustrating the research questions and methods, the paper will focus on the specificities of a suburban arrival space located on the outskirts of Milan.

3. Research question and methods

The main research question of this article revolves around the ways in which the governance of local welfare is arranged in multicultural suburbs. In particular, we pinpoint two key questions behind our reflection. First, we aim at identifying what implications are related to the governance of a multiethnic context where many different societal problems are overlapped, especially as regards housing. Second, we are interested in observing whether and how the in-between geographical contextualization, at the edges of a big city, differentiate the planning and governance activities from the typical regenerations of an urban periphery. We argue that some dynamics occurring in territories at the urban edges are determined by supra-local issues which entail considerable governance interventions to be mainly developed at the local scale. In other words, broad dynamics related to migration flows and suburban transformations, generate local impacts to be addressed. The case of Satellite, a neighborhood of the town of Pioltello, belonging to the Metropolitan City of Milan (see Figure 1), provides a number of insightful indications. The analysis enhances that when governmental actions aimed at regenerating a vulnerable area take place in the post-suburban in-between, the development of welfare programs is affected by different complexities. In this respect, vulnerability is related to the economic and socio-economic difficulties shared by a large number of households, and the view on Satellite as a 'vulnerable area' stems from the concentration of such deprived conditions in a specific neighborhood.
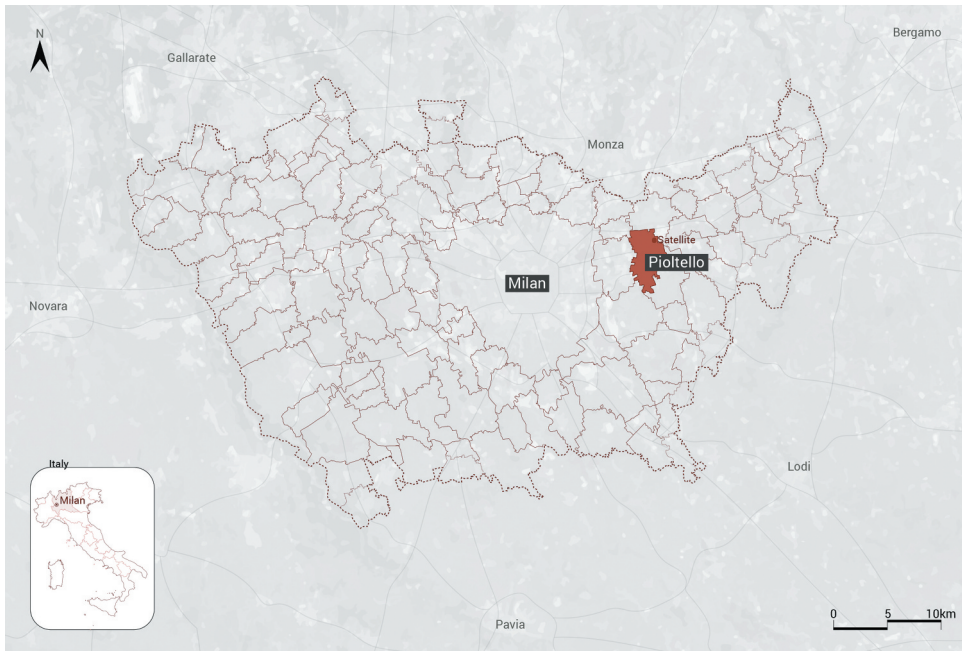
Figure 1. Milan Metropolitan area and Pioltello. Source: authors' elaboration on SIT, Metropolitan City of Milan.

The focus on Satellite in Pioltello will disclose that the suburb does not possess the same resources of the urban core, in terms of human capital, economic means and inter-institutional networks to be activated. Furthermore, the typical condition of Satellite as a highly multiethnic neighborhood introduces the need to ensure liveability conditions in such a context, which has seen many tensions over the last years. On these assumptions, Satellite and Pioltello are currently facing several welfare interventions, following the vibrant welfare planning phase that characterized Milan over the last two decades.

