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Abstract

Unfathomable economic pressures have warped an Italian textile district. The city of Prato, Italy, serves as an ethnographic laboratory of globalization and crisis. Labeled the most multicultural city of Europe, Prato ranks No. 1 in terms of ratios of foreign residents to local citizens. Residents grapple with bewildering transformations and contrasts in work rhythms. Chinese immigrants own or are employed in more than 5,200 Chinese firms registered in Prato's Chamber of Commerce, a large portion of which manufacture or wholesale low-cost fast fashion. Different tempos manifest in two neighborhoods, where residents, engaged urban planners, and anthropologists have launched efforts to counter segregation and xenophobia. This article takes a Gramscian perspective to expose struggles in different "wars of position." On the one hand, a right-wing mayor sustained a hostile and coercive approach to dealing with the immigrant presence. On the other hand, residents along with engaged urban planners and anthropologists launched a counter-effort in a working-class neighborhood that has transitioned from Little Italy to Little Wenzhou. The presence of transnational migrant workers and their families has made the neighborhoods more complex, presenting new challenges and opportunities for realizing *mixité*.

Keywords

Urban ethnography, immigration, hegemony, action, diversity

*Via Gramsci: Hegemony and Wars of Position in the Streets of Prato**

Elizabeth L. Krause and Massimo Bressan

Il mondo è grande e terribile e complicato. Ogni azione lanciata sulla sua complessità
sveglia echi inaspettati.
The world is large and terrible and complicated. Every action launched against its complexity
awakens unexpected echoes.
(Antonio Gramsci)

Publicized as “An Idea of the City”, new urban questions related to diversity were at the heart of Open Prato’s hosting of Bernardo Secchi, one of Italy’s most renowned urban theorists and planners. The event took place in Circolo Curiel, a grungy cultural center on Via Filzi in the core of Macrolotto Zero. This borderland of ill repute sits just beyond the medieval wall of the historic city center. Here, and in the adjoining neighborhood of San Paolo, Little Italy uncomfortably comesling with Little Wenzhou. The senior planner’s visit brought into relief contrasting political views on the status and stakes of visioning the city¹.

The event drew an admiring audience and kindled controversy. Residents, activists, and students listened as Secchi said that he considered Macrolotto Zero «one of the most fascinating places of the city because it is a place of diversity». His guiding star was *mixité*, the principle of a vibrant mixing of different social and cultural elements. «I prefer a diversity of activity and of population to socially homogene-

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¹ <http://iltirreno.gelocal.it/prato/cronaca/2014/02/20/news/ritorna-a-prato-bernardo-secchi-il-padre-della-mixite-1.8705472>

ous neighborhoods», Secchi said. «Let's not forget that the twentieth century was the century of the autonomous individual - which is exactly why it is necessary to give space to difference». He outright rejected the city council's urban planning vision, which he described «as a disaster» («Il Tirreno» 2014).

Despite Secchi's appreciative audience, by all accounts his visit turned out to be a political bomb. In a press release a few days later, then-mayor Roberto Cenni shot back, describing the «exaltation of Macrolotto Zero as inappropriate and morally harmful» (Comune of Prato 2014). A local headline captured the extent of the disagreement and the mayor's strategy to discredit the urban planner: «Cenni Attacks Secchi over Macrolotto Zero: "He seems to have landed from an alien spaceship"». For a mayor to liken an urban planner's arrival to a spaceship landing was a colorful and insulting way to say his foe was out of touch with local reality. It was also a way to advance political warfare, for as the editors of the Gramscian lexicon volume so keenly point out (Frosini, Liguori 2004), metaphors and events are ways of making interpretations and of connecting the past with the present and the present with the future.

The mayor went on to mock Secchi's position on diversity. He characterized him as having a «fascination» with the «Chinese fast-fashion firms and enormous uncontrolled migratory flux present in that area», Cenni wrote. «I do not see any charm in those old sheds used previously for weaving, warping, or craft activities, transformed into absolutely uncivilized workplaces, which has taken Prato back hundreds of years instead of bringing it toward the future». Cenni then referred to «niches of promiscuity», listing features such as lawlessness, tax evasion, treatment of workers «like slaves», indiscriminate use of propane gas cylinders, unhealthy and unsafe environments, and a general disregard for human dignity. All told, he questioned how such a neighborhood could qualify as a «place of difference and diversity» (Comune of Prato 2014). Rather, Cenni called for respect toward the people who lived in those neighborhoods and who must contend with such realities on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, Secchi was hardly a newcomer to Prato. He was the author of the well-known Secchi Plan completed in the 1990s and known

for coining the phrase *città fabbrica* and developing a vision of *mixité*. He was invited not only because of his past knowledge of the city and his international notoriety, but also because of his experience working on the urban plan of another major European city: Antwerp. Similarities were striking between the Italian and Belgian cities: They shared tensions and challenges related to a migrant presence and rapid growth of a xenophobic political party.

In the daily «Il Tirreno», Prato-based architect and urban planner Roberto Vezzosi drew comparisons between Antwerp and Prato in terms of a status of «near desperation» stemming from an incapacity to adequately confront their problems, including economic ones but especially those related to immigration and coexistence. Antwerp's new city leaders had turned to Secchi and asked, «Give us a vision of the future», In Prato, by contrast, it was not the city's elected leaders who invited the planner to share his vision but rather a group of concerned citizens. Those citizens, in fact, accused their leaders as having completely lost any idea of the city. At stake were crucial issues such as the “right” to the city, its services, and deepening segregation between rich and poor neighborhoods.

For some local residents, Secchi's vision of *mixité* was difficult to embrace. Even before the concentrated presence of non-Europeans, the neighborhood of Macrolotto Zero intermingled residential dwellings and manufacturing activities. Now, older residents associated the area with Chinese newcomers, economic activities that push the limits of legality, militarized security blitzes that intensified under Cenni's mayorship, compromised hygienic conditions of roads and trash receptacles, and overcrowding of private homes (Bracci 2012; see also Parbuono 2016) . All told, the migration of citizens from China rendered the neighborhood more complex and accentuated its character as a *transition zone* (Bressan, Tosi Cambini 2011) resulting from an assemblage of local and global economic and social spaces with new hierarchical relations and internal differentiations. It has only gradually and reluctantly assumed the moniker of Chinatown. By association, the adjoining neighborhood of San Paolo has become known as a *zona di degrado*, a rough and neglected area, a place best left to its own devices, dilapidated, beyond the possibilities of planning.

If San Paolo and Macrolotto Zero have come to be considered as places to avoid, even seen as unsafe, they have also become the site of remarkable citizen and notorious government action to bring about change. Visions for the direction of change assumed dramatically contrasting tones and interventions. Drastically different ideas circulated about how to address pressing issues such as concerns with too much segregation, too little public safety, and too few green spaces. In a word, dueling «wars of position» erupted concerning the management of the changing cityscape. Cenni brought a negative valence to what Secchi had framed as positive. Secchi's visit itself became an event, one of many in the ongoing wars of position that were underway in Prato. These wars of position represent struggles for hegemony related to urban space. In this article, we extend a Gramscian framework to analyze contestations over the future of the city.

1. Via Gramsci

As with other contexts where migrant newcomers are a prominent feature of the population profile, ideological wars erupted over symbols, policies, and resources (Holmes and Castañeda 2016). These struggles to gain and sustain hegemony lend themselves well to a Gramscian analysis, particularly his concept of «wars of position» (see also Hall 1996).

