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Receptive Cities?
Institutional Narratives of Migrants' Integration
and Migrants' own Perceptions of Receptiveness
in Brighton and Bologna

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Abstract

Located at the intersection of human geography and political sociology, this thesis examines how two cities have constructed and established public narratives of ‘receptiveness’ and the degree to which their respective narratives include or exclude ethnic diversity. The study is a cross-country city-level comparison between Brighton, UK, and Bologna, Italy. It draws on eight months of qualitative field research including 58 in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observations at public events held explicitly to foster diversity in the local community.

Both cities are noted for being ‘tolerant’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014) and ‘hospitable’ (Scuzzarello 2015), which forms a core element of their public self-image. Built as a party town and well-known for being the home of the largest Gay Pride of Britain, Brighton is popularly described as young, artistic and unconventional. Bologna, with its historical role as the leader of the Italian Left and the oldest university in Europe, has a reputation as a city of culture and political rights. In both cases, the study shows that ‘diversity’ is the main – albeit not unique – factor on which local receptiveness is built. To gauge how narratives on receptiveness produced from ‘above’ and from ‘below’ interact and/or contrast, my analysis differentiates between the perspectives of representatives of the local government, on one side, and members of migrants’ grassroots associations, on the other.

Looking at similarities and difference between institutional and grassroots narratives, this study provides valuable insights on how diversity and, in turn, receptiveness are framed in distinct contexts. I first pay attention to diversity as a social fact, by examining local demographics, then shift to diversity as a public narrative or

‘trademark’ of the city. Secondly, I focus on the political formations through which migrants can participate in local politics and on the collective identities that are deemed to ‘fit in’ the local community. While these place-narratives of openness undoubtedly project a positive self-image, migrants criticise this ‘receptiveness’ as superficial, restricted to certain groups, and based on ‘desired ends’ (Stokowski 2002).

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WORK NOT SUBMITTED ELSEWHERE FOR EXAMINATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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Glossary

BH	Brighton & Hove
BME	Black and Ethnic Minority
BMECP	Black and Ethnic Minority Community Partnership
BO	Bologna
DOS	Discursive Opportunity Structure
POS	Political Opportunity Structure

Writing conventions

When reporting a quote from either a scholar or an interview I have placed it in inverted commas. I have also done the same with words that need an explanation when used for the first time. Terms in a foreign language are in italics.

When translating my interviewees' quotes from Italian I tried to remain as close as possible to their original meaning, in order to convey the message in the most exact way possible. However, sometimes this needed to be slightly adjusted to result in grammatically and structurally correct English.

The terms 'Black and Ethnic Minorities', including its various ethnic classifications, and 'foreigners' reflect the political language used in the case study's country.

'Informants', 'participants', 'respondents' and 'interviewees' are used as synonyms throughout the thesis.

We don't walk around our neighbourhood thinking, "How's this experiment going?"

This is not how people live. It's just a fact, a fact of life.

Zadie Smith

The doors out, which is to say the doors to richer destinations, were heavily guarded, but the doors in, the doors from poorer places, were mostly left unsecured, perhaps in the hope that people would go back to where they came from – although almost no one ever did – or perhaps because there were simply too many doors from too many poorer places to guard them all.

Mohsin Hamid

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Receptive cities?

One afternoon during the part of my fieldwork I spent in Bologna, I telephoned one of my prospective informants, a man of mixed Italian-Somali heritage, to check if he was available for an interview. After introducing myself and explaining from whom I had got his number, I started describing my research interests and my project. I told him that I had decided to study Brighton and Bologna because of their well-established reputations for being ‘tolerant’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014) and ‘hospitable’ (Scuzzarello 2015) places. I wanted to dig deeper into their reputations, examining the factors that lie at the core of these narratives. Through this enquiry I could, in turn, analyse the broader discourses of ‘receptiveness’ in the two cities, understanding the meaning given to this term and who can take advantage of it. In addition to this, I also aimed to understand the level of accuracy with which the local public image was supported and shared by different groups coexisting in the city.

I was specifically interested in migrants: my focus was on whether and how they were part of the stories told about the two cities, and on how their inclusion was narrated by representatives of the local governments. More importantly, I wanted to gauge migrants’ own views on the city’s inclusiveness, from both the cultural and political sides. Ultimately, I wanted to understand why the popular ideas of Brighton and Bologna are of cities where everyone, including migrants, is welcome and can live well. I thought the description of my research was clear and the idea behind it strong, but – to my surprise – the man said sarcastically:

‘This idea of yours to investigate welcoming cities...there is no such thing! The world is not a welcoming place!’

I clearly remember how, in the face of that caustic comment, some of the certainties related to my study wavered. How was it possible that someone who lived in Bologna did not agree with an idea about the city that, to me, was so well-deserved? What was his perception of it, then? But, most of all, why?

Perhaps the reason why I was so sure that my interviewees would tell me a specific story about Bologna was that the very story I had in mind – that of a left-wing, liberal, inclusive city – was the narrative that I had been hearing for years myself. In the popular imaginary, Bologna is the archetype of the Italian left-wing city. The local Communist Party had been in power for nearly 50 years, from the Liberation from the Nazi-fascist regime in 1946 to 1993, after which other more moderate left-wing parties had control of the Council.¹ It was also a city where manufacturing was the most profitable economic sector, and this was associated with the presence of a high number of industrial workers, considered the Communist Party’s most dedicated supporters. This vision reflected more realistically the situation in the factories during the 1960s and 1970s (Piano B Group 2007) than the contemporary one, but it nonetheless held a certain degree of truth in my eyes. The town’s political character is visible in everyday activities and events: Bologna was well-known across Italy for its self-managed social centres where underground culture flourished, producing music and street art (Bandolo 2018). It was the city of the anti-prohibitionist Street Parade, organised by the social centre Livello57, during which trucks playing deafening music would pass through the city centre followed by a huge crowd. But it was also, in connection to this political

¹ There has been only a single break in the line of left-wing administrations. It lasted from 1999 to 2004, corresponding to the Guazzaloca administration, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 7.

dimension, home to the oldest university in Europe, where students would fill the city squares.

I wondered if this openness was a privilege that only Italians could perceive or take advantage of. However, during the time I spent in Bologna as a student, I was continuously exposed to initiatives fostering the local plurality of cultures and condemning racism. It was common, while walking through the streets of the centre, to see a poster advertising a ‘multiethnic party’ as ‘*Indovina chi viene a pranzo*’ (‘Guess who is coming for lunch’²) or the ‘*Mondiali Antirazzisti*’ (‘Antiracist world cup’³) banner. When I was a student, I volunteered for the *Universo Interculturale* (Intercultural Universe) association, which provided support to asylum seekers and migrants, and I was in touch with members of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and cooperative societies managing programmes for the reception of asylum seekers in the city. I bought into that image of Bologna as an alternative, politically and culturally welcoming city, and there he was, someone at the other end of the telephone line, who not only did not see in the city what I saw, but who also did not seem to have the same attachment to it as I had.

By that time, I had already interviewed a number of local government representatives, who generally fostered a vision of Bologna as hospitable and welcoming, considering this ‘a well-deserved reputation’ [Respondent 5 BO/institutions] on political, social or cultural grounds, as one Councillor argued. I understood that the ‘reputation’ of a city, which in this study I define as the most established narrative about it, does neither always, nor completely, correspond to

² *Indovina chi viene a pranzo* is a lunch event organised by a group of local associations featuring food from various countries.

³ The *Mondiali Antirazzisti* is a series of sport competitions promoting the values of antiracism, fair play, anti-violence, inclusion, and mutual respect.

reality. However, noticing that the difference between the discourses of the representatives of local institutions and those of individuals engaged in grassroots activism could be so wide and could trigger such harsh reactions, was, at the very least, a sign that it was worth exploring these dynamics in more depth. This was exactly what I replied to him. I explained that my aim was not only to understand which narratives about the cities had been constructed and reproduced over time, but also by whom. Identifying more than one story about these places, more than one opinion on their alleged openness and on the local inclusion of migrants, was perhaps unexpected, but certainly interesting. Later that night, when we met for a more extended conversation, I had the feeling that he did not disagree with my research, but rather that he wanted me to prove my point before he disclosed his personal views.

This episode was unique, although throughout my fieldwork I heard similar – but extremely subtle – comments from members of local grassroots associations in both Brighton and Bologna. For example, when introducing the topic of my research to Respondent 11[BO/foreigners], a woman originally from Iran but living in Bologna since 1980, I used a conversation opener along the lines of, ‘When I talk about Bologna to people from my hometown, they all have an image of it as very open and receptive’. Her reply to this was an ironic exclamation: ‘Ah, really?! Is this what people say?!’ She toned down this statement over the course of her interview, during which she acknowledged the truthfulness of the mainstream place-narratives, although only partially and in relation to a past when the city reflected such narratives for real.

My informants’ behaviours and reactions were usually spontaneous: their comments in response to my questions, although sometimes unexpected, were straightforward and useful for adjusting my research scope. Through this study, I explore the different narratives that have been constructed and reproduced about

Brighton and Bologna and their residents. I distinguish between the stories narrated by local government representatives and by members of migrants' associations in order to examine whether the elements said to lie at the core of each city's character are the same or not. Looking both at the narratives constructed by institutions, or from 'above', and at the grassroots level, or from 'below', also makes it possible to understand whether openness and migrants' inclusion in the city are narrated in the same way or not and, in the latter case, the issues that prevent effective inclusion. Further on, I provide a detailed description of my research context, presenting the reason that led me to this research and to identify the two cases studies, together with the academic rationale for this research. In the light of this description, my informants' reactions to the mainstream narrative of a 'receptive city' will become clearer.

1.2 Research aims, questions and contributions

My research is a city-level, cross-country comparison looking at Brighton and Bologna, with the aim of investigating their reputation as 'receptive cities'. The overarching question guiding it is therefore: *what explains the convergences and divergences between the institutional representation of receptiveness and the experience of it on the ground?*

I first analyse the narratives about these two cities, identifying their core elements and distinguishing between institutional and grassroots perspectives. While the geographical comparison provides insight into the place-specific factors upon which local narratives are based, as opposed to their reproducible factors, the comparison between institutional and grassroots narratives uncovers the power hidden in the 'mainstream' (or institutional) narratives by exposing their possible contradictions and/or reality fabrications. The study starts by examining how each city is narrated in

cultural terms, using the concept of sense of place as a guide. It then shifts to the political sphere, identifying the principles guiding local policies for social inclusion and the collective identities that are considered legitimate. Throughout the thesis, I connect the analysis of these themes to the presence of migrants in the cities. I consider if and how they are narrated as part of these cities, the principles that guide their inclusion in the majority society, and the lines along which they are expected and/or allowed to participate in local politics.

I unpack the main research question into six minor points, three for each group of participants. Although they address the same issues, they had to be adapted to the group chosen as object of inquiry to grasp the differences between the narratives from ‘above’ and those from ‘below’. Concerning the representatives of local governments, I address the following questions:

- *How are institutional narratives of receptiveness constructed in Brighton and Bologna?* As anticipated, this question explores the reputations of the two cities, exploring the elements that have shaped these narratives of ‘receptiveness’.
- *Who is depicted as an ‘integrated migrant’ and why?* With this question, I aim to explore how local place-narratives describe migrants and according to which conditions they are framed as ‘fitting in’ with each city’s character.
- *How do local government representatives describe their policies for social inclusion and the principles guiding them?* This question shifts attention from the cultural to the political sphere, exploring the political formations through which migrants have more opportunities to participate in local politics in each of the two cities. The question also examines the lines or characteristics that are considered ‘legitimate’ in the political context. I focus on this institutional part of the comparison in Chapters 4 and 6.

With respect to the second group, the members of grassroots migrants' associations, I address the following questions:

- *How are grassroots narratives of receptiveness constructed in Brighton and Bologna?*
- *How do migrants see themselves as 'fitting in', particularly in relation to their treatment by native residents?* In contrast to the second question above, this question explores migrants' perception of native residents' beliefs about the characteristics that define a migrant as 'integrated'. This discussion has valuable potential for opening up other relevant conversations about discrimination, racism, and hate crime in the two cities.
- *What is the perception of the members of migrants' associations on their chances to participate in local politics and interact with local authorities?* This question serves to gauge the local political structure's design and the forms and lines of association to which migrants have access. I explore these points in Chapters 5 and 7.

The way in which I have structured my research project is in itself a contribution to the literature. While both the cultural and political aspects of places have been investigated, generating a rich number of studies on sense of place (Massey 1991), place-narratives, policy narratives (Scuzzarello 2010, 2015), and Political and Discursive Opportunity Structure (Koopmans & Statham 2000), these themes have rarely been connected. My decision to bridge these bodies of literature can inform a more widely encompassing picture of how different elements shape life in the city. The way in which native residents approach ethnic diversity not only at the everyday street level, but also through the work of institutional bodies, depends on both cultural and political factors. Together and simultaneously, although in different ways, they influence residents' attitudes and actions. Therefore, they should be studied together to

gain a better understanding of why and how issues such as racism and hate crime occur and are addressed in two cities that are commonly narrated as being free from violence and intolerance.

Second, the comparison between narratives from ‘above’ and from ‘below’ contributes to a more precise analysis of local dynamics of power and how they influence the production of narratives. Equally, the exploration of the political and discursive structure of Brighton and Bologna can uncover the conditions through which migrants can participate in local politics and be considered to be ‘fitting in’. Furthermore, the comparative design contributes to the literature on policy narratives, as it has the potential to separate place-specific factors from reproducible ones and, through this, to isolate the cultural factors and policy approaches that can improve the receptiveness of other cities. Finally, this thesis also allows the reader to achieve an empirical understanding of the social inclusion of migrants in Brighton and Bologna. Through the data collected, it can shed light on the level of support that local place-narratives of receptiveness receive from migrants themselves and on the existence and management of social issues preventing effective inclusion.

1.3 Brighton and Bologna as receptive cities – the context

I lived in Bologna from the beginning of my Master’s degree in 2010 until 2014, right before starting my PhD. What prompted me to move there was surely the course I had chosen, but I would be lying if I said that the character of the city did not play a role in my decision. To be honest, I am not able to say which of the two elements had more importance in my decision, and this is a first demonstration of how well-established narratives about cities can be in the common imaginary. Bologna is the capital of the Emilia-Romagna region in the North of Italy and is also the seventh largest city in the

country in terms of number of residents, with 387,044 (Comune di Bologna 2016) inhabitants living in the city itself and around 1 million in its greater area. Of those living in the actual city, in February 2016⁴ foreign-born residents accounted for 15.24% (Comune di Bologna 2016).

It is home of the oldest university in Europe, established in 1088, around which the city has built a considerable part of its prestige. However, the culture for which it is famous is not only related to higher education. The turmoil taking place in the many social centres of the city is, as mentioned in section 1.1, key in distinguishing it from other Italian towns with old and well-established universities. Emilia-Romagna has long been an industrial area, which also makes Bologna well-known for its manufacturing production. The high number of industrial workers is one of the elements explaining the historically deeply-rooted presence of the Communist Party and, more generally, the left-wing allegiance of the city, which reached its peak during the Resistance against the Nazi-fascist regime in World War II. The connection between the cultural and political sectors can be easily gauged from the widespread establishment of grassroots associations in the Region. Civic engagement has characterised the area (and, more generally, the North of Italy) since medieval times. In his research on Italian regional governments, Putnam (1993) concluded that this not only generates mutual trust but also positively impacts on the performance of local institutions. Although his research has been criticised as too simplistic, his findings are well-known in the Bologna area, which I realised when some of my informants explicitly mentioned them to support the city-narrative.

⁴ The demographic data refer to 2016, as that is when I conducted my fieldwork.

Bologna's Urban Centre study (2013) on local city branding describes the city as 'caring and welcoming', 'young and open-minded', 'a workshop of innovation', and 'a city of culture and creativity'. It is sufficient to read some media headlines to spot the same mix of characteristics that are said to provide the city with a unique identity and determine its relationships with individuals – what I define as the local 'sense of place' (Campelo *et al.* 2014). For instance, Bologna Today (2017), a local online magazine, refers to 'Bologna the welcoming city: migrants marching through the centre', while on Facebook there are pages and events as 'Bologna welcomes: no one is illegal'. Equally frequent are online pages such as 'Bologna open city', advertising tourist routes and landmarks. Whether connected to culture, politics, or tourism, the narrative of Bologna as 'welcoming' and 'open' is visible, well-known, and pervasive from the institutional to the everyday level.

Brighton is located in the county of East Sussex, on the south coast of England, and is ranked the 42nd most populous district in England (ONS 2018) with a population of 273,369 (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011⁵). According to the 2011 Census Briefing (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011), 16% of the local population is estimated to be non-UK born, while the percentage of local residents classified as BME is 19.5%. These data are both necessary, since the BMEs include both migrants and their descendants whose ethnicity is not white British (Institute of Race Relations 2017). The word 'foreigners' on the other hand, which I use to refer to individuals settled in Bologna but originally from a different country, is used both in the institutional and informal register. I expand on the meaning of these two terms in the empirical chapters, providing some clarifying examples and explaining why, despite their similarity, it is not possible to merge them under a single definition.

⁵ The 2011 Census is still the most complete demographic report on Brighton.

Brighton is, like Bologna, a student town, although the establishment of the two local universities, the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton, is much more recent than in Bologna. The University of Sussex was established in 1959 while Brighton Polytechnic was granted the status of university in 1992 under the Further and Higher Education Act, thus becoming the University of Brighton. However, the city had already been used to receiving students, even if in small numbers, since the mid-19th century when the Brighton School of Arts was opened. Their numbers are nowadays high for the size of the town, in part because of the population of temporary language students in addition to students enrolled in the two local universities (Visit Brighton 2018).

What is locally well-established, however, is the character of holiday and party town with which Brighton was developed from the mid-18th century, lies at the heart of the connotation of it as ‘artistic’ and home to members of the LGBTQ+ community. Its very own landmark, the Royal Pavilion, was built, starting in 1787, as the holiday residence of George IV. Its style, resembling 19th century Indian buildings, not only recalls the British Empire but also gives the town a ‘flamboyant’ flavour. In connection to this, Brighton’s economy is heavily tourism-, retail-, and service- based, with the three sectors often merging. The art-loving, crafty and – not to be forgotten – green ‘own character’ (see Massey 1991) for which Brighton is best known is clearly visible in the central Lanes and the North Laine areas, which feature a series of vintage shops and independent vegan cafés. With its display of eco-friendly businesses and a Green MP, early this year Brighton was crowned the ‘most hipster city’ in the world (Dickinson 2018).

Although tourism has registered a decline in recent years (BBC News 2016), Brighton remains the city where Londoners go for the weekend to enjoy music and

cultural events. Its Gay Pride celebration, usually organised at the beginning of August, is the largest and most renowned in Britain and its fame is closely connected to the image of Brighton as the ‘gay capital of England’ (Evening Standard 2004). As I describe in Chapter 4, the presence of members of the LGBTQ+ community is long-established, dating back to the construction of the London-Brighton railway half way through the 19th century. With this transport expansion, artists who could not afford to live in London settled in Brighton and this paved the way for the association of the city with both artistic and LGBTQ+ communities, which often overlap in the popular narrative. Businesses involved in the media sector, and in particular ‘new media’, are also widespread in the city, which confirms – perhaps in a modern version – its artistic character. Interestingly, but perhaps less evidently, Brighton also has the highest rate of homelessness outside London, with 1 in 69 people sleeping rough (The Argus 2016). Three areas within the city, East Brighton (particularly St. James’s Street and Eastern Road), plus ‘Queen’s Park, and Moulsecoomb & Bevendean, have also been ranked in the top 10 percent of national deprivation’ (Hastings & St. Leonard’s Observer 2016). Not only do these figures show a more hidden face of the city, but also problematise the city’s narrative of openness, receptiveness, and harmony.

Local institutions describe the city as willing to be ‘inclusive for everyone’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2018), ‘renowned for its culture of tolerance’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014), and a ‘friendly city’ (Visit Brighton 2018). Since my fieldwork in Brighton began in September 2015 – the most intense point of the so-called refugee crisis – a new spotlight has been directed onto asylum seekers. Local charities’ and grassroots associations’ initiatives in solidarity with asylum seekers have multiplied under the guidance of the umbrella-organisation Sanctuary on the Sea (part of the City of Sanctuary network). However, I found it very revealing that, even on the webpage of

the Brighton & Hove City Council dedicated to the City of Sanctuary network, the city's inclusivity is based on

‘our worldwide reputation for being somewhere that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people tend to feel safe and accepted, with the most gay-friendly Council in the country’ (Brighton & Hove Sanctuary on the Sea Group 2015).

As in the case of Bologna, Brighton's tolerant character appears very strong and widely acknowledged – this time in connection to gender and sexuality.

This overview of the research context has shown that the two cities chosen as case studies have many similarities. They are both medium-sized towns within their respective countries, with migrants accounting for a similar percentage of the city population (15.24% foreigners in Bologna versus 16% non-UK born in Brighton⁶). Both are towns with a significant presence of students and a huge focus on culture, and they have a clear political allegiance that, either leftist or green, opposes conservatism. In addition, the mainstream narratives about both cities are based on tolerance, inclusion, and receptiveness. However, their sense of place is not identical: while Brighton's inclusivity appears to focus on the LGBTQ+ community and more generally on gender and sexuality, Bologna's appears to be framed along political lines and is more directly connected to immigration.

I decided to investigate these two cities' stories and the impact they have on people for a number of reasons, originating from a personal motive. I experienced the appeal of Bologna myself even before deciding to move there. It was because of this, and because of the good quality of life I had while living in the city, that I wanted to

⁶ In the case of Brighton it is essential to add the percentage of BMEs too (19.5%). Foreign-born people are not necessarily BMEs and, equally, BMEs are not necessarily foreign born. I address this issue in Chapters 4 and 5.

investigate how and why it had achieved this reputation. The second and consequent reason was then to enquire into the degree of truth that the city-narratives of receptiveness hold for migrants. For the sake of clarity, I find it crucial to explain that within a concept as broad as receptiveness, the aspect in which I am interested concerns migration and ethnic diversity.

Together with these first two aims, I wanted to understand whether it is possible to export the elements which are the basis of these narratives of receptiveness to other cities, in an attempt to make more cities ‘receptive’. But for this a single case study would have been too limited. Understanding the origin of Bologna’s place-narrative would not have been sufficient to establish whether those grounding elements are specific to that place or can be reproduced. A comparison with Brighton could instead pin down the differences between these two types of factors and examine local political and cultural strengths and weaknesses, and upon which institutions efforts to make cities more receptive should focus.

Moreover, this research’s distinguishing trait is to add a second level of comparison to the geographical one. As demonstrated through the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter, the narratives about a place that become accepted and renowned at a mainstream level are not necessarily shared by the totality of the local population. Hence, I divided my respondents into two groups in each city: on the one side I had representatives of the local government who could provide me with narratives ‘from above’, while, on the other, I had members of grassroots associations of BMEs (in Britain) or foreigners (in Italy) who could provide me with the narratives ‘from below’. The latter are particularly precious because they are based on personal and direct experiences. As Castañeda (2018) argues in his book ‘A Place to Call Home’,

‘immigrants themselves are the best judges of whether a particular city is predominantly hostile or welcoming.’

In Chapter 3, I provide a detailed account of the characteristics according to which I selected my participants.

However, the importance of this investigation goes beyond my personal interests and reasons. The populations of both world capitals and smaller cities have become more and more diverse during recent decades, inducing scholars such as Vertovec (2007) to describe it as ‘unprecedented’. We live in increasingly diverse environments, where contact with people of different ethnicities and nationalities happens daily. However, the recent right-wing drift of many European and world countries has ignited feelings of nationalism, racism, and xenophobia that can have dangerous effects on an individual and wider societal/political level, together with the introduction of more and more restrictive policies in terms of Migration Law. Many scholars, such as Castañeda (2018), believe that in such a context, cities that hold a reputation for being accepting and open towards diversity or, as I define it in this thesis, for being receptive, can be a model to which other cities can aspire and follow to resist nationalist, racist, and xenophobic trends and to make migrants feel ‘at home’.

1.4 A place with a character – the cultural aspect

My research is located at the intersection of the disciplines of human geography and political sociology, engaging respectively with place-narratives and with the political formations and axes according to which migrants’ participation in the political sphere is considered ‘legitimate’. It employs a Political Opportunity Structure approach, inquiring on those groups whose participation in local policies this framework fails to predict.

Space and place have long fascinated academics, generating a rich body of literature. Although the two terms might seem similar, they refer to two distinct concepts, the latter differing from the former because of the value that humans attribute to it (see Tuan 1977:6). Interactions between geographical space and individuals are necessary to establish which ‘space’ is also a ‘place’, since humans are the ones capable of attributing value, meaning, and, ultimately, a ‘character’ to a material environment, as argued by scholars such as Harvey (1990) and Massey (1991).

This character can be understood and/or described as the place’s identity (Kyle & Chick 2007, Lewicka 2008), or the set of core traits that makes it unique. In my research, Brighton’s identity emerges as an art-loving city, home to members of the LGBTQ+ community, and Bologna’s as the home of the oldest university in Europe and a stronghold of the Italian Left. The concept could also be described as ‘place dependence’ (Williams *et al.* 1992), which indicates how those characteristics mentioned above influence the people living in that place and determine, for example, behaviours that become typically associated with the residents of the area. The organisation of festivals and events celebrating diversity of gender and sexuality in Brighton and of those supporting asylum seekers’ and migrants’ rights in Bologna, and, more generally, the ‘acceptance’ and ‘openness’ towards diversity associated with the residents of the two cities, are clear examples of how a place can be seen as the origin of its inhabitants’ nature. The very peculiar and affective bond that sometimes and for various reasons connects people to places is defined as place attachment (Rollero & De Piccoli 2010). In my empirical chapters, I discuss personal experiences extracted from my informants’ interviews that identify the reasons why Brighton and Bologna appealed to them and/or to others and the feelings these bonds generate.

These three concepts are equally important for, and part of the construction of, a ‘sense’ of place, which is then passed on through conversations and stories to the point of becoming established (Johnstone 1990). Over time, narratives of places (or place-narratives) gain increasing legitimacy in public discourse, to the point that they are usually no longer questioned. This is considered the moment when places ‘come into existence’, as Ryden (1993:242) explains by saying that ‘places do not exist until they are verbalised’. However, the fact that these specific images are taken for granted does not mean that they correspond to reality. In Section 1.1, I demonstrated that not only can there be more than one narrative about the same place, but these narratives might be in opposition. But, when place-narratives are contested, this means that the very identity of the place is contested. Thus, questioning the core elements of narratives about Brighton and Bologna, while additionally examining similarities and differences between institutional and grassroots narratives, can uncover the parts of the story about which these actors agree and those about which they do not. This opens up the possibility of questioning why institutional and grassroots actors do not agree on certain parts of place-narratives, which can uncover unexpected or unknown issues affecting the city. More importantly, this comparison can provide an understanding of how the existence of competing narratives can impact on local populations.

Bodies of literature engaging with space and place, place-narratives, and sense of place are part of the academic tradition of human geography. Despite its focus on individuals’ relationships with the environment and the impact of these, analyses of sense of place have rarely touched upon migration. Rather, the concept has been mostly discussed in relation to globalisation and power geometry (Massey 1991, 2012), individuals’ attitudes and behaviours (Jorgensen & Stedman 2001), tourism (Campelo *et al.* 2014), and even ecosystem management (Williams & Stewart 1998). Studies on

city branding (Landry 2012) provide some hints to the reason why a city can attract a specific kind of incomers depending on its public image, although they do not problematise migration as such. Only more recently has research, such as Glick Schiller and Schmidt's (2016), connected cities as physical places with a specific scale positioning to migration and migrants' incorporation. I situate my research in a continuum with Glick Schiller and Schmidt's (2016) study, adding an exploration of place-narratives both at the institutional and grassroots level.

The reason why I divided my respondent sample into two groups, according to the role they play in their local community, goes back to the initial anecdote about my informant scoffing at my description of Bologna. What I had in mind as the established narrative about the city, and what I have called the 'mainstream narrative', is a vision of the town mainly produced by representatives of the local government. This narrative 'brands' (Landry 2012) or 'markets' the city to make it more appealing for tourism, investment, and inward migration. Hence, it only represents a partial vision. Even if this represents an issue for the truthfulness of the narrative itself, in the literature there is very limited mention of whose experiences, feelings, and aims are the most influential in constructing and reproducing place-narratives. According to scholars such as Stokowski (2002), the construction and reproduction of narratives strongly depend on the power of the category of people producing them. In the context of my study, the narratives that have gained high visibility and strength over time are those produced or supported by local political and economic powers. Including more than one category of respondent in my project has the potential to uncover the dynamics and discourses of power underlying the construction and reproduction of narratives of receptiveness. Furthermore, it highlights the voices of those who are usually left out from these narratives precisely because of this lack of power.

1.5 A place with a structure – the political aspect

Johnstone (1990) demonstrates that place-narratives can shape our perception of a place and also of the issues affecting it. They direct the attention of politicians, policy-makers, and media to specific sectors, and this determines the perceived need to develop policies connected to these sectors. In the section above, I introduced how sense of place (Tuan 1975, Massey 1991, Campelo *et al.* 2014) is rooted in narration and, through it, projects a public image of the place and its community that becomes part of the cultural knowledge about it. Since this project focuses on narratives of receptiveness towards ethnic diversity, I look at the different place-narratives behind Brighton's and Bologna's sense of place with the aim of pinning down how diversity is framed in these two places.

However, even if sense of place and place-narratives are connected to policies, the political set-up of a city – my unit of analysis – ultimately depends on a set of rules designed at the national level, to which the local dimension adds specific features (Garbaye 2005, Caponio 2006). The field of political sociology explores how, within every context, there are factors facilitating or preventing the political participation of specific groups. The analysis of these factors was initially applied to social movements, studying their possibilities of success in a certain context, and only later shifted to migration, with a more specific focus on migrants' organisations. This framework, defined as Political Opportunity Structure (Tarrow 1996, Koopmans 2004), is the lens through which I look at local policies for social inclusion in my case studies and, more broadly, the main approach I employ in my thesis. In a well-known definition, Tarrow (1996:149) describes the Political Opportunity Structure as those

‘consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements.’

Examining the principles guiding local policies and the projects in place to improve social inclusion allowed me to gauge which political bodies (associations, unions, NGOs, et cetera) are deemed as legitimately entering the political sphere in each of the case study cities. In addition, through this analysis I identified the lines along which members of these bodies associate, such as, for instance, gender, sexuality or political allegiance. As mentioned above, I focus on the ways in which migrants are narrated as ‘legitimately’ accessing the local political sphere or as ‘fitting in’. More concretely, I analyse the political bodies they form and/or join that are considered legitimate and the lines along which they associate. Arguably, BMEs in Brighton participate in local politics through different bodies compared to foreigners in Bologna, and/or associate according to different criteria. However, this does not mean that their experiences of political participation do not share many contact points. Several scholars (Portes, Escobar & Arana 2008, Però & Solomos 2010, Pilati 2011) have studied migrants’ political incorporation at the local level, which is also relevant in relation to both political sociology and migration. However, even though it is closely related to Political Opportunity Structure, in my research I touch on migrants’ local incorporation only when reporting my participants’ accounts.

I preferred to focus on narratives of integration rather than on incorporation practices as such, in an attempt to include both the cultural and political aspects of place-narratives. Local public discourse has the capability to influence the lines according to which migrants associate. In fact, some factors (for instance, the conception of citizenship and national identity) determine how the relationship between

the majority society and migrants is framed in a specific place. For example, the importance of race and ethnicity in the British national context means that the divide between who is part of the white British majority and who belongs to a Black, Asian, or Arab minority lies in race or ethnicity, and that, most likely, people will associate along those lines to participate in politics, either through ‘formal’ participation and/or less formal activism or mobilisation. In contrast, in Italy the emphasis on nationality is greater than on ethnicity, which also marks the line along which most migrants’ associations are set up. Certain factors affect the collective identities according to which migrants associate and are defined as legitimate. These have been explored in the literature under the name of Discursive Opportunity Structure (Koopmans & Statham 1999a, 2000), which completes the analysis of the political sphere through the Political Opportunity Structure mentioned above. Koopmans and Statham (1999a) separate the Discursive Opportunity Structure from the Political Opportunity Structure, defining it as

‘The aspects of the public discourse that determine a message’s chances of diffusion in the public sphere.’

When examining Brighton’s and Bologna’s public discourses in relation to migration and ethnic diversity, I aimed to pin down the collective identities that are considered legitimate for migrants in that context and, in turn, which migrants are considered to ‘fit in’ and why. Ethnicity had a controversial role in the local POS and DOS alike, being the dimension determining exclusion from the local understanding of diversity and, in turn, from policies for social inclusion.

1.6 Looking for ‘insights into subjectivity’ – the methods

To construct and reproduce place-narratives also means to construct and reproduce a specific truth about an environment (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001), in this case a city. This process of truth construction guided my data collection and is the basis of my choice of research methods. To collect the data upon which I based my study, I used interviews and observations. Interviews, and the interview process itself, are defined as the ideal method to gain access to an informant’s subjective vision of the world (Atkinson & Silverman 1997, Rapley 2004). The informants’ own lived experiences and feelings constitute their truth. However, interviews also address actual facts, such as the demographic composition of the city, and both interpretations of lived everyday experiences and facts were essential for this study.

The interviews covered three main areas: the local sense of place, focusing on its constitutive dimensions and origins, local politics for social inclusion (addressing the principles guiding them and the relations between the local government and the migrants’ associations), and racism in its institutional and street-level dimension, all of which points are connected to both the cultural and political framing of migrants. In each city, I divided my sample between respondents who worked as representatives of various departments and services of the local government, most of whom worked for the City Council, and members of migrants’ associations of various types, from cultural associations to unions. Although I have until now used the term ‘migrant’, in the following chapters I distinguish between ‘BMEs’ and ‘foreigners’ because they originate from a different political design, and also because, although similar, they carry a slightly different meaning. I discuss this in detail in Chapters 5 and 7.

My methodology also included an ethnographic component, during which I observed in person the interaction between native and non-native residents during a

number of cultural events. I conducted some participant observation at events fostering cultural diversity in the city, which were organised, sponsored, or supported by the local Council. My goal was to verify whether the local place-narratives were reflected in the events' organisation, purpose, and presentation and also, crucially, to gauge what kind of interaction took place between native and non-native residents. These methods complement the interviews because they uncover possible anomalies between people's perception and reality in terms of actual intercultural interactions and, in turn, fabrications of the two cities' 'realities'.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 2 engages with the analysis of relevant literature on sense of place, place-narratives, policy narratives, and Political and Discursive Opportunity Structure, in order to provide a broad overview of the most relevant studies conducted in these fields to date. Not only do they lay the ground for my research, but an outline of previous research also allows me to identify the gaps in the various streams of literature and to give a sense of where is possible to build bridges between them. First, I examine the origin and complexity of the concept of sense of place and place-narrative using the work of, among others, Massey (1991, 1994) and Campelo *et al.* (2014). I then shift my attention to the analysis of power intrinsic in the production and reproduction of narratives (Stokowski 2002). In discussing these concepts, I provide a framework for my own investigation of sense of place and the identification of its core elements in Brighton and Bologna. I also identify the different chances that narratives belonging to different categories have to become established according to their authors' political, cultural, and/or economic power. I then move onto an overview of the literature on Political and Discursive Opportunity Structure

(Koopmans & Statham 2000, Koopmans & Olzak 2004), which plays a central role in my thesis, looking at it with a critical approach. Exploring first the factors preventing or facilitating migrants' associations' participation in the political sphere and then the lines and forms of associations 'legitimated' in the local public discourse, I provide a basis for how the political framework works in my two case studies. Most importantly, I uncover the fact that POS sometimes fails to predict some categories' participation in the political sphere, connecting the reasons for this to the local narratives of diversity. To complete the understanding of this process, I focus on the notion of group and group formation in social sciences (Brubaker 2001) and their connections to public discourse. Connecting the streams of these different bodies of literature, I aim to fill a gap in the fields of human geography and political sociology that have so far analysed them separately notwithstanding their mutual influence and simultaneous action.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and design of my research, reflecting on the data collection and writing-up processes. I present the methods I chose, their qualities, and their potential, in order to justify their use. I first introduce myself as a researcher, explaining who I am and the personal characteristics that might have influenced my research, from my decision to study this topic to the way I approached my respondents and my interpretation of the data. Being aware of my possible biases is fundamental to valid and honest research but also sheds light onto issues normally faced by researchers with whom I share age, gender and my 'insider/outsider' status. Moving to the presentation of the actual research methods, I first introduce the comparative design of my study and the choice of the city as the geographic unit of the research. I then describe the process of participant selection, the sampling strategies, and the interviews, before shifting my attention to the ethnographic part of my research, explaining the rationale behind my participant observation and my selection of cultural

events. The final part of the chapter concentrates on data processing, data analysis, and writing-up, demonstrating the value of the chosen methods through the results achieved.

With Chapter 4 begins the part of the thesis relating to the empirical work, which comprises four chapters. I arranged them in order such that each one corresponds to a category of informants, that is, Brighton's local government representatives, Brighton's members of BMEs' associations, Bologna's local government representatives and Bologna's members of foreigners' associations. Chapter 4 focuses on the data collected from representatives of Brighton's local government. It reports their views on the city's sense of place and unpacks the narratives about it and identifies its fundamental elements. Diversity plays a central part in the analysis of my data, and I start by distinguishing its use as a social fact from its use as a narrative or symbol of the city (Berg & Sigona 2013). After this analysis, I shift my attention onto the local political language regarding social inclusion, looking at the meaning and implications of such terms as 'community cohesion' and 'equality'. The themes emerging from my interviewees' answers enable an understanding of the issues perceived as affecting the city, and when a hypothetical migrant is 'in tune' with the city's character. This last element is crucial to understanding who, in addition to migrants, is perceived as an 'outsider' in Brighton and the implications for local policies.

Chapter 5 follows the pattern outlined above for members of BMEs' associations in Brighton. In comparison with the previous chapter, this one is enriched by informants' direct and/or indirect experiences, adding subjectivity and depth to the story. I first explore their own notion of sense of place, looking for similarities and differences between their narratives and the meaning they attribute to diversity, and the responses from institutional respondents. I then do the same with respect to perceptions of local issues affecting residents, and of the principles guiding local policies and their

perceived effectiveness. This chapter aims not only to examine similarities and differences between the narratives of institutional and grassroots actors in Brighton, but also, through this, to uncover possible challenges faced by BMEs and to critically assess how the local government deals with them and why.

Chapters 6 and 7 shift the geographical focus to Bologna. The former follows the structure of Chapter 4, as it is centred on the analysis of the data collected from the representatives of the local government. As in the first case study, I report on the dimensions and elements considered by informants to be the origin of the local sense of place and I examine how diversity is framed in this context. Following from that, I describe their vision of an ‘integrated migrant’, or a migrant that fits in with the city’s character, as well as their perspectives on local social issues and the ways in which their institutions tackle them.

Chapter 7 closes the circle by concentrating on Bologna’s narratives of receptiveness from the side of foreigners. As in Chapter 5, I include participants’ own stories and experiences, which substantiate their claims about their own perception of sense of place, local issues affecting residents, and the functioning of policies for social inclusion. The degree of difference and contrast between their narratives and the narratives of institutional respondents gives an idea of the possible tensions between native and non-native residents but also illustrates the points on which narratives from above and from below agree. This helps to distinguish reality from the vision established by those in positions of power.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws together the key findings reported in each of the chapters and the thesis’ contributions to the literature, suggesting possible avenues for future research. In both the cities, diversity emerges as the main – albeit not unique – factor on which local receptiveness is built. Therefore, I start by discussing diversity as

a social fact. I critically look at the proportion of the local population made up of non-UK borns and BME groups in Brighton and of foreigners in Bologna. From this, I evaluate the degree of validity of the local governments' claims about the absence of residential segregation, focusing especially on BMEs' and foreigners' perspectives. I then explore the connection between demographic diversity and diversity as a narrative, questioning whether or not they align and what this means for the narratives about the two cities.

Following from this, I summarise the origin and core elements on which diversity as a narrative is based, both in Brighton and in Bologna, identifying similarities and differences between the cities but also distinguishing place-specific from reproducible (or exportable) factors. In the third part of the chapter I move onto a summary and elaboration of the political side of the story, uncovering a relevant gap in the mainstream use of the Political Opportunity Structure framework. In fact, while this approach would normally predict a certain outcome in the degree of political inclusion/participation of migrants, strictly based on political factors, I demonstrate that there are cases in which the results are unexpected. On the basis of my enquiry, I argue that political factors alone are not sufficient to foresee the inclusion of categories such as BMEs and/or foreigners, but that we should rather include a focus on cultural elements too; such as the local place-narratives. I compare and contrast the ways in which local issues are framed and in which local policies to tackle them are designed. I also, and more importantly, discuss how the inclusion of people of different ethnicities is narrated, through which channels and formations they participate in local political life, and along which lines they associate. This analysis enables a more in depth enquiry into discrimination, racism, and hate crime in two cities that are often described as 'over' these problems. To provide a better-encompassing understanding of these issues

and of whether, how, and why local policies work in relation to these themes, I examine the existence in each city of categories of so-called ‘outsiders’ who do not conform to the local sense of place and are therefore singled out as troubling allegedly peaceful local coexistence.

CHAPTER 2

Places, policies and population: the interplay of local government and society in constructing narratives of receptiveness

My research is situated at the encounter of two disciplines: human geography, on which I draw the analysis related to sense of place and place-narratives, and political sociology, which I refer to in relation to the modes and conditions of migrants' political participation in the receiving society's political sphere. This second element represents the focal point of my literature review and of my thesis, employing a Political Opportunity Structure approach.

Through the literature on sense of place I aim to explain why a place comes to be defined as having 'a character on its own' (Massey 1991:6) and how this impacts on the local society, collective memory and narratives. I then unpack the sphere of politics using the Political Opportunity Structure framework (Tarrow 1996, Koopmans 2004), which identifies the factors facilitating or preventing migrant organisations from political participation. The Discursive Opportunity Structure, identifying instead the collective identities considered legitimate in a certain environment and supported by public discourse (Koopmans & Statham 1999a), completes this part of the investigation.

In Section 2.1 I explore the meaning and origin of sense of place, which encompasses both material and emotional aspects of the interactions and relations between physical space and individuals. I first engage in a historical explanation of this term through the ancient belief that spaces are inhabited by a 'spirit' (Jackson 1994), or

an element, which gives them their unique character. Then, I introduce the human component which, in connection to the place, can generate unique sets of attitudes, behaviours and social norms (Low & Altman 1992). The dimensions constitutive of sense of place are analysed, with a particular focus on time as a vehicle of legitimacy of someone's presence in a specific place (Tuan 1975, 1977). Following from this, I concentrate on the narratives that allow a place to 'come into existence', since, as Ryden (1993:242) argues, 'places do not exist until they are verbalised'. Drawing from Stokowski's work (2002), I examine how people construct meanings about places through conversations and interactions. I emphasise the need to consider the power of the individuals (re)producing these narratives and manipulating the local society towards 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002:374). Connecting the social to the political sphere, Section 2.1 ends with a discussion on how sense of place can influence the way marginality issues are perceived locally and, consequently, the social policies issued to tackle them.

Although inscribed within the scope of human geography and focusing on the relationships between places and individuals, the literature on sense of place, its constitutive dimensions, and place-narratives was not developed in connection to migration. In his study on city branding, Landry (2012) provides insight on the reasons why certain cities attract a specific kind of inward migration, although he does not build on sense of place, and migration *per se* is not problematised. Following from more recent studies, such as Glick Schiller's and Schmidt's (2016) – addressing cities' scale positioning in relation to migrants' incorporation – I instead analyse sense of place and migration together. Among the constitutive dimensions of Brighton's and Bologna's sense of place, diversity emerges from the data collection as a primary factor. Thus, I

bring this concept into my analysis, considering its variations of diversity as a fact, as a narrative and as policies (Berg & Sigona 2013).

Section 2.2 examines the notion of POS in connection to migration, looking at which conditions predict higher degrees of success for migrants' organisations in a given political sector. By the term 'success', Koopmans and Statham (2000) indicate the degree of possibility and ease with which migrants' organisations can make their claims heard by the local government. Following from their suggestion, I discuss POS and DOS separately, considering the latter as a necessary complement to the former. DOS does indeed not concern policies but rather the influence of public discourse on the collective identities considered more 'desirable' in a certain context. Applying this literature to the 'diverse' – or 'superdiverse' (Vertovec 2007, Wessendorf 2011) – contexts I analyse as case studies, I identify which narrative constructions of diversity (Berg & Sigona 2013) are preponderant in Brighton's and Bologna's public discourse and how this influences the formation of collective political bodies (i.e. formal organisations, grassroots associations and unions).

Considering the relevance attributed to ethnicity by my participants in the course of the interviews, in connection to local understanding of diversity but also of social exclusion, I decided to add to the literature a focus on the way ethnic groups have been studied. Hence, Section 2.3 begins with a critical overview of the very notion of group in the social sciences referring to, among others, the grounding work of Brubaker (2002), Glick Schiller *et al.* (2006) and Wimmer (2008). Arguing that its definition does not correspond to reality because it portrays a homogeneous entity instead of a variegated one, Brubaker (2002, 2004) suggests to replace 'group' with the more suitable term 'category': this not only emphasises the process of imposition of a label on certain subjects by the institutions but also shows the agency of the categorised

subjects in appropriating, subverting or transforming the categories. The second part of the section is then devoted to a critical analysis of the role of ethnicity in groups and categories. The use of the ‘ethnic lens’ (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006), that is, considering ethnicity as the sole line along which people associate, obscures many other social divides such as gender, class, religion or political beliefs. In addition, it obfuscates the manifold agencies, sociabilities and belongings of migrants, especially in those cases which have reached a ‘post-migrant’ phase⁷ (Foroutan 2014). This discussion cannot be separated from Brubaker’s (2001) critique of the ‘differentialist’ public discourse and public policies’ bearing on the integration of immigrants. This indicates those discourses and policies sensitive to and supportive of differences which he considers to be ‘conventional wisdom’ at the time of writing (Brubaker 2001:532). I expand on this and the consequences of what he defines as the ‘return to assimilation’ in Section 2.3, analysing how this relates to my case studies.

The different terminology used in Britain and Italy to label residents with an ethnicity and nationality other than the natives’ is a first example of the issues deriving from the use of an ‘ethnic lens’ as outlined above. While, indeed, ‘Black and Ethnic Minorities’ (BMEs) includes both first-generation and second-generation migrants whose ethnicity is not white British (Institute of Race Relations 2017), ‘foreigners’ is used in the Italian context to indicate first-generation migrants, regardless of their citizenship and of the length of stay in the country (Çağlar 2016)⁸. Their children, either born in Italy or having arrived at a very young age, are considered ‘second generations’. I thus conducted my investigation conscious of this potential bias and that – despite the

⁷ Foroutan (2014) defines a ‘post-migrant’ phase as the one in which migrants have already passed the stage of integration into the receiving society.

⁸ Although any migrant with an origin other than Italian can be labelled as ‘foreigner’, the frequency with which this term is used for extra-EU and/or non-Western individuals is noticeably higher.

importance of ethnicity being certain – if not used correctly, ‘concepts such as integration might lead us to [...] dead ends’ (Çağlar 2016:961).

Although the bodies of literature on sense of place, place-narratives, POS, DOS and collective identities intersect on many points, the proposed arrangement is helpful for a neat organisation of the review. After the analysis, I draw connections between them in Section 2.4. In fact, very little has been done to connect them (i.e. Scuzzarello 2015), despite these three streams of literature having several overlapping points. Shaping the memories, social identities and self-perceptions of a local community, sense of place crosses over from the social to the political sphere, determining not only how the physical place is narrated but also which identities are considered proper and which are, instead, alien to the place in question. Equally, the POS and the DOS, determining which collective formations have more chances of succeeding when putting their claims forward, and through which channels (Koopmans & Statham 2000), impact on the frequency with which these formations are used and, in turn, on how relevant they can become in the local narratives. As I show in the empirical chapters, this has an influence on the way local collective identities are constructed but also on the issues local policies prefer to address. Simultaneously, local policies can foster the idea that certain identities are more prominent than others in the urban environment, which produces and reproduces new senses of place. Ultimately, I argue that, since cultural and political elements equally influence city narratives, local policies and residents’ attitudes towards migrants, studying them together opens up a more truthful and wide-encompassing understanding of the intercultural dynamics taking place in the urban space.

2.1 When a place has ‘a character on its own’

2.1.1 The spirit of a place

‘What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’ (Tuan 1977: 6)

Scholars studying the interactions and relationships between physical space and individuals have used a wide range of terms to describe this phenomenon, among which ‘sense of place’ has emerged as prominent. ‘Sense of place’ has been framed by scholars as a feeling encompassing both material and emotional levels and covering a variety of experiences of a place, ranging from the most tangible to the most abstract and intangible. Several scholars, such as Stokowski (2002) and Campelo *et al.* (2014), explain that places are both tangible and ‘metaphysical space[s] determined by a network of meanings and values that are attached to [them]’ (Campelo *et al.* 2014:154). While the former element relates to the physical setting, the latter refers instead to the ‘two-dimensional conceptualisation of place identity and place dependence’ (Kyle & Chick 2007:209) as elaborated by Williams *et al.* (1992).

Lewicka (2008) points out that the level of agreement on the definition and measurement of people’s bonds with places is low, especially if compared to the general consensus of scholars on the idea that ‘places’ are spaces bearing a meaning (see Tuan 1977, Low & Altman 1992). The lack of clarity around the definition of and relation between place attachment, place dependence and place identity has resulted in one of the main obstacles for a univocal comprehension of sense of place (Hernández *et al.* 2007). Following Hay’s (1998) and Jorgensen and Stedman’s (2001) perspective, I consider place identity, attachment and dependence as components of the broader notion of sense of place, which overlap in the majority of the cases. Rollero and De Piccoli (2010:199) also write on the matter, assuming that ‘the relationship between

individuals and their environment have two linked but different aspects: an affective dimension, that is the emotional bond towards place (place attachment), and a cognitive dimension', which they identify in place identification.

Differently from them, I associate this cognitive dimension with place identity: as I demonstrate in the empirical chapters, the local 'character' of the place (Massey 1991) is conceptualised according to some axes acknowledged by the majority of the local population, and those further afield. In Chapters 4 and 6 I indeed explore in more depth the influence of gender and sexuality on Brighton's 'sense of place' (Campelo *et al.* 2014) and the importance of (alternative) culture and politics for Bologna's. Williams *et al.* (1992) describes place identity as the emotional and symbolic meanings attributed to a certain setting, while place dependence refers to the role the place has in facilitating certain experiences. However, several scholars (Jacobson-Widding 1983, Low 1992, Milligan 1998, Manzo 2003) have expanded on the concept of place identity, shifting its focus from the place itself to the individual. Lewicka (2008:211) specifies that, while the first meaning of 'identity' 'means a set of [...] features that guarantee the place's distinctiveness and continuity in time', researchers in the field of psychology associate it with those features of a person that define his/her identity in relation to a physical environment. In accordance with the aim of this research, I follow Williams' *et al.* (1992) definition, interpreting place identity as place-centred.