The information collected for the research purposes predominantly consist of qualitative materials, such as interviews to local governors, civil servants, local operators and experts, fieldwork observations, and the examination of institutional documents and statements in the field of welfare and housing policies. In particular, we processed the institutional documentation of planning phases for the regeneration of Satellite neighborhood. In detail, five interviews were conducted to people involved in the local administration, including the current Mayor, the responsible for the social policies' office, and the Secretary for the Social District *Est Milano* ('Eastern Milan'). Three interviews were carried out to the three local operators currently engaged in the Satellite neighborhood regeneration process. These three individuals are local operators working for three social cooperatives commissioned by the Municipality of Pioltello – after winning the award of an open call – to work on local interventions on housing, labor market, and social cohesion (see section 4.2). Finally, two interviews were conducted to two experts, i.e. scholars and urban planners, working on academic research focused on the regeneration of Satellite.

Figure 2. Satellite neighborhood today. Source: authors.

It is noteworthy to point out that we approach the area using the available open materials and enriching our reflection with the standpoint of some local actors. Nonetheless, we develop an analysis that lies at the intersection between different research trajectories (two PhD researches and an interdisciplinary research project), nurtured by research exchanges emerged from a common understanding of some key themes of the area. Such dialogues have been addressed in a wider inter-institutional research framework. The use and assumption of such a diverse research outline allows us to work on broadly shared comprehension of Pioltello's features; however, for the same reason, the paper misses the direct reference to some contributions from which it would have benefited, such as a collection of in-depth perspectives from migrant populations, or more detailed information about their working conditions, as they actually belong to these ongoing inter-institutional research efforts.

The following sections present the area of Satellite, with a brief overview of the main features of Milan urban region, then grounding the reflection on the qualitative findings that enable to observe Satellite as an arrival suburban space affected by particular welfare complexities.

4. Pioltello, Satellite: a suburban arrival space

4.1 *The urban region of Milan and the suburb of Pioltello*

Milan is most likely the main Italian city that has experienced an outright process of metropolization since the early 1900s and in the period after the Second World War (Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci 2017). Furthermore, it also has been an observatory of the complex process of regionalization of the urban, encapsulated by the notion of *regione urbana milanese* (Ardigò 1967; Balducci 2004; Lanzani 2005). Polycentrism has been depicted as a key feature of the urban core in terms of economic functions and urban development (Colleoni and Scolari 2017), as well as a space of interactions amongst different towns and territorial systems (Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci 2017). Milan is also an important global city (see Magatti 2005), as legitimized by the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) ranking, which places Milan amongst the main global cities in the world.[2]

To define the characteristics of Milan urban region, Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci (2017a) identify four profiles of socio-spatial differentiation: (1) a central city affected by consistent processes of social polarization; (2) a first ring of municipalities, originally seen as places of concentration of new families in the 1950s and 1960s, and now engulfed in typical urban processes, such as aging population, economic restriction and social fragility; (3) a second ring of municipalities, located 14–15 km from the city, attracting middle-classes due to different reasons, which result in a constellation of edge towns; (4) an urban continuum shaped by a higher rate of home property than in the cities and ring municipalities, with large residential spaces, and emerging patterns of urbanites related to unemployment and families' impoverishment.

The case study in the town of Pioltello, is referred to the first ring belt of municipalities at the outskirts of Milan (see Figure 1), which represents 'a dynamic in-between space characterized by a dense network of municipalities and multiple centralities exceeding both radiocentric and polycentric hierarchies' (Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci 2017aa: p. 38). Pioltello is located in the eastern part of this ring-belt, where home property is particularly consistent along the infrastructural axis (Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci 2017aa), as well as the concentration of immigrant population. Moreover, the new bypass road *TEEM – Tangenziale Est Esterna* confirms a strategic importance of the eastern sector resulted from an intense urbanization in such in-between territories. Yet, a growing differentiation is emerging in the urban region of Milan from a concentration of specific fragile social conditions, resulting in a geography of social problems different from those affecting the city (Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci 2017aa). In this regard, the case of Pioltello helps in navigating these key issues by focusing on some peculiarities of a suburban constellation included in the second 'ring belt' of municipalities. Pioltello is a town of 37.002 inhabitants,[3] located 15 kilometres from the centre of Milan. Its territory is entrenched between two transit Provincial roads, n. 11 *Padana*, and n. 14 *Rivoltana* along the North–South axis, with an East–West width of 2 km only. This stripe conformation is the result of the merging of two municipalities in 1870: Pioltello and Limito. The latter hosts the train station, an Eastern gateway for the railway system of 'suburban lines' (*Servizio Ferroviario Suburbano*). The town experienced a significant building expansion between the 1960s and 1970s, although it