Writing during fascist rule from his cell between 1926-37, Antonio Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks* used military metaphors to define political struggle. The editors of *Le parole di Gramsci*, a volume dedicated to Gramsci's key concepts, underscore the importance of metaphors for Gramscian thought. Perhaps even more than literal terms, editors Fabio Frosini e Guido Liguori suggest that metaphors for Gramsci allow conceptual stations for depositing loads of friction that travel between past and present and between present and future. As an example, the authors emphasize how certain metaphors may belong to a specific time or place, whereas others, newly coined, render acceptable and thinkable new concepts, relationships, or ways of being. We understand that Gramsci's reliance on metaphors was likely heightened

by the incarcerated and censored conditions under which he thought and wrote. Yet in drawing our attention to metaphors, the editors lead us to appreciate certain temporal tensions that may very well exist internal to words and their usage – whether in highfalutin prose or vernacular speech. Frosini and Liguori draw our attention to the ways in which tensions may collect. The practice of noticing such tensions may help aspiring interpreters of social life to comprehend historical dynamics. Ultimately, texts, actions, and events cannot be understood on their own. Interpretation of a text or of an event, after all, is not just inevitable but is the only path to comprehension that we have as human beings (Frosini, Liguori 2004).

Gramsci frequently relied on war metaphors to describe political processes. He contrasted wars of movement with wars of position. The former involved literal maneuver and were common in weak or «gelatinous states», such as Russia at the time, and tended to be violent and involve head-on revolution. The latter involved positioning, often of the discursive type, and were common in the West, where states were strong. Hence, this version of warfare took place on the terrain of civil society. As Gramsci famously wrote: «The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare» (Gramsci 1971, 235). He offered the insight that Italian fascism had violent streaks but its duration was due to its political power, to hegemony, consent with the threat of coercion.

Anthropologists interested in understanding relationships between culture and power have found Gramsci to be a tremendously useful theorist. His concept of hegemony has proven particularly productive, perhaps because his method itself is so dialogic. For Gramsci, hegemony names the problem: how power relations underpinning various forms of inequality are produced and reproduced (Crehan 2002, 104). Furthermore, hegemony helps explain how dominance is lived (Williams 1977). Ultimately, consent is won through wars of position and education writ large. In other words, civil society institutions play a key role in “educating” people linked to dominant values, common sense, and economic resources. Thus, political struggle, for Gramsci, has moral stakes at its core.

At times, U.S. anthropologists have been guilty of what Kate Crehan refers to as «hegemony lite». This watered-down version of hegemony saps the concept of its materiality and emphasizes an ideological or super-structural approach to interpreting cultural dynamics. In his key word entry on hegemony in *Le parole di Gramsci*, Giuseppe Cospito reminds that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is one of the most studied of Gramscian thought (2004, 74). Where does the concept come from? Cospito takes us to the roots of the idea, reminding us that it emerges in the course of a veritable «explosion» of theoretical reflections represented in the didactic notes concerning the problem of the Risorgimento as a «revolution without revolution». The point he drives home is a «weak» or emergent view of hegemony. Here, hegemony is depicted as a process, as a movement toward the consolidation of political power, but not yet the absolute securing of that power. Cospito's essay emphasizes the relational aspect of hegemony: in early 19th-century Europe, the hegemony of France over the rest of Europe; or in Italy, the hegemony of the North over the South in city-country territorial relationships. Hegemony as process leads to the strong connection in Gramsci's thought between hegemony itself and war of position. Gramsci writes in 1932: «the war of position, in politics, is the concept of hegemony» (Cospito 2004, 82).

His dynamic theories continue to have relevance for understanding cultural struggles in a globalized urban context (Crehan 2016). Gramsci's enduring relevance derives from a heterodox Marxist approach, which legitimizes the application of concepts across places and periods. Fabio Frosini, commenting on a new edition of the *Quaderni del carcere*, describes Gramsci as a «provisional and open thinker, uncertain actually [...] an author who works along the lines of a research program [...] that at its base allows for changing political circumstances» (Frosini 2017).

This point of changing circumstances is particularly important in recognizing the resilience as well as relevance of applying Gramsci's method, as much as his concepts, in cases that are distant from those he studied. Consider, for example, the case of subaltern classes in the context of economic crisis in which there exist both Chinese cut-and-sew workers and Pratesi artisans without work. These groups, in dif-

ferent times and ways, have been “evaders” and “illegals” (for simplicity’s sake, let’s say: against the State). They have also been considered by the State in different ways for behaving in the same way. The times and the “identities” of the subalterns change, and as such the responses change. This is an open way to interpret the happenings of subaltern groups using the analytic keys of a Gramscian approach.

This case demonstrates how subaltern classes have internal variation yet, as Guido Liguori writes, commenting on Gramsci’s writings, «precisely because the subaltern classes are subjected to initiatives of adversity [read: *from the dominant class*] they are constrained to be on the defensive» (Liguori 2015, 42). He goes on to define classes: «In the first place, the “dominant class” is one (in the singular), the ‘subaltern classes’ are more than one: the expression of “subaltern classes” indicates a variegated assemblage of social and economic classes» (Liguori 2015, 43). Furthermore, in the past, as Gramsci noted, subaltern classes had significant levels of autonomy, to the extent that they even produced institutions with state functions. Today the modern State, with its tendency to incorporate subaltern institutional forms, including livelihood strategies that subjects manage to devise so as to withstand the crisis, clearly demonstrates its vulnerability (D’Aloisio, Ghezzi 2016). Therefore, the State must adapt its control tactics in order to govern social and economic organizational patterns that reproduce themselves in local circuits of global capital formation. The launching of hegemonic offenses in turn gives rise to a host of spontaneous subaltern responses to enact the goal of seizing power.

Debates about the future of the city were being fought out in formal government settings and in informal community settings. Struggles became especially tense during 2009-2014, the term of Prato’s first right-wing mayor since the fall of fascism in 1944 and the first postwar elections in 1946. Strategies fell out along a political spectrum. The positions between the Open Prato group and the mayor’s supporters could not have been starker.

On the one hand, the city government led by Prato’s right-wing mayor had sustained a five-year hostile and militaristic approach to contain and conquer the immigrant presence. The mayor’s allies downplayed the forces of globalization. Through policies and police

forces, the mayor sought to heighten security efforts, criminalize global workers, and use them as scapegoats for political gain. In fact, Mayor Cenni had been elected to office on a blatant anti-immigrant campaign.

On the other hand, residents affiliated with neighborhood associations along with engaged urban planners and anthropologists launched a countereffort to value and build a diverse city. Initiatives such as Open Prato among others aimed to bring attention to urban exigencies and spatial injustices confronting historic residents, newcomers, immigrants, and youth². Those involved sought to recast the dominant narrative of perceived threats to social cohesion, drawing on a discourse of *mixité*, the idea of a vibrant mixing of different social and cultural elements as opposed to tendencies, for example, of racial and ethnic segregation. A major source of inspiration was the renowned urban theorist and planner himself, Bernardo Secchi (1934-2014), who advocated for future cities as permeable, accessible, and democratic. He and his team viewed access as a fundamental right and developed visionary plans for small and large European cities alike. His plan for Prato was shelved, however, a decision that numerous commentators found to be misguided and disappointing. The legacy of Secchi has nevertheless stimulated ideas and actions for addressing social inequality and spatial injustice in urban territories.

This article analyzes actions as they played out in the neighborhoods. It contrasts the mayor's hegemonic strategies with counter-hegemonic ones. It offers historical context into industrial rise and decline and draws on ethnographic fieldwork to explore the contours of a grassroots initiative, the Gymnasium of Ideas, as well as a collaborative action-research project, *Trame di Quartiere*, or Neighborhood Plots.

In documenting and making sense of diverse political encounters, we take inspiration from Gramscian political theory as well as the anthropology of value, particularly in the sense of value as action-oriented theory (Graeber 2001). As people try to grasp what unfolds around them, they also engage in imaginative acts, which is a fundamental human process. Imagination implies the possibility of doing

² For a perspective on a previous initiative involving social relations and urban space, see Raffeà, Baldassar (2015).

things differently. Through actions people ultimately pursue value, and through these pursuits society transforms. Whether related to minerals, food, parks, or garments, as Elizabeth Ferry observes, «through attempts to create things as valuable, the social and material world is stabilized in enduring ways» (Ferry 2013, 9). Attempts at value-making can also destabilize social worlds. To examine value-making in the context of human action is thus another way to understand what people value and the ways local meanings manifest and what worlds will or will not endure in the face of global forces.