With respect to this, Jackson (1994) speaks of a *genius loci*, from the Latin locution meaning 'the spirit of a place'. The author refers to the ancient Roman belief in a spirit inhabiting and protecting a place (cited in Woolf 2008), from which a community 'derives much of its unique essence' (Jackson 1994:24). Developed from this belief is the theory that certain places have a distinctive – and often hard to define – identity, a 'character on [their] own' (Massey 1991:6). Contemporary research, such as

Campelo's *et al.* (2014) does not see the *genius loci* as a divine presence but rather as the social atmosphere or 'the air you breathe' in a place, as one of my respondents suggested. She, whom I introduce in Chapter 6, was an Italian female caseworker in a cooperative society for the reception of asylum-seekers, who had moved to Bologna for her studies and then stayed as a professional. Describing how she perceived the local place identity, she compared her experience of 'feeling at home' with that of the asylum seekers she worked with, explaining:

'I've lived in several cities. And I actually have to say that the 'air you breathe' in Bologna – it might be because of its reputation, historically achieved, it might be because it really is a very, very particular city – err, it's real, it's true, it's a city where I have felt very welcome. Me, personally. Then, actually, living in other cities and gradually making a few comparisons, the comfort zone I found here in Bologna is something I haven't found in other cities. In the job I'm doing and comparing myself with people who haven't just lived in Italian cities but in other European cities, I have to say that the feeling even these people have, asylum seekers and refugees who transit through the projects where I work, is the same.' [Respondent 17 BO/institutions]

As Hernández *et al.* (2007:318) put it, the *genius loci* is now considered as the 'content and relevant meaning' cities are charged with. This, they suggest, 'relates to [the] representation and expression' of specific behaviours and attitudes on the side of the local population (Campelo *et al.* 2014:155). In relation to human-place bonding, Low and Altman (1992) highlight how it gives origin to a unique social context with its own set of attitudes, behaviours and social norms; and that individuals develop an attachment to that in addition to the physical space. They propose that

'Places are [...] repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just the place qua place, to which people are attached' (Low & Altman 1992:7).

This connection indeed powerfully emerges from the data I collected, which attribute Brighton and Bologna's 'open-mindedness' to the history of the cities and the way in which they and their people mutually shaped each other. The primary example in

relation to Brighton refers to the foundation of the city by George IV as a holiday and party resort on the coast. As I explore in Chapter 4, the specific purpose with which the town was built attracted what Respondent 7, a local Councillor, defined as ‘what you would call open-minded [individuals]’, that is, artists, actors and other people who lead an unconventional life. Since the establishment of Brighton then, the majority of the local population was not only made up of, but also open towards those ‘who [do not] necessarily fit into a terribly clear Britishness’ [Respondent 7 BH/institutions]. This supports the local government representatives’ argument that this familiarity with a certain type of diversity is what led the local population to be receptive to other kinds of diversity, as well as ethnic diversity.

Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) state, in fact, that ‘place-attachment’ has affective, cognitive and behavioural components, which explains the connection identified by the researchers between a place, its community and local attitudes and/or social norms. I expand on this in Chapters 5 and 7, reporting the personal experiences of Black and Ethnic Minorities in Brighton and foreign citizens in Bologna, who emphasise their attachment and belonging to the city through the knowledge of its history and politics and/or the compliance with distinctive local behaviours (Yuval-Davis 2010, Scuzzarello 2015). A suitable example on which I expand in Chapter 7 draws from the account of Respondent 4, a member of an intercultural association and originally from Cameroon. He arrived in Bologna in the 1990s, thus claiming to have seen ‘the best of Bologna’. Respondent 13, a lady originally from Cuba who moved to Bologna around the same time, similarly described to me that when she reached the city ‘the Mayor was Vitali. Bologna was beautiful back then’. Both of them, echoing the narratives of other respondents, also identified an association between the transfer from Guazzaloca’s (2000-2004) to Cofferati’s (2004-2009) administration and the shift from

a Bologna that truly reflected its reputation as open, tolerant and a city of welfare to a city that lives off her image of the past, thus demonstrating a detailed knowledge of long-term local dynamics and, in turn, their belonging to the city.

This analysis follows from Lee's (1972) work, arguing that place meanings are socially constructed by members of a cultural group. Castells (1977) and Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith (1991) take the statement further, suggesting that even space *per se* is a social construct. In fact, Castells (1977) claims that, while spatial environment alone does not determine human behaviour, the socio-political and economic conditions proper of a place do. Drawing from the definition of 'habitus' originally coined by Bourdieu (2002), Campelo *et al.* (2014:156) define this construction as 'the best example of the unity of human behaviour' in relation to a place. This means that, to each place and to its essence correspond a recognisable (at least in some core traits) behaviour of the local population and its distinguishing characteristics; stemming from the physical space itself and in combination with the local social, political and economic conditions. Sense of place is what determines

'Manners and ways of doing things in terms of the practicalities of life, in terms of affective engagements, and in terms of expression and communication' (Campelo *et al.* 2014:156).

The literature on this topic widely agrees not only that a place is much more than a mere physical space but also that the reason why this happens is the presence and actions of the individuals inhabiting it. Human interaction is the link between materiality and meaning (Harvey 1990). During both parts of my fieldwork, I very often encountered the tendency on the part of both groups of interviewees to attribute the identity of their city to an inexplicable 'nature of the place'. They framed it not only as a characteristic spontaneously springing from the place itself, but also as a force capable of influencing the attitudes of the local population, shaping them accordingly.

The connection between a place and its individuals is, however, in perpetual development and the outcome of their relation is always unique; this depends on human actions, encounters and interactions, but also on other dimensions such as time and community, which vary from place to place (Sack 1988). Following from Lee (1972), Kyle and Chick (2007:212) actually suggest that ‘these meanings emerge and evolve through ongoing interaction with others and the environment’. Using examples, Campelo *et al.* (2014) pinpoint the four dimensions of time, ancestry, landscape and community to identify the sense of place that the residents of the Chatham Islands of New Zealand attribute to their own land. Even if their investigation focuses on destination branding, they argue that a deep understanding of sense of place as perceived by locals is the basis of an efficient place branding strategy too. In fact, other scholars, such as Stylidis *et al.* (2015), have emphasised that an issue in the study of place images and meanings is the excessive focus on tourists’ image of the destination, while giving ‘limited attention to other stakeholders’ perspectives’ (Stylidis *et al.* 2015:659).

My research aims therefore to address this issue by focusing on the residents’ own perspectives. From the qualitative research of Campelo *et al.* (2014), the four aforementioned constructs of time, ancestry, landscape and community emerge as pivotal, standing for a set of meanings giving the local residents a derived identity, a reason to live in the place and particular habits. These narratives about their land are reproduced by the inhabitants themselves, reinforcing their ideas of their own community. Among the four factors however, time has a prominent role, as has already been pointed out by other scholars some decades ago. Tuan (1975:164) argues that

‘To know a place is also to know the past, [because] sense of place is rarely acquired in passing. To know a place well requires long residence and deep involvement’.

Time is framed both as the meaning of the past and history of a place, deemed necessary to comprehend it, and as the spontaneous connection to the place itself as a first-hand experience.

Along the same lines, Jackson (1986:6) identifies two meanings commonly given to time in relation to sense of place: the first is the gradually developed sense of being ‘at home’ in a place, while the second is the instant response to aesthetic factors of the surrounding environment. Both of them encompass the core components mentioned before: the physical outlook and the meaning and values attributed to the city (either personally or vicariously, i.e. through narratives). These are present in both cases. However, the second meaning is not considered legitimate by a number of scholars on the basis that ‘experience takes time’ (Tuan 1975:164). Tuan’s belief is indeed that sense of place is acquired only through a set of experiences in a place, that are in turn able to generate feelings of ‘at-homeness’ (Alexander 2008). Other scholars share the same view: Stokowski (2002) reflects for instance on how sense of place is typically used to refer to

‘An individual’s ability to develop feelings of attachment to particular settings based on combinations of use, attentiveness and emotions’. (Stokowski 2002:368).

Yet, in the literature there is almost no mention of whose experiences are the most influential, an omission which overlooks the dynamics and discourses of power. My research fills this gap not only by identifying different senses of place coexisting in a single city but also by pinpointing the most frequent elements and experiences described as generating and reproducing them. Both in Brighton and Bologna, the institutional narratives of receptiveness actually present quite a few points of contrast with the grassroots ones, even if stemming from the same core aspects.

The relevance of time when discussing sense of place is also supported by several geographical writings discussing its contrasting relation with space. Massey (1994) describes this dynamic as

‘the current speed and mixing of inhabitants from different origins, whose trajectories intersect and influence the space [and] an idealised notion of an era when places were inhabited by coherent and homogenous communities’ (Massey 1994:1).

The author grasps the current uncertainty in relation to sense of place and place identity, raising the question of how it is possible to retain a sense of place and its particularity in the face of the contemporary time-space compression. She argues, however, that this idea of time-space compression is not universal but rather ethnocentric and built on a capitalistic framing of society. It is capitalism and its developments, together with race and gender, which give us a certain understanding of time and space. In this case, she states that Western society perceives space and time as compressed because it is the society that has benefited the most from globalisation. Other populations, on the other hand, contribute to the production of space-time compression but do not take advantage of it: people living in the *favelas* of Rio for example, despite having produced musicians and football players famous on a global scale, are imprisoned in this compressed space and time. In the scope of my research, the rhetoric of time-space compression is symbolised by migration: the arrival and settlement of migrants is a test for the cities used as case studies, caught between the will to maintain the reputation they have achieved through history and emerging attitudes that are aggressive towards ethnic diversity. But this analysis is also pivotal because ‘all places are relational’ (Massey 1994:6) and ‘situated within different scales of economic, political and cultural power’ (Glick Schiller & Schmidt 2016:4); therefore every city and its ‘sense of place’ is produced not only thanks to the city *per se* but also in contrast with other cities in the same national environment.

Despite playing a crucial role in grounding my research, the literature examined above gives too little attention to power in the narrative construction process. Campelo *et al.* (2014) treat the local community as a homogeneous group, while scholars such as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) and Lamont and Molnár (2002) have demonstrated that groups and communities are always composite and present various social divides. Grounding my investigation on Massey's (1994) theorisation and on the connection between geopolitical power and sense of place on which she sheds light, I not only identify the narratives of receptiveness used in Brighton and Bologna but also unravel the connection between them and the social position of their authors. As outlined above, portraying the different narratives produced in the two cities can lead to a better understanding of which narratives are produced by whom, what factors are shaping them and which purposes lie behind them. Once this is clear, an understanding of the identities considered legitimate in the place (DOS) and of the political formations through which their claims have more chances to be heard (POS) follows logically.

2.1.2 The reputation of a place

The above discussion has critically assessed what sense of place is and how it is constructed. In this section I consider more deeply the importance of narratives in its reproduction, focusing not only on the transmission process *per se* but also on how narratives are interwoven with discourses of power. To explore this I draw on Stokowski's (2002) work on languages of place and discourses of power in shaping new senses of place. A key focus of her study is the role of narratives in our understanding of places, because

‘Much of what a person knows about places is initially mediated by others’ (Stokowski 2002:372).

However, this process is not mono-directional: people do not only teach others the qualities of a certain place, but they also ‘actively create meaningful places through conversation and interaction with others’ (Stokowski 2002:372). As a consequence, conversations and every other rhetoric device that follows under the category of ‘narrative’ are crucial to create meaning, to give significance to a place. Narratives also encompass legends, traditions and accounts of the past; using time to validate symbolic meanings. As highlighted in the previous section, all these elements actually need time to consolidate and gain importance. Concerning this, Stegner (1992:202) reminds readers that ‘no place is a place until things that have happened in it are remembered in history’, while Ryden (1993:242) observes that ‘places do not exist until they are verbalised’, either through memory or writing. I substantiate this in the empirical chapters, when examining how narratives both from above and from below claim legitimacy on the basis of time, referring to the historical role and image of their city.

To expand on this vision, place narratives are so powerful not only because they construct meanings, but also – and even more so – because they can

‘Manipulate [meanings and feelings connected to a place] towards desired (individual or collective) ends’ (Stokowski 2002:374).

With respect to this, Johnstone (1990) suggests that, as our sense of place and community is rooted in narration, so is the framing of issues and needs affecting a citizenry. Above all, this informs the best-suited policies to address those issues. I elaborate on this connection over the next sections, exploring how sense of place and city politics mutually influence each other. It then becomes clear that narratives can support a full range of political objectives, such as economic interests and investments (Johnstone 1990). The analysis of the influence of narratives in policy-making has been developed by several scholars, such as Franzosi (1998) and Boswell *et al.* (2011). While

Franzosi (1998:517) explains that social scientists should be interested in narratives because ‘a great deal of our empirical evidence is in narrative forms’, Boswell *et al.* (2011) tailor this idea to the realm of migration policy-making. They argue that, especially when considering migration,

‘Conceptions of policy problems do not simply flow from the objective “facts” of the situation. [...] Instead, both problems and preferred solutions are constructed by different actors [...] drawing from available ideational resources or patterns of thought’ (Boswell *et al.* 2011:1, 2).

However, these studies exclusively focus on institutional narratives and their influence. Despite taking into consideration the dimension of power and its impact on the management of a city, they fail to include the dialectic tension between groups in power and grassroots groups. My study aims to fill this gap by providing an account of narratives other than the institutional, in this way also uncovering the local government’s ‘desired ends’ (Stokowski 2002:374).

Due to the specific context I concentrate on, characteristics such as ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘diverse’ need greater attention, and also because they reveal the connection between the city’s public image and its demographics, which migration contributes to shaping. Binnie *et al.* (2006) highlight that, despite notions of the cosmopolitan or diverse city being deployed and mobilised in a variety of different contexts, all over the world policy makers compete for the title of ‘most cosmopolitan city’ (Binnie *et al.* 2006:6). However, as Szerszynski and Urry (2002:469) suggest, drawing from Laclau’s (1998) work, ‘cosmopolitanism – like places – is just an empty signifier’ that can be filled with several meanings, according to the local government’s interests and objectives. My participant narratives unpack possible aims behind the construction of Brighton’s and Bologna’s image as ‘receptive’, ‘open’ but, most of all, ‘diverse’. As I explain thoroughly in the following sections and in the empirical

chapters, diversity is actually the main driver of the image of receptiveness associated with the two case studies. Within the context of cosmopolitanism, Landry (2012) develops the idea of intercultural city branding, which is highly suitable for discussing the two cases I consider in my research. Intercultural city branding fosters an image of a city welcoming migrants and appreciating diversity, presenting it as a place which is, or has, the strong potential to become a global centre for knowledge, trades, art, tourism, entertainment, etc. Institutional narratives adopting this rhetoric can foster an image of a city as ‘hospitable’ (Scuzzarello 2015), ‘migrant friendly’ and/or ‘renowned for its culture of tolerance’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:3), hence making it desirable for inward investment, tourism and consumption. In Chapter 4, I draw on the example of the Brighton Gay Pride to provide an idea of how local diversity, both as demographics and as a narrative (Berg & Sigona 2013), can be portrayed as the symbol of the city (Hadj-Abdou 2014), thus attracting investment to organise related cultural events.

The above has demonstrated how place narratives, and those of intercultural/multicultural cities in particular, not only depend on historical and social reasons, but also on political and economic ones. However, the literature on the topic does not elaborate on a few crucial points related to this insight. First of all – to follow up on the critique levelled by Franzosi (1998) and Boswell *et al.* (2011) – neither Landry (2012) nor Binnie *et al.* (2006) focus on the meaning given to ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘diverse’ by groups outside the institutional realm⁹. In addition, their analysis omits a more specific inquiry on the kind of migrants that the local government wants to

⁹ My critique does not refer to the literature on ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ (Datta 2009, Noble 2009) which, although rich, concerns relations between people at an informal and everyday level. In this case my focus is instead on the lack of an exploration of the residents’ perception of ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘diversity’ as a narrative fostered by local governments.

attract and on how those not corresponding to this target are treated. My decision to include the migrants' perspective in the study aims, then, to address this very issue: migrants not only construct and reproduce their own narratives on the city, but also – through their experience – have a clear understanding of which migrant collective identities are more or less welcome in the urban context.

My project fills an important gap neglected by the discussion around sense of place and place narratives. Even if narratives of receptive cities depend very much on historical and social constructs, they undoubtedly have economic implications too, as I demonstrate in the chosen case studies. Yet the links between narratives and their 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002:374) are only partially examined in the literature. My aim is therefore to fill in this gap, uncovering the relations between sense of place, local governments' representatives' 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002), 'legitimate' collective identities and migrants' chances to participate in local politics.

2.1.3 From narratives to policies

The role of narratives in shaping policy-making has been stressed by numerous scholars (Goldstein & Keohane 1993, Berman 2001, Bleich 2002, Franzosi 1998, Boswell *et al.* 2011). Boswell *et al.* (2011:1) explore in more detail how accounts of policy issues do not correspond to facts or events but rather to various political actors' ideal constructions. Aware of the limitations of these studies, as addressed in the previous section, in this section I deepen my analysis by critically discussing place narratives of diversity and of migrants' integration as constructed by institutional actors.

In her comparative research on Malmö and Bologna, Scuzzarello (2015) sheds light on the narrative constructions privileged by local politicians and policy-makers to describe the social relationship between migrants and the majority society. She

demonstrates how the narratives currently in place provide a framework which justifies the adoption and reproduction of a certain direction in policy-making. More specifically, her analysis of the local narratives identifies the connection between them and the emerging figure of the ‘integrated’ or ‘non-integrated’ migrant. Scuzzarello highlights that narratives about who is already integrated into the receiving society and who is yet to be are shaped by several factors, including ‘stories about the nation and its people’ (Scuzzarello 2015:57). For example, migrants in Bologna are said to be ‘integrated’ when participating in the civic life of the city, which stems from the local narratives describing the place as the Italian city at the forefront of civil rights movements. Similarly, in Malmö, the business-friendly policy framework adopted by the Swedish government in the 1990s (Schierup 2010) and the consequent narratives of the city as an entrepreneurial hub, merged the figure of the ‘integrated migrant’ with that of ‘cosmopolitan entrepreneur’ (Scuzzarello 2015:69).

This comparison crucially sheds light on the mutual influence between sense of place and city policies, even if this connection is not explored. If in the case of Bologna the narratives on the city and its people constitute the basis of the ‘integrated migrant’ image, in the case of Malmö it is the city policies that provide a business-friendly framework to which ‘integrated migrants’ should adhere. In the former case, sense of place precedes city politics, while in the latter the relation is inverted. Despite the literature on the influence of narratives on city politics being crucial for my investigation, I argue that this encompasses only one side of the story. Actually, although my participants’ accounts echo, with various degrees of agreement, the narrative on Bologna presented above, my analysis bridges studies such as Scuzzarello’s (2015) and Boswell’s *et al.* (2011), discussing the connection between the institutional narratives on a place and its community and the adoption of particular local

policies, with those examining the role of power in narrative construction and reproduction, such as Stokowski's (2002), Landry's (2012) and Binnie's *et al.* (2006).

2.2 The local political sphere

2.2.1 Individuals' and groups' chances of political participation: the Political Opportunity Structure

This thesis employs a POS approach, critically uncovering areas in which its outcomes are not predictable but, rather, unexpected (see Lewicki 2017). It specifically engages with those groups who, not complying with the local understanding of diversity, are ignored by the political process. The Political Opportunity Structure framework was first elaborated in the early 1980s to analyse social movements' chances of thriving in specific political contexts, but its relevance for migration studies has grown noticeably in the last ten to fifteen years. Meyer and Minkoff (2004) assess the possibility for some groups to influence national politics and policies as being either enhanced or inhibited by exogenous factors, more specifically identified by Tarrow (1994) in institutional conditions. These conditions affect people's expectations of success or failure, either providing incentives for their mobilisation or prospecting obstacles. With respect to migrants' claims, Koopmans (2004:35) argues that the chances they have to make their demands heard by the receiving governments depend on 'national repertoires of citizenship and on their model and welfare regimes'. In a renowned definition, Tarrow (1996:54) describes this model as the

'Consistent, but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources'.

Opposite to the dynamic nature of social movements, the relation between settled migrant groups and the state presents a more static composition, based on political

integration rather than on ideological drivers (Strömblad & Bengtsson 2009). In contrast with the previous migration studies tradition, which had framed the social structure as apolitical, Koopmans and Statham (2000) stress the importance of public discourse and political culture in identifying the chances migrants have to actively engage in the political sphere of the receiving society and to consequently achieve full political integration. For example, a common complaint by my informants with migrant backgrounds in Bologna was that foreigners ‘are treated like children’. Respondent 2[BO/foreigners], a man originally from Sudan and member of a local trade union, used this comparison to expose that the opportunities foreigners’ organisations in Bologna are to take part in the local political sphere limited to their connection to (if not dependence on) Italians. Several respondents raised the problem that the associations who gain access to public funding year after year are either associations of Italians or associations of migrants managed by Italians.

These claims refer to a local rather than national setting. Although connected to one another, the two levels show specific differences. Several scholars adopting a POS approach have written on the relation between national and local level, and the way they influence each other (Miller 1994, Alexander 2004, Garbaye 2005, Caponio & Borket 2010, Ajala 2012, Bolognani & Statham 2013, Cappiali 2016, see also Anwar 2001). Following Cappiali’s (2016) understanding of it, I argue that there are local variations within the same national model, of which Brighton and Bologna represent clear examples. Although the local level proceeds from the national, especially when considering policies such as immigration laws, local contexts can add something to it in terms of either place-specific policies or refusing to apply certain measures within the limits of their power. Garbaye (2005) demonstrates that, in some cases, local “modes of integration (Alexander 2004) can be more inclusive than national ones, or even reach

the point of challenging them (Caponio & Borket 2010). A recent case illustrating this freedom of action enjoyed by local authorities comes from Italy, where in the last months several mayors have refused to enact the latest changes to the immigration regulations introduced by the Lega/5 Star Movement far-right/populist government on the basis that they were unconstitutional¹⁰. In addition to this, the literature on the POS “local turn” (Penninx *et al.* 2004, Garbaye 2005, Caponio 2006) argues that the local level should receive more attention because it is exactly where integration and political participation of migrants *de facto* take place (Cappiali 2016:136). Drawing from this, I not only set my research at the local level, but also argue that one of the reasons behind local variations of the same national model lies in the city’s place-narratives. I demonstrate this throughout my empirical chapters.

Continuing the analysis of POS, Koopmans and Statham (2000) also discourage scholars from lumping together political and cultural elements under the same category, rather promoting an analytic division of political and cultural elements in Political and Discursive Opportunity Structures, respectively. Several studies, such as Hooghe’s (2005), Schrover’s and Vermeulen’s (2005) or Pilati’s (2011), have focused on immigrant organisations to understand the degree and ways of influence of both public discourse and the political setting on migrants’ participation in the receiving society’s political sphere. These formations in fact provide a very good case to gauge the influence of the POS framework: on the one hand they are organised bodies which are, either formally or informally, recognised by the local establishment but, on the other hand, their activities are conditioned more than others by the political discourse and debate, due to migration and integration being heavily politicised issues. The migrants’

¹⁰ http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/it/map/resistenze-locali-al-decreto-salvini_279671#5/41.656/17.490

organisations I include in this research belong both to the formal and informal sectors, even though in most of the cases their status is semi-formal: most of the organisations I contacted both in Brighton and Bologna worked at the grassroots level but, at the same time, they were recognised by local authorities and used to collaborate with the City Council for special cultural events. Schrover and Vermeulen (2005:825) assess that the difference between formal and informal organisations as follows:

‘They do not have the same goals, the same continuity or the same leadership. However, formal and informal organisations are not always as different as they may seem at first sight. [...] Formal organisations may take on roles that are not the same as their officially stated purpose. Moreover, different governments take different positions toward informal leadership’.

In his study on ethnic mobilisation in Belgium, Hooghe (2005) questions whether the Flemish political system offers enough possibilities for the development of ethnic minority movements. He begins with an overview of who is considered as belonging to an ethnic minority, pointing out that

‘Officially, only groups from outside the European Union are considered as ethnic minorities. Most of the non-Belgian inhabitants of Belgium, however, originate from other EU countries’ (Hooghe 2005:977).

The political discourse defining who is considered a migrant and who is not is the first line along which individuals can associate, because it is an immediate realisation of what Koopmans (2004:35) defines as ‘national repertoires of citizenship’. This consideration goes together with the critique of the use of ethnic groups in social sciences (see Brubaker 2002) and of the “ethnic lens” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002) often used when investigating migrants’ social inclusion at different levels, whether it is national, local, institutional or *de facto*. Yet I suggest that the public discourse on diversity has to be not only included but also emphasised, since the perception and framing of diversity – whether ethnic, racial or national – contribute to the definition of

who can be legitimately considered part of an ethnic minority and who cannot. Following Koopmans' and Statham's (2000) suggestion, I look at this element as not strictly belonging to the POS framework, but rather to the DOS one, referring to the cultural variables which generate 'legitimate' identities for migrants. I elaborate on this point in the next session.

Pinpointing which channels are not only institutionally but also *de facto* available and legitimate for migrants to put their claims forward is undoubtedly essential for a good comprehension of the local political structure and local policies. Yet this framework is rarely connected to the analysis of institutional narratives developed in the paragraph above, explaining who matches the image of the 'integrated migrant', who does not and why. On the contrary, I argue not only that both place narratives and local politics should be included in the analysis of cities' diversity and receptiveness, but also that research should emphasise their mutual influence in the development of a 'receptive' local environment.

2.2.2. Accepted and neglected identities: the Discursive Opportunity Structure

If institutional opportunities predict which forms of associations have more chances to gain recognised access to a certain political framework and to succeed within it (Gamson 1975), discursive opportunities determine which collective identities have a higher likelihood of gaining visibility in the media, of resonating with the claims of other collective actors and of achieving legitimacy in the public discourse (Koopmans *et al.* 2005:19). Koopmans *et al.* (2005:6) explain this by saying that

'cultural notions of citizenship and national identity determine which points of view on the relation between immigrants and the majority society are considered sensible, which constructions of reality are considered realistic, and which claims and collective actors are held as legitimate within the polity'.

The DOS influences the way people see themselves in relation to others and the aims they pursue as part of collective organisations (Koopmans *et al.* 2005). Referring to Koopmans and Statham (1999) and Ferree (2003), Koopmans and Olzak (2004:202) define discursive opportunities as

‘The aspects of the public discourse that determine a message’s chances of diffusion in the public sphere’.

In their study on discursive opportunities and right-wing violence in Germany, Koopmans and Olzak (2004:199) distinguish between three elements constituting discursive opportunities, namely ‘public visibility, resonance, and legitimacy’. While visibility is a necessary condition for the spreading of a message and/or a narrative, legitimacy is the key dimension determining the ‘acceptable’ ways in which migrants can frame their identity within the receiving country’s political sphere. Although the visibility of a message – in this research the message referring to the narratives on migrants – is a fundamental condition, the positive and negative responses to it in the public sphere are what actually determines its legitimacy. The receiving society’s supportive or antagonistic reactions to the ways migrants frame their identity influence the ‘legitimate’ lines along which they can associate.

Despite the attention devoted by scholars (Koopmans & Statham 2000, Koopmans & Olzak 2004, Cinalli & Giugni 2011) to the constitutive dimensions of discursive opportunities, the link between them and sense of place is not explored in the literature. I hence propose to unpack how sense of place influences the cultural and political discourse of a place and, in turn, local politics; but also to examine the impact that local politics have on sense of place. There is then a third element to include in this analysis which is in direct relation to the DOS, which is collective identities. In the section above I have observed how migrants are ‘encouraged’ to associate along

specific lines (i.e. ethnic, racial or national) according to the local sense of place and opportunity structure. In addition, I argue that these group formations, emphasising a specific aspect of the local diversity, have the potential to influence both sense of place and opportunity structure in a bottom-up approach. I expand on this in Section 2.4, after discussing diversity and collective identities in the Section 2.3.

2.3 Diverse contexts and diverse residents

2.3.1 Social fact, narrative or both? An analysis of diversity on city scale

‘Within studies of migration, “diversity” holds the potential to do what “intersectionality” has done within feminist scholarship, that is, conceptualising the interrelationships between gender, class, ‘race’ and other social divisions’ (Berg & Sigona 2013:203).

Diversity, as emerging from the local public discourse (Wessendorf 2011), plays a crucial role for institutional narratives, determining how the community of residents is perceived – that is, which dimensions of the local community are considered the most important and characterising – by the local government and, by so doing, defining what the most compelling issues for the citizenry are and which social policies can address them. Berg and Sigona (2013) explain how this concept can refer to either a social fact, policies or a narrative. While in the first case it refers to the demographic composition of the population, in the second it refers to ‘policies aimed at managing integration and fostering social cohesion’ (Berg & Sigona 2013:350). In the third case, diversity is not counted as a fact but as a quality of the place and ‘publicly celebrated like a marketable good’ (Berg & Sigona 2013:350). Diversity, then, achieves the status of the city’s symbol, not only acquiring value as an asset *per se* but also as a resource for the city’s self-representation, its economic competitiveness and its social performance (Hadj-Abdou 2014).

Prior to this, in the 1990s, with a focus on the resident population, Hollinger (1995) proposed the concept of “diversification of diversity” to recognise the shifting of group boundaries from ethnic to manifold and, consequently, to describe the increasing appearance of multiple identities. Group rights should, according to this perspective, give way to a cosmopolitan model of rights protection. This position is aligned with a wide critique against the use of ethnic communities as the sole units of research (Baumann 1996, Vertovec 1996, Alexander 2002, Brettell 2003) and against multicultural policies – because of their excess of groupism (Brubaker 2002), which I explore in the following sections. Using the multiculturalist framework, then, not only essentialises cultural and ethnic differences (Baumann 1996) but also obscures the diversity and complexity of migration (Glick Schiller 2006).

Following from this vision, Vertovec (2007) theorises the concept of superdiversity, basing it on the level of complexity reached by the population of London, defined as ‘unprecedented’. Since then, there have been a large number of attempts to test if this concept is also applicable to other contexts (Sigona 2016), such as other capital cities including New York, Paris and Johannesburg. Their population is in fact more and more characterised by composite identities in which ethnicity, language, country of origin, gender, sexuality, religion and many other dimensions are intertwined. In addition, Vertovec (2007:1025) stresses that, not only does multiculturalism no longer function as a model to approach the population’s needs, but it is necessary to consider ‘new conjunctions and interactions of variables’ in designing public policies. Other studies on superdiversity focus on the divides of class (Gidley 2013, Rogaly & Qureshi 2013, Wessendorf 2013), housing (Meier 2013), life-style and consumption habits (Wessendorf 2013). Finally, concerning the spatial dimension, superdiversity is not exclusively relevant for world capitals and/or their neighbourhoods

(Wessendorf 2013) but also more narrow urban agglomerates such as suburbs and provincial cities (Meier 2013). Moreover, the combination of multiple variables constituting superdiversity plays out differently in different locations, according to the specificities and memories of the place, but also to several connections to other ‘non-proximate elsewhere’ (Berg & Sigona 2013:350) through migration, trade links and/or political activism. This is to say that the (super)diversity of a space is a unique product of the intersection of variables belonging to both its residents and the place itself.

Yet Glick Schiller and Schmidt (2016:5) point out that

‘Much of the studies on mobile people and cities has focused on impoverished neighbourhoods [...] characterised as “multi-ethnic”’, [arguing for] ‘the need to address more specifically the nature of place-making beyond the assumption that migrants’ social lives are confined within ethnically defined neighbourhoods’.

The literature overlooks the impact that different perceptions and constructions of diversity have, not only on the group identities considered more ‘desirable’ in a certain setting, but also on which group rights are protected through local policies. Acknowledging that local (and national) authorities mainly work in accordance with a group rights approach, this investigation sheds light on how narratives of diversity influence the choice of which groups’ rights are protected (Hartney 1991) and seeks to verify if and how migrants are considered within this political design.

2.3.2 Migrant groups in a diverse city: which collective identities?

Quite a few scholars (Loveman 1999, King 2001, Brubaker 2002, Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002, Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006, Wimmer 2008) have explored how groups are constructed in social sciences. The very concept of ‘group’ is problematised by Brubaker (2002), who stresses that, despite its pivotal importance in sociology, anthropology and political science, its meaning is more often implied than analysed.

This bias is not only reflected in academia, but also in policy-making. Indeed, Brubaker (2002:164) identifies a tendency of the scholarship

‘...to take distinct and sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life and as protagonists of social analysis.’

He criticises not only the use of groups as basic aggregates of social life, but also the correspondence of what is considered to be a group – especially in policy-making – to the very meaning of it, which he describes as

‘a mutually interacting, mutually recognising, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity and capacity for concerted action’ (Brubaker 2002:169).

When groups are established, regardless of their adherence to this definition, the risk of jeopardising the investigation (and the policies’ outcome) is high. Specifically in relation to migrants’ opportunity structure, Koopmans *et al.* (2005) argue that they have to receive some incentive from the host society before they feel sufficiently empowered to demand any special treatment as a group. I evaluate Brubaker’s (2002, 2004) approach as a crucial prompt to analyse, on the one hand, which groups are identified as ‘legitimate’ by Brighton’s and Bologna’s local public discourse – focusing on how BMEs/foreigners are conceived – and how they are taken into consideration in policy-making. Chapters 5 and 7, discussing the BMEs’ and foreigners’ own perceptions of local policies for social inclusion, also provide a critical analysis of whether the current framing of these groups gives them the status of ‘legitimised collective identity’ and can effectively enhance their inclusion in society. Ethnicity plays a significant role in it, because it comes out as ignored, at best, or opposed, at worst, to the understanding of diversity in Brighton and Bologna.

However, the literature often neglects the mutual influence that discourse and policies have on the formation of group identities and, by so doing, overlooks the agency of the (migrant) subjects themselves. Following Brubaker's (2002) suggestion, I consider the term 'category' more appropriate than 'group' in defining local identities. Categories, unlike groups, are imposed on the basis of one or more shared characteristics and can become institutionalised through public discourse (Tilly 1998). The politics of categories as framed both from above and from below has been studied extensively: on the institutional side, categories can be 'imposed, proposed, propagated, institutionalised, articulated and entrenched' (Brubaker 2002:170), while the categorised subjects appropriate, subvert, internalise, evade or transform categories (Dominguez 1986). Drawing from Petersen (1987), Brubaker (2002:170) demonstrates that only by distinguishing between groups and categories is it possible to problematise their relationship, asking about

'the degree of groupness associated with a particular category in a particular setting and about the political, social, cultural and psychological processes through which categories get invested with groupness.'

Understanding how people *do things*¹¹ with categories (Brubaker 2002:170) – in the context of this research, how categories work in relation to policy-making – is the starting point to grasp how local residents are classified (Levine 1999). In addition, this can also allow us to gauge how access to resources and/or specific domains of activity is restricted to 'outsiders' on the basis of these very categories (Weber 1968[1922], Tilly 1998). I elaborate on this discussion through the empirical chapters, showing how categories of BMEs/foreigners are imposed and/or institutionalised by local authorities but also how the local population appropriates and/or transforms them. This being the

¹¹ Italics in the original.

focus of my study on migrants, in the following section I develop a critical discussion on the relevance of ethnicity when considering migrants' sociabilities.

2.3.3 The question of ethnicity: when is it misleading and when is it important?

In the previous section I have anticipated that, in both my case studies, ethnicity can be either ignored or seen as being in contrast to the local framing of diversity. In this section I elaborate on the literature that has problematised the use of 'ethnic communities' as monolithic categories to explain why this is still problematic in current policy-making.

The main remark Brubaker (2002, 2004) makes to other migration scholars when criticising the use of ethnicity in social sciences is that, more often than not, ethnicity is not seen as part of what needs to be explained but as what academics 'explain things with' (2002:165). Glick Schiller *et al.* (2006) also point out that migration scholars have long used the notion of 'ethnic community' as both the object of study and the unit of analysis. Brubaker's (2002, 2004) criticism is aligned with those of several others (Baumann 1996, Vertovec 1996, Alexander 2002, Brettell 2003, Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006, Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009, Berg & Sigona 2013, Meer & Modood 2013, Çağlar 2016), who judge the use of ethnic communities as basic units of social analysis as a dangerous bias in research. An excessive use of ethnicism or, as Glick Schiller *et al.* (2006) define this tendency, of the 'ethnic lens' only results in blurring the diversity of migrants and of their relationships. This issue is, however, not limited to ethnicism only, since 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002) and 'racialism' (Loveman 1999) present the same risk to jeopardise an investigation. Methodological nationalism, dependent on the concept of nation-state, portrays people as belonging to one single nation and as deriving their identity

exclusively from this affiliation (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). In this vision, someone's identity is not only inextricably linked to, but also solely dependent on his/her own nationality.

To truthfully report its complexity and multifaceted composition is thus crucial for a valid representation of a social aggregate. All the dimensions that can be found within the migrant category (gender, sexuality, age, legal status, length of stay in the receiving country, political engagement and/or alliance, profession, education, religion and so on) contribute to its complexity, and therefore considering migrants as belonging to a 'bounded collectivity' (Brubaker 2002:169) does not reflect the variety of dimensions interplaying within the 'group' itself. This emerges clearly in how, in Brighton, narratives of diversity distinguish LGBTQ+ from BMEs. Not only does the use of the ethnic lens obscure the multiple sources and dynamics of migrant agencies, sociabilities and belongings, misrepresenting their group as homogeneous, but it also hides the divisions based on class, religion, or politics among members of those identified as being from the 'same' group (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006, see also Glick Schiller & Schmidt 2016). In addition, studies taking for granted the formation of groups along ethnic lines fail to consider the impact the local political structure and public discourse have in establishing more or less successful lines of associations. The imposition of categories, more than groups, on a certain polity and their appropriation and/or transformation by the members of the community shows instead the mutual influence between POS, DOS and group formation, on which I elaborate in Section 2.4.

As I report in the empirical chapters, ethnicity is not the only divide emerging as decisive in BMEs'/foreigners' formations of belonging, social affiliations and political participation in Brighton and Bologna. Rather, class achieves a prime importance in how migrants' frame their sense of place and participation in the political sphere of the

receiving city. However, in migration studies, the multiplicity of factors shaping and impacting on newcomers' belonging and active participation in the receiving society is often covered by the broader term 'integration'. In her work, 'Still "migrants" after all those years. Foundational mobilities, temporal frames and emplacement of migrants', Çağlar (2016:961) raises the problem that

'Concepts such as integration often lead us to the dead ends of ethnic lens and methodological nationalism'.

Despite the importance of integration policies in the period following a migrant's arrival in the receiving country¹², when migrants are not officially considered capable of overcoming that phase and fully becoming citizens, they remain confined in a position that sees them as in need of specific policies only. Çağlar (2016) highlights that it is possible to identify this tension from the political language used to address migrants even before than from the policies in use. Drawing from Fabian's work (1983), she pinpoints how the political language of integration conveys an idea of a different time frame, in denial of migrants' 'coevalness' with the non-migrants (Çağlar 2016:959). Following from this, I argue that questioning migrants directly on the main obstacles to full participation in the local political sphere is also crucial – hence my decision to analyse both institutional and grassroots narratives. Identifying the categories imposed on migrants (Dominguez 1986, Brubaker 2002) at the level of institutional narratives is therefore pivotal to, first and foremost, gauge how they are perceived in the receiving society and to whom the image of 'integrated migrant' (Scuzzarello 2015) corresponds. Second, it allows one to understand which political formations have higher chances of succeeding in that context when putting their claims forward.

¹² In this case, 'integration policies' refers to measures such as language classes or, for asylum seekers, national plans for reception and/or resettlement.

In connection with the idea of ‘post-migrant society’ coined by Foroutan (2014), Çağlar (2016:959) argues that

‘All these terms (post-migrants, migration background) are more or less anchored in the idea that because the pasts are not shared, the present should also be handled through different temporal regimes rather than through contemporaneity’.

Grounding her analysis on Fabian’s work (1983), Çağlar (2016:959) argues that the denial of coevalness functions as ‘a device of exclusion’. In connection to the study by Campelo *et al.* (2014), time emerges as a fundamental dimension to establish proximity to, knowledge of and belonging to a place. Indeed, Fabian (1983) argues that only when people are considered coeval can their dialectical confrontation be equal. Applying this to the context of my study means to unravel the lack of coevalness with natives that local administrations attribute to BME and foreigners, emerging through the policies’ dominant focus on ‘integration needs’. This came across as redundant, since the individuals with migrant backgrounds who took part in my research had been well established in the urban context for at least a decade and were politically engaged with supporting BMEs’/foreigners’ rights.

Finally, writing on ethnic diversity and integration of migrants, Brubaker (2001) critiques the ‘differentialist’ public discourse and those public policies bearing on the integration of immigrants. He considers these discourses and policies as the ‘conventional wisdom’ at the time of writing, not only in countries that have long been destinations of migration, such as the US, Canada and Australia, but also in the vast majority of northern and western Europe (Brubaker 2001:532). He opposes a growing tendency that he suggests could be a ‘return to assimilation’, which he supports with cases from France, Germany and the US. More than fifteen years after the publication of this article, his suggestion seems to capture very well the tension between community

cohesion and the multicultural concept of minority in Brighton and that between integration and *de facto* assimilation identified in Bologna.

With the term ‘assimilation’ Brubaker does not refer to the classic idea of a country with one homogeneous national identity and society (Favell 2001), which forces immigrants to give up their culture in order to be accepted in the receiving country. Rather, he argues that ‘assimilation is [...] the process of becoming similar’ (Brubaker 2001:534), as pointed out in Bologna by a young man originally from Senegal working for a local cooperative society. He complained that what Italians define as integration is actually assimilation, since ‘until you look 100% like an Italian, you are not integrated’ [Respondent 14 BO/foreigners]. To this transitive meaning of assimilation, which would imply complete absorption, Brubaker adds the intransitive meaning, which indicates ‘a direction of change’ (Brubaker 2001:534). This second aspect refers to those people upon whom the responsibility for assimilating, or integrating, is placed. This is particularly apt in the case of Brighton, where policies striving for community cohesion that should be aimed at every member of the society are instead directed towards BMEs. Throughout the analysis developed in the empirical chapters, I write about narratives of integration and the image of the ‘integrated migrant’ bearing in mind the contradictions of this concept highlighted by Brubaker (2001).

Different frameworks of multiculturalism, integration, and assimilation correspond to different political traditions which, in turn, closely depend on the understanding of ‘nation’ where they have been established. Ideas about a national community include a specific perception of its members’ physical appearance, culture, language, religion and, more generally, ethnicity (see Anderson 2006). In such a context, whoever does not fit into this framework gets othered and discriminated against

on multiple levels, the effects of nationalism being visible both from a macro- and micro-dimension (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008, Fox & Jones 2013, Fox 2017). Othering and discrimination fall under the heading of racism, but racism is much more than that. For the purpose of this research I consider both its institutional aspect (Carmichael & Hamilton 1967, Baron 1969, John & Humphrey 1971, Jones 1972, Dummett 1973, Fenton 1982, Kushnick 1982, Bourne 2001) and the racism taking place on the ground (Ford 1992, Björge & Witte 1993, Witte 1995, Koopmans 1996, Webster 2003), since both emerged as relevant (mainly) from the members of BME/foreigner associations' stories.

In his definition, Fenton (1982:59) suggests that institutional racism is manifest in those social structures where

'(a) Racism is not only to be found in ideal constructs but in regular practices, rules and the enduring features of society, (b) Racism as a belief or attitude is somehow masked but is nonetheless structurally evident in practice, (c) It may even be conceded that racist attitudes are absent but the structural correlates — inequality, disadvantage and subordination — are still fashioned along racial lines'.

Uncovering this flaw in the system while singling out its consequences on policies and the citizenry marked a divide with the 1950s/60s framing of 'the colour problem' in terms of psychological misunderstanding or culture clash (Bourne & Sivanandan 1980:8). However, some scholars (Williams 1985, Bourne 2001) criticise how ambiguously institutional racism has been both defined and approached in an attempt to be exhaustive; calling for an effective restructuring of 'the state – the legislature, the executive, the judiciary'. According to her, the state is, in ultimate analysis, what sets the tone of race relations in society, 'through its immigration and asylum laws, its administration of public services (such as the police, the prisons, immigration) and its courts' (Bourne 2001:19,20). Throughout the empirical chapters, I report my interviewees' accounts of institutional racism in relation to differential treatment of

White British and BMEs or white Italians and foreigners in such contexts as access to public funding for associations and/or public spaces for cultural events, access to jobs and/or promotions, and protection from the police.

Racism as experienced on the streets ranges from pre-assumptions and stereotyping to verbal harassment and overt physical violence and hate crime, which were, to different extents, all part of my participants' accounts. Before the 1990s, studies on racist violence were rare, the focus being on either institutional racism or political extremism (Witte 1995:489). It was only after a series of racially-based attacks across Europe that academia started engaging with the issue, previously discussed almost exclusively by journalists. However, although this time was referred to as 'the rise of racism' (Ford 1992), this phenomenon had been long engrained in European society. The definition of racist violence on which I draw in my research is as follows:

'the (threat of) violence in which victims are selected not in their capacity as individuals, but as representatives of minority communities based on phenotypical characteristics, or on religious, national or cultural origins' (see Björge & Witte 1993:6, cited in Witte 1995).

Despite differences across various European countries, Witte (1995:499) identifies a common trait in the groups becoming victims of racist attacks. He argues that 'they are perceived and presented as the typical examples of migration flows and migrant and/or religious communities'. In the current context, this argument remains valid, being also associated with a perceived threat to national identity and security (King & Mai 2009, Il Sole 24 Ore 2016).

Drawing from the above reflections, I believe institutional racism and street-level racist violence are inter-dependent, the former legitimising and fuelling the latter. Throughout the thesis, I therefore address racism as a combination of the two unless explicitly specified.

2.4 Conclusion: connecting places, policies and population

Through a Political Opportunity Structure approach and an attention to sense of place, place-narratives, and collective identities, this chapter has engaged with the analysis of the most relevant bodies of literature on which I have grounded my investigation. Despite each dimension having been extensively studied in the literature and notwithstanding their many contact points and reciprocal influences, scholars have very rarely connected them (Johnstone 1990, Scuzzarello 2015). Yet I argue that only by putting them in relation to one another is it possible to achieve an accurate and wide-encompassing picture of the manifold dynamics producing a ‘receptive city’ and to shed light on those categories whose participation in local politics the POS fails to predict.

As our sense of place is rooted in narration (Johnstone 1990), so is the framing of collective identities. The local public discourse, stemming from sense of place and the narratives based on it, has indeed the potential to establish which collective identities are more ‘desirable’ in a specific context and/or are considered ‘more in tune’ with the place itself. For example, the way in which diversity as a narrative (Berg & Sigona 2013) is framed in Brighton portrays LGBTQ+ and artists as fitting in with the ‘character of the place’ (Massey 1991), while in Bologna this happens in relation to culture and politics, leading to an acceptance of politically engaged students and refugees. Throughout the empirical chapters I not only discuss the origin of these narratives but I also analyse how they relate to BMEs in Brighton and foreigners in Bologna and when they are considered to ‘fit in’ with the public image of the city (see Scuzzarello 2015).

However, integration is not a monodirectional process, nor is it a concept free of contradictions, as the analysis of Brubaker (2001) on a possible ‘return to assimilation’

suggests. In relation to the concept of DOS, I have outlined that not only is the formation of certain categories allowed, encouraged or supported by the local public discourse but that the latter can influence the former too. The more individuals associate along certain lines – such as gender and sexuality, in Brighton, or (alternative) culture and ethnicity/nationality, in Bologna – the more this dimension becomes visible, acknowledged and, ultimately, legitimate. Besides, the description of specific issues as the most distressing for the community conveys the message of them being embedded in the place, impacting on the narratives on the place and, ultimately, on the sense of place itself until, potentially, transforming it.

Inspired by Stokowski's (2002) work, I paid attention to the role my participants played within the research context. The aim of this was to enable me to identify the powers they have in the construction and reproduction of narratives and, by so doing, to reach a better understanding of which stories are produced by whom and which purposes or 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002:374) may lie behind them. As I explain in the empirical chapters, in both the case studies the members of migrants' associations accept the existence and (to a certain extent) truthfulness of the institutional narratives of receptiveness. However, they criticised it to various degrees, basing their opinions on personal experiences. This dynamic depends on the participants' life stories and, as a consequence, their (lack of a) power position. For example, in Brighton, respondents classified as Black/Caribbeans were the most open in their criticisms against the perceived institutional racism of the Council, while in Bologna the majority of the foreigners interviewed claimed to be 'treated like children' [Respondent 2 BO/foreigners]. They complained that their participation in the political sphere was more often than not subjected to the presence of Italians within their associations. I expand on this matter in Chapters 5 and 7.

CHAPTER 3

The research ‘in the making’: methodology and analytical framework

My investigation is a qualitative research project supported by an eight-month fieldwork between the cities of Brighton, UK and Bologna, Italy. The decision to make it a cross-country city-level comparison was inspired by other studies in the field of migration focusing on narratives and policies, as demonstrated by Scuzzarello (2010, 2015) and Martiniello (2013), who equally used a comparative framework. It is indeed an established thought that, as much as single nation-studies are capable of giving a detailed account of a place-specific dynamic, it is only through comparison that we can identify ‘socio-structural regularities’ (Kohn 1989:76) and understand their role. This happens especially when researching on migration and diversity, and when attempting to understand if social inclusion in a specific environment is the mere product of contingencies or a reproducible dynamic. In addition, working on an urban scale makes the research more feasible than covering a whole nation and leaves room for the local government to adopt a more effective exchange of good practices and policy dialogues (Martiniello 2013:13).

As I explain in the empirical chapters, my respondents identified ‘diversity’ as the main cause of receptiveness in Brighton and Bologna. Nevertheless, as I explore in detail, ‘diversity’ does not have a unique meaning. This term can indeed refer to gender, lifestyle – as in Brighton, class, culture – as in Bologna, and/or ethnicity and nationality.

Enquiring on the experiences of migrants and their social inclusion, my focus was exactly ethnic diversity. I framed receptiveness as both migrants' perceived feeling to be welcome by the native population – materialising through regular and positive interactions, and efficient policies to prevent migrants' social exclusion.

This chapter gives an account of my fieldwork and is divided in three sections. In Section 3.1 I discuss my positionality as a researcher, reflecting on my age and gender, familiarity with the context and affiliation to a British university; in order to clarify from which perspective I have seen my data. Section 3.2 focuses on my research methods. I first explain my selection criteria and the techniques I used to reach my respondents to then deepen on the interviews, outlining how I conceptualise the knowledge this methods gives access to and how I conducted them. I problematise the need to respect participants' anonymity and the tension between being overt with them and gathering as much information as possible. Following from this, I discuss the importance of participant observations for my study, explaining which events I attended and with which purpose. Finally, in Section 3.3 I describe the process of data analysis and writing-up.