preserves some green plots, such as the *Besozza* grove, located in the southern part of the town.

4.2 Satellite neighborhood: history and features

Since its construction in the 1960s, the area of Satellite neighborhood, in the Municipality of Pioltello, played a crucial role in the definition of socio-demographic characters, services, and policies of the whole town. Satellite was built in the 1960s targeting middle-class families moving in the suburbs of Milan; during the demographic boom that occurred in Italy at that time, the population of Pioltello grew from 10.000 to 30.000 inhabitants in just 15 years (1960–1975) (Granata 2003). However, due to the high density of constructions, only workers and immigrants coming from Southern Italy ended up living in the depreciated buildings of the area.

Between the end of the Seventies and the beginning of the Eighties, Italy started witnessing international immigration flows (Ferrario 2014); however, from the Nineties the size and nature of migration inflows changed, and an increasing amount of migrants, who were no more willing go back to their countries of origin after having earned small capitals, started to settle in Italy for longer periods, or forever (Ponzo 2009). By the end of the 1990s, Pioltello had registered a steep increase of the foreign population in its territory, with a great ethnic variety: already in 2003 there were immigrants coming from 80 different countries. The number of registered foreign residents reached in 2001, 5% of the total population, mostly coming from Africa (32% of total foreign residents), from European countries not included in the EU (22,2%) and Asia (20,8%) (Granata 2003). These figures witness how, within the surrounding territorial context, Pioltello did represent a very accessible place for newcomers, who found a port of first entry to the Milanese region; the main reasons are related to housing availability. According to the research findings of previous studies (Granata 2003), affordable housing prices characterized Pioltello until the early 2000s, and they often attracted those foreign immigrants who were not able to afford a house in Milan. Within this framework, Satellite neighborhood, in particular, was pivotal for the housing market: it provided a concentration of available stock, and many apartments of the neighborhoods were rapidly sold or rented to foreign newcomers by Italian owners.

Thus, in the 2000s, the number of foreign residents kept growing, by reaching 7,9% of the total population of Pioltello in 2003, with the largest concentration in the Satellite neighborhood. The debate on foreigner's presence entered the political agenda, and the public administration began to establish a more structured and fruitful dialogue with the local third sector to manage such cultural heterogeneity. Hence, the concentration of foreign immigrants started resulting in a specialization of the area on arrival and transition, through the establishment of specific services and institutions. In 2000, the Municipality launched the Helpdesk service (*sportello stranieri* in Italian) to support foreigners (especially non-EU citizens) in bureaucratic issues, such as the acquisition of residence permits, and it also established the Inter-cultural Council (*consulta interculturale* in Italian), to gather the philanthropic actors involved in pathways for the integration of foreigners. The Inter-cultural Council was introduced in 2000 to ease the inclusion of non-EU foreigners into the local community of the town, through

a joint effort involving several institutions (such as the Municipality, the Schools, and the voluntary bodies). In this sense, Pioltello has started becoming a 'resourceful' neighborhood for newcomers, as Schillebeeckx, Oosterlynck, and De Decker (2018) define arrival spaces, not only for the easier access to a – mainly secondary – housing market, but also for specialized services that keep representing today a reference for foreign newcomers also beyond the municipal territory.