2. Crossroads of Diversity

The neighborhood of San Paolo flanks the western side of the city of Prato, where silent smoke stacks soar skyward like brick beacons to twentieth-century industrial fervor. Here, a chaotic layout of streets and structures reflects a particular model of a *città fabbrica*, or factory city. Narrow roads curve into dead ends. Stucco structures squeeze into tight spaces. Cement walls rise naked with rebar. Factory windows stand shattered. On one wall graffitied words blare, “OUT SARS”. A lone chicken paces in a strip of weeds behind a wire fence.

The original nucleus of San Paolo adjoins the historic district known as Macrolotto Zero. The boundaries of Macrolotto Zero consist of physical barriers, such as raised railroad tracks, which slice through the neighborhood to the north and allow crossings through only a few treacherously narrow underpasses, and a highly trafficked bypass that creates a west ring. Tucked in spaces intermingled with textile and garment production live some families of Italian origin. In other spaces live Chinese residents who own or rent, at times, just a portion of the space for sewing clothes with a quick turnaround. Up until the deadly Teresa Moda factory fire made international headlines in December 2013 and stimulated a new regime of health and safety inspectors, the workers commonly lived inside workshops. They slept on bulky rolled mattresses that Chinese shopkeepers stocked in stores along Via Pistoiese, the major artery that nearly parallels the track, along with other household items that new arrivals from the mainland need for a night’s

sleep – or a day’s sleep, as may be the case, as often they rested during daytime hours when electricity was at its peak demand and price.

When referring to San Paolo, some residents include the territorial area of Macrolotto Zero itself. The name resonates: “macro” translates as large and “lotto” means parcel, but also has connotations that derive from *lòtto*, which refers to something that belongs to everyone, e.g., land that is held in common. The plots and parcels precede the name itself, which dates to the urban vision completed by a working group coordinated by Secchi himself (Secchi 1996a).

The factory city evokes a history of labor, of sweat, and of dreams – some realized, others broken. A colorful yet grizzly description of Prato could easily apply to this part of town: “la città delle mani mozze” the city of the chopped-off hands. That reputation is a consequence of lots of textile work involving recycled rags and used clothing that arrived from ships departing from all parts of the world, especially America. The “Little Hand”, an excerpt from native son Curzio Malaparte’s *Those Cursed Tuscans*, recounts the story of a severed hand lacquered with gold nail polish that the author found as a child playing in a bundle of rags (Malaparte 1998).

The weaving machines were dangerous. They made a lot of dust, and people were known to spit a lot. The looms were loud, too. People went deaf – at least partially. Some still joke about the brusque local way of speaking. They’ll recount in a self-deprecating way about the generation who came of age during the 1960s. They had a habit of yelling when they talked. If all that work around those machines didn’t cost them an arm or a limb, it certainly cost them some hearing³.

Machines were everywhere – in side rooms of houses, in the nooks of basements, in separate workshops. Pratesi hated working for others – that’s what Malaparte wrote originally in 1954 in the Italian original, *Maledetti Toscani*, and that’s what economist Giacomo Becattini wrote

³ Il Museo del Tessuto is a rich reference for the history of the textile industry in Prato, particularly known for the regeneration of used fibers, a niche that is receiving new attention in the context of green economy innovation.

in 1998⁴. So many had left the farm life, the life of sharecropping, to get out from under the rule of the *padrone*, the landlord, as well as the rigid hierarchical ordering and injustices of the patriarchal family (Beccattini 1998, Malaparte 1964). In the factory-city, there was work then, and a lot of it. There were also labor struggles, factory owners, returned partisans, shamed fascists, new communists, ambivalent Catholics, and new streets being named after heroic figures of the sort you'd never see lining the avenues of an American city, such as Via Marx or Via Gramsci. New communist-inspired cultural clubs were also being formed where men could drink espresso, argue, and strategize. Women eventually joined, too⁵.

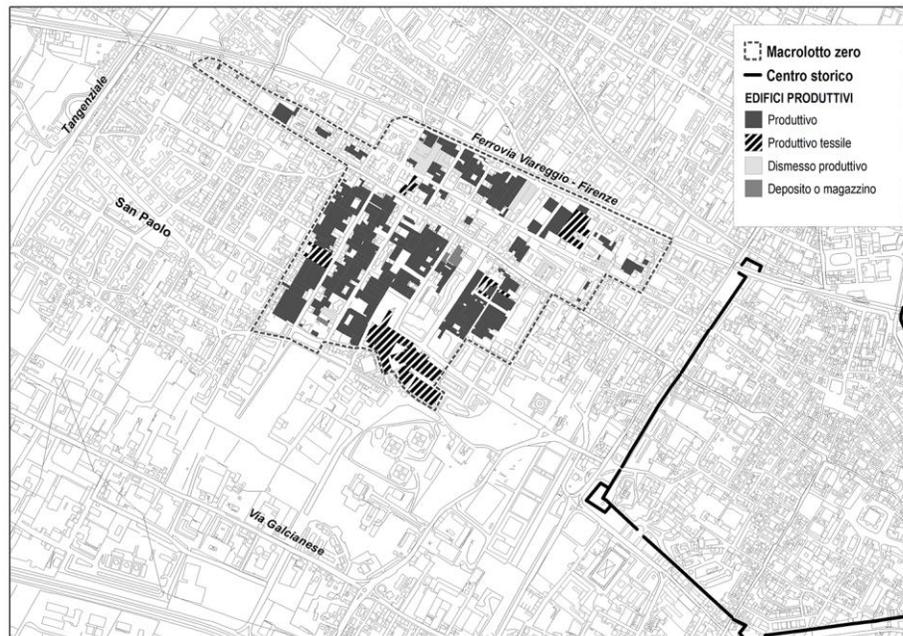


Figure 1. Macrolotto Zero and the historic city center of Prato.

⁴ Malaparte wrote «poiché [I pratesi] stimano una grossa coglioneria il lavorare per gli altri [...] ognuno si adopra a lavorare per sè» (1968, 59-60). Since the pratesi detest working for others [...] everybody strives to work for him/herself.

⁵ The theater group Compagnia per l'Acquisto dell'Ottone performed a play in the piazza of Carmignano on June 11, 2013, that told the story of one of the first people's clubs established in Prato, *Racconta da una casa del popolo*, written and directed by Viviano Vannucci.

A problem arose in housing the massive number of migrants arriving from the nearby rural hinterlands and the distant Italian south during the postwar decades to central and northern industrial cities. The solution was found in the familistic-private realm with its tolerance toward self-construction: agreements between small construction companies and groups of individuals and families, who purchased homes without recourse to banks, but relied instead on agreements with contractors. The oldest cluster of houses and apartments along the main access routes of Via Pistoiese or Via Donizetti, roads that for some residents mark San Paolo's border, eventually became part of a dense and hectic industrial suburb resulting not from public planning processes but rather from industrialization private initiative. The pace of construction in those years was intense. This solution proved to be viable in the short term for a large majority of Italians to the point that they were able to ignore «the obvious drawbacks that it had in terms of managing the city and its territory» (Signorelli 1996, 112-113). This version of growth offered quick responses to an urgent demand for new structures but proved detrimental to public and residential spaces.

The shape and boundaries of Macrolotto Zero came into being in a sense after the fact as a result of Secchi's (1996a) intention to carve out an exemplary physical space of urban development that revalued the factory city in all its diversity. His purpose was not, therefore, simply to identify a neighborhood – a task he preferred to leave up to the groups of people who live there – but rather to accomplish something much bigger: to recognize and represent the unique physical and social aspects and potentialities of an urban phenomenon characterized by the postwar phase of development that launched the Italian industrial districts. Secchi's version of planning for *mixité* goes well beyond “diversity” in the American sense of identity liberalism – what Mark Lilla describes as a foundation for democratic politics that «slipped into a kind of moral panic about racial, gender and sexual identity» (Lilla 2016). Secchi's vision of planning aims to counter individualism run amok. Such a vision fuels what can be understood as a Gramscian war of position to envision and enact a certain kind of urban space.