3.1 Situating myself in the field – reflections on positionality

This research is, first and foremost, the demonstration of my attachment to two places that have shaped me as a person in the last years and of my intention to investigate them with the ultimate goal of generating positive outcomes for their policies and citizenry. Because of this particular bond, reflecting on my positionality in the field is necessary to explain from where I looked at my research. As Rose (1997: 308) actually explains, everyone 'see[s] the world from specific locations'. I discuss my age, gender,

familiarity with the environments and academic affiliation, since they have proven to be the characteristics that most shaped my informants' reactions and attitudes towards me.

3.1.1 A young female researcher

Many times, when meeting the participants face-to-face for the first time, they would greet me with surprise by saying 'Oh, it's you! You look very young'; as if they expected someone much older to conduct the research. When contacting them on the phone or via email to check their availability for the interview, I had indeed introduced myself as a researcher based at the University of Sussex, although during my fieldwork in Bologna I would always specify my nationality.

Figenschou (2010:972), following Odendahl and Shaw (2001: 311), notices how certain personal attributes of the interviewer – especially gender and age – trigger some noticeable reactions in the interviewees. To provide some background information on myself and how my characteristics (even if aware that some are socially constructed) could impact on the data collection (see Kobayashi 1994), I feel relevant to add that I am white, female, Italian and European, fluent in English, from a middle-class family background¹³ and that, at the time of fieldwork, I was in my late twenties. My gender and age caused two different but quite intertwined effects: on the one side my respondents, especially if working for the local government, were often very detailed (sometimes even too detailed) in their explanations and accounts, which they carried on using a simple terminology; perhaps assuming a very limited knowledge of the local context and migration policies from my side or underestimating my capability to use their information in my analysis (Figenschou 2010: 971,972). This used to bother me

¹³ The concept of class in the Italian context neither has the same relevance as in the British one nor is used with the same frequency. Thus, it feels unusual to define my class background.

because I did not feel respected and/or taken seriously, but I never pointed it out to my respondents; since I was worried this could damage the data collection process. On the bright side, ignoring this patronising attitude and sometimes playing along with it was an easy way to have access to detailed information (Figenschou 2010: 972). This technique is used by some researchers as well: for example, O'Reilly (2000:15) justified her decision to remain silent when listening to some opinions from British migrants in Spain, even if feeling in strong disagreement, with the aim of not influencing the outcome of the conversation. I expand on this in Section 3.2, where I discuss my research methods.

The downside of not pointing out to my respondents that I was more familiar with the context than they thought was that they tended to feel legitimised in dismissing some of my questions as not important and to try to lead the interview with an overly confident attitude. Issues of social desirability in elite interviewing have often been highlighted and explored in the methodological literature (Berry 2002), but in that case I attributed these respondents' drift towards topics in which they were more confident to the fact that they wanted to give me a polished picture of their institution and city; feeling even more authorised than usual to do so because of my age and gender. It was not only representatives of local institutions though, who displayed this behaviour. The respondent that made me feel the most uncomfortable, first suggesting I should have paid him for his answers and then maintaining an arrogant attitude during the entire interview, belonged to the grassroots group of interviewees. Despite my intention not to let my personal beliefs interfere with my research-self (see Kobayashi 2003), I acknowledge it was not easy to keep calm during our conversation. I rushed the interview to the end as quickly as possible and I am aware that this biased the data collection.

Although it was one of the most difficult moments of my fieldwork, I have decided to write about it following Figenschou's (2010:972) suggestion that including such negative episodes in the methodological discussion is important because it 'illustrates how some of the informants may have perceived [the researcher]' and because raising these issues contributes to shed light on them in order to better explore them. This perception of me as harmless and perhaps not so well experienced on the side of my informants impacted on the research in two ways: on the bright side, I gained access to information rich of details and to personal opinions on the topics I was inquiring on. However, the unfavourable effect of their overly confident attitude was that I could not always completely guide the interview, and, in a few cases, I was forced to skip a couple of questions because I could not bring my respondent to discuss them.

It was not only men who took advantage of their older age when talking to me, rather, more generally, individuals in positions of power; regardless of their gender. One of the appointments in which I felt the least respected as a professional was, indeed, with a female policy-maker. Discussing these obstacles is crucial to uncover the ways in which individuals in power positions can use (and take advantage of) their power. This achieves and even higher importance in the framework of this thesis because, as explained in Section 2.1.2, power is what lies behind the construction and reproduction of narratives. But these episodes have an empirical impact on the research as well. In my experience, I felt uneasy after my respondent's initial approach and I was more controlled and restrained than usual in the conduction of the interview. I am not able to say it for certain, but this could have meant a collection of data less complete than normal.

Despite these obstacles, my age and gender were beneficial when interviewing BMEs/foreigners (Russell, Touchard & Porter 2002). I could generally sense that they

perceived me as harmless and this made them easily open up. Elderly participants in particular treated me quite protectively and with affection as when, during the ‘Celebrating Faith in Our Community’ event in November 2015, Respondent 1[BH/BMEs], member of a multicultural group and originally from Bangladesh, introduced me to quite a few people that I could interview at a later stage. Having the chance to benefit from his connections was a huge help in my participants’ identification. Another fitting example regards Respondent 3[BH/BMEs], originally from Iran, with whom I established a positive rapport from the very first time we met. At the beginning of the session of the Racial Harassment Forum I attended in December 2015, she warmly greeted me with a hug and I could sense that many participants attributed to it an increased legitimisation to my presence there, which my own presentation as a researcher had not fully managed to achieve.

I received an equal support in Bologna from Respondent 5 [BO/foreigners], who has a mixed Somali and Italian heritage. After the difficult conversation on the phone I described in Chapter 1, we met at an event in a social centre, during which he introduced me to an Italian writer and journalist of Somali heritage, whom he thought would be a good fit for my research. Finally, Respondent 2 [BO/foreigners] was perhaps the most helpful in the second phase of the fieldwork. I knew him from my previous job in Bologna and we had established a relationship of mutual respect. He supported me throughout the process of informants’ identification, suggesting I engage with some acquaintances who were part of his broad network and reassuring them that he knew me.

Merriam *et al.* (2001) notice the various ways in which gender can influence the access to certain arenas and informants. During my field research, the most evident moment when being a young woman represented itself as an asset was when, in

Bologna, I met the members of an association fostering Ukrainian culture and traditions. I joined them for one of their Sunday meetings at the Centro Zonarelli, arriving when they were celebrating one of the members' birthday. Apart from two men, the group was composed of women of different ages, from a teenager to a couple of ladies in their sixties. The lady I had contacted to arrange the interview introduced me to the group but, after greeting me, the others went back to the conversation. However, she then pointed out that I couldn't understand their native language, so they switched to Italian. They were discussing how living far from their mothers and daughters, when someone asked me if I had siblings. I replied that I have two sisters and I then explained to them that, living in the UK, the distance from my family is sometimes hard to bear. This shared experience allowed us to bond and, for the rest of the afternoon, I felt well-involved and warmly included in their conversation and activities. Equally important, the information they provided me was very valuable and rich with personal accounts. Contrary to the former case, in the latter I felt extremely at ease, which had a noticeable positive impact on the conversation with my respondents.

3.1.2 An 'insider/outsider'

I lived in Bologna from 2010, when I started my Master's degree, to 2014, right before moving to Brighton for my PhD. At the time I started my field research, I had been living in Brighton for approximately one year. In both cases my relation with the city was not limited to the academic environment: besides being a Master student at the University of Bologna, I was also actively engaged with the activities of Universo Interculturale, a local association working on migrants' and asylum seekers' integration. In addition, at the end of my studies I had started working in a café and as a Communication Officer for the Human Rights Nights Film Festival. In Brighton, I was

part of the University of Sussex as a Doctoral Researcher and I worked part-time in a shop in the city centre. Around the time I started my fieldwork, I also started a Research Assistant job for a different project. Through this combination of experiences, I could have access to different environments and people, and being connected to the local social sector allowed me to be recognised as an insider by many of my participants. Being perceived as well-acquainted with the urban context happened noticeably more in Bologna than in Brighton and this corresponded to how I felt at the time. This was not, however, just a matter of perception, but was rather justified by the fact that I had already met a good part of my foreign interviewees either in the association I used to volunteer for or during my work for the Human Rights Nights Film Festival.

Their awareness of my connection to Bologna's social sector and that, even if I left, I remained connected to it, generated comradeship between me and my informants, which was grounded on their perception of me as 'on their side'. They reinforced this perception whenever meeting me at politically-connoted events and demonstrations, most of which were in support of migrants' and asylum seekers' reception and/or social inclusion. Even though this fellow-feeling allowed them to be open and sincere with me, it also had a downside. It was exactly because this group of participants saw me as so close to the local social and political environment that, in many cases, they felt they did not need to explain their ideas in detail. They would use lots of allusions and implications when describing their daily life in the city, the local government and its decisions and the relations between the Council and BMEs'/foreigners' associations. This tendency sometimes slowed down the interviews and created a transitory disorientation in my interviewees, who could not understand why they were asked to explain something they were sure I already knew.

Noticing this confusion, I started the following interviews by asking them to be as thorough as possible, describing myself as more of a reporter or a messenger than a researcher. I framed myself as someone aiming to collect their experiences and thoughts to understand if Bologna was as actually accepting and inclusive as the institutional narratives described it. Even more importantly, I introduced myself as someone whose ultimate goal was to understand how a city could become more receptive. Using this strategy was useful for them to get a sense of why they were asked to explain their point of view in so much detail. Inspired by Serrant-Green (2002), I felt I was neither an insider nor an outsider, but rather ‘in a space between’ (cited in Kerstetter 2012:114). My relationship with this group of respondents was, indeed, not ‘dichotomous’ (Bröckerhoff 2014), since I could simultaneously be an insider with whom they shared political claims and an outsider working for a foreign institution.

In addition to my familiarity with the urban context of investigation, my nationality, more than ethnicity, played a role in drawing me nearer to my respondents. Many times, during the interviews with BMEs in Brighton, I was told ‘I’m sure you understand, you are a migrant here too’. Although shared experiences – as, in this case, migration – are often seen to facilitate research relationships, I found this curious when considering their refusal to be labelled as migrants. I suggest the meaning of this statement was that neither I nor they were part of the dominant white British group and therefore, in a way or another, we could have experienced alienation. This surprised me mostly because I am white, which should theoretically reduce my exposure to racist and discriminatory episodes; while the individuals who pointed out our shared character as ‘migrants’ were not. However, the period when the field research was conducted has to be noted too as, even though the Brexit referendum had not been announced yet, a growing xenophobic attitude in both Britain and Europe was already noticeable. Muslims were not the only

targets of those social tensions, exacerbated by the Paris attacks of the 13th November 2015, but also some Europeans had been facing social hostility from British nationals; and Eastern Europeans most of all (Moroşanu 2012, 2013; Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015).

Defining me as a 'fellow-migrant' would happen more often during informal pre- or post-interview chats than during the interview itself. In addition, it usually referred to the feeling of being far from home and to the difficulty to get adapted to a new environment with its own norms but also, and mostly, to the perceived discrimination experienced when someone is not part of the dominant ethno-cultural group. Discriminatory treatments are various, ranging from criticism to a patronising and over-explanatory treatment to an overtly racist attitude. Unfortunately, this free-flowing conversation often turned into a more formal one after I turned on the recorder. I kept notes of these informal conversations and of other insights my respondents gave me aside of the interview, which became pivotal in enriching the empirical chapters.

3.1.3 A member of a British university

When working on my Master's dissertation at the University of Bologna I had planned to conduct a few interviews with local policy-makers, but contacting them turned out to be frustrating and time-consuming: most of my emails were not answered and my phone calls were usually bounced back and forth between several offices. I finally managed to access a couple of respondents thanks to my academic advisor. Therefore, when I started the second part of my fieldwork, I was concerned I would experience the same treatment. Meanwhile, many things had changed: I had got a Master's degree, I had achieved some work experience through which I established strong connections but, most of all, I had started a PhD at a British institution.

This was the factor that helped me the most with the recruitment of my institutional participants', even more than my previous engagement and experience in Bologna. One day, during a call with the Personal Assistant of 'a very busy' – as presented to me on the phone – Councillor, she asked me in quite a bored tone 'So, which institution are you from?' When I replied that I was part of 'the University of Sussex, in the UK', her voice changed and, this time thrilled, she asked for a confirmation: 'So, would your study be published internationally?' Although this was the most evident example of the well-established reputation of the university I belonged to, I could perceive the excitement and respect that being part of a British academic institution generated all along. I am not able to determine whether this was decisive in scheduling the interviews with the representatives of the local authorities or my respondents were just helpful and keen to participate, but it definitely speeded up the process.

Back (2004) warns researchers of the danger of describing the society following Manichean divisions between positions of absolute good and evil. Accepting this suggestion, I justify the Councillor's Personal Assistant's and the other interviewees' attitude on the basis of the pride in seeing someone's own city and/or Council mentioned in an international study that can re-establish the scale positioning of that specific urban space (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009). In addition, I find that there is a component of fascination attributing more importance to the British (and, generally, English-speaking) academia than to the Italian one, perhaps due to its diffusion on a global scale. As it happened in relation to the interviews to BMEs and foreigners, when relating to representatives of local authorities I felt I was occupying the 'space between' insider and outsider that Serrant-Green (2002, cited in Kerstetter 2012:114) describes: I

was an insider because of my familiarity with Bologna, but also an outsider, because of my academic affiliation.

As it was the case for my age, gender and familiarity with the context, my academic affiliation with Sussex also had a negative side, even if easily manageable. Especially when asking questions on the design and functioning of local policies for foreigners' inclusion, the Councillors and policy makers I interviewed tended to deploy a very praising narrative approach with barely any room for criticism, illustrating to me how Bologna was still at the forefront of welfare policies. For example, Respondent 12 [BO/institutions] prised the will of the local government to receive more asylum seekers than established, during and in the aftermath of the recent 'refugee crisis'. The tendency to sound socially desirable and to provide a picture of their job and work environment as much successful as possible is quite high among elite interviewees, as Berry (2002) problematises. I usually tended not to contradict my respondents, even in cases when it was difficult for me to remain neutral; hoping they would feel at ease and disclose as much information as possible (O'Reilly 2000). I expand on the interview process in Section 3.2.3.

3.2 Research methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define research methods as an assemblage of different pieces of techniques and representations in response to different situations. In this section, I provide an account of the techniques of data collection I needed to support my research and, more in general, of my fieldwork between Brighton (from September to December 2015) and Bologna (from January to April 2016).

3.2.1 Developing a solid research: a city-level comparative framework

For a long time, research in the field of immigration and ethnic relations was conducted through single-country case studies (Koopmans & Statham 2000), which used to focus on the country as a whole rather than on selected localities. Even if cross-national research has experienced an increase in relevance from the late 1990s (Joppke 1996, 1999, Favell 2001, Koopmans & Statham 2000), the focus of those studies remained long tied to single countries' integration politics, their national institutions and the multiple ways in which they can either determine or influence migrants' integration patterns. Qualitative/ethnographic research has instead very often been conducted in particular and much more restricted spaces, as urban neighbourhoods (Baumann 1996, Wessendorf 2013). In recent years there has however been a growing interest in the local aspect of integration and immigration, as works by authors like Alexander (2007), Caponio and Borkert (2010) and Emilsson (2015) demonstrate. The reasons behind this are, first, the realisation of the 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002) limitations, which have triggered a desire of

'Understanding whether and how national policies are implemented at the local level and whether municipalities are formulating policies on their own' (Emilsson 2015:1).

These more recent stream of studies follows a multi-level governance approach, focusing on the relations between national and local policies and comparing local policies in different cities within the same country or in different ones (Emilsson 2015). Several scholars (Ireland 1994, Garbaye 2000, 2005, Martiniello 2000, Caponio 2004, 2006) have actually argued that local authorities have a more direct contact with migrants than national institutions and that they have not only to provide primary solutions for issues such as housing, education and healthcare but also to manage migrants' demands for the recognition of their identity and 'tactics of belonging'

(Yuval-Davis 2010). That is to say, local authorities not only have to manage the practicalities of integration but also the different actions undertaken by migrants when claiming to be part of the receiving society.

Following the studies of Jørgensen (2012) and Scholten (2013), Emilsson (2015:2) identifies an ‘increasing incongruence between national and local level’; indicating a tendency of Municipalities and local authorities to design, when possible, their own policies. In relation to this research, focusing on the local level allows to include crucial place-specific elements in the study, namely the sense of place (Massey 1991, Campelo *et al.* 2014), the influence of the local public discourse on the perceived ‘legitimate’ collective identities (Koopmans & Olzak 2004) and the local understanding of diversity (Berg & Sigona 2013); all contributing to build specific narratives of receptiveness towards migrants. However, it is important to stress that this shift of focus from the national to the local does not mean that the two scales are in opposition, because local policies – as place-specific as they can be – are always integrated in and following from the national level.

After establishing the rationale behind the choice to work at the city level, I here discuss the strength of the comparative analytical framework. Dennis, Stanfield and John (1993:25) argue that

‘The best social scientific work is comparative. This is because, whether we are trying to explain something about the world or to predict future trends and tendencies, our arguments are the strongest when we are able to bring to the table evidence drawn from more than one case’.

In addition, Nowak (1989:34) explains that

‘For many classical writers, the notion of ‘comparative’ sociological study would sound redundant. Sociology *had*¹⁴ to be “comparative”, almost by definition’.

¹⁴ Italics in the original.

Among comparative studies, the cross-national ones work according to the rules of inductive logic, aiming at

‘The discovery of broad, possibly universally valid regularities applying to such complex objects’ (Nowak 1989:37).

Despite believing that Bologna would be an ideal case study, due to its reputation of being ‘hospitable’ (Scuzzarello 2015), established both at a national and international level, I was also conscious of its place-specific particularities concerning the way the city frames its diversity and issues local policies. Building a comparison with Brighton thus proved to be an efficient way to test whether the processes and factors constructing the image of a city as receptive to ethnic diversity do or do not follow a common pattern and, if not, how they differ. Kohn (1989:76) supports the value of cross-national comparisons when aiming at establishing general rules, because

‘In no other way we can be certain that what we believe to be social-structural regularities are not merely particularities, the product of some limited set of historical or cultural or political circumstances’.

Single nation-studies might indeed give an extremely detailed account of a dynamic located in a specific place, but we could never be sure if this could be replicated elsewhere. Therefore, studying why and how Bologna – or Brighton – achieved its reputation of being welcoming and open cities might have produced a careful report of its historical and political processes but I could not have argued with confidence whether the factors deemed crucial to establish their public image are, in effect, regularities.

City-level comparisons concentrate on a restricted geographical space, this making them not only more feasible but also allowing a more effective exchange of good practices and policy dialogues (Martiniello 2013:13). Analysing what makes Bologna and Brighton cities receptive towards migrants not only singles out effective

elements in developing a city's receptiveness but it can also foster a positive and policy-centred dialogue between 'receptive cities' and, ultimately, provide best practices for other cities to become more receptive as well.

Brighton and Bologna have proven to be to ideal case studies: besides boasting a reputation of 'open', 'tolerant' and 'welcoming', they have other key similarities with respect to their size and demographics. Both are considered medium-size cities in their countries, with respectively 273,369 (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011¹⁵) and 387,044 (Comune di Bologna 2016) inhabitants. According to the 2011 Census Briefing (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011), 16% of the local population – approximately 42,885 people, is estimated to be non-UK born, while the percentage of local residents classified as BMEs reaches 19.5%. In Bologna, at the end of February 2016 foreign-born residents accounted for 15.24% of the overall population (Comune di Bologna 2016). I provide a detailed breakdown of these data in Chapters 4 and 6. At the same time, there are substantial differences between the two cities, which makes it possible to identify regular factors at the basis of the local narratives of 'receptiveness' without running the risk of them being solely place-specific factors. First and foremost, their location in two different countries means that the cities have a different migration history and different immigrations laws. However, for the purpose of this research what needs to be considered are also the Race Relations Acts and community cohesion policies, in the case of the UK, and the integration policies, in the case of Italy, which are designed to regulate the relations between natives and BMEs/foreigners long-term settled in the country.

¹⁵ All the demographic data I report are the ones I had access to before and during the fieldwork, to respect the time-specificity of the data.

3.2.2 Recruiting my participants

Participant recruitment and selection is ‘central to the outcomes of the research’ (Rapley 2004:17). Identifying who I wanted to talk to and negotiating access to the interviews was a crucial phase of my fieldwork, constituting a solid ground for my data gathering. Even if I tried to keep the two halves of the field research as symmetrical as possible, the process slightly varied from one case study to the other, partially depending on the connections I had established. The recruitment process I used to contact my participants was guided by a combination of snowball (Seale & Filmer 1998:138) and criterion sampling (Patton, 2001: 238). Snowball sampling is particularly efficient in contexts where accessing interviewees directly is noticeably harder than reaching them through friends and colleagues and in case the researcher aims to grasp specific ‘insider’ perspectives (Biernacki & Waldorf 1981); which was the case of my investigation.

However, this technique also has its downsides: the first and most common issue for a researcher is that the snowball sampling is not a mechanism which, once started, keeps going endlessly (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978). Sometimes the referral chain can just stop working; let alone the times when is hard to get it started. Another issue to take into account is that the snowball sampling can jeopardise the diversity of the sample. Even if not certain, there is a high risk that this happens, depending on the networks in which the respondents are inserted and on whether they include people of the same gender, ethnic origin, etc. Therefore, I decided to combine snowball sampling with criterion sampling, and in doing so identify specific cases meeting relevant criteria (which I discuss further on in this section) and capable of providing a richness of information (Patton 2001).

At the time I started my fieldwork, Brighton was still relatively new to me. My connection to the non-academic sector was extremely valuable because it allowed me to

get a first impression of the presence of BMEs in urban life; thus, paving the way for the participant observations I conducted in the following months. What I was missing though, was a connection with either the City Council or, most of all, BMEs' associations. Differently to Bologna, in Brighton I had never volunteered nor got involved with local NGOs, and so I had to build up my network from scratch.

I then began by browsing the Council's website looking for those Councillors and policy-makers that could be in regular contact with ethnic diversity-related issues. In addition, I sent an email to the Council's main switchboard asking for more details and they sent me a chart showing all the Council's department and services. Once I had this data, I started to send out the first emails to Councillors and policy-makers whose area could be related to BMEs – as equality, education, housing or public safety – introducing myself and my research and explaining why I wanted to conduct an interview with them. I did not select the Councillors on the basis of their political party but only members of the Green and Labour Party got in touch with me, while I had no responses from any of the Conservatives. This did not come across as a surprise, being migration and ethnic diversity one of the most currently debated topics dividing the country, especially after the recent Brexit referendum. However, it was also curious to see that, many times, some potential respondents stated that they were not the best candidate to talk to and suggested me to contact some other colleagues whose role was commonly associated with refugees and migrants. Even if I spontaneously interpreted that reaction as a lack of interest in my research and/or an easy way to avoid yet another commitment, I think it is fair to follow Back's (2004) advice and acknowledge that at least some of them might have actually not felt prepared or knowledgeable enough to reply to my questions. This also reflects some of the issues relating to how migration and BMEs' inclusion are framed in local policies, which I address in Chapter 4.

Around the same time, I also started to identify respondents belonging to the BME group. After a consultation with my supervisors, I opted for interviewing only individuals involved in community associations/organisations. The reason behind this was a presumed familiarity with the work of local government and its representatives; this allowing not only an informed opinion on policies, but also an approach to issues such as racism and discrimination beyond personal reactions and opinions. In this case, I contacted a friend who had previously worked with one community association and she gave me the contact of Respondent 1[BH/BMEs], who became my first BME informant and introduced me to a good number of interviewees. As it happened for the representatives of the local authorities, the snowballing technique was essential here too: counting on the support and intermediation of my main knowledgeable informant (Rubin & Rubin 1995, in Rapley 2004:17) incredibly eased the participants' recruitment process.

On the contrary, I was already familiar with Bologna and I had connections to both the local social sector and (even if superficially) representatives of the local government. During my years of volunteering for *Universo Interculturale* I had established professional and friendly relationships with different kinds of 'foreigners', from the asylum seekers who arrived in Bologna as a consequence of the North Africa Emergency Plan to individuals of foreign origin well settled in Bologna and participating to local politics. I focused on the latter group. I could count on a couple of key figures that provided me access to various other interviewees. However, their intermediation was essential to build trust between my new contacts and I, especially when contacting them for the first time. Saying 'It was this person who gave me your number, he thought you might have important insights for my research...' eased the tension derived from receiving a call from a stranger. As in the previous case, I could

sense that the authority of my key informant in the Bolognese social realm would result in an incentive to participate in my study.

Regarding the representatives of local authorities, in this case I only had two informants, a Councillor and a policy-maker I had met during my work for the Human Rights Nights Film Festival. Because of my previous job, I had the phone number of both and I could contact them directly instead of having to go through administration officers to schedule an appointment. The impact of the snowball sampling was however weaker when recruiting participants from local institutions than when recruiting BMEs/foreigners because they were generally more concerned of their contacts' privacy and availability. Therefore, I relied more on the criterion sampling in the recruitment of this group, the snowball technique being just a second support when the first contact was already established.

The participants' age in the study ranged from late twenties to seventies. Despite trying to maintain a gender balance by contacting an equal number of men and women, I succeeded more in some groups than in others: in the Brighton's institutions one, the ratio of women was noticeably higher than the men (11 to 4), while Brighton's BME male respondents were 7 over 8 informants. In Bologna's institutions group the ratio was more balanced (although leaning toward the men's side): I interviewed 9 women and 12 men. Finally, I reached 9 male foreigners as opposed to 5 female. Overall, the sample slightly over-represents men.

In Brighton, I conducted 9 interviews to representatives of the local government, 6 to caseworkers and/or employees of local charities working with BMEs – whom I consider part of the institutional group – and 8 to members of BMEs' associations. I also did two follow-up interviews to representatives of local institutions and two to members of BMEs' associations. In Bologna, I instead conducted 13 interviews to

representatives of the local government, 9 to employees of local NGOs and cooperative societies – whom I consider part of the institutional group – and 14 to members of foreigners’ associations. Within this latter group, twice I interviewed two people together, not only because in both cases they were a couple but also because they spontaneously started the conversation in this way. The number of interviews conducted in Bologna is slightly higher, due to the significant ease with which I could reach the informants. Even though I tried to balance this tendency, I ended up with a sample skewed in favour of those responsive to my invitations, which Cohen *et al.* (2007: 113-116) define as a ‘convenience’ or ‘volunteer’ sample.

BH/institutions	Gender	Age (decade)	Ethnicity	Profession
Respondent 1	F	40s	White British	policy-maker
Respondent 2	F	40s	White British	policy-maker
Respondent 3	F	40s	White British	policy-maker
Respondent 4	M	50s	White British	policy-maker
Respondent 5	F	60s	Mixed	policy-maker
Respondent 6	M	60s	White British	Councillor
Respondent 7	M	60s	White Other	Councillor
Respondent 8	F	50s	White British	policy-maker
Respondent 9	F	50s	Mixed	policy-maker
Respondent 10	F	50s	White British	caseworker
Respondent 11	F	60s	White British	caseworker
Respondent 12	F	40s	White Other	caseworker

Respondent 13	F	20s	Black British	caseworker
Respondent 14	M	60s	White British	caseworker
Respondent 15	F	60s	White British	caseworker

Table 1: list of the interviewees of the Brighton's institutions' group and their main characteristics

BH/BMEs	Gender	Age (decade)	Ethnicity	Role
Respondent 1	M	60s	South-Asian	member of a multicultural group
Respondent 2	M	70s	Black/Caribbean	member of an association in support of black people's rights
Respondent 3	F	70s	White Other	member of the Racial Harassment Forum
Respondent 4	M	60s	Black/Caribbean	member of an association in support of black people's rights
Respondent 5	M	50s	South-Asian	member of a religious association
Respondent 6	M	40s	Arab	member of a religious association
Respondent 7	M	70s	South-Asian	member of a religious association
Respondent 8	M	40s	South-Asian	member of a multicultural group

Table 2: list of the interviewees of the Brighton's BMEs' group and their main characteristics

BO/institutions	Gender	Age (decade)	Country of origin	Profession
Respondent 1	F	50s	Eritrea/Italy	policy-maker
Respondent 2	M	60s	Chile	Councillor
Respondent 3	M	60s	Italy	member of an intercultural centre
Respondent 4	F	50s	Italy	member of an intercultural centre

Respondent 5	F	60s	Italy	Councillor
Respondent 6	F	40s	Italy	Councillor
Respondent 7	M	50s	Italy	Councillor
Respondent 8	M	50s	Italy	Regional Councillor
Respondent 9	M	40s	Italy	Councillor
Respondent 10	F	40s	Italy	policy-maker
Respondent 11	M	30s	Italy	Councillor
Respondent 12	F	50s	Italy	policy-maker
Respondent 13	M	60s	Italy	policy-maker
Respondent 14	F	20s	Italy	member of a union
Respondent 15	M	30s	Italy	caseworker
Respondent 16	M	30s	Italy	caseworker
Respondent 17	F	30s	Italy	caseworker
Respondent 18	M	40s	Italy	caseworker
Respondent 19	M	30s	Italy	ex-civil servant
Respondent 20	M	30s	Italy	caseworker
Respondent 21	F	40s	Italy	member of an intercultural association

Table 3: list of the interviewees of the Bologna's institutions' group and their main characteristics

BO/foreigners	Gender	Age (decade)	Country of origin	Role
Respondent 1	F	50s	Philippines	member of an association fostering Filipino culture and traditions
Respondent 2	M	60s	Sudan	member of a union
Respondent 3	M	40s	Eritrea	member of an intercultural association
Respondent 4	M	50s	Cameroon	member of an intercultural association
Respondent 5	M	50s	Italy/Somalia	member of an intercultural association
Respondent 6	F	40s	Ukraine	member of an association fostering Ukrainian culture and traditions
Respondent 7	M	20s	China	member of an association fostering Chinese culture and traditions
Respondent 8	M	30s	Peru	member of an association fostering Peruvian culture and traditions
Respondent 9	F	30s	Peru	member of an association fostering Peruvian culture and traditions
Respondent 10	M	60s	Iran	member of a union
Respondent 11	F	60s	Iran	member of a union
Respondent 12	M	50s	Pakistan	member of a union
Respondent 13	F	50s	Cuba	member of an intercultural association
Respondent 14	M	30s	Senegal	caseworker

Table 4: list of the interviewees of the Bologna's foreigners' group and their main characteristics

3.2.3 ‘A special insight into subjectivity’ – in-depth interviews

Atkinson and Silverman (1997) define the interview process as a ‘special insight into subjectivity’; enabling access to the interviewee’s own lived experiences and meanings (cited in Rapley 2004:15). This vision focuses on the process of meaning and truth construction more than on a factual truth (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001). Using this framework, it is possible to understand that the crucial feature of the interviews is then the way in which diversity and receptiveness are constructed in Brighton and Bologna. However, this does not mean that the empirical truth is irrelevant for the validity of the data. Qualitative interviews, and especially in-depth interviews, seek to cover both a factual and a meaning level because they allow people to convey to others a situation from their own perspective and in their own words (Kvale 1996).

My participants did not recall just factual truths, as the establishment of programs on community cohesion and/or integration, but also widely expressed themselves, their thoughts, opinions and feelings on their city’s actual openness while offering some examples of interactions and relations between locals and BMEs/foreigners and/or between BMEs/foreigners and the Council services – either positive or negative. By means of example, one of the respondents belonging to the grassroots group narrated his version – shared by quite a few other individuals classified as BMEs – of the set up and changes in the People’s Festival (or People’s Day) to complain about the appropriation of cultural events by the local government and its white British majority. I expand on this in Chapter 5. Chirkov (2009) also argues that interviews, together with other methods as ethnography, participant observations and diary analysis are highly suitable to study the meanings behind someone’s actions and opinions. The perspective I wanted to give to my research, inspired by Gubrium and

Holstein's work (2002), follows Chirkov's (2009) insight and consists of considering the individuals as the source of the knowledge.

In relation to the area of migration studies, semi-structured interviews are ideal not only to grasp the migration-related terminology used in the one and the other part of the comparison, but to understand which meaning the respondents used in association to which term. By means of example, the significance given to 'migrant' in the UK is different from 'BME' in the measure that, while the former conveys an idea of recent arrival and emergency, the latter is connected to a more established vision of the British multicultural society and Race Relations policies. The same goes for the other relevant terms I analyse in the empirical chapters, as 'foreigner', 'community cohesion' and 'integration': they all have a distinctive meaning that makes sense only in the specific context the interview is embedded in (Rapley 2004). For this reason I asked the interviewees themselves for definitions and clarifications on the meaning of their jargon, as in the case of my clarifying conversation with Respondent 2[BH/BMEs]. It is also to respect the place-specific meanings that I kept the original terms throughout my writing instead of merging them into a unique category. Being able to set up a comparison between equivalent terms did not mean, indeed, to deny their specific characteristics and their cause-effect links to their environment.

Finally, my decision to include in the participants' sample not only representatives of local institutions but also members of migrants' associations is functional to my intention to 'unmask' and 'de-centre' the power balance that – as feminist theory explains (Rapley 2004:15) – is implicit in narratives. Oakley (1999) illustrates that qualitative methods not only are 'a method of choice', allowing the reader to grasp the voice of categories unlikely to be heard – as, in this case, BMEs and foreigners – but also that they connect particular social groups' sets of experiences with

their own account of reality and human processes. Therefore, drawing together the responses of both representatives of local institutions and of members' of BME/foreigners' associations, helps to understand if different categories of people frame narratives of receptiveness in different ways and, if this is the case, how and why they do so.

The interviews tended to last between 40 minutes (the shortest) and 2 hours (the longest), with an average of one hour. I would usually start by introducing myself and the project, encouraging question and stressing that the participation was voluntary. At this point I would usually hand out the consent form which was received with familiarity by the representatives of local institutions but not equally willingly by members of BMEs'/foreigners' associations. Anonymity was indeed by far the main issue I faced when conducting interviews and the reactions of the participants to it divided them along the same line that separated the authorities from BMEs/foreigners.

The representatives of local authorities were generally very conscious of their privacy and data protection but, once I explained to them that I would treat their information confidentially and that I would not use their name or any other information which would reveal their identity, they were reassured. However, there were a couple of policy-makers who were extremely worried about the possibility I would disclose any data connectable to their identity. I interpret this fear in the light of the information they provided me: they were the people who discussed their own institutions from a critical perspective, demonstrating not only high analytical skills but also honesty and transparency; which they put before social desirability (Berry 2002). Their narratives were largely down to earth and did not aim to give me any overly advertising picture of the city, rather it was centred on unpacking the very same advertising discourse, its truthfulness and what lies behind it or, as Respondent 2 [BH/BMEs], of Caribbean

origin, put it, ‘what happens underneath’ (see Stokowski 2002 for ‘desired ends’). Many among the BME/foreigner respondents reacted in the opposite way. Most of them were not as familiar with the informed consent as the representatives of local institutions and I soon realised that giving them a sheet to sign would change the register of the conversation from friendly to formal, from a helpful chat in which they would give me a set of confidential insights to an official exchange of information. They seemed wary of the implications of the document despite my reassurances, so I started asking for verbal consent only; hoping not to damage the atmosphere of trust.

I consistently addressed the core themes, concerning local demographics, pros and cons of an ethnically diverse city, the elements behind the city’s reputation, local policies for social inclusion and issues of discrimination and racism. However, I would follow the thread of the conversation instead of sticking to a rigid structure, so every conversation was not only different from the others but also centred on what was of importance for the interviewee him/herself. As soon as possible after the end of the interview, I would take notes of important details such as the respondent’s expressions and body language, the conversation’s and the surroundings’ atmosphere and my perceptions of his/her behaviour towards both me and my questions; as for instance of the sincerity of the answers.

I recorded every interview with a portable recording device (apart from once, when I had to use my laptop), to which people responded generally positively. I suppose the representatives of the local government were quite used to this system because of their institutional role, but among BMEs and foreigners it was well received too. Quite a few of them actually appreciated the chance to be recorded and even asked me not to be given a pseudonym when I would write the thesis (on which I did not agree). They seemed to believe that their claims would reach a wider audience and/or would have

more influence on their local government through my intermediation. I talked to most of my informants individually, even though in some cases I interviewed couples or small groups. I was initially worried that this would jeopardise the quality of my data, while instead their mutual encouragement and bouncing off enriched the responses.

I made constant efforts to be as open as possible about myself both professionally and personally, but there were moments when doing it would have jeopardised the quality of the research. This happened almost exclusively when interviewing representatives of the local government: as explained in Section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, many among them perceived me as not acquainted enough with the local social sector and its connected policies and tended to adopt a narrative praising the Council's work and its outcomes. In both the case studies, but especially in Bologna – thanks to my higher familiarity with the context – I was able to understand when the participants' responses did not correspond to the truth or, at least, when the actions of the Council were not met with support by the citizenry. Some scholars argue for taking part in the interview not just as a neutral listener but as an 'active conversationalist' (Wetherell & Potter 1992:99), noting that contradicting the interviewee, or even arguing when necessary, is efficient to get more information. However, I felt that a challenging attitude would have just triggered a defensive reaction, while instead keeping my opinions for myself when in disagreement or just asking for clarifications would allow me to have access to more detailed data (O'Reilly 2000). In addition, Valentine (2005), reporting Skegg's (1994) idea, asserts that challenging the respondent would not make them change their mind on delicate issues while, on the contrary, it could destroy the rapport built up between informant and researcher.

Despite my decision not to overtly criticise my respondents' views, there was one case only when I used a controversial example to ask them about their city's

institutional narrative, which I describe extensively in Chapter 6. To briefly hint to it, it refers to the case of the eviction of some (mainly foreign) families from the abandoned ex-Telecom building in Bologna, in October 2015. The case was very much debated, opposing a part of the Council who pointed out the housing occupation unlawful character to another part that was sympathetic to the occupants' situation and need of shelter. The final eviction triggered many arguments on the alleged 'loss of Bologna's soul' (Bianchi 2015), on which I questioned my institutional respondents. I report their answers and their implications for my study in Chapter 6. However, I always posed this question at the very end of the interview so as not to penalise its outcome.

3.2.4 Events fostering cultural diversity – participant observations

Even though I considered in-depth interviews the ideal method for this study, I also wanted to enrich my data with a different technique. Delamont (2004:218) notices that subjects' lives are open to 'research surveillance' in the field well beyond what they might agree to share during the interview. Strong (1980:27, 28) also argues that 'no form of interview study [...] can stand as an adequate substitute for observational data' (cited in Delamont 2004:220). The main aim of my observations was then to witness the extent to which BMEs/foreigners organised or participated in events fostering the city's cultural diversity and how interactions between BMEs/foreigners and natives developed in those public spaces. I decided to set up participant observations during selected events fostering the local ethno-cultural diversity which were organised, co-organised, sponsored or publicly supported by the Council.

During both parts of my fieldwork I lived in the same city subject of enquiry and, on daily basis, I used to spend a good part of my time either interviewing or regularly visiting my key informants or hanging out in places generally attended by

BMEs/foreigners, as for example the Black and Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP) in Brighton and the Centro Interculturale Zonarelli in Bologna, where I could have the chance to start an informal conversation with some of the members. In addition, I made sure to attend some intercultural events I considered key for my investigation; which I list at the end of this paragraph.

However, despite my immersion in the field being extensive and intense, it was still partial, as it is the case of most sociological research, because I kept my own private life detached from the investigation (Delamont 2004:218-219). Sometimes the boundary between private life and fieldwork were quite blurred, especially when I casually saw some of my interviewees on the streets. Even if some hints to the interview topics were unavoidable, I often tried to divert the conversation to more neutral and mundane matters, not to convey the message that my respondents were meaningful to me only in relation to their insights. The other side of the coin was that in many cases they wanted to talk to me about social inclusion and integration policies, having identified in me a messenger through which to communicate with the authorities; as reported in Section 3.2.3. I met the majority of my participants only once, but in some other cases we had more than one session. This happened both with my key informants, because of the relevance of their insights, and with a couple of other respondents who were particularly keen on sharing their views with me. Sometimes, this perceived proximity generated emotional and ethical challenges in relation to which information to include and which to leave out (see Ellis 2007).

Drawing a boundary between my researcher persona and myself as a human being, as between my informants as research subjects and as individuals, was an ongoing process. I usually included in my data the relevant information I was given even when the interview was over, unless it was very sensitive for the informant. In

some cases, I deliberately left out details shared with me during the interview, because I judged them as personal while not determinant for the outcome of the project. For example, when I met Respondent 13 [BO/foreigners], a lady originally from Cuba, we went for a walk in her neighbourhood park. We sat on a bench, I turned on the recorder and started the interview, which turned very soon into a long chat with the inclusion of many personal examples and experiences from her side. When transcribing, I decided to leave out those that could be connected to her and which, even if interesting, were not essential for a better comprehension of her view on local receptiveness.

To conclude, I outline the events where I conducted the participant observations: in Brighton, I attended ‘One Voice Celebration of Cultural Diversity’ held at The Open Market on the 21st May 2015 and organised by One Voice with the Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership, ‘Celebrating Faith in Our Community’, held at the Brighton Centre on the 18th November 2015 and set up by a group of religious organisations together with the Interfaith Contact Group, the Health and Social Care Faith Forum and Community Works and a session of the Racial Harassment Forum, held at the Brighton & Hove City Council on the 16th December 2015 and organised with the Brighton & Hove Community Safety Partnership. In Bologna, I then attended to ‘Una moschea per Bologna?/A mosque for Bologna?’, a workshop held at the co-working space BOrgo22 on the 21st February 2016 and organised by a group of Italian researchers from the University of Bristol, ‘La città trascurata/The neglected city’, organised in the Baraccano building on the 23rd February 2016 by the electoral roll Coalizione Civica, ‘Bologna alla pari/Equal Bologna’, set up at the Council of Bologna on the 13th April 2016 by the Department of Equal Opportunity and ‘Il sistema di accoglienza e integrazione dei migranti a Bologna/The reception and integration of migrants in Bologna’, organised at the Ritmo Lento Circolo ARCI on the 23rd April

2016. The last one turned out not to be relevant for the specific purpose of my study, but it was nonetheless an interesting moment where to see cooperative societies working on asylum seekers and migrants reception in Bologna dialoguing with university students. The above might come across as unrelated events and indeed they are very diverse if we consider the organising bodies and their target audience. However, it was actually this diversity to give me plenty of insights on the participation, contribution and interaction of BMEs/foreigners with natives and local institutions.

3.3 After the fieldwork: data processing and analysis

‘So many stories, so many journeys: each one fantastic in its particularity.’ (Ahmed 2000:90)

Making sense of all the information gathered was not an easy task. Every interview seemed to me so precious and dense with crucial insights that had to be turned into a systematic account. However, Gubrium & Holstein (2002) argue that the analysis of the data starts long before the writing, having its peak during the interview. In this space both the speakers are constantly ‘doing analysis’, collaborating in ‘making meaning’ and ‘producing knowledge’ (cited in Rapley 2004:27).

However, the post-interview phase undoubtedly constituted the most relevant section of the data processing and analysis. I transcribed every interview, this allowing me to keep track of important details, such as pauses, emphasis or elusive tone and to match them with the topic in question. After that, I uploaded all the transcripts on NVivo, taking care to analyse each category of respondents (representative of local institutions in Brighton, members of BME associations in Brighton, representative of local institutions in Bologna and members of foreigners’ associations in Bologna).

I decided to use a software for my data analysis because I wanted the comparison to be as systematic as possible, considering its pivotal role for my study. Also, considering the length of the interviews and the density of information in them, benefitting from the rigour of a software seemed to me the best decision. The codes of analysis I created were originally constructed following the main topics explored with my questions: 'city's image', 'local inclusion policies', 'locals/migrants interactions' and 'cultural events'. While re-reading the transcripts and classifying the information in them, I edited and enriched these categories with sub-categories, transforming the organisation of the data as follows: 'city's image' turned into 'sense of place', divided between 'identity', 'diversity', 'community of residents' and 'culture/location/political history'; 'local inclusion policies' became 'Political Opportunity Structure', divided into 'relations between BMEs/foreigners and Councils' and 'community cohesion/integration policies'; 'locals/migrants interactions' was edited in 'Discursive Opportunity Structure'. In addition, I created the new category of 'racism' under which I listed 'segregation', 'media portraits', 'visual difference' and 'natives' behaviour'. The subcategory of 'intermarriage', under 'locals/migrants interactions', was deleted half way through the data processing, due to its emerged marginal importance in proving the interaction between BME/foreigners and nationals.

Finally, two clarifications are necessary before moving on to the empirical chapters. The first one refers to the use of 'foreigners' as a classification when reporting the data collected in the second half of the fieldwork. Despite the term might convey a derogatory idea, I decided to keep it and actually use it as a category both because I wanted to report my findings as factually as possible and, not less important, because the same migrants I interviewed used it to define themselves. The second clarification refers instead to the quotes from the interviews in Bologna I report in the text: when

translating them I tried to remain as accurate as possible – which can be seen in the use of certain terms and expressions in their original Italian version – while simultaneously making sure they are grammatically and structurally correct in English.

CHAPTER 4

‘Very open, very welcoming...kind of OK with difference’:

exploring the institutional narratives on Brighton

‘Our city is renowned for its vibrancy, culture of tolerance, its independent shops and businesses, historic lanes, array of pubs, clubs and restaurants, its varied festivals and events, stunning architecture and 13 kilometres of coastline.’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:3)

In the 2014 City Snapshot Report of Statistics, Brighton is described as a ‘fashionable destination’ associated with a ‘culture of tolerance’. The interviews I conducted with representatives of the local government reflected this by identifying ‘tolerance’, ‘open-mindedness’ and ‘diversity’ as the core of the local narrative around the city. In connection with Ryden’s (1993:242) statement that ‘places do not exist until they are verbalised’, I suggest that these characteristics are the pillars around which the institutional narratives about Brighton’s sense of place are constructed. Indeed, Johnstone (1990) argues that sense of place is rooted in narration, meaning that it is not only verbally constructed through collective memories or stories but that, to be effective, it also has to be reproduced.

Very relevant to this part of my investigation is also Stokowski’s (2002:374) attention to the narratives’ ‘desired ends’, which take advantage of local trademark characteristics aiming at various goals beneficial for individuals and/or groups in positions of power. As Hadj-Abdou (2014) points out in her comparative study on Vienna and Dublin, diversity can become a powerful trademark to attract selected categories of people, thus increasing the city’s positioning on the global scale (Glick

Schiller & Çağlar 2009). This chapter, then, not only accounts for the institutional narratives on Brighton as a tolerant, open and diverse place and their origin according to the first group of respondents, but also explores the ‘desired ends’ behind these accounts. By so doing, it uncovers the economic benefits that this reputation can provide to the city. Examples related to the cultural and educational spheres illustrate this well.

The research questions underlying this chapter are as follows:

- *How are institutional narratives of receptiveness constructed in Brighton?*
- *Who is depicted as an ‘integrated migrant’ and why?*
- *How do local government representatives describe their policies for social inclusion and the principles guiding them?*

To provide a structured answer to these questions, the chapter is divided into four sections. Section 4.1 evaluates local diversity as a social fact (Berg & Sigona 2013) by exploring the town’s demographics. I point out Brighton’s characterising trait of counting ‘fewer¹⁶ migrants [...] from *more* places’ (Gamlen 2010:7) instead of a vast non-British born community from the same ethno-national group as opposed to a white native community, as happens in many major cities in the UK. After a presentation of the statistics of the local population, I elaborate on the notions of Black and Ethnic Minorities, visible difference and social relations between natives and BMEs. Basing my analysis on Allport (1954) and Brown and Hewstone (2005), I problematise the alleged good relations between different ethnic groups: some of my informants’ comments indeed reflected a lack of interaction more than a positive engagement. In addition, I critically examine the claim that in Brighton there is no residential

¹⁶ Italics in the original.

segregation, and that this is the key to positive social interaction, by analysing in which parts of the city and its surroundings BMEs live and how this can impact on their social and political participation.

Section 4.2 analyses diversity as a narrative and its connection with the dimensions of gender, sexuality and lifestyle. The history of Brighton in connection to the presence of LGBTQ+ groups, often associated with artists too, serves as a basis for that narrative. I then draw attention to the point made by the vast majority of the local institutions' representatives that it is because the locals are used to those specific types of diversity that they have become easily accustomed to and receptive of any other form of diversity, including ethnic. Following from this, in Section 4.3 I establish a connection between the diversity celebrated in place-narratives and public discourse and the collective identities perceived as legitimate in the local environment (Koopmans & Olzak 2004). I problematise how a 'flamboyant' dress code [Respondent 1 BH/institutions] is perceived as more in tune with the city's own character (Massey 1996) than 'visible' ethnic diversity – as, for example, skin colour and/or religious clothing.

Finally, in Section 4.4 I elaborate on the connection between place-narratives and the issues and needs of the place as perceived at the institutional level (Johnstone 1990). Hate crime is examined first, focusing on how it is accounted for by representatives of local institutions: hate crime against LGBTQ+ gets higher visibility in comparison to racially-motivated crime because, as I argue, of the narratives depicting that kind of diversity as constitutive of the place. In addition, I describe Brighton's role as a 'City of Sanctuary' in connection with the local politicians' open-mindedness and respect for human rights. In this section I also provide a detailed account of the political language used in policies concerning ethnic minorities:

‘community cohesion’, ‘equality’ and their implications are analysed and the different uses of those terms with respect to various categories of subjects (migrants, BMEs, LGBTQ+) are outlined.

4.1 Diverse demographics?

Gamlen (2010:7) points out that in recent decades ‘patterns of international migration involving *many* migrants from and to *few* places have shifted to patterns involving *fewer* migrants from and to *more* places’. This realisation is in line with Vertovec’s (2007:1043) awareness of the current ‘superdiverse’ character of the migrant population, comprising an ‘unprecedented’ composition of differences along lines of ethnicity, gender, legal status, age and many more. Brighton’s demographics reflect this setting since, in contrast to many British cities, there is no dominant group among the non-UK born residents, while instead the population statistics report the presence of many small or medium-sized groups (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011). The representatives of local institutions I interviewed unanimously considered it an asset, arguing that having many different ethnic groups of similar size can prevent inter-group clashes as, for instance, happened in the cases of the Bradford, Oldham and Burnley riots of 2001.