Around 2011, the political instability of Northern African countries resulting into the 'Northern Africa emergency', has led to new international immigration flows to Italy. Also, in those years Pioltello registered a new increase of its foreign population, that represented 12% of the total population in 2014 and 24% in 2017. Foreign newcomers' housing demand, following the previous migratory chains, mainly developed in the Satellite neighborhood. Here, foreign owners started renting the apartments at reasonable prices to the latest newcomers, often with non-registered contracts.

Today, Pioltello is the second municipality of the Lombardy region with the highest number of foreign residents, and the first municipality among those of the same demographic size (Di Giovanni and Leveratto 2018). The Municipality registered 9000 foreign residents[4] (25% of the total resident population), coming from almost a hundred of different countries; the most represented are Romania (13% of the total foreign residents), Egypt (12%), Pakistan (11%), and Ecuador (10%), follow Perù, Albania, Bangladesh, Morocco, Philippines (between 5% and 3%).[5] Foreign population has an even gender distribution (around 4600 men and 4400 women), and is composed by a large majority of adults (mainly between 30 and 40 years old) and small numbers of over-70. In the Municipality, the Satellite neighborhood presents more than 70 different nationalities. In the neighborhood, there are 2000 apartments, where are registered around 5600 inhabitants,[6] reaching almost 9000, including the non-registered citizens (Di Giovanni and Leveratto 2018). These data point out the issue of property, which strongly characterizes the neighborhood today and its housing market. Many immigrants who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s bought the apartments in the neighborhood from previous Italian owners through favorable mortgage rates; after the 2008 crisis, however, they found themselves jobless and unable to pay the loans. Today, newly arrived immigrants are mainly renting from previous foreign owners and many don't have a regular contract, as indicated by the Mayor:

'Housing and the *right to housing* is a pivotal welfare emergency: there are evictions of families with children; we attempt to enact social housing projects, but it is difficult to develop, even because the Prefecture and the court are responsible for monitoring the legality in Pioltello, coping with a situation of longstanding illicit that hamper the constant development of innovations' (Mayor of Pioltello, 9 October 2018)"

Today, homeownership is very fragmented in the area, part of the stock is subjected to repossession by banks, and its physical conditions are, in certain cases, very bad (Di Giovanni and Leveratto 2018) (see Figure 2). This problematic property condition has a twofold effect: on the one side, it allows for a secondary housing market, cheaper and easier to access.[7] An operator involved in the ongoing local policy-making portraits such situation:

'Informal, unlawful and non-regular access to an apartment, and sub-leases, still characterize the Satellite area. Moreover, the problem of housing runs in parallel with

that of unemployment, as there are many foreign single-income families, with a low salary' (Local operator from social cooperative, 30 January 2019).

On the other side, the absence of the public actor, as owner or manager, prevents the possibility of undertaking comprehensive actions of transformation on a public level. Satellite deploys a socio-economic condition where the population tries to operate with the means available (Petrova and Prodromidou 2019). Furthermore, a perceived higher insecurity crosses the whole town, although it is more accentuated in Satellite due to an overlap of tensions, as indicated by the Municipal responsible for Social Services of Pioltello:

'Housing is actually a peculiar emergency of Pioltello, as precariousness and "new social risks" generate insolvencies in families and individuals, affecting the late payment of housing rental. In Satellite, such issues are epitomized by the coexistence with many other social tensions, which consequently led to a general "problem of Satellite neighborhood"' (Responsible for the Social Services Unit, Municipality of Pioltello, 20 March 2019).

In recent years, Pioltello and Satellite have gained a renewed governmental attention benefiting from new initiatives and projects developed in the fields of welfare services' provision and urban regeneration. In 2018, the project *Periferie al centro* was activated in the framework of a more extensive program promoted by the Metropolitan City of Milan and funded by the National government; the project is specifically focused on Satellite neighborhood through a body of interventions in the fields of dwelling, employment, and social cohesion, and it involves a number of actors in an inter-institutional governance arena (the Municipality of Pioltello, the Court of Milan, the Prefecture, and the third sector).