3. Politics of Containment

Defining the perimeters of Macrolotto Zero assumed new stakes when a policy was enacted to limit business practices operating within its boundaries. The entrepreneur-cum-mayor in September 2010 approved what proved to be a highly contested policy, «Hours for Macrolotto Zero and Adjacent Streets». Ordinance No. 2054/2010 restricted hours of operation for the «exercise of artisan, trade, administration, services, entertainment and leisure activities that cause, because of their schedules into the late hours of the night, noise and environmental discomfort to residents». Moving to draft and approve this policy was an event of sorts that we interpret as a tactic in a larger war of position that aimed to marginalize and even criminalize Chinese migrants living and working in the area.

The restrictions applied only to the zone of factories, workshops, and residences of Macrolotto Zero, a targeted area that corresponded with a dense population of Chinese residents and workers. This regulation effectively marked Chinatown as a “ghetto” in the old-fashioned Italian sense of the word – a word that came to epitomize the most exclusionary way to manage Jewish populations⁶.

The ordinance followed on the heels of Prato’s sea change after the 2008 global economic crisis. Citizens on June 22, 2009, lurched to the political right and elected their first center-right coalition mayor since the fall of fascism. Cenni, a textile and garment entrepreneur, ran his successful bid to a five-year term on a blatant anti-immigrant campaign, specifically capitalizing on fears of a “Chinese invasion”⁷. Threat

⁶ “Comune di Prato, Proponente: 4° Attività Economiche, 4°2 Sportello unico per attività commerciali e produttive, Ordinanza N. 2054, 07 settembre 2010, Oggetto: Ordinanza orari Macrolotto zero e vie limitrofe.”

⁷Biografia del Sindaco Roberto Cenni. <http://www.comune.prato.it/sindaco/?act=i&fid=637&id=20090519125603982>, accessed November 12, 2013. His mayoral candidacy was backed by the following parties of a Right and Center Coalition: Pdl, Udc, Lega, Destra, Movimento Giovani Pratesi, Liste Civiche. These acronyms stand for Il Popolo della Libertà (The People of Liberty), Unione di Centro (Union of Center), Lega Nord (Northern League), La Destra (The Right), Movimento Giovani Pratesi (Movement of Young Pratesi). See also La Pietra Dialogues of NYU, Short List of Political Parties, 2013. http://www.lapietradialogues.org/publications_det.php?id=62, accessed November 13, 2013.

narratives found fertile ground (Bracci 2012). Ironically, yet not surprisingly, the winning candidate was former president and current shareholder of Go-Fin, which the *New York Times* described as «a holding company that is behind several midrange Italian fashion companies», at least one of which «has moved much of its production to China within the last 10 years». Cenni sought to make use abroad of China's cheap labor to enhance profits, yet at home embraced anti-globalist hostility toward immigrants.

Cenni's supporters justified the ordinance as a necessary step for intervening in urban decay. The administration justified its action as an attempt to reconcile the exercise of economic activities in the territory with citizens' rights to quiet and rest (Comune di Prato 2010). Complaints of noise and odors motivated the policy. Residents objected to the noise from cut-and-sew surgeons late into the night, as well as odors from Chinese takeout restaurants.

Critics, including members of the Chinese community, underscored the fact that the policy only applied to only a limited area of the city. Its approval triggered organized legal action among shopkeepers and entrepreneurs operating within Macrolotto's boundaries. In short order, thirty Chinese business leaders filed a lawsuit and, backed by Italian lawyers' investigation, won a judgment. In March 2012, the Regional Administrative Court (TAR) deemed the ordinance to be discriminatory and thus unjustified (Bressan and Krause 2014).

Despite being overturned, the policy itself illustrates the approach of local political power to manage and even incite conflict. Never before in Prato had a local administration advanced such an aggressive policy. Ironically, the city's planning office superimposed the mayor's restrictive policy over an almost identical area to what Secchi had mapped of Macrolotto Zero, originally created as a template to promote *mixité* (Figure 2). Thus, a redevelopment tool designed for the "factory city" became, fifteen years later, albeit briefly, a tool of segregation while the diversity of the neighborhood was sanctioned.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/13/world/europe/13prato.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0, accessed November 12, 2013.

Gramsci predicted that weak states are gelatinous and will resort to wars of manoeuvre whereas stronger states will tend to rely to wars of position to sustain their hegemonic rule. In Prato, as the right-wing mayor took control, the political and social climate was characterized by rampant uncertainty about the economy, xenophobic mistrust toward immigrant others, and skepticism toward the government's ability to make things better in light of accusations of widespread corruption and incompetence. Indeed, the politics of containment, on a spectrum between wars of position and movement, were toward movement and suggest a weakened state apparatus. The fact that the regional court deemed the mayor's ordinance illegal was perhaps an omen of the limited duration of the rule of the mayor and his right-leaning xenophobic-inspired politics.

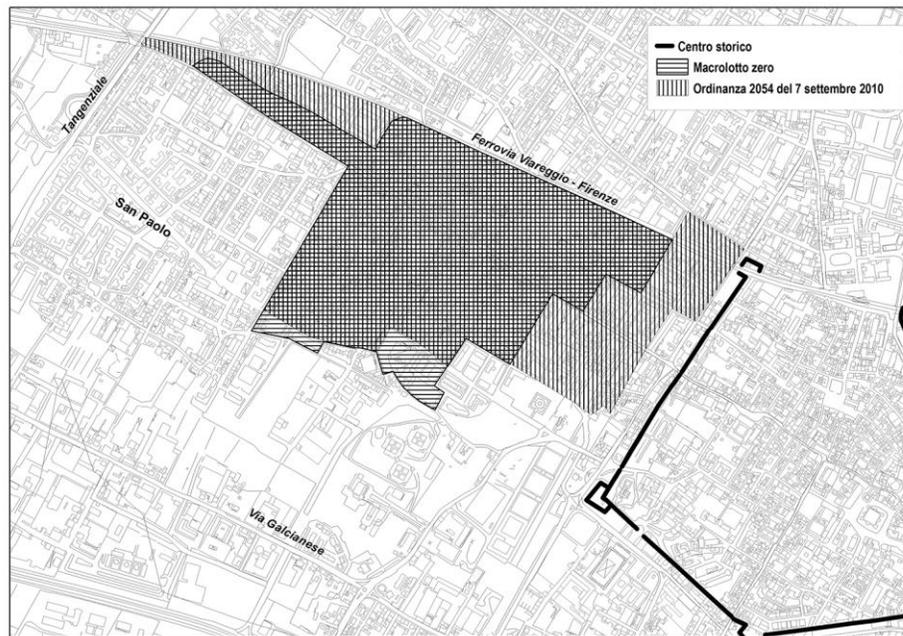


Figure 2. Macrolotto Zero as per Secchi and the perimeter of the Ordinance.

A recurring refrain among Chinese residents in audio-recorded interviews with more than 41 immigrant parents, during our ethnographic research between 2012–15, was the expression of alienation not only from the tempos of work but specifically from living in Prato. Although participants said they felt comfort in having many other

Chinese people around them, living in neighborhoods such as Macrolotto Zero, they also deeply felt the anger and racism directed at them. Many recounted experiences of being burglarized and mugged. They expressed fear and vulnerability. An adult son and his mother who had finally managed to own their own firm balked at the suggestion that things must be better for them now:

«That's still nothing», Ming, the adult son said of firm ownership». «Nothing, we are still bullied», echoed his mother, Yue-Sai»⁸.

The man was considering sending the grandparents back to China with his child because life in Prato had become intolerable.

Interviewees frequently noted the greater level of tension and discrimination they experienced in Prato as compared with other European cities. Peng, a young migrant who told of exchanging his youth for money, recalled a story of police brutality shortly after he became a new father in Prato. The year was 2010, and he had recently filed amnesty-related information with the government, but the policeman accused him of lying.