According to the 2011 Census Briefing (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011), 16% of the local population – approximately 42,885 people, is estimated to be non-UK born, while the percentage of local residents classified as BMEs is 19.5%. However, the first group includes a large majority of Europeans: it is estimated that 50% of the non-UK borns who moved to Brighton between 2001 and 2011 come from European countries (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:4). A local White British policy-maker described the recent changes in the urban demographics as follows:

“There have been many more White European people moving in, people from Eastern Europe and economic migrants, I think this is a big change. And [...] I think we have the biggest population of [...] Arabic speakers other than London in Brighton. And, so that’s a big change and I think if you just go down certain roads in Brighton like Western Road in Hove that’s many Arabic food shops, restaurants, cafés, and if you go, sit on a bus, you hear all sorts of different languages, you hear a lot of Polish, [...] particularly a lot of Polish”. [Respondent 2 BH/institutions]

Groups	Percentage of total population (2011)
All BME groups	19.5%
Other White	7.1%
White Irish	1.4%
Asian/Asian British	4.1%
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Group	3.8%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1.5%
Arab*	0.8%
Gipsy or Irish Traveller*	0.1%
Any other ethnic group	0.7%
*not recorded in 2001 Census	

Table 5: Brighton & Hove BME population as a percentage of the total population (source: Brighton & Hove City Council 2014)

As Moroşanu and Fox stress in their research on Romanians in London (2013), Europeans are phenotypically similar to the White British population and this can be misleading when investigating attitudes towards ethnic diversity. Romanians’ and other Eastern Europeans’ visual similarity to British people does not make it easy to identify them in the population, which constitutes a shield against everyday street-level harassment – even though they have been the target of a derogatory discourse in the

British national press. This dynamic is characteristic of Brighton, where the white population is the majority, even though it is composed of people from different nationalities. As I report further in Section 4.3.3, the few voices critical of the institutional narratives of Brighton as tolerant refer to discrimination and hate crime based on skin colour. Respondent 4[BH/institutions], a White British policy-maker resident in Brighton for decades, argues that the city's tolerance has not been tested yet and this is exactly because of the clear majority of white residents. He posits that only if Brighton had a different demographic composition with more Black and/or Asian people making diversity more visible it could be possible to verify whether or not the place is actually open towards diversity.

The term BME also needs some definition, in order for it to be better contextualised in this research. The Institute of Race Relations, a London-based think-tank researching racism, racial oppression and social justice both in Britain and overseas, defines 'Black and Ethnic Minorities' as 'the terminology normally used in the UK to describe people of non-white British descent' (Institute of Race Relations 2017). As I clarify in Chapter 5, this term includes non-white native British too. The Italian categorisation of 'foreigners' pays attention instead to the country of birth, therefore identifying first-generation migrants as such, although not their descendants, who are defined as 'second-generations'. As I described in Chapter 3 when discussing my methodology, I have therefore interviewed only first-generation migrants, that is, non-UK/Italian born individuals who have migrated to Brighton or Bologna in the course of their life. My choice aimed to keep the samples of informants in the two case studies as similar as possible.

One of the themes most frequently connected to a positive attitude towards diversity is intergroup contact (Brown & Hewstone 2005, Wessendorf 2010, 2013)

which, in my case study, my institutional respondents related to an alleged absence of residential segregation. According to almost all the representatives of the local institutions, in Brighton there are no neighbourhoods associated with the prevalence of one single ethnic group. This asset contrasts with many other British cities, where the division is sharper and more evident. This claim appears logical as several scholars (Allport 1954, Hewstone & Brown 1986, Sturgis *et al.* 2014) supportive of the ‘contact hypothesis’ (Brown & Hewstone 2005:256) have indeed suggested that proximity can foster the dissipation of negative stereotypes and reduce inter-group prejudice and conflict. In their study conducted in the neighbourhoods of London, Sturgis *et al.* (2014) find that ethnic diversity in the vicinity is positively related to the social cohesion perceived by the inhabitants, while ethnic segregation is associated with lower levels of perceived social cohesion.

However, proximity and contact alone are not sufficient to guarantee a positive coexistence in a diverse environment: rather it is the type of interactions and contacts that plays a specific role. Already in 1954, Allport set four criteria for contact to improve intergroup relations: equal status, cooperative contact, high ‘acquaintance potential’ and institutional support. Brown and Hewstone (2005) elaborate on this theory by stressing the importance of awareness and acknowledgement of group differences and of the perceived typicality – rather than exceptionality – of the contact. Wessendorf’s (2010, 2013) study on the superdiverse borough of Hackney follows this line, describing the ‘commonplace diversity’ of the neighbourhood – that is, a perception of ethnic, religious, linguistic and socio-economic diversity as normal. Together with it, the author identifies a typical behaviour apt to navigate and facilitate diversity in everyday life, defined as ‘corner-shop cosmopolitanism’ and referring to the ‘localised and everyday nature of such intercultural social skills and the existence of a

certain openness towards people perceived as “different” (Wessendorf 2010:3). In addition, Sturgis’ *et al.* (2014) warn that it is necessary to consider the economic deprivation of the area to gain a more nuanced picture of the local social cohesion. From an analysis of the literature it is, then, possible to understand that proximity and contact matter only when the interactions are equal, meaningful and perceived as ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ – hence the doubts about whether the absence of ethnically dominated neighbourhoods *per se* is sufficient to support the claim that different ethnic groups in Brighton have positive relations.

Indeed, the few respondents who offered a more critical view of the local narratives pointed out that the absence of neighbourhoods where a single minority prevails does not correspond either to a BMEs’ high political participation or to an absence of marginalisation, as I explain further on. The same issue is raised by BMEs themselves. They look critically at the BME residents’ distribution around the city, present within the central area but most of all in the boroughs outside Brighton, such as the recurrent Whitehawk. For example, Respondent 5 [BH/BMEs], a middle-aged man originally from the Caribbean islands, denounced the differences between the city centre and the suburbs (where a good percentage of the BME population lives) in relation to the organisation of cultural and social events fostering the diversity of the local community and, together with that, highlighted the difficulties for anyone who lives in the outskirts of the city to participate in those activities. He claimed that, even though BMEs are not segregated, they are *de facto* prevented from an equal social and political participation mostly on an economic basis. Reflecting on the need to have more spaces where BMEs could come together and participate in Brighton politics, he argued:

‘It costs 6 pounds or something [like that] to get in and out of town. So you’re out of the areas, so there’s isolation. And because the BME community is so scattered,

there is no meeting place. There is no...You have to create it. You, a place like this [the Brighton Centre] has to be open every day.'

Further on in Sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4, I elaborate on social exclusion in Brighton considering not only the ethnic dimension, but class as well. To provide a thorough analysis, I connect these dimensions to each other, not only to avoid 'ethnic lens' biases (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006) but also to accurately report how ethnicity, class (Gidley 2013, Rogaly & Qureshi 2013, Wessendorf 2013), housing (Meier 2013), and lifestyle consumption habits (Wessendorf 2013) intersect in the daily life of Brightonians. In the next section I focus on diversity as a narrative rather than as a social fact (Berg & Sigona 2013), highlighting that the mainstream image of diversity as gender and sexuality does not intersect with ethnicity, and thus portraying a specific image of who the local government aims to attract.

4.2 Brighton 'Pride' in diversity

Brighton Gay Pride's official website describes the event as 'a vibrant celebration of all that is wonderful about Brighton & Hove's diverse community'. The festival, which dates back to 1973, is currently held on the first weekend of August and features the Brighton Pride Festival in Preston Park, the Sunday LoveBN1 Fest also in Preston Park, the Pride Village Party in Kemptown, other club parties and, primarily, the famous Pride Parade through the city centre. I have chosen it as the primary example of Brighton's narratives of diversity and receptiveness since the vast majority of the representatives of local institutions I interviewed actually focused on diversity of gender, sexuality and lifestyle when explaining what diversity means in the city. As a middle-aged White British policy-maker suggested,

‘Is not just about ethnicity, the diversity, is it? It’s accepting people who are different, you know, [...] for whatever reason. Whether they have a mental health problem or they are very flamboyant in the way they dress, you know, or they identify as being transgender, for whatever reason...’ [Respondent 8 BH/institutions]

Lifestyle, gender and sexuality are constitutive dimensions of Brighton’s sense of place just as time, ancestry, landscape and community are the core of the Chatam Islands inhabitants’ sense of place in the research carried on by Campelo *et al.* (2014). Time and ancestry also emerge as interconnected and both dating back to the foundation of the city. A local Councillor explained this association connected to the town’s establishment by George IV as a party resort on the coast where he could enjoy an extravagant and unrestrained lifestyle. The peculiarity of the place, its then low population density and the building of the London-Brighton railway line pushed artists and actors who could not afford to live in the capital to settle in Brighton.

‘He [George IV] brought with him a lot of – it’s what you would call open-minded. It was aristocrats but it was not the traditional aristocrats, they were more sort of wild characters. Um, and which gave Brighton a wild characteristic from its foundation, but I think it started really when the railways came. One of the first tracks was from London to Brighton. It was about an hour distance and, err, a lot of actors, who couldn’t afford to live in London but worked in London found that they could live in Brighton. They were, you know, just being actors, there were a lot of gay people, people with non-traditional political views, err, and so from Victorian days onwards those groups, political mavericks and gay people, have been overrepresented in Brighton. And I think this has given a start and so other groups, and time has gone on, other groups who don’t necessarily fit in a terribly clear Britishness as a whole found a home in Brighton.’ [Respondent 7 BH/institutions]

The individuals defined as ‘mavericks’ in the quote above were then symbols of an unconventional way of living, because of either their professional choices or their sexual orientation; which are stereotypically associated in the narrative. While collecting the data, the link between the residents who first shaped the city and the part of the current population mostly mentioned in the institutional narratives appeared clear. People identifying themselves as LGBTQ+ and/or active in the defence of LGBTQ+

rights have become such a characterising presence in Brighton that both local authorities and the citizenry take them now as a matter of pride. Respondent 2[BH/institutions] defines it in this way:

‘I think as well about all the other forms of diversity in terms of, you know, the gay friendly, lesbian, bisex [...] that’s very celebrated and it’s something that the city is proud of. You feel, you can sense that as you go through the city...’

Gender and sexuality diversity – as lifestyle – have become a trademark and symbol of the city (Hadj-Abdou 2014, see also Landry 2012), attracting young professionals working in the creative industry.

In addition to what has already been outlined, the presence of university students and the characterisation of Brighton as a ‘student city’ were also mentioned in more than the half of the interviews, however not without controversial feelings. As for LGBTQ+ and artists, the influence of these group on Brighton’s sense of place was justified on how long they have existed in the city. Several scholars (Tuan 1975, Campelo *et al.* 2014, see also Çağlar 2016) have pointed out how time can be considered, then, effectively a constitutive dimension of the local sense of place, giving legitimacy to certain groups and to their settlement in a town. The establishment of the University of Sussex in the Sixties, the achievement of university status for the University of Brighton in 1992 and the more recent development of language schools has meant that Brighton has been receiving a constant influx of students, many of whom settle in the town after graduating. Basing my argument on my professional experience as a Doctoral Tutor at the University, working with first year undergraduate students, I could gauge the appeal of Brighton’s reputation as ‘tolerant’ and ‘liberal’ and how it impacts on their choice of the university, as also happens in Bologna. As a consequence, many students and young people do not only feel free to openly express their diversity

(Fanshawe & Sriskandarajah 2010:15) of gender and sexuality but they can also enjoy the cultural expressions of this diversity.

This does not just modify the demographics of the city both in the short and the long run but has also fostered the establishment of a series of businesses and services specifically tailored to students and young people. Much research has been done on the impact of migration on students' identity and behaviour (King & Ruiz-Gelices 2003, Findlay *et al.* 2006, Collins 2010), while there is much less attention in the literature to whether students can be considered migrants and why (Hazen & Alberts 2006). This tension is explained well in a sentence by a White British local Councillor. Describing the sizable presence of young people from different countries in Brighton, he clarifies:

‘I think that people see that as migration when in effect it is students.’ [Respondent 6 BH/institutions]

The data collected during both halves of the fieldwork from representatives of local institutions seem to suggest that it is not the case, the reasons for this being the temporary nature of students' stay in the city/country and their status – although I do not have extensive data on this, because it was not the focal point of the interviews. Even if both Brighton and Bologna – as I explain in Chapter 6 – are widely recognised as university cities ‘hosting’¹⁷ students from all over the world, the majority of this inward migration comes from other cities within the same country. According to The Times Higher Education (2018), the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton have 38% and 22% international students respectively. My interviewees' stance on international students surprised me because it partially contradicts the claim

¹⁷ Specific attention to the term ‘hosting’ and its significance, as emerged from the interviews with representatives of local institutions in Bologna, is given in Chapter 6.

that ‘visible diversity’ in terms of skin colour, feature and traditional ‘ethnic’ clothing is what causes attrition and intolerance at an everyday street level.

Considering Landry’s (2012) idea of ‘multicultural city branding’, Berg’s and Sigona’s (2013) definition of diversity as a narrative and Hadj-Abdou’s (2014) explanation of how diversity can become the symbol of a city – regardless of its actual demographic diversity – it is possible to see how, in Brighton, branding the city as diverse can result in a way of advertising it and making it desirable for inward investment by and for certain groups – especially in the realm of culture, tourism and consumption. Contextualising this in Brighton, it is then straightforward to see how the most profitable economic sectors are exactly those (Brighton & Hove City Council 2016). Within the framework of my research it is also crucial to remember that intercultural city branding is different from the narratives of integration and of integrated migrants (Scuzzarello 2015), their difference lying in their target. While the first fosters an image of a city welcoming high-skilled migrants, presenting the town as having a strong potential to become a global centre for knowledge, trades, art, tourism, entertainment, etc., narratives of migrant integration regard low-skilled individuals, said to be in need of integration policies and pathways, not to constitute an ‘issue’ or a ‘threat’ for the receiving society and the national identity (King & Mai 2004:475).

Stemming from the presence of specific groups settled in the city (LGBTQ+, artists and students), a presence that is legitimised by time (Tuan 1975, 1977), the institutional narratives of Brighton portray the place as ‘different from the rest of the country’, ‘diverse’, ‘open’ and ‘tolerant’. A White British policy-maker I talked to described her reasons for moving to Brighton on the basis of its

‘...particular character, I think, and [that] was part of what attracted me to come here. [...] And it felt that Brighton was, err, that it has a reputation for being a very

open city, very welcoming, err, very, err, kind of OK with difference, it's OK with people being different.' [Respondent 1 BH/institutions]

An even sharper characterisation of the local identity comes from Respondent 7, who defines the local openness towards diversity as 'part of our nature [...] of the sort of people we are.' The general argument emerging from the Brighton institutions' representatives' accounts is that, thanks to their familiarity with the local gender, sexuality and lifestyle diversity, the locals have developed an open attitude towards any type of diversity, including ethnic. This 'spillover effect' is presented as a spontaneous and natural process, overlooking the influence of public discourse on the collective identities considered legitimate in a certain place (see Koopmans & Olzak 2004).

However, if it is true that Brighton is 'OK with people being different', it is also true that this 'difference' is not all-encompassing. A quote by Respondent 1[BH/institutions] elucidates it well:

'I swear, I was coming back from somewhere last night, not very late actually, and I saw a man going down the road completely naked and I looked at him and I said "Ooh, OK". And no one around looked twice. Nobody looked, and we probably should 'cause he might have been in trouble! [laughs] But I just thought "Actually, that's Brighton" So, that's what I think, people from Brighton, most of them expect difference, they expect people to be dressed oddly, or to look strange, and they don't even notice it anymore.'

The same openness described in this quote does not apply to every form of diversity. Respondent 1 proceeded with her account, explaining that the visible difference that goes unnoticed when associated with gender and sexuality and/or style becomes noticeable when indicating religious affiliations:

'The one exception to that [being accustomed to diversity] is in terms of Muslim women wearing the veil. That, I think, it's still noticed and I think that's because people have so strong feelings, political almost feelings about that. So for example there is a bus driver in the city who's a Muslim, so she wears not a full veil but she wears a sort of headscarf, uhm, yeah? And I take the bus a lot to go around the city and I noticed that that's when people do a sort of a double take. So they are just

looking at the bus driving up and you can see people doing it and even if the bus is going past people will look twice. So I think that Muslim people, err, women wearing the veil, I think this is still very noticeable and I think that's possibly one of the ones when people are not as comfortable.'

These narratives have an impact not only on how the local sense of place is constructed and reproduced, but also on which collective identities are considered legitimate (Koopmans & Olzak 2004) and on the way local issues are framed and policies to tackle them are set up (Johnstone 1990), which I explore in the next section.

4.2.1 'Legitimate' collective identities

'The white people [from] the middle class, Hanover [residents], yoga freaks...'

Respondent 4's sarcastic definition is useful to introduce the collective identities considered legitimate in the Brightonian context because they comply with the place-narratives and with the public discourse. In contrast with them, invisible and/or 'mismatching' identities also appear clearer. Despite the degree of attention given to LGBTQ+, BMEs also find some space in the narratives of the local institutions' representatives. Ethnic diversity emerges, however, always in connection to the idea of 'contribution'. For example, Respondent 8 described this process thus:

'They can bring in a new perspective, new ideas and ways of thinking. I think it's about values, really, isn't it?'

But besides a first narrative on the added value of cultural diversity, when asked to elaborate on the meaning of contribution, the vast majority of my respondents identified it in the enrichment of the local economy. Respondent 6[BH/institutions] referred, for instance, to the broad range of 'ethnic' restaurants and events in Brighton:

‘Every time a new cuisine comes to Brighton & Hove it’s adding something very rich to it, so there are a lot of restaurants and food festivals and events.’

Drawing from Landry’s (2012) intercultural city branding theory and Stokowski’s (2002) ‘desired ends’, I here suggest that the narratives describing Brighton as diverse serve to attract not only people who comply with the place-specific diversity standards such as, in this case, LGBTQ+, but also others like BMEs, who might indirectly benefit from this narrative while simultaneously producing income for the receiving town. This income is, however, produced in sectors like retail and hospitality, which provide ‘front spaces’ (MacCannell 1973) of diversity and make Brighton attractive for tourism without drawing equal attention to the many implications of ethnic diversity. In Section 4.4.1 I mention how the need for community cohesion for BMEs does not go at the same pace as the awareness of racism and racially-motivated hate crime, which, instead, follows from the place-specific narratives of gender, sexuality and/or lifestyle diversity.

4.3 Narratives in policies: which and how local issues are framed in Brighton

4.3.1 Hate against whom? A discussion on hate crime in relation to local diversity

As mentioned in the paragraph above, not only sense of place, but also policies are rooted in narration (Johnstone 1990). Narratives have the potential to convey an image of the place, the kind of community inhabiting it and the most threatening issues affecting it. The association between the local tolerant atmosphere and a diversity of gender and sexuality is reflected in how the incidence of hate crime is narrated by the vast majority of this group of respondents, with the exception of a couple of policy-makers working closer than the others to BMEs. Their perspective is examined further on in Section 4.3.3. As Respondent 6[BH/institutions] points out,

‘With the big LGBT population here in the city, hate crime is very much directed on that.’

This statement contrasts with the official statistics, showing that 11 to 15% of the local population identifies themselves as LGBTQ+. Not only, then, does defining this percentage as ‘big’ become debatable, but Respondent 6’s statement can raise a question as to whether there is a common mismatch at the discourse level between the actual incidence of diversity within the local population and the way diversity is narrated (see Hadj-Abdou 2014). It is also curious to see that, although the percentage of LGBTQ+ is not noticeably different from that of non-UK born people (16%) and of BMEs (19.5%)¹⁸, LGBTQ+ are not defined as a ‘minority’. I elaborate on this issue in Chapter 5, where I present the accounts of BMEs of racism in its various forms.

4.3.2 A ‘Sanctuary on the Sea’

While in Chapter 5 I analyse in depth the difference between and the legitimacy of the ‘migrant’ and ‘BME’ collective identities in relation to Brighton’s Discursive and Political Opportunity Structure, in this section I examine the institutional narrative describing Brighton as a ‘City of Sanctuary’ and its implications for the political sphere. Both Darling (2010) and Squire (2011) look at the City of Sanctuary movement as combining solidarity and mobility because territorial embeddedness and relational networking come together in it. The official website of the City of Sanctuary network defines its work as ‘intended to welcome people seeking sanctuary’, especially asylum seekers and refugees. Besides relying on Brighton’s dominant narrative of openness,

¹⁸ I here include both the percentages to provide the most accurate possible picture. While the first includes non-UK borns who look phenotypically similar to the White British – and therefore not ‘visibly diverse’ – the second also includes British-born descendants of non-white-British migrants.

this vision connects the city to a wider national network of places recognising themselves in similar humanitarian values but also in an idea of shared responsibility going beyond spatial proximity (Darling 2010). This explains why the motion for Brighton to join the City of Sanctuary network was approved by all the Councillors except for one affiliated to UKIP who was, however, “even a bit apologetic about it”, as Respondent 7 related. In the Notice of Motion, the Council underlined that

‘Brighton & Hove has a well-deserved reputation for embracing the diversity of its residents. Further, both Brighton & Hove have histories of welcoming members of communities who fled their homes to find sanctuary.’ [Brighton & Hove City Council 2015]

Around half of this group of respondents mentioned that Brighton is a city of Sanctuary, stressing this in connection to the political open-mindedness of local politicians and, more generally, of the local citizenry. It was curious to see that, in contrast with Bologna – where much of the city’s sense of place is connected to its political stance – these interviewees did not focus on the city’s political allegiance but on its support for and protection of human rights. Only one respondent, a middle-aged policy-maker, described the town as having, or trying to have, ‘a socialist tendency’, which she saw in the supportive measures for disabled people. Referring to the 2015 political elections, she stated:

‘Well, look at the [South-East] map. Green, which is Brighton, and Red, which is Portslade, which is Labour. And all around there is blue, which is Conservative. So, I’d say in a way, yes, it is left-wing. [...] I’d say Brighton has a socialist tendency or tries to have a socialist tendency.’ [Respondent 5 BH/institutions]

The idea of Brighton as an open-minded place where local politicians protect human rights was well shared by the majority of these participants.

This narrative of the city being a safe haven for asylum seekers and refugees is reflected in the attitude shown when the principle of welcoming people seeking sanctuary is threatened. As Respondent 8[BH/institutions] pointed out when describing the high turnout for the previous year's counter-demonstration to the March for England, it was 'a very Brighton response'. She related that several associations based in Brighton had organised a counter-demonstration to protest against the English Defence League's¹⁹ choice to march in Brighton on Saint George's Day. In the interviewee's opinion, the EDL supporters picked that city among many because they assumed the local community would be much more outraged than in other places. The 'very Brighton response' to this provocation was a very crowded demonstration claiming that the EDL's members were not welcome in the town, since they did not respect the values of acceptance and anti-racism that are celebrated there. An echo of this event can be found in the responses of Respondent 7[BH/institutions], relating that he was part of the counter-demonstration along with a friend of his – defined as 'a Muslim lady' – and her daughter. The two used to live in a city in the Greater Manchester area where, according to the lady, White British women would not stand next to those who were not while waiting for their children at the school gates. When the daughter saw the participants at the March for England, she said that they all looked like they came from that town.

From these examples it clearly emerges how tolerance, anti-discrimination and anti-fascism constitute local marks of identification (Berg & Sigona 2013), not only characterising Brighton's sense of place but simultaneously differentiating it from other towns presenting opposite features. However, I find it essential to add a caveat to these

¹⁹ EDL from now on.

narratives, which is further explored in Chapter 5. Even though public support of anti-racism is strong in Brighton, the institutional narratives define hate crime as ‘directed mostly against members of the LGBT community’ and committed ‘mostly by outsiders’ [Respondent 7 BH/institutions], while not as much attention is paid to racially-based hate crime. This can be explained, as previously suggested, through the influence that the narratives of a place have on collective identities (see Scuzzarello 2015) and the place’s policies (Johnstone 1990). Narrating Brighton as a place where diversity indicates gender, sexuality and/or lifestyle overshadows not only other collective identities bearing diversity – such as BMEs – but also the multiple identities a person maintains and their consequent belonging to more than one group. In addition, this means emphasising the aspect of diversity narrated as core and the collective identities related to it even in policies. In the context described in this section, this translates into a much higher awareness of and greater attention to hate crime against LGBTQ+ than BMEs. I take this analysis further in Section 4.4.

4.3.3 What is missing? Critiques to the institutional narratives from within

Even if similar, narratives are never identical to one other. Jansson (2003) talks about dominant and oppositional narratives to explain why, regardless of the strength of the dominant one, there is always the possibility for alternative and oppositional groupings to challenge that perspective. In this case the critiques of the institutional narratives of the place come not from an opposed group, as I explore in Chapter 5, but from within the institutional group itself. A couple of respondents working more closely than average with BMEs accounted for a more nuanced view of the city’s receptiveness. The mainstream narratives of receptiveness were not rejected, but rather analysed from a more critical perspective. For instance, Respondent 3[BH/institutions], a policy-maker,

reflected:

‘I don’t think we are particularly... I know we have a reputation of dealing with LGBT rather than rights and equality issues and being very open towards, on, on gay rights and I think we’ve got a reputation for being kind of funky, and “hey, anything goes” and we have amazing art and culture, but I don’t know if we’ve ever been really good at dealing with issues of race, ethnicity and, err, and... sort of... I know I’m contradicting myself now...’

Another respondent, very aware of the sensitivity of their opinions, challenged more directly the narrative of openness by defending the argument that Brighton does not actually have to face ethnic diversity. His position was that, since the city’s demographic composition – especially in the centre – is predominantly white, this does not allow either the local institutions or the citizenry to test their openness, even at a merely visual level. The comparison between Brighton and London became quite recurrent when discussing Brighton’s demographics, ethnic composition, visual difference among the population and ethnically dominated neighbourhoods. Both the participants supporting the dominant narrative of Brighton as receptive and the ones criticising it compared the town to the nearby capital. The first group used this comparison not only to acknowledge that in Brighton there is no predominant group among BMEs, but instead many groups of a more limited size, but also to argue that there is no residential segregation. According to their point of view, this fosters better relationships among different communities and between them and the local population (Allport 1954, Hewstone & Brown 1986, Sturgis *et al.* 2014).

In contrast to this, despite the respondents who opposed the dominant narrative agreeing on the positive effect of diverse demographics, they were quite sceptical about the absence of residential segregation in Brighton, arguing that this does not indicate an absence of *de facto* segregation. An argument in support of this thesis common to both these respondents and BMEs is that many BMEs live in the outskirts of town – as in the

frequently mentioned borough of Whitehawk – and that this prevents them taking part in the cultural and social life of the city. The reasons behind it are both that the variety and frequency of the activities organised in the city centre are far greater than those organised in the neighbourhoods, and that economic factors such as the prohibitive cost of public transport prevents them participating more regularly and actively in the events organised in the centre. The Black and Ethnic Communities in Brighton & Hove Report (Brighton & Hove City Council 2015) explains that:

‘Whilst 11 per cent of the total BME population live in the ten per cent most deprived areas of the city, 31 per cent of Bangladeshi residents do. Using the 2010 indices of multiple deprivations we have looked at whether people of different ethnic backgrounds tend to live in more or less deprived areas of the city. Whilst there are few notable exceptions to the general pattern, Bangladeshi residents are markedly more likely to live in the most deprived areas. Other ethnic groups which have higher concentrations in more deprived areas are Black Africans, Arabs and White Gypsies or Irish Travellers, all of which have 18 per cent of their populations living in the ten per cent most deprived areas and over three quarters living in the 50 per cent most deprived areas.’

However, in the 2014 Snapshot Report of Statistics I did not find any correspondence between the data on the percentage of BME residents in the different neighbourhoods of Brighton and my participants’ declarations, but I suggest this happened because official documents consider more central neighbourhoods than those mentioned by BMEs. Finally, it is interesting to note that, while the BME respondents who problematise this issue describe it as affecting poor people in general, regardless of their ethnicity, the local institutions’ representatives describe the groups’ situation as separated. I expand on this in the following section.

4.3.4 Who is missing? The ‘hostile’ white working class

‘There are still a lot of people in the city who are elderly now, who have been here since they were a child, working class, who have, you know, much of a narrower view of what it is for people to come to the city.’

This quote from Respondent 14[BH/institutions], a local caseworker, sheds light on how the local white working class is narrated by the middle class, namely as close-minded, and resentful towards the local government. This description echoes Lawler's studies (2012) on the white English working class, framed as 'unreflexive, axiomatically racist [and] belonging to a past time' (Lawler 2012:410) by middle class narratives. Rhodes (2012:485, 486) similarly discusses the working class as described from the outside as 'the primary constituency of racism, and racist and populist sentiment [and] seen to lack the necessary social and cultural resources to embrace a multiracial or even "postracial" contemporary'. Lawler's (2012) focus is not on whether these characteristics truthfully represent the white English working class but how and why it is portrayed by the middle class. It is indeed the latter who, by virtue of its power, manages to ascribe a certain identity to the powerless former while simultaneously staying out of this classification. Drawing from Clarke *et al.* (2009), Lawler (2012) analyses the BBC program 'The White Season' to ground her analysis, from which she extrapolates that working class people have been portrayed as more racist and more hostile to immigration than their middle class counterparts.

Admittedly, this topic emerged in a few interviews only and when it happened it was during the interviews with local institution representatives who had more regular and close contact with BMEs and/or migrants. However, I found it noteworthy that, in those accounts, the white working class was presented as distinct from BMEs. Rogaly and Taylor (2009:51) problematise indeed how the working class is commonly thought to be white both in the news and in some academic work. Commenting on the BBC's documentary series 'White Season', and on the rhetoric used by its commissioner, Richard Klein, the authors point out that

‘for Klein, it would seem, not only is the label “indigenous” reserved for the white *working* class, as though the latter was some kind of lost tribe, but the “*British* working class” is used interchangeably with “the *white*²⁰ working class”. The implication of the latter is that British people of colour are not in fact British at all.’

A respondent of mine, who was very conscious of the sensitivity of his position, expressed his stance on the topic with the following words:

‘A lot of what you would call [...] the indigenous population of Brighton, people who are born and bred here, and have generations of families and tend to live in the poorer estates and tend to be and to feel [...] often feel quite excluded themselves. So going back to the thing about welcoming, Brighton welcoming students, they could go “Oh, but what about us? [...] Our families have lived here for years and what have you done [for us]?”, which again would be an interesting debate of how open is Brighton to migrants, we’re suddenly inviting lots of migrants...those people [the working class natives] would certainly think that they would have a legitimate argument about “Oh, but what about us? We’ve been dumped on the estates for years in the outskirts of Brighton, what do we have?”.’

While the former were defined by class, the latter were defined by ethnicity, portraying a picture that emphasizes divisions and rivalries rather than similarities and companionship (Shaheen 2017). In ‘Still migrants after all those years’, Çağlar (2016) explains that framing people who have been migrants at some point in their lives exclusively as migrants – or, in this case, BMEs – prevents them being fully acknowledged as citizens and coeval with the natives.

Following from the analysis developed at the beginning of the chapter, Brighton’s institutional place-narratives of diversity attract individuals who correspond to the kind of diversity narrated as place-specific. Young middle-class creative professionals, some of whom identify as LGBTQ+, are therefore those who are not only attracted to Brighton, but who reproduce this very type of diversity. On the contrary, the public discourse does not mention the Brightonian white working class. It would be inappropriate to say that they are an illegitimate collective identity: rather, these born

²⁰ Italics in the original.

and bred Brightonians are not even visible (see Koopmans & Olzak 2004) in the narratives.

4.4 Local legitimate channels to participate in local policies – Brighton’s Political Opportunity Structure

Brighton’s 2012-2015 Equality and Inclusion Policy opens by stating that

‘Brighton & Hove City Council recognises and welcomes the diversity of our city. We recognise that this is part of what makes our city great’ (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2012:3)

As explored in the previous sections though, ‘diversity’ is not understood here as superdiversity, that is the ‘increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants’ described by Vertovec (2007). Diversity in the local institutional narratives emphasises the gender, sexuality and lifestyle aspects, ignoring other traits that contribute to forming someone’s identity. As explained in Chapter 2, local narratives about a place and its community impact on the collective identities considered legitimate, ‘fitting in’ and integrated into a certain context (see Scuzzarello 2015). Narrowing this to a local context, local politicians privilege certain constructions of social relationships between migrants and the majority community. Tajfel’s (1982) definition of the relationship between narratives of integration and inclusion/exclusion dynamics stresses that migrants’ integration greatly depends on how the idea of citizenship is conceived and presented in a specific political context. In this way, policies implement local institutions’ views on immigration to and in the city, providing a certain image of the ‘integrated migrant’ and impacting on the interactions between locals and migrants. Therefore, place-specific narratives of migrants’ integration (Datta

2009, 2012, Hall & Datta 2010, Scuzzarello 2015) become of pivotal importance for this study.

So far, I have explained how Brighton's narratives of diversity in terms of gender, sexuality and lifestyle determine a perception that LGBTQ+ and/or artists are attracted to, fit into and reproduce the city's atmosphere. In this section I now direct my focus onto BMEs and the policies issued for the protection of their rights. This also allows me to gauge the POS that BMEs can use to participate in the local political life, which I explain at the end of the section. However, this analysis would not be possible without a previous introduction and explanation of the terms 'community cohesion' and 'equality', and a subsequent assessment of them in relation to BMEs.

4.4.1 Analysing the British political language for social integration – community cohesion

When first approaching the policy papers issued by the Brighton & Hove City Council, I noticed that the principles around which they revolve are community cohesion and equality, following the line of the national political language. The notion of community cohesion emerged in 2001 as a measure following the riots of opposing White British and Asian communities in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley. A report with the title 'Community Cohesion: The Report of The Independent Review Team', or the 'Cantle Report' – after the name of its author – was then issued to create a new policy framework which, as Muers (2011) points out, was deemed necessary to tackle clashes between different communities. Its fundamental argument was that residential and institutional segregation had contributed to tensions which then resulted in the riots (Muers 2011). Community cohesion was intended to foster better relationships within the whole community, beyond ethnic differences, by establishing shared values. Even

though there have been different reformulations of this framework, in particular from 2002 to 2008, its main goal has remained to tackle inequalities and to develop a positive attitude towards diversity. The original Cattle Report actually focused on a combination of belonging, equal opportunities and positive interactions between the different members of the community, whereas, following the reports of the Commission of Integration and Cohesion, such as ‘What works in Community Cohesion’ (2007) and ‘Integration and Cohesion Case Studies’ (2007), the policies shifted towards citizenship-related concepts, such as ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’.

These concepts constitute a challenge to the multicultural policy model that has characterised Britain since the Seventies. Similarly to superdiversity, it emphasises connections and features shared by both minorities and the majority community, beyond ethnic divides. As Thomas (2011:91) defines it, community cohesion consists in ‘a critique of particular forms of multicultural policy formation and operation that have focused exclusively on the needs, identities and concerns of each separate ethnic group without consideration of relations, links and experiences shared between those groups’. When contextualised, community cohesion ‘can differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood or even from street to street’ (Muers 2011). However, the emergence of this concept did not lack critiques, not against the concept *per se* as much as, analogously to the case of multiculturalism, against the way it was implemented. For instance, Lentin & Titley (2011) argue that behind the importance attributed to community cohesion is hidden an attempt on the part of the government to take back control over race relation policies.

Others, such as Kundnani (2002), state that the shift from multiculturalism to integration – presented as community cohesion – would lead diverse groups to accept British institutions more easily and with fewer disputes. In his article ‘The Death of

Multiculturalism' (2002), Kundnani criticises the concept of community cohesion not because he is against the integration of immigrants into the receiving society but because of the way the notion itself was adopted as political measure after the 2001 riots. The author argues that Home Secretary Blunkett's declaration suggested that, rather than racism, immigrant communities' lack of integration was the cause of the violence. Hence, there was a strong need to introduce community cohesion policies to bring together those communities separated by the way multiculturalism had been implemented. However, it is crucial to note that community separation was not the only cause of the riots, but that it went together with deprivation and the demands of new generations of, in Bradford's case, Asian British (Amin 2002). The environment where the riots took place was not only clearly divided between a white majority and a South Asian minority but also a traditionally working class area with high social deprivation (Bagguley & Hussain 2016). An analogy with Brighton appears problematic, considering that its economic, social and demographic environment is very different from the cases mentioned above.

At a policy level there is still confusion between multiculturalism and community cohesion. When asked about community cohesion policies issued in Brighton, Respondent 3[BH/institutions] presented a complicated picture of the Council's development of a community cohesion strategy.

'I think we did get that but it was a lot of years ago now [...] and it never really went anywhere, you know, we got it down, I think, but it didn't particularly change the way we did things or whatever, so... I think that part of the difficulty is that although it comes within my area of work and my team's area of work, and we do a lot of work that would affect community cohesion or integration, but we don't necessarily call it that, we don't necessarily measure it in a very formal way and we couldn't really say what effect we're having... And then, so it's that but it's also our Community Safety team [...] who do a lot of work around hate crime, who do a lot of work about supporting people experiencing anti-social behaviour, which can have something to do with harassment or discrimination and so they do quite a lot of that

work as well but we haven't coordinated it; it doesn't necessarily meet together very well and I don't know who would say that they are leading on it.'

One of the major issues preventing a better functioning of community cohesion policies is, in Respondent 3's view, the perception that migration does not have to do with policy work in the locality:

'That's what we should change in the attitude, reverse it, I think, saying "migrants, that's me" [...] So if people kind of incorporate this in...Well, you know, [laughs] their jobs!'

From these quotations emerges a lack of connection between community cohesion and hate crime and/or harassment and discrimination. Linking these data with the analysis developed in Chapter 2 on the effect of place-narratives on the perception of local issues and needs (Johnstone 1990), it is, then, clear that community cohesion – designed on the basis of the need to integrate immigrants – is not associated with hate crime prevention and/or tackling discrimination because those are locally perceived as issues affecting 'mostly the LGBT community' [Respondent 7]. Respondent 1 actually discusses community cohesion as exclusively regarding immigrant groups or, more accurately, following from what was explained above, asylum seekers and refugees.

'We have quite a strong relationship with our different departments, to ensure that we have a sort of more community cohesion approach to the way we integrate anyone who's migrant or refugee or asylum seeker into the city.'

Respondent 1 describes local community cohesion in the following terms:

'So we have a lot of different communities in Brighton & Hove, we want to get all of them well together, we want different neighbourhoods to get on well together, we want people in the same street, whoever they are, to get on well together, it's not just about BME people integrating into white British culture, you know, we've tried to take a sort of broad approach so that nobody feels like that they are the problem.'

Continuing on the same line, she explains why the Council has decided to proceed in this way, the reason behind it being the will not to target any specific group but to talk about cohesion across all the local citizenry.

‘I guess the risk is [that] when you have people who already feel under pressure because they don’t have enough money, they don’t feel like they are very safe in the city, they maybe feel that they are at the bottom of the pile and somebody comes in with something that feels like a challenge, it can cause a friction, it can cause problems.’

The shift in the political language from multiculturalism to community cohesion has, then, not corresponded to a shift in the content of the policies, and the society still appears divided between a white British majority and Black and Ethnic Minorities. In contrast to the emphasis put on community cohesion by the representatives of local institutions, multiculturalism is seen by the BME respondents not only as still effectively functioning and able to keep the society divided, but also as a formality the Council complies with. During the event ‘Celebrating Faith in our Community’, held on 18th November 2015 at the Brighton Centre, Respondent 5 [BH/BMEs] asked me if I had listened to the presentation given by a member of the Council to inaugurate the event, and used the following words to comment on it:

‘The multicultural agenda has been taken by the status quo. [...] Multiculturalism used to be a belief that everybody was equal and everybody got to share their differences. But the all system is built on keeping people apart. [...] He [the representative of the Council] would come here, go back to his office, and tick a box saying “Done multiculturalism”.’

He explained to me that the Councillor’s speech and presence there was just a way to tick the multiculturalism box and that, in his and a couple of fellow interviewees’ perception, the multiculturalist agenda’s only function was to keep communities apart. I

found it interesting that, despite multiculturalism having officially given way to community cohesion, this change is not perceived by BMEs.

4.4.2 Analysing the British political language for social integration – equality

Together with community cohesion, equality is another major word on which the British policies for social inclusion are based. In UK legislation, the term came to the fore with the Equality Act, enacted by Parliament in 2010, which replaced and updated its 2006 version. Its outset dates back to the Labour Party's commitment to an Equality Bill which was included in its manifesto for the 2005 elections. In the Party's view, the new act would bring together under a single legal instrument all the anti-discrimination laws (The Labour Party Manifesto 2005:112).

Therefore, the Equality Act replaces previous legislation concerning discrimination, namely the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and other instruments protecting against faith, sexual orientation and age discrimination in employment. They are the Employment Act 2002, The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2003, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. These regulations focus on the reduction of socio-economic inequalities in rights and access to services. At the local level, their impact consists in making sure that Council services are as open, accessible and fair as they can be to everyone in the city, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and any other difference. In addition, the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was designed as a measure of secondary legislation to ensure that no policy or law discriminates against vulnerable or disadvantaged categories. These are listed by the Greater London Authority as women, BMEs, children and young people, elderly people, disabled

people, LGBTQ+ and people of a different religious faith. Contextualising this in Brighton, Respondent 1 explained that

‘The Equality Act [...] is what guides most of my work. [It] has three duties, so to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations and that’s basically the community cohesion requirement. So we have since 2010 or 2011 this duty to foster good relations between groups of people and that’s not just around ethnicity: it can be intergenerational, it can be in between the genders, it can be with people of different sexual orientation or religious belief and in some ways it’s probably the area I think we are weakest on, in a sort of a formal and structured kind of way. So I think we do work in these areas, we do monitor these areas but we don’t coordinate us in a way that’s very effective.’

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, despite tackling discrimination being mentioned as a pillar of British social policies, there is no specific emphasis on ethnicity. Rather, the approach aims to be all-encompassing, as specified in the Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-2015 (Brighton & Hove City Council 2012:244):

‘We recognise that there can be no fair society if some groups remain disadvantaged because of their legally protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. We also know – from our data and research – that there are additional people and places facing disadvantage in our city and have identified these as “social inclusion groups”.’

If, on the one hand, it is beneficial not to target any group, ‘making it feel that they are the problem’ – as Respondent 1[BH/institutions] stated, on the other it implies that the main focus of discrimination remains the one that the narratives of the place identify as the characterising trait. Since the local institutional narratives see Brighton as a place of gender, sexuality and lifestyle diversity, these are also the dimensions in which discrimination will be perceived as more threatening. As pointed out before, the emphasis on the nexus between community cohesion and migrants does not correspond to an equal emphasis on the need to tackle not just discrimination in general but

specifically discrimination on an ethnic basis. Despite believing that adopting an ‘ethnic lens’ perspective (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006) results in biased research outcomes, I also argue that an emphasis on ethnicity can be helpful in situations like the one presented here, where overlooking it can inadvertently contribute to discrimination.

4.4.3 How do Brighton’s services work? Perceptions from the institutions

Two main ideas emerged from the interviews with local authorities’ representatives when discussing the inclusiveness and accessibility of local services. Interestingly, they are in contrast to one another. The first sees Brighton as willing to be receptive and providing a wide range of services, especially compared to neighbouring authorities, as Respondent 5[BH/institutions] stated in the quote reported previously. As Respondent 8[BH/institutions] illustrated:

‘We [...] have a lot of services in Brighton & Hove, compared to our neighbouring authorities. So, for example, homelessness, street homelessness... You know, we’ve got day centres, hostel provisions... All sorts of services our neighbouring authorities don’t have. So, people would come to access the services, ’cause they know it is a good place to access them.’

However, the respondents who were supportive of this perspective were also aware of its downfalls, consisting in perhaps excessive expectations on the part of the clients. Respondent 8 described this mismatch between the range of their service’s actions and what is perceived from the outside by saying that

‘They [the clients]...they don’t really understand, and it’s not a fault of them, what we can do for people. So, we have to manage that... So, there’s a sort of tension, because they’re advocating and so you need to help this person. And then they don’t understand that actually we don’t have the statutory duty to do that. And our resources are extremely limited.’

Respondent 7[BH/institutions] suggests that, although there is ‘a lot of willingness on all sides’, effective communication and interaction does not always take place. He states that ‘there are ethnic groups within the city who are much more disconnected than others’. This observation links to the analysis developed in the previous sections, arguing that migrants – but also, as it emerges here, BMEs – are the real beneficiaries of community cohesion policies because of their ‘disconnection’. As Kundnani (2002) argues with respect to the 2001 riots, the way in which community cohesion policies have been enforced does not seem different from the way multicultural policies were realised, *de facto* placing the burden of adaptation and integration on the ethnic minorities and, by so doing, blaming them for the failure of the policies. A possible solution to the local disconnection of the communities as envisaged by the representatives of Brighton’s local institutions’ is to establish contact with the representatives of some local communities in order to give them an intermediary role. But, as Respondent 1[BH/institutions] points out, there is no certainty of what happens when the people who are currently playing the role of community leader disappear. In addition, Respondent 4[BH/institutions] clarifies why communication issues with communities have become quite difficult:

‘You know, not all black people in Brighton are in a community, not all Asian people are in a community. [...] And I don’t just mean BME communities, I mean also lots of community events, you know, we attend the Racial Harassment Forum. There are a number of people there who report to represent their community that I’m not sure actually are, but there are a number of people there who quite obviously don’t get on with others, so which is the feedback actually, it is actually quite difficult to get feedback from a community, because who you really get feedback from is individuals from within Brighton & Hove who might be part of a community.’

The second trend consists instead in acknowledging the failure of the Council in representing the diversity of the city, with a particular focus on BMEs. Respondent 3[BH/institutions] highlights that

‘[the Council staff] perhaps have not been so good at recruiting people from those BME groups to reflect the change in nature of the city, so my suspicion is that, so migrant communities and other BME, people who’ve settled here perhaps sometimes feel a barrier because they’re, they don’t see their own communities reflected in the city services.’

The lack of institutional representation emerges as an issue equally in Brighton and in Bologna, as I explain in Chapters 6 and 7. However, there is a clear difference between the way the local institutions’ representatives and some members of BME associations report the matter: while the former admit a possible fault on the part of the Council in organisational terms, the latter denounce it as a sign of institutional racism. I expand on the topic in Chapter 5.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter started by analysing diversity in Brighton both as a social fact and as a narrative. Local demographics show that in the city there are ‘*fewer* migrants from *more* places’ (Gamlen 2010:7) than in most British cities where, instead, it is common to see a white British majority and a consistent non-British born community sharing the same ethnicity. Data from the 2011 Census provide a clear picture of Brighton’s demographic setting, reporting a percentage of non-UK born residents equal to 16% and a percentage of BME residents equal to 19.5% (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011). After elaborating on these data, I critically considered the alleged absence of residential segregation as reported by representatives of local institutions. Connecting these

findings to what was narrated by BMEs themselves – explored in the next chapter – I problematised the absence of ethnically dominated areas, arguing that BMEs are *de facto* prevented from participating in the local political life on economic grounds.

Following from this, I then shifted my attention to diversity as a narrative, identifying from the data collected a close association between diversity and gender, sexuality and/or an unconventional lifestyle. Drawing from Tuan's (1975, 1977) argument that time is essential to achieve a legitimate sense of place, I expanded on the connection between diversity and LGBTQ+ and artists, narrated as groups resident in Brighton since its foundation and giving to the place that trait that differentiates it from other British towns. This section draws from Koopmans' & Olzak's (2004) theorisation of the opportunities available to migrants to participate culturally in the local context, stating that the public discourse has the power to influence the perception of legitimate collective identities in a certain place. In the context of Brighton, this means that LGBTQ+ are perceived as a legitimate collective identity. Moreover, it means that, in view of the percentage of local residents identifying themselves as LGBTQ+ being very close to that of BMEs (11-15% to 19.5%²¹), LGBTQ+ are not defined as a 'minority', whereas BMEs are. This narrative could, then, have an impact on the way BMEs frame themselves, but also on how the native population sees them and, more importantly, on the issuing of social policies. The characterising mark of Brighton's narratives of receptiveness is, however, the belief common to almost the whole of this group of respondents that their (and the locals') familiarity with the Brighton-specific diversities has driven them to be open to any kind of diversity, including ethnic. My interviewees

²¹ The percentage of BME residents has to be merged with that of non-UK borns, since in it are counted people who were born in Britain from migrant parents too.

presented this dynamic as a ‘spillover effect’ spontaneously occurring in the native population.

After outlining these narratives, I problematised the incongruities intrinsic to them such as, for example, the double standard of openness reserved for a flamboyant – although always Western-looking – style on the one side and traditional and/or religious clothing on the other side. Ethnic difference emerges then – despite the claims of institutional narratives – as the type of diversity locals are still not as acquainted with as the narratives suggest. Other relevant discrepancies refer to the white working class, not visible in the public discourse and depicted as marginal, narrow-minded and not fitting into the city’s own character (Massey 1996).

In the final section I then focused on the British and, narrowing it down, Brightonian, political language concerning community cohesion and equality. Through an analysis of the terms and of their practical application in the Brighton context, I then evaluated how, although community cohesion policies should address all sorts of categories part of the local society, they are actually focused on the integration of BMEs into white British society. This comes across as quite problematic because a high percentage of BMEs are British citizens who moved to the country as citizens of the British Empire (Bhambra 2018) and are therefore subject to the same rights and obligations as the white British majority. Similarly, equality as a concept is framed in policies as tackling any kind of discrimination. However, due to local place-narratives describing a city which is diverse in terms of gender and sexuality, the perception of issues such as hate crime is more concerned with hate crime against LGBTQ+ than BMEs. This creates a dearth in the possibilities that BMEs can use to associate and to participate in local politics (see Koopmans & Statham 2000). Appealing to principles of equality and anti-discrimination also raises the issue that the measures enforcing these

principles are usually more focused on migrants and refugees than ethnic minorities and this is problematic for BMEs who do not recognise themselves in the former category. I explain this more in detail in Chapter 5, where I suggest that BMEs' political action has the potential to modify the perception of the issues and needs of a place, the collective identities locally considered legitimate and, ultimately, the local sense of place.

CHAPTER 5

When tolerance and ‘visible difference’ don’t match: narratives on Brighton’s receptiveness from the BMEs’ point of view

In their article ‘Ethnography, diversity and urban space’, Berg & Sigona (2013) explain that ‘diversity’ can refer to local demographics, policies or narratives. As discussed in Chapter 2, despite being classified with the same term, the three meanings above do not only refer to different sectors but also convey different messages that do not always correspond. The demographic composition of the population, as it happens in the case studies examined, can actually neither reflect nor justify the normalisation of diversity as the city’s symbol (Hadj-Abdou 2014) and, in turn, the issuing of specific policies ‘aimed at managing integration and fostering social cohesion’ (Berg & Sigona 2013:350).

In her comparative study on Vienna and Dublin, Hadj-Abdou (2014:1875) observes how ‘ethno-cultural diversity is seen increasingly as a competitive asset, with which to improve the socio-economic performance of cities’. This happens despite demographics, migration history and the policies for social integration in the two European capitals she examines are clearly different. This suggests that, to be narrated as ‘diverse’, a city does not necessarily have to count a certain percentage of foreign residents or a population ‘visibly different’ in terms of race and ethnicity; which is exactly what happens in the case of Brighton. Hadj-Abdou’s (2014) study also connects to Stokowski’s (2002), usefully identifying the ‘desired ends’ (Stokowski 2002:374)

lying behind the narratives of diversity. Medium-sized cities as Brighton also experience this dynamic: as outlined in Chapter 4, narratives of a ‘tolerant’ and ‘diverse’ city, but also of a city where people are ‘very flamboyant in the way they dress’ [Respondent 1 BH/institutions], have the potential to attract white middle-class young creative professionals and/or middle- and upper-class students. However, Stokowski’s (2002) work is also important in relation to this chapter because of the light she sheds on power differentials and on how they impact on the narratives’ construction and reproduction.