In the same year, the Municipality of Pioltello made, together with neighboring municipalities, a proposal for the European call *UIA (Urban Innovative Action)*, with a project of social and housing inclusion, that reflected on the possibility of action of the public actor within the private real estate.[8]

Satellite is also receiving increasing scholarly attention, as the ongoing research *M.O. S.T. of Pioltello*, directed by Milan Polytechnic, demonstrates. The research, launched in December 2017, aims at analysing the current situation in Satellite, through an inter-disciplinary work and set of proposals.

Thus, throughout its history, Pioltello and the Satellite neighborhood have witnessed two intertwined dynamics: relevant and consecutive immigration processes and the housing issue. The district has represented a strong pull-factor for migrant newcomers' housing needs, thanks to the availability of a cheap housing offer and the proximity to the city of Milan that for a certain period has 'rebounded' social demands to neighboring suburban municipalities.

Welfare responses to immigration and housing issues have already begun in the 1990s, starting with third sector initiatives and later involving also public policies and services, which grew a lot in the last decades. However, the complexity of the Satellite neighborhood situation seems to require the intervention of broader levels of governance, as the recent efforts undertaken by the third sector and public actors show. The next section navigates the reasons why Pioltello and the Satellite neighborhood are entailed in the framework of suburbanisms and arrival spaces, and what some implications may be.

4.3 A suburban arrival space

Based on the overview of the town of Pioltello, the Satellite may be described as an arrival suburban neighborhood. The presence of arrival spaces in suburban areas has been recently investigated in different works, also in the Italian context (Balbo 2015; Cremaschi, Albanese, and Artero 2020). Nonetheless, it is worth reflecting on the implications of assuming the two perspectives of suburbanisms and arrival spaces in Pioltello: What does the definition of the Satellite neighborhood as an 'arrival suburban space' entail? Does this definition shed light on particular territorial dynamics and interrelations?

Regarding the debate on suburbanisms (suburban ways of living), Pioltello well represents a disjunct fragment (Keil, 2018) where peripheral conditions are visible, once mainly attributed only to the 'inner-peripheries' of the cities. This is not only linked to the geographical position of the town within the urban region of Milan, but also to the complex interplay of different dynamics in the field of welfare, planning, housing systems, land ownership, industry structures, and ideologies that characterize this area. Additionally, the case of Pioltello presents elements of unevenness in the development of the urban region, as described by Balducci, Fedeli, and Curci (2018), and it expresses very well the complexities of the suburban landscape surrounding major cities today.

Additionally, Pioltello and the Satellite neighborhood may be related to the arrival space concept, indeed, here we can recognize the features that are used to outline arrival neighborhoods in the literature. Firstly, Satellite has represented the port of first entry to the Milanese region for many newcomers starting from the end of the Nineties, mainly thanks to the availability of affordable housing stock (Granata 2003). Secondly, starting from the first international arrival in those years, the neighborhood witnessed a certain degree of residential mobility, which is visible in the turnover of foreign owners of the housing stock, occurred between the Nineties and most recent years.[9] Thirdly, in the last thirty years, Satellite has provided a set of resources for immigrants; namely, the concentration of immigrants has effectively nurtured, year by year, welfare services, such as the Helpdesk for foreigners, housing and job support services, cultural mediation in schools, that today represent crucial references in the region. Interestingly, indeed, some of the services targeting migrant populations are used not only by people living in Pioltello but also by the population of surrounding municipalities. In the neighborhood are also visible some of the main challenges related to arrival spaces: the temporary nature of many inhabitants, often linked to the irregularity of their statuses, makes it very hard to involve them through public services and support. The multiplicity of spatial practices shows the complexity of use of this area, where public and private spaces assume plural meanings. The role of Pioltello as an arrival space, emplaces it within broader global trajectories, and often introduces in this local reality, challenges of global size, as we will discuss in the next section.