After Lily gave birth to the baby, she was having her postnatal care, and so she had to stay at home. There is no one else who can drive but me, so the company called me to pick up the goods. Lily has a driver's license, but I don't. So she was having her postnatal care, the company asked me to pick up the goods. I was driving and I still hadn't gotten the goods, and a policeman pulled me over. He pulled me over, but I can't speak Italian, so I didn't know what the policeman was saying, I just kept shaking my head. Then the police took me to police station and asked me for the residency permits. But I didn't have one at that time; I had just applied for the residency permits during the amnesty period. [...] So the policeman said I lied to him, and he asked me to sit inside the car. He hit me on my chest twice and on my back once. He took off his helmet, and put it in front of my chest and punched me [...]. That way, he won't leave any bruises [...].

The Chinese have to suffer through it because there are language barriers! If you don't understand the language, it's the same as not knowing anything, I can't bear it. If I don't understand the language, how can I sue him? There are people who can speak Italian well, if the police take action against them, they would sue

⁸ Interview no. 35, January 24, 2013.

them. Therefore, basically, there are some Chinese people here, people from Wenzhou, that don't understand the language, and they have to bear it. Policemen like this – we can only forget about⁹.

Despite language barriers, Peng explained that he eventually hired a “foreign” lawyer, meaning an Italian who, the next day and at the cost of €1,000, went to the police station and guaranteed him immunity. In any case, the power hierarchies are clear in such narratives. The police violently put into action the collective anger and xenophobia. Such a collective sentiment had been legitimated through democratic politics and transformed into common sense. Given this force of common sense, Peng felt powerless. The result is profound social suffering on his part and the Chinese community writ large (see Krause *in press*).

In *Chinese Migration to Europe*, Loretta Baldassar and the volume editors describe the case of Prato as representing «a kind of litmus test for the possibilities and challenges of global mobility and immigrant incorporation in contemporary receiving societies». (Baldassar *et al.* 2015, 3). A litmus test implies a moral judgment about whether the course forward will be acceptable. The mayor's discriminatory tactics became unpalatable for too many of Prato's citizens and leaders given the city's particular postwar history and political sensibilities.

4. Hong Kong, Italian Style

During the decades of rapid growth of the textile industry, between 1950 and 1970, Prato's population doubled from 77,631 to 143,232¹⁰. The built environment followed suit. Industrial and domestic spheres intermingled: production activities were born in garages, basements, and factories. In 1953, Italy already ranked No. 1 as the world exporter of wool fabrics, Prato's original specialization (Becattini 2001). Within this “economic miracle”, a major transformation of the local production structure also took shape. In the two decades of 1951-1971, small

⁹ Interview no. 18, December 1, 2012.

¹⁰ See Bandettini 1961, Comune di Prato n.d., Krause 2005a, 598).

firms grew and large firms shrunk. The category of local woolen textile firms with more than 500 employees disappeared; the category with 101–500 declined from 37% to 12% of the total; the category of local firms with 11–50 workers constituted 40% of employment; and those with 1–10 employees accounted for one third of the total workers. The figures are particularly noteworthy given that at the same time the total textile workers rose from about 21,600 to 50,000 (cf. Becattini 2001, 56-60).

The explanation for Italy's small firm economy has been famously documented in Piore and Sabel's *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity*. The book analyzes the fact that other countries desired to duplicate U.S. standards of industrial efficiency but could never totally succeed. The authors compare several national contexts – France, Germany, Japan, and Italy – to account for differences in the organization of mass production. Their explanation for the Italian case comes down to a story of several cycles of collaborative and destructive relations between capital and labor especially throughout the twentieth century. Italy came rather late to industrialization, in the 1880s, first in heavy industries and, then, at the turn of the century, in consumer industries, such as FIAT and Olivetti. Labor and industry made strides to collaborate but fell apart after World War I and entered a phase of intense strikes and then violent reprisals with the rise of fascism and the March on Rome in 1922. After World War II, a rural exodus brought about decreasing wages yet increasing competitiveness on the world market. Former peasants who had sought to throw off the shackles of patriarchal power but retain relations steeped in reciprocity confronted working conditions that dismayed them. They sought out a communitarian experience, which manifested in “militant egalitarianism” and the so-called Hot Autumn of 1969. Trade union struggles led to a major victory in terms of a comprehensive Workers' Statute, but the employers' reaction was to decentralize production. By the 1970s, mass subcontracting became the norm and small firms proliferated (Blim 1990, Piore and Sabel 1984, Clean Clothes Campaign 2014).

In this new production context, which witnessed the launch of the industrial district, a large sector of *lavoro sommerso*, or informal economy work, thrived in a realm of practices defined as a *logica dell'essenzione*, or a

logic of exemption. Little attention was paid to preventing accidents and safeguarding working conditions. Meanwhile, state intervention in industry concentrated on defining incentives for the benefit of big business, while a special regime was reserved for small firms, which were exempt from costs and also «excluded from institutional advantages» (Arrighetti and Serravalli 1997, p.336; authors' translation). The main advantage for small businesses consisted of a “silent agreement” that made them exempt from tax inspections in exchange for the creation of jobs and wealth. This form of exemption from public regulations (when they existed) extended to the environment, planning, and land use.

For its exploitive conditions, the French fashion magazine «Elle» in 1978 compared Prato to India and dubbed the city *l'inferno del tessile*, or the hell of textiles. «The city fell into turmoil, the political and economic world became involved, but it reacted almost like a cartel, and forgot about its internal conflicts» (Cammelli 2014, 28, authors' translation). The local textile union workers intervened, accusing the journalist of being in the city just a couple of hours, and asserting that the labor situation in Prato was substantially in order. Faced with threats to local competitiveness, a homogeneous front came together and all but wiped out local debate on contractual terms as well as workplace health and safety to defend the image of the city that even then was considered a factor of competitiveness in European and global markets.

This media coverage was one of several attempts by high-profile European publications to get the scoop on the rapid success of Prato's textile industry, which had brought many European competitors to their knees. The prestigious «Le Monde» followed suit in 1980, offering a title that in retrospect seems nothing short of provocation: «Italian Hong Kong» (Maurus 1980). The journalist highlighted the city's ability to respond to any type of problem posed by production needs whether investments for renewing machinery or provisions for supplying industrial water purification systems. With irony, the report underscored the severe effects of its development on the urban environment and the health of its citizens and workers. The article referred to “self-

exploitation,” a term that, the journalist asserted, had its origins in Prato.

This characterization resonates with the present: The term self-exploitation is commonly used to describe, often disparagingly, the disposition of migrant workers from China. In both cases, considering the Italian and Chinese migrants, discipline to incessant work rhythms occurred not on large factory floors but rather in small workshops. The types of top-down time thrift imposed on the working classes of E.P. Thompson’s «Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism» (Thompson 1967) are transmogrified in this story. Workers in Prato are known for a quest for autonomy and subsequent self-exploitation. In both cases, most work was or is carried out in small workshops, which now includes some 5,230 Chinese-owned firms, of which the vast majority, or 3,423, are engaged in cut-and-sew production for the Made in Italy fast-fashion market (Caserta 2016).

Contemporary use of “self-exploitation” has become disparaging. The insult, to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu, «fails to historicize economic dispositions» (Bourdieu 2000, 18). Indeed, workers with these dispositions, or economic habitus, have a social and historical genesis. Drawing on the violent Algerian case of colonial France forcing market logics on a society with an intact precapitalist economy, Bourdieu traced how «the so-called “rational” economic agent is the product of quite particular historical conditions» (Ibidem). His scathing critique of «rational action theory» underscored the «*mismatch* between economic dispositions fashioned in a precapitalist economy and the economic cosmos imported and imposed, oftentimes in the most brutal way, by colonization» (Ibidem, emphasis original). A similar observation could be made about the collisions that ensue in globalization encounters. Considering Italian and Chinese workers, in both cases, “flexibility” has been used as a gloss for self-exploitation that serves as a “rite of passage” necessary for entry into an affluent society (Berti, Pedone and Valzania 2013).