This chapter complements the analysis on the institutional narratives on receptiveness in Brighton explored in Chapter 4 by providing the perspectives of the residents classified as BMEs on local diversity, community cohesion and relations with local authorities. In connection to what explained in Chapter 3, I clarify that only people who have migrated to Brighton during their life course constitute my interviewees’ sample. This disclaimer is necessary as BME does also include second generations or, more in general, ‘people of non-white British descent’ (Institute of Race Relations 2017). The research questions I answer to in relation to this section of the research are:

- *How are grassroots narratives of receptiveness constructed in Brighton?*
- *How do BMEs see themselves as ‘fitting in’, particularly in relation to their treatment by native residents?*
- *What is the perception of the members of BMEs’ associations on their chances to participate in local politics and interact with local authorities?*

The following analysis is organised into four parts. Section 5.1 enquires on the BMEs’ perception of the narratives on Brighton as a tolerant and open-minded city. It explores the meaning BMEs give to diversity, considering both urban demographics and

narratives, as well as focusing on the importance attributed to ethnic diversity in comparison to the ‘mainstream’ diversity of gender and sexuality. The reasons why BMEs define Brighton as only ‘selectively tolerant’ are then unpacked under a critical perspective. I argue that BMEs’ emphasis on ethnic diversity in Brighton and on the fact that it is neglected by the local government aims at being acknowledged as a collective identity legitimated in the public discourse (Koopmans & Olzak 2004). Proceeding from this, in Section 5.2 I explore issues related to discrimination, which emerged as a crucial part of the collected data, either because some interviewees presented it as a critical issue or because some others denied its presence in Brighton. While, in the case of Black/Caribbeans, the participants fiercely complained about discrimination and unequal treatment from the local institutions, participants originally from South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East presented an overly enthusiastic account of Brighton, denying the presence of discrimination and even questioning the appropriateness of the term.

Drawing from Whetherell and Potter (1992), Verkuyten (1997, 2005) and Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy (2015), I argue that, despite denying discrimination could seem counterproductive, certain groups enact it to re-negotiate their social status in the society through the use of values and/or characteristics they share with the dominant group. In this case, they reproduce the institutional narrative of Brighton as a place where hate crime is extremely low and, when it takes place, is ‘directed mostly against members of the LGBTQ+ community’ and is committed ‘mostly by outsiders’ [Respondent 7 BH/institutions]. I, therefore, suggest this behaviour is motivated by their will to be accepted by and included in the dominant group.

In Section 5.3 I explore how the respondents referred to themselves as ‘BMEs’ instead of ‘migrants’; due to the higher acceptance of the former term in the British

public discourse and the relative lack of association of ‘BME’ with stigmas (see Moroşanu & Fox 2013). I then proceed to unpack the connections and influences of public discourse on the design of local services. I argue that the way migrants are conceived in the British public discourse is linked to ideas of temporariness and to the needs of integration, which do not convey perceptions of coevalness with the native population (Çağlar 2016). Finally, in Section 5.4, I explore BMEs’ political participation as an expression of belonging. I consider the narratives on Brighton as a place with a high concentration of associations and well known for its activism – even though mostly in the field of LGBTQ+ and environmental rights – to argue that participating in the local political life is beneficial for BMEs to achieve the status of ‘integrated migrant’ (Scuzzarello 2015). In addition, I analyse the organisation, management and participation of specific cultural events as a politic of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2010), using the example of the People’s Festival to argue that cultural events and their management can symbolise the right to be ‘meant to be’ in a place (Mee & Wright 2009).

5.1 ‘Selective tolerance’: a critical approach to the mainstream narrative of receptiveness in Brighton

In the BME respondents’ accounts, diversity as a narrative merges with diversity as a social fact (Berg & Sigona 2013). In contrast with the prominence ascribed to gender and sexuality as marker of local diversity in the institutional narratives and in the ‘branding’ of the city (Landry 2012, Binnie *et al.* 2006) – which neglected any specific attention to race and ethnicity, the narratives of diversity of the BME group of respondents focus on ethnicity and religion. Respondent 5[BH/BMEs], a middle-aged

man originally from Pakistan and part of a religious association, argued that diversity in Brighton is different from anywhere in Britain on the basis that

‘You can have diversity or so-called diversity in another town but what diversity means in another town is that you have, for example, a white large indigenous community and then you have a single foreign community [...] But when it comes to Brighton, yeah, it’s not just that, it’s quite different. There is obviously the white indigenous community but then you have white people, [people] from Africa and the Caribbean and West Indies, also Muslims from all over the world are here, from the Middle East, as well as Asian and South Asian countries, and then you have Coptic Christians; so there is a real true diversity in Brighton that you don’t really find in many other towns and cities.’

According to this account, Brighton is narrated as diverse – or, we should say, ‘superdiverse’ (Vertovec 2007) – because of its peculiar demographics in the British panorama: Brighton is different from other cities in the UK where there is a white majority and a single ethnic community. Superdiversity is also considered by certain scholars (Crul *et al.* 2013) as the final level of integration exactly because it moves away from the multicultural paradigm of majority/minority group.

Yet, the validity of this assumption is tightly dependent on the context: if it is well-grounded for global capitals such as London (Vertovec 2007) and its boroughs as Hackney (Wessendorf 2011, 2013), the case of a medium-sized town as Brighton needs closer examination. Despite its undeniable heterogeneity, the presence of superdiverse residents in Brighton is celebrated. However, it does not correspond to a set of policies aimed at the integration of this portion of the local community. The mismatch between a sense of place, the narratives on it, and the policies issued for the ‘diverse’ part of the population are extremely revealing of the ‘desired ends’ (Stokowski 2002:374) or, to say the least, the main concerns of local institutions. In addition, the focus on the gender and sexuality aspect of diversity at the expenses of other dimensions causes an equal lack of awareness on needs and issues related to the latter; as I unpack further on in this

chapter. To further support the argument that demographics and narratives do not necessarily reflect each other, I highlight that, in the City Snapshot Report of Statistics (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:20, 21), the narrative of diversity is associated with gender and sexuality rather than to ethnicity. However, this happens despite a lower percentage of people defining themselves as LGBTQ+ (11-15% of the population) than of those classified as BMEs (20% of the population).

The respondents classified as BMEs were well-acquainted with the institutional narratives on Brighton as renowned ‘for its culture of tolerance’ (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:3) and generally referred to it as a matter of fact during the first introductory part of the interview. However, the more the questions narrowed down on their perception of it and their life experiences in the city, the more their perspective became critical. On the one side, they limit the scope of Brighton’s tolerance to certain sections of the citizenry, while on the other side they blur the contours of the city’s tolerance with political correctness. A gentleman in his Seventies involved in an association for the support of black peoples’ rights articulates its feelings by saying that

‘[Brighton] it’s welcoming and it’s tolerant. But because certain sections of the community are tolerant to each other, not necessarily tolerant to *[sic]* (tolerant ‘of’) other people outside. Err, I think that Brighton has always been a tolerant place. But individually, I think there is a group of people tolerant ’cause they’re trying to be politically correct.’ [Respondent 2 BH/BMEs]

Echoing this statement, a man in his Fifties, member of the same association, attributes the widespread support to the image of a ‘tolerant city’ to a lack of genuine interest in the ‘diverse’ population more than to an actual open-mindedness. Similarly, to the previous respondent he also uses the example of gender and sexuality difference as the benchmark of the local idea of openness.

‘They [the White British] think that because they’re walking through East Street

amongst gay people, openly, and disguised people, they think they are very easy-going. Because that is something about Brighton, is you can [emphasis] do what you like. Nobody really cares.’ [Respondent 4 BH/BMEs]

The emphasis placed on the distinction between the respondents and ‘them’ (Lamont & Molnár 2002) – the white British walking through East Street assuming to be open-minded – not only makes a clear cut between BMEs and the majority of the population, but also points out the contradictions embedded in a selective understanding of diversity. Quite surprisingly, this group of respondents focused on the way they thought Brighton is perceived by the White British (some included also white Europeans and Americans – officially recorded as White Other) more extensively than on their own perceptions. Fielding (1993) points out that migrants and potential migrants actually read places as texts in relation to several factors, among which the image of the place – or, as I elaborated in Chapter 2, the sense of place – has a primary role. Brighton’s achieved reputation as artistic, nonconformist and tolerant town is here taken as an assumption by BMEs too and, even though they do not openly deny it, they demystify it through their own critical view.

As analysed in Chapter 2, sense of place has implications on both local collective identities formation and social policies. A selective emphasis on one component of diversity does not only influence which characteristic of the local community are highlighted but also which collective identities are considered legitimate and officially supported and/or protected. In political terms, this impacts on which issues are considered the most compelling for the city and which policies are then issued to contrast them. However, in Chapter 2 I have suggested that this is not just a mono-directional process but that, if collective identities manage to gain enough visibility in the media, they can also become ‘legitimate’ in the local public discourse

(Koopmans & Olzak 2004). Consequently, this process could provide more opportunities for the new collective formations to succeed with their political claims (see Koopmans *et al.* 2005); this new articulation of city politics having the potential to construct a new sense of place. BMEs' emphasis on the ethnic component of diversity is explored in the next section, demonstrating how a certain identity – in this case, an ethnic one – is connected to specific issues – racism – and to the corresponding actions of local authorities.

5.2 'This is a wonderful place for any immigrant': oppositional views on Brighton's receptiveness

5.2.1 Black/Caribbeans' spotlight on racism

'[There is] something about Brighton, you can [emphasis] do what you like. [...] But we cannot forget that the underlying feeling is abusive. People who look Muslim, ok? Are getting beaten up.' [Respondent 4 BH/BMEs]

In this quote, which proceeds from the one in Section 5.1, the institutional narratives of tolerance and openness towards diversity are specified, contextualised and partially contradicted. According to the accounts of Black/Caribbean participants, the Council periodically ignores reports of racist abuses and hate crimes and this is aggravated by the absence of BME representatives in the local government who could advocate for the need of an institutional spotlight on that.

Respondents 3 and 4, who had both previously worked within local institutions, complained that the Council overlooks a consistent part of the racial abuse reports it receives because of their overwhelming number; which contrasts with the image of tolerant city Brighton boasts.

‘I experienced [a senior policeman saying] “It’s overwhelming our resources, so we are not gonna do it. You can continue your surveys but it’s not gonna go anywhere.”’
[Respondent 2 BH/BMEs]

And, continuing on the same line, he claims:

‘The Council would do survey and not publish the results’

The gentleman stressed that many reports of attacks are not taken seriously, denouncing that the way local authorities approach racially motivated hate crime is an attitude he defines as ‘blaming the drunk’. As an example, he narrated that one day a teenage girl he defined as ‘mixed-race’ arrived into his office in tears because she had been verbally abused in central Brighton by a man harassing her using racial insults. However, when they reported the events to the Police, the officer did not frame the incident in racial terms while instead of blaming the man for being intoxicated. My interviewee used this case as a recurrent example of how racial discrimination is, in his view, minimised by the local government, comparing it to the degree of attention attributed to LGBTQ+ rights protection and support. Considering the central role narratives play in this thesis, I focus on my interviewees’ claims rather than on the Council’s hate-crime records. However, the episode I account for in Section 5.3.2 can provide a data-based evidence of the relevance of the issue.

The scholarship on discrimination teaches that claiming unequal treatment and exposing the injustices of a particular system against certain groups can result in a benefit for the ones protesting against it (Whetherell & Potter 1992, Verkuyten 1997, 2005). It also demonstrates how the groups reporting and openly protesting against discrimination have as ultimate aim to upset and weaken the dominant system of hierarchies (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015:744), which I relate to the behaviour of this group of interviewees. In comparison, in the next section I focus on Asians’

reaction to discrimination and racist attitudes, showing that both groups approach the same issue differently. I suggest that this depends on a different political consciousness and engagement (Shingles 1981, see also Gilroy 1993) and on the way the two groups are portrayed in Western media; in turn based on different historical legacies of the British colonial history.

Very insightfully, a local Councillor described hate crime's incidence in Brighton as 'abuses directed mostly against the LGBT community' and 'mostly committed by visitors' [Respondent 7 BH/institutions]. Attributing the responsibility of assaults to outsiders, the tolerant image of the city is reinforced. As Hall (1996) explains in his book 'Who needs identity?', identity is best constructed as oppositional, ascribing positive traits to self and peers or members of the same group and negative ones to others. In this case, Brightonians emerge as tolerant as opposite to racially abusive visitors. The construction of a narrative picturing on the one side the Brightonian 'insiders' as welcoming of every kind of diversity and on the other side the aggressive and narrow-minded 'outsiders' impacts on the perceived need of issuing policies to tackle hate crime. Johnstone (1990) suggests that, as our sense of place and community is rooted in narration, so is the framing of issues and needs affecting a citizenry but also, above all, of the best-suited policies to address those issues. This explains why, in the face of the actual presence of racially-motivated hate crime, there is no corresponding framing of the problem in the institutional discourse. On the contrary, being diversity of gender and sexuality the symbol of Brighton, its community is perceived through that classification and so are the issues affecting it and the necessary actions to contrast them.

As pointed out at the beginning of the section, one of the main problems identified by members of BME associations regarding their communication with

Brighton's institutions is the absence of BME representatives in the local government. Kymlicka (1995) addresses the issue of minority group rights defence stating that, within modern liberal democracies, minority groups need special measures in order for their own needs to be met and to ensure their survival. Drawing from this, Smith and Stephenson (2005:323) argue that 'group representation is essential in the achievement of social justice', which emerges as a key issue in Brighton.

A significant percentage of my interviewees had had regular contacts with the local institutions either through the associations they were members of or because of their role in representative bodies as the Racial Harassment Forum. Among them, a couple of individuals who had worked for various Council services denounced the mismatch between the claims of multiculturalism of the local government – as problematised in Chapter 4 – and its effective actions; worsened by the absence of BME representatives in the Council. According to Respondent 2's [BH/BMEs] perspective,

'We have no significant people in significant positions in the Council so, really, we are just left behind, and we are just out of thought.'

In the view of my participants, this lack of representation not only impacts on the absence of an acknowledgement of the BMEs' situation and the issues they face in terms of hate crime but also ignores more subtle forms of discrimination as the one on the work place (see Fenton 1982, Williams 1985, Bourne 2001). Among the incidents recalled supporting this claim, another respondent mentioned the experience of an acquaintance of his working in the Council for several years without any promotion but being surpassed by more recently-employed colleagues. The reason attributed to this unbalanced treatment ultimately lied in skin colour:

'Caterina: How do they justify that [the lack of promotions given to the lady]?

Respondent: Err, easily. She's black.

Caterina: Oh. But they wouldn't say so...

Respondent: Oh, no, they couldn't say it...But we know, she knows and her husband, who's white, knows...'

When explaining to me their relations with the local institutions, the participants whose ethnicity is classified as Black/Caribbean ultimately denounced a mismatch between the Council's declarations regarding the improvement of BMEs' socio-economic situation and the unavailability of the surveys used to determine that (see Williams 1985). Even the more critical among the BME interviewees were, however, open to a dialogue with the local government. They identified the main obstacle to a frank and productive relation with the representatives of the white majority in the middle-management bureaucrats rather than in the top-management politicians. The latter had proven to be quite sympathetic to BMEs claims, even though a long-term collaborative relation is regularly prevented by the government's turnover. Describing this feeling, Respondent 2 stated:

'You're backwards all the time! The problem is, every four years, these people change and you have to start connecting to them again, and to get to know them, and this takes a tremendous amount of time and effort.'

The political consciousness of my Black/Caribbean interviewees, their suspicion against the willingness and ability of the local government to respond to their needs and their active engagement in local social and political activities reflects the findings of Shingles' study (1981) on black Americans consciousness and political participation. Shingles (1981) analyses the increase in racial consciousness, political participation, political cynicism and self-esteem of black Americans witnessed from the 1960s, arguing that behind them lies an emancipation from a Protestant view of society blaming who does not succeed. According to his research, the realisation that the reason for blacks' deprivation lies in historical reasons – first and foremost slavery – and

political ones symbolised by the government has resulted in a politically more active black citizenry. This perspective results in a greater effort to influence public policy than poor whites who

‘Having no equivalent ideology, are more inclined to accept the implications of the Protestant work ethic for their sense of self-worth and the utility of political action’ (Shingles 1981:89).

Following this analysis, Black/Caribbeans participants were the only group who fostered a vision of Brighton population including both class and ethnicity. They denounced social issues that not only affect BMEs themselves but that equally touch all working class people. Respondent 4 suggests that the most worrisome concerns in Brighton are poverty and criminalisation:

‘Poor people have been criminalised. And they are all systematically removed from social services. I give you an example. Somebody who hasn’t got a computer would not be able to pay taxes online. So people, because they can’t afford a computer, are excluded from the everyday services. Then we have...more and more [BMEs/poor people] placed in isolated communities.’

This interconnection is exactly what superdiversity theory aims at shedding light on: not only the multiple dimensions of diversity but also the numerous ways in which they can intersect. As Respondent 4 argued,

‘You pay the same taxes as everybody else. National insurance, everything, I don’t cost, I can contribute to the community. As a worker.’

5.2.2 South Asians’ conciliatory approach

On the 18th of November 2015 a number of religious associations working with the Interfaith Contact Group, the Health and Social Care Faith Forum and Community Works organised the event ‘Celebrating Faith in Our Community’ with the purpose to ‘recognise and celebrate the wealth of work currently delivered by faith groups in the city’ (Brighton & Hove Faith in Action 2015). That was an excellent site to interview

members of several BME associations. Most of the participants I recruited on the day were of South Asian origin, specifically Indians, Bangladeshi and Pakistani, while the rest was from North Africa. Apart from one man in his Seventies of Sikh faith, the other interviewees were all Muslims. As it happened for the Black/Caribbeans, also this group of respondents showed consistency and agreement in their responses. In order to give a more structured representation of the different lines of responses collected and of their connections to the respondents' ethnicity, I include in this section also a lady originally from Iran but resident of Brighton for decades.

While the previous section shed light on the alleged lack of interest on the side of local authorities in contrasting racially-based hate crime as denounced by Black/Caribbeans, this paragraph enquires on the responses of BME participants of Asian descent. Their accounts are almost in opposition to Black/Caribbeans, since they provided an extraordinary positive picture of local institutions and of the native community. Following the example of Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy (2015), I avoided any direct reference to racial discrimination in my questions, focusing instead on Brighton's demographics, 'public image' and the respondents' own experiences in liaising with bodies representing local institutions. My rationale behind this was not only to make the respondents feel more at ease by avoiding potentially distressing topics but, most of all, to explore how they 'encountered and negotiated difference whilst going through routine daily activities' (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015:731). However, the responses of this group of participants not only denied the presence of discrimination in Brighton, with one young man, in particular, pushing so far to doubt the appropriateness of this term's use, but their opinions of Brighton's institutions and native community were overly positive.

Denying discrimination – especially after other groups have claimed it for the

same place – might at first appear counterintuitive, but other studies too (van Dijk 1992, Verkuyten 1997, Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015) have proved this behaviour to have its roots in discursive strategies aimed at re-establishing and re-negotiating the subjects' own social status. In their research on Hungarians and Romanians in Bristol, Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy (2015) identify in their denial of discrimination a possibility to claim a status higher than other migrants', either by embracing values traditionally associated with the dominant class (i.e. meritocracy) or by emphasising their whiteness and Europeanness. Describing Brighton and its native residents, the Sikh man mentioned above said that

'They're very free and easy [going] and they are open-hearted. They are very tolerant also, of the ways of human life...' [Respondent 7 BH/BMEs]

His approach and the one of the other respondents of this group is, however, not a-critical, but the critiques are so subtle and nuanced that it is difficult to grasp them in the first place and, even when openly expressed, the interviewees themselves immediately retracted them. Following from his statement about the openness on the side of native residents, the respondent introduced above continues by questioning if the same freedom applies to religion too, in addition to the 'ways of life'. Yet, he withdraws his statement immediately:

'I'm not sure about the religion. But the religion is also accepted and it's a wonderful place for any immigrant. For anybody who's coming to England.' [Respondent 7 BH/BMEs]

This complete adhesion to the institutional narrative of acceptance consequently obfuscates any discussion about racism and racially-based hate crime. As mentioned before, a young man originally from Bangladesh and member of a local multicultural group not only denied that racially-motivated hate crime is an issue for the city but came across as sceptical regarding the behaviours many would define as racist.

‘Is there racism? Might be, might not. But I myself I didn’t find any [...], that’s why I don’t have any evidence about [it]. I believe sometimes it can be even [a] misunderstanding. [...] Maybe somebody said something very frankly or somebody has done something like...so, it’s not racism.’ [Respondent 8 BH/BME]

Vargas (2014) suggests that an excessive support of the dominant groups’ narratives by minority groups is due to their search for verification of their claim to be included in the dominant group. In this case, I posit that the Asians’ overly positive support of the mainstream narrative – portraying Brighton as a place free from racism, where hate-crime incidents are not only a few but also mainly directed against LGBTQ+ communities, is aimed at being acknowledged as part of the dominant group as well. This claim also reinforces the self-identification as BMEs rather than as migrants I discuss in Section 5.3.1.

However, I argue that in this specific situation it is necessary to consider the discourse reported in the media too, because of the increasing association of Muslims with terrorism. At the time these interviews were conducted, the Paris attacks of the 13th November 2015 had just taken place and my respondents (both from the institutional and the grassroots sector) were conscious about its repercussions. During the Racial Harassment Forum meeting I attended on the 16th December 2015, one case worker of the Black and Ethnic Minority Community Partnership²² reported an increase in Islamophobia in Brighton, even though there were no specific data available yet. Therefore, I propose that the South Asians’ and Middle Easterns’ confirmation of the institutional narrative of Brighton are not only functional to re-negotiate their social status, but also to dissociate themselves from stigmatised categories (Moroşanu & Fox 2013).

A young man in his Thirties, originally from Pakistan, supports this narrative to

²² BMECP from now on.

the point of stating

‘Personally I feel more at home here than anywhere else in the country’ [Respondent 6 BH/BMEs]

In his account, he mentioned the pride Brighton has in ‘accepting people who are different’ and in fostering an idea of social justice thriving in the scenes connected to the Cowley Club, a social centre located in central Brighton. Saying that he feels ‘part of the city’, he mostly referred to a feeling of being respected and accepted, to a local ‘more conscious awareness and willingness to listen and to accommodate’ diversity in comparison to the other British cities where he had previously lived, including London and another city in the North he did not want to mention. Furthermore, he also praised his friends’ interest in getting to know something about his spiritual practices even though not practicing themselves. He is, anyways, aware that this might depend on his own circle of friends rather than being a characteristic encompassing all the locals; as in the case of Respondent 12 [BO/foreigners] in Bologna. In that case too, the respondent praised his friends to be interested in his country and traditions or cuisine, even if he was equally critical of other Italians he was not close to, because of their lack of will in learning something new from other cultures. It is striking to notice that hate-crime is absent from Respondent’s 6[BH/BMEs] first account, arguing that he has ‘never experienced obvious [emphasis] racism’. However, contrary to the respondent in Italy, when unpacking his first statement, Respondent 6[BH/BMEs] gave room for a critical analysis of the specific circumstances that prevent him from experiencing verbal or physical assaults. He attributes that to the facts that he generally ‘dresses quite restrained’ and that ‘his English is good’. Concluding his reflection, he added:

‘I’m sure that there is some racism and I think maybe it depends on how different you look’

In connection to Brighton's institutional narratives on diversity and of the construction of a sense of accepting and tolerant place, it is here crucial to note that the diversity Respondent 6[BH/BMEs] is accounting for is not the 'legitimate' gender, sexuality or lifestyle diversity, but the more controversial ethnic diversity. In this very context, it is also thought-provoking to examine how, in a town priding itself for accepting extravagant styles, the same freedom does not apply to religious clothing. I posit then that the reason of this lies in a 'flamboyant style' being associated with white middle-class creative professionals – who form the group the local government aims to attract – while religious and/or traditional clothing is more commonly associated with lower-class Muslim migrants. Once again I believe it is important to stress that the interviews were conducted in the aftermath of the Paris attacks of the 13th November 2015, when the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism in Europe was at one of its peaks.

The adhesion to the public discourse by this group of respondents is high to the point that it overcomes the scepticism on the absence of racism in Brighton that even some caseworkers and a few representatives of the local institutions had. As Respondent 4[BH/BMEs] argued, giving too much credit to the public discourse can blur the perception of actual issues affecting the local community, or at least part of it:

'Now parents, especially mixed parents, are less likely to be as conscious of it as I was in my mixed relationship. Now there is this assumption "No, the world is too good, it can't be that, it can't be...it's not what happens." So, I don't get racially abused in the street, I don't get...I don't remember the last fight I had with a racist. And it wasn't in Brighton. I think is safer, I see young people now, walking with each other, in mixed groups, while [...] when I was younger black people would be with black people and white people would be with white people. But it's like...It's safer but psychologically less safe because of the assumption that we are safe.'

As explained in Chapter 2, sense of place and the narratives of a place fostered by those in power positions have an impact not only on how the local community is narrated but also on the way its concerns are (Johnstone 1990) and, in turn, on the policies issued to

contrast them. Powerful and widespread narratives of a tolerant city where, if hate crime happens, it is ‘directed mostly against the LGBT community’ and ‘mostly committed by visitors’ [Respondent 7 BH/institutions], hide the incidence of racially-motivated hate crime and its impact on BME communities.

However, the interviewees themselves demonstrated to be aware of the contradictions described in this section. I had indeed a couple of post-interviews informal conversations with Respondent 1[BH/BMEs], whom I consider my gatekeeper, in which we discussed the various communities’ approach to racial abuse and whether they would turn to the Police or not. He suggested that, while discriminations and abuse affect all non-white communities, some of them, especially Asians, are much keener not to report it because of the fear of being targeted.

5.3 How much space for BMEs? An analysis of policies for community cohesion in relation to the ethnic component of diversity

5.3.1 BMEs or migrants? The role of public discourse in shaping ‘legitimate’ collective identities

As argued in the previous sections, local narratives have the power to influence which section of the community is considered more in need of and deserving support and which policies are issued by the local government. Looking at this dynamic through Baumann’s (1996) work, it is possible to argue that these narratives establish which categories are considered legitimate in the city and available to the citizens to associate with and/or appropriate them. I have examined the effect that the local public discourse on Brighton and its citizenry have on the local collective identities when discussing the focus placed on LGBTQ+ rights protection in comparison to the scarcer emphasis put on BMEs rights. This approach frames LGBTQ+ as ‘fitting in’ Brighton’s character

more than BMEs. In addition, very rare connections emerge between these two categories. Following Stokowski's (2002) work on narratives' construction, an analysis of Brighton's ones could reveal that the 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002:374) of the local government are to attract young white middle-class creative professionals – stereotypically connected to the LGBTQ+ community – more than any other category; this to benefit Brighton's already profitable creative and entertainment industry and tourism.

In addition to the narratives of the place, also the DOS (Koopmans & Statham 2000) is crucial to understand which collective identities are considered legitimate in the public discourse and, subsequently, which collective formations have more chances to make their claims heard in the local political debate. The political language used to identify migrants is, in this very case, crucial to understand not only how the local BMEs frame themselves in relation to the white majority and to newcomers but also how local political bodies and policies related to migration work.

Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) argue that in recent years the British media have emphasised the figure of asylum applicants and conflated the term 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees' with immigrants in general. The resonance of this definition in the public discourse (Koopmans & Olzak 2004) shapes what Blinder (2015) calls 'imagined immigration' and Lippmann (1997[1922]) 'pictures in our head', that is not only a perception of immigration different from statistical data but also consequent attitudes towards migrants depending on the imagined immigration itself. In his work 'Imagined immigration: the impact of different meanings of "immigrants" in public opinion and policy debate in Britain', Blinder (2015) elaborates on the results of a survey conducted in England, Scotland and Wales enquiring on which sorts of groups the respondents normally had in mind when thinking about immigrants. The study demonstrates that

‘the sort of immigration opposed by the British public does not match precisely with immigration as measured by government statistics and targeted by policies’ (Blinder 2015:96). In this case, the public perception focuses on asylum seekers and permanent migration while forgetting other categories as international students; which constitute a massive presence in Brighton due to its two universities and its many language schools. The survey also shows that public attitudes correspond to this ‘imagined immigration’. The key point of Blinder’s (2015) work however, is that the participants were not provided with a detailed picture of the ‘immigrant’ in question. Other research (Brader *et al.* 2008, Hainmueller & Hiscox 2010) has proven that that attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policy vary when the attention is directed towards specific characteristics of immigrants such as race, ethnicity or class.

In correspondence to Blinder’s (2015) work, during the part of my fieldwork conducted with members of BME associations in Brighton I realised that ‘migrant’ and ‘asylum seeker’ merge in a unique category in the local discourse; from which BMEs themselves distance. Respondent 4[BH/BMEs] explained it by clarifying that

‘Well, firstly, migrants and BMEs...two different things. Lots of minorities would say “We don’t want migrants here”. Migrants is [*sic*] (are) like saying...that person is Muslim, I don’t want that person. That’s, you know...within my own family, I have people saying they don’t want migrants in this country.’

The representatives of local institutions were equally cautious of not using the two terms interchangeably because, as Respondent 3[BH/institutions] clarified,

‘It’s the complexity of it in the UK, you’ve got migration there [mimicking] and you’ve got race and equality there [mimicking] and they, to some extend their function separate, are sort of separate tram lines, and that’s what your difficulty must be in gaining the local form because you’ve been coming to talk about migration and there is a civil society response to migration and immigration and refugees which is more...which is really just about refugees. Then you’ve got race politics, which is not either one or the other, and the challenge is to pull them together.’

The term of comparison to define an ‘immigrant’ is indeed, in the words of Respondent

4, the image of the asylum seekers in the ‘jungle camps’ of Calais, whose pictures were on the first page of British media at the time of the interviews (September – December 2015). He related that, when watching the news, even members of his own family would express derogatory views on them, as

‘Look at those migrants in Calais. Look at them, they are taking all the resources of the police. [...] They don’t have jobs, what are they going to do? They would take our jobs [...]’

However, he is conscious of the power media has in fostering a certain image of who is now defined as a ‘migrant’ in the public discourse. He explains that

‘That’s what the media say. What our MPs are saying.’

As argued in Chapter 2, the local DOS has an influence on the formation of collective identities too: the merging of ‘migrants/immigrants’ with ‘asylum seekers’, the stigma associated with them of individuals arriving at the British shores in masses and exploiting the British welfare system motivates BMEs to dissociate from them and from the ‘emergency’ of their situation. In their study on Romanians in London, Moroşanu and Fox (2013) explored the strategies that migrants use to cope with stigmatised identities, one of which consists in removing the blame from their own group while placing it onto someone else; in their case, Roma. Framing their collective identity as BMEs gives then to my respondents a more legitimate connotation than ‘migrant’ or ‘asylum seeker’, which not only finds a justification in the relative absence of pejorative talk about minorities in the public discourse but also in the long tradition of ethnic classifications and race relations in British politics. Britain’s first Race Relations Act was issued in 1965 (The Museum of London 2018), at a time when – as explained further on – Britishness became to be associated with whiteness. A new and tougher Act passed in 1976, which was subsequently amended a number of times in the

1990s and 2000s and was then repealed by the Equality Act 2010. The change in political language, passing from 'race relations' to 'equality' is a crucial indicator of the loss of importance that race has lately experienced in the British political discourse; which is here contested by the respondents. In addition, being 'migrant' and 'asylum seeker' terms that evoke temporariness, 'BME' is preferable to claim coevalness with the native community (Çağlar 2016) and, through it, a social status more equal to the dominant group.

Although Britain has been the destination of several immigration waves starting from the 1950s, and therefore its demographic composition has noticeably varied in the last sixties to seventy years, immigrants have rarely been completely accepted (Ford 2011). Moreover, several scholars (Rogaly & Taylor 2010, Anderson & Blinder 2011, Anderson 2013, Blinder 2015) emphasise that one of the reasons for this denial has been the still powerful link between immigration, race and difference. Simultaneously to the first immigration waves to the UK, Britishness as a concept started to be racialised. As Clarke (2015) points out drawing on Fortier's (2005) work, this idea of a racialised Britishness became subsequently more and more evident in the public discourse on the nation and manifested in legislative decision making (Paul 1997, Hampshire 2005 and Wilson 2007). The issue of ethnicity became also a relevant part of the British policy language starting from the 1991 UK Census, when a question on ethnic groups was included in the population Censuses of England, Wales and Scotland (Census Program 2011). The categories enlisted were 'White', 'Black/Caribbean', 'Black-African', 'Black-Other', 'Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Bangladeshi', 'Chinese' and 'Any other ethnic group'. To these categories was then added the 'Other Asian', elaborated merging the 'Black Other' and 'Any other' answers. Ballard (1996) first criticises this classification, pointing out the statistics' confusion between ethnicity and race. Furthermore, The

National Archives (2012) reports that

‘Ethnicity is complex to define as it is multi-faceted. Importantly, ethnicity is subjective: a person should self-assign his or her own ethnic group. While other people may view an individual as having a distinct ethnic identity, the individual's view of their own identity takes priority’

This signifies that there is no general consensus on what constitutes an ethnic group.

Moreover, the terminology used to define it has changed considerably over the decades.

Almost twenty years after Ballard, considering both the 1991 and the 2001 UK Censuses, Vertovec (2007) underlined that

‘These categories do not [...] convey the extent and modes of diversity existing within the population today’.

As Jivraj (2012) outlines in his report ‘How has ethnic diversity grown 1991-2001-2011?’ (see also Simpson & Jivraj 2012), the ‘Other’ ethnic group categories have all increased by over 2 million in the last 10 years. In line with Vertovec (2007, 2011) and other scholars working on superdiversity, he posits that

‘The existing ethnic group categories are, perhaps, becoming increasingly less meaningful for many people. [...] The population with ethnic background other than White (White British, White Irish and White Other) has doubled in size since 1991 from 3 to 7 million, while remaining a minority of the total population (14%).’

Dividing the population according to an ethnic criteria not clearly separated from race, this classification opposes a white majority to a non-white minority; which simultaneously constitutes a vulnerable group.

5.3.2 From discourse to services: the impact of narratives on local services design and provision

Besides the formation of collective identities, the local DOS has a potential to influence how local services are set up and for whom. One of the pivotal bodies working with

immigration in Brighton is the Refugee and Migrant Forum, ‘a partnership of statutory and voluntary organisations who support refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants’, coordinated by the Council’s Community Safety Team (Brighton & Hove City Council 2016). Under its umbrella, the Refugee and Migrants Forum includes several organisations working in language and interpreting support, legal advice, housing advice, anti-trafficking, violence and sexual abuse, mental health and, in general, in all the services mainly (even if not exclusively) targeting groups of people in a transitional status as asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants. Çağlar (2016) points out that the focus on integration and on needs specifically related to new migrants denies their coevalness with non-migrants, relegating them to a second-class status. Despite not questioning the benefit of services dedicated to whom belongs to these vulnerable categories, what caught my attention was that the above structure confirms the division between transient migrants (conflated with asylum seekers) on the one side and BMEs, seen as an established part of the local society – even though a minority, on the other. Following from Çağlar’s (2016) critique, it is possible to state that the BMEs respondents don’t frame themselves as immigrants not only because that identity is less ‘legitimate’ in the Brightonian (and British) context but also because that would not give them a coeval status equal to non-migrants.

In fact, my interviewees mentioned the Racial Harassment Forum far more noticeably than the Refugees and Migrants Forum. Including representatives of the city’s BME community, voluntary organisations and institutional bodies such as the local Police, the Forum meets quarterly to discuss the state of hate crime in Brighton and to design strategies to tackle racism. My participation to one of the meetings, on the 16th December 2015, allowed me to grasp the tension on the matter emphasised by Respondent 4[BH/BMEs] in his interview: a social worker for the BMECP reported

that, out of 100 hate crime incidents, 67 were racially motivated. This not only contradicts the institutional narrative about hate crimes being directed against members of the LGBTQ+ community but also reinforces the argument explored before in this section, concerning legitimate collective identities and the impact they have on local services.

Drawing from my analysis of the literature and the data concerning this part of my fieldwork, I argue that the Black/Caribbeans' claims of racism and differential treatment by the local institutions can be seen in two complementary ways: on the one side they expose the injustices of the dominant system in an attempt to weaken it (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015:744) and, on the other side, they emphasise the importance of an existing category (Dominguez 1986) to make it more visible in the public discourse (Koopmans & Olzak 2004) and, through that, to impact on local policies. Visibility and legitimacy are indeed necessary conditions for political participation.

5.4 Political participation as politics of belonging

Fennema and Tillie (1999) study the rank correlation between the degree of civic community of different ethnic groups and their level of political participation and trust in local institutions, finding that these elements are directly proportional. Their research explains that the more a community is cohesive (Putnam 1993) the more chances there are of it to get involved in the local politics of the receiving city and, ultimately, to show high levels of trust in the local government. Yet, the communities and their cohesiveness are explored *per se* instead than considering the influence that the receiving sense of place and its narratives have on them. Scuzzarello's (2015) research sheds light on the importance of local institutional narratives on a place and its residents, fostering a certain image of 'integrated migrant'. She explores how, in

Bologna, the narrative of civic engagement – deemed to be a characteristic of the Emilia-Romagna territory and of the local population – shapes the narratives of the ‘integrated migrant’, who has to comply to it to ‘fit in’ the receiving society.

Similarly to what happens in Bologna – even though not with the same intensity – Brighton is also well known for its civic engagement, especially in connection to LGBTQ+ rights and green movements. Echoing Scuzzarello’s (2015) findings, a local Councillor recalls the participation and engagement of BMEs in associations, organizations and local representative bodies as a sign of their settlement in the city and expression of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2010). Referring to their participation in the Racial Harassment Forum, he explains that

‘last year, [...] we had the Racial Harassment Forum, which has been going in the city for a very very long time and started off as a body just to really really work against racist facts, [but] has more often become something much more broad. And I think that we’ve had three people standing for the chair of it this year, all of them came from the Bangladeshi community. So, in my experience that seems what happened, that might take a while to get established but when they do get established then they start to get a role in the city’s life.’

Yuval-Davis (2010:270) uses a performative approach to define identity, suggesting that ‘identity narratives can be constructed within, counter or outside predetermined social discourses’. Being the narratives on Brighton focused on the high rate of civic engagement – even though mainly around gender and sexuality issues, one of the techniques BMEs can use to assert their ‘local’ identity and belonging to the place is actually to act in compliance with this social discourse. The validity of the statement is even clearer when considering the case of One Voice, a program now part of the Safe in the City Community Partnership but first set up by BME residents themselves. According to Respondent 2[BH/BMEs], they had set up One Voice to provide an inclusion of BMEs wider than the Racial Harassment Forum; where the people invited were always the same and belonged to a closer circle. When discussing the Forum, he

stated that

‘The communities were quite disappointed, I mean, because they [the representatives of local authorities] look at the people they know to invite. So it’s the same people who always turn up everywhere, even when they do these events. [...] And I see that this is why we set up One Voice’

One Voice represents not only a way of complying to the local narratives defining Brighton a place with a high rate of social cohesion, but also a strategy to claim the importance of race and ethnicity as aspects of diversity and, through that, to assert the need of tackling racially-motivated hate crimes more seriously. Even representatives of local institutions were conscious of the role of One Voice in attracting BMEs towards a higher political participation, as explained to me by a local case-worker:

‘I do think that maybe people know about events, a lot of people go to the same thing...But I do think that the One Voice was different...I think it was different because it was very visible and also connected to other things.’ [Respondent 15 BH/institutions]

Visibility, a key feature for the DOS (Koopmans & Olzak 2004), together with the connection to a multiplicity of smaller-scale initiatives emerges then as crucial for the involvement of the BME population. In addition to that, the ownership on the initiative and/or event itself is fundamental and capable of generating place attachment (Low & Altman 1992) in opposition to the alienation felt when the event is appropriated by other groups. The example of the People’s Day (now People’s Festival) is very insightful: comparing the account of its set up and modifications provided by Respondent 7[BH/institutions], a Councillor, and the one provided by a grassroots respondent, it is possible to grasp how crucial the ownership of cultural events and the possibility to express BMEs’ own culture is as a ‘politic of belonging’ (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2010). The former participant relates that

‘Originally the Muslim community had this, it was a day of celebrating diversity in the city, which was very small and sort of in the outskirts of the city. But people

were very keen on it, it got larger and it turned into what it's called People's Day, where you had people...all the ethnicities of the people were represented and we had people giving demonstrations of, err, ethnic art or music or cooking. It was lovely and it was in the centre of the town, in [*sic*] (on) New Road. And it was enormous fun and you did, you did see the same people, but you also saw a lot of normal mix of Brighton folks and people who passed and "oh, that looks interesting". And this year it expanded again and they moved down the Hove Lawns and they called it the People's Festival. Err, it was, late August...September, and I went down to it and, to be honest, I thought it lost something, I thought it, it, it had turned into like an urban festival. So, there was food and music and some of the food and some of the music was ethnic, but it didn't...but there wasn't the same feeling of people taking pride of their backgrounds. I mean, maybe it was because it was the first years and they did not afford to make it through but, oh maybe it wasn't to my taste but I didn't feel like you could learn as much or meet people who could say "this is where we come from, this is what we do there".'

However, the account provided by the latter respondent is way different:

'[...] and really successful, really successful was a party in the street, we were in the street in New Road. So we had stalls and music and...it was so successful and the following year the Council decided that "we are doing it!" and called it People's Day [...] We sat in the steering group, we got a lot of BME people involved in it, [it was] successful, and the next year they decided that they would do it themselves and they got a lady in charge of it, a white lady in charge of it. They didn't invite those who were in the steering group and there is no BME involved in it. So, emptying the event of the communities doesn't make it successful.'

According to the BME respondent, the only reason why the festival is not successful anymore is that the managing role was taken from the BME community by representatives of the white majority, who were not able to keep its original vibe and instead transformed it into yet another expression of the mainstream institutional narrative of an 'open' and 'tolerant' Brighton explored in Chapter 3. If openness and tolerance are framed referring to gender, sexuality and/or lifestyle, the attention reserved to ethnicity is noticeably lower.

Mee and Wright (2009) identified how, in cases like this, behind the re-shaping of the festival and of the kind of diversity portrayed by it, there is an assumption that certain groups are considered as not 'meant to be in a place'. Engaging with the debate on the relation between cultural difference and belonging, they argue that belonging is

often used in a way that implies a common understanding on what it is and why it is important when its actual meaning is actually often left unspoken by research and literature. Among the many different ways and scales in which it is possible to belong, Mee and Wright (2009) pinpoint inclusionary and exclusionary processes (Anderson & Taylor 2005, Diener 2007, Ervine 2008) as playing an essential role for this research. Subtly excluding a certain form of diversity from public visibility in favour of other ones signifies that a certain group is excluded from a place and considered not meant to be there and, ultimately, not belonging to the place.

Also, the bitterness emerging from Respondent 2's account for the Council's choice of putting 'a white lady in charge' of the festival, marks a sharp divide between 'us' and 'them' (Lamont & Molnár 2002) on the basis of ethnicity. Referring to the analysis of the literature outlined in Chapter 2, re-tracing the aspect of diversity locally considered the most important has the potential to impact on the sphere of local policies but also on the local sense of place. The fact that members of the BME community emphasise the relevance of ethnicity as a social divide aims at a wider acknowledgement of the presence of the BME community itself in Brighton, but also of the issues affecting it and of the need of a more efficient set of policies targeting them.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has engaged in a wide-encompassing critical analysis of the narratives on Brighton's receptiveness from the BMEs' point of view. I paid attention to their idea of 'selective tolerance' towards certain, but not other, groups, their 'oppositional views' on the city's receptiveness, the influence of public discourse on the term 'BME' and 'migrant' and to political participation as 'politics of belonging' (Yuval-Davis 2010).

Diversity does not only refer to the composition of the population, but it also

functions as a narrative and a principle guiding social policies (Berg & Sigona 2013). I have contextualised this statement by locating it in the Brightonian context, where, despite a lower percentage of people defining themselves as LGBTQ+ than as BMEs (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014), the narrative's focus on diversity of gender and sexuality is incomparably higher. The responses reported in this chapter challenge this narrative by emphasising the connection between demographic diversity and diversity as a narrative; claiming the importance of ethnicity when narrating the city's diversity. Despite taking the mainstream local discourse on Brighton's receptiveness for granted, my respondents critically reflect on it, arguing that the town is 'selectively tolerant [...] because certain sections of the community are tolerant to each other' [Respondent 2 BH/BMEs] while being hostile to people falling outside those categories.

In Section 5.2, I have explored the connection between the narratives of a place and social policies, which are rooted in narration (Johnstone 1990). I have problematised the narrative considering diversity of gender and sexuality as primary, not only because it obfuscates other aspects of diversity – as the ethnic one – but also because the perception of local issues is highly correlated to it. The clearest insight demonstrating how narratives can provide a misleading interpretation of the connection between a place and the issues affecting it lies in how racially-motivated hate crime is framed in Brighton. Through an exploration of the way hate crime is narrated by the representatives of local institutions in comparison to the accounts of grassroots associations members, I could determine the impact the narratives of place have in conveying the message that in Brighton hate crime is mostly directed 'against the LGBT community' and 'mostly committed by visitors' [Respondent 7 BH/institutions]. In response to this, I have analysed the difference between the responses of my participants classified as Black/Caribbeans and the ones classified as South-Asians (to

which I have added individuals originally from North Africa and the Middle East). While the former group openly denounces racism and the perceived scarce interest of the Council in tackling the issue, the latter presents an overly positive account of Brighton and its native community.

Following from a study by Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy (2015), I have argued that, despite denying discrimination could seem counterproductive, it is actually a dialectic strategy to renegotiate migrants' own inclusion within the dominant group. Moreover, it was interesting to notice that Black/Caribbeans were the only ones to foster an image of the local population which took into account both ethnicity and class. This vision associated BMEs with some parts of the native population (see Brubaker 2001). These observations go together with a reflection on blacks' social and political consciousness, noticeably different from Asians'. Using Shingles' (1981) study on black Americans as a reference, I have identified in black people's racial consciousness (marked by slavery and colonialism) and mistrust against the government the key reasons of their political participation and active denounce of institutional discriminatory treatments of marginalised groups.

In connection with this, in Section 5.3 I have explored the role of public discourse in shaping 'legitimate' collective identities. I have referred to the stigma associated with 'migrant' and to the merging of this term with 'asylum seeker' in comparison to 'BME'. Referring to studies on migrants' dialectic strategies to cope with stigmatised identities (Moroşanu & Fox 2013), I argue that my respondents' accounts aimed at marking their separation from migrants to remove the stigma from their own group while placing it onto someone else. In addition, 'BME' is preferable to 'migrant' and 'asylum seeker' because it does not evoke an idea of temporariness, but rather claims coevalness with the native community (Çağlar 2016). Through it, the terms also

convey a social status equal to the dominant group. Following from this analysis, I have then explored how public discourse – in form of the issues perceived as threatening for a citizenry – impacts on public services and institutional bodies design; using as an example the Migrant and Refugee Forum and the Racial Harassment Forum.

By exploring my BME respondents' participation to the Racial Harassment Forum and the ownership they claimed over certain cultural events – as the People's Day – I suggest that these forms of political participations are 'politics of belonging' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2010). While exposing the injustices embedded in the dominant system is a useful strategy to weaken it, their claims also emphasise the importance of an existing – although neglected – category of people with the aim of making it more visible in the public discourse (Koopmans & Olzak 2004). This has not only the potential to disclose differential treatments between established categories, but also to establish a stronger legitimacy of BME collective identity within the Brightonian context and, ultimately, to introduce policies more efficient for their inclusion.

CHAPTER 6

‘A city of culture, a city of rights’:

an analysis of the institutional narratives on Bologna

On the 4th December 2014 about a hundred people occupied the Ex-Telecom building²³ in the Bolognina area, part of the Navile neighbourhood in the North of the city; with the support of the SocialLog²⁴ union. As the photographer Lapini (2015) writes on his reportage on the occupation, they converted the ex-offices into social housing, modifying the interiors and transforming the yard and other big spaces into communal areas. This experiment where different nationalities, ethnicities, cultures and faiths lived side by side managed to last almost one year. On the 20th October 2015, 250 DIGOS²⁵ policemen were sent to the building, which was evacuated after a 15-hours resistance by the occupiers. The happenings triggered an exacerbated debate opposing the Police Commissioner and the part of the local political establishment supporting him to grassroots organisations, social centres and part of the third sector. The citizenry was equally split, with some residents siding with the authorities and others criticising their decision.

This event had wide resonance in both the Italian and international press: the article ‘Bologna is a city that is losing its soul’ (Bianchi 2015) followed the Guardian’s ‘Bologna's latest eviction threatens to whitewash the “red” city's political legacy’

²³ The building was and still is the property of a German company.

²⁴ Social Log is a union advocating for and working on housing rights (https://it-it.facebook.com/pg/SocialLogBologna/about/?ref=page_internal, last accessed 11th May 2016)

²⁵ The *Divisione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Sociali* (General Investigations and Social Operations Divisions), commonly known as DIGOS, is a law enforcement agency which investigates cases related to terrorism, organised crime and serious criminal offences.

(Patrick 2015). I found it appropriate for my enquiries to the point I decided to use the first article's provoking headline as a prompt for the interviews. Echoing the voice of Respondent 1[BO/institutions], a policy-maker, the piece highlights the current division the city is going through, shaking the mainstream image of Bologna as a city of rights, welfare and reception that comes out of the institutional narratives. The Ex-Telecom constitutes a case in point because it opposes a situation of severe housing emergency, equally touching upon migrants and Italians, to a narrative of defence of legal legitimacy and a fight against *degrado*²⁶.

Towards the end of the interviews with the representatives of the local authorities I therefore often added a question on the city's alleged loss of authenticity to gauge how they framed the local sense of place (Massey 1994, Pierce, Martin & Murphy 2011, Campelo *et al.* 2014) and how they positioned and envisioned it in the context of the current social changes. In the vast majority of the cases, this question caused embarrassment and a fierce denial in my institutional respondents. I suggest this is partially a natural reaction and partially a defence of what the Council of Bologna actually does for social inclusion. However, the counter-argument used by my participants referred to the humanity of local politicians in dealing with this extraordinary situation and to the fact that quite a few members of the local government expressed their concern for it to the Police Commissioner who had ordered the eviction. In Section 6.2.2 I expand on this narrative constitutive of the place, explaining why Bologna is defined as 'a city of rights'.

In a parallel with Chapter 4, the research questions I here address are as follows:

²⁶ *Degrado* is an Italian word translatable with disrepair, neglect and/or degeneration. I decided to use the Italian word instead of recurring to a translation because it feels to me more complete and suitable for its inherent meaning: a mix of dirt, abandon, disrespectful behaviours ranging from loud noise to petty crime and lack of public safety.