The definition of the Satellite neighborhood as arrival space in suburbia is not only an analytical statement, but it allows us to assume an alternative point of view on this area, from which to draw general reflections about the spatial and welfare implications of migration flows at the urban edges. This perspective highlights the complexities underpinning the relation between Pioltello, the city of Milan, and the whole urban region. Additionally, the closer observation of Satellite, as an arrival space, shows that the suggested connections are very diverse: It is not only about suburbs depending on

major cities, but often the major city itself may rebound several specific functions to the surrounding territories. This reflection enables us to introduce a pillar of our discussion: the process of 'welfare offloading' that weighs on post-suburbia.

5. Discussion: offloaded arrival space

Assuming the concepts of suburbanisms within the post-suburban framework, and that of arrival space lying at the intersection between urban and migration studies, the case of Pioltello and the specificities of Satellite solicit a reflection on the inter-territorial relationships occurring between such suburban fragment, and the surrounding urban region. The following sections discuss such issues, by presenting and outlining a peculiarity difficult to perceive in the framework of welfare governance in the urban region of Milan: the offloading of welfare tensions from the city to its territorial edges.

5.1 Outlining 'welfare offloading'

A threefold analysis of 'offloading' has been introduced relying on its etymology from computer sciences, marine science and technology, and cognitive studies (see 2.3).

The three fields refer to offloading as a process of sorting loads, which entails a lightening of the loads for one unit, and a 'take-over' process by a second unit. The urban region of Milan unfolds how offloading can be identified even in the urban policies' field. The idea of a welfare offloading stems from 'the need to engage with new policy concepts with far-reaching consequences for the modalities of egalitarian and emancipatory change' (Albrechts, Barbanente, and Monno 2019, 1491). The ongoing planning phase characterizing Pioltello and Satellite succeeded the vibrant long period of area-based projects and urban regeneration programs launched in the urban peripheries of Milan from the early 1990s onwards. Yet, the metropolitan peripheries located in the suburban constellation of first and second 'ring municipalities' at the outskirts of the urban core, seem left behind. In this misalignment, research findings reveal a process of 'offloading' from Milan to the in-between. Today, the contemporary social challenges in the urban contexts may rely on a number of synergies, collaborations, and inter-institutional arrangements, towards an (allegedly) publicly discussed solution for a specific problem. In particular, cultural facilities have been assigned a flagship role in planning and real-estate development schemes, following the rationale of entrepreneurial urban policies, with expected benefits to cities' economies, as well as overall international attractiveness, visibility, and branding (Petrova and Prodromidou 2019). Milan is currently in line with such rationale, whereas at its urban edges the development of such governance arenas is harder and episodic, as the suburban constellations have fewer capacities and experiences in coping with increasing constraints resulting from overlapped new social risks. Positive experimentations are indeed limited to few cases across the suburbs of Milan (see the program *Oltre i perimetri*,[10] De Vidovich and Tricarico 2019). Several deprived areas of Milan are running into regeneration processes, particularly led by place branding (Van Assche, Beunen, and Oliveira 2020), even related to migrations and diversity (Belabas, Eshuis, and Scholten 2020) as for the case of Via Padova, rebranded as *NoLo – North of Loreto* (see also Verga 2016). Suburban neighborhoods like Satellite in Pioltello, conversely, are experiencing tensions

and frictions related to the complex coexistence and cohabitation of diverse ethnicities in a (sub)urban context.

The governmental solutions to cope with the multiethnicity of Satellite have been put in motion only over the last years, after a long phase of regeneration within Milan. One might argue that Satellite embeds the new social demands of a context that receives 'offloads' from the consolidated welfare governance targeted in the city of Milan. Patterns of the built environment in Satellite reveal a rather different building typology from the rest of Pioltello, which portraits Satellite as a deprived enclave in a middle-class suburb, where issues and fragilities typical of the urban peripheries of Milan are reproduced, albeit faced belatedly compared to the urban peripheries. Such evidence remarks the 'offloading process' weighing on Satellite, where the projects involving the most deprived neighborhoods of Milan over the previous years were absent in suburbs until recently. After decades of experimentations to face urban societal problems, the city 'offloads' the persistent fragilities on its urban edges and then proposes the instruments, frameworks and possible solutions to cope with such vulnerabilities. The case of Satellite is meaningful in this regard, as it firstly indicates a new governmental body (i.e. the Metropolitan city) responsible for repositioning and implementing welfare innovations at the urban edges, but it also discloses the complexities and the difficulties behind such 'offloading.'

5.2 *On welfare and the suburban arrival spaces*

The framework of offloading and the closer reference to the Satellite neighborhood as a suburban arrival space shed light on several inter-territorial relationships worth discussing.

Two primary intertwined considerations arise. Firstly, on an analytical level, there is a need to 'zoom-out' the observation: the intensity of the immigration phenomenon in Pioltello can be fully understood only if it is contextualized on a supralocal dimension. The concentration of immigrants over time has been the result of two contemporary mechanisms: On the one hand, the presence of favorable conditions in the Satellite neighborhood (i.e. housing offer, services, etc.) and, on the other hand, the absence of the same conditions elsewhere. This has been the case of accessible housing availability, while in the Satellite neighborhood was growing a secondary housing market, the city of Milan was not able to provide accessible housing solutions and rebounded the demand on neighboring areas (Granata 2003). Additionally, this is also happening today with some bordering municipalities: a recent study on the Metropolitan Area of Milan (Marani et al. in press) shows how there are tangible differences of immigrants' presence and services within neighboring municipalities. While in Pioltello more than 20% of the resident population comes from outside the European Union, in the neighboring municipality of Cernusco sul Naviglio, this rate is less than 5%.[11] Similarly, the concentration of services for foreign users is unevenly provided amongst the municipalities. Hence, in addition to the existing studies on the specific territory of Pioltello and the Satellite, other complementing perspectives seem to be necessary: Perspectives able to 'zoom-out' from the specific municipal limits and to recognize the supralocal dimension of certain local phenomena.

Secondly, the theorization of post-suburban arrival spaces, where welfare tensions are offloaded from city to suburbs, entails an issue of governance; namely, the question arises who are the actors and tools that might be relevant in addressing such crucial issues in Pioltello. As discussed, the Satellite neighborhood's conditions have been a pull-factor for many immigrants to move there and, thus, this local area has played, as often happens for arrival spaces, a supralocal role. The difficulties in dealing with supralocal mechanisms on a local scale are witnessed by the presence today of different levels of actors and projects in the territory of Pioltello. As seen, there is a research program developed by a group of Milanese universities (*M.O.S.T. of Pioltello*), a project funded by the Metropolitan City of Milan (*Periferie al centro*), and there has been an attempt by the Municipality of Pioltello to apply for the European *UIA* program, together with neighboring municipalities. The importance of multilevel actions on local realities has been extensively explained in the field of urban studies and migration studies (Scholten 2014; Zapata-Barrero, Caponio, and Scholten 2017). However, the concept of offloading suggests some further reflections: at times it is not only needed a multilevel set of interventions on the same local territory, but it is also necessary a horizontal set of actions on neighboring areas that are strongly interconnected. Namely, the problems arising in Pioltello do not only depend on actions and policies undertaken locally, but also on actions and policies that are (or are not) undertaken by neighboring territories. Hence, this consideration introduces the need to rethink the roles and relationships between neighboring municipalities and that of supralocal institutions, as the Metropolitan City of Milan, especially concerning very variable and 'liquid' phenomena, as migration processes.

Within the framework of the suburban arrival neighborhood, the proposed perspective of offloading solicits a double shift in the gaze. On the one hand, it emerges a need to analytically 'zoom-out' and look at the overall context to fully understand the role and the mechanisms occurring in Pioltello. On the other hand, it triggers a reflection on the different levels of governance and territorial actors involved in local processes.