5. *The Gymnasium of Ideas*

In front of the Circolo Ricreativo San Paolo on Sunday morning June 9, 2013, a neighborhood group converted a paved lot at a triangular intersection of Via Cilea into a public forum. Volunteers set up a tent, table, and chairs in front of this Gramscian-style social club. The event marked the fifth in a series of initiatives called *La Palestra delle Idee*, or the Gymnasium of Ideas, organized by a group based in the popular club, affiliated with the Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana (ARCI), a national solidarity association founded in 1957 in Florence to promote Italian social and cultural life.

The organizers of the Gymnasium of Ideas were desperately trying to re-create a sense of possibility. The collective sense was that city leaders had neglected their neighborhood. They were building a grass-roots movement to bring attention and action to its doorsteps. In this sense, they were engaging in their own Gramscian-style war of position to open minds, change the discourse about the city, and chart a new course of action. This was no small task. On a banner, large green and red letters “PD” were printed above an image of an olive branch, the symbol of the *Partito Democratico*, recognized as a social-democratic political party that resulted, in 2007, from the merger of various center and left parties. The tent provided shelter for the P.A. system and the six panelists, three men and three women, who sat in front of about thirty-five spectators sitting in plastic armchairs. The backdrop was a three-story factory, numerous windowpanes auspiciously missing.

On the agenda was “Work and Made in Italy”. This theme seemed to be on everyone’s mind. How would people talk about Made in Italy in a public setting? What might be revealed about its value, its vulnerability, and its future prospects? The theme of work came up frequently across the province during our collaboration. A few months earlier, on a Sunday morning in January 2013, a different cultural club hosted an event billed as a “Democratic Breakfast”. Guest speakers campaigning for parliamentary elections included one candidate for the Chamber of Deputies, Matteo Biffoni of the Democratic Party (PD), and two candidates for the Senate, Ilaria Santi also of the Democratic Party, and Francesco Paoletti of *Sinistra Ecologia Libertà* (SEL), or the

Left Ecology Freedom Party. The local chapter had billed the theme as “Fair Italy”, as a way to counter rampant disillusionment vis-à-vis national politics and kick-start a new era of trust in light of the groundswell around comedian-turned-rabble-rouser Beppe Grillo and his political Five Star Movement. Candidates messaged on key challenges, particularly those related to generating work and managing immigration. Democratic Party candidate Biffoni put it clearly: «The mother of all battles will be work» (*La madre di tutte le battaglie sarà il lavoro*).

The speakers were engaging and the crowd was supportive, but at the conclusion of the meet-and-greet session widespread skepticism cast doubt any of these candidates’ ability to bring about much positive change. After twenty years of Berlusconi and his cronies, together with economic uncertainty and European-wide austerity, the problems were complex and felt insurmountable. Creative alternatives admittedly seemed absent. A half-century earlier, these clubs were known as hotbeds of possibility.

Development was on people’s minds. The economic downturn had brought a sense of despair. Unemployment was rampant. Poverty was on the rise. Indicators revealed 33 percent of the population had a very low income, below €10,000 annually (IRIS 2015). Youth unemployment nationwide had reached 37 percent, a figure that appeared in the newspaper and that politicians and ordinary people threw around with regularity. Austerity measures were brutal. Local news reported incessantly on businesses that closed altogether or were under bankruptcy reorganization. Prato, with its history of industrial production, had been hit hard. While some blamed the Chinese workforce, others were grateful for the immigrants, saying if it weren’t for them, Prato would long be a ghost town. In this light, the event’s organizers were taking action. During fieldwork, citizens commonly conveyed their frustration at the political situation. The sense we perceived was that they could not wait around and expect any concrete solutions from the government, particularly the government in Rome, with all of its shenanigans focused on Berlusconi and politicians who appeared better at spending money on luxury villas, gala events, and official security cars known as *auto blu* than time on representing and governing. In this context, the organizers of the Gymnasium of Ideas were taking action.

Krause attended the event as the team ethnographer. Despite the prevalent pessimistic mood toward politicians, one of the invited guests was Valeria Fedeli, vice president of the Italian Senate, along with several local figures: an entrepreneur, an artisan serving as president of the city's industrial artisan's union (CNA), a young businesswoman, a regional representative from the national union (CGIL), and secretary of the city section of the Democratic Party. A major theme emerged around the value of the Made in Italy brand. After describing the current moment as «the worst economic crisis in the last fifty years» and pointing to serious effects on «our social cohesion», the first speaker passionately said Made in Italy should be defended because it was «one of the crown jewels of this country». Later, listening to the audio recording and hearing the metaphor, «gioielli della corona», Malinowski's encounter with the crown jewels of Scotland and his insight about «historical sentiment» (Malinowski 1922) came vividly to mind. Historical sentiment ran deep here, as did the desire to reclaim a sense of history gone awry.

During the event, Chinese residents walked along the street behind the speakers' tent, casting a quizzical gaze at the happenings, the flapping political party flags, and the lot filled with Italian spectators. Occasionally, an individual of Chinese descent ducked into the San Paolo bar for a coffee, a drink, a snack, or a game of video poker. None of the resident Chinese migrants joined the event. The irony couldn't have been more poignant. Chinese passersby could have joined the discussion. Their non-involvement suggested different networks, different stakes, and different realities.

The senator took the microphone and reminded, with a tone of regret, of the national incentives and bonuses that had been given to businesses willing to uproot and produce “*all'estero*”, abroad. She noted the way in which Italian businesses are undercapitalized and drew negative comparisons with Germany. Finally, she discussed a new law in the works that would protect and boost the Made in Italy brand, a voluntary sort of certification designed to «*far esplodere il Made in Italy*» to make the brand explode, in a positive sense, of course. An existing law, passed in 2009, required that the label be used only on items that are exclusively made in the Italian territory, including the design, de-

velopment, manufacture, and packaging¹¹. The senator's proposal was framed in the language of sustainability, as it emphasized a crackdown on counterfeit goods, on unfair competition, and on irregular workers. In other words, the certification would also ensure decent and fair working conditions.

The entrepreneur argued for seeing the textile and fashion sectors as deeply connected. Despite the crisis, he said, Prato remains an intensely industrial and fast-fashion district. He made a heartfelt speech about businesses that resist going bankrupt. Rhetorically, he pointed to Germany, Russia, and China and asked how Italy could possibly compete, particularly in places where democratic principles were unknown.

Speakers shared talk of teamwork and collaboration. The young woman who ran a private daycare with three associates noted how hard the crisis was hitting women and cited the statistic that one out of four firms is woman owned. She became emotional as she described her struggles for women business owners. The secretary of the union lamented the number of people in precarious work situations even when they do have work. She lamented the limits of the production chain – given that many phases are done outside of Italy – and called for the need to move beyond textiles.

At that point rain began to fall and the group of forty or so people collectively moved chairs inside the club where for the next hour members of the public took turns participating in debate. There were criticisms of the senator's certification proposal based on the suspicion that many big firms oppose the idea; they don't want to be transparent because there is still a good deal of illegality behind production. A fact that many in Prato knew well because of the history there of *lavoro nero*, work that flew under the taxman's radar and helped the economy thrive as subcontracting became a way of life and small family firms flourished. Nevertheless, people expressed desires to defend Prato and its artisans, to crack down on tax evasion (of the Italian variety as well), to address structural problems, and to create options for the young generation.

¹¹ See Article 16 of Law No. 135. <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/decreti/09135d.htm>, accessed February 16, 2017.

«Future: Zero», announced one self-described 28-year-old freelancer who despite great effort and skill was not able to find regular work and if he did rarely got paid. He described one profound desire: «Fare la valigia e andare all'estero», or «To pack my bags and go abroad».

The debate concluded at 1:00 p.m. By that time, two long tables were being set for the 40 guests. «You're going to stay for lunch, aren't you?», one of the hosts asked. A three-hour lunch ensued to celebrate the anniversary of the Gymnasium of Ideas initiative. The meal included several courses: a panzanella bread salad, crostini with spreads of artichoke and liver pate, homemade lasagna, two kinds of meat thinly sliced (roast beef and pork) with roasted potatoes. Wine and water flowed throughout. The meal concluded with cake, champagne, coffee, and toasts all around.