- *How are institutional narratives of receptiveness constructed in Bologna?*
- *Who is depicted as an ‘integrated migrant’ and why?*
- *How do local government representatives describe their policies for social inclusion and the principles guiding them?*

After a discussion of local demographics, diversity as a social fact (Berg & Sigona 2013) and the connection of certain neighbourhoods with the presence of foreigners in Section 6.1, in Section 6.2 I explore the local sense of place and its constitutive dimensions (Campelo *et al.* 2014). Besides the long tradition of human and social right protection dating back to the Middle Ages and reaching its peak in the Seventies, Bologna is also narrated by the representatives of the local government as ‘a city of culture’. This dimension owes its relevance to the presence of the local University, established as long ago as the 11th century. Since then, Bologna has received students from all over the world, who have ‘forced it to be open’, as Respondent 3[BO/foreigners²⁷], a man from Eritrean origin, provocatively argues.

In Section 6.3, I deepen the analysis of public discourse and its influence of the collective identities considered legitimate in the city (Koopmans & Olzak 2004). Their ‘legitimacy’ lies in being considered as reflecting the ‘character’ of the place (Massey 1994). Following Scuzzarello’s (2015) research findings, the narrative of the ‘integrated migrant’ portrays someone actively involved in local politics and in the social and civic life of the city, though the adhesion to associations and/or unions. The same section also highlights the contradiction between the narrative according to which Bologna ‘has always been ready to welcome [...] anyone’ [Respondent 12 BO/institutions] and the

²⁷ I have decided to classify the interviewees members of migrants’ associations/organisations as ‘foreigners’ rather than migrants to reproduce the language used in this case study both at the institutional and informal level to indicate individuals of non-Italian origin legally and long-term residing in Italy.

criticisms pointed out by a couple of dissonant voices; arguing that what is defined as the foreigners' 'contribution' to the receiving society is often more realistically an 'exploitation' [Respondent 1 BO/institutions]. The section ends with an account of the exclusionary trait of *Bolognesità*, dividing alleged 'real' natives from incomers and unpacking the divided character of the city.

6.1 Local demographics: 'multicultural' neighbourhoods and constant change

6.1.1 Different nationalities coexisting in the city

At the end of February 2016, foreign-born residents accounted for 15.24% of Bologna population²⁸ (Comune di Bologna 2016). As a local Councillor reported, 'more than 140 different nationalities coexist on our territory' [Respondent 6 BO/institutions]. Dissimilarly to the way these data are reported in Brighton, what is mentioned in the Bolognese statistics is not just the area of the world they are originally from, but also the country. A second but not less important difference between the case studies' demographics is that, regarding Bologna, there is no mention of the ethnic groups local residents belong to. This is motivated by a different national history and political discourse on the integration model of the country. While Britain has long used the frame of multiculturalism, as discussed in Chapter 4, the Italian approach is integration.

Country of origin	2016
Romania	9,020
Philippines	5,282
Bangladesh	5,120
Moldova	4,220

²⁸ Although these figures refer to the Municipality, it was not always possible to retrieve data concerning the city as such; due to the recent (Law 56/2014) re-design of the Italian territorial administrations which has substituted provinces with 'metropolitan cities'. I refer to data collected in 2016 because I want them to match the time-specific data collected during my fieldwork.

Country of origin	2016
Morocco	4,037
Pakistan	3,745
Ukraine	3,673
China	3,476
Albania	2,656
Sri Lanka	1,418

Table 6: Top 10 foreign nationalities in Bologna on the 1st January 2016 (Elaboration on ISTAT/National Institute for Statistics²⁹ data)

Caneva (2014) points out that integration is considered an ‘awkward political issue’ in Italy. In comparison to the degree of attention devolved to immigration as a security threat, integration actually takes up quite a marginal position in the public and political debate. Moreover, contrary to the situation in the United Kingdom, race relation matters are not part of the political agenda. The scholar argues that cultural and social integration has gained resonance quite recently, while instead integration as such has long been framed as a *de facto* process occurring by participating in the labour market (see also Ambrosini 2011). However, Caneva also suggests that the Italian integration policies have an assimilationist approach, as they are grounded on a dominant identity to which migrants have to integrate (see also Taylor 2012). This perception is supported by those among my participants who mentioned this political framework, particularly a young man of Senegalese origin who argued that

‘There is a huge problem in Italy, [...] that [...] that the concept of integration is not clear to many people. It’s not clear to many many people because here, unfortunately, [...] integration becomes assimilation. Until you look 100% like an Italian, you are not integrated. [This regards] the dresses, the way you behave, the

²⁹ For a thorough breakdown of all the nationalities present in Bologna, consult <https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/32-bologna/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2016/> (last accessed 13th March 2018).

way you talk, everything. This causes that, many times, many immigrants, err, unfortunately, exclude themselves.’ [Respondent 14 BO/foreigners]³⁰

I expand on this perspective in Chapter 7.

Considering this difference in the case studies’ political framework, it is then possible to also understand the impact they have on how foreign-born residents are perceived. While in a country using a multiculturalist structure – as Britain – foreign-born residents and their descendants (if not White British) are identified and defined as minorities, in another one adopting the frame of integration – as Italy – they are rather seen and defined as ‘foreigners’; regardless of the amount of years spent in the receiving country (Çağlar 2016). Çağlar (2016) problematises this dynamic arguing that framing who has been a migrant in the past as still a migrant even after years of residence in a different country, not only denies their coevalness with natives but also frames their issues and needs in a reductive way. This recalls Johnstone’s (1990) statement regarding narratives on places. Explaining that as our sense of place is rooted in narration so are our perceptions of the issues and needs affecting it, he sheds light on the power narratives have to influence policies. I return to this issue in Chapter 7, when discussing the foreigners’ point of view on Bologna’s narratives of receptiveness.

For the avoidance of doubt, I clarify that in the Italian context the term ‘foreigner’ is used both at the informal and official level – in the latter case they may use ‘foreign citizens’, indicating that the foreign-born residents are legally residing on the territory (Comune di Bologna 2018). While this term and its use convey an idea of more long-term residence, the term ‘migrant’ is more often connected to newly arrived individuals and to the landings on the Italian shores highlighted in the press and equally often merged with ‘asylum seeker’. Its widespread use in relation to reception actually

³⁰ I have translated all the quotes from Italian-speaking interviewees, trying to provide a good balance between a correct English translation and an account of their words which is as accurate as possible.

strengthens this association of ideas (Repubblica Bologna 2018), echoing the confusion between the terms commonly taking place in Brighton. However, in contrast to the first case study, throughout this part of the fieldwork I did not find any participant who was opposed to the definition of ‘foreigners’ as ‘migrants’. They rather understood what I meant and whom I pointed at if I used that term. For example, Respondent 13, who is a policy-maker, clarified that ‘by “foreigners”, we mean “immigration”’. To my understanding, the difference between the two case studies in relation to this terminology lies in the different political frameworks they refer to. In the case of Britain, ‘minority’ conveys the idea of a group not only legally and long-term settled in the territory, but also legitimately inserted in the multiculturalist system and allowed to maintain its cultural specificity (Kymlicka 1995, Koopmans & Statham 1999), while ‘migrant’ indicates someone outside this system. On the contrary, using ‘foreigner’ or ‘migrant’ does not change the meaning of the world significantly, because in a country as Italy using an integration-based approach, both indicate someone who has to adapt to a dominant majority (Heckmann 2005).

6.1.2 When is a neighbourhood also a ‘ghetto’? A discussion on neighbourhoods’ demographics and their perception as multicultural

Before exploring the demographics of Bologna’s neighbourhood in terms of diversity, a clarification of my use of the word ‘ghetto’ is necessary. The expression emerged in quite a few participants’ accounts, so I decided to employ it to report my findings as faithfully as possible. ‘Ghetto’, in my informants’ words, did not refer to an area of the city where a single ethnic group is confined, but rather it is a term flagging up the deprivation of an area. Deprivation then goes together, according to this account, with a presence of foreigners higher (or just more visible) than in other areas of the city. As

stated in the first part of the research, the percentage of foreigners or BMEs living in deprived conditions is higher than the nationals.

What emerged as recurrent and of crucial importance from the interviews with representatives of the local government, is an emphasis on the diversity of the city's demographics matched with the alleged absence of 'ghettoes' – which follows the accounts on Brighton examined in Chapters 4 and 5. As an Italian man working in a local intercultural centre narrated,

'Bologna hasn't had a specific immigration as it happens for ethnic communities like, I don't know, err...the Latinos in Milan, [but there are] places where the immigrant presence is – how to say this? – almost prevailing. Whether it's a ghetto or not, I don't know. [...] I mean, we are not facing the physical image of the ghetto with huge buildings and Council estates...' [Respondent 3 BO/institutions]

The association of certain areas with 'ghettoes' is not only dependent on its spatial location in the periphery and/or the ethnicity of the inhabitants but rather on the image of a neighbourhood in disrepair with tall apartment blocks – conveying the idea of economic deprivation, segregation and social marginality. It was interesting to notice how, during the data collection, the Bolognina area – located behind the railway station – was always used as a reference when describing a multicultural neighbourhood; even though the statistics on the population distribution show that the presence of foreign-born residents is high in other central areas too.

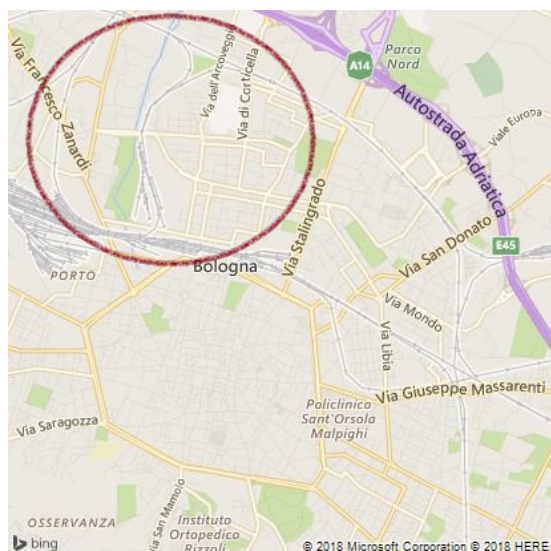


Image 1: Map of the Bolognina area.

Area	Number of foreign residents
Arcoveggio	more than 2,000
Piazza dell'Unità	more than 2,000
Via Ferrarese	more than 2,000
Borgo Centro	between 1,500 and 1,900
Via del Lavoro	between 1,500 and 1,900
Via Mondo	between 1,500 and 1,900
San Savino	between 1,500 and 1,900
Cirenaica	between 1,000 and 1,499
Galvani	between 1,000 and 1,499
Irnerio	between 1,000 and 1,499
Malpighi	between 1,000 and 1,499
Marconi	between 1,000 and 1,499

Table 7: First ten areas for number of foreign residents in Bologna.

Among the different areas of the city, the Pilastro, also administratively included in the Navile neighbourhood, is the only one that reflects the visual criteria of a ‘ghetto’: tall apartment blocks formally constituting Council estates and surrounded by poorly-maintained patches of green, detached from the city centre but closer to the industrial part of the city (see Vitali 2011, Prog, res 2013). The housing complex was built in the 1960s complying with the indications of IACP³¹ (now ACER³²), to respond to the high demand for Council housing increased after the mass inward migration the city experienced from the end of World War 2. Faenza (1979) reports how the first 2,500 inhabitants were mostly Southern Italians who were either already living in the city or came at that time mostly to work in the local manufacturing industries. Their separation from the other residents of the city, connected to the poor initial conditions of the neighbourhood (lack of basic services like running water, heating and public transport), contributed to give it the connotation of a ‘ghetto’. One of the Councillors I interviewed reported his experience of growing up in the Pilastro:

‘In the ‘60s/‘70s, during my youth, I used to live in the Pilastro and, notwithstanding the fact that I’m Bolognese by birth and family, living in the Pilastro, I was looked at as if I was a weird thing, because there was where all the people coming from the South of Italy used to live.’ [Respondent 7 BO/institutions]

Strictly speaking of diversity as a social fact (Berg & Sigona 2013), among Bologna’s neighbourhoods there are areas that count a percentage of immigrants higher than the Bolognina but are not equally associated with ethnic diversity. An excellent example is the San Vitale neighbourhood, extending from the Two Towers in the very heart of the city to the peripheral area of via Mattei in the North-East, location of the ex-CIE³³. Neither my interviewees nor I could tell whether this happens because a relevant part of

³¹ *Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari* (Autonomous Institute for Council Housing)

³² *Azienda Casa Emilia-Romagna* (Emilia-Romagna’s Housing Company)

³³ *Centro di Identificazione ed Espulsione* (Centre for Identification and Expulsion)

San Vitale is very centrally located, within the ancient city walls, and so not matching the stereotypical image of the marginalised migrant, or for other reasons. However, the only participant who analysed this more detailedly is Respondent 3, who pointed out that, in his opinion, associating certain districts with the presence of foreigners regardless of the demographics has to do with intergroup contract (Hewstone & Brown 1986, Wimmer 2004). Speaking of San Vitale, he states:

‘Perhaps they [natives and foreigners] don’t intersect [there]. There are many areas in the city that can be consider peripheries, but they are in the centre. One of the most foreign neighbourhood in Bologna is San Vitale neighbourhood, which goes up to the Towers.’

Respondent 6 also pointed out the contradiction according to which certain neighbourhoods are defined as ‘multicultural’ more than others regardless of the actual percentage of foreign residents.

‘[The city] it’s divided in neighbourhoods, these 9 neighbourhoods, some of which have a...more relevant foreign component. [...] It’s interesting to understand why. For example, in Borgo Panigale there are, there is a strong component of foreign citizens, even because it’s on the border with some Municipalities with a strong industrial presence, for example. [...] There are several areas that are...Let’s say that in the collective imaginary they are labelled as – sometimes with a positive meaning, sometimes with a negative meaning – let’s say...as...as having a predominance of foreign citizens...’

Even though the mismatch between the neighbourhoods’ demographics and their label as ‘multicultural’ might seem counterintuitive, Berg and Sigona (2013) explain that diversity as social fact and as a narrative do not necessarily go hand in hand. Stokowski (2002:372) also states that ‘most of what a person knows about a place is initially mediated by others’, suggesting that place-narratives – or city-narratives as in this case – are constructed and developed by specific groups who have the power to do so.

The Bolognina, the area that the narratives of the local government representatives depict as the most multicultural but also as object of public concern

because of its disrepair and neglect, is, according to both some of my respondents' accounts and my personal experience, one of the areas where university students and young people would live and occasionally hang out, despite its distance from the centre. The grassroots cultural life of the area revolves around the social centre XM24³⁴ but there are also many other spontaneous cultural initiatives by and/or oriented towards first- and second-generation migrants; such as the On the Move Lab, a hip-hop music collective created by a group of Italian and second-generation teenagers. Several studies have been done on this area (Scandurra 2014, 2015, 2016, Piano B Group 2017), focusing on the multiplicity of cultures mingling in it and its peculiar history as an industrial and politicised neighbourhood. In my respondents' accounts, the Bolognina and its characteristics have become one of the symbols of the city as a whole (see Haji-Abdou 2014). Equally, Porta Lama – the site of one of the most relevant battles opposing the army of the Italian Social Republic and Germany to the Partisan forces – has become the symbol of city's participation in the Resistance and of its character as a stronghold of the Italian Left. However, it is exactly the visibility and wide acknowledgement of the Bolognina as the home of many foreign residents that makes it the core of many urban disputes.

One day in April 2016 I met two of my interviewees, a young couple of Peruvian origin, in Piazza dell'Unità, the centre of the Bolognina. It was early afternoon and, while waiting for them to show up, I spent some minutes observing the scene surrounding me. Piazza dell'Unità is a relatively small square in the centre of a roundabout with a couple of green flowerbeds and benches around an asphalt basketball court. On my right, a group of women presumably from Bangladesh with their babies in

³⁴ The *Ex-Mercato 24*, or *XM24*, is a social centre set up in the space of the old fruit and vegetables wholesale market in via Fioravanti 24, in the Bolognina. It is very close to the new head offices of the Council and this has created quite some tensions between the local government and the grassroots group.

the strollers were chatting while a homeless men was sleeping and another one was drinking canned beer in the furthest flowerbed. At the time, the basketball court was completely empty. Even though the situation was very calm and no event was organised there, I was surprised to notice both a police and an army patrol stationing at two opposite ends of the square. When my interviewees arrived, I shared my surprise with them. They looked quite hostile and doubtful regarding the police's and army's presence, arguing that the stigma of the Bolognina as unsafe does not correspond to the reality perceived by local dwellers. Plus, they attributed this narrative to a political convenience to use a multiethnic area as a scapegoat and as a terrain to prove the Council's active action against urban *degrado*, lack of safety and crime, in an attempt to protect its citizens. The male participant argued:

'In a city you always have to blame a specific place, as crime hideout. But why the Bolognina? Because the Bolognina is a mix, a melting pot of many situations, of many foreign communities and so they think that here there is – I repeat, I underline this, I don't want to say that nothing happens here [...], but it's properly associated with a dangerous area.' [Respondent 8 BO/foreigners]

This perspective was very common among the foreigners interviewed but not equally shared by local government representatives. As it had happened in the case of Brighton, only a couple of respondents, closer than the others to migrants and asylum seekers reception or connected to some foreign citizens for personal reasons, had a more reasoned and critical perspective on the matter. For example, another interviewee working as policy-maker, ironically reflected on pre-electoral times and the Council's obsession to show the highest dedication in the protection of its citizenry. She stated:

'Yes, me...I live there [in Bolognina] and I have complained too, about this thing [the police and army patrols], because they are kidding us, I mean, I understand...I live in the Bolognina and I feel safe. I don't have a security issue in the Bolognina. [...] It doesn't absolutely affect the security. It's ugly to see that there are part of the city where it's permitted that there is a continuous drug dealing [...] From this point of view the Bolognina has been slightly abandoned. [...] Since I moved to the Bolognina, I had started to go there, in Piazza dell'Unità, with my children...then I

stopped. I admit it. [...] I gave up because there were guys dealing drugs, I gave up because there was a bad smell because people peed around and so I gave up. I felt sorry, but I did. And I was jealous of who lived close to Giardini Margherita. [chuckles]' [Respondent 10 BO/institutions]

Not only then, do the institutional narratives not properly reflect the multi-ethnic composition of the neighbourhood but, as Johnstone (1990) explains, also the policies and, in this case, security measures, conform more to the institutional narratives on the place than to the perspectives of the residents. In section 6.2 I examine the origins of these narratives and their 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002:374).

6.1.3 A change inherent to the city

A second, but not less relevant, characteristic associated with the city's demographics by at least two thirds of my institutional respondents is its 'inherent change', which starts as a social fact (see Berg & Sigona 2013) but develops into a symbol of the city (Hadj-Abdou 2014). A Councillor described it by saying that 'every 10 years 25% of the population changes [...] This means that changing is intrinsic in this city' [Respondent 7 BO/institutions]. The 'character' of the place (Massey 1994) emerging from accounts like this is the one of a city used to receive different groups of people (as I elaborate in Section 6.2) and that has accepted change as one of its constitutive traits. Then, the participant mentioned above expanded on his explanation with the following words:

'There are people who don't stay too but a good portion of them [the students] stays. Is also a very old city, and therefore there is a high mortality. So, the city changes even physically, people die...Then, it's a city where there is a highly developed manufacturing sector, there are many people coming to live here because there is work.' [Respondent 7 BO/institutions].

The main cause of this turnover can be found in the arrival of students at the beginning of their higher education cycle and their departure once their studies are over. However,

it is possible to trace a parallel with Brighton with respect not only to the students' presence but also in relation to their retention in the city even after their time at university. In Section 6.2.1 I expand on the presence of students and other categories of people in the city and on their association with some of the city's core characteristics.

6.2 Bologna *città aperta*³⁵ – narratives on the city and local sense of place

Perhaps due to my interviewees knowing I had lived in Bologna before, or perhaps because they thought that what they were saying was common knowledge, shared and agreed upon by the most, I often had to deal with many 'non-saids' during the local authorities' description of the city and its citizenry. Even though I was able to understand what they were implying at all times, I had to ask them to be more explicit for the sake of the interview's completeness. This apparent difficulty actually resulted in a revealing discovery reproducing what had happened in the first part of the fieldwork – but not as strong as it was in Brighton's case: the confidence with which the participants mentioned a characterising trait of the city often wavered when they ventured into explanations and examples.

Describing a new interactive logo created by the Bologna City Branding project to symbolise the city, Respondent 7[BO/institutions] praised its capability to change according to the words a user types on the screen. This logo, according to him, perfectly reflects Bologna's multiple identity and, to explain its potential, he said that 'you cannot put it [the city's identity] in a box'. This statement recalls Fanshaw's and Sriskandarajah's (2010) study 'You can't put me in a box: Superdiversity and the end of identity politics in Britain', problematising how individuals settled in Britain find the current ethnic-related definitions inappropriate to define their own identity. The

³⁵ Open city.

respondents who took part in the study actually argued that their perception of identity goes far beyond their own ethnicity and is, among other characteristics, in constant development. Following this point, Respondent 7 narrated Bologna's identity as continuously evolving, partially because of the demographic change mentioned in Section 6.1.3 but also because of its diverse nature.

As Landry (2012) and Stokowski (2002) suggest, narrating a city as intercultural³⁶ and diverse is functional for it to attract certain categories of incomers, in this case mainly tourists, students and creative professionals and, in turn, to move upwards in terms of international competitiveness and city scale (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009). However, the ones mentioned above are not the only 'legitimate' collective identities associated with Bologna's public discourse (Koopmans & Olzak 2004), since – in addition to students – also refugees have a peculiar role in it.

6.2.1 A city of culture

Most of my interviewees working for the local government, but also quite a few migrants, connect Bologna's openness to the presence of students, established in the city since the 11th century. Being the location of the most ancient university in Europe, established in 1088, was presented as a matter of pride by local politicians and policy-makers. The prevailing narrative of a glorious past when Bologna was the centre of knowledge, attracting students from all over Europe and the world, was connected to the

³⁶ In discussing the narratives of migrants' integration I firstly feel the need to point out the use of a specific jargon. When describing either projects or environments where migrants and natives come in contact, the respondents closer to the social sector prefer to address them as 'intercultural' rather than 'multicultural'. Grounding this statement on my fieldwork research and on my professional experience in the Universo Interculturale Association, I argue that the main reason why interculturalism is preferred to multiculturalism is a perceived emphasis on the dialogue between different communities and on the fluidity of identities; viewed as a dynamic two-ways exchange (Meer & Modood 2012).

many coat of arms visible in the frescoes on the walls of the Archiginnasio³⁷ library. These symbols used to be the emblems of noble and wealthy families, indicating that those who were enrolled in the University belonged to upper social classes and that their presence in Bologna increased the University's prestige.

Respondent 3[BO/institutions] defines Bologna's 'tradition of welcoming' as stemming from and dependent on the University, which has remained engrained in the 'self-representation of Bolognese':

'Bologna has an ancient tradition of welcoming, mainly linked to two factors. The University, which in the past [...] used to receive students from all over the world. When Bologna was the most important University for the study of Law, it used to receive students from – I don't know, Portugal, Poland, even from the North of Europe...'

Hadj-Abdou (2014) notices that the ethno-cultural diversity brought in by certain individuals increasingly acquires value as an asset capable of increasing the economic competitiveness of the city. Indeed, the high rate of students has determined a process of service modification and tailoring. Diversity, besides becoming a symbol of the city (Hadj-Abdou 2014, see also Çağlar 2016), is a powerful feature used by local institutions to brand it as intercultural (Landry 2012). Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2009, 2011) argue that this branding process has the double effect – or, as Stokowski (2002:374) puts it, the 'desired end' – of raising the urban centre's relative positioning in terms of its different forms of power in attracting global flows of capital and talents.

However, stressing Bologna's excellence in the field of education does not equate to acceptance and inclusion of students' ethnic diversity or, merely, their presence. The relationship Bologna's natives and administration have with students is actually very ambivalent. If, on the one side, they are associated with the University as

³⁷ The *Archiginnasio* is a historical building in the center of Bologna which used to be the main building of the ancient University and is now a library.

an institution and therefore indirectly constitute a matter of pride and distinction for the city, on the other side they are also accused of being one of the main causes of urban *degrado*, especially in the city centre (BolognaToday 2016, 2017). If it is true that, as Respondent 3[BO/foreigners] stated, ‘students force you to be open-minded’ – which implies a connotation of obligation rather than free will – it is also true that students are a transitory presence in the city; possessing a weak influence on local policies. Respondent 15[BO/institutions], an Italian man employed as caseworker by a local cooperative society, explained the complicated relationship between the city’s administration and native community, the University as an institution and its students with the following words:

‘I think that a lot [of the city’s connotation] is caused by the circle of students coming from other cities. And who create a sort of substratum – now accepted – in the social fabric of the city – even though it’s changing – because people, some stay, some don’t...well...it’s a temporary presence but, at the same time, it’s an already established presence. There are parts of Bologna that have a hard time in coexisting with the student-Bologna and, besides that, you can’t say that it’s not a mainly accepted presence and this is a presence that, already *per se*, creates a coexistence with diversity, with generational diversity, diversity of origin and this fosters...fosters a predisposition to an openness...’

To summarise, the presence of students since the very establishment of the University was considered by my interviewees as one of the main drivers of Bologna’s openness and receptiveness, even though this attitudes appears as ‘forced’ and short-term oriented. Therefore, I argue that the truthfulness of the receptiveness here presented is questionable and that a closer examination of these narratives allows us to grasp the administration’s ‘desired ends’ (Stokowski 2002:374) behind them. Portraying the city as the home of a leading University in Europe attracts new students every year and, as a consequence, local businesses can develop a vast range of services and events tailored towards them. The inclusion of students is, however, only put in place for this short-term rather than for the long run.

6.2.2 A city of rights

In her article ‘Policy actors' narrative constructions of migrants' integration in Malmö and Bologna’ (2015), Scuzzarello describes the significance of political engagement for Bolognese citizens, determining their social inclusion, consideration, connection and achievement of the status as a constitutive part of the citizenry. Helliwell and Putnam (1995) similarly argue that the regions of the North of Italy are characterised by a horizontal social structure and by a higher extent of civic community, citizens involvement and governmental efficiency; which has determined their centuries-long higher richness in comparison to the regions in the South. This perspective appears simplistic because it does not consider the relevance of some historical and political events strongly impacting on the socio-economic and political asset of the regions – such as the annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to the Kingdom of Sardinia; originating the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 but also establishing the foundations of the economic North-South divide. However, it is undeniable that horizontal social structures and civic engagement are a core characteristic of some Northern regions in particular; such as Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy (Putnam *et al.* 1994).

The requirement for the ‘good citizen’ to engage and participate in the civic life of its city impacts on migrants too, differentiating who is considered an ‘integrated migrant’ from who is not (Scuzzarello 2015). During my investigation, I have observed the same pattern Scuzzarello describes taking shape in my interviewees’ narratives. Besides the pivotal role of the University as a dimension constituting Bologna’s sense of place (Campelo *et al.* 2014), the undisputed focus of the participants’ narratives on the town’s identity is linked to rights, politics and political activism and is embodied by the figures of both Partisans and factory workers.

A local middle-aged Councillor defined Bologna as ‘a city of rights, boasting a long tradition of democracy and inclusion’ [Respondent 5 BO/institutions], explaining that the city’s reputation as open and welcoming is well deserved because these characteristics can be identified throughout history both in institutional and grassroots environments. One example she chooses refers to the adoption by well-off Bolognese families of children coming from the deprived areas of the South of Italy after the Second World War³⁸. Generally speaking, there was complete agreement among my respondents on the city’s openness being due to an historical tradition of democracy dating back to the Middle Ages³⁹. The connotation of ‘Red City’ was however achieved in more recent history thanks to, first the city’s leading role in the Italian Resistance against the Fascist regime and, second, a long series of leftist local governments. This focus on the urban dimension which emerged in all the interviews is a distinctive example of how the plurality of Italian self-representations favours the local over the national, as Pratt (2002) points out in the study ‘Italy: Political Unity and Cultural Diversity’. This narrative of political engagement is more centred on a glorious past – to which all the institutional respondents seemed particularly attached – than on current best practices, but it is this past that is thought to have influenced the present local solidarity and civic consciousness.

The ‘long series of leftist administrations’ [Respondent 10 BO/institutions] Bologna has had is presented as a process that, on the one side, reflected the culture of the citizenry and on which, on the other side, depended on the attention that was and is still paid to the political situation in other countries. Respondent 2[BO/institutions], a Councillor living in the city for decades, explained that, in his opinion, Bologna’s curiosity for political events in other areas of the world and its sympathy for those who

³⁸ The episode is narrated in detail in the documentary ‘*Pasta Nera*’ (2011), directed by Alessandro Piva.

³⁹ In 1256, the Council of Bologna proclaimed the abolition of slavery and the release of serfs.

flee authoritarian regimes is due to the city's leading role in the Italian Resistance. The liberation fight, led by Partisans both in the outskirts of the city and in the urban space and deeply felt by the whole citizenry, became a benchmark not only for the Bolognese's own political engagement and beliefs but also for their relationships with other peoples (Piano B Group 2007). A couple of participants recalled that, for instance, Bolognese were very well informed about dictatorships in South America. They associated those oppressive regimes with Italian fascism and welcomed political refugees as victims of fascism as the Bolognese themselves had previously been. This perception of proximity and blurring of the us/them divide (Lamont & Molnàr 2002) was accounted for by the vast majority of my institutional respondents as what determines a proactive reaction to asylum seekers and migrants' reception even nowadays. However, this process turns out not to work in relation to every ethnicity and/or nationality. As the respondents mentioned above reported, despite the fact that dictatorial regimes around the world are many, for some reason Bolognese and Europeans in general are not that aware of quite a few of them. For example, people leaving African countries are hardly seen as legitimate victims of persecutions and authoritarian regimes and welcomed as peers, and this impacts negatively not as much on the reception system itself as on the social climate of the city.

The general outward-facing attitude of the local population emerges as connected to a specific political belief and not influenced by social class. The scholars who conducted the social investigation '*La Fabbrica e il Dragone*⁴⁰' (Piano B Group 2007) describe the tight interlace between the participation in the Partisan Resistance and the role of factory workers in shaping the city's political allegiance, defining the factories in the Bolognina as 'workshops of antifascism' (Piano B Group 2007:53). It

⁴⁰ 'The Factory and the Dragon', the name hinting to the presence of the Casaralta factory and, subsequently, of a high percentage of Chinese immigrants in the Navile neighbourhood.

was on that legacy of political militancy that the identity and sense of belonging of the neighbourhood were established and endured through the following decades. Joining the Communist Party, as it was the case for many, also meant the support of an ideal of social justice and participatory democracy that was not limited to the Italian environment, but rather connected to other areas of the world. This is why ‘the national and international political dimension merge in the workplace’ (Piano B Group 2007:60).

Even if most, but not all, of this historical and political analysis has been done using the Bolognina area as subject, its space symbolically indicates the entire city (Hadj-Abdou 2014); as mentioned in Section 6.1.2. As Piano B Group’s members (2007) argue

‘a neighbourhood can be many things: a specific section within a broader urban network, an administrative unit that permits a more thorough management of the territory on the side of the Council, the container of a fragment of the multiform population inhabiting a city. And, partially, Bologna’s Navile neighbourhood is all this.’

This neighbourhood is actually a microscope of the diverse demographics of the city and, because of its various population, works as a laboratory of social interaction (Liguori 2017) the effects of which can impact on the entire city. It is indicative that the campaign against the demolition of the social centre XM24, in the heart of the Bolognina, claimed that

‘the fight for XM24 is the fight for the Bolognina and the fight for the Bolognina is the fight for the entire city, for its capability to be inclusive, sympathetic, creative and so worthy the best part of its history⁴¹’ (Comitato IloveXM24, 2017).

⁴¹ My translation.

6.3 ‘Bologna welcomes everyone’...is this the case? Public discourse and legitimate collective identities

6.3.1 Integration means contribution

Drawing from the data collected in this part of my fieldwork, the image of a migrant whose integration process is completed and is now a full part of the Bolognese society corresponds to the one of an individual taking active part in the social, political and cultural life of the city through political commitment, volunteering and participation in unions and/or associations already working on the territory; confirming the outcome of Scuzzarello’s (2015) investigation. By means of example, Respondent 5 mentioned the training course for touristic guides that FAI⁴² organises every year for the FAI Day (or Open Museums Day). She praised the 50 residents, between foreigners and second generations, who had signed up for the course, describing the formers as ‘a population of 40/50-years old people who has been living here for 15/20 years’. In her opinion, this choice to engage in volunteering activities is proper of ‘that part of the immigrant population more settled and [that], at this point, feels part of the citizenry and provides services’. Continuing on this line, she describes the positive outcome of such a decision:

‘They can say “Bologna is my city, I like it, I can make it mine from this point of view...I can be a generator of transmission both with my community but also for many Bolognese who might not know” [something important about the city]’

As previously mentioned, this contribution is framed in a way that sees volunteering and joining cultural and/or political associations not only as beneficial to both the migrant communities and the native society, but as a marker of a real inclusion (Putnam 1993, 2000, Scuzzarello 2015). Forming an association, normally along ethno-national lines, is seen as a normal step for migrants who are well integrated, engaged and

⁴² *Fondo Artistico Italiano* (Italian Artistic Fund)

devoted to a communal wellbeing. For instance, Respondent 3 mentioned the case of some Ukrainian women he knew, who were mostly working as carers for Bolognese families. At first they used to meet below the Two Towers to speak their own language and exchange goods and news on their own country and/or on their loved ones back in Ukraine. But as soon as they became familiar with and settled in the city, they constituted an association and asked for a meeting space at the Centro Zonarelli⁴³. This was, in the respondent's narrative, a turning point in the migrants' relation with the city: from passive users they had become active interlocutors with the native community and the institutions. After this transition, they had started organising cultural activities as, in the case of the Ukrainian women's association, a choir and a workshop of traditional Easter eggs decoration; not only showing and sharing their culture with the receiving society, but also stating its importance. This is reflected in the idea that a foreigner is accepted only when 'they recognise you the right to a space' [Respondent 3 BO/institutions].

However, contribution does not only apply to the field of ideas and culture, but also to the local economy. The same respondent as above also stated:

'Well, it's obvious that immigration is a resource, judging from facts. You just need to look at...they contribute to 10% of the GDP...'

Even if he refers to national data (Natoli 2016), the idea he supports comes out as quite clear: foreigners constitute a valuable and indisputable contribution in terms of workforce. This narrative, which remains almost implicit, nonetheless permeates my participants' accounts. Despite the institutional narrative of receptiveness and inclusion of foreigners in the socio-political realm, what emerges from these accounts is an

⁴³ The *Centro Interculturale Zonarelli* is defined by the City council's website as 'a point of reference for the city and foreigners, associations, for intercultural dialogue and valuing the city' (Comune di Bologna 2017).

attitude that conceives migrants in economic terms, that is, in relation to their productivity for the local economy. Unfortunately, this does not always go at the same pace as their possibility to enjoy rights. By means of example, Respondent 6[BO/institutions] emphasised the nodal position of second-generation migrants' in the Bolognese job market. She points out how the small-medium enterprises typical of the local economy managed to navigate through the recent economic crisis only thanks to exports and creating commercial links with foreign countries. Due both to the geographical proximity, economic convenience and, sometimes, language similarity (as in the case of Romania), at the time of the interview the countries involved in this process had been Eastern European ones, but the respondent pointed out how beneficial new links with North African states could be. She presented the high number of second generation teenagers studying in the commercial and/or touristic sector as an asset for Italian enterprises, not only because they could speak both the language of the country of residence and of origin but also because, due to their story and identity, they embody the encounter of these two cultures. One caveat I feel important to point out is that this statement reflects a potential, rather than the situation as it is, reminding me of Taylor's (2012) description of the features of multiculturalism and interculturalism not as they actually work but as they ought to.

There are, however, voices opposing to this view and suggesting, as in the case of Respondent 1[BO/institutions], that what happens is an 'exploitation' of foreigners by the local government rather than a voluntary 'contribution' on the side of the foreigners. With a powerful sentence, she claims that 'for better or worse, the foreigner is something to be exploited'. As an example she mentioned the call for projects 'MigrArti', funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and aimed to fund artistic projects on integration and cultural pluralism, she reports that many cultural

associations managed by migrants themselves do not even have access to these calls because not only do they not know how to apply for them, but they are also oblivious to their existence. As an effect, only associations of Italians working with migrants take part in them, taking away the agency from migrants themselves while portraying their culture as stereotyped. She explains:

‘Very often [...] the foreigner is told, is narrated, is discussed, but just very seldom finds a space where...where he can narrate himself.’

This perspective was deeply felt and shared by the majority of the foreigners I interviewed too. However, Respondent 6 was one of the few voices belonging to local institutions to present a more nuanced and critical account of ‘the integrated migrant’ (see Scuzzarello 2015) and their contribution to the city. As in the case of Brighton, within this group of interviewees there was a general agreement not only on the narrative of Bologna as a city that owes its receptiveness to its diversity but also on the idea of the ‘integrated migrant’. The participants who reported this image with a more sceptical approach were, again, as in the case of Brighton, individuals who had personal connections with foreigners and/or were working or volunteering with them.

6.3.2 The other side of the coin: a ‘divided city’

During her interview, Respondent 1[BO/institutions] defined Bologna as a ‘divided city’, sketching out a separation between natives and foreigners. She also saw the native community as divided between a part ‘which would absolutely love to detach itself from the present, to go back to a situation preceding immigration’ and another which is, instead, very friendly. However, what she considered to be the major obstacle to a fruitful reception and integration is the extremely mutable and fluctuating character of the Italian integration policies and pathways. The national context, lacking a clear set of

policies and projects from above, ‘jeopardises integration and reception and makes them just a personal fact’ [Respondent 1 BO/institutions]. The establishment of a more or less efficient integration program is left to local authorities and other individuals in power in the various types of local institutions. As an example, the interviewee mentioned headmasters of local schools, who have to find a compromise between their will to design inclusive programs and the available funding. On these premises, the onus of integration lies on the possibilities, skills and motivation of the migrants themselves.

Regardless of whether they adhered or not to the institutional place-narrative (Stokowski 2002), the vast majority of my interviewees mentioned economic inequality as the biggest friction towards the peaceful coexistence of several ethnic groups. The main issues are more common to low-income situations than to alleged ‘migrants’ needs’, as housing, access to the job market, navigation of the bureaucracy related to benefits and funding and low chances to move upwards professionally. Respondent 7, a local Councillor, explains the situation stating that

‘In this moment of general economic difficulty, not just of Italy, but of the entire world, err, the first ones to suffer from this because they don’t have enough family networks are immigrants. So an immigrant who loses his job immediately enters a difficult situation. And this then triggers an all series of stomach aches [smiles – means resentments], of difficulties from the Italians in accepting that there is all this mix [of ethnicities in the city].’

Arguing that these are the same obstacles that internal migrants from the south of Italy faced in the 1960s and ‘70s, he specified what the only difference with today is:

‘What has changed is that back in those years there was the chance to work and so a chance of redemption even for those coming from the South of Italy.’

To sum up what has been outlined in this section, the sense of place presented in this case study is descriptive of a city of rights and education, that has been inclusive since its early days because of both the adherence to an ideal of social justice and equality and

the constant contact with foreign students to which locals have been exposed; that has normalised the coexistence of people of different ethnic origins (Wessendorf 2011, 2013). Many of my respondents have actually pointed out that one of the peculiarities of Bologna has been the acknowledgement of the status of need to anyone fleeing persecutions or extreme social conditions – as in the Ex-Telecom case mentioned in the chapter's introduction.

Despite the enthusiastic declarations narrating Bologna as receptive, when reading between the lines of the responses I found a constant reference to the idea of 'hosting' and 'adoption'. This image is also echoed in the words of a case worker with asylum seekers who, describing how migrants experience the city, said

'I see that my guys, my girls, go to...go around Bologna for real, they don't go just to the places where their communities meet, they go to the pizzeria where I go too to get a slice of pizza for lunch. So, there is actually a...Bologna is a mother. It's actually a maternal city, I don't know how to say that. It gives actually a welcoming feeling. It might be because it's small, so you know more or less everyone, it's easy to go around the center, the neighbourhoods...' [Respondent 18 BO/institutions]

This temporary dimension of the reception stands out as opposed to the idea of open-armed city portrayed by the institutions – actually, it appears as quite exclusionary. A more realistic perspective is the one provided by Respondent 3[BO/institutions] when describing how the natives perceive him, who was not born in Bologna but has been living there for decades. He expressed this with the following words:

'I chose Bologna as a city where to live, I got married, it's a city that I love and I adore. And this is the symptom of how, if you open up, this city adopts you. [...] It never considers you as a Bolognese, not even after 50 years, but...'

At this point, there is one thing that remains necessary to analyse, meaning the peculiar dichotomy between the narratives on the city and its autochthonous population.

6.3.3 The other side of the coin – who is the real autochthonous?

In February 2016 I attended a meeting organised by the electoral roll *Coalizione Civica*⁴⁴ on the topic ‘The neglected city’. Its focus was the urban *degrado* and the Santo Stefano neighbourhood management. The meeting followed what in the Italian political language is called ‘*approccio partecipativo*’ and is commonly translated with ‘participatory approach’; according to which representatives of the local government and residents can design new local policies together and/or discuss the issues to tackle in the neighbourhood. During the open debate at the end of the meeting a student – who presented himself as originally from Calabria, in the South of Italy – member of the social centre *Labàs*⁴⁵ took the floor to illustrate the work his union was doing in the area and the fruitful relations it had developed with local dwellers. Following a line of reasoning that recalled Putnam’s work (1993, 2000), the young man praised the local tradition of civic and social engagement, which had inspired and encouraged many incomers too. Respondent 3[BO/institutions] himself had quoted Putnam and its definition of social capital (2000) when describing the city, arguing that in Bologna and in the all Emilia-Romagna region social networks, reciprocity, trust and cooperation are high. As a proof, he mentioned the strength of the cooperative movement in this territory (see Menzani 2007).

After the students’ speech, an elderly man intervened. His main argument was neither supportive of nor against the union, rather he argued that that only autochthonous had the right to take part in the neighbourhood management by virtue of their *Bolognesità*; or ‘Bolognese identity’. This exclusionary vision sharply contrasts with the notion of openness and sociability deemed to characterise Bologna, opposing

⁴⁴ Civic Coalition.

⁴⁵ *Labàs* is a political union that on the 13th November 2012 occupied the ex-army barrack *Masini* in via Orfeo 46.

autochthonous to outsiders. The picture constructed on the basis of the interviews is quite peculiar: the inclusive, open, welcoming and sympathetic city narrated by the local authorities is opposed, but inextricably connected to the inward-facing local community. Scandurra (2015), writing on Bologna and on the Bolognina area in particular, captures this complexity by defining the place as having ‘multiple citizenships’.

This dynamic is different from what was discussed about Brighton because in the case I’m exploring I could identify a sense of pride in the words of the Bolognese that I could not experience in Brighton; a special characteristic constituted by and constitutive of a specific social and cultural capital to which outsiders do not have access, regardless of the amount of years they have lived in the city for; as Respondent 3 argued in his quote in the previous section. In Brighton none of my interviewees ever mentioned a ‘Brightonianness’. Actually, they either described Brightonians as residents conforming to the town’s reputation and to a certain style or indicated the marginalised community of the autochthonous white lower educated working-class; as explored in Chapter 4. Despite acknowledging their local descent, my interviewees tended not to recognise the latter as ‘true’ Brightonians; perhaps because they are disconnected from the mainstream image of both the city and its dwellers.

My interpretation of their words is that Brightonianness and Bolognesità work in two sensibly different ways: in the British case the class divide is a basic trait – as if all the locals worth ‘special attention’ belonged to the working class (see Lawler 2012 and Rhodes 2012), while in the Italian case this divide is obscured by birth and descent. The ‘true’ Bolognese, the ones who can boast Bolognesità, belong to families whose roots can be traced back to the local area, regardless of their wealth. Both well-off families and families of factory workers and artisans can legitimately boast Bolognesità, even

though this crucial exclusionary concept was hardly defined by my participants. Besides belonging to a family line that can claim to have been in the Bolognese territory long enough to be considered Bolognese for real – this means more than 2 or 3 generations, or the point where first-hand memories are lost – neither in my interviews nor in the man's speech at 'The neglected city' meeting was Bolognesità actually unpacked. The class divide is, if not invisible, definitely marginal and I suggest this happens because of the higher importance class has in the British context and discourse (see Lawler 2012 and Rhodes 2012) than in the Italian one.

Autochthonous people are described by the vast majority of my interviewees – both belonging to the institutional and the grassroots sample – not only as unwilling to mingle with non-Bolognese but also as quite discriminatory against them, as already pointed out in the case of Southern Italians moving to Bologna in the 1960s. However, they are simultaneously described as very keen on engaging socially, volunteering and associating (Putnam 1993, Pratt 2002). On these premises, this definition of the autochthonous is useful to unpack their framing of reception as warm but temporary and limited to certain groups; 'fitting in' the local context better. In addition, social capital displays in two different ways: on the one hand there are tight bonds among autochthonous (Wimmer 2008) that exclude outsiders, while on the other hand the local social capital emerges as what has fostered that creation of associations characterising this territory. As Koopmans and Olzak (2004) point out, the public discourse has an influence on the collective identities considered legitimate in a place. As Scuzzarello concludes in her research (2015), the pivotal role of the associative forms in Bologna, together with a public discourse that celebrates them, impacts on incomers too, indicating a 'proper' way to participate to the social, cultural and political life of the city and, therefore, be 'integrated' – even if never actual natives.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of Bologna's demographics with a focus on ethnic diversity (Berg & Sigona 2013). As Respondent 6[BO/institutions] pointed out, in Bologna coexist individuals of circa 140 nationalities. However, as was the case for Brighton too, the percentage of this 'superdiverse' (Vertovec 2007, Wessendorf 2011) part of the population is quite limited; corresponding to 15.24% (Comune di Bologna 2016). After noticing that in Bologna – in contrast to what happens in Brighton – ethnicity is not registered in official statistics while attention is given to the foreigners' nationality, I suggested that this is due to the countries' different approaches to immigration and integration. While British multiculturalism and Race Relation policies classify people belonging to an ethnicity other than White British as 'minorities', the Italian term 'foreigner' indicates a marginal identity that has to adapt to the nationally dominant one. It is on this identity that the burden of integration is put, in a one-way process that risks resulting in assimilation (Caneva 2014).

In Section 6.1.2 I deepened my analysis of the elements of demographic diversity, namely the association of the Bolognina area with a 'multicultural' character. My discussion critically approached this portrait of the area, not to question the high presence of foreigners in it but rather to enquire on the issues this presence is associated with – drug dealing, lack of safety, *degrado*. As some respondents who either live or work at the Bolognina pointed out, this narrative does not truthfully reflect the local situation. This charges the area with derogatory characteristics while not paying equal attention to the centre, for instance, where the same issues are noticeably higher. During this round of interviews, more people than in Brighton were critical of the institutional narratives on Bolognina. Through their criticism, they dissociated themselves from that

narrative. *Degrado* and lack of safety in the city are actually highly problematised by the local government, especially in moments of political relevance. During the 2016 electoral campaign, taking place at the same time as my fieldwork, both the Police and the army used to patrol the Bolognina; sometimes generating hilarity in its residents. Even though I acknowledge that my interviewees had a personal view on Bologna's sense of place and that the responses of this group did not have to be homogeneous, the dissonant voices surprised me more than in Brighton because the vast majority of the people I interviewed belonged to the same political party.

After this analysis, I moved onto examining the concept of diversity as a narrative (Berg & Sigona 2013) in Section 6.2. Bologna is described as a city of culture and a city of rights. As a city of culture, where the oldest university in Europe was established in 1088, it has a long history of receiving students from all over the world. The pride with which my interviewees mentioned the prestige of the University did not, however, go hand in hand with the attitude with which locals receive the students. According to the words of Respondent 3[BO/foreigners], students 'force [the city] not to be close-minded'. This sentence is particularly powerful because it grasps the ambivalent relationship locals have with the University and its students: while the former is a matter of pride for the city, the latter are received and tolerated by virtue of their transitory presence. In addition, this emphasis on culture (both high culture and the alternative culture of the local social centres) has achieved a symbolic status for the city (Hadj-Abdou 2014) and, as a consequence, has the potential to attract new students and young creative professional every year (see Stokowski 2002).

Bologna is also narrated as a city of rights, its reputation dating back to the Middle Ages, when it was the first Council to liberate slaves. But it was from the Second World War that the town gained its nickname of 'Red City', first thanks to the

Partisans' Resistance against the Nazi-fascist regime and then because of the series of left-wing administrations ruling the city and being 'deeply rooted in the territory, in the population' [Respondent 5 BO/institutions]. According to the majority of my interviewees, this receiving attitude and solidarity for whoever flees from an authoritarian regime is still visible in the 'brave choices' that the local government has made in the sector of asylum seekers reception, regularly participating in the national plan for asylum seekers and refugees reception (SPRAR⁴⁶) and accepting, even in difficult circumstances, to receive more incomers than established by law [Respondent 12 BO/institutions]. Receiving more funds than other cities for asylum seekers reception and intercultural events/projects can be regarded as another 'desired end' (Stokowski 2002) of this specific narrative.

In the final Section I have then discussed local collective identities considered 'legitimate' as an effect of the local public discourse, questioning the truthfulness of the sentence 'Bologna has always been ready to welcome everyone' [Respondent 12 BO/institutions]. It expresses the core of the sense of place as fostered by the majority of the local institutions. Besides referring to students and political refugees as categories 'fitting in' the city, 'integrated' foreigners are framed as active and engaged in the local social and civic life. Using several anecdotes, the majority of my interviewees described a settled and integrated migrant as someone who takes part in volunteering for the benefit of the local community.

By means of conclusion, the gap between the way the city is narrated and the reputation it achieved historically and its current strengths is crucial. The idea of social justice as a legacy of the liberation fights and the left-wing administrations permeates

⁴⁶ The *Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) is the main program for reception and integration of asylum seekers in Italy, managed by local authorities.

the narratives of the local authorities. However, it clashes in a curious way with the emphasis certain politicians and policy-makers put on the city's scalar position (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009, 2011); based on economic competitiveness. Even if the dominant narrative is the one of a welcoming city, I find it essential to understand who is actually welcome. In order to understand better the ambivalent position in which foreigners are put, I refer to the relevance of their presence when representatives of the local government boast Bologna's economic competitiveness. Although this narrative remained implicit in the interviews, foreigners were praised for their contribution to the GDP and taxes, in a framework that depicts them in increasingly economic and rational terms. This is not only important *per se*, but also because it clashes with the discourses of inclusion and social justice the city uses. Being exposed to those narratives while being *de facto* classified as external economic resources negatively impacts on the foreigners' perception of the Council's aims and will to treat them as fully part of the citizenry.