6. Concluding remarks

Looking at the context of the Satellite neighborhood in the suburb of Pioltello, this paper has examined the complexities affecting welfare governance in multiethnic suburban spaces. The contribution has interwoven the concepts of 'arrival space', from migration and urban studies, and 'suburbanisms' (suburban ways of living), from the contemporary post-suburban framework, to unfold present complexities across urban peripheries. Such a theoretical framework served to observe welfare in a 'suburban arrival space,' as the two concepts provide a groundwork to study two central themes of the contemporary 'suburban century' (Clapson 2003; Keil, 2017): the intensified migration flows on a global scale, and the peripheral condition experienced by several suburbs worldwide.

The paper has demonstrated how the suburbanisms raised from multicultural daily lives taking place in arrival spaces, enable to disclose not only the governmental complexities for an in-between municipality, but also the profound interdependencies with the urban core. In this respect, resulting in a process of welfare 'offloading.' Such a concept describes a transition where the city 'offloads' the unsolved welfare fragilities

on its urban edges, by also indicating the governance and planning instruments to tackle the local governmental weaknesses experienced by suburbs. In so doing, the concept of welfare offloading also solicits further reflections about roles and responsibilities amongst the governance scales and the local actors involved in the planning complexities of this suburban arrival space. In this view, welfare offloading may be also seen as a process that challenges and revisits the patterns of arrival spaces in city regions, shifting the gaze outside of the city. Nonetheless, further urban policies at a metropolitan scale will be required to deal with such a shifting that reposition welfare priorities for multi-ethnic places at the city's outskirts, especially at a time when the construction a metropolitan scale and space of political action is a task involving a plethora of local and governmental actors (see Fricke and Gualini 2018). The analysis was built upon a brief overview of the social and spatial transformations of the Satellite neighborhood, followed by a focus on the undergoing welfare implementations, which lead to the definition of welfare offloading as a process characterizing governance improvements in suburbs. Through these arguments, the article also raises further reflections about the role of local and supra-municipal actors involved in the governance of welfare across different municipalities. According to the ongoing reconfigurations in Milan (Marani et al. in press; Paris and Pezzoni 2020), supra-municipal frameworks are to be crucial for the governance of welfare. Nonetheless, local imbalances and differentiation may affect the planning activity. The case of Satellite, in Pioltello, illustrates a situation where localized issues, on a neighborhood-scale, are far to be reproduced in the neighboring suburbs involved in the same supra-municipal unit. As a consequence, superimposed tensions risk overloading on a single context, thus undermining the implementation of local welfare systems across the urban regions (framed into a 'Metropolitan City' rationale for the case of Milan). The locally rooted critical points faced by the in-between municipalities are key to understanding which further governance instruments are to be fostered towards the development of local welfare(s) amongst diverse suburbs. Further examples of suburban arrival spaces involved in local welfare transformations may enrich the gathering of the ways in which multiethnic areas are governed, and how the governance responds to diverse social demands.

Notes

1. This spatial – and sometimes social – mobility differentiates these areas from the notion of 'ghettos,' as this latter concept somehow entraps the inhabitants within the neighbourhood itself.
2. 'The world according to GaWC' (2018): https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2018t.html
3. ISTAT demographic data (2018): http://demo.istat.it/
4. ISTAT demographic data: http://demo.istat.it/ (2020).
5. ISTAT demographic data: http://demo.istat.it/ (2019).
6. ISTAT demographic data: http://demo.istat.it/ (2017).
7. The absence of a regular contract often implies that no documents are required and also non-regular migrants are able to easily access the houses, although it also prevents them from regularizing procedures.
8. The proposal did not pass the call. However, it is worth mentioning, given the attention and efforts that the Municipality dedicated to it, aware of the high competitiveness of UIA.

9. Further longitudinal studies would be needed to verify whether also in the short term and in recent years, the neighborhood has allowed any forms of residential or social mobility.
10. Welfare programme *Oltre i perimetri*: https://www.oltreiperimetri.it/
11. Data retrieved from Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2018), *La presenza dei migranti nella città metropolitana di Milano*. Available at https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/La%20presenza%20dei%20migranti%20nelle%20aree%20metropolitane,%20anno%202018/RAM-2018-Milano.pdf

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Disclosure statement

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