After paying for the meal, truly economical at only 14 €, I (Krause) passed through the bar, where several people faced a wall of video poker machines. At the seat nearest to the door, a man of Chinese origin steadied a young boy, perhaps four years old, as the child played a virtual game. As I drove off in my rented Fiat Panda, an anti-slot machine campaign ad aired on the radio. Despite a GPS attached to my windshield, I got lost in Macrolotto Zero's labyrinth of streets with no exit.

6. *Cul-de-Sac*

In Prato, a street with no exit is known as a cul-de-sac. We came to realize that we had very different associations with the category of cul-de-sac. On the afternoon of July 9, 2014, we took a field trip to the hamlet of Oste, in the commune of Montemurlo, on the outskirts of Prato with another Massimo, an architect whom Bressan would eventually enlist in the *Trame di Quartiere* action research project, a.k.a., Neighborhood Plots. *Trame* can mean “dramas”, “plots”, “weaves”, or “wefts”. We chose the translation of plots because it best captures the spirit of the initiative: full of purpose, planning, vision, and even subversive schemes to transform the previous city government's hostile approach to diversity into one that addressed social inequalities

through policies that were inclusive and democratic. Neighborhood Plots took inspiration from visions of inclusivity and *mixité*. The action research project sought to intervene against stubborn segregation and in effect to awaken collective remembering that temporal distance had let slumber. Neighborhood Plots aimed to cultivate dignified diversity. To that end, in spring 2015, its organizers launched a series of events: a landscape architect-guided urban walking tour, a social photography lab, documentary film screenings, and a digital storytelling workshop¹².

A number of information-gathering fieldtrips to neighborhoods went hand in hand with the project. The dense urban area of Montemurlo hosted multistory apartment buildings, stucco factories, and a small fenced park with little shade. The ground floor of the apartments had mailboxes in which Italian and Chinese names were interspersed. I felt like I had been transported to another part of the universe as we walked through the neighborhood, peered into factories that seemed abandoned, climbed up a wall to gaze into a canal used for textile dyes, and cautiously stepped into dead-end concrete spaces. Massimo and Massimo kept pointing out the cul-de-sacs as evidence. My field notes suggest that Robert Sheckley's (2006) *Mindswap* might offer some direction, of what sort, now, I do not know. Massimo Bressan meanwhile was using the urban outing as inspiration for colleagues who were designing an art installation at the Venice Biennale titled *Calling Home*, which explored domestic spaces and change in Italy¹³, as well as for #San Paolo, the beta version of Neighborhood Plots.

The topic of cul-de-sacs kept coming up, and for some reason, I was perplexed by the association that the two Massimos were making with a cul-de-sac. They kept nodding in mutual agreement. I kept

¹² Trame di Quartiere: Ricucire la Memoria di San Paolo e Macrolotto 0.

<http://www.pratosfera.com/2015/01/10/trame-di-quartiere-ricostruire-la-memoria-del-macrolotto-0/>, accessed March 15, 2016.

¹³ XIV International Architecture Exhibition, Venice Biennale, June–November 2014, Filippo De Pieri and Federico Zanfi. “Calling home: explorations on domestic change in Italy” explored houses in Italy and how Italian society was adapting to new spaces. <http://www.callinghome.it/Project/>. The page on Montemurlo, <http://www.callinghome.it/Archive/Montemurlo/>. And the edited version of the interview, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWwjDm4kFxU>

shaking my head in confusion. It was classic insider complicity. Later, over lunch at Soldano's in Prato's historic center, Massimo the architect rendered a sketch on a Tuscan-parchment style placemat (Figure 3). The image on the left showed a square interspersed with little rectangular, separated, narrow entryways. The image on the right depicted a rectangle with an arched top with central artery around which was a cluster of housing plots. It was all too familiar to me. I grew up on Waverly Place, a dead-end street in Webster Groves, a historic inner-ring suburb of St. Louis established in 1896 with the merging of five communities along the adjacent Pacific Railroad line. Playing with neighborhood friends on that traffic-free street was the delight of my childhood. Massimo Bressan, by contrast, as a teenager worked in a sweater workshop located on a very different sort of cul-de-sac. It was the classic Prato factory-city variety.

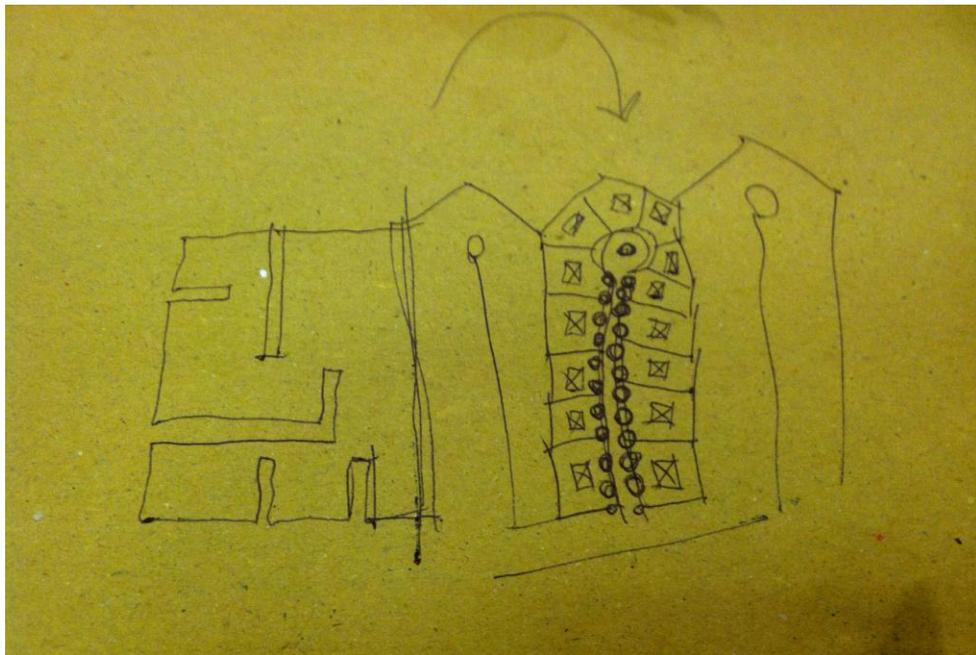


Figure 3: Conceptual sketch of Italian and American cul-de-sacs by Massimo Tofanelli.

In English and Italian, the word *cul-de-sac* is exactly the same but the meaning is completely different. The American *cul-de-sac* refers to a safe and comfortable residential neighborhood – and historically

white and crime-free. In the environs of Prato, a cul-de-sac has a negative connotation. It suggests a place that is forgotten in urban plans. It is a place where toddlers can play but risk getting run over by a truck whose driver is in a hurry to make a delivery. To discover a cul-de-sac, for the two insiders, sparked intellectual satisfaction yet experiential annoyance. To realize the street led nowhere disrupted the flow of our journey and required that we turn around and retrace our steps.

Secchi himself observed the cul-de-sac feature in the built environment that reflected the district's productive system: tight integration and proximity between the fundamental activity of the textile cycle and the home, very often realized in the immediate environs of work spaces: «The residence remains at the curb of large blocks within which are located industrial workshops. These are reached by trails to “cul-de-sacs” that often end in the domestic courtyards of factories» (Secchi 1996a, 44).

In Macrolotto and San Paolo and other similar neighborhoods with mixed industrial-residential urban features, all of these dead ends in effect block movement. Beyond the physical barriers, the cul-de-sacs become a sort of metaphor for barring connections. They prevent sociality. They prevent flow. They cause segregation. They become in fact a symbol of segregation and separation.

In San Paolo and Macrolotto Zero, the cul-de-sacs, lack of public spaces, encircled and confined location, partially due to impenetrable infrastructure such as the raised railway and heavily trafficked bypass, rank among the features that are obstacles to connectivity and diversity. Isolated streets without a way out interrupt the flow of movement inside the neighborhoods. If dead ends are an inevitable design feature, they should at least lead to a public space and a pedestrian walkway. Strategies that ensure robust and healthy neighborhood diversity include: 1) mix, 2) connection, and 3) security (Talen 2008). A key inclusivity principle rests in maximum accessibility in terms of the network of roads, paths, and public spaces that residents as well as passersby use to move around a given neighborhood. Furthermore, public spaces and collective goods – whether schools, health-care structures, sports facilities, or libraries – by virtue of their ability to provide meeting contexts, have a particular significance in supporting the processes that fa-

vor developing and sustaining socially and culturally diverse and vibrant neighborhoods. And yet city leaders' approach had been militaristic helicopter blitzes rather than community-based planning efforts.

As people participate in political processes, they are essentially engaging in world-making activities. Anthropology has long been involved in world-making activities. Those drawn to anthropology, such as us, embrace anthropology for its ability to access and cultivate an anthropological imagination. We see ourselves as change agents. Gramsci's philosophy of praxis is also very much about change – understanding the dynamics of culture and power and how change works. He underscored the important role of intellectuals in consolidating hegemony or in constructing counter hegemony. For anyone steeped in a historical materialist tradition, history results from material conflict, or it results from events that are then followed by action.

7. *Mixité 2.0*

As anthropologists embarking on a collaborative project, with intertwined aims of intellectual scientific merit and broader humanistic impacts, we found ourselves initially documenting these changes and then developing engaged action-research strategies to encourage and cultivate a diverse city in line with Secchi's vision. To be sure, conflicts brought into relief contrasting ways in which the present, past, and future were perceived and valued. They also led to initiatives that stimulated people to articulate and act on what they valued.

The most recent influx of immigrants to a large extent has returned the neighborhood of San Paolo and its environs to the rhythm of the 1960s, the era of the industrial boom. Granted, the stories of the people passing in the streets, the goods that are sold in stores and circulating in vans, the languages spoken by residents, differ from those of fifty years ago. Paradoxically, the concentration of Chinese workers and families has effectively slowed down the processes of urban transformation in Macrolotto Zero. The immigrant presence has extended rather than upended the characteristic of *mixité*.

Recall, Prato drew rural Tuscan sharecroppers and southern migrants to work in its factories and family firms during the economic boom of the 1960s. Since the mid-1990s, it has been the destination for tens of thousands of migrants, primarily from the Zhejiang Province of China. Regardless of their regional or transnational origins, residents share a history of producing Made in Italy textile, knitwear, or apparel products. Despite similar tempos, their occurrence in different historical times has created social distance and dissonance. Residents grapple with bewildering transformations (Bressan, Tosi Cambini 2009) and contemporaneous contrasts in work rhythms: unemployed Italian sweater artisans and inactive household handloom workers as opposed to frenetic Chinese garment workers and entrepreneurs. Poignant was the fact that many Italians who migrated to Prato and came of age during a period of economic boom, experienced their own rapid success and subsequent dizzying decline, and then watched as a non-Italian population moved in, spatially concentrated, and took hold of a niche economy. Whereas spatial proximity has created tensions, temporal distance has made similarities seem strange and even unrecognizable.

Temporal distancing also figures centrally into the ongoing urban struggles among residents and city officials concerning how to live in, govern, and make sense of changing political, economic, and social dynamics. After the “Idea of the City” event, when Cenni accused the immigrant presence of taking Prato back “hundreds of years”, he was drawing on temporal ideologies that effectively generated distance and dissonance between the past and the present. His appeal to moral leadership through such contrasting temporalities of past, present, and future was a clear tactic to attack the kind of vision for a diverse city that the urban planner Secchi and his supporters promoted. Crisis stimulated temporal thought and discourse (Knight and Stewart 2016). Temporality became a tool – a tool to win consent in the current hegemonic struggle that was playing out in the city. In retrospect, Cenni’s attack was also an attempt to secure his party’s foothold given

the threat to his legacy and then-upcoming elections of 2014¹⁴. The threat was real. Matteo Biffoni, the Democratic Party candidate, after being elected to Parliament in the winter 2013 elections, unseated Prato's mayoral incumbent in May 2014.

The right-wing, anti-globalist political rhetoric emphasized the distance and separation between Italian and Chinese residents as well as businesses. Meanwhile, the interactions between workers and employers – including local Italian owners and immigrant renters – have continued as old habits adjusted to new global conditions. Public opinion reacted to the transnational changes with an intensity reminiscent of the reactions to articles in the international press that portrayed the submersed side of Prato's impressive economic development of the 1970s. Parallels between those international journalists who appeared on the scene then to describe the contradictions of globalization – that is, the ways in which economic competition shaped working conditions and impacted the local context, completely changing quotidian dynamics and social worlds – resonate uncannily with mainstream media descriptions of the past several years.

A clash of actions to address the future of an intensely globalized city inspired this article. Conflict between a famous urban planner and a controversial mayor over how to manage the city gives a sense of the distance between two ends of a political spectrum: *mixité* vs. militarization. San Paolo and Macrolotto represent a crossroads where Little Italy and Little Wenzhou uncomfortably come together. Yet the communities share in Prato's brand of small firm development, its history of economic distinctions, and its story of outsourcing. They share temporal rhythms. They even share in unique if divergent ways to bring and sustain value related to the Made in Italy brand. Finally, they share challenges of place resulting from fast and chaotic growth without planning.

The grassroots initiative, the Gymnasium of Ideas, brought together residents to foster dialogue on issues such as urban renewal and local economic possibilities. Many of the participants grappled with dis-

¹⁴<http://www.notiziediprato.it/news/cenni-boccia-secchi-sul-macrolotto-zero-sembra-sbarcato-da-un-astronave-aliena>

placement from textile-related jobs due to forces of globalization. The organizers, who came together in a former communist-turned-moderate leftist cultural club, grappled with community members to generate ideas about the future of work, the Made in Italy brand, and the future of the city. They searched to forge a politically viable counterdiscourse to that of the seductive xenophobic one of the right. In no small part, they were responding to hostile actions of the mayor, such as the ghetto-style ordinance, which only applied to residents and establishments in the primarily Chinese neighborhood of Macrolotto Zero. Although two years later a high court deemed this policy to be discriminatory, aggressive helicopter patrols and factory raids were ongoing as was blatant hostility toward attempts to counter segregation with diversity management and participatory planning, as evidenced in the former mayor's response to the event "An Idea of the City", which opened this article.

The scaffold for this essay has been assembled through place-based ethnography and analysis; it has focused on how citizens engage in value-making actions; and it has considered how temporality is deployed, i.e., how the past is conveniently forgotten to construct a certain kind of resident-citizen. Local interventions at envisioning and enacting an idea of the city revealed the challenges of bringing together Chinese and Italian residents to forge collective histories and futures.

The forces of industrial decline, financial crisis, and immigrant influx have created a «crisis of authority». Such a crisis occurs, in Gramsci's estimation, «if the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e., is no longer "leading", but only "dominant"». Gramsci's observation applies particularly well to the crisis of presence. «The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born», yet in this whirl of crisis there exists the «possibility and necessity of creating a new culture» (Gramsci 1971, 276). Gramsci's insights related to culture and power have proved once again to be formidable and lasting in a variety of historical moments and social settings.

Our place-based focus on action as value-making yields understanding of how urban spaces evolve over time and how grassroots action enacts value and foments the new. The presence of transnational migrant workers and their families has made San Paolo and Macrolotto

Zero more complex than they were in the past, presenting new challenges and opportunities for realizing *mixité*. Historical conjunctures involve 1) transnational cultural practices and “passageways” between local/regional and global markets; 2) spheres of segregation and integration that operate on multiple levels; and 3) places where diversity is expressed in terms of an extraordinary *mixité* in the urban landscape. All told, a flow of meanings and situations require constant capacity at reading, engaging, and interpreting. The contemporary system of globalization brings people together and taxes their bodies, senses, relationships, and prospects in new ways that have inspired us to apply understanding to local conditions in which we find ourselves living, working, and collaborating.

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