A critical difference lies in the status of the foreigners coming to the city and in the length of their stay. As quite a few Councillors proudly recall, new high-speed train routes and the airport have made Bologna even more of a hub than before and increased its competitiveness with respect to tourism. When the New York Times' video '36 Hours in Bologna' was posted, Emilia Romagna's Councillor for Tourism Corsini praised the city's hard work on attracting new tourists by developing attractions and enhancing promotion and links with international press (Bianchi 2015). But tourists, as students, usually stay only for a limited amount of time. This leads back to the peculiar attitude the city has towards newcomers: it hosts newcomers, 'adopts' them but never completely considers them as locals. They never achieve the exclusionary trait of

Bolognesità, which appears to apply exclusively to residents whose family have been Bolognese for as far back as memory goes.

Connected to this, common feelings I have picked up during my ethnography (overhearing conversations, witnessing people's behaviour or reading local newspapers' headlines) are tiredness and mistrust towards foreigners. I argue that the current precarious economic situation exacerbates local tensions revolving around resources; although there is not enough evidence to frame them as 'ethnic tensions'. In Bologna is it possible to witness a certain tiredness that Respondent 12[BO/institutions] described in the following way:

'Well, in comparison to these realities [small towns new to migrant reception], it's possible to see that Bologna is paying off because of its being a bit old.'

Pulling the strings of this analysis on Bologna's institutional narratives, I argue that the city is going through a process of deep reframing in which the old-established narratives of openness and social justice are now more functional to economic competitiveness 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002) and to the attraction of tourists than to the inclusion of new citizens. This risks that the grounds and meanings of the original city-narratives sink into oblivion.

CHAPTER 7

‘I immediately felt it was my city’: migrants’ narratives on Bologna’s sense of place and social inclusion

When questioning representatives of local institutions in Brighton and Bologna, the celebration of the city’s openness and inner multiplicity of culture came as expected. After all, one would logically assume that the individuals in charge of representing the town have all the interest in fostering an image of an open-armed place, which could be beneficial to attract tourists, national funding and foreign investments (Landry 2012). However, I also identified critical and dissonant voices within the same groups of respondents, but they remained marginal and restricted to the few Councillors and/or civil servants that had either a migrant background or working in close contact with BMEs and foreigners; as pointed out in Chapters 4 and 6.

The representatives of the local institutions promoted a well-defined narrative of the city, from which a sense of diverse, but also of open and receptive place, comes out. Differently, the respondents who were members of BMEs’/foreigners’ associations appeared more focused on social inclusion and exclusion and on their ‘sense of belonging’ to the city (Fenster 2005, Mills 2006, Mee & Wright 2009). They mainly derived their belonging from informal day-to-day practices (Alexander 2008) and feelings of being ‘at home’ (Yuval-Davis 2010) and ‘safe’ (Ignatieff 2001, cited in Yuval-Davis 2010:197). In connection to these topics, I discuss discrimination and racism as experienced by foreigners, even if in most of the cases it is the respondent herself who ignore explicit references to and/or deny them (see Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015).

The perception of the city's sense of place among Bologna's foreign residents constitutes the core of this chapter. In order to explore it and to remain coherent to my comparative research design, I respond to the following set of questions:

- *How are grassroots narratives of receptiveness constructed in Bologna?*
- *How do foreigners see themselves as 'fitting in', particularly in relation to their treatment by native residents?*
- *What is the perception of the members of foreigners' associations on their chances to participate in local politics and interact with local authorities?*

In Section 7.1 and 7.2, I analyse the foreigners' perceptions of the institutional narratives on the city. In this part of my analysis I draw on Massey's work on the search for the real meaning of space and place (1994), in conjuncture with Yuval-Davis's (2010) analytical framing of belonging. Feelings of belonging are indeed dependant on many variables, among which the perceived safety and the very own identity of the place inhabited (Taylor 1995, 1996, Garland 1996, Holloway & Jefferson 1997, Brown 1998, Alexander 2008). After exploring their take on the institutional place-narratives (Stokowski 2002) and the factors contributing to achieve a defined sense of place (Campelo *et al.* 2014), I set out their perception of a city 'forced to be open' [Respondent 3 BO/foreigners] because of its history but currently torn between keeping that facade and an increasing abandon and neglect of the inclusive welfare that has characterised it in the past. Crucial for this part of the analysis is the dichotomy the respondents reported between the local authorities' interest in keeping an image of openness and the civil servants' actual will and availability to relate to migrants.

As it already partially came up during the interviews to local authorities, exploring the emerging narrative of change is pivotal to understand how the city of Bologna and its community of residents are narrated. In his article 'The Good City'

(2006), Amin questions if ‘the contemporary city can still qualify as the *topos* of the good life’ in connection to community and well-being. This is the same question that I refer to when problematising the difference between the current Bologna and its idyllic image from the past. In addition, Landry’s concept of intercultural city branding (2012) is useful to examine the reasons behind the framing of certain cities as intercultural hotspots.

In Section 7.3, I report the participants’ views on local policies and services based on their own experiences. They expose the perceived cliquey ways in which the access to services and funding is currently managed and denounce the lack of autonomy given to migrants’ associations. My approach ties foreigners’ political and cultural activism – which, in the context of Bologna, makes them ‘integrated migrants’ (Scuzzarello 2015) – to ‘practices of belonging’ (Fenster 2005) and their will to display their culture and identity in the public space (Cancellieri & Ostanel 2015). These practices are aimed at achieving an acknowledgment not only of the foreigners’ presence and coexistence alongside Italians, but also to reassert their belonging and contribution to the urban life.

In Section 7.4, I then focus on the type and quality of social interaction between foreigners and natives, including reference to institutional and everyday-level racism. Interesting features emerged from this part of the interviews are the strategies to reassert someone’s own position in the receiving society and the adhesion to its norms (Smith 1989) through rhetorical devices (Firth 1956, Smith 1989, Lamont, Morning & Mooney 2002). They include denial of discrimination (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015) and other tactics to cope with stigmatised identities (Moroşanu & Fox 2013). More in detail, I unpack a contradiction already identified in Brighton: foreigners protested against the misrepresentation of them conveyed by the media when associating them to

urban *degrado*. They hinted to episodes when they had been addressed racist comments and/or had been discriminated, although they tend not to label them as racism; reaching the point of dismissing the legitimacy of other foreigners who do that.

7.1 ‘Feeling at home’: belonging and diversity in Bologna

As reported for the first case study, in Bologna the members of foreigners’ associations interviewed equally did not linger on demographic data, while instead concentrating on their emotional attachment to the city and their active social and political involvement in it. Much has been said in the literature about how the ‘sense of belonging’ to a place (Fenster 2005, Mills 2006) is connected to the way certain groups of people experience inclusion/exclusion and to whether or not they perceive to be safe in a specific environment (Alexander 2008). In this chapter I argue that the process of developing a feeling of ‘at-homeness’ (Alexander 2008:189) is constructed and shaped by foreigners on the basis of how safe and accepted they feel in Bologna, but also on the degree of public expression of their cultural tradition they can enjoy.

The respondents’ statements describe their perception of Bologna as ‘home’ using a language of possession and acceptance. For instance, Respondent 12[BO/foreigners], a man from Pakistani origin member of a union, stated: ‘I have been here for 11 years already, since the first day. And now I feel as if this was my city’, while Respondent 4[BO/foreigners], originally from Cameroon, told me:

‘In Bologna I immediately felt in my city. I have never felt a foreigner [here].’

In addition, the respondents’ sense of belonging came out as a result of the familiarity with and understanding of local dynamics, history and politics. I deliberately interviewed people who had been living in the city for at least a decade, even if actually over a half of them had been there for over thirty years at the time of the interview.

Most of them claimed – more or less explicitly – to be well acquainted with local politics and politicians by reporting and analysing happenings from decades before but that, in their opinion, changed the ‘real’ Bologna. Sentences as ‘I’ve seen the best of Bologna’ [Respondent 4 BO/foreigners] or ‘Bologna was beautiful back then’ [Respondent 13 BO/foreigners] were frequent during the fieldwork, as common were also references to their own involvement in social and political activities; such as participation at demonstrations and/or at events fostering the local cultural diversity or enrolment in local unions. I situate this narrative at the intersection between the description of their ‘sense of belonging’ (Mee & Wright 2009:772) and a compliance with the local narrative of the ‘integrated migrant’ (Scuzzarello 2015). Indeed, if this group of participants described to me how they felt at home in Bologna, this sense of home is often articulated through their accounts of participation in local social and political activities, considered by Scuzzarello (2015) a determinant of successful integration.

As mentioned in the opening of this section, demographics came rarely into the picture and only when the participants enumerated the different migrant communities living locally, to support the idea that Bologna is a diverse town – even if some respondents criticised the concept of community *per se*. For instance, Respondent 3[BO/foreigners] argued that

‘Communities do not exist anymore as they used to exist a long time ago. For example, Italians in America used to build up their communities [...] Even here, speaking of nationalities, if we think about Bangladeshi or Chinese we say that they are a community, but it’s not true – they are a group of people.’

Through the acknowledgement that many different ethnic groups coexist in the same urban space, there was a general agreement among my respondents on the idea of Bologna as a diverse city. Here diversity is both a social fact and a narrative (Berg &

Sigona 2013), the two faces of the concept being highly entangled. According to my participants, originally this diversity was positively evaluated by the local administration, considered as an asset and taken care of through an inclusive welfare system. This, together with the political legacy of the Partisan fights and the Italian Left, contributed to form a space where foreigners were not only accepted but also integrated in the local society. However, the turning point in this perhaps now too idealised past started with the Guazzaloca administration (1999-2004) to then change irreversibly during Cofferati's (2004-2009) local government. Respondent 4[BO/foreigners], who moved to Bologna at the beginning of the 1990s, describes this turn with the following words:

'Once [...] this [diversity] was an asset of Bologna. Err, there was an all first period of time where Bologna was open and many people from other cities, or even people coming from other countries, when they chose Italy, they tended to choose Bologna. Understand? Then we got to a point in which this diversity, which was an asset, became a burden. It became a burden. Because of...with turnovers in the administration. I start, like, from Vitali's administration. Vitali's administration used to interpret this city as welcoming. When the Guazzaloca's administration came... [...] Even though he was right-wing, Guazzaloca was one of Bologna. He knew how Bologna was and he used to do things adapting to this openness of Bologna. The one who created a clear cut was Cofferati. Amazingly enough, Cofferati was left-wing but he had the idea of acting as a sheriff. Not being from Bologna, Cofferati...being someone [who had] come here to – in my opinion he went through that in order to build up a political career, because he just set up restrictions. He was also the only one who had the nerve to touch some of the left-wing policies that nobody could touch because it was a taboo, it was the city of Bologna!'

Diversity and sense of place (Massey 1994, Sparks *et al.* 2001) emerge from his dense quote as strongly connected and interdependent. The Bologna from the past emerges then as the one 'open for real', 'truly left-wing' and capable of valuing diversity.

However, Respondent 3's [BO/foreigners] account is also crucial to grasp the peculiar connotation of left- and right-wing attributed to policies in this specific context. Although susceptible to changes put in place by the political administration, the policies' efficiency is framed as not dependant on the ruling party's political alliance

but rather in their suitability to the city's sense of place or, in other words, to how the city and its issues are narrated (Johnstone 1990). The account of Guazzaloca adapting to Bologna's openness rather than following right-wing paradigms in setting up policies is quite explanatory of the way my respondents framed their image of the city and of the pervasive strength they assign to the identity of the place (Taylor 1995, 1996, Garland 1996, Holloway & Jefferson 1997, Brown 1998, Massey 1994, Campelo *et al.* 2014). The same interviewee then continued by giving me some examples to support his statement:

'He [Cofferati] removed the benches, understand? The public fountains. So, a welcoming city...Cofferati used bulldozers to kick the gypsies away. On the *lungo Reno*⁴⁷. A right-wing administration wouldn't have ever had the nerve. Understand? Because you generally think that right-wing people do this. But, amazingly enough, Guazzaloca wouldn't do anything. He used to look at the problem, to come closer and see what he could do.'

This account challenges and reduces the importance of the conventional ideas of left and right-wing and of the way a politician from either the one or the other front is supposed to act. In this particular case, the influence of the surrounding environment is so strong to overcome the political legacy. Bologna's nature comes across as so tied to left-wing welfare policies and to ideals of opposition to authoritarian regimes that, in such a place, even a declared centre-right administration does not behave like expected but rather shifts to the left. On the contrary, a declared left-wing administration can break with a decade-long tradition of inclusiveness and welfare if lead by an individual that is not 'from there' (see Però 2007 and Scandurra 2015).

But from the quote a few lines above is also possible to grasp how a certain degree of deviance in the public space was tolerated: benches and fountains were considered helpful not only for resident's recreation but also for relieving homeless and

⁴⁷ The *lungo Reno* is literally the bank of the river Reno, which passes through Bologna.

poor people. According to my interviewees' accounts, this does not mean that marginality was passively accepted or welcome, but that authorities used to have a dialogue with the social services' clients that has now left space to hostility. The aforementioned values and approaches are complemented by certain ways of experiencing the urban space, as hanging out in outdoor public spaces but also enjoying events with an anti-prohibitionist inspiration, such as the (now abolished) Street Parade.

At a first impact, this categorisation of who is 'from Bologna' and who is not can appear as connected to someone's place of birth but, at a deeper analysis, the symbolic boundary grasped here is about more than that. Symbolic boundaries, categorising "objects, people, practices and even time and space" (Lamont & Molnar 2004), separate people into groups, generating in this way a perception of either familiarity or extraneousness. In this specific context, the conceptual distinction between who is 'from Bologna', so belongs to it, and who is not actually regards the adhesion to certain values and behaviours considered constitutive of the true meaning of the place (Massey 1994). According to my participants, they are first of all political values typical of the left-wing tradition derived from the city's history, above all anti-fascism. Secondly, and connected to what just stated, there is an expectation of an inclusive welfare that supports the working classes and a positive evaluation of diversity (here framed as ethnic), as the one celebrated in the tales of the Bologna from the past.

7.2 University, culture and politics: exploring the elements of Bologna's sense of place

The accounts of my foreign participants developed from the assumption that Bologna is a city diverse both because of its demographics – to which, however, they did not pay that much attention when answering – and because diversity has now achieved the role

of city symbol (Hadj-Abdou 2014). All my respondent were well aware of the reputation of Bologna as a welcoming city, a couple of them being familiar with it even before migrating. Respondent 2[BO/foreigners], originally from Sudan, explained to me that

‘[it was] a famous city. I mean...I come from the Horn of Africa, you know. And there I used to hear the stories about Bologna, [and] about the Italian Left too.’

He recalled that, hearing accounts on Bologna before migrating, he had pictured it as similar to his hometown because of the widely supported left-wing government and the strong presence of workers’ unions. Already from this hints it is then possible to gauge the tight association between Bologna’s identity and the leading role on the left of the political spectrum. He never criticised the truthfulness of this narrative of the city as diverse, open and receptive, while instead complaining of the scarce consideration in which foreigners’ associations are taken by the local administration. His account is just an example of a trend common to this all group of interviewees: despite hinting to mistreatment by the local administration and/or discriminatory behaviours from the natives, they do not openly frame it as discrimination (see Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015) and, even more crucial, they never fully reject the narrative of Bologna as hospitable.

Alexander (2008:187), following from Shirlow and Pain (2003), points out that ‘places are a unique blend of historical, social and economic circumstances’. In line with this statement, when asked on the origins of Bologna’s sense of place as is narrated today, the shaping factors that came out were three: the centuries-long presence of students, the decade-long leading role of the left-wing and the alternative culture of anti-prohibitionism connected to social centres. Curiously, these elements are not used to justify an uncontested openness to ethnic diversity, as it happened for the

representatives of the local authorities. Rather, my interviewees took them as the symbol of the inner contrast and change the town is facing: keeping up with the idealised image of the inclusive Bologna from the past and, at the same time, facing a growing hostility towards diversity.

7.2.1 ‘Students force you not to be close-minded’: the role of culture in its many forms

‘There are more than 100.000, 100.000 students every year and they force you not to be close-minded.’

With these words, Respondent 3[BO/foreigners] describes not only Bologna’s diversity, but also its receiving attitude; which has developed through the centuries starting from the foundation of the University. However, at a deeper analysis the city’s open-armed attitude does not seem as genuine as emerging from the accounts of the representatives of local institutions. The word ‘force’ conveys indeed an idea of induced action rather than free will. This perception is then further supported by Respondents 8 and 9[BO/foreigners], a young couple of Peruvian origin. The female participant argued:

‘To tell you truth, in my opinion Bologna is open because, due to [its] history, it has always been made of different people, coming from...Meaning, since the University, the University foundation, Bologna has always attracted foreigners. Willing or not.’

In contrast with the first group of respondents, who praised the prestigious role of the University as main, if not unique, source of culture, the foreigners stressed the relevance of a wider notion of this term; combining the institution of the University with the diffusion of art and the alternative culture typically taking place in social centres. But what is crucial is the way culture is framed, as Respondent 3[BO/foreigners], states:

‘There is respect for the culture, so there is music, art, cultural heritage, this is felt very deeply in Bologna and this, in my opinion, opens up. Even because if one is

interested in culture it doesn't have to be Italian culture. Culture tends to make things mixed⁴⁸.'

Not only, according to the vast majority of this group of respondents, culture has the potential to open up a place and its inhabitants to the world but it can also connect people through a dialogue. As already analysed in Chapter 6, it is exactly the importance of cultural dialogue (Meer & Modood 2012) the reason why interculturalism, instead of multiculturalism, is the concept used by Bologna's local government and third sector when describing the policies for social inclusion.

As anticipated above, culture is not exclusively associated with higher education and the University – as it was the case for the answers of the representatives of local institutions reported in Chapter 6. The respondents belonging to foreigners' association framed culture as grassroots culture too and connected it to the activities of the many social centres present in town. I suggest this view is due to their personal experiences: while only some of them came in contact with social centres during the initial phase of their stay in Italy⁴⁹, they all are part of socio-cultural association and therefore, in contrast with the first group of respondents, they are directly involved in the grassroots social activities.

References to both the alternative cultural scene of the city and to the bureaucratic process to organise cultural events were focal points of my respondents' accounts on the culture topic. As I report more in detail in Section 7.3, the main contentious point was the perceived unequal treatment between foreigners and Italians in relation to the organisation of cultural events, such as festivals and/or exhibitions. A female respondent in particular was very vocal on the matter, accounting for the

⁴⁸ In the interview he used the Italian word *meticcio*, literally translatable as mixed-race and normally attributed more to a person than to a concept.

⁴⁹ In Bologna, as in every city in Italy, a consistent part of the reception and integration process of migrants and asylum seekers is left to the voluntary sector, as associations and social centres.

difficulties in navigating the bureaucratic procedures and calls to achieve authorisations and funding. Moreover, she complained about the difficulty in organising an event, not only because of the restrictions on time and locations but also because of unwritten rules and dynamics that allegedly favour either Italian associations or association for migrants managed by Italians, relegating the foreigners' associations to a second-class position (Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999:54).

Locating this statement in a historical perspective, it can be easily connected to the institutional narrative of change examined in Chapter 6, according to which Bologna's population changes continuously and the natives' attitude towards foreigners is transforming from welcoming to gradually more and more aggressive. But it could also be linked to the foreigners' own narrative of change, comparing the present with a past when the cultural life of the city was more alive and various, but also more free from regulations. In their accounts', this impacted positively on people's possibility to socialise, to come across demographic diversity and establish new relationships. In this narrative, culture and politics are closely interwoven. The respondent mentioned above located this period in which it was possible to enjoy both the high-brown and grassroots cultural offer of the town to the local administration of Mayor Vitali. Before the already mentioned turn in the city's management started with Guazzaloca and ended with Cofferati, Bologna was not only administered by a left-wing local government, but also the citizenry had the chance to enjoy a more vibrant social and cultural scene. On the contrary, she identified a worrying change in the recent proliferation of civic decrees regulating bars' opening times and music but also the possibility to hang out in public places like squares.

7.2.2 ‘The idea of an equal society’: Bologna’s political legacy

The political legacy of the Partisans’ liberation fight against the Nazi-fascist regime during the Second World War and the decades of left-wing local administrations interrupted only in 1999 are the factors that contribute in the highest part to the construction of Bologna’s sense of place (Campelo *et al.* 2014). Despite the relative validity of left- and right-wing in this specific context analysed in the Section 7.1, the ideals and policies characteristic of a left-wing local government have impacted on the way both residents and not looked at the city, on the policies and services they enjoyed but also on the way they expected to be treated regardless of their origin. Narratives not only reproduce certain ideas and framings of a place, but also of its community, its issues and the measures needed to tackle them (see Johnstone 1990). A place is a space with a particular history, arising emotional identifications and associated with particular groups and activities. Even more than with university students then, Bologna is historically associated with Partisans and the Communist Party and, more contemporarily, with a nationally-praised welfare system.

With respect to the role of the Communist Party in the city, Respondent 3[BO/foreigners] related that it

‘[Ruled] with the idea of an equal society, a society where everyone has the same importance. Perhaps this made possible that some people understand...that they go beyond [...] They [the Partisans] transmitted a culture according to which you can’t accept any dictatorship. So, if anything happens, they open the city to any people, I think.’

In his vision, shared by many other respondents, the Resistance first instilled in the local population the firm rejection of any dictatorship and authoritarian government. In addition, the Communist Party mediated the development of an international-looking perspective through its connection with other like-oriented parties all over the world. Due to its voters’ large presence in factories, where the most committed members

would organise assemblies, the working-class was well informed on the international political situation (Piano B Group 2007) and this contributed to strengthen the idea that people suffering under any dictatorial regime around the world would be well received in Bologna and considered as companions. Echoing the words of the respondents who stressed that in the 1970s all the opposition groups to Latin American dictatorships had a nodal presence in Bologna, Respondent 3 described the city as an ‘important meeting point for immigrants’. He argued that it was exactly because of the narratives of the place that many Eritreans, Iranians and Greeks (among other nationalities) opposing their regimes had settled there during the decades.

The picture emerging from these narrative is the one of a city that has had a well-defined role in the political landscape of its own country. This has both attracted like-minded individuals and members of the same categories such as university students. Attracting more students indirectly improves the economic wealth and scale positioning of the city (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009) through the establishment of a series of businesses and services tailored on them. However, the change in the city’s management discussed above is leading towards a situation where Bologna appears to be facing the double challenge of keeping up with the image of its glorious past of social inclusion and a current increase of intolerance towards ethnic diversity and students alike.

Nowadays, it is impossible for me to understand to what extent this portrait of the truly left-wing and inclusive Bologna from the past corresponded to a reality. As a researcher, I could not help to notice that it comes across as equally nostalgic and idealised as the autochthonous’ image of an Bolognese-only homogeneous city, prior to the arrival of consistent number of migrants (Cancellieri & Ostanel 2015:505), described in Chapter 6.

7.3 ‘Foreigners are treated like children’: perceptions of local policies and services

In this section I expand on the perception of this group of respondents on the way policies for integration and social inclusion are set up and on how the relations between local institutions and foreigners’ associations are managed. Before getting to the core of the discussion, I clarify that not many of my participants expressed themselves on this matter and the few who did were the participants I was the closest to. With this statement I do not mean that they praised the Council’s conduct but rather that they actually did not bring up the topic and, even when asked, tried to divert. I suggest that, as it happened in Brighton, they were very conscious of criticising the Council’s behaviour because of their weak bargaining power and the precarious economic situation of the associations they were members of⁵⁰. In addition, in their attitude there was a component of fear of being associated with certain declarations, even though I had assured to them that the interviews would be anonymised. But the tendency from marginalised groups to deny discrimination (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015) and/or use rhetorical strategies to re-establish their position in the society (Firth 1956, Smith 1989, Lamont, Morning & Mooney 2002) and be included in the dominant group also have to be considered and examined.

7.3.1 A ‘political treatment’ of foreigners

In Section 7.2 I have discussed the factors originating Bologna’s unique sense of place, among which its political positioning had a primary role. According to my interviewees’

⁵⁰ Many among my interviewees told me that they are experiencing a high rate of funding cuts for social and cultural activities.

accounts, the shared support of the Resistance by the local citizenry and, in the following decades, the ruling of the Communist Party, have made the natives aware of the authoritarian regimes around the world and sympathetic towards who flees from them. Even though Bologna is not defined as a sanctuary city (Darling 2010, Squire 2011) by my interviewees, the political characteristics with which is narrated actually retrace the sanctuary city image.

As Johnstone (1990) argues though, not only our perception of what a place is, but also of its issues and of the most appropriate policies are rooted in narration. Consequently, as place-narratives – of which diversity as a narrative, described by Berg and Sigona (2013), is a well-fitting example – do not always reflect the substance of the place, policies can fail to target the alleged issues and needs of a place and/or mistake their relevance; ignoring other crucial matters. Considering the attention given to politics in the city, the perception of how this public discourse impacts on the social inclusion of foreigners (see Koopmans & Olzak 2004) is efficiently summarised by one of the female respondents. The quote is very explanatory of the resentment many foreigners feel for local institutions' lack of preparation and expertise – or, as implied, of willingness – in receiving foreigners' claims and/or in responding to their needs. She argued that

‘Bologna is very “political”. If you are a certain type of foreigner, of migrant, you are welcome, otherwise you are not.’

With this provocative statement she complains that a good portion of the reception and integration funding in Bologna is distributed through exceptional decrees justified by statuses of emergency – following the national trend. Therefore, she claimed that only the groups under the spotlight of media attention, like Syrians or Nigerians at the time of the interview, get easy access to reception and integration programs. The example

she used to support her argument was that individuals of other nationalities are never granted refugee status in Italy despite their circumstances meet all the requirements for it. She continued her account by explaining to me that, in the case of her country – which I do not name to protect her anonymity, the situation had reached peaks of tensions so high to justify an asylum request; even though it would have been very unlikely to receive it. The reason she attributed to it was that this story lacked of visibility in the media – unlike Syria, this influencing the public discourse on who deserves the refugee status and who does not.

What caught my attention was that my interviewees did not distinguish between programs for the first reception and the integration of asylum seekers, as the SPRAR project, and policies for social inclusion aimed to residents of foreign origin settled in Bologna. Connecting the participants' declaration to an analysis of national and local news (Centuori 2017, Giusberti 2017) but also of the Council's website (Comune di Bologna 2016, 2017), I could identify the origin of this issue in the higher visibility of funding and programs for first reception measures than of those for enhancing the social inclusion of long-established groups of foreigners.

Regarding instead a more bureaucratic aspect of the foreigners' relations with the Council, a statement by Respondent 2[BO/foreigners] described the perception of most of my foreign participants concerning their chances to set up and manage associations. He complained that

'Foreigners are very often treated as children. There are foreigners' associations, but they are managed by Italians'

This sentence follows Respondent 1's [BO/institutions] comment on foreigners being discussed and analysed but not being allowed to express themselves. However, her voice was one of the few who pointed out this contradiction within her group of

respondents and I suggest it was due to her personal more than professional experience. On the contrary, the perception of being placed in a second-class position (Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999:54) by local institutions and not to be allowed to access funding and spaces as Italians is a complaint that emerges very often from the foreigners' interviews. Using these declarations as a basis for my analysis, in the following sections I examine the perception of the treatment they receive by local authorities and its implications of their use of public spaces.

7.3.2 Use of the public space and cultural events' organisation: a right or a privilege?

In the course of the interviews, the vast majority of this group of respondents did not discuss the actual local policies for social inclusion, as much as the possibilities granted to foreigners' organisations to use the public space to organise events and activities (Amin 2008, Cancellieri & Ostanel 2015); topic towards which they would often divert their story. Notwithstanding the fact that

‘Real life stories demonstrate that different people have different experiences in the very same public spaces [depending on their] cultural diversity, social status, economic class and personal idiosyncrasies’ (Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999:53),

A central trait of these participants' accounts was a critique of the degree of possibility they had to use central public spaces. Having chosen to interview members of associations, I came in contact with people for whom having the chance of organising cultural events was pivotal. In the particular context of foreigners' associations, events are indeed a pillar activity not only to get together, but also to display the members' culture and to assert their presence in the receiving country (Cancellieri & Ostanel 2015:503). Even more, several scholars have demonstrated how migrants' presence in public spaces is ‘a struggle to redefine the conditions of belonging to “their” new

societies' (Sandercock 1998:14) and that activities such as festivals, shows or celebrations constitute everyday practices of belonging to the city where they live (Fenster 2005, cited in Mee & Wright 2009:774).

Among my participants, the respondent mentioned in the previous section was one of the most thorough in relating the frustration and resentment against what she defined as the cliquey organisation of the Council with respect to cultural activities. First and foremost, she identified the main issue migrants' associations have to face in the lack of transparent and easily accessible information about how to take part in calls for events and funding. As pointed out in the previous section, also a couple of institutional respondents supported this view, even if vicariously, accounting that many local associations of migrants were breaking apart not only because of a lack of funding but also because the information on the scarce available funding was not easily accessible.

Narrowing down the issue, the migrants I interviewed who were willing to share their thoughts on the subject were also very critical on the process according to which funding is allocated. They argued that, even when an association manages to find out the availability and application process for a certain call, the organisations awarded year after year are always the same, well-established cultural associations of Italians connected to the local government or associations for migrants managed by Italians. On the contrary, in the words of a good part of my respondents, it was very rare for associations autonomously managed by migrants to enjoy the same opportunities as the ones which are managed by nationals.

One example is the declaration of Respondent 6[BO/foreigners] on her association feeling ignored by local authorities. Showing a thorough knowledge of the city's bureaucratic procedures, she told me that her association had requested more than

once the possibility to use the interior garden of Sala Borsa – the public library, which should be open to any association. Despite the regulations though, they never got the permission; which they attributed to the preference other Italian well-connected associations are granted. The research has shown that

‘using methods ranging from explicitly racist and violent force, to subtly exclusive behaviour, the participation of certain unwanted groups in public spaces has been widely restricted’ (Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999:55).

Although explicit racism or violence do not refer to this context, it is nonetheless impossible to deny that subtle bureaucratic obstacles prevent foreigners’ associations to take advantage of certain spaces in the same way as Italians.

Drawing from Incirlioglu and Tandogan (1999), I posit this happens because of two entangled reasons: the first one is the importance of the urban spaces in question and the second the local power dynamics. Depending on the interplay of these two factors foreigners are admitted or not to public spaces. The authors argue that exclusion and inclusion in urban public spaces not only dismantle the common beliefs of public spaces being inclusive by nature and of their access being relatively unrestricted. Incirlioglu and Tandogan (1999) rather demonstrate how certain groups of people are deemed to be ‘qualified enough’ to access those venues while others are not, this depending on several divides. In this very case, I evaluate the national and visual differences as they most powerful axes in creating a divide. Visual difference or, as Amin calls it ‘phenotypical racism’ (2008) had emerged as noticeably stronger when investigating Brighton BMEs’ perceptions, but the issue is equally present in Bologna. I suggest its higher incidence in Brighton is due not only to the more widespread use of the category of race in the British academic and political debate, but also in the fact that, in Italy, other criteria of separation come up as more powerful; as clothing and attitude.

The difficulties in organising a cultural event displaying and fostering the culture of a certain ethnic group have generated resentment in more than one associations, some of them deciding not to apply for public support anymore while others trying to find alternative solutions alongside continuing to advocate for a more equal organisation. The foreigners' resignation shows also a consciousness of the second-class treatment reserved to them (Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999:54); but I could not grasp whether their reaction was a forced acceptance of the system or a way to protest against its unfairness. By means of example, Respondent 6[BO/foreigners] told me that, if they had not got the permission for the workshop that year either, they would have organised it at the Centro Zonarelli. However, this was only an alternative solution and certainly not the one they were aiming for. Actually, they saw the possibility of organising it at the Zonarelli as problematic, relegating their activity to the peripheral area and being therefore less visible to the wider public, attracting individuals who are already sensitised only.

The majority of the respondents belonging to both the local institutions' and the foreigners' group stressed that the chances of forming an association are on average higher in Bologna than in other city in Italy and that it is this that gives to the local social and cultural life the turmoil for which is famous. As pointed out in Chapter 6, Respondent 3[BO/institutions] refers to Putnam and his theory of social capital (1993) to prove that the Emilia-Romagna region and Bologna as its capital city are places where not only the connections and ties among people are strong but so also certain communal values are, such as political participation. Exactly because of the importance attributed locally to political participation, an 'integrated resident', and even more an 'integrated migrant' is someone actively involved in cultural and/or political activities (Scuzzarello 2015). On the basis of the relevance locally attributed to political and

cultural engagement to reach the status of ‘integrated migrant’ (Scuzzarello 2015), the organisation of events displaying a community’s identity and culture is a ‘strategy of belonging’ (Fenster 2005) which demonstrates the community’s integration but also attachment to the city and its will to be acknowledged (Amin 2008:8).

Despite social engagement being valued as essential by the institutional narratives to be considered part of the city, effective and equal participation for migrants appears to be, in fact, all but easy to achieve. The differential treatment of Italians’ and foreigners’ associations denounced by my respondents re-asserts the second-class treatment reserved to foreign citizens pointed out by the literature on cultural diversity in public space (Vertovec 1996, Sandercock 1998, Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999, Amin 2002, 2006, 2008, Cancellieri & Ostanel 2015). As long as the foreign citizens come together in associations and occupy marginal spaces, or take part in events organised by an autochthonous leadership, they are welcome to do so, but when they start to claim the same chances of use of the public space and funding accessibility as the natives, the hostility around them grows.

7.4 The challenges of an assimilationist integration

Even if my participants were generally very keen on sharing their stories with me, sensitive topics such as discrimination needed my interpretation as a researcher. I grounded my findings on the existing literature on social integration (Correll & Chai 2009), boundary making (Tilly 2004) and symbolic and social boundaries (Lamont & Molnar 2002) together with studies examining the role of narratives, rumours and talks (Firth 1956, Smith 1989, Alexander 2008) on someone’s own position within the society and the reasons to deny discrimination (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015). To explore my foreign respondents’ perception of their integration in Bologna I focused on

how they framed their relationship with local residents, concentrating on socio-cultural integration; that is migrants' inclusion in the use of 'social services, benefits and rights enjoyed by others in society' but also their 'participation in the economic, social, political and civic life' of the residence society (Correll & Chai 2009:39), their command of the language and their inclusion in social networks within the local community. I therefore enquired on whether they perceived Italians as interested in learning from other cultures and on if and how they had developed relationships outside their community of co-ethnics (Putnam 1993, cited in Strang & Ager 2010).

The outcome of the first question was contradictory, divided between positions firmly supporting the argument that natives were keen on coming in contact with ethnically diverse individuals and other positions arguing that they were, instead, not willing to learn from other cultures while sticking to deeply-rooted prejudices. In the first stance I identified many similarities with the positions of Asians in Brighton and their denial of discrimination and racism – I expand on this topic in Section 7.5. Regarding the perception of Italians as reluctant to interact with foreigners, Respondent 12[BO/foreigners] challenged the assumption according to which people active in the social realm are curious and outward-facing, arguing that 'they have a slightly close mind'. He argues that

'Sometimes I think that – especially the young Italians, they don't...they don't want to get to know another word [...] they don't want to get to know the culture of another country. [...] Also, as far as I can see, in Italy there is no commitment to support other countries' culture.'

He motivates his statement explaining that none of the people he has got to know since he arrived in Bologna, neither in the social centre where he learnt Italian or at work, was used to ask him for the traditions, history and/or politics of his country, or to ask him how to pronounce a certain word in Urdu. He also ironically told me about how difficult

it is to invite his Italian friends, even the ones he meets regularly for dinner or gatherings, to Pakistan: at the time of the interview, nobody had yet accepted his invitation to join him for a trip to his country of birth. Describing the reluctance and sense of embarrassment with which they received the proposal, he said that they were ‘not ready yet’. In this view indeed, even his work colleagues or people he met in like-minded social circles were not exempt from prejudices that see Pakistan as a backwards and dangerous place; considering him as a rare exception and not as one of the many varieties of people inhabiting the country.

His vision of integration was, however, crucial to understand his strategies of coping with the stereotyped and sometimes stigmatised views of Pakistan (and, equally, of other countries where most of the foreign residents come from) as backwards and dangerous and of foreigners as generally intellectually inferior (Incirlioglu & Tandogan 1999:59) and not equally deserving as citizens (Gonzales, Sigona & Muñoz Burciaga 2016). He stressed the urgency for foreigners to commit to integrate in the Italian society, pinpointing that

‘We, the foreigners, [...] we have a wrong way of thinking – not evil, but wrong against Italians...’

As Moroşanu and Fox (2013) explain, one of the strategies to cope with stigmatised migrants identities is not only to acknowledge the derogatory stereotypes placed on migrants – in this case, the idea that they do not want to integrate widespread in the current Italian popular debate, but also to detach themselves from the blame while attaching it to someone else within the same group. Arguing that foreigners have a wrong way of thinking equals to reprimand them because they do not want to integrate and, at the same time, to mark a clear distinction between ‘them’ and himself, who is instead willing and capable to integrate.

Although the vast majority of the participants discussed the term ‘integration’, the intensity with which Respondent 12 diminishes the role of foreigners locates the approach closer to an assimilationist than an integration approach. Caneva (2014) points out indeed that integration in Italy is grounded on a dominant identity to which migrants have to adapt (see also Taylor 2012) and can be therefore defined more as assimilation than integration as such. This perception is made explicit by Respondent 14[BO/foreigners] too, a young man originally from Senegal. He asserted that

‘Until you look 100% like an Italian, you are not integrated. [...] The clothes, the way you behave, the way you talk, everything. This causes that, many times, many immigrants, err, unfortunately, exclude themselves.’

The symbolic boundary between ‘integrated’ and ‘non-integrated’ migrants is here not drawn along the axis of skin colour, ancestry or birthplace – identified by Bond (2006) as markers of ‘sameness’ in national identity, but is rather traced by clothes, slang, attitude and lifestyle. These factors become then important markers able to shift the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Lamont & Molnar 2002) or between ‘integrated’ and not. However, the interviewee underlines that, being aware of the high standards to comply with to be considered socially integrated, many foreigners self-limit themselves in the certainty not to be accepted (Bond 2006).

Going back to the accounts narrating the natives as interested in interacting to other cultures, an important disclaimer has to be made: when my participants argued for this, they always referred to the high number of Italians attending inter-cultural events, especially those revolving around food from different areas of the world. This raised then my doubts on whether the described behaviour was sign of a genuine interest in the foreigners’ culture or just the consumption of an exotic product. Despite the already explored bureaucratic difficulties in setting up an event, the aim with which they are set up by the communities and the locals’ attendance to them are various and multifaceted

(Fenster 2005, Alexander 2008, Yuval-Davis 2010). Respondent 3[BO/foreigners] asserted that the attendance of Italian people at the cultural events that his association organises was high and regular, which he evaluates positively. He described the audience as mostly young people already open to other cultures and interested in intercultural dialogue for personal or study reasons. However, he pointed out that, in many cases, cultural events are not only ‘practices of belonging’ (Fenster 2005) but also a good ‘marketing for the community’ and that is truly hard to distinguish who is interested in another culture from whom only focuses on a different food and new artistic performances. All considered, he was well aware that the line between cultural exchange and the vision of foreign cultures as a showcase is thin and blurred.

Respondents 8 and 9 were instead more optimistic on the participation of Italians and people from different origins to intercultural events, but they also acknowledged the difficulties of an intercultural dialogue (Meer & Modood 2012) and, among the obstacles, they emphasised the mistrust on the side of their own community towards the locals. They argued:

‘It’s not that they [Peruvians] simply are foreigners who migrate, save money, bring it back to their country and that’s it. They have culture, they have history, and we wanted to tell this most of all to the Italian citizens.’

Their intention to display their identity (Cancellieri & Ostanel 2015) and share their culture with a level of legitimacy equal to Italians emerges therefore as part and parcel of their own narrative of who an ‘integrated migrant’ is (Scuzzarello 2015).

7.5 Reporting racism/denying racism

In this section I elaborate on a debate already outlined in Chapter 5, concerning the ambivalence of the participants’ behaviour when dealing with issues of discrimination and racism. In contrast to what gauged in the first case study, among the foreigners

interviewed in Bologna I was not able to grasp an equally clear-cut pattern connecting their residents' nationality to their reaction to stigmatisation, discrimination and racism. However, some common approaches emerged, which I outline in the following sections. Several scholars have examined the effect of stigma on migrants (Goffman 1990[1963], Portes 1999, Lamont & Fleming 2005, Moroşanu & Fox 2013) and the rationale behind the denial of discrimination (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015), exploring the various effects it can trigger. Drawing on Moroşanu's and Fox's study on Romanians in Bristol and London (2013), and on Smith's (1989) and Fox's, Moroşanu's and Szilassy's (2015) studies on the reasons behind and aims of the denial of discrimination on the side of migrants, I here argue that the contradictory approach my respondents demonstrated during their interviews falls under the scope of ambivalent strategies to cope with stigmatised migrant identities. In addition to the denial of discriminatory experiences, I encountered the acknowledgement of the stigma that blames migrants for the current state of urban *degrado* and lack of safety. In addition, an emphasis on personal skills and achievements – mainly revolving around wealth, were employed by individuals to re-negotiate their position within the receiving society (Wimmer 2008).

7.5.1 Relocating the stigma to relocate someone's social position

In their study on Padua, Cancellieri and Ostanel (2015:500) explain – following from Cohen's ideas (1973) – that the message conveyed by the media on the presence of migrants in Italian cities works on generating a 'moral panic' in the nationals. This feeling is created by presenting the issues of safety and urban *degrado* as the logical consequence of the increasing number of foreigners in Italy. A general mistrust in foreigners' integration – or, as Caneva (2014) specified, assimilability – at the public discourse level also creates a perception of them as 'underserving' (Gonzales, Sigona &

Muñoz Burciaga 2016) and not worthy to be included in social services, benefits and rights (Correll & Chai 2009).

Considering the power of this derogatory vision of foreigners, I was not surprised to hear accounts contrasting it during my interviews. However, the ways in which this happened were multiple and different. When freely talking about their daily life in Bologna and their interaction with the local population and/or authorities, all my foreign participants provided examples of discriminatory behaviours and verbal assaults addressed to them with a certain frequency, while, when directly asked if they had ever been subjects of hate crime and/or racist behaviour, they tended to deny. On the contrary, that was usually the moment when they stressed how good their Italian acquaintances were or when they undermined the legitimacy of other foreigners' complains about racism in the city. For example, Respondent 12[BO/foreigners] clarified that

'If a person doesn't know you, perhaps on the street, or in a café, or in any place, it's possible to hear some racism. But not in general. Me, I don't feel it. Because, if immigrants moan because of this, I think it's not fair. It's not fair. Yes, there is racism, there is racism, but it's not [...] that every person tells you "Oh, you are a foreigner, go out of the country..." No, I don't feel it.'

The quote strongly resembles the declaration of Respondent 8[BH/BMEs] interviewed in Brighton, who stated that, generally speaking, there might be racism in his town but he had never witnessed any. Respondent 12 thoroughly explained his viewpoint to me, arguing that if a migrant puts some effort in learning a good Italian, which is the basis of intercultural communication, the locals will treat him/her with respect; as it has happened to him. He continued by stressing that foreigners have a 'wrong way of thinking' when it comes to integration and racism, because they do not commit enough to integrate in the Italian society. His blame towards their behaviour reveals his intent to

adhere to the receiving society's values and to simultaneously assert his social status (Firth 1956, cited in Alexander 2008:188) as 'integrated migrant'.

The same attempt to acknowledge the stigma while attaching it on someone else can be grasped from the interview to a one of the female participants. When I first asked her some general questions about her experience in Bologna and the interactions she had with locals on daily basis, she said that 'Italians are a bit racist [...] and not all [the people] of Bologna accept to integrate with foreigners' cultures', complaining that Italians treat all the foreigners in the same way. But, she also stressed, 'we, the foreigners, we are not all the same'. This powerful statement includes both an acknowledgement of the partial truthfulness of the stigma on foreigners – if they are not 'all the same', someone is (Moroşanu & Fox 2013), and the intention to distance herself from it (Goffman 1990[1963]:51). By narrating that, when on a bus, she was usually afraid of Moroccans because of their aggressive attitude and abuse of alcohol, she placed the real responsibility of the stigma on other foreign nationals living in Bologna. The account of another female respondent follows the same line. She narrated that, when she worked in a restaurant in the centre she co-owned with the husband, she had many troubles with Algerians and Tunisians, to whom she attributes most of the responsibility of the urban *degrado* and lack of safety in connection to drug dealing. However, both of them were very careful in stressing Italians' extraneousness from acts of hate crime, harassment and crime, as when Respondent 1[BO/foreigners] told me that some months before one of her fellow-nationals was hit by some men, 'but they were not Italians'. In this case too it is possible to identify her will to reaffirm the importance of the morality of the receiving society, where she fits perfectly (Smith 1989).

Finally, the note on the subject that came across as the most startling for me concerns the words of a teenager I met because she accompanied a relative to the

interview⁵¹. The girl had been in Italy since her childhood and, in the informal chat we had, she told me that she had always felt welcome and that nobody had ever made her feel like a foreigner. Moreover, she firmly denied that unpleasant experiences motivated by racial hate could happen in Bologna, until when adding that

‘It only happens that, sometimes, some guys tell me “Shut up you shitty foreigner”...but they are just idiots’

Dismissing those verbal assaults as non-relevant constitutes a rhetorical device used to contrast locals’ racism, as Lamont, Morning and Mooney (2002) reveal in their study on African migrants in France. However, while hearing her account I could not determine whether or not she was aware of the racist connotation of those words and if this was a strategy to re-locate herself within the ‘worthy’ and ‘deserving’ foreigners (Gonzales, Sigona & Muñoz Burciaga 2016).

7.5.2 Emphasising individual worth: wealth as a gateway to the Italian society

Besides acknowledging the partial truthfulness of the negative stereotypes on foreigners and simultaneously detaching someone’s self for that (Smith 1989, Moroşanu & Fox 2013), Lamont and Fleming (2005) explain that an effective strategy to re-establish someone’s status in the receiving society is to stress someone’s own individual worth and qualities, such as education and/or wealth. This rhetorical strategy was noticeably less common than the first among this group of participants, since only a couple of them used it. However, I find it relevant to provide a full picture of the foreigners’ positions.

Not only some of the foreign interviewees blamed others nationalities for their aggressive attitude generating a stigma on their category, as for Moroccans, Algerians

⁵¹ I do not mention any more information on the respondents she was with to protect her privacy, due to her young age.

and Tunisians, but also they blamed the moment when and channels through which ‘other’ foreigners reached Italy. Clarifying that she was ‘not as the people who are coming here on rubber dinghies’, one of the participants traced a symbolic boundary (Lamont & Molnar 2002) between who, as her, arrived in Italy decades ago with a wealthy and educated background and the people currently portrayed by the media while reaching in Italy on overcrowded boats; in an account that reminds of the differentiation explored in Chapter 5 between migrants and BMEs. She pointed out that she also had the luck to arrive in Bologna in 1980, when the economy was growing and the foreigners were just a few. This conjuncture influenced the way she was received, without the current aggressiveness and rhetoric of foreigners stealing jobs from Italian nationals.

But this also impacted on how she was treated by the authorities. As a demonstrative anecdote, she claimed that she would take her bank statement with her when she had to renew her visa and that, after seeing that, the policemen dealing with her request would treat her as a lady and even offer her a cappuccino. Without enquiring further on the truthfulness of this anecdote, what I find revealing in it is the intent to draw a symbolic line (Lamont & Molnar 2002) first between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ migrants (Gonzales, Sigona & Muñoz Burciaga 2016) and, second, between ‘established and decent “us” and “them”, the troublemakers and outsiders’ (Wimmer 2008:1042). This separation of migrants according to temporal and economic wealth lines is aimed at re-locating someone’s ‘own position within a hierarchical system of ethnic categories’ (Wimmer 2008:1038): by placing ‘new’ migrants in a lower position, the lady seeks to re-affirm her status as ‘integrated’ in the receiving society and ‘respectful’ (Firth 1956). In asserting her elitist position over the majority,

she therefore remarks her moral value; implying that she deserves to be included in the locals' 'us' (Lamont & Molnar 2002, Tilly 2004).

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the foreigners' perception of Bologna's own character (Massey 1991), their chances to engage in the social, cultural and political life of the city (see Koopmans *et al.* 2005) and their relationships with the natives. After an overview of the city's demographic diversity, I have discussed the respondents' feelings of belonging (Mee & Wright 2009) and 'at-homeness' (Alexander 2008:189). They are based not only on the level of safety perceived in their environment but also on their familiarity with and understanding of local dynamics, history and politics. Indeed, the majority of my participants demonstrated to be well acquainted with local politics and politicians by reporting and analysing events happened decades before but that, in their opinion, changed the 'real' Bologna. Guazzaloca's (1999-2004) and Cofferati's (2004-2009) administrations emerge as the turning point between the time when the city truthfully reflected its left-wing reputation and a current climate of increasing aggressiveness and intolerance. The interviewees referred to these periods as a powerful example of how even the categories of Left and Right can take on a different meaning in accordance with a local sense of place. More than the adherence to left- or right-wing principles, what they saw as crucial was the respect of certain political lines 'characterising the city of Bologna' [Respondent 4 BO/foreigners].

This analysis led to the components of sense of place (see Campelo *et al.* 2014) examined in Section 7.2. Similarly to what was narrated by the representatives of local institutions, the presence of the University and its students, together with the relevance attributed to culture, is among the core elements that have given to Bologna 'a character

on its own' (Massey 1991:6). However, in contrast with the institutional place-narratives, the reception of students is defined by foreigners as a forced choice – opposite to the spontaneity with which it was described in Chapter 6 – and grassroots associations, unions and social centres are defined as crucial places of culture production; in addition to the University. I suggest that the higher attention given to these bodies is first due to the local government's current opposition to them, accused of creating *degrado* in the city. Second, I also argue it depends on the fact that the majority of the foreign participants had some forms of contacts with them; especially during their first years in Italy. Because of this proximity, they were generally very keen to praise the role of social centres and grassroots associations as vital for integration.

Another crucial element, perhaps the most unique, is the political legacy of the Resistance to the Nazi-fascist regime and the following series of leftist local administrations. Scuzzarello (2015) identifies in the adhesion to this trait the main indicator of integration for the citizens, which impacts on foreigners too. Section 7.3 is therefore dedicated to how policies for integration and social inclusion are set up in Bologna and on how the relations between local institutions and foreigners' associations are managed by the local administration. Johnstone (1990) argues that our perception not only of a place, but also of its issues and of the most appropriate policies to tackle them, is rooted in narration. As an effect, the attention attributed to politics in the construction and reproduction of local sense of place is reflected in policies and in the collective identities considered more 'legitimate' (see Koopmans & Olzak 2004). Summarising a thought common among this group of interviewees, one of the participants argued that Bologna is 'very political' even in the reception of migrants and asylum seekers. This means that the local administration is perceived by them as more

keen on receiving those groups narrated in the media as victims of current conflicts but simultaneously excluding others that equally deserve protection.

Finally, in Sections 7.4 and 7.5 I have explored the challenges of integration and day-to-day relationships between natives and foreigners. Caneva (2014) points out that integration in Italy is ‘an awkward political issue’ because the importance granted to it is way far from the one devolved to migration as a security threat. Besides being relatively marginal in the public and political discourse, in this context integration takes on a rather assimilationist character; being constructed around a dominant identity to which the foreigner has to adapt. This contradiction is best expressed in Respondent 14’s [BO/foreigners] powerful statement

‘Until you look 100% like an Italian, you are not integrated. [...] The clothes, the way you behave, the way you talk, everything.’

This observation expresses the common confusion between integration and assimilation that leads foreigners to a self-exclusion from environments normally attended by Italians. In connection to this, I have explored the rhetorical strategies used by these respondents to re-locate themselves in the Italian society. Both Smith (1989) and Moroşanu and Fox (2013) identify the intention to include someone’s self in the dominant group when he/she acknowledges the stigma commonly placed on its peers but claims to be different. This behaviour emerges from the accounts of a good part of my interviewees, undermining their fellow-nationals’ denunciation of racism (see Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015) or arguing that ‘foreigners have a wrong way of thinking’ [Respondent 12 BO/foreigners]. Another strategy to be included in the dominant group is to emphasise someone’s own worth, which my participants also used. A number of them claimed to be different from other foreigners because of their education, wealth and adhesion to the receiving society’s values and norms.

Bologna emerges from my interviewees' accounts as a city struggling to keep up with the image of openness it had achieved thanks to the political legacy of the Resistance and the centuries-long presence of its University. However, even if criticised, the dominant image (Jansson 2003) of the city as welcoming and hospitable was rarely entirely opposed or denied; as it happened in Brighton. On the one side, this demonstrates the strength of this narrative and how embedded it is in the local public discourse while, on the other side, it opens up the question whether Bologna can still genuinely boast its status of 'open city'.

CHAPTER 8

Receptive cities?

Concluding reflections

‘People are more tolerant now and, when I say “more tolerant” [I mean that] they’re more politically correct and they’re not saying it [racist comments] out loud. [They are tolerant] here [indicating the surface] but not underneath.’ [BH/BMEs]

‘Bologna is very “political”. If you are a certain type of foreigner, of migrant, you are welcome, otherwise you are not.’ [BO/foreigners]

The words of two of my interviewees belonging respectively to the BMEs and foreigners groups were exceptionally straightforward and critical in comparison to the accounts of other members of their group. When interviewing BMEs/foreigners, I received a high number of overly positive responses about the City Council’s policies for social inclusion, local social services performance, and/or the natives’ behaviour towards them. Statements along the lines of ‘[This] is a wonderful place for any immigrant’ [Respondent 7 BH/BMEs] were not rare at all, especially among participants of Asian origin. However, the degree of satisfaction expressed in these accounts was so high and free from the slightest criticism as to raise doubts about their truthfulness. When analysing the data, re-reading my interview transcripts, or browsing through my field notes, I identified a second hidden layer of narratives through which BME/foreigner informants revealed the existence of discrimination both at the institutional and everyday level. Instead of addressing these directly, they hinted at

them. For instance, Respondent 1[BO/foreigners], lost in thought during her interview, said distractedly:

‘Even some days ago, when they [the natives] see foreigners...you know, every time... [shaking her head] As yesterday, I went to a place. I’m on the street and... “Oh, these foreigners, these foreigners! Always in the way!”’

She referred to a hostile attitude that natives often expressed against foreigners through spontaneous reactions or exclamations, which she and her acquaintances experienced on the street. However, she never openly pointed out episodes like this to uncover the issue of discrimination in Bologna. On the contrary, whenever she realised that she might convey this impression, she quickly modified her tone and adjusted her words to express her happiness to live in such an accepting place. This was a common pattern among BME/foreigner informants in both cities. Differentiating institutional from grassroots place-narratives has proven to be beneficial to gauge similarities and differences between sense of place as constructed from above and from below. This revealed some elements on which representatives of local governments and BMEs/foreigners’ grassroots associations agreed, and some on which they had contrasting opinions. In certain cases, the two narratives seemed to coincide, although a more attentive examination revealed their differences. This was a common pattern followed by grassroots narratives: all respondents, including the most critical ones, considered the mainstream narratives about the city’s diverse composition, receptive attitude, and migrants’ integration as a ‘given’. This vision always underpinned grassroots accounts, but members of BMEs’/foreigners’ associations would build on them to expose their ‘selective’ [Respondent 2 BH/BMEs] and partial validity.

Drawing from human geography literature on places and their ‘character’ (Tuan 1977, Low & Altman 1992, Massey 1991, Hay 1998, Stedman 2002, Campelo *et al.*

2014) and adopting a Political Opportunity Structure Approach (Tarrow 1994, Koopmans & Statham 2000, Koopmans 2004) complemented by the inclusion of the Discursive Opportunity Structure (Koopmans & Olzak 2004, Koopmans *et al.* 2005, Cinalli & Giugni 2011), this thesis has explored different narratives about Brighton and Bologna and their citizenry, as constructed and reproduced both from above and from below. During the data collection, diversity emerged as a core – albeit not unique – element capable of generating an urban environment receptive to migrants. In both case studies, diversity was narrated as the symbol of the city, although its meaning was associated with different dimensions. In Section 8.2, I explored this pattern, arguing that as it is constructed in Brighton and Bologna, the label of ‘diversity’ highlights only certain types of diversity, while obscuring others. For instance, in Brighton, gender, sexuality, and an ‘artistic lifestyle’ are considered to ‘fit in’ with the city’s character, while ethnic diversity plays a much more marginal role. Yet the power of mainstream narratives obscures this dimension as well as the actual low ethnic diversity in the local population. BME participants’ shared perception of Brighton’s population was indeed that of a ‘very white’ community.

In this concluding chapter, I draw together the most relevant findings discussed throughout the thesis and address the overarching research question outlined in Chapter 1: *what explains the convergences and divergences between the institutional representation of receptiveness and the experience of it on the ground?* In addition, I outline this study’s contributions to the literature. I start with the cultural aspect of place-narratives, reporting my findings on institutional narratives of receptiveness as constructed and reproduced in the two case studies. I then analyse how these narratives shape the figure of an ‘ideal migrant’ fitting in with the city’s character. After this, I shift my focus to grassroots narratives, examining the same themes as well as

accounting for similarities and differences. In the second part of the chapter, I examine the political aspects of the study, analysing from both above and below the principles guiding local policies for social inclusion and the political formations through which BMEs/foreigners can successfully participate in local politics. While discussing this, I also highlight the categories of people who are either ignored or prevented from participating in local politics because of not corresponding to the local understanding of diversity. Uncovering these grey areas means also uncovering a gap in the POS framework, demonstrating that the success of the claims by these groups depends on more than strictly political factors, but rather on cultural ones too. I then move onto a closer examination of the local public discourse and its influence on the characteristics and collective identities considered ‘legitimate’ in Brighton and Bologna. The last section relates to those categories considered ‘outsiders’ in each case study, examining the consequences of this framing for both local policies and the community. Finally, I outline the study’s limitations and suggest possibilities for further research.

8.1 Framing receptiveness in an urban context

8.1.1 Facing diversity: many ethnicities and nationalities in two ‘*very white cities*’

Diversity can be constructed in three different ways, corresponding to demographics, narratives, or policies (Berg & Sigona 2013). In my research, I have focused on the first two, which were helpful to distinguish the make-up of the local population from how the city and its citizenry as a whole are commonly imagined by insiders and outsiders alike. Focusing on both the social fact of diversity and narratives about diversity is also helpful to understand whether the two dimensions have to align, or whether the latter necessarily have to reflect the former in order to become established.

Diversity is a social fact when we consider a city's demographics and its composition by looking at the proportion of residents who are of an ethnicity and/or a nationality other than that of the native majority. Gamlen (2010:7) points out that patterns of international migration have recently changed from 'involving *many* migrants from and to *few* places [...] to patterns involving *fewer* migrants from and to *more*⁵² places', a statement that reflects Brighton's and Bologna's population composition. Places of origin, however, are not the only element establishing the degree of diversity in a population. Vertovec (2007) considers, from a broader angle, the variety of characteristics represented within the population of global capitals such as London, which, in 2007, he defined as 'unprecedented' (2007:1043). It is not only global cities such as London, New York, Paris, and Johannesburg that can be classified as 'superdiverse', but also (as I demonstrate in this thesis) medium-sized cities such as Brighton and Bologna. Local government representatives narrated these cities as superdiverse environments not only because they have a high number of ethnic backgrounds and nationalities in their territory (which in Bologna⁵³ is as many as 140 nationalities [Respondent 6 BO/institutions]), but also because many traits other than nationality contribute to the heterogeneity of the population, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, cultural capital, and many others.

However, the proportion of the population legitimately definable as superdiverse is quite low in both the case study cities. According to the 2011 Census Briefing (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011), 16% of Brighton's local population, or approximately 42,885 people, are estimated to be non-UK born, while the percentage of

⁵² Italics in the original.

⁵³ Neither Brighton & Hove's City Council's statistics nor the 2011 Census report the number of nationalities present in the city, instead focusing on ethnicities.

local residents classified as BMEs is as high as 19.5%.⁵⁴ As Brighton & Hove's City Council (2014:7) points out, 'This is slightly lower than the estimated proportion of UK-born residents in both the South East region (88 per cent) or across England (86 per cent).' (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:7)

In Bologna, foreign-born residents accounted for 15.24% of the overall population, or 58,985 inhabitants, in 2016 (Comune di Bologna 2016). This is relatively high compared to the Emilia-Romagna region, where the percentage of foreign residents was 12% in 2016 (Tuttitalia.it 2016). This appears dramatically higher when compared to the number of non-Italian born residents across the country, which was 8.3% (Istat 2016).

In both the case studies, local government representatives praised the local demographic diversity, arguing that the heterogeneous make-up of the city implies a lack of residential segregation and, in turn, of social tensions. A recurring element in their accounts of their city was an enthusiastic emphasis on the absence of ethnically segregated areas.⁵⁵ However, as Brighton Respondent 2[BH/BMEs] sarcastically clarified, 'residential segregation doesn't exist only according to newspapers and statistics', since the city is surrounded by

'A lot of villages, sometimes 4 miles away from the centre. So a lot of BME people live outside the area and the only time when you see them travelling is because there is actually an event going on and they are coming to that.'

This straightforward declaration uncovers the superficial and partial truth expressed by institutions' representatives. It is a fact that neither in Brighton nor in Bologna are there

⁵⁴ In Chapter 4, I explain why I use both figures relating to non-UK born individuals and BMEs.

⁵⁵ Interestingly, the word 'ghetto' was used by a few participants, but it was always connected to economic deprivation and marginality rather than to ethnic segregation.

neighbourhoods immediately known to the public as being dominated by a certain ethnicity. However, the proportion of residents whose ethnicity is different from the native majority is, in both cases, too low and too diverse to generate such segregation. There are areas where a certain ethnic community is larger than others (as I explain in Chapters 5 and 7) but this is far from recalling the demographic make-up of big capitals such as London or even of smaller cities with a high percentage of residents sharing the same ethnicity. For instance, one of the interviewees I talked to described his surprised reaction to noticing, first, how homogeneous Brighton was and, second, that this homogeneity was not actually recounted as such:

‘I was brought up in an area that’s 80% Asian. So I’m really used to kind of being in an area where white people are the minority and so, you know, the first thing I noticed about Brighton was how white it was. So, Brighton and Hove is suddenly a cosmopolitan town and I said “Really?” [laughs] “I’ve never seen anywhere so white in my life!”’

In addition, despite the absence of ethnically dominated areas within the city proper, BMEs/foreigners were often concentrated in peripheral surrounding areas. As Respondent 2[BH/BMEs] noted in his quote, moving from those areas to the centre to participate in the city’s cultural and political life is time-consuming and expensive and not many BMEs/foreigners can afford to do it. However, the institutional narratives about the city and its diversity seem to ignore the situation of those living in these hinterlands who are *de facto* segregated because they are prevented from cultural and political inclusion.

Drawing a connection between understandings of diversity as a social fact and as a narrative, it is clear that narratives on diversity can become the symbol of a city even if they do not fully reflect local demographics. The analysis above has demonstrated that, despite Brighton’s and Bologna’s relatively low demographic

diversity, the two cities have achieved a reputation of being ‘diverse’ in institutional and informal discourse (see Hadj-Abdou 2014). As I explain in the next paragraph, this demonstrates the power of narratives and their authors, which construct and reproduce meaning and, ultimately, the place itself (Johnstone 1990, Ryden 1993). Narratives are usually associated with a set of goals to achieve or, as Stokowski (2002) calls them, of ‘desired ends’ to reach through a specific city image. These can range from attracting foreign investment to attracting tourism to attracting specific categories of people. In Sections 8.3 and 8.4, I expand on the intended and perhaps unintended effects that place-narratives have had on local policies and, crucially, on the local populations in my two case studies.

Looking at the data more closely, I can identify a connection between diversity as a social fact and issues of discrimination and racism. The vast majority of Brighton’s non-UK born population comes from European countries (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014:4). In most cases Europeans are phenotypically similar to the White British population, making it more difficult to be singled out and subjected to day-to-day street-level harassment. This does not imply the absence of aggressive attitudes against them, as in the case of Romanians or Eastern Europeans in general, who have long been the target of a derogatory discourse in the British national press (Moroşanu 2012, Moroşanu & Fox 2013). However, many members of BME associations and, to a noticeably lesser extent, a few local government representatives, were sceptical of Brighton’s receptiveness on the basis of the level of visible ethnic diversity. They suggested that receptiveness in Brighton had not actually been ‘tested’, because of the low percentage of people looking different in relation to skin colour and/or traditional clothing. One of the interviewees expressed this mismatch particularly clearly:

‘I don’t think it [receptiveness] has been tested, because Brighton is so white. [...] It’s very easy for Brighton to keep itself as cosmopolitan because actually there is a lot of issues having to do with race that it doesn’t actually have to confront. You can just go out and say “Oh, don’t we fucking get on really well?!” Let’s see, if it was 50% black, whether you’d be saying the same thing, standing in your white middle class ivory tower, you know. [...] The test for Brighton would be if in, you know, if as a response to the current migrant situation [...] Brighton local Council informed the residents next week that “to help with that we’re going to bring a thousand refugees in the city”. That’s when we get a test on whether Brighton is receptive. Actually, I don’t know because I don’t think it has ever been tested.’

In Bologna the situation is similar, considering that among the most represented nationalities there are Romanians, Moldovans, Ukrainians, and Albanians, who are also phenotypically similar to Italians (see King & Mai 2009). However, perhaps due to the lower importance of ethnicity in Italian political discourse in comparison to British political discourse, my informants were not as aware of the impact of visible ethnic diversity on the city’s receptiveness. This surprised me, not only because nobody mentioned the phenotypical similarity of Romanians or Ukrainians to Italians (especially to people from northern Italy, where Bologna is located), but also because informants neither mentioned that in Italy it is still unusual to consider a non-white individual as an Italian. The only people who commented on the presence of, for instance, Eritreans in Italy due to the country’s colonial history were Respondent 1[BO/institutions] and Respondent 3[BO/foreigners], who both had personal connections to Eritrea. However, they just hinted at their current long-term settlement in Italy, without analysing it in relation to demographic diversity. The perspective of Respondent 14[BO/foreigners] could be helpful to interpret this. He stressed the importance of clothing, slang, and attitude in considering someone fully integrated, while leaving skin colour aside.

I personally do not fully agree with his perspective: despite being aware that clothing, slang, and attitude are all of vital importance in the perceived integration of a

migrant in Italian society, I also acknowledge that ethnicity is not frequently included in Italian political debates. Castañeda (2018) points out that countries' political designs influence how migrants perceive themselves to be received by natives and the extent to which they feel at home in the country they settle in. However, I posit that issues related to ethnicity and skin colour could have also been silenced because of their sensitivity in the current Italian society, where migration is increasingly a catalyst of social tensions. When I conducted the fieldwork, the current right-wing populist government had not yet been elected, but a number of political figures had long been using immigration as an issue upon which to divide the population, presenting Italy as being under 'an invasion' (Il Sole 24 Ore 2016). Recalling Fox, Moroşanu, and Szilassy's study (2015), I suggest that overlooking the subject while pointing out related (although not equally sensitive) issues such as clothing could be a strategy for questioning the receiving society while simultaneously claiming to 'meet all the criteria' to fit within it.

Although neither Brighton nor Bologna present ethnically dominated areas, in comparison to other (especially British) cities, BMEs/foreigners are *de facto* prevented from participating in local political life for economic and geographical reasons. Most cultural events take place in central locations, which are often difficult and expensive to reach for those living in peripheral areas. Together with this, Brighton's and Bologna's receptiveness has not been tested for real, at least at the street level. The relatively small percentage of Black and Asian people in comparison to the white population means that day-to-day racist attitudes may not be as frequent as in other cities, not because of the peculiarly receptive environment depicted in institutional narratives, but because it is harder to gauge who is 'different' at first glance. The overrepresentation of white residents, regardless of their nationality, in the two cities could be regarded as a limitation. A fascinating evolution of this investigation would therefore involve research

in a city which, despite maintaining a similar reputation as receptive, has a more balanced presence of ethnicities.

8.1.2 Narrating diversity: the two sides of the receptiveness coin

When I started my field research, rather than speculating on the factors at the basis of Brighton and Bologna's reputations of receptiveness, I decided to let interviewees identify them. Diversity emerged from my data collection as the main, although not exclusive, factor upon which local narratives of receptiveness are constructed and reproduced. As mentioned in the previous section, this concept does not only refer to the variety of characteristics embodied by the citizenry, but also to a trademark of the place under study. A first and crucial finding is that a diverse demographic make-up of the population is not always necessary for a place to achieve an established reputation as being a diverse place. Despite the high number of nationalities and ethnicities represented in the two cities, their population seems quite homogeneous in terms of skin colour. However, this has not prevented either Brighton or Bologna from achieving a widely acknowledged reputation as 'diverse'. Informed by the literature on place identity, place attachment, and place dependence, which function as different components of a broader notion of sense of place (Hay 1998, Jorgensen & Stedman 2001), I explored the similarities and differences between the narratives on the two cities. To each, I added another level of comparison referring to the shared and contrasting elements of institutional and grassroots narratives.

In Chapter 4, I explored how Brighton's local government representatives construct narratives about diversity and receptiveness, focusing on elements constituting its specific sense of place (Campelo *et al.* 2014). Gender and sexuality, often associated

with an unconventional lifestyle, lie at the core of Brighton's 'diversity'. The city's history has been closely intertwined with this group of residents since its foundation. Established by George IV as a party town and an outlet from the more morally controlled life in London, Brighton attracted artists, 'political mavericks', and 'whoever didn't fit in a terribly clear Britishness' [Respondent 7 BH/institutions], representing a safe space for these groups that remains strong even today. The expansion of local receptiveness, first toward LGBTQ+ and artists and then including BMEs, was accounted for by institutional respondents as a 'spillover effect': the vast majority of these interviewees argued that their familiarity with gender, sexuality and/or lifestyle diversity has driven openness and receptiveness of other types of diversity, including ethnic diversity.

In Chapter 5, I investigated these institutional narratives on Brighton's sense of place and legitimate collective identities from the point of view of members of BME associations. Their accounts did not deny the truthfulness of the institutional narratives, but moved ethnic diversity to the foreground. They stressed the relevance of ethnic diversity for the local context but simultaneously criticised the scant consideration given to their group when issuing or evaluating policies. These respondents' stories unanimously appreciated the validity of the institutional narratives and acknowledged Brighton's openness on gender and sexuality. However, regarding ethnic diversity, they did not judge the city as welcoming *per se* but only in relative terms, in comparison to the more hostile environment of the North of England. A clear-cut division along ethnic lines emerged in BMEs' narratives about the city's openness and tolerance: South Asians and other individuals coming from Muslim countries such as Iran or Morocco were overly positive in their accounts, describing Brighton as 'a wonderful place for any immigrant' [Respondent 7 BH/BMEs] and leaving little space for criticism. In

contrast, Black/Caribbean informants openly expressed their concern and outrage about local racism taking place ‘underneath [the surface]’ [Respondent 2 BH/BMEs].

I argue that the former’s denial of discrimination is a dialectic strategy to re-negotiate their inclusion in the dominant majority (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy 2015) and, for Muslims, to prove their distance from Islamic terrorism in a historical moment when the association between Muslims and terrorism is widely and iteratively suggested by the press. On the contrary, Black/Caribbeans fiercely complained about both institutional and day-to-day discrimination. I drew from Shingles’ (1981) study of Black Americans’ racial consciousness and mistrust of the government not only to elaborate their active denouncing of racism but also in connection to the construction of new ‘legitimate’ collective identities. I argue that, emphasising the relevance of ethnic diversity in Brighton, BMEs make this dimension visible and acknowledged and, ultimately, give it a bottom-up legitimisation in public discourse, until it achieves the status of being a component of sense of place. BME associations have the potential to challenge the top-down dynamic according to which ‘legitimate’ collective identities are constructed by institutions through public discourse.

In Chapter 6, I explored Bologna’s institutional place-narratives, which describe it as a city of culture and civic rights. Its history is interrelated with the centuries-long establishment of the University and its ‘long series of leftist administrations’ [Respondent 10 BO/institutions]. Both institutional and grassroots respondents connected the local variation of diversity to culture and, most importantly, to the counterculture fostered by social centres. These emerge in foreigners’ accounts as linked to the University through the presence of students. Despite coming from different locations, students living in Bologna are mostly Italians and Europeans and, even if not considered as ‘actual migrants’ (as in Brighton), they are a social and visual reminder of

the constant influx of newcomers into the city. The presence of students reflects an encounter between culture and politics, as students and/or young professionals, associating around social centres, lead most grassroots political activities. The city's Left-wing allegiance interests the local government, too: representatives of local institutions unanimously defined the local administration's political history as lying at the core of the city's sense of place. Bologna's receptiveness toward asylum seekers fleeing from authoritarian regimes around the world was described as stemming from the city's role during the Resistance against Nazi-fascism. According to this vision, that historical moment taught the citizenry to contest authoritarian governments and to accept as comrades those escaping from them.

Foreigners' perceptions of institutional narratives about Bologna's diversity and receptiveness followed a pattern similar to that in Brighton. They acknowledged the institutional narratives almost to the point of taking them for granted. However, in this case too, the grassroots narratives present critical stances against institutional ones, although for a different reason. While in Brighton informants who criticised the validity of institutional narratives did so on the basis of the scope of Brighton's receptiveness (open toward gender and sexuality but not ethnic diversity), members of foreigners' associations in Bologna complained about the loss of the institutional narratives' truthfulness over time. They did not disagree with the image of the way Bologna used to be in a past when 'it was beautiful' [Respondent 13 BO/foreigners] or 'at its best' [Respondent 4 BO/foreigners], but rather criticised what the city has become. According to their accounts, it was the Cofferati administration (2004-2009) that had

'The nerve to touch some of the left-wing policies that nobody could touch because it was a taboo, it was the city of Bologna!' [Respondent 4 BO/foreigners]

Changes in local policies and welfare measures that started with Cofferati have continued until today, and many foreigner informants felt a mounting aggressiveness from natives against those who are ‘different’ – which, in contrast to Brighton, they experienced more on a street level basis than from the local government. Those who pointed out this issue stressed the length of their stay in Bologna, using time to legitimise their knowledge of the local sense of place and dynamics and belonging to the city. Indeed, Tuan (1975:164) points out that ‘sense of place is rarely acquired in passing’. Long residence and deep involvement in cultural, social, and political life is what allows individuals to gauge the local sense of place. In both case studies, time plays a crucial role in strengthening particular framings of diversity and receptiveness, but it also has the power to shape some individuals as ‘legitimately’ living in the place and as ‘suited’ to the place’s character.

Drawing together the threads of my analysis on diversity as a narrative, I argue that, even though it was constructed along different axes, in both the case studies it was identified as the basis and origin of the city’s reputation as receptive. Diversity, according to my informants, generates an open and welcoming attitude towards newcomers. However, despite referring to gender and sexuality in the first case and to culture and political allegiance in the second, both in Brighton and Bologna diversity indicates an ‘unconventional lifestyle’. In Brighton this is displayed by artists and LGBTQ+ communities, while in Bologna it is exemplified by union members and leftist intellectuals. Moreover, students and political activists are categories that ‘fit in’ with both cities’ diversity variations. The most problematic contradiction in these narratives and their categories of citizens who ‘fit in’ is that ethnic diversity emerges as only secondary or collateral.

The current emphasis on ‘selected’ aspects of diversity has the undoubted potential to attract to the cities categories of people that would feel welcome there, although it obscures other equally relevant forms of diversity (such as ethnicity) or the lack of it. Brighton-based artists and/or creative professionals, many of whom were described by interviewees as also belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, and BMEs were discussed as two different categories, as if the former only included white-middle class individuals and the latter Black or Asian working-class people. The institutional respondents also mentioned a third category of ‘white working class’ as separate from the previous ones. I analyse how they frame this third category and its implications in Section 8.5. The only informants to present a picture of Brighton acknowledging the simultaneous influence of ethnicity and class were Black/Caribbean. Instead of using the ‘ethnic lens’ (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006) to describe the various groups living in the city, they added a class divide to discuss social inclusion and exclusion. For instance, Respondent 4[BH/BMEs] argued that ‘poor people have been criminalised’, but he did not distinguish between White British and Black or Asian people. He was aware that the figures (Brighton & Hove City Council 2014) indicate that BMEs represent a higher percentage than White British people living in poverty, but even so he considered economic status equally or even more relevant for social exclusion than ethnicity.

Similarly, the vast majority of Bologna-based students and political activists share with Brightonian artists and the LGBTQ+ community the characteristic of belonging to the white native majority, while foreigners are commonly framed as non-white, even if ethnicity was not usually brought up in participants’ accounts. This emerged as a subtext, which I confirmed by analysing the make-up of the student population and through participant observation. A class discourse emerged instead, even if feebly and from a minority of institutional informants working in the social sector.

For instance, when discussing housing rights in the city, Respondent 14[BO/institutions] pointed out that it was not only foreigners who were suffering from the long and difficult process to access Council housing, but also Italians who had lost their jobs due to the economic crisis and were no longer able to pay their rent. This, analogously to Respondent 4's [BH/BMEs] reflection, marked the difference between who is and is not welcome and included in the city, between who 'fits in' with the local sense of place and who does not. The consequences of place-narratives on local policies and on issues of racism and discrimination are examined in the next three sections.

A relevant continuation of this study could be based in locations which do not share such a high concentration of 'unconventional' categories of residents but which also do not have a reputation of being 'hostile' towards migrants. Exploring this avenue of research could contribute to expanding the range of reproducible dimensions generating a receptive sense of place.

8.2 What is receptiveness useful for? Local governments' 'desired ends'

Place-narratives are not just an exercise in rhetoric. Rather, they can also impact on the city and its inhabitants in various ways. After identifying the narratives that allow Brighton and Bologna to 'exist' (see Ryden 1993) and to develop the image of diversity, openness, and tolerance they foster, in this section I address their work and influence in more depth. In the previous paragraph, I exposed the influence that institutional place-narratives have on the identities considered to 'fit into' a place because they are deemed to correspond to the local sense of place, and those that are ignored or discredited. Here, I shift my focus to more tangible effects, such as policies, events, projects, and/or funding. Although in my study I included narratives from both above and from below, when analysing the effects of narratives that are currently in

place I refer to the institutional ones. The power of institutional respondents' roles is what has allowed these narratives to become mainstream. Despite their influence for place-narratives, the power through which they are established and reproduced is rarely taken into account in research (Stokowski 2002).

In Brighton, the place-specific shaping of diversity along gender and sexuality lines is reflected in the range of events organised by and for the LGBTQ+ community and/or whoever supports their rights. The presence of large numbers of students – although mentioned by my interviewees as only marginally significant – can be gauged from the constant offer of student-tailored services and events across the city. I argue that the local government takes advantage of Brighton's public image as an LGBTQ+-, student-, and artist-friendly town organising cultural events and festivals tailored to these groups,⁵⁶ which has the potential to attract like-minded people from elsewhere and – more importantly – to generate profits for local businesses and the Council. However, just as institutional narratives of diversity and receptiveness overlooked an approach merging gender and sexuality with class and ethnicity, so too did cultural events. For example, the controversial story of the People's Day, or People's Festival, and of its management (according to my BME respondent, entrusted to 'a white lady' when the Council took over the organisation from BMEs' associations) reported in Chapter 5 reveals tensions between the local government and BMEs' associations when it comes to acknowledging the intellectual ownership of events fostering the city's ethnic diversity.

Bologna has, by contrast, based its institutional narrative of diversity and receptiveness on culture and its left-wing political tradition. Culture emerged from the

⁵⁶ Examples include the Brighton Festival, the Fringe Festival, the Great Escape Festival, and Gay Pride.

accounts of the second group of grassroots informants as not only related to the University, which was highly praised by institutional respondents, but also to the large number of social centres. Many of them had indeed come into contact with some of the local social centres during their early days in Italy and some had kept a connection lasting until the time of the interview. However, local government representatives did not include social centres in their narratives, focusing exclusively on the prestigious institution of the University. Similar to Brighton, Bologna offers a variety of student-tailored services and cultural events, which are beneficial to the town in economic terms. However, perhaps paradoxically, this goes together with an aversion to students' presence in public spaces. This hostility has increased in recent years and can be traced to the multiple local decrees restricting alcohol purchase, the opening hours of bars and clubs, and even young people's prolonged stay in some public areas. The city's long left-wing history is equally controversial, emerging simultaneously as the core component of the local sense of place and as a faded image the city cannot (or does not want to) live up to anymore. The majority of local government informants connected this element to the goodwill and efficiency with which Bologna currently participates in the national plan for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees. But this engagement simultaneously helps to achieve certain 'desired ends'. Referring to the respondent whose statement I used in the opening of this chapter, Bologna's public image as a politically active and welcoming city makes it relatively easy for local governmental bodies to obtain funding for both cultural projects and/or festivals and for asylum seeker reception, although the latter usually depends on short-term projects.

Interestingly, many cultural events organised in Bologna combine culture and cultural diversity with political themes such as migration and asylum or international

development.⁵⁷ However, as many informants in the second group bitterly complained, there is a huge gap between the funding received by associations of Italians (especially those who are well-connected to the Council) or Italian associations working with foreigners, and funding received by associations managed by foreigners themselves. They argued that foreigners are not permitted autonomous management of cultural resources or equal participation in local policies, and are relegated to displaying their culture on an almost folkloric basis. Despite the different construction of diversity in Brighton and Bologna and the different framing of BMEs and foreigners, the dynamic developing in relation to BMEs/foreigners' ownership and management of cultural events is the same.

In both cities, the Councils emerged in BMEs/foreigners' accounts as willing to take on the management of cultural events fostering the city's cultural diversity and/or the culture of a specific ethnic/national group, although only as long as those events worked as a mere facade. When BMEs/foreigners claimed ownership of the organisation of those events, exercising their right to participate in the local cultural and political space, they were prevented from doing so due to complex and obscure bureaucratic processes. Referring to the Councils' economic 'desired ends' (Stokowski 2002), I argue that the management of cultural events directly or indirectly benefits the cities through, for example, proceeds gained during them. This could be one of the reasons behind the management of events by local governments, which blurs the local emphasis on receptiveness. A related question that would be fascinating to explore is whether this limitation of BMEs'/foreigners' independent action is based on

⁵⁷ Examples include the Human Rights Nights Festival, the Terra di Tutti Film Festival, and the It.A.Cá Festival.

bureaucratic and/or economic reasons, or on a more or less conscious limitation of such action by local governments.

8.3 Political participation and ‘legitimate’ collective identities

In the empirical chapters, I first looked into whether and how place-narratives describing Brighton and Bologna as diverse and receptive places touch upon migration and ethnic diversity. The second matter on which I focused was the political sector, to gauge through which channels and in which formations BMEs/foreigners can successfully participate in the local political sphere. I based this analysis on the Political Opportunity Structure framework (Tarrow 1996, Koopmans & Statham 2000, Koopmans 2004), studying the conditions according to which migrants can successfully present their claims in the receiving society. Tarrow (1996) identifies this structure in the channels, opportunities, associative forms, and/or thematic lines available to groups to participate in local politics.

The primary factor I examined was the policy language used in each of the two case studies, which follows from the national down to the local level. In Brighton, the City Council puts community cohesion at the basis of a peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups, which should theoretically touch all the members of society with equal intensity. However, in Chapter 5 I explain that the way this has been implemented in Britain has put a spotlight on the need and duty for BMEs to integrate into the white British majority rather than shaping it as a common and shared effort. Equality is a second principle guiding local policies, in the implementation of which I identified the influence of local place-narratives. Equality *per se* could refer to any sort of characteristic ascribable to human beings, including ethnicity. However, in the context of Brighton, a city associated with diversity of gender and sexuality and with

openness towards a flamboyant lifestyle, equality is implemented in accordance with the very dimensions that make the place it unique. The connection between policies and place-narratives lies, then, in the fact that this conception and use of equality does not follow any formal rule but is, on the contrary, almost spontaneously driven by the importance of gender and sexuality in local narratives. Respondent 2[BH/BMEs] pointed out this contradiction, explaining that:

‘Brighton has its board of people who voted...for equality. But at the same time they use the word equality for the LGBT there are reports of how they [the local government] treat the BME community.’

Bologna’s City Council refers to the notion of integration, which is actually considered both by some scholars (see Caneva 2014) and by my informants to lean more towards assimilation than integration. The difference lies in the strength of the dominant national identity to which migrants are supposed and required to adapt (see Castañeda 2018) and which leaves as ambiguous the possibility of retaining and showing one’s culture of origin. ‘Integration’ is the concept usually guiding reception plans for asylum seekers at both national and local levels, although it is also used for long-term settled migrants. In his book *A Place to Call Home*, Castañeda (2018) clarifies that integration does not exclusively refer to the

‘ability of newcomers and their offspring to interact on mostly fair and equal terms with established city residents’.

In fact, it also refers to material conditions, including the state’s political setup. Connecting this to Bologna’s place-narratives, highly focused on the city’s left-wing political allegiance, integration takes on a political connotation and appears connected not only to asylum seekers but to their temporary and exceptional situation. In both

cases, then, BMEs/foreigners appear as the category of people upon whom the duty of integration is placed.

Place-specific political language also determines the political formations through which BMEs/foreigners have more chances to succeed. Koopmans and Statham (2000) define Discursive Opportunity Structure as the framework affecting the collective identities considered legitimate for migrants, according to the local public discourse. Koopmans and Olzak (2004) identify a link between local public discourse and those collective identities, with this legitimacy paving the way for inclusion in local political and social life. In Brighton, a narrative of diversity placing the LGBTQ+ community at the very heart of the city's identity means that their collective identity is not only considered legitimate, but is also taken into account when designing local policies, such as those related to equality and anti-discrimination.

However, BME informants pointed out that gender and sexuality are not the only dimensions to consider, shifting the focus onto ethnicity. In Brighton, as all over Britain, race relation policies and multiculturalism have framed social groups in terms of majority and minorities and have classified people according to their ethnicity. Therefore, in Brighton it is accepted and common for people of non-White British descent to associate under the label of Black and Ethnic Minorities and, through those associations, to seek to participate in local politics and in the design of local policies. Ethnicity and race relations do not have the same importance in the Italian context, where the emphasis is on nationality. The make-up of foreigners' associations having their premises in the Centro Interculturale Zonarelli of Bologna reflects this framework, as it revolves around the nationality of the members.

Building on current literature, which analyses place-narratives separately from Political and Discursive Opportunity Structure, in my thesis I have uncovered the many

connections between them. I base this connection on the argument that they simultaneously work top-down and bottom-up. As explained before, local place-narratives influence perceptions of the issues affecting a city but also the ways in which local political language and principles are interpreted. However, examining BMEs'/foreigners' accounts, I have also identified the potential that their narratives have to influence the local sense of place. Their political action focuses on issues that might not be under the local government's spotlight and, through this, they can widen its scope, modifying the perceptions of the issues and needs of a place, the collective identities locally considered legitimate, and, ultimately, the local sense of place. For the sake of precision, I clarify that this dynamic is more evident in Brighton and I posit that the reason for this lies in the wider gap between institutional and grassroots narratives in that context.

The issues underlined so far uncover a gap in the way POS has been studied, relating to this framework's pathway dependency. Contrary to what the mainstream understanding of POS would suggest, there is no single outcome for migrant groups' political inclusion/participation based on the factors facilitating or preventing their claims being put forward. In the cases I examined, these factors and the institutional pathways through which people organise and discursively represent themselves do not necessarily converge. On the contrary, they diverge in unexpected ways.

My thesis contributes to reaching a more thorough understanding of the scholarship on POS by shedding light on those grey areas where the outcome does not follow from what the framework predicts. Concretely, I have demonstrated that the political sphere alone is not sufficient to explain migrants' inclusion/participation, this requiring the incorporation of cultural factors as place-narratives. Through a bifurcated research design that worked simultaneously from above and from below, I provided

strong evidence of the limitations of the POS approach using the cases of BMEs in Brighton and foreigners in Bologna. Adding my critique to other scholars' (Cappiali 2016, Lewicki 2017), I challenged the pathway dependency of POS, showing that its actual functioning includes more elements than previously theorised and that limiting our gaze to the political realm would not explain its complexity. Sense of place and place-specific narratives can indeed complete the understanding of how this dynamic of social inclusion and political participation unfolds, who is accepted, who is excluded, and why.

8.4 The 'side effects' of narratives on receptiveness: who is left out?

Throughout my data analysis and writing, I realised how important it was not only to report what the narratives revealed but also to pay attention to what they left out. Hall (1996) explains that the most efficient way to construct identity is in opposition to others, which in most of the cases involves ascribing positive traits to self and peers or members of the same group and negative traits to outsiders. Analysing Brighton's and Bologna's 'outsiders' as they emerged from my participants' accounts, it is possible to see that the division between who 'fits in' and who does not appears only in the accounts of local government representatives, and does not depend on autochthony but rather on adherence to and/or support of the local sense of place. As explained in the section above, paying attention to who is left out contributes to better understand of which factors actually make POS work in different local contexts, exploring beyond the strictly political realm to include narratives.

To be specific, in Brighton the native white working class is framed as close-minded and not appreciative of the city's 'open' and 'tolerant' character. On the contrary, they are depicted as hostile. Among the institutional informants, a few of them

(those working the closest to individuals in situations of marginality) suggested that this attitude is based on years-long economic deprivation, which has made them resentful of being allegedly ignored by the Council. Bologna's native families are equally described as extraneous to the local place-narratives. Their self-segregation takes place when they move out of the town centre to informally establish new natives-only neighbourhoods on the hills surrounding the city, while simultaneously being nostalgic for a past (which perhaps never existed) in which only Bolognese populated the city.

From this thought-provoking picture stem avenues for new research, which could consist of interviewing the 'left out' populations about their perception of sense of place. Identifying similarities and differences between their narratives and those reported in this thesis could open up valuable new insights for a wider-encompassing comprehension of the construction, reproduction, and influence of place-narratives.

Focusing on who is described as an outsider also helps to understand why certain choices are or are not made in terms of policies. This is my thesis' key contribution not only to the literature but also to policy-making. In Brighton, local place-narratives of receptiveness portray diversity as related to gender and sexuality and the urban environment as a safe place. As a consequence, hate crimes are narrated as 'abuses directed mostly against the LGBT community' and 'mostly committed by visitors' [Respondent 7 BH/institutions]. In Chapter 5, I argued that the construction of a narrative opposing tolerant Brightonian 'insiders' with aggressive 'outsiders' affects the perceived need for policies to tackle hate crime. Even if racially motivated hate crime and discrimination exist in Brighton, as in every other part of the world, this issue is certainly framed more often (and with more strength) along lines of gender and sexuality than along lines of race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, the grassroots narratives of Black/Caribbean informants point to the existence of institutional and street-level

discrimination, stressing the need to intervene on the issue. A division between institutional and grassroots narratives with respect to racism and hate crime can be gauged in Bologna as well, although this appears less sharply divided than in Brighton. Respondent 1[BO/foreigners]'s words concerning natives' spontaneous aggressive reactions on the street were followed by many similar accounts. However, according to institutional narratives, people living in Bologna are divided between those who reflect the 'character' of the town (Massey 1991) and are therefore open to newcomers and to new cultures, and those who dream of a past where the only people living in Bologna were autochthonous families. The second picture refers more (although not exclusively) to wealthy individuals, who actually represent the vast majority of families leaving the city centre for the hills surrounding the town.

The people described above are 'outsiders' because they do not comply with local place-narratives and/or with 'legitimate' collective identities, even though they are actually 'insiders' who were born and bred in the town from native families. The portrait of these categories of people as different from the character of the town (and more specifically as narrow-minded, isolated, and hostile toward diversity) logically makes them responsible for behaviours such as hate crime and racism, according to institutional narratives. According to this vision, only those who deviate from Brighton and Bologna's receptive character could drift towards those intolerant positions.

However, in this case it is more important than ever to consider the hidden side of this narrative, partially brought up by the Black/Caribbean informants in Brighton but not fully explored. In Brighton, hate crime was defined as 'directed mostly against members of the LGBT community' and committed 'mostly by outsiders' [Respondent 7 BH/institutions], which simultaneously implies that ethnically-motivated hate crime is not a big issue for the city. From the accounts of some BME informants, this is actually

not the case, and framing it as a marginal issue and as a problem caused by outsiders justifies the *status quo* of local policies. Bologna does not have an equally straightforward narrative about this, but simply framing the city as open and hospitable on political grounds subtly implies that hate crime should not be a big concern. Blaming a specific category of people for hate crime – be it EDL supporters coming to Brighton from the North of England on Saint George’s Day, the narrow-minded and resentful white working class, uneducated Bolognese residents in the backcountry, or wealthy Bolognese families living on the hills around the city – suggests that the acceptance of diversity associated with Brighton and Bologna is the acceptance of a myth that distracts from the actual existence of discrimination and racism. This also justifies the support of the policy *status quo*, because issuing new policies to tackle a problem that allegedly does not affect the city would appear nonsensical. This issue is common to a number of contexts. For instance, Castañeda (2018) identifies it in the French ‘colour-blind’ approach: since French authorities do not register individuals’ ethnicity in the national census, ‘policies designed to help minorities – such as affirmative action – are not only almost impossible there but also frowned upon as discriminatory.’

Fostering a narrative according to which Brighton and Bologna are open towards any kind of diversity and tolerant of people expressing it reflects only a partial truth and limits policies’ efficacy. While there are local government representatives and citizens who genuinely welcome diversity, the power of this narrative simultaneously obscures the need to tackle issues of discrimination, racism, and hate crime stemming from within the urban context. Considering and including BMEs/foreigners’ narratives and claims when designing or evaluating social policies would represent a perhaps painful but beneficial exercise to face some of the challenges affecting communities that do not receive as much attention as they deserve.

8.5 Comparing and connecting

The comparative design of this research constitutes an initial contribution, together with its connection with human geography and political sociology. Comparative research in the area of migration studies is not new *per se* (Tilly 1984, Castañeda 2018) but in this case it is innovative in the way it separates place-specific elements from reproducible factors within place-narratives. The comparison between two cities located in two different countries with two different migration histories and laws, but also with different political designs, has made it possible to understand that certain dynamics related to a city's narratives of receptiveness take place regardless of those elements.

The primary such dynamic concerns the creation, in institutional narratives, of a category of 'outsiders' who neither reflect the local sense of place nor act accordingly. It is not so relevant who these groups actually are; rather, what is crucial is that they are singled out for being the cause of hate crimes and racist episodes taking place in the city. Framing these groups as an external disturbance element simultaneously reinforces the narrative of Brighton or Bologna as a safe haven whose harmony is troubled from the outside. However, since the Council can intervene only on issues internal to the city, the current framing of it as a place where different group get along well justifies the acceptance of the *status quo* in the development of policies for both social inclusion and anti-discrimination.

This research also builds a bridge between two streams of literature focusing on two different areas: sense of place and place-narratives, representing the cultural side of the study, and Political and Discursive Opportunity Structure, representing the political side. Including both in my investigations firstly reflects the complex and simultaneous interplay of factors influencing the receptiveness of a city. Cultural and political factors

act on a city's receptiveness together and at the same time, both from above and from below. As cultural and political dynamics together influence both natives' attitudes towards foreigners and local government approaches, studying them together allowed me to develop a wide-encompassing and accurate picture of how cities' narratives of receptiveness are constructed and reproduced, and how they impact on the citizenry's everyday life.

Moreover, including both the narratives constructed by individuals in positions of power and those constructed by members of grassroots associations not only uncovers the power dynamics supporting mainstream place-narratives, but also shows BMEs/foreigners' own potential to influence these narratives. Through the analysis of this process, this thesis contributes to the literature on Discursive Opportunity Structure and uncovers a process of establishing 'legitimate' collective identities, developing according to a bottom-up approach. The interplay of cultural and political factors does not happen in a top-down direction alone, because bottom-up processes take place simultaneously and on an everyday basis.

In connection to this, another crucial contribution to theoretical knowledge my thesis makes is to enhance and improve the understanding of POS as a framework. Complicating the research picture with the cross-country comparison and the double level of analysis (from above and from below) uncovers the gaps in the mainstream theorisation of POS. This consequently explains why its predicted outcomes are not always correct. Adding cultural elements to the political ones, such as place-narratives, allows us instead to break free from POS' pathway dependence while understanding the reasons behind some categories' social incorporation and some others' exclusion.

Finally, this research is also relevant to policy-making, pointing out the contradictions embedded in 'receptive cities'. Policy types that could be informed by

these findings include social inclusion and anti-discrimination, which could be wider-encompassing if they took into account a more complete framing of diversity. Such cities, although certainly more receptive than the average and at least partially willing to live up to their reputation, have so far taken advantage of their own place-narratives to avoid engaging in a perhaps painful but much needed analysis of hate crime and intolerance within their own environment. This study could be a starting point for local governments to come together with different categories of residents (including, but not limited to, migrants) and to face these issues. This could ultimately address these obstacles not as disturbances coming from groups of outsiders but as embedded within a population that is only 'selectively' receptive.

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Appendix A



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET TEMPLATE

Caterina Mazzilli, PhD candidate in Migration Studies at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK

STUDY TITLE

“Receptive cities. Institutional narratives of migrants’ integration and everyday intercultural interactions in Bologna and Brighton”

INVITATION

Dear Madame/Sir,

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This project is part of my PhD research and the gathered data could be used for related publications. The title of the study is “Receptive cities. Institutional narratives of migrants’ integration and everyday intercultural interactions in Bologna and Brighton”. The overall aim of my research project is to understand according to which criteria a city can be considered receptive towards migrants. In order to reach this goal, I will unpack the meaning of receptiveness in the domains of local institutions and associations/organisation of and for migrants.

The fieldwork will be run for approximately one year, of which six months will be spent in Bologna, Italy and the other six in Brighton & Hove, UK.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been invited to participate because you meet some criteria relevant for the selection of the sample and/or because you have been recommended by existing study subjects.

You will be part of a 15-respondents group, but your interview will be individual and confidential, as explained in the Consent Form.

The first part of my fieldwork includes 2 groups of 15 interviewees each, and so does the second part. The first one includes 15 representatives of local institutions and policy-makers, while the second comprehends 15 among representatives and members of associations/organisation of migrants or fostering migrants’ integration. The overall number of respondents will therefore be 60.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a Consent Form. If you decide to take part you are still free to retreat at any time before and during the interview and without giving a reason. You are also free not to answer just some specific questions without giving a reason. In addition, it will be possible for you to ask to withdraw the given information until one month after the interview.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I TAKE PART?

To gather the data I need for a completion of the study I will use interviews, ethnographic observations and complementary pictures.

Concerning interviews, they will focus on the respondents' perception of Bologna/Brighton and Hove as a city, their community and everyday interactions between local and migrants. Of particular interest will be the idea of the local community and migrants' integration. I will cover both the institutional domain and social associations' realm. Each interview will last approximately one hour.

Concerning the ethnographic observation and the use of photographs, I will take some pictures during festivals and cultural events organised in Bologna/Brighton and Hove with the involvement of local institutions (support, sponsor, main or co-organisation). The aim of them is to portray snapshots of everyday forms of interaction between locals and migrants in the frame of an event celebrating ethnic diversity.

If you meet the relevant criteria (e.g. attending to one of these events), you might be asked to be portrayed in a picture. It could be included in my PhD thesis and used in related publications/presentations.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?

If you decide to take part in this study please consider that you will have to devote to it a part of your time, estimated to be approximately one hour.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

By taking part in this study, you will help me to understand how local institution act in the field of migrants' integration and to identify the local community's experiences, attitudes and concerns on the topic. In addition, a fruitful outcome of this research could be beneficial for the definition of effective policies for social inclusion.

WILL MY INFORMATION IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured all throughout the collection and publication of research material. Data will be stored in secure computer files protected by a password known just by the researcher.

While reporting the information in the PhD thesis, I will make sure to de-identify all the data which can lead back to individual informants.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I WANT TO TAKE PART?

If you feel like taking part at the study, you can either call me, send me a text or an email with your contact details and I will get back to you in two days. My email address is c.mazzilli@sussex.ac.uk and my phone number is +44(0)5792522664/+393406827896.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?

The results of my research will be published in anonymised form in in my PhD thesis and in related publications and presentations.

WHO IS ORGANISING THE RESEARCH?

I am conducting this research as a PhD candidate of the University of Sussex's School of Global Studies.

WHO HAS APPROVED THIS STUDY?

It has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC).

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to have any further information or clarification, you are very welcome to contact me by email or phone. My email address is c.mazzilli@sussex.ac.uk and my phone number is +44(0)5792522664/+393406827896.

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you can contact my supervisors, Doctor Laura Moroşanu, at the University of Sussex's School of Law, Politics and Sociology (l.morosanu@sussex.ac.uk) and/or Professor Paul Statham, at the University of Sussex's School of Global Studies (p.statham@sussex.ac.uk).

University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

In closing, I would like to thank you very much for taking time to read the information sheet.

Date

7th May 2015

Signature

Caterina Mazzilli

Appendix B



CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE: Receptive cities
 Institutional narratives of migrants integration and everyday
 intercultural interactions in Bologna and Brighton

Project Approval ER/CM517/1
 Reference:

First part

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex's research project. I understand that it is part of Caterina Mazzilli's PhD research with the title of "Receptive cities. Institutional narratives of migrants integration and everyday intercultural interactions in Bologna and Brighton" and that the information I provide will be used for its completion and for related publications/presentations. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be audio taped
- Let the researcher use a computer to take notes of the most relevant parts of the interview

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that, to prevent my identity from being made public, the researcher will de-identify the information I give and make impossible to link it with me.

I understand that, if required by me at the end of the interview, I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before being included in the write up of the research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can retreat before and during the interview without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. In addition, I understand that it will be possible for me to ask the researcher to withdraw the information I have given her until one month after the interview.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Second part

I understand that the interview in which I will take part might need a follow-up session. Therefore, I understand that signing this part of the form means that I am willing to:

- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Third part

I understand that the researcher might rely on the use of some pictures as a complementary research method. Therefore, I understand that signing this part of the form means that I am willing to:

- Been portrayed in a picture taken by the researcher, which can be included in the PhD thesis and used in related publications/presentations

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name:

Signature:

Date:
