

# BLEND to STANDING OUT





**POLITECNICO**  
**MILANO 1863**

**An investigation of the “communal living” role in  
Southern Asian young generation life in Milan**

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# Table of the content

Abstract . . . . .	V
Introduction . . . . .	VI
<b>Chapter-01 Literature review . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Communal living definitions . . . . .	2
1.2 Multi-dimensional analysis of young generation . . . . .	5
1.3 Milan as a transient city. . . . .	9
1.4 Milan and its students. . . . .	12
1.5 Criteria of choice. . . . .	14
<b>Chapter-02 Methodology . . . . .</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter-03 Field research . . . . .</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 Coliving Lambrate . . . . .	27
3.1.1 Spatial features. . . . .	30
3.1.2 Actors. . . . .	34
3.1.3 Rules/ Services . . . . .	35
3.1.4 Practices . . . . .	36
3.2 The Isaac Newton Residency . . . . .	43
3.2.1 Spatial features. . . . .	46
3.2.2 Actors . . . . .	48
3.2.3 Rules/ Services . . . . .	49
3.2.4 Practices . . . . .	50
3.3 Camplus Sesto San Giovanni . . . . .	58
3.3.1 Spatial features. . . . .	60
3.3.2 Actors. . . . .	62
3.3.3 Rules/ Services . . . . .	63
3.3.4 Practices . . . . .	64

<b>Chapter-04 Interviews . . . . .</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter-05 Interpretation . . . . .</b>	<b>77</b>
5.1 The Role of communal living in the Lives of Young Southern Asians in Milan	78
5.1.1 Interpretation through the lens of the literature. . . . .	78
5.1.2 Interpretation through the lens of the interviews and case studies . . . . .	78
5.2 Suggestions . . . . .	86
5.2.1 Policy intervention . . . . .	86
5.2.2 Architectural intervention . . . . .	90
<b>Conclusion . . . . .</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Bibliography . . . . .</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Appendix . . . . .</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Appendix A: Interviews transcription . . . . .</b>	<b>106</b>
Interview 01: Male- Indian . . . . .	106
Interview 02: Male- Indian . . . . .	110
Interview 03: Male- Indian . . . . .	113
Interview 04: Male- Iranian . . . . .	116
Interview 05: Female- Iranian . . . . .	119
Interview 06: Male- Iranian . . . . .	122
Interview 07: Female- Iranian . . . . .	126
Interview 08: Male- Italian . . . . .	129
Interview 09: Male- Italian . . . . .	132
Interview 10: Male- Iranian . . . . .	135
Written interview 01: Male- Italian . . . . .	136
Anonymous expert interview 01 . . . . .	138
<b>Appendix B: Questionnaire . . . . .</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Appendix C: Further Research . . . . .</b>	<b>141</b>

## Abstract

The housing crisis in Milan has been exacerbated in recent years, particularly for students from South Asian countries who have become among the prominent new arrivals in this city. Despite this group's significant population and human capital, research studies have primarily neglected their importance. Previous studies on housing have mainly focused on local students or other immigrant groups, leading to a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by South Asian students.

This situation has pushed young people to share their accommodations with others to manage the financial crisis. One of the standard models of shared housing is multicultural communal living. Universities, social housing, and the market are three different providers that offer these structures.

This study addresses this knowledge gap by conducting in-depth interviews with South Asian students and analyzing three case studies offered by different housing providers mentioned above. The study seeks to understand the cultural backgrounds, current situation and challenges this South Asian students faces, as well as the influential factors that affect their financial and social lives.

By combining qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study proposes policy and spatial design suggestions that promote more compatibility and positive interactions among residents from diverse cultural backgrounds. The findings of this study have the potential to contribute to a better understanding of the housing crisis in Milan and inform policy makers and housing providers' decisions to improve the living conditions of South Asian students coming to Milan.

*Keywords: communal living; coliving; compatibility; social interaction; Young generation.*

## Introduction

Regarding urban affordability, sustainability, solidarity, and well-being, housing is a crucial policy concern in Europe. The affordability issue drastically affects city dwellers, leading them to risk exclusion, especially those already financially and socially vulnerable. On the other hand, Europe is facing depression problems, mainly resulting in loneliness. Although cities become increasingly cramped and dense as urbanization rises, people feel more alone and disconnected. There is less community development and fewer networks with weaker links. The loneliest generation is determined to be young people, and loneliness and isolation result in severe risks to public health.

The built environment contributes significantly to developing new relationships and social capital. Cities and urban professionals have thus been challenged with building visually yet compact urban residential zones that emphasize interpersonal interaction and a feeling of community. Urban residential complexes that strongly emphasize community and sharing are attracting more attention. Nowadays, even real estate developers are creating more house plans with communal areas, shared rooftops, tool libraries, and more where social interaction increases.

Traditionally, communal living displays several new urbanist traits regarding its goals and design principles. It works toward achieving social goals like fostering a sense of belonging, promoting conversation, and fostering friendly environments and various collective experiences for the vulnerable population, such as young immigrants. Thus, it may reduce social segregation in the urban dimension, at least between people with high human capital and diverse cultures.

The communal living contribution does not limit to the social dimension. It has the potential to reduce consumption, improve environmental sustainability, and create dense urban places that are mixed-use, efficient with space, pedestrian-friendly, and have the opportunity for pleasurable interaction. However, the environmental aspect of communal living is out of the interest of this research.

Besides unaffordability and loneliness, Urban planners and local stakeholders are looking for solutions to problems driven by the immigrant influx in several European cities. Housing plays a crucial role also in determining the strategies adopted to integrate immigrants since immigration flows increasingly aim to settle on the territory permanently. Deciding on the method used to incorporate immigrants becomes increasingly essential since the immigration flow is increasingly oriented toward residing permanently on the territory.

This study investigates the definition and characteristics of the effective coliving type of communal living in Milan and its contribution to groups of immigrants' financial and social situations. Young South Asian individuals are the subjects of this research study for several reasons, including the fact that there is a shortage of case studies in the previous academic research that addresses this issue. There is hardly any empirical data regarding the social effects of living in an intercultural community among the local young generation and Southern Asian Students.

It focuses on young people, particularly students with high human capital, who are highly vulnerable and surprisingly neglected. The young individuals members come from Southern Asian countries, where you can find similar cultural patterns among them.

Nonetheless, the presence of this group may be helpful not only for Southern Asian Students but also for shrinking countries like Italy, where the population is dramatically getting old and needs a new wave of immigrants with high socioeconomic potential.

In this context, communal living, particularly the coliving type of living, a non-traditional kind of housing, comes into play as an alternative to conventional housing to elevate the socioeconomic standing of young people, both for Italian and young immigrants.

Notably, the research investigates the compatibility and interaction between tenants rather than social integration. In other words, the scope differs from integration Strategies for People who have just recently arrived in the host culture. First, because they have passed a childhood period in which they can adapt to the new culture. Second, most of them do not want to stay in Italy.

Although coliving is a new phenomenon, it is possible to find helpful literature regarding the coliving type of living to describe the phenomenon. The purpose of this investigation is to provide explanations rather than descriptions. Therefore, as the most meaningful part of the study, there are interviews to collect the qualitative data, followed by a questionnaire producing quantitative and qualitative data in a wider statistical population. In the further step, the quantitative data are collected from three different case studies provided by three different coliving providers to describe the coliving habitation in Milan.

Finally, we have an open-ended conclusion explaining how and what kind of coliving is helping or will help our South Asian young individual to have a better socioeconomic home life in the coliving type of living in Milan.

## Personal involvement background

The research aims to investigate this vast research gap in the academic section and mainstream existing in European Society and academic sectors. For years the Euro centrism perspective has been permanent in western academics and societies about third-world countries. This study also sheds light on the actual situation of young people from South Asia, including Iran. As mentioned above, the study investigates if shared living in the coliving contest between students from South Asia with Italians works, what are the influential factors and how it can be improved. However, the first thing to understand is to find compatibility between these groups.

The case of Iran is captivating at this historical moment. It is my responsibility as Iran to describe to the young people of Iran, particularly generation Z, what is happening in Iran and why it is highly connected to our subject.

The “Women, Life, Freedom” revolution started in Iran shows the world a different perspective of the young generation of Iranians. Their values and desires are not much different from the western world. The hijab, previously considered a part of a nation’s culture, today is being burnt as a symbol of revolution. The “Allah” -an Arabic Islamic emblem meaning God -is being removed from the flag by revolutionaries. However, what is actually going on in Iran?

We live in a post-modern global world, and the national and continental borders are fading. Judging a society based on its authority, nationality, history, and even historical culture becomes a superficial analysis. Iran has been judged by its theocratic regime for years; historically, the clerics in Iran were not popular (Abrahamian, 1982). As (Bayat, 2007) State:

*“Islamic revolution” makes sense basically in terms of the outcome and not in terms of the process; in other words, historically speaking, in Iran in the 1970s, there was not a robust Islamic movement in society to serve as the ideological basis of an Islamic revolution”.*

Apart from different historical backgrounds, which western countries have always misunderstood, the rising of radical generation Z has disturbed all equations that existed in society and authority. Iran’s rising Generation Z at the forefront of protests shows a significant generational gap between the dominant theoretical Islamic regime, the previous generations, and Generation Z regarding social, moral, ethical, religious, and political principles. The difference between the life values of this generation and the world they live in is one of the leading causes of their anger and rebellion.

In fact, the constant anti-imperialist propaganda from the Islamic regime to destroy the image of western culture has had an adverse reaction. This contrary effect has resulted in the young generation’s deep interest in western culture. Like, in a society where you can hardly find a native English speaker, the English language is widely spoken by the young generation.

This generation, which has always had access to the Internet and content of the free world since childhood, has a mental image of a world and a “normal” life in its mind, which has nothing to do with anything in the world they actually experience. This rage has become even more robust due to the significant gap between their values and those of previous generations and authority. One of the main reasons for this gap is the shift in the source of education from institutions and families to digital information, mainly the Internet, resulting in more rebellions and riots.

Unlike previous generations in Iran who are used to accepting cruelty exposed by authority or families, this younger generation has the bravery to question authority. They do not believe in the red lines set by society or the regime. They are not ready to take for granted the holiness, whether religion, the country’s rules, and regulations, families, social norms, or anything else.

Plus, politically speaking, this generation has grown up with famous, courageous protests, namely (Iranian Green Movement, s.d.) And (2019–2020 Bloody Aban, s.d.). Thus, they are braver than their previous generations and believe in themselves to remove the dictators. This high self-esteem resulted in a leaderless revolution. In other words, they do not search for a leader to help them from either outside or inside. It is noteworthy to mention that fluid identity is prominent in this generation. They have high cross-cultural competencies and English fluency, enabling them to contact their peers in the world, mainly the western world, who are more sensitive to human rights and more into progressive movements like “Women, Life, Freedom.” Since their identity is more fluid than previous generations, they can communicate better with other young people. Rapid online communication is helping them in various ways; for example, it enables them to create different groups in various neighborhoods in big cities for protests rather than creating one grand march.

However, despite all their efforts, due to the existence of long-term political deadlock, social censorship, etc., The social scientists are pessimistic about Iran’s future, and there is no clear vision of the future of Iran, even in the case of a revolution.

Therefore, we will probably face even more emigration of generation Z to the western world to find their “normal” life, particularly in Italy.

Communal living can financially and socially contribute to young students with high human capital from an almost bankrupt country. I hope my study contributes to the future Iranian young generation coming to Milan.

# Chapter-01 Literature review



These communal areas often consist of kitchens, living rooms, work areas, extensive terraces, and utility rooms like laundries. Coliving places are more likely to share a common area, enabling a higher level of interaction inside the cohousing equivalent.

Spatially speaking, a private space for a dweller in the coliving consists of a room with a bed or a private bathroom. With this definition, the university structure that offers single or double rooms to students with large kitchens and communal space is also considered coliving (Figure 2).

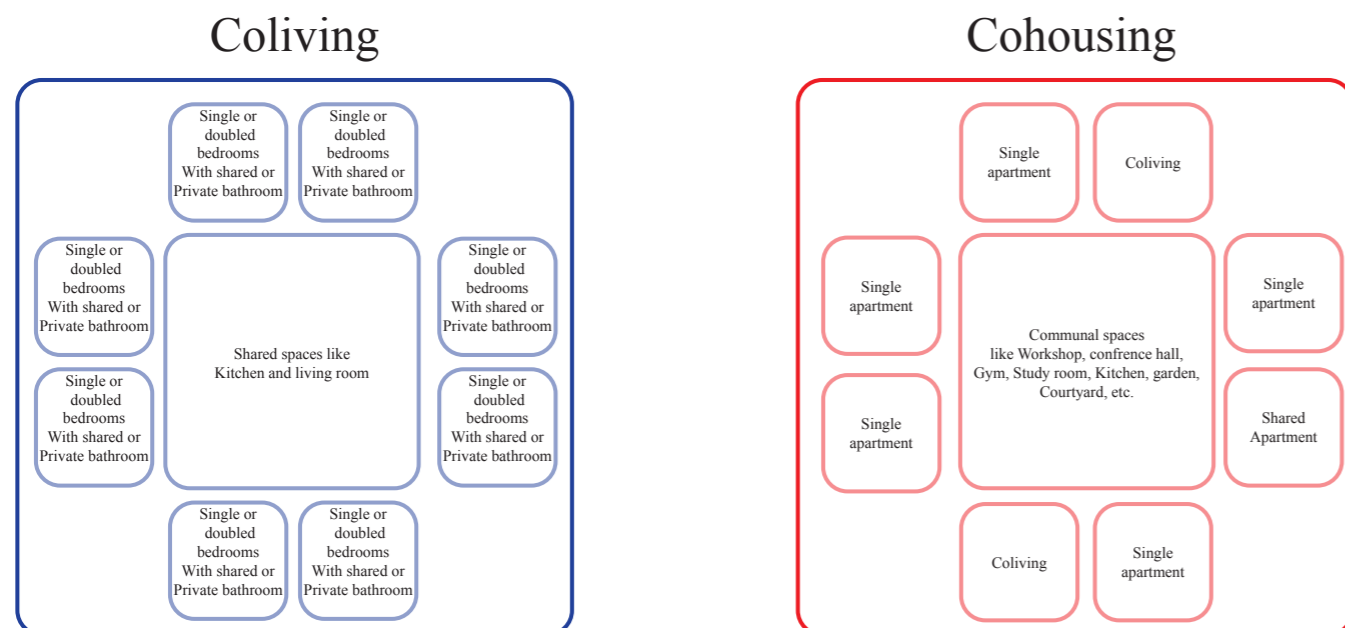


Figure 2 Coliving and Cohousing architectural layout

Note: Illustrated by author

## 1.2 Multi-dimensional analysis of young generation

The thesis topic focuses on young people with different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, understanding the young generation is essential. It should be noted that the “young generation” is intended for people between 18-35 who are demographically considered generation X and Z.

These generations were the second and third wave of individuals after generation Y. They were raised and educated at the age of technological growth.; They are highly skilled in technology and, Unsurprisingly, swiftly use new digital tools and have a flexible attitude toward social change, both in terms of the digital revolution and cultural diversity acceptance. Hence, they might be the potential group welcoming new immigrants.

They tend to resolve conflict and improve the world through discourse, cultural debate, negotiation, etc. They are more open-minded, open to accepting differing viewpoints and lifestyles, and respect the previous generation.

According to (Semuels, 2015)and (Mairs, 2016), the millennial generation is now at a stage of life known as “extended adolescence” or “emerging adulthood” This is evident in the rising marriage age and conventional “settling down” and their reluctance to property ownership (Fuller, 2015). During this stage of their lives, most millennial dwell in tiny houses or rent apartments with their peers while working in large cities. Their explorative and transitive journeys mostly happen in their 20s. However, their aging ranges are relative and may differ based on their culture, nationalities, etc.

### Multi-dimensional analysis of the young generation in western Europe countries

The post-Fordist life has significantly influenced the family structure both socially and financially. A new socio-economic situation is replacing the usual life-course regime for the industrial society due to such social transformation, particularly in the neo-liberal era after the 1970s. The 1970s witnessed several changes indicated by proponents of post-Fordism, including the decline of the traditional male breadwinner family structure, the expansion of opportunities for recurrent education, the modification and growth of vocational training, delaying family formation, extended schooling, extended adulthood Figure 3 low birth rate (Figure 4) and an increase in the divorce rate.

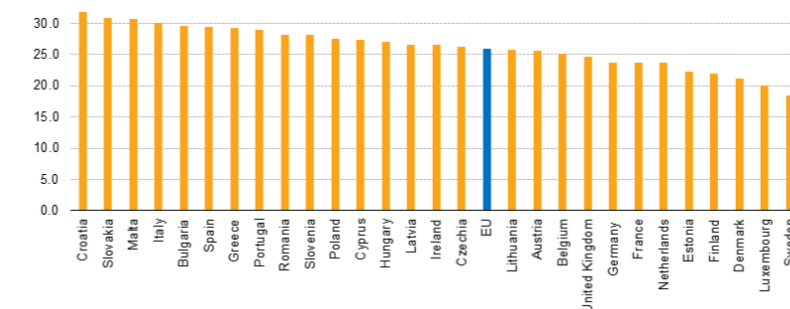


Figure 3 The Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household,2018

Note : From Eurostat [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Age\\_of\\_yung\\_people\\_leaving\\_their\\_parental\\_household](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Age_of_yung_people_leaving_their_parental_household)

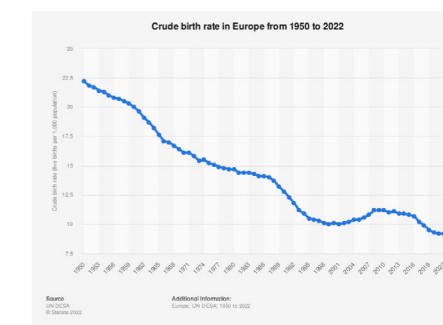


Figure 4 Crude birth rate in Europe from 1950 to 2022

Note: from “Statista.com(<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1251516/crude-birth-rate-in-europe/>)

Furthermore, contemporary society, especially in recent years, is practicing a new type of family complexity; non-residential Partnership, Divorced parents, same-sex cohabitation, and Mixed status family (Sabatinelli, 2020), which fundamentally influences the concept of family. Even more interesting, millennia in western society have been exploring and developing new types of relationships based on the new perception of gender identity, sexuality, and polygamy resulting in a complete change in family structure and relationships. This revolutionary change in family structure undoubtedly creates new demand for housing.

Also, in this period, western countries have experienced a minimized separation between work and life. The change from mass manufacturing to a knowledge-based economy has had far-reaching effects on social, organizational, and institutional structures (Castells, 1989; Freeman, 1991; Geels, 2002; Kemp, 1994; Perez, 1983; 2004). New social settings are the product of concurrent tendencies supported by the knowledge economy, especially the merging of work and personal life (Lewis, 2003).

The social boundary between work and life brought by industrial capitalism is starting to fade and become less clear-cut or even vanish entirely. Evaluations of this trend suggest that workers’ increasing autonomy in establishing their own hours and workplace norms has contributed to the breakdown of the traditional divide between work and personal life(Lewis, 2003).



Merging the professional and personal life resulted in new housing types, responding to the new demands for people working differently. The coliving trend could adequately respond to merging professional and personal lifestyles by providing more flexible spaces and management.

Another important advent is the emergence of the sharing economy. The increasing behavior of the younger generation drives the older ones toward a shift in consumption; we now speak of the prospect of access as opposed to ownership. Generation Y and Z have shifted our perceptions of the services we can demand (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016). In today's world, younger generations place high importance on the accessibility of a wide variety of information sources to do detailed research before purchasing. The purchased items themselves and how they were consumed must be investigated.

According to (Mairs, 2016), On the one hand, companies such as Netflix are pushing the boundaries of expectations of entertainment services. On the other hand, they are driving the real estate market toward a business model centered on providing a service as well.

*In every industry, you've got an ownership model and you've got a service model. The property market doesn't have that. We realized there's a gap in the market for a new way of living, which we somewhat coined the name "coliving" to reflect it (Mairs, 2016).*

Unsurprisingly, coliving, like other services, follows the sociological, economic, spiritual, and technical advancements of the same period that significantly affected our lifestyle choices and drove us to redefine our concept of home. Therefore, the contemporary coliving movement is linked firmly with the emerging sharing economy. We are witnessing a shift away from consumption and towards a peer-to-peer bias. Moreover, the advent of the Internet has made it easier than ever for individuals to purchase assets directly from one another. Contemporary coliving communities reflect a revitalized societal trend toward resource sharing, which is also a direct response to rising housing costs, dwindling environmental resources, social isolation in the digital age, and the millennial perspective that places the highest value on experiences.

Finally, we could conclude that the business strategy known as "space as a service" includes coliving as an essential component. The supply of a managed geographical area as a commodity that can be rented out is meant by the term "space as a service." In this setup, the area is rented out and maintained by people and organizations responsible for maintaining its cleanliness, organizing events, and providing users with general assistance (Mairs, 2016).

It is vital to mention that this situation is still more prevalent among Southern Asian Students due to more significant financial challenges. Due to their higher level of uncertainty and lower sense of belonging, they perceive the new location-based services as transient rather than permanent assets.

### Multi-dimensional analysis of Southern Asian young generation in Milan

In recent years, Milan, with high-ranked universities with a variety of courses in the English language, job opportunities, and easy access to the country of origin, etc., Has become a popular destination for students from west and south Asia, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

Data type: annual inflows of non-EU citizens										
Territory: Milano										
Gender: total										
Select time	2018			2019			2020			
	Reason	work	family	study	work	family	study	work	family	study
<b>Most relevant Country of citizenship</b>										
Turkey		33	105	472	41	87	381	20	50	140
Georgia		3	39	29	1	28	39	5	17	8
Iran		28	49	319	14	41	271	11	22	211
Iraq		2	9	3	1	..	4	..	2	2
Lebanon		4	8	90	4	16	68	3	8	28
Syria		1	37	15	..	17	11	1	7	9
Afghanistan		..	17	2	..	20	2	..	8	2
Bangladesh		3	972	5	11	978	6	13	518	2
India		186	262	671	166	180	610	59	130	332
Pakistan		20	747	71	12	663	47	18	381	34
Sri Lanka		10	974	4	12	721	3	8	353	4

Figure 5 Annual resident permit issue for middle eastern and southern Asian people resident permit in Milan  
 Note: from "Italian National Institute of Statistics" (<https://www.istat.it/it/popolazione-e-famiglie?dati>)

"Indo-Iranian peoples, also known as Indo-Iranic peoples by scholars, and sometimes as Arya or Aryans from their self-designation, were a group of Indo-European peoples who brought the Indo-Iranian languages, a major branch of the Indo-European language family, to major parts of Eurasia in the second part of the 3rd millennium BCE. They eventually branched out into Iranian and Indo-Aryan peoples, predominantly in the geographical subregion of South" (Wikipedia, s.d.).

The interlocutors is chosen from Southern Asia because they expose similar cultural patterns in many ways. When talking of Southern Asia geographically, we refer to a sub-regional division based on the United Nations geoscheme(Figure 6).



Figure 6 Statistical sub-regions as defined by the UNSD  
 Note: Adapted from <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/#geo-regions>

For a long time, one of the most significant issues has been the state of relations between Iranian and Indo-Aryan peoples, who are referred to collectively as the Indo-Iranians. We can see how similar these communities are by exploring the cultural, social, political, and economic linkages that bind them and their ties to one another historically and contemporaneously (Tagliacozzo, 2009). As seen in Figure 7, they share a common language as one of the most critical factors in cultural similarities. As demonstrated in the figure 7, one of the most significant factors for their cultural pattern similarities is that they mostly speak the same language or vice versa.

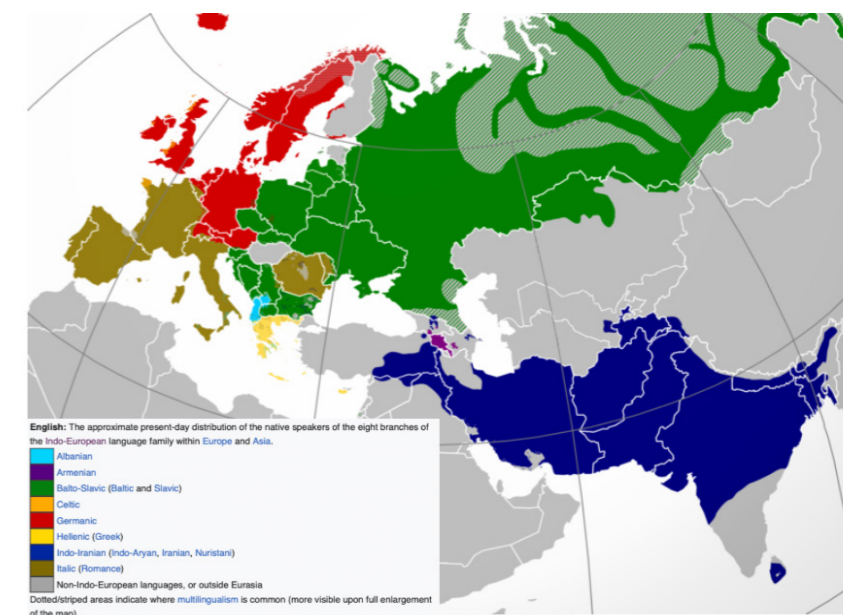


Figure 7 The approximate present-day distribution of the native speakers of the eight branches of the Indo-European language family  
 Note: from "Glottolog 4.6" (<https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/indo1319>)

Along with cultural background, these students mostly come from the same social class, mainly from the middle or upper middle class, and follow the same goal. They are not entirely unfamiliar with western culture and lifestyles, contrary to the mainstream that exists in western societies (Rasoul Sadeghi, 2018). Regarding financial issues, most Southern Asian Students struggle to live in Milan. These youngsters could neither gain enough money nor financial aid from their families.

The former reason is their lower capacity and higher imitation than local people: language and cultural barriers, discrimination, immigration rules, etc. For example, Non-EU Students are permitted to work just part-time (DECRETO DEL PRESIDENTE DELLA REPUBBLICA, 1999), and hopefully, if they find it, despite their high social capital level, their position would be precarious as they are non-EU international students since Italy has one of the highest rates of discrimination on the job regarding ethical discrimination (Zegers de Beijl & Roger, 2000).

They also feel discrimination in the housing market; for instance, these groups may be denied a mortgage, face higher fees, or even be subject to guarantees from real estate agents, depending on their ethnic background. Particularly, Iranian students have problems opening bank accounts due to the recent sanctions imposed by the United States government. (Bastianelli, 2020). The latter is because of the low value of Currencies in these countries. For instance, according to the (Iranian National Institute of Statistics, 2019), the average annual income of families in Iran in urban areas in the best scenario is around 2500 Euros. Compared to their Italian pioneers, Italy's national students have at least financial support from their families (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016).

Regarding the social dimension, these groups from entirely different cultural backgrounds need even more to integrate into the host culture. These newcomers tend to feel despaired, homesick, stressed, and culturally shocked. To prevent these mental illnesses and help them improve their personal and professional life, they should be gradually integrated into Western culture, especially the Italian one. It becomes even more critical since most do not aim to return to their original countries. For example, according to (Salavati, 2021), only six percent of students tend to return to Iran after graduation.

Therefore, acquiring the language and cultural knowledge and respecting the civic duties of the host society is a must. Therefore, Intercultural communal life is presumed to be a context in which many informal forms of social assistance and mutual education occur. However, these groups may not be as many as other typologies of immigrants; they could play a more critical role in the socioeconomic situation of Milan due to their higher level of education and human capital.

In short, despite their importance and difficulties, they have not received enough attention in urban policies and the academic sector. The concentration in academia and governmental sides mainly concentrates on the most vulnerable immigrants, while third-world international students' concerns are obscure.

### 1.3 Milan as a transient city

As (Filandri, Olagnero, & Semi, 2020) mentioned correctly, "we are a country of owners." As shown in Figure 8, most of the rental housing stock is owned by Italian nuclear families, while government-owned property makes up just 21% of the total. In the homeowner country, this situation mainly affects vulnerable people such as immigrants, especially recently arrived people such as students, because the rental sector is too small, especially regarding social housing.

Besides the property system, the recession in 2008 significantly reduced housing affordability in European countries, with rents increasing by 70% and home prices rising by 20% between 1998 and 2007 (Italy's central bank, 2010). However, it influences both the owner and renter sides. For the first time, compliance has been considerably reduced in the owner-occupied sector's coverage. The situation has become grave in the rental sector due to the worsening conditions of tenants and steps to liberalize the rental market, which have led to increased rental prices.

According to (Cognetti, 2017), home ownership, which was traditionally considered a stability factor, is now a driver of crisis due to the new temporariness of the personal journey of individuals. In contemporary cities like Milan and based on factors previously mentioned, the request for access to the house is given in dramatically different terms than before (Balducci & Rabaiotti, 2001). Nowadays, in the contemporary period, with high globalization, sharing culture, and economy, people tend to access the house rather than own it.

However, policies at the national level continue to encourage ownership. For example, the Draghi government promoted new benefits for young people for the purchase of their first home by canceling the tax registration and interest on the mortgage, with the possibility of guaranteeing up to 80% for households with ISEE up to 40 thousand euros, approved by the Council of Ministers at the beginning of May 2021. (Bernardi, Cognetti, & Delera, 2021). Moreover, even worse, the new Meloni government is working on almost the same policy, even for the second house.

The concepts of temporariness and detachment from the place are the fundamental characteristics of contemporary cities in the modern globalized world. This hyper mobility is dominant in highly attractive countries such as Italy.

Italy has been exposed to Extensive migratory flows in the last few decades. With approximately 5.2 million immigrant residents (Italian National Institute of Statistics, 2022), this country ranks fourth in the European union among nations with the highest immigrant populations, behind Germany, France, and Spain. The Northern Regions continue to be the leading choice for newcomers, mainly due to the intense need for labor from northern-based businesses and the wide range of university choices within the English language courses. Based on (the Italian National Institute of Statistics, n.d.) in Table 2, the provincial ranking concerning the number of temporary and foreign residents shows the more extensive metropolitan areas and the Centre-North of Italy as having the highest concentration of immigrants.

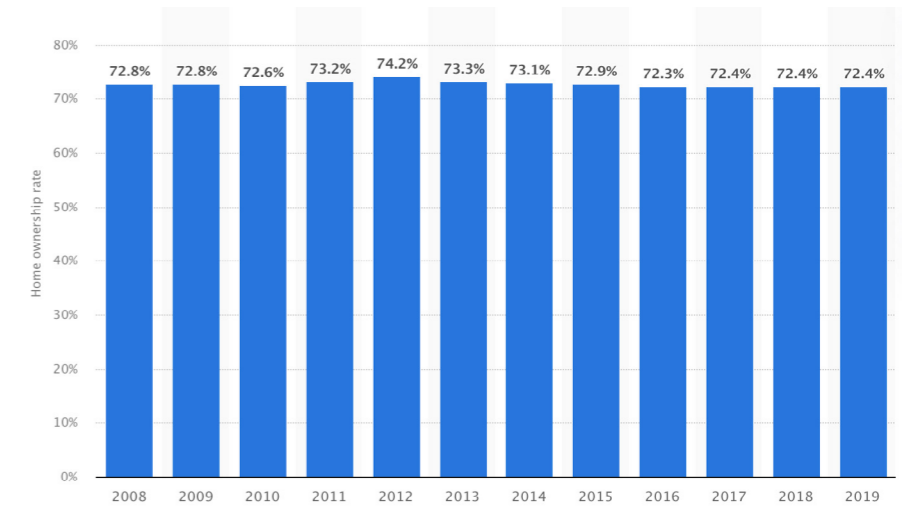


Figure 8 Home-ownership rate in Italy from 2008 to 2019

Note: from "Statista.com" (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/543402/house-owners-among-population-italy/>)

Tipo dato	permessi di soggiorno al 1° gennaio									
Sesso	totale									
Selezione periodo	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Tipo di permesso	con scadenza									
<b>Territorio</b>										
Italia	1741501	1718574	1695119	1681169	1592698	1458656	1421775	1402590	1333665	1200549
Nord-ovest	617384	601810	594115	583953	561555	491986	486473	486541	471594	431668
Lombardia	437307	423079	422302	415167	396410	337889	336516	341455	331273	303996
Milano	215672	214459	221159	222542	213371	179308	179889	185319	178949	155820

Figure 9 The residency permit issue from 2012 to 2021

Note: from "Italian National Institute of Statistics" (<http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=4220>)

In addition to the external immigration, the north of Italy has faced massive immigration from the country's south. Following World War II, Italy saw a significant influx of people moving from southern areas to the country's northern regions. More than two million people relocated to the north, most of whom made a permanent home for themselves there. The rapid growth of northern manufacturing, coupled with the socioeconomic divide, significantly impacted migration dynamics. Migration from the south to the north has been a defining characteristic of Italian civilization since the beginning of the 20th century, and likely even before unification (Treves, 1976). Therefore, North Italy has become a popular spot for external and internal immigration.

First, it should be mentioned that when we say "the city of Milan" or "Milan," we intend urban areas within the city of Milano divided into nine zones (Figure 10). The focused area is considered within the borders due to its popularity among students, especially those from South Asia.

In addition to the external immigration, the north of Italy has faced massive immigration from the country's south. Following World War II, Italy saw a significant influx of people moving from southern areas to the country's northern regions. More than two million people relocated to the north, most of whom made a permanent home for themselves there.

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First, it should be mentioned that when we say "the city of Milan" or "Milan," we intend urban areas within the city of Milano divided into nine zones (Figure 10). The focused area is considered within the borders due to its popularity among students, based on different reasons indicated further.

In Milan, individual families own over 632000 of the city's properties, which accounts for almost 80 percent of the total. However, just over 121000 are dedicated to renting (Figure 12). On the other hand, the ratio of public to private participation is relatively close when looking at the ownership structure of non-family businesses, with just over 80000 available (Figure 11) accommodations for renting (Nomisma, 2020).

The young generation tends to live within the city's boundaries due to the city's various attractions. According to a survey (Nomisma, 2020), Young people choose smaller apartments closer to the city center than larger ones on the outskirts. The primary grounds for their favor include the city's dynamic setting, developed infrastructure, qualified spatial qualities, brightness, livability, and low operating costs. According to the statistics provided by Istat, the portion of the rental market in Milan began at 22,5% from the city center and decreased to 13,3% as one moved toward the city's outskirts.

Regarding housing conditions, Milan has turned the city into one of the most particular cities in Europe. As mentioned before, the high ownership rate in Milan makes it difficult for public actors to stabilize the housing market. In the region of Lombardy, the public authority only owns thirty percent of the public housing unit, which is low compared to that of countries in the Nordic and Western regions. However, it is greater than that of other regions in Italy.

The rental market has found new phenomena through the "super hosts" platforms now widely spread throughout Europe. These multi-owners manage more than twenty real estate ads for short-term rental, typically with subletting contracts. They have seen considerable growth in their turnover in Milan alone in the last eight years (Bernardi, Cognetti, & Delera, 2021). On the demand-driver side, the "super host" success of short-term rental is mainly due to the transient feature of Milan. On the supply side, however, temporary sub-contracts are highly popular due to the avoidance of property maintenance and payment depth (Bernardi, Cognetti, & Delera, 2021).



Figure 10 The City of Milan  
Note: Adopted from adobestock.com

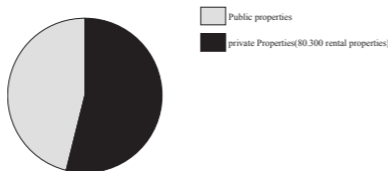


Figure 11 Private/ Public ratio in legal person ownership (Big owners)  
Note: from "Nomisma. It"

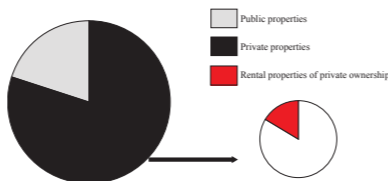


Figure 12 Public/private ratio and Rental/ non-rental properties ration  
Note: Adapted from "Nomisma.it"

The definition of Meni is the basis for our use of the term "transient city" in the first place:

"A transient city is "the notion that people come here to work for a few years and then move on to where they'll spend the rest of their lives" (Meni, 2016).

Frequent residence movement is often linked to socio-economic situations regarding lifestyle, well-being, and, more importantly, education. This is particularly true in the case of the city of Milan. Residential movement drivers may be either voluntary or involuntary or seem voluntary but spontaneously involuntary and could result from different factors: Relationship elements including marriage, divorce, and new patterns of the family (Clark & Huang, 2003), which is already explained in the post-Fordism section; Economic situation, like employment opportunities (Clark & Withers, 1999) again has previously been discussed; Educational opportunities, touristification, housing situation (Phinney, 2013). These factors are changing quality, period and method of access, and compatibility with family resources (Cognetti, 2017).

For example, a significant portion of this population comprises non-resident students enrolled in universities in the area, which has increased progressively. Milan universities and academies have about 220,000 students enrolled, of which 110,000 are out-of-town students, 10% of whom are foreigners. In the academic year 2021-2022 alone, there were 17 thousand new enrolments, i.e., 13% more than the previous year (Figure 13).

Another significant component of the temporary population that affects housing demand and supply is represented by tourist flows. Milan is a popular tourist destination in Italy. The city has undergone a process of "touristification" in recent years, which has led to an increase in tourism and a rise in property prices. According to (Figure 14), Milan welcomed almost 7.5 million visitors in 2019, up 9.4% from 2018, when 6.8 million people spent at least one night as a city guests. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of arrivals in Milan declined to approximately two million in 2020. In 2021, the number of tourists started climbing back, recording a recovery trend.

Milan, in recent years, has entered a new demographic phase, marked by a significant increase in the number of families, from 740,375 total nuclei for the data recorded by ISTAT in 2019 to 762,968 total families in 2022. The growth of family composition is defined in absolute value with an increase in single-family households, with an increase in young age groups (from 19 to 34 years) and seniors over 65. The evolution of sales and rental prices strongly influences the population's social structure: the market intensifies pressure on families, and the crisis affects not only the most disadvantaged nuclei but also the middle classes."

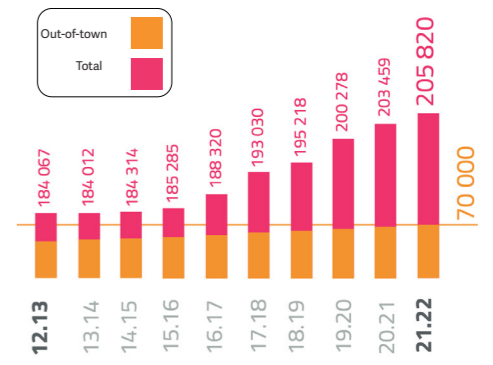


Figure 13 students enrolled in Milan universities in last decades

Note: From the paper "Una nuova strategia per la casa"

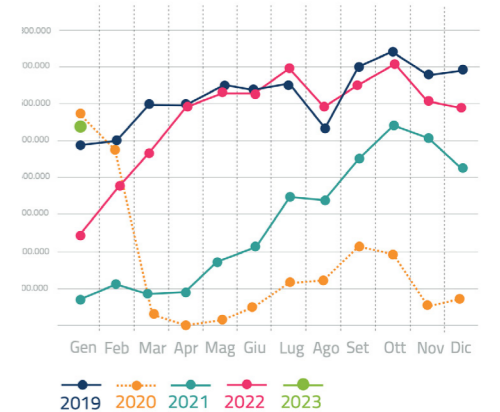


Figure 14 The data is provided by the monthly report on tourism in the Milan area 2023 (up to 2021).

Note: From Milan police headquarters

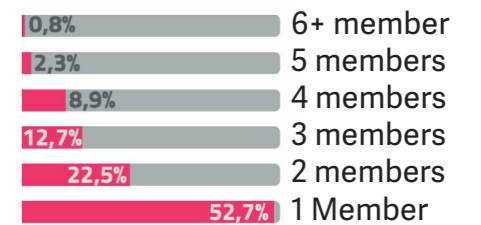


Figure 15 Family units' structure in City of Milan in 2019

Note: From ISTAT, Demographic Balance 2021-2022

## 1.4 Milan and its students

### 1.4 Milan and its students

The history of universities in Milan is this relatively recent. It is immediately distinguished by its tight bounds with the rise and affirmation of Milan as an industrial metropolis in the mid-1800s. Unsurprisingly, Politecnico di Milano, the first university of Milan, was responding demand to the demand coming from the city as the center of the industrial spot in Italy. (Torrani, cited in (Balducci, Fedeli, & Cognetti, 2010)). The same scenario happened for other universities as well.

Nonetheless, having passed the Fordism area, like other cities in the western world, the city's industrial aspects faded. At the same time, the universities as clusters came to play as one of the most economical sources. The universities are changing the city radically in diverse ways.

In fact, the university system appears to play a crucial role that has recently been consolidated; an urban role that is increasingly linked to broad dynamics of transformation in which the university is understood as having a strategic role in driving development (Balducci, 2010), cited in (Bernardi, Cognetti, & Delera, 2021).

However, why is Milan attractive to students?

With 214,537 enrolled students, the number of students in Milan is highly significant. Roughly 10% of all students are international, with 40% coming from Asia as many as European countries. Interestingly, Iranian and Indians taken part of Southern Asian Students are considered prominent nationally among students (YesMilano, 2018).

Various criteria influence the young attraction; a qualified educational system, local cultural diversity, qualified workspace, a high standard of living, social welfare, Integrated public transportation, security, the quality of the urban environment, etc.

Milan is now the second most populated city in Italy and is northern Italy's largest and most economically developed city. It has international connections with the major European nations. It is the elective place for many young people who choose it as a territory to start, with an eye on Europe (Chiaretti, 2019), cited in (Bernardi, Cognetti, & Delera, 2021). However, based on extensive interview conducted in 2020 showed that the main attractive factors for the "creative class" is a high level of education and culture rather than job opportunities.

Milan expresses a particular attractiveness as a place of life, as well as training and work opportunities (Cognetti, 2017). Lifestyle elements like access to sociocultural activities and varying tolerance toward people of other races and cultures greatly influence student attraction (Darchen & Tremblay, 2010).

Institutions in the higher education systems of Southern European countries, which were already underfunded, are forced to compete for more than before for students as sources of additional money due to severe cuts in funding from the governments of those countries. In the past ten years, university competitiveness for students in Italian higher education has risen. After the 2008 financial crisis, university financing historically depended on government support for higher education.

Furthermore, in the consumerism and neo liberal era that we are in, education is also considered a commodity. Unsurprisingly, Students are increasingly seen as the primary funding sources for universities. Unsurprisingly, globalization, mobilization, and internationalization change the focus from the local market to the international scale.

To better position themselves and increase Italy's attractiveness as a study destination and innovative country, Italian universities are growing more international, particularly as they adopt international methods and expand their worldwide education and research profiles (De Wit, 2015).

Moreover, internationalization can enhance institutions' reputation and attractiveness to students and faculty in an increasingly competitive international market.

Furthermore, due to negative demographic trends (down in the young population) and socio-economic factors, enrolling international students has become vital for many Italians. International attractiveness is a strategy for recruiting more national students. One of the promoting factors is that exchanging students is at the top of the list of the most common strategies in Italy's national internationalization policy. In addition, joint and double degrees are growing due to government financing for joint programs. Italian universities aim to attract more international students for both degree and one-semester Erasmus students coming to Italy via joint programs. Unsurprisingly, more international students create cooperative programs resulting in a rise in the number of international students on campus, each with unique service requirements.

### Milan attractiveness for the southern Asian young generation

As is already noted, our Southern Asian Students have severe financial difficulties; thus, in most cases, the scholarship opportunities offered by countries are their top considerations when deciding where to study.

Italy is one of the leading countries in offering scholarships to international students. There are more than 800 scholarships for international students, including the "Italian Government Scholarship (Diritto allo Studio)," which is allocated to students not based on academic knowledge but the "financial situation (ISEE)." The "DSU (Diritto allo Studio)" covers students from 107 countries, including all from Southern Asia (Decreto MUR, 2022).

Italian Government Scholarship (DSU) will not entirely cover living expenses; however, it satisfies students' fundamental needs, such as accommodation and food. It significantly helps students who are already accustomed to living on a tight budget. Despite the tight budget, Southern Asian Students try to reside within the border of the city due to several reasons.

Firstly, being a student typically forces us to assume excessive social, academic, and professional duties. Participate in clubs, volunteer in the community, lead teams, maintain good grades, secure internships, and do many other things while juggling a full schedule. For all these reasons mentioned above, young people, mainly students, prefer to live within the city's boundaries to manage their time. An interview with the young residents of Milan (De Noni, Orsi, & Zanderighi, 2010) indicated that young individuals connected to the city in terms of location, culture, and cognition have more favorable opinions of Milan and are more likely to stay (Fiocca, Gavinelli, Orsi, & Zanderighi, 2011).

However, back to our focused group, using the vivid atmosphere of Milan city atmosphere is vital since they usually come from countries ranked as the most conservative worldwide (Hancock, 2017)

Secondly, since most come here with a DSU scholarship, they must follow specific rules. Firstly, to be eligible to take the total amount of the DSU scholarship, they should have accommodation contracts in specific urban areas almost within the municipality's border (BANDO DI CONCORSO PER L'ASSEGNAZIONE DEI BENEFICI PER IL DIRITTO ALLO STUDIO Anno Accademico 2022/2023, 2022).

Thirdly, as previously mentioned, since Southern Asian students face extreme financial difficulty, they need more job opportunities in the city. To these primary problems, we can add other reasons like unpostponable five-euro daily food coupon tickets, transportation costs, etc., Which indirectly force the focused group to live in the city even in shared bedrooms. In short, there seem to be many direct and indirect reasons bounding the city of Milan tightly to the Southern Asian Students.

### Examining the question of reciprocity in Milan's relationship with its students

In summary, students are a vital component of Milan's socio-economic and cultural development. As an international hub for education and innovation, Milan relies on its diverse student population to drive creativity and progress in various fields, from design to technology. Students also contribute to the local economy by spending money on housing, food, and entertainment, creating job opportunities for locals. However, while students bring numerous benefits to the city, it is worth considering whether Milan equally supports and invests in its student community. Adequate funding for education, affordable housing, and accessible transportation are some factors that affect students' well-being and success. Therefore, evaluating the reciprocal relationship between Milan and its students is essential to ensure that both parties can thrive and continue to contribute positively to each other's growth.

This thesis aims to examine the city's relationship with its student community, focusing on housing, and identify the challenges and opportunities for creating a more affordable accommodation and less fragmented environment for all students, particularly the south Asian students in Milan.

### 1.5 Criteria of choice

As stated, the students have access to the market, university dorms based on DSU scholarships, and some social housing assets, but at a different level. Still, since the thesis is focused on coliving styles, we will concentrate on the accessible communal living accommodation provided by these three different systems for our Southern Asian Students: Market-Driven Coliving, University dorms offered based on DSU regulation, and social housing Coliving. We first want to compare based on three indicators possibly measured by quantitative data: accessibility, price, services, and freedom of choice.

It is crucial to keep in mind that the alternatives presented here are made only in a broad sense.

#### Accessibility

Firstly, the research analyzes quantitative data and legislation to determine which accommodations lawfully exclude or include students, particularly Southern Asian Students.

As noted in the previous chapter, Milan, with 191,600 rental accommodations (Nomisma, 2020), which includes approximately 19,2% sharing of the total lodging, generally does not provide many opportunities for its residents. However, the first and most common choice is not only for Southern Asian Students but also for everyone in the market. It is the most straightforward way for newcomers who do not have time, information, acquaintances, etc.

Although there is no legal limitation for students to rent from the market, numerous indirect, invisible hands like discrimination exclude students, especially Southern Asian Students, from access to market rental housing.

The students from developing countries, which includes all the Southern Asian Students' countries as well, have the right to use these university accommodations based on their economic level and availability (BANDO DI CONCORSO PER L'ASSEGNAZIONE DEI BENEFICI PER IL DIRITTO ALLO STUDIO Anno Accademico 2022/2023, 2022). Although the supply and demand sides do not equilibrate, it is a possible choice for them to request.

In addition to the 11,500 beds offered in the university structure, some other social projects offer students various accommodations from the public, Semi-public, and private associations with subsidized temporary contracts. These projects, managed mainly through Cooperatives, aim to intervene with the young generation to promote solidarity while making the city more attractive and accessible. There are three kinds of social housing in Milan: "Transitional Housing Services (SAT)," "Public Housing Services (SAP)"; and "Social Housing Services (SAS)." The projects provide a variety of dwellings, from beds to apartments, but in exchange for such accommodations, occupants are typically required to participate in volunteer tasks. No factual information is available regarding these projects' prices; however, it is undoubtedly less than the real estate market price. However, accessing these projects is extremely limited due to the limited projects (Figure 17) dedicated to students and young professionals.

It should be noted that many accommodations shown in Figure 17 are not legally accessible to non-EU students because at least a Two-years resident permit is required (i all'art. 7 del Regolamento Regionale 4/2017, D.G.R. 14 luglio 2020 – n. XI/3363, 2020). Thus, As shown in figure 17, most of the accommodations these services offer are out of reach for our Southern Asian Students. That is why the more frequent rental Accommodations presented by the mechanism of the subsidized contract are three-room flats. Furthermore, the people with this contract are adults aged 35-44 (Nomisma, 2020).

Rental Contract	N. of accomadation
Non-conferentiated university student fees(Market)	3007
Subsidized student rates in operation	1986
Beds in operation from University and Higher Education	6542

Figure 16 total beds offer in university residencies in metropolitan Milan  
Note: adapted from the paper " la strategia per la casa)

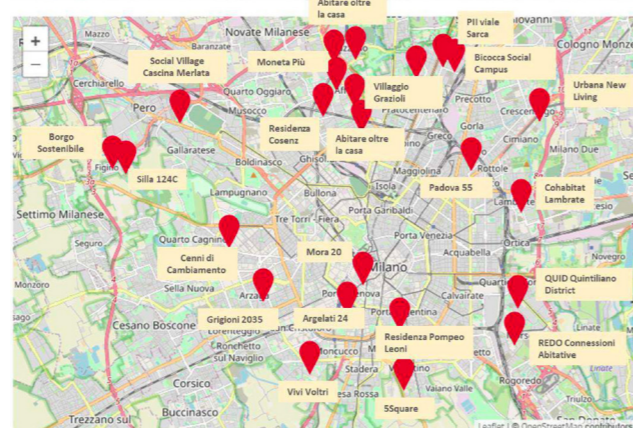


Figure 17 map of temporary subsidized accommodation contracts for students  
Note: From "https://milanoabitare.org/

	Rental Contract	N. of accomadation	Accessibility
ERS	ERS art. 9.2 lett. b PdR -Subsized Rent (LOCAZIONE CANONE CONVENZIONATO)	1.263	●
	ERS art. 9.2 lett. b PdR - Moderate Rental(LOCAZIONE CANONE MODERATO)	329	●
	ERS art. 9.2 riconducibile alla lett. b PdR ai sensi L.R. 80/2014 e Det. PUG 47/2014 - Rent to Buy(LOCAZIONE CANONE CONVENZIONATO CON PATTO DI FUTURA VENDITA)	318	●
	ERS art. 9.2 lett. C PdR - Rent price at social rental housing price(LOCAZIONE A CANONE SOCIALE)	207	●
	SERVIZI ABITATIVI (tempo indeterminato)	56	●
	CO- HOUSING art. 9.2 lett. b PdR	19	●
	subsidized student housing(RESIDENZE CONVENZIONATE PER STUDENTI UNIVERSITARI)	2178	●
university residence	Allocation of housing places for DSU (residenze convenzionate con gli organismi regionali per il Diritto allo studio e collegiuniversitari)	12.500	●
Market	Market	N.D	●
ERP	Public Housing(Somme destinate ad interventi di Edilizia Pubblica )(€) - contributo art. 9.6 PdR	1.115.010	●

Figure 18 rental accommodation in the Province of Milan to which the South Asian students access  
Note: Adapted from "Nomisma. It"

#### Price

For numerous reasons stated before, the price of apartments is exceptionally high, particularly in the Real Estate segment. Therefore, according to estimates provided by (Immobiliare.it, Feb 2023), the rent price has risen exponentially(Figure 19), and students and young professionals tend to rent a room in shared apartments to save up some expenses.

The broadest information we could look at regarding the price of coliving presented by real estate is the DoveVivo website. DoveVivo is a unique living platform that operates in numerous European locations. They provide short, medium, and extended housing options, including coliving rooms, private studios, student housing, and flats. Nevertheless, in market-driven Coliving, as illustrated in Figure 20, rent price is generally higher than those in typical apartments and not much cheaper than a one-bedroom flat in Milan and, in some cases, more expensive. In Figure 20, the price of the single rooms within the boundaries of the city of Milan is shown, including all fees and expenses (DoveVivo, 2022). The rooms are located in coliving management with other 7-8 different rooms. However, the prices are surprisingly high.



Figure 19 Medium rent price/mm  
Note: From (Immobiliare.it, Feb 2023)

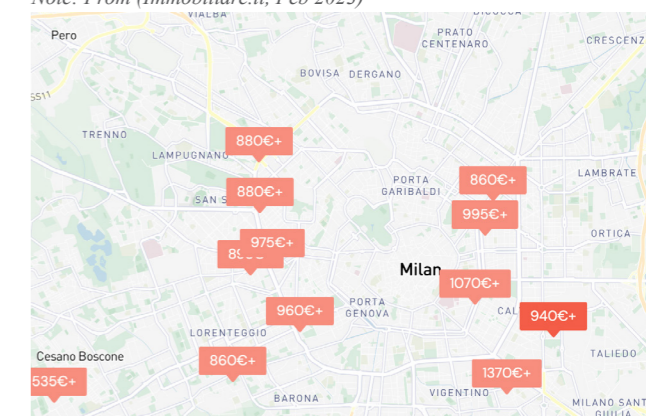


Figure 20 The Rent Price for single rooms (all expenses & fees included) in Market-Driven coliving in 2022  
Note: From (DoveVivo, 2022)

On the contrary, regarding the DSU accommodations, the situation is entirely different. The Province of Milan, with seven universities, is the educational center of about 110,000 students but provides just 11,500 beds for students to study, which meets the needs of only 10% of off-site students in the Milan metropolitan area (la strategia per la casa, 2023). This situation degraded even more in the City of Milan. The institutional offer of student housing covers just 6.8% of out-of-town students. The anticipated shortage in Milan is approximately 16 thousand beds for out-of-town students (Montanino & Camerano, 2022). In the case of availability, however, the price is far less than in the real estate market, with a room costing from 3800€ to 4500 per year in Politecnico di Milano residences (residenze polimi, 2022) as an example. Instead, determining the price of coliving for a subsidized contract is variable and depends on the intervening private and public institutions. The expenses are estimated to be between those of the DSU university dormitory and the free market. For example, a single room in “darcasa” cooperative structures costs around 450€, including all fees and expenses (darcasa, 2022). In summary, According to data recently released by Nomisma, the actual and near-future prices for students for beds based on our three different provider systems are shown in Figure 21 (Nomisma, 2022).

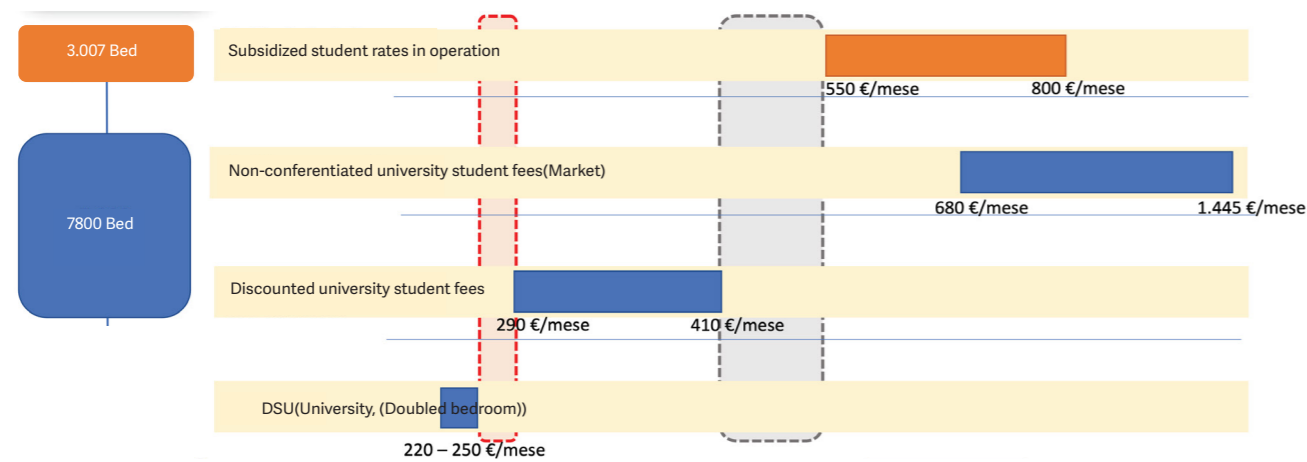


Figure 21 Monthly rates for bed in single room with bathroom by type of student residence

Note: from “Nomisma. It”

On the contrary, regarding the DSU accommodations, the situation is entirely different. The Province of Milan, with seven universities, is the educational center of about 830,000 off-site students but provides just 12,500 beds for students to study, which meets the needs of only 15% of off-site students in the Milan metropolitan area (Nomisma, MILANO INCLUSIVA La produzione di case in locazione a costi accessibili, 2020). This situation degraded even more in the City of Milan. The institutional offer of student housing covers just 6.8% of off-site students. The anticipated shortage in Milan is approximately 16 thousand beds for off-set students (Montanino & Camerano, 2022). In the case of availability, however, the price is far less than in the real estate market, with a room costing from 3800€ to 4500 per year in Politecnico di Milano residences (residenze polimi, 2022) as an example. Instead, determining the price of coliving for a subsidized contract is variable and depends on the intervening private and public institutions. The expenses are estimated to be between those of the DSU university dormitory and the free market. For example, a single room in “darcasa” cooperative structures costs around 450€, including all fees and expenses (darcasa, 2022).

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## Services

Regarding facilities, The Coliving is managed by social housing, and the market differs. On the other hand, the informal social factors like the relationship among dwellers in social housing coliving and university dorms are relatively similar to the market-driven market. When it comes to safety, dorms will come out on top of the contest. Valid photo identification is typically required to enter a college dorm, meaning that the security level in dorms is typically more robust than that found in shared residences. Coliving places are known for their lack of security.

On the cost issue, although the rent is lower in university residency, the running cost may be higher. In a university residence, you must usually provide personal supplies for the communal kitchen and other building areas. In contrast to the coliving arrangement, in which you get to move into a space that has already been set up, complete with furniture and fixtures, this one allows you to start fresh. Coliving complexes provide a comfortable living environment at a more affordable cost.

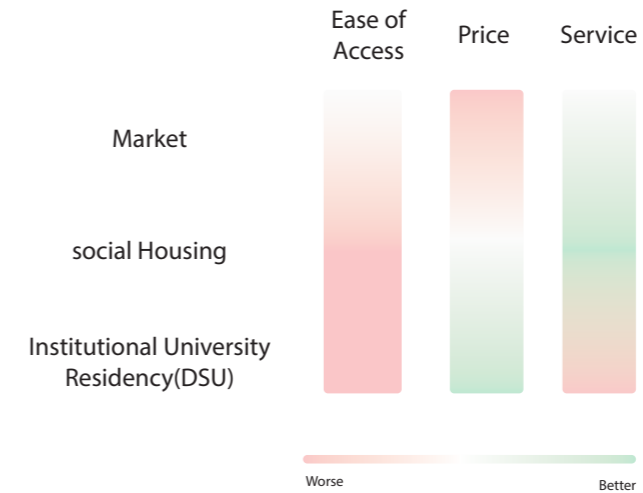


Figure 22 Comparison between Different kinds of accommodation by three different systems.

Note: Illustrated by author

# Chapter-02 Methodology

Diverse research techniques have been combined in this master thesis to offer a more comprehensive insight into the issue. The literature survey was done to find sources for document analysis and collect information for the interview guide design. The approaches offer several viewpoints that can produce new insight into the study issues. It is a comprehensive approach that outlines our choices in particular methodologies while resulting in open-ended outputs.

Complementing qualitative and quantitative research findings is necessary to foster a wide range of perspectives and points of view (Ulmer & Wilson, 2003). Thus, instead of being incompatible with one another, these different study approaches are regarded as complementary (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As was said before, the research on coliving is a relatively recent phenomenon. It has been determined that qualitative research methodology is the most appropriate for this investigation since it examines a new field of study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007) implies, various qualitative methods could be developed to fully understand circumstances via interpreting their texts, the most common of which are interviewing and observation. Therefore, since we have a research gap and lack the previous analysis that supports it, the approach tries to avoid the deductive technique due to its dependency on an existing hypothesis, which does not exist in our case. However, due to personal experiences, some subjective views may be incorporated into qualitative data analysis. In contrast, the research methodology has abductive nature; That is, it mostly begins with an imperfect collection of observations and goes to the most plausible explanation for the incomplete understanding, which is the most logical approach it can follow (Figure 23).

However, when clear and comprehensive information typically originates from quantitative data, it may use some inductive reasoning. In short, the research does not intend to arrive at a particular result, although it will do its best shot. The objective of this research is to acquire qualitative information and quantitative data using various methods: Literature, semi-structured interviews, and case studies. All methods are crucial in diverse aspects. However, the interviews are the most important ones as they explain the new communal living trend with qualitative data.

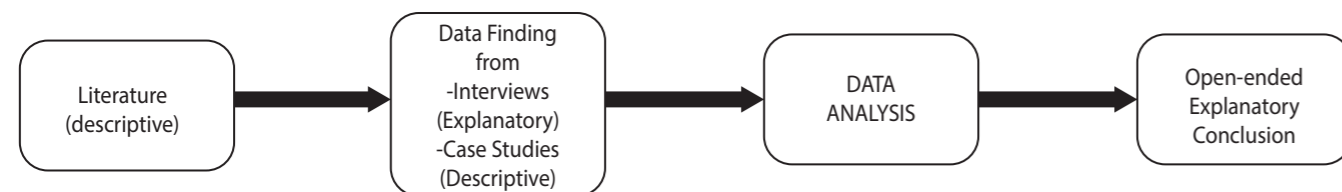


Figure 23 Research layout reasoning

Note: edited by the author. Primary source: (Farthing, 2016)

Since coliving is still relatively new, there is limited research on this type of living arrangement. Consequently, the study uses principles and theories regarding the Cohousing model to determine factors for promoting social factors.

The research consults from the book "Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities" (Williams, 2005), which focuses on three main factors and their impacts on Behaviors (Figure 24).

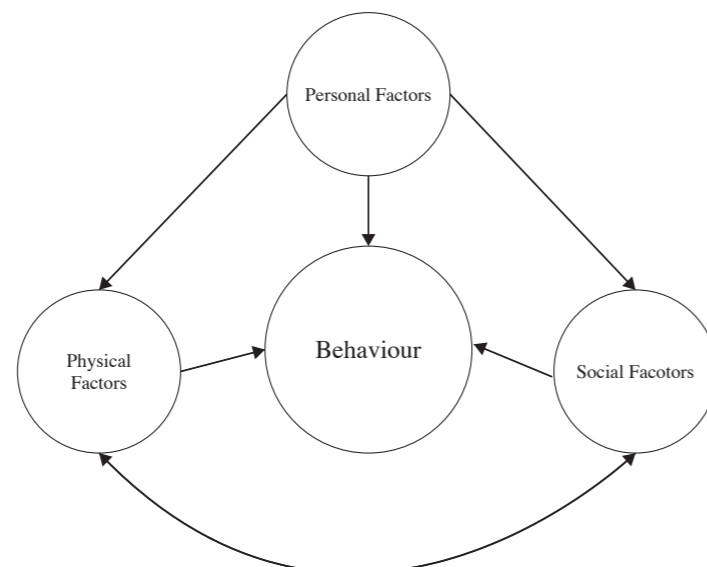


Figure 24 The interaction between physical, personal, and social factors and their impact on behavior

Note: adapted from (Williams, 2005)

A quantitative & qualitative examination of three different coliving sites is carried out with the help of a mixed methods technique. This study sheds light on the social factors that contribute to creating a community between Southern Asian Students and the local one, as well as on ways in which the Physical factors can either help or hinder that goal.

The evaluation of the coliving communities regarding physical and spatial factors is based on criteria developed from environmental psychology theories., Which will be discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs. However, the physical and social aspects impact an individual's social network (Weijs-Perrée, Van den Berg, Arentze, & Kemperman, 2017). According to (Williams, 2005), social and Spatial elements influence the degree of community formation, particularly in cohousing structures.

However, in our situation, characterized by greater variation, the individual elements play an extremely significant role. The in-depth interviews of target and local groups are held to discover the personal factor of the interaction between the Southern Asian Students and local culture, which may result in community building. However, the compatibility between them is the main focus of the research.

### Personal Factors

"Personal factors include personality traits, interpersonal dynamics, and attitudes, which are largely influenced by people's backgrounds" (Williams, 2005):

- Nationality/ Culture
- Values, preferences, and goals
- Gender
- Job & Education
- Financial background

### Physical factors

#### Proximity, size, and density

When community members have opportunities for contact with one another in close proximity, besides having appropriate space for interaction, it mainly results in social interaction (Festinger, 1950). Increasing proximity between inhabitants through design can lead to more opportunities for recurrent passive interaction, which benefits developing social relationships (Kuper, 1954).

There is a direct relationship between proximity and density, and size. However, it is not linear. In other words, changing size and density absolutely altered the level of the proximity, not necessarily in the same direction. Higher population densities encourage more face-to-face and spontaneous contact among inhabitants of the same area ( C.Delmelle & Prinz, 2013). On the contrary, some literature found that the amount and quality of one's social interactions are negatively impacted by a built environment population density, probably because people in places with lower population densities have a greater need to engage with their neighbors due to the lower availability of facilities in those places (Brueckner, 2008). While the residents in high-density areas have the impression that they have less influence over the social environment in which they live and are more likely to isolate themselves from the community, which they view as being intrusive and beyond their ability to influence (Baum & Valins, 1977).

Regarding the size of the community, according to (Williams, 2005), There are fewer opportunities for social interaction in communities with a higher population density. Because residents do not know each other, their values and norms are, therefore, unknown. Due to anonymity, residents will be less likely to connect socially within their surroundings, preferring to interact with known acquaintances.

On the contrary, regarding the physical size, the ratio between public and private spaces is more crucial than the actual physical space dedicated. As (Williams, 2005) states, less private results in more societal interaction; that is, people living in smaller residences tend to spend more time on activities outside their private dwellings. The opportunity for interaction is further increased if the community in which they live provides them with social places and facilities, as is often the case with communal living.



## Surveillance

The concept of surveillance is more intricately linked to the management of public, private, and in particular semi-public areas. In other words, it is a characteristic primarily associated with the spatial quality of the dwelling. This feature has a linear relationship with a higher level of social interaction (Williams, 2005).

*“The surrounding environment is the basis for resident communication and evaluation of their shared interest. (M. Abu-Ghazze, 1999).*

Surveillance is highly associated with semi-private spaces because of these spaces:

*“Can protect inhabitants from overexposure to the community, which may result in disengagement and less community formation” (Williams, 2005).*

They can host community gatherings and provide a voice for locals regarding their identities, desire, goal, lifestyles, etc.

## Quality of space

Indoor and outdoor shared areas offer excellent social interaction possibilities and can help strengthen the bonds that bind a community together. They must be high quality and appropriate for use while simultaneously being flexible to adapt (M. Abu-Ghazze, 1999). Poorly maintained communal facilities may lead to less usage and less social contact. Residents are negatively impacted by poor cleanliness and broken equipment (Williams, 2005). Maintainability of the common property has always been a permanent problem in all levels of built environment spatial design due to the lack of responsibility from non-owner-occupied properties. The designing approach should be a way to make sense of belonging for dwellers using them.

Besides maintainability, aesthetically pleasing places are assumed to promote social interaction. An architecturally well-designed built environment can encourage a sense of belonging and community (Lund, 2002).

## Homogeneity

Homogeneity is the main crucial and challenging factor due to the different cultural diversity between dwellers. According to (Putnam, 2007), a higher level of diversity in a community is associated with lower levels of social cohesiveness. However, other literature suggests that sociocultural diversity may result in peaceful coexistence. Therefore, homogeneity, in our case, has two-fold effects and is highly needed to discover.

(Williams, 2005) concludes that maintaining some degree of similarity among community members is necessary. She believes that building social cohesion requires consistency among the citizens, particularly concerning their beliefs and ideals. She states that cohousing communities benefit from increased social interaction due to the diversity of family types and levels of wealth. A more diverse population inevitably results in a more varied range of resources that each resident can provide to the other residents.

## Permanency

On the one hand, some literature suggests that younger communities tend to have more social interaction. (Osborne, 2018) claims that young, international-minded digital nomads from around the world who stay for only a few weeks are more receptive to making friends and connections with locals than their older counterparts.

While on the contrary, according to some research, younger communities tend to have higher rates of conflict and lower rates of social contact. Cohousing projects have a lower capacity for social contact due to the immaturity of the organizing structures (Williams, 2005). However, the contexts they discuss are slightly different, and it is crucial to discover case by case.

## Residents' participation

According to (Williams, 2005), excluding residents from management and activities might lead to fewer opportunities for engagement and more opportunities for conflict. On the one hand, he states that Participating in the decision-making process may bring residents closer together, foster trust, and guarantee individuals have a stronger sense of power. These are the fundamentals upon which social capital and community building are formed. On the other hand, he explains some interactions as a source of “Meeting fatigue” and initiates conflict in the long term.

## Organized activities and policies

The spontaneous behavior of social members is not guaranteed participation. It is necessary for some intervention from the community manager to facilitate interaction between dwellers (Carrigan, Moraes, & Leek, 2010). This type of management, named “formal social factors” (Williams, 2005), is considered highly crucial for deepening member relationships.

# Chapter-03 Field research

The study uses several analysis types, including investigating three cases run by three different systems to improve the study’s validity. In this research, based on the literature, three instances of case studies by three different systems are utilized to produce fresh thoughts on the influence of communal living on social interaction and their compatibility between host and guest groups with varied cultural backgrounds based on four criteria:

- Rules/ Services
- Actors
- Spaces
- Practices

The case studies are also suitable for qualitative research designs because they permit an in-depth examination of a particular situation, mainly because most interviewees have experienced living in these structures.

As was said earlier, the communal living trend is relatively recent in Milan, and insufficient cases are available. The instances that are going to be investigated in this thesis were selected for analysis based on three different supply-side drivers:

- University
- Public-private organizations in the social housing system
- Market

The case studies are put into groups based on the provider. This is because other personal, physical, and social factors vary the most depending on the provider. In other words, the different providers have different goals. To that end, they orient their policies and spatial design based on their different goals. Therefore, the variation coming out is different in other aspects. However, that does not mean they have nothing in common. The study wants to understand how these variations in spatial and policy influence their residence.

The analysis is not just based on differences between their providers. These three cases are formed based on different and the same spatial qualities, demography, regulation, etc. It also considers the variation regarding the spatial and policy factors, which, again, can or cannot be the same in some of those cases. As a result, the analysis is case-by-case, but the selection technique is based on the suppliers.

First, we go through one coliving case provided by CCL cooperative, categorized as social housing. Second place, we have Newton residency provided by “Politecnico di Milano” in the structure of the dorm. Finally, we go through Camplus Sesto San Giovanni, managed by one of Italy’s great, if not the greatest, student housing providers.

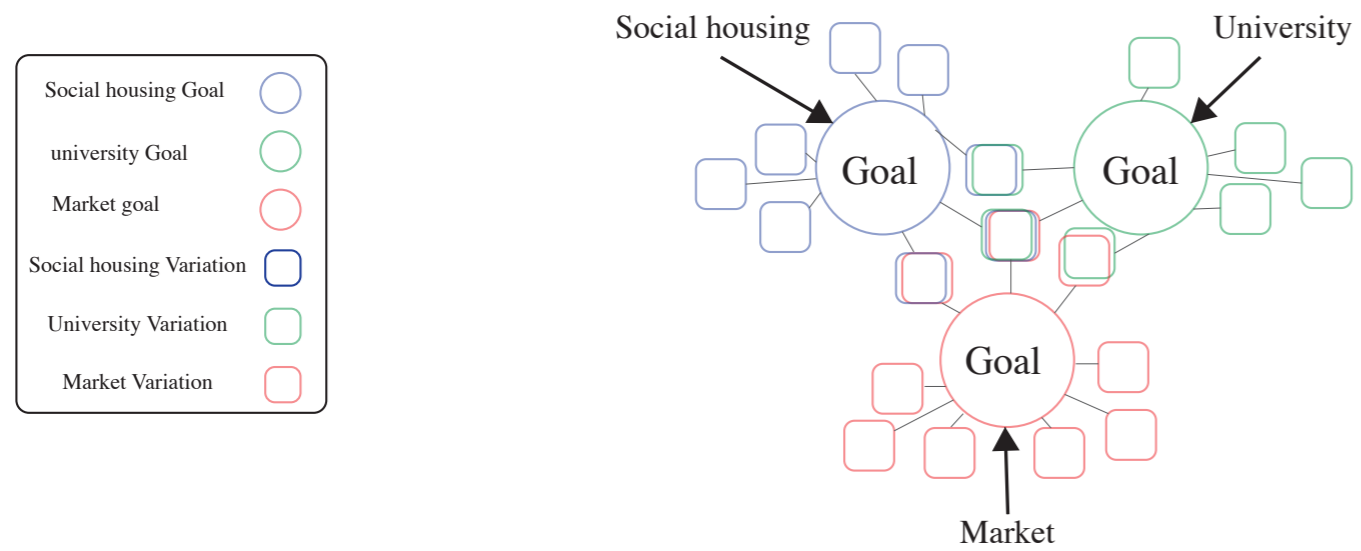


Figure 25 Scheme of similarities and differences in communal living structures run by different suppliers  
 Note: Illustrated by author



Figure 26 Cohabitat Lambrate  
 Note: Photographed by S. Anzini

### 3.1 Coliving Lambrate

In this section, in the first part, the study goes through an overall analysis of neighborhood life to understand whether the students spend time in the neighborhood. Second, it examines the dynamics of the Cohabitat condominium, and finally, and most importantly, it delves into the specifics of what is going on in the two colivings (Apartments).

#### The Urban Context

The east of the Lambrate zone is one of the focus points of PGT for regeneration, where our case study is located. However, the aim of the study is not to focus on that but rather to have a short overview of the situational analysis of the neighbor and see if it has any influence on our students.

Also, one of the key aspects asked by (c40reinventingcities, s.d.) in international competition for regeneration the “Scalo Milano” is foreseeing and connecting the realized, ongoing, and future projects in the neighborhood like “Cohabitat Lambrate” and “P. A Ex Nora” Etc.(Figure 27).

Furthermore, another critical component of the project “Lambrate Streaming”-winner of the Scalo Lambrate regeneration competition- is providing over 19,000 square meters of low-cost housing (307 social housing units), primarily for young people and students. It gives areas.

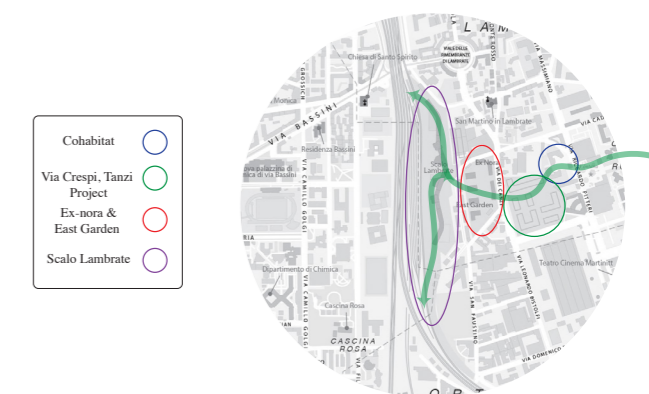


Figure 27 realized, ongoing, and future projects on the East side of Ex-Lambrate rail station & Rubattino neighbourhood and their connectivity  
 Note: Illustrated by author

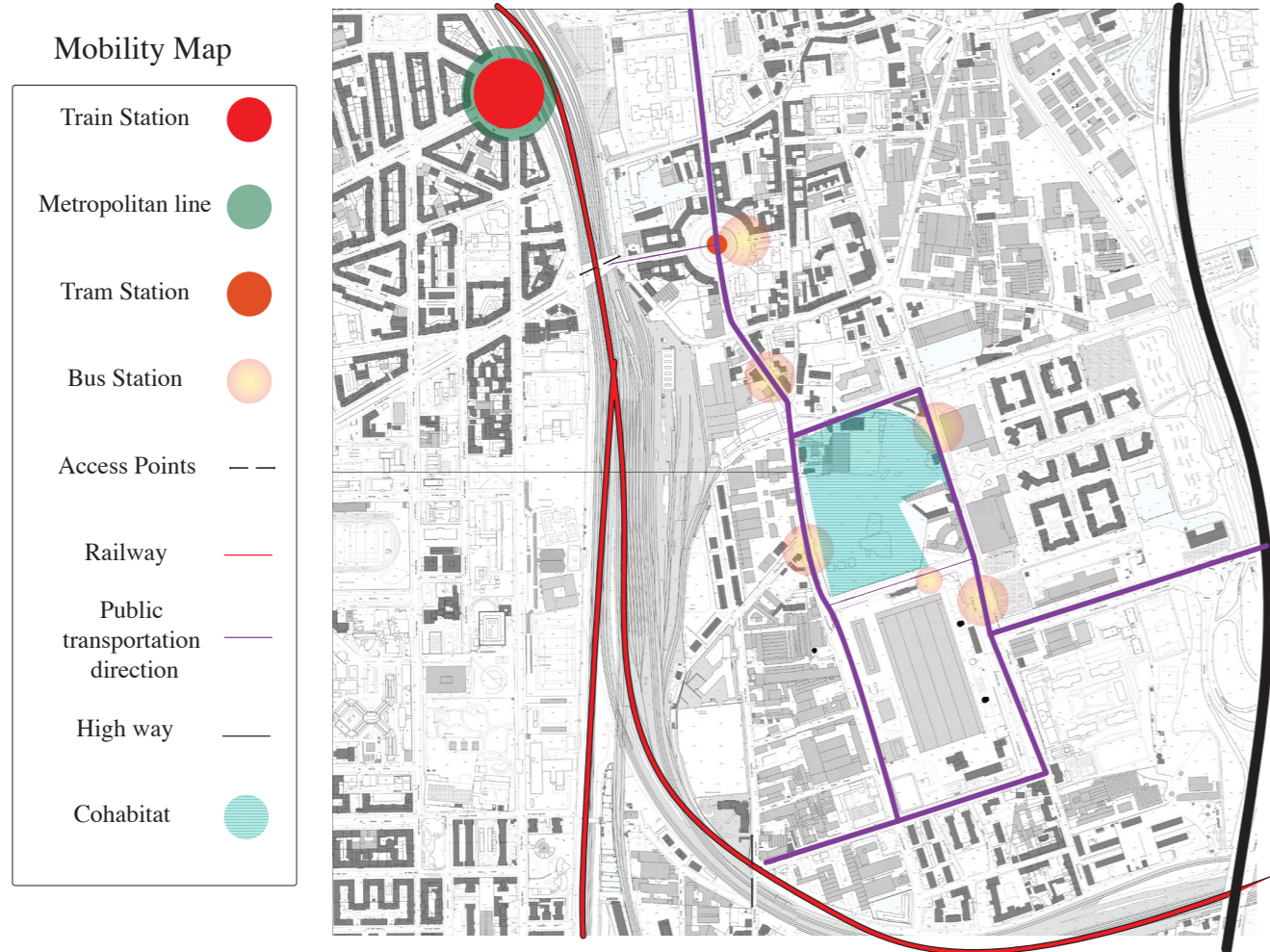


Figure 28 Mobility map of the surrounding area of the Cohabitat  
 Note: Illustrated by author



Figure 29 Land-use map of potential features for students  
 Note: Illustrated by author

### 3.1.1 Spatial features

As discussed before, Milan has become an expensive and temporary city, and many young people are leaving. The need for affordable housing has become more crucial than before. One of the pillars of the “PGT”- Milano piano del Governo”- in 2019 is providing sustainable, affordable housing for the city resident. One of the notable projects, undoubtedly, following the plan, is the “Cohabitat Lambrate” via Riccardo Pitteri 93.

Coop. Doria is in charge of the Cohabitation Lambrate realization. Along with Delta Ecopolis, the historic cooperative known as Dorica is responsible for constructing several interventions found in the neighborhood of Lambrate. The housing proposal takes the approach of Common Housing, which is a typological mix of housing in ownership (104), for rent (46), and in cohabitation (2 colivings), equipped with common areas that promote sociality and lead the inhabitants to the rediscovery of the role of the “neighbor.”

Nevertheless, the initiatives are not restricted to only these three buildings; instead, in the following years, four other buildings will be added with interior courtyards. In fact, it is a more significant part of the complementary project, helping generate the neighborhood and district in a holistic approach. However, the study approach tried to give an overall perspective of these projects, not aiming to go into detail on an urban scale.

In the second place, the project tries to be inclusive on the neighborhood scale. In some cases, therefore, the shared spaces and courtyard are open to the public to attract people inside the project with events. Also, for better Permeability to the neighborhood, there are some commercial spaces, namely a pharmacy, a medical office, and a hairdresser; it also serves as

As illustrated in Figure 30, two spaces on the ground floor of the buildings are dedicated to the community of residents and for activities and services. The primary goal for these activities and services has been chosen to promote sharing between residents. The gathering place is flexible and can be used for various purposes, including hosting small events and parties, providing a space for students to do their homework, hosting co-working sessions, and

However, the second goal is to bring people from the neighborhood into the condominium. Due to that, one hairdresser and one pharmacy are located inside and attached to the condominium. However, there should be some economic reasoning behind that as well. Aside from them, the two shared salons in the condominium and interior courtyard are sometimes open to the public for certain special events. The condominium “Cohabitat” of Lambrate comprises two large apartments on staircases C and E on the first floor (Figure 30). Each is divided into seven double or single rooms, some with single-use bathrooms and others with a shared bathrooms. In fact, these colivings are unified of four individual apartments.

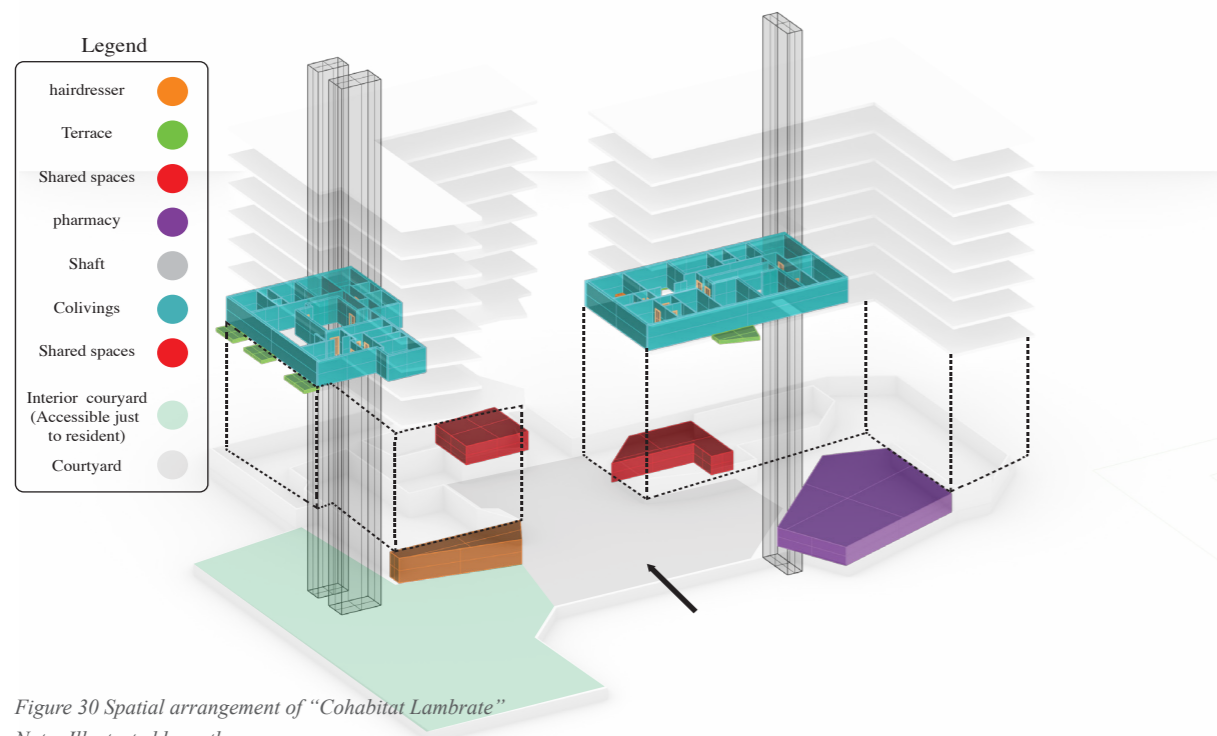


Figure 30 Spatial arrangement of “Cohabitat Lambrate”  
Note: Illustrated by author

According to the Deputy manager, as illustrated in Figure 31, this coliving comprises four apartments. The assistant manager said, “they did not design the coliving per se. This method has allowed them to change to individual apartments if the coliving does not work. On the contrary, it puts many limitations in spatial design regarding coliving”.

The apartments are also characterized by a large, shared kitchen, well equipped and equipped with dishes, utensils, and accessories, a living area with tables, chairs, modular sofas, and large terraces. Each Apartment has two or three alternatives for each category, providing flexibility to people with various family structures, such as individuals, couples, and cohabitants. Each Apartment has two entrances, one opening to the shared spaces and the other to the semi-private spaces. Each public space in both apartments has a large terrace, and some bedrooms also have them. However, because it is not intended for coliving, the terrace’s composition evolved naturally in the current configuration.

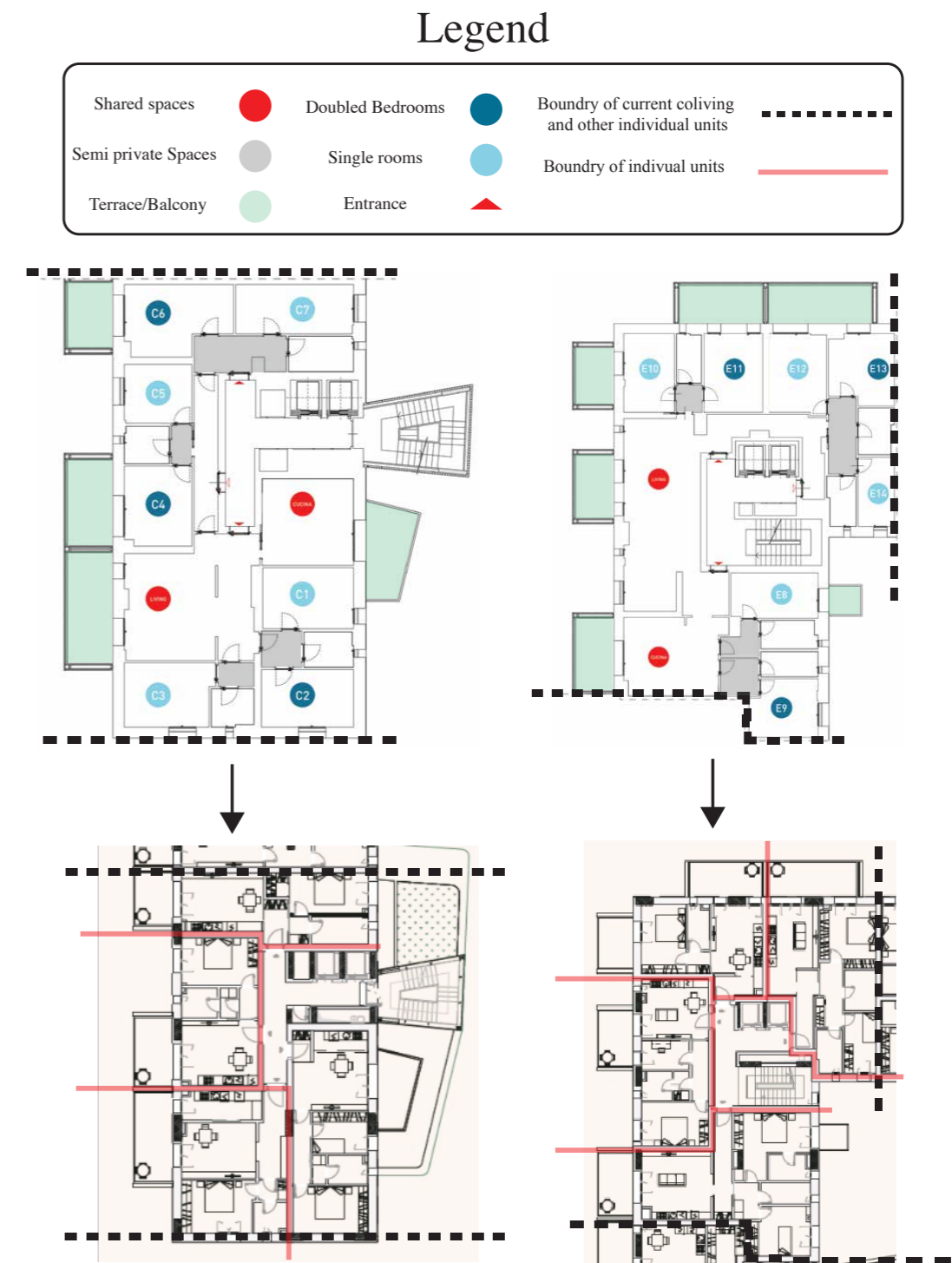


Figure 31 Floor plan of coliving C and E and the other plan Typology of the different floor  
Note: Adapted from <https://www.cclcerchicasa.it/cohousing-un-modo-nuovo-di-abitare/>

For a better explanation, here are 3d section views of two building apartments with photos to help visualize the spatial arrangement and their relationship. As a result, the photos attached here are raw without the presence of a residence. The practice section will analyze the relationship between tenants and spaces more thorough!

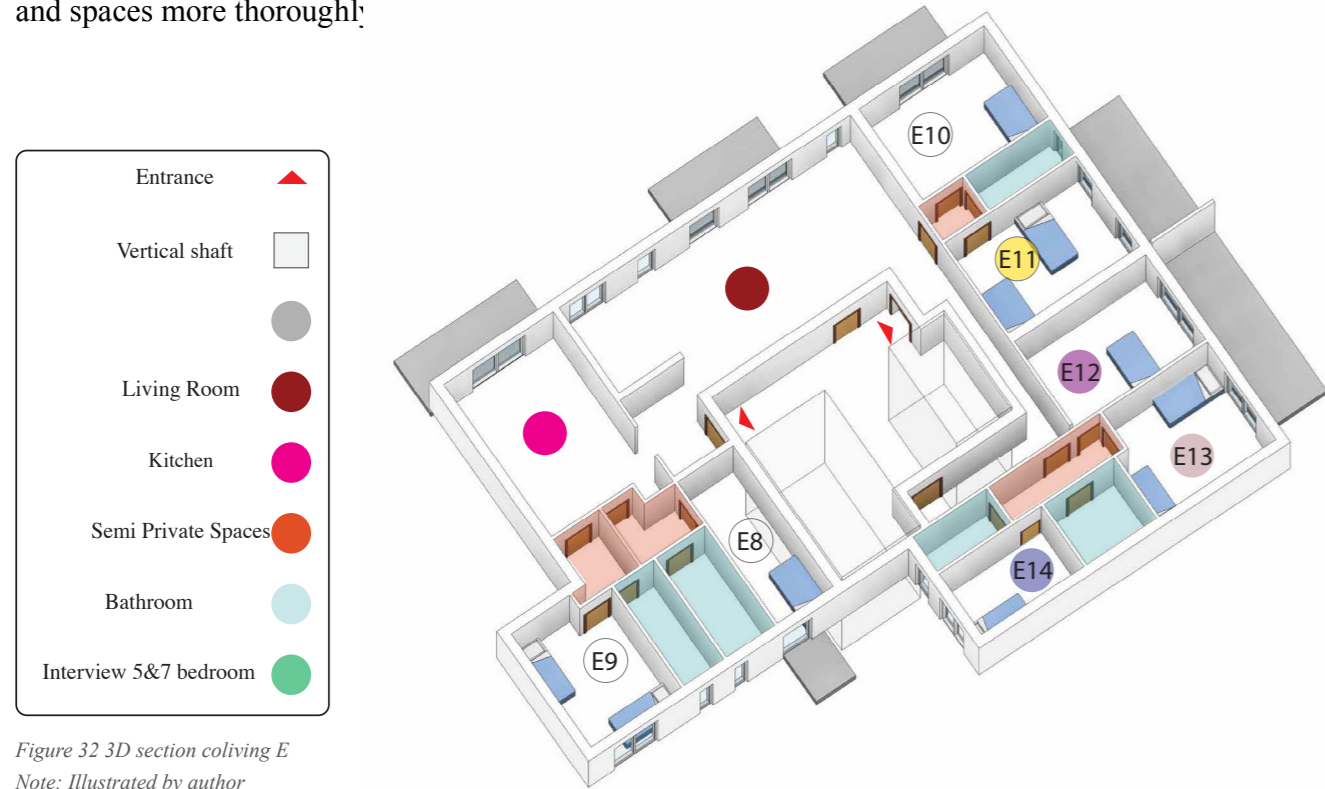


Figure 32 3D section coliving E  
Note: Illustrated by author



Figure 33 Photos of the coliving E

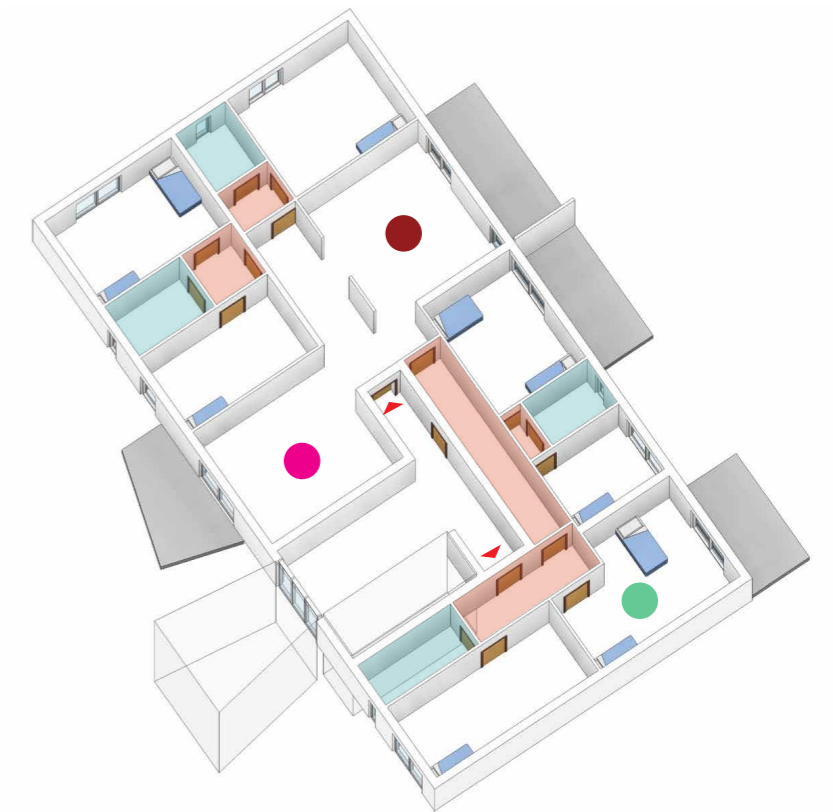


Figure 34 3D section coliving C  
Note: Illustrated by author

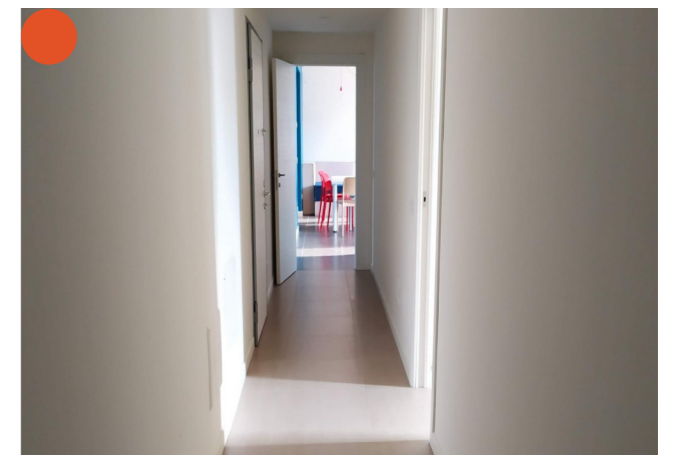


Figure 35 Photos of the coliving C

### 3.1.2 Actors

Some projects have recently started to help young professionals and students by giving them affordable housing for short-term periods. One of the most important, if not the most important, is the “Milano2035” project. Following the same approach for providing affordable housing, two coliving communities are constructed, with 26 beds for young adults or single parents. A new system was never used before, calling for unique legislation to resolve the issue with the municipality of Milan. (Milano2035.It, s.d.)

These Two colivings in Cohabitat are known as “Cohousing Lambrate”; However, based on (Tummers & Lidewij, 2017) definition in the literature part, it is literally considered coliving in our case study. On the other hand, the “Cohabitat Lambrate” is considered cohousing.

Cohabitat Lambrate is a residential community that the residents themselves run. The organization, events, and staff are all managed by the residents, who take a bottom-up approach to decision-making and take responsibility for their living spaces. This approach allows for a high degree of flexibility and customizing, as the residents can create the living environment they want. They can work collaboratively to plan events and activities, manage the property, and create a sense of community.

While the residents are the main actors in handling the organization, events, and staff, cooperatives also support them. According to Lucia Pompele, one of the active residents, the events are also supported by cooperatives. According to Lucia Pompele, one of the active residents of Cohabitat and organizer of many events, the cooperatives have always supported the initiatives, organizations, or logistics. Some residents also work professionally with the cooperative CCL as advisers or assistants.

It is important to note that while the CCL supports the community, they do not intervene in the issues inside the residents’ apartments, such as maintenance.

Regarding the two coliving units, these colivings are also self-managed by their residents. There is no responsible living among coliving residents. The residents should manage the house among themselves. However, the responsible parties are available in the event of a management problem. The actors engaged in the management are three people. In the case of physical management, like impairment or maintenance, a local architect is working as an assistant with CCL Cooperative. Later, the other two actors resolve the problems in the further steps to resolve the maintenance problems.

Two deputy managers have the main responsibility for running the co-livings. Their responsibilities included:

1. Conduct interviews with future residents; select the next tenants.
2. Explain the regulation.
3. Prepare the contracts and payments.
3. Further intervention in the case of physical maintenance.
4. Further intervention in the case of interpersonal conflicts between tenants.

### 3.1.3 Rules/ Services

First, the study states the bureaucratic condition with which the applicant can apply. Access to the lease is To those who meet the following qualifications and who, in any case, agree with the applicable law and Resolution no. 42/2010 of the Municipality of Milan (cclcerchicasa.it, 2019):

- Italian or EU citizenship or people who regularly stay in Italy with a residency card.
- Italian or EU citizenship or people who regularly stay in Italy with residency cards.
- Residing, mainly working or studying in the Metropolitan City of Milan.
- He or she or their spouse should not have any property in Italy.
- The applicant should not have any prior assignment to any lease contract supplied and subsidized by the public institutions in any form.
- Not having an income that exceeds a specific limit.
- Applicants should be between 18 and 35 or single parents without cohabiting with their children.

After the selection process, the residents should respect cohabitation rules during their stay. The Cohabitation rules are formulated in 10 articles. In this section, the most important ones are stated (cclcerchicasa.it, 2019):

1. The first variable is the contract’s length, ranging from 6 to 18 months. The second is dealing with hosting guests.
  2. Tenants must notify the manager if they wish to host a guest for more than two nights, and only one person is permitted.
  3. The residents are responsible for their own cohabitation management and housekeeping division (cleaning, garbage management, tidying up, shared purchases, etc.).
  4. Periodic meetings organized by the cooperative accompany cohousing. These meetings help contribute to the development of a collaborative and harmonious environment within the cohousing community. Attendance at these sessions is vital if there is to be any hope of fostering the spirit of collaboration and initiative that is required. Residents are encouraged to contact the cooperative’s point-of-contact personnel to discuss specific concerns that may call for assistance in resolving them.
- The third factor is undoubtedly the survey/questionnaire proposed by social housing. One of the main concepts of so-called social housing accommodation is promoting solidarities between groups and societies. Consequently, the social housing provider usually asks a questionnaire with a motivation letter from the applicant to understand their motivation and their compatibility for participating in these projects. The questions concentrate on the following:
- The requested typology of accommodation
  - Occupation
  - Motivation letter
  - Living experience

### 3.1.4 Practices

This section describes how the tents are experimenting with spaces. Two types of evidence exist for how spaces are being used. The first set of photos shows coliving in action and everyday life happening there. Nevertheless, some activities lack visual content. Therefore, interviews are used as a second or sometimes the supplementary source of evidence.

#### Neighborhood level

Most of the short questions asked of young people in communities have the same short route from home to necessary places. On the one hand, the residents are delighted with daily services like transportation and shops. Regarding their social needs, On the other hand, they do not have enough presence in the neighborhood, and their presence is more fluid than static. They just pass the same route on foot or by bus but do not find enough reason to stay. They usually move to other zones for their recreational activities, like Città Studi, with open parties and various bars. The most frequented place is Lambretta Park; however, they usually practice the spaces individually rather than socially. The other one is the Sanctuary club/restaurant. However, this place usually attracts more people from outside than inside, and due to its location, it is detached from the neighborhood.

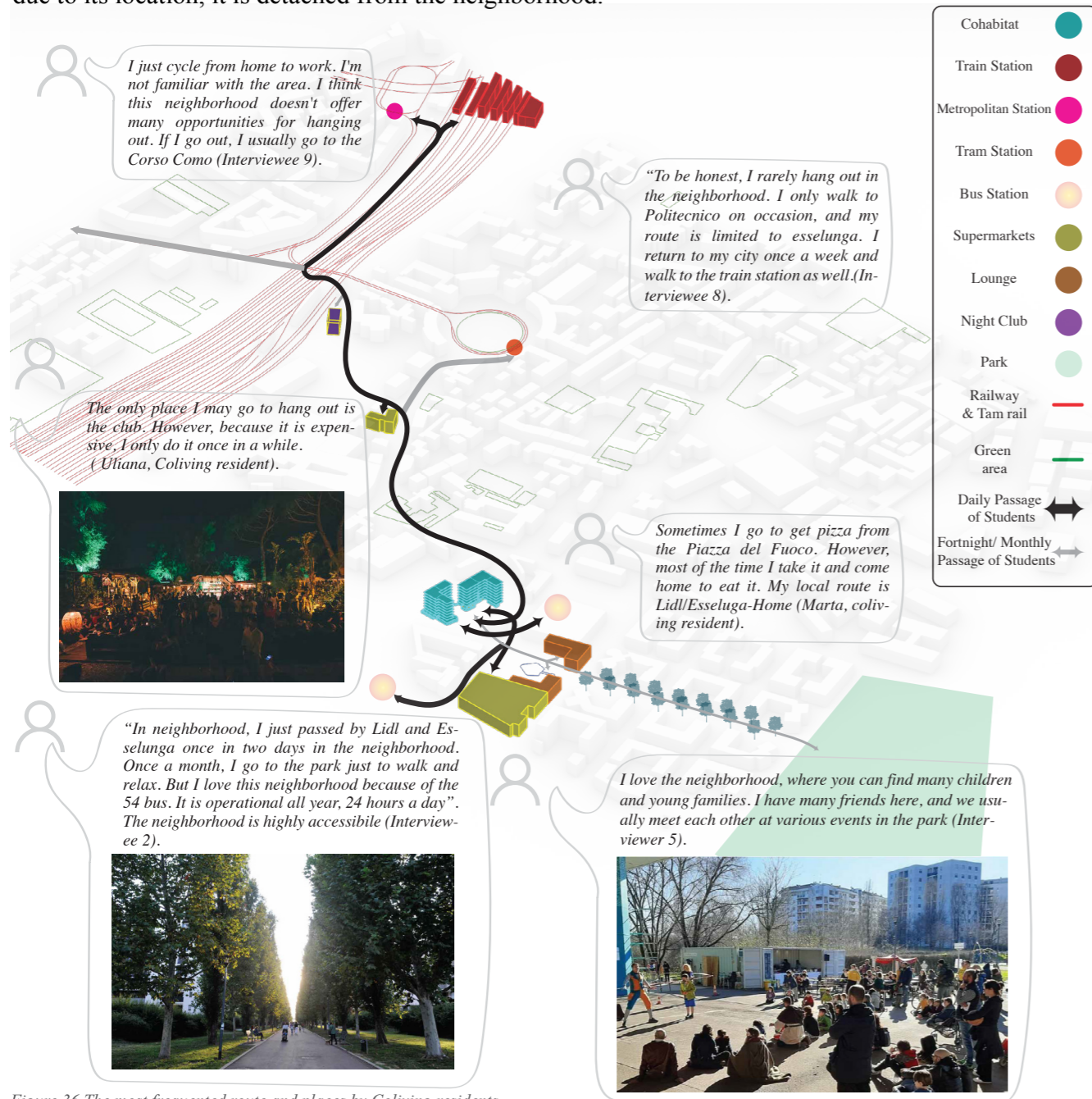


Figure 36 The most frequented route and places by Coliving residents  
Note: Illustrated by author

#### Condominium level

Overall, this overview of the activities, events, and practices at the condominium level is a crucial first step in our study as it will provide us with the necessary background information to move forward with our analysis; however, the main focus of this section is on two coliving units.

The condominium could hold the events with a two-and-a-half-year delay, frequently following a COVID pandemic. Some famous people watch the “Euro cup” in the courtyard, and Cohabitat residents gather for dinner at particular moments. According to Lucia Pompele, one of the active residents, despite the residents’ constant invitations, the coliving residents, mostly students, are not willingly participating in events, as evidenced by the photographs in Figure 37. Later, the study will go further with the interviews with coliving residents, asking their opinions about condominium events.



Figure 37 Some of the events held in the condominium



## Coliving level

The second and more critical approach is analyzing the practices in two coliving units.

We first go through the overall size of the house to understand if the size meets the needs of the tenant. The population living in these co-living areas is roughly 9–10 people. At first glance, it appeared inappropriate for ten people to use in such a medium kitchen or living room. However, the density, or, more accurately, the tenant's presence in the co-living at the same time, determines the more important rules in our cases.

Interesting facts are discussed in interviews. While more people live together in one coliving, tenants in the coliving feel less presence from their flat mates than in typically shared apartments. The daily lifestyles of tenants, including workers and students, off-site students and permanent residents, and Italian and non-Italian individuals, provide a proper balance of dwellers' presence in shared spaces.

*"We only live together for part of the day. But I think shared living was more challenging in the shared apartment when we were all students because we were all young and worked less. On the contrary, now that I'm sharing my living with older people with different occupation and we have a bigger space, we see fewer people with bigger space" (Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

Regarding the kitchen, our contest is not limited just to cooking. Some roommates prefer to sacrifice other parts of shared spaces, like the living room for the kitchen.

Especially since the kitchen is the focal point of any party or gathering, some tenants prefer to sacrifice other parts of shared spaces, like the living room, for the kitchen:

*"I think they could make the kitchen bigger while reducing the size of the living room. The kitchen is not for 10 people while our enormous living room is useful only just for big parties which happen every 2-3 months" ( Interview 08: Male-Italian).*

However, the diversity of food habits or different working hours moderates the high-density kitchen. For instance, while workers have lunch at work. Furthermore, the students eat lunch at home. Alternatively, for example, while workers stay at home just for the night, students tend to hang out with their friends while using the shared spaces more on morning shifts. The mix of culture, occupation, age range, etc., Allows the flat mates to manage the shared spaces between themselves properly:

*"We only live together for part of the day. But I think shared living was more challenging in the shared apartment when we were all students because we were all young and worked less. On the contrary, now that I'm sharing my living with older people with different occupation and we have a bigger space, we see fewer people with bigger space" (Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

The interviewees come from cultural backgrounds with rich food cultures and spoke freely of cooking and kitchens. The importance of kitchens is inevitable in our context. Kitchens are often the focal point of social intrigue and conflict. It is the center of attention and plays a particular role in spatial management. However, as a strategic space, the kitchen is more than just a place to have fun. Food bias—the opinions and preferences surrounding food, both unconscious and conscious—creates many conflicts:

*"However, the majority of them were heated argument. They always wanted to tell us how we should use kitchen tools, cleaning, and this stuff which I felt was offensive most of the time" (Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

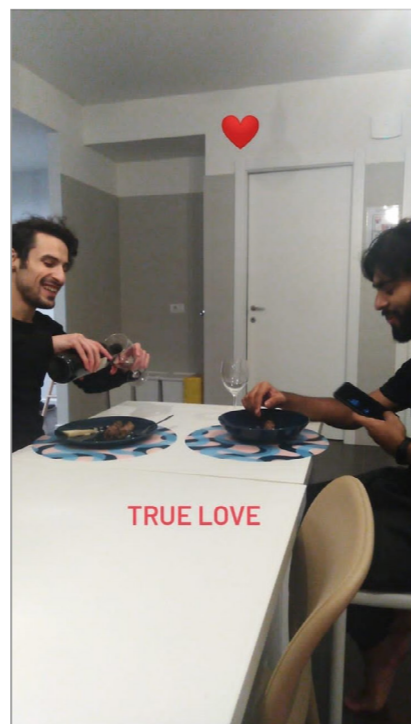


Figure 38 Coliving level the presence of 1-4 People in the kitchen (Everyday life)



Figure 39 presence of 4-7 People (once in two weeks)



Figure 40 presence of 4-7 People (once in two month)

Or on the contrary, it creates curiosity and social bonds:

*"Knowing a different culture and behavior, like seeing how people cook in another way than us with particular cuisine and smell"*

As mentioned above, the tenants prefer to sacrifice the living room for a bigger kitchen. The living room is full of activities, but they are less frequent than those in the kitchen.

After the kitchen, the big common space (Living room) is crucial in the tenant's life. In the previous studies conducted about shared life in the shared apartments in Milan (Bricocoli & Sabatinelli, 2016), the important role of communal life among the young generation was highlighted. The same pattern is observed in our interviews as well. Almost all the interviewees stated that they preferred having bigger shared spaces than private spaces. Young people seemed to think it was essential to find shared spaces where they could hang out with their roommates and friends:

*I usually invite my friends for dinner. The big living room allow me to use that space to have dinner with my friends without disturbing my flat mates and gives me more privacy (Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

The role of the common area comes into play when people invite their friends outside the house or in a less frequent moment, like throwing big parties. It is thought-provoking to see that the people interviewed see shared areas as places where they guarantee their privacy.

As was said above, the big common space gives them privacy when they invite their friends over without bothering their flat mates. It also keeps their guests out of their bedrooms:

*"Also, I enjoy having my friends over, and fortunately, we have a large living room where we frequently host parties. My room is small. But who cares? Honestly, I don't want to invite my friends into my personal space" ( Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

On the other hand, the renters' creative uses of the living room are intriguing. Rather than splitting the space, the tenants have learned to adjust the spatial character of the large living room for various uses. Some examples are displayed in the photos.



Figure 41 Coliving Night Club



Figure 42 Fitness room coliving



Figure 43 Media room Coliving



Figure 44 Coliving Indian restaurant

Like community size, the quantitative approach is not enough to measure the accuracy of the proper size. We should also consider qualitative factors, like the quality of the spatial design. The flexible design not only makes it possible for the spaces to be used more frequently for various purposes, but it also makes it possible for those spaces to be used more frequently for several purposes. Especially in the case of a smaller group like a coliving setup, this flexible facility configuration can be more suitable because it can be quickly agreed upon between smaller groups.

Another factor can be flexible furniture. As discussed before, the extensive shared areas with people of different ages, occupations, and cultures create additional needs. With flexible furniture, the tenants change them quickly.

*“You can easily change the space of those sofas and tables based on different needs created at other moments” ( Interview 05: Female- Iranian).*

Flexible furniture like small tables and cube sofas is essential in creating functional and versatile spaces. These types of furniture are designed to be compact, lightweight, and easy to move around, making them ideal for small living spaces and multi-functional rooms.

Small tables, for example, can be used as a dinner table, a workspace table, a coffee table, an Aperitivo table (Figure 45), or even a tennis table (Figure 47). They can also be easily moved around to accommodate different activities and needs.

Cube sofas, on the other hand, offer a comfortable seating solution while also being highly customizable. They can be arranged in various configurations to fit the needs of the space, such as a cozy sofa (Figure 46), a single seat, a double seat, or even a bed. They are also often designed to be stackable, allowing even more storage versatility.

In summary, flexible furniture like small tables and cube sofas provide versatility, functionality, and adaptability in modern living spaces, helping to make the most out of limited space and changing needs.



Figure 45 Aperitivo table on the terrace of the coliving E



Figure 46 Cube sofas in the living room of coliving E



Figure 47 table tennis in Coliving E



Figure 48 Living room of Coliving E

Physical Layout is an essential consideration in a coliving structure for the presence of the tenant and the way they practice the spaces, as residents may need private spaces to retreat to, as well as areas to interact with other residents. The Layout allows residents to have a sense of privacy and personal space while promoting social interaction. The way residents experience and practice the spaces is related to many factors, such as their private spaces (double room or single room), if they have semi-private spaces, the location of their private room concerning shared spaces, especially the kitchen, the location of the entrance, etcetera. Then the study goes through the Layout of the two buildings and its effects on the satisfaction of their dwellers.

Physical space plays an essential role in maintaining privacy in a coliving structure. However, the level of privacy required can vary depending on the area of the coliving system and the preferences of individual residents. In addition to spatial analysis, qualitative interviews can also be helpful.

First, the study starts with the location of the entrance. The location of the entry in the Layout has been a matter of concern for tenants, and most interviewees mentioned that themselves. While some people don't care much about that, others find it crucial:

*“Because of the high pressure when I was at home, I wanted to be at ease, but I was just entering the house I was facing the people who offered me a beer to drink, and we have that Iranian culture that doesn't let you say no” (Interview 06: Male- Iranian).*

There are two different opinions among scholars regarding access to private spaces. Some argue that common spaces should be located in areas where everyone must pass through, while others advocate for direct access to private spaces via semi-private spaces (Figure 49). There was no one in the interviews who welcomed access through the common spaces, while some blamed forced greeting:

*I was often in a hurry when I was leaving apartment, but I had to stay and have a small conversation by force (Interview 05: Female- Iranian)(Look at figure 49 & 52).*

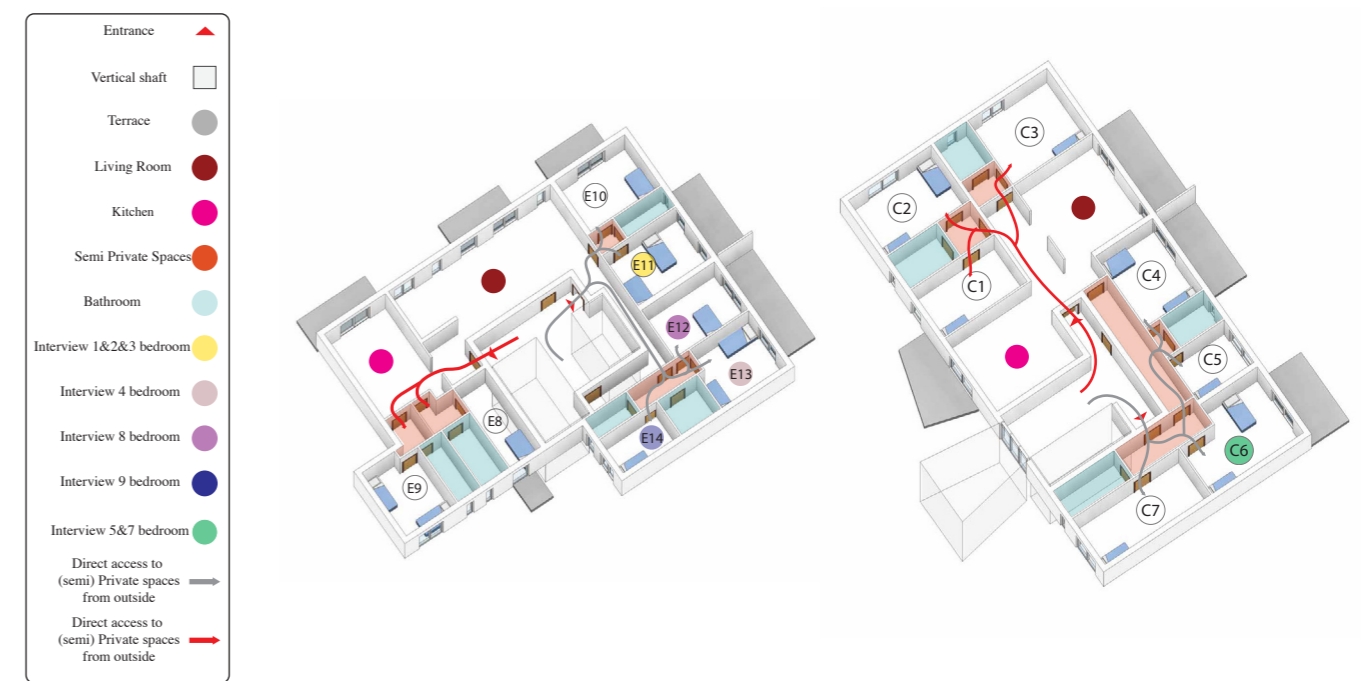


Figure 49 The access to the (semi) private spaces from outside the unit  
Note: Illustrated by author

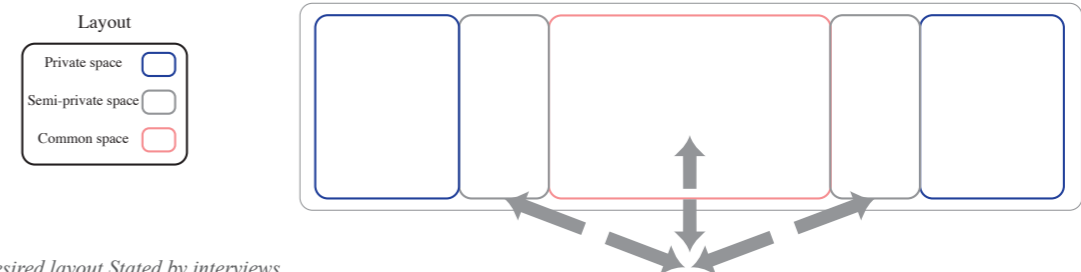


Figure 50 Desired layout Stated by interviews  
Note: Illustrated by author

Speaking of semi-private spaces, semi-private are crucial components of a coliving community. In a coliving setting, residents typically have a private bedroom for sleeping and personal activities but share common spaces such as kitchens, living rooms, and other amenities with other residents. These “intermediate spaces” give residents a sense of privacy and personal space: Scholars have two different opinions regarding access to private spaces. Some argue that common spaces should be located in areas where everyone must pass through, while others advocate for direct access to private spaces via semi-private spaces( Figure 49 & 51). There was no one in the interviews who welcomed access through the common spaces, while some blamed forced greeting:

*“Just as I told you I wanted to separate my private space from the common, I preferred to have more area that covered my private room” ( Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

*“Once, one of my flat mates asked us to close our bathroom door because it was visible from the common room. She was right, but anyway that was our (semi) private zone” ( Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

These semi-private spaces are crucial in maintaining privacy in a coliving setting and can help to reduce tensions and conflicts that can arise when individuals feel their privacy has been invaded. Overall, the design and allocation of semi-private spaces in a coliving community can have a significant impact on the privacy and well-being of its residents.

Semi-private areas may also be where the shared bathroom is located . In the layout of the structure, it is not possible to put the bathrooms in the private room, either economically or technically.

Last is the proximity of each private and shared space and their relationship. The proximity of private spaces to shared spaces in a co-living structure can also significantly impact the overall dynamics of the living arrangement. According to some literature, primarily idealist literature, when private spaces, such as bedrooms, are close to shared spaces, such as kitchens, living rooms, and common areas, residents are more likely to interact with each other and engage in communal activities. This may lead to a sense of community and a supportive environment where residents can easily build relationships and form a sense of belonging. They argue that if private spaces are too far away from shared spaces, it can lead to a more isolated and disconnected living experience, where residents may not have as many opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.

On the contrary, based on our interviews in our case studies, the dwellers disproved this suggestion. All the tenants residing in the rooms far from shared spaces show their satisfaction with the location of their bedrooms( E14, E13, E12 & C6 in Figure 49), while the tenants of the bedrooms closer to shared spaces (E8, E9, C1,C2 & C3 in Figure 49 & 53) are always complaining of the noises and smells.

In order to achieve the best balance between privacy and interaction, coliving communities need to design their spaces to facilitate interaction and encourage residents to come together. This might involve strategically positioning shared spaces far from private spaces or providing intermediate areas that are easily accessible. A well-designed co-living space should strive to balance privacy and community and provide residents with the right mix of private and shared spaces to meet their individual needs.



Figure 51 Semi private spaces in coliving C



Figure 52 entry in coliving C



Figure 53 door of the private spaces close to the common spaces.



Figure 54 Isaac Newton residency

### 3.2 The Isaac Newton Residency

The Newton Dormitory at Politecnico di Milano is a student housing facility on the university’s campus. It provides affordable and convenient housing for students and researchers studying or conducting university research. The dormitory offers a range of accommodation options, including single and double rooms and shared apartments. All rooms have basic furnishings and amenities, and residents can access common areas such as kitchens and lounges. The Newton Dormitory provides a supportive and inclusive community for its residents and offers a range of programs and events that encourage social interaction and academic engagement. By living at the Newton Dormitory, residents can fully immerse themselves in the educational and cultural life of Politecnico di Milano. The building houses approximately 260 students who, together, represent about 20 different nationalities.

**The Urban context**

Initially, a brief overview of the neighborhood experience for students will be provided, followed by a comprehensive analysis of the student residency as a whole.

Gallaratese is a neighborhood located in the northwest area of Milan, Italy. It is a residential neighborhood that is centered around the eponymous train station and includes a large residential area, a commercial district, and a public park.

The neighborhood is mainly residential area located on the outskirts of the city center. The neighborhood is partially connected to the city center by a reliable bus network and a metro line that runs through the area(). The convenient transportation options allow residents to easily travel to the city center for work, shopping, and entertainment.



Figure 55 accessibility of students to public transport  
Note: Illustrated by author

The neighborhood offers its residents a unique combination of big open spaces and a variety of sports amenities (Figure 56 ). While these offerings may seem desirable to many young residents in the Newton Residency, their functions has become questionable.

They are some Initiatives started to integrate the residency with local people. The most important one is from “Polisocial” in 2019.

The goal of the initiative is to promote and encourage social relationships between the residents of the student residence “Newton” at the Polytechnic University of Milan and the residents of the Gallaratese neighborhood through the sharing and integrated use of the public green spaces generated by the student residence, as part of the activities planned in the Off-Campus - Polisocial program promoted by the Polytechnic University of Milan, a line of action will be dedicated to the “Newton” student residence and specifically to the design and sharing with the residents of the Gallaratese neighborhood of open spaces near the green public areas.

This level of analysis is not within the scope of the study. However, that was noteworthy enough to be mentioned.



Figure 56 The Important land use of the neighbourhood for Newton residency residents  
Note: Illustrated by author

### 3.2.1 Spatial features

#### Shared spaces:

As discussed before, Milan has become an expensive and temporary city, and many young people are The common spaces in the Newton residency are shared among all residents and include the following:

**Kitchen:** The residency has a shared kitchen where residents can prepare meals. The kitchen has basic appliances such as a stove, oven, microwave, and refrigerator.

**Lounge:** The residency has a shared lounge area where residents can relax, socialize, and study. The lounge is furnished with comfortable seating, tables, and chairs.

**Laundry room:** The residency has a laundry room with washing machines and dryers.

**Outdoor spaces:** The residency has a garden and courtyard area where residents can enjoy outdoor activities and relax.

**Other common facilities:** The residency also has other shared facilities, such as a gym, a library, and a music room, that are available for all residents to use.

#### Private Spaces:

The private spaces in the Newton residency are the individual rooms assigned to each resident. These rooms are intended for personal use and are equipped with basic furnishings such as a bed, a desk, a chair, and a closet. Each room also has a private bathroom.

Three types of accommodations are available: studio flat, mini loft, and double room. (Residenza. Polimi. It, s.d.) A studio flat is a single room with a private bathroom, while a mini loft is a single bedroom with a shared bathroom and another doubled room. The third option is a double room that also has a shared bathroom. These accommodations differ in size and level of privacy, so residents can choose the option that best suits their needs. Whether they prefer the independence of a studio flat, the affordability of a shared space, or the convenience of a double room, there is a housing option for everyone. However, as illustrated in Figure 57, most of the accommodations are Doubled bedrooms (Figure 53), which creates a high demand for shared spaces in the residency. In other words, there are just two Single rooms and two lofts with single rooms.

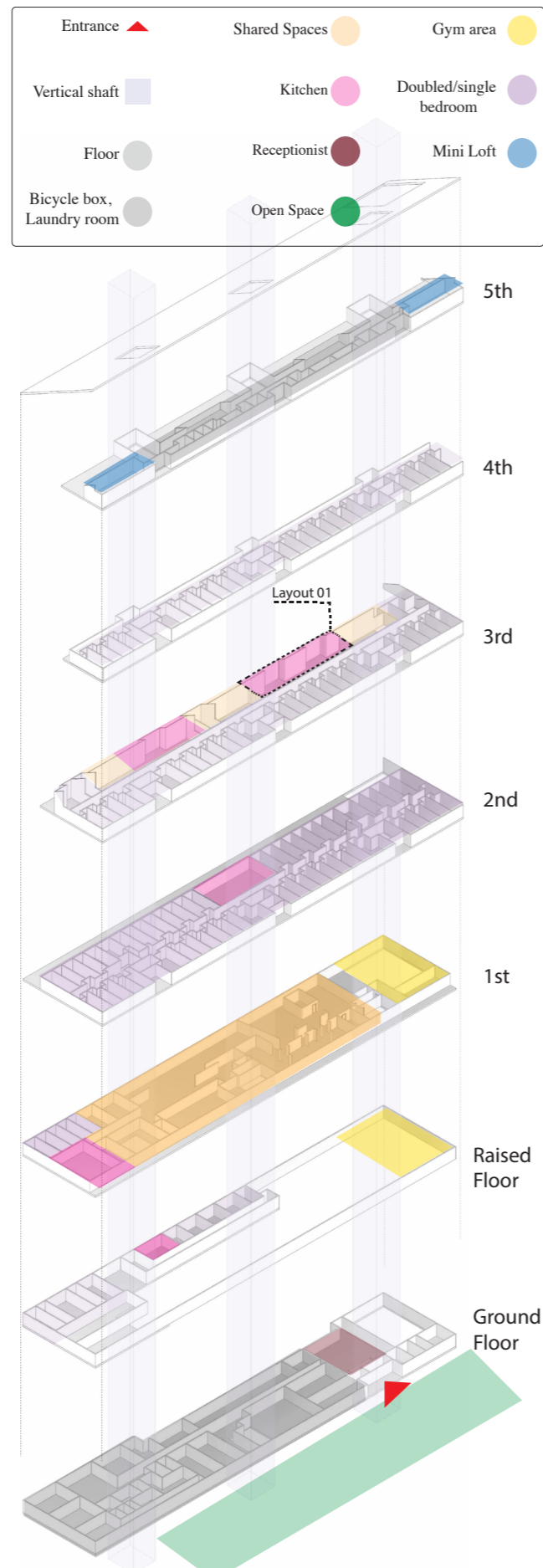


Figure 57 3D section split of the Isaac Newton residency  
Note: Illustrated by Author



Figure 58 Shared spaces in the Newton residency

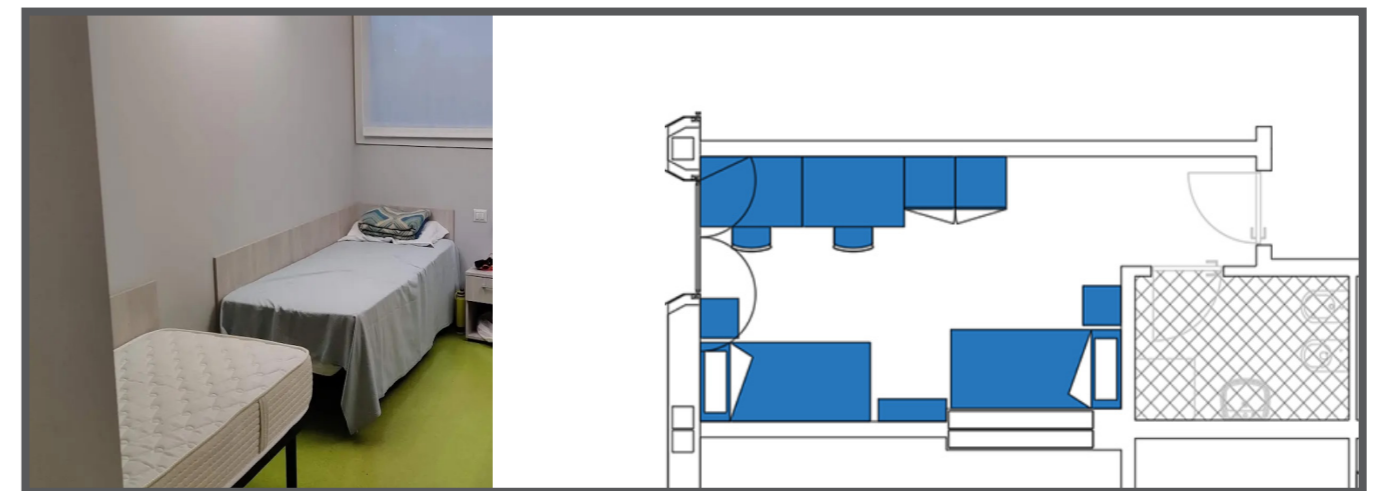


Figure 59 Private spaces in the Newton residency

### 3.2.2 Actors

The housing service manages Newton, a branch of the campus life office inside Politecnico. The housing service oversees various aspects of our residence, such as maintenance inside our rooms and in common areas like kitchens, gyms, etc., Through a third-party company. Maintenance is handled by Dussman, a company that has been awarded the contract through a public tendering process by the Housing service. It's worth noting that Dussman also holds maintenance and cleaning services in Politecnico campuses, particularly at the Leonardo Campus. However, the housing office will continue to manage the overall operation.

The housing service also handles administrative matters such as contracts, payments, and regulations. The housing service comprises three managers who oversee different aspects of the residence operations. The head of the office is responsible for the overall management and coordination of the service and liaising with other departments and external stakeholders. Below the head of the office, two managers handle the specific needs and requests of different types of students. One manager deals with scholarship students, who get residence access at a reduced cost that is deducted from their scholarship loan. The other manager handles total tariff students, who pay full price to access the residence. These managers ensure that the students are assigned to suitable rooms, receive adequate services and facilities, and comply with the residence rules and regulations.

However, since the housing office member is not physically present in the residency, they delegate their authority to a representative. A representative is a person who should act as a liaison between the housing office and the residents. She is responsible for implementing the policies and decisions the housing office makes.

The housing office is responsible for planning and organizing various events for the residents of the student accommodation. These events promote social interaction, physical activity, and cultural diversity among the students. Some examples of these events are sports tournaments (such as foosball and table tennis).

However, organizing parties or other informal gatherings for the residents are left to the students, who can use their creativity and preferences to create their own fun and memorable experiences. There is no written rule about this, but it is a common practice for the students' representatives to organize parties open to the entire residence.

In case of conflict, the residence regulations are a reference document containing the residents' rules and guidelines (residenze.polimi.it, s.d.). It is the only source of truth that the director of the residence uses to resolve any conflicts or disputes that may arise among the residents or between the residents and the staff. The director's decisions are based on what the document regulates and what is happening in reality. If the residence regulations do not cover any situations, the director consults with the housing service to make a definitive choice.

One of the services Politecnico offers its residents is a ticketing system for maintenance and cleaning complaints. This system allows you to report any issue or problem you encounter in your accommodation, such as a broken appliance, leaky faucet, or dirty common area. You can access the ticketing system through the Politecnico mobile app, where you can find a support section and send a fault report. The housing service will then assign your ticket to the appropriate staff and resolve it immediately. The ticketing system is the only way to complain about maintenance and cleaning issues. You should not contact the director or the receptionist for these matters, as they cannot help you. The ticketing system is also a way for the housing service to monitor and evaluate the quality and speed of the maintenance service and to ensure that your living conditions are satisfactory.

Every year around January, the housing office conducts a non-mandatory survey to gather feedback from our residents. The survey asks specific questions about the quality of the kitchens, the common areas, and the rooms in our facility.

### 3.2.3 Rules/ Services

Based on bureaucratic rules, the facilities and resources available are strictly for students and researchers working off-campus. It is based on the right-for-study policy (DSU).

The initial observation concerning the regulation of residency is the significant level of restriction imposed. It is noteworthy to highlight that the guidelines provided to students by the rector consist of nineteen articles. In this regard, some key regulations are outlined below to provide a comprehensive overview of the policies:

1. The room assignment is personal and cannot be transferred permanently or temporarily.

While it is possible to establish a domicile in Politecnico di Milano's housing places but not residency.

There are very restricted rules regarding using communal spaces to maintain a clean and safe environment for all users. These rules may include restrictions on certain activities or behaviors that may cause damage to the communal areas, such as smoking or consuming excess use of alcoholic drinks. Additionally, there may be rules regarding the hours during which the shared spaces are accessible and guidelines for maintaining cleanliness and order within the areas. Behavioral laws in communal spaces may be implemented to prevent disturbances or disruptions that may negatively impact other users. This could include guidelines for noise levels, respecting others' personal space, or avoiding disruptive or inappropriate behavior.

Regarding furniture, there may be rules in place to prevent damage or excessive wear and tear. This could include guidelines for moving or rearranging furniture or restrictions on bringing personal furniture that may not be suitable or safe for the communal space. The same can happen in Private areas as well.

Residents must inform the appropriate parties, such as landlords or property managers, about any illnesses or health concerns they may have on an ongoing basis to ensure the health and safety of all residents.

In addition, Regarding Parties, Events, many dormitories require that residents obtain permission from responsible parties before organizing a party. They can't last after midnight except in some particular situations. This may include getting approval from a dormitory manager, residential advisor, or other authorized individuals to approve such events. Sometimes, this permission may need to be obtained by mail or in writing.

In terms of guests, one common restriction is that residents may only accept a limited number of guests at a time, often no more than three people. Guests must leave by a specific time in the evening and not be permitted to stay overnight. The circulation of guests is also limited in many ways to ensure that they do not disrupt the daily routine of the residence or interfere with the needs of other residents. The inviter should be in the residency when their guests are there.

Residents have the opportunity to choose representatives who can speak on their behalf.

These were the summary of 19 Articles presented to the students regarding the hall of Newton residency rules.

In this residency, there are five different types of accommodation available for residents. These options offer a range of sizes and amenities, allowing residents to select the option that best fits their needs and budget.

Despite the variety of options available, the cost of living in this residency is incredibly affordable, especially compared to the average cost of housing in Milan. The prices range from 3500 to 4000 euros for an 11-month stay, making it an excellent choice for those seeking an affordable place to live in Milan (residenze.polimi, 2022).

Apart from the accommodation cost, a €500 damage deposit needs to be paid, which will be refunded at the end of the student's stay in the accommodation.

Regarding services, some of the amenities provided in this residence include a 24-hour reception desk, access to bed linens and towels that are changed every two weeks or can be purchased as linen, room cleaning every two weeks, daily cleaning of communal areas, a broadband Internet connection, access to water, electricity, heating, and air conditioning, as well as the use of several facilities such as a laundry room, an ironing room, a TV and reading room, a gym, a study room, and shared kitchens. (Residenze.polimi, 2022).

### 3.2.4 Practices

It is evident that the sort of evidence employed to support the research findings differs between the second and first case studies when comparing them. The second case study, in contrast to the first, depends more on comments and interviews with residents of the Newton residence. In the first case study, the author had actual experience living in the residency. The author was forced to depend on the narratives of the residents to create a comprehension of the living circumstances and atmosphere of the residence since there was no visual material or personal experience. While this strategy could have certain drawbacks, it enables a variety of viewpoints to be considered and sheds light on the lived experiences of the dwellers. The author's ability to provide a complex knowledge of resident life, encompassing both good and bad elements, was made possible by the material she gathered via interviews, a questionnaire, and quotations. Despite potential flaws in the data used to support it, the second case study nonetheless offers insightful information about the experiences of individuals who dwell in residence.

#### Neighborhood level

Based on what was said in the interviews, the people who live in the area are not involved in the life of their neighborhood. The results imply that people feel a strong sense of isolation, reflecting the neighborhood's incapacity to foster a mutually supportive community. The prominent presence of the students outside the residency is limited to the Metro station and entrance. As shown in Figure 61, the location of the entrance of the building prevents any neighborhood dynamics from spilling in.

In other words, the residency is designed to be self-contained, isolating itself from the surrounding neighborhood dynamics.

For example, mugging at the Leonardo metro station, where just hardly 70 meters from the residency, which many students and an anonymous employee verify, shows how many people feel cut off from the neighborhood. Neighborhoods that lack social cohesion and a shared sense of purpose are more likely to be affected by these things. However, this is the reason for alarm since crime tends to reduce people's feelings of safety and security in a given area. The occurrence of similar crimes in the area highlights the critical need to take preventative steps to deal with the problem of social isolation.

One thing to remember is that the police did little to aid the troubled students. The university, instead, contracted with a private security firm. It's disturbing that the university had to hire private protection after failing to get the aid it needed from the government.

Since the university had to do something to ensure the student's safety, the security company put a person at the entrance. The problem seemed to be solved, at least temporarily. However, now the security service is deactivated again.

However, according to an anonymous employee, the open space designed as off-campus program in front of the entrance (Figure 60) used to be in the Covid period, when inviting friends was forbidden. According to her/him, now it is not frequented like before. However, that space is a focal point for people in the neighborhood to pass from, and sometimes they pass and sit.



Figure 60 Open spaces in front of the Newton residency Entry

While the study focused on only three individuals who had experienced living in the Newton residency, it also gathered supplementary information by seeking opinions from other Iranian individuals on campus about their relationship with the neighborhood. However, the study does not aim to provide an in-depth analysis of this topic and remains at a surface level of exploration.

Having conducted interviews and short talks with the Iranian students of the Newton residency, I found that they not only not view the neighborhood as a recreational place but also perceive it as dangerous to hang around. The recent mugging incidents have further heightened their concerns about safety in the area as well.

In brief, the students of students has little to no connection or familiarity with the neighborhood. There is a lack of relationship between them and the community, be it through social, recreational, or other activities.

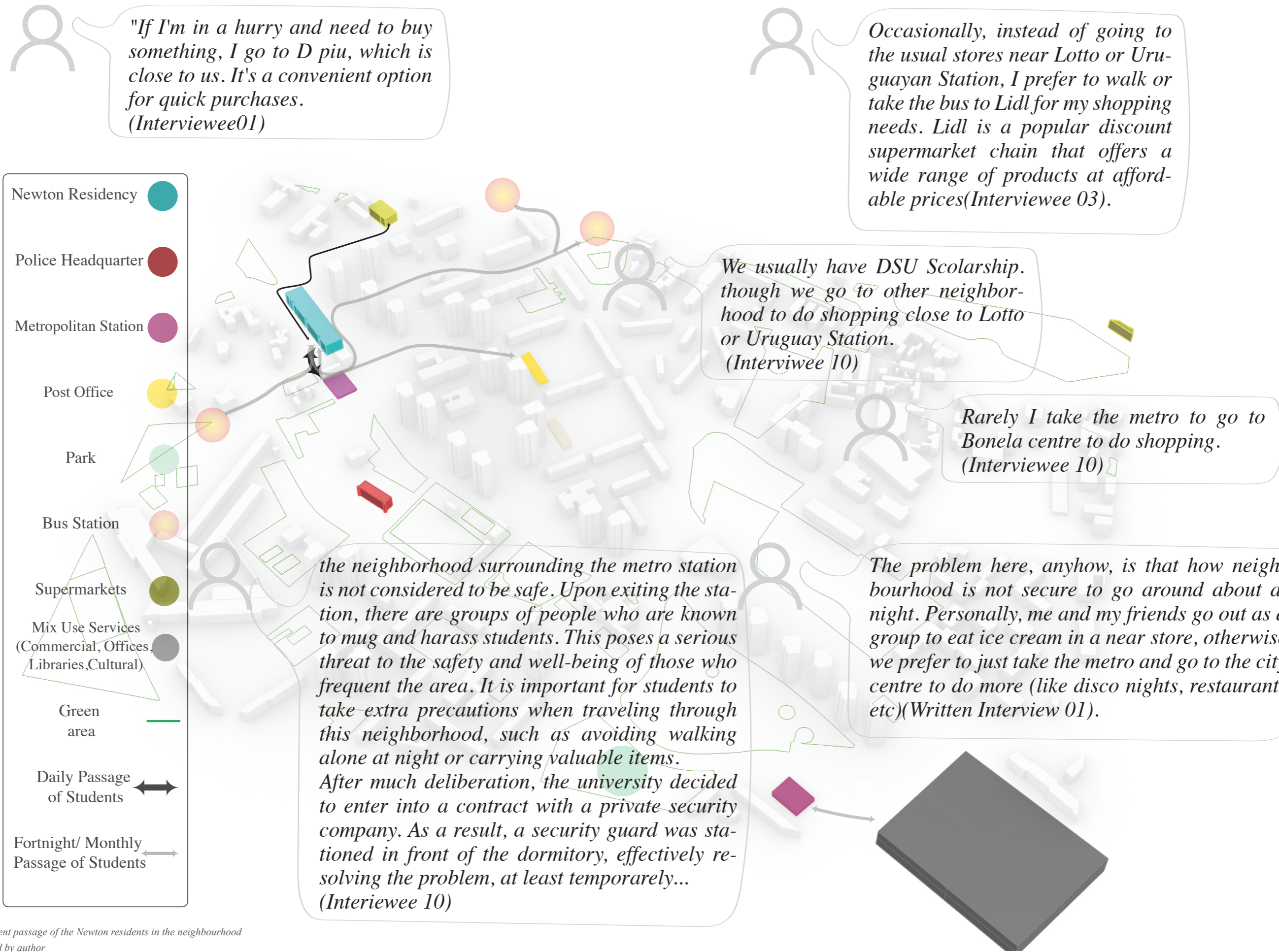


Figure 61 frequent passage of the Newton residents in the neighbourhood  
Note: Illustrated by author



### Inside the residency

The Isaac Newton student housing is enormous and well-equipped, accommodating many students. The seven-floor student housing can house 250 students. After looking at our interviews, questionnaires, and short quotes from students, it's clear that the residency offers excellent physical services like cleaning and facilities. The accommodation students' feedback suggests that the services are operating well. Students said the communal spaces and shared rooms are being cleaned frequently. The receptionist's helpfulness and attention to students' needs have been recognized. As one of the Iranian residents declared:

*"Being here saves busy foreign students time on household chores. Language, culture, and social norms are new when living abroad. This is time-consuming and stressful, especially with academic work"(Interview 10: Male- )."*

Nonetheless, the study aims to go something further than services. The study goes through the physical/spatial factors as well. Regarding the private spaces, the rooms are inefficient. Most rooms are designed as double bedrooms, making students uncomfortable. Yet, the student house has several shared places for students to use (Figure 58). However, Students dwelling in these well-maintained shared places is doubtful. A recent questionnaire and the actual situation in residency show that students are not using these common spaces as much as they can. Despite having several communal rooms, students don't use them frequently, or at least as it can be.

To analyze the situation, first, the study looks at the residency's layout. The residency layout shows a lot of shared space. Figure 57 shows that shared spaces comprise a considerable part of the residency. The layout isn't ideal. The long rectangular building makes flexibility difficult. Although it could be improved, the communal spaces are mainly on the first floor, and the rooms are mostly together. The design resembles more a dorm than a residency (Figure 57), as one resident mentioned accurately that the rooms are only for sleeping, supporting this. The whole design isn't flexible, with many walls and floors separating the spaces. In general, the author, as an architect, sees vertical connections as a problem.

Kitchen placement is another layout issue. Students from all cultures tight firmly to kitchens and cooking culture. Residents also find the kitchen too small, especially during certain hours. Since the kitchen is a shared space that encourages residents to socialize, it must be large enough to meet their needs. More importantly, the kitchen seems disconnected from other shared spaces. The layout of the building doesn't give the students the to extend their interactions to proximate areas if there are any as ( Interview 01: Male- Indian)states:

*"In addition to the paperwork, the shared space was far from the kitchen, and for our culture, which is tied to cooking, that was useless. But you couldn't find other people using that too"*

In addition, since the kitchen is unattached from other spaces with another spatial quality, it separates your cooking/eating activities from others. My recent interview with an Iranian student raised an important point about the shared kitchen ( Interview 10: Male- ). He said they only cook and eat when they're in the kitchen. Reading, relaxing, watching, and other activities are challenging in the shared kitchen while cooking or eating. The resident, however, added that the kitchen offers socializing. This is an interesting observation and shows how the shared kitchen space affects students living in shared housing.

To conclude, understanding the residency's layout is essential. The residency space could be made more flexible and well-designed. The physical quality of the spaces, furniture, and services is necessary, but to meet residents' needs, the spatial quality must be addressed deeply as well; otherwise, the students will change it as much as possible: Figure 62 and Figure 63 illustrate how students adapt the composition of the kitchen table to suit their individual needs. A well-designed layout with functional shared spaces can improve residents' living experiences.

After the layout, the second important factor is density. As density is a concept connected to physical factors, the number of residents and their presence in residency also come into play. Residents' lifestyles and routines determine how they use common spaces. Newton residents are likely students with similar life time lines. They have identical schedules and may need to use the common spaces and kitchen simultaneously, which can cause overcrowding. This makes managing the residency's common spaces difficult because residents cannot share them at different times, unlike in mixed groups with different lifestyles in the first case study:

*"The kitchen is too crowded and at certain times it is literally impossible to cook and to eat calmly, because there is too much noise and crowd"(Appendix B: Questionnaire)*

Thus, spatial design is even more crucial. In newton residency, instead of the mixing the kitchen area with common spaces, the layout has mixed other functions with are not related:

*"The study room is either completely silenced or constantly disturbed by people playing games, watching television or talking unnecessarily loudly, i really can't understand where the idea of placing games and study tables together came from(Figure 58)"*

Furthermore, the residents face a predicament when hosting their guests due to the insufficient space available in the kitchens, typically used as a gathering place during peak hours. This issue is compounded when residents of Newton attempt to entertain guests, as the limited kitchen space designated for residents is inadequate for accommodating visitors:

*"In addition to the paperwork, the shared space was far from the kitchen, and for our culture, which is tied to cooking, that was useless. But you couldn't find other people using that too"(Interview 01: Male- Indian)."*

However, it's important to note that this factor is relative and may vary depending on the time and circumstances. For instance, (Interview 10: Male- Iranian)cited the spacious kitchen as an advantage because it allows for hosting many friends in the kitchen.

Another aspect of this research is to analyze if the residency is also giving the international students a chance to interact more with local culture. People from eastern cultures make up the South Asian students, and one of the main goals is to find out if the residency gives them a chance to understand the local culture while they are staying there.

So, in addition to the daily life function, the research is focused on figuring out how residency affects social interaction and the development of cross-cultural understanding. The author believes this aspect of the residence is equally important and is eager to explore how it works for the South Asian students. The study hopes to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the residency's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the students by examining both physical services and more cross-culture interaction.

Using semi-structured in-depth interviews and questionnaires, the study has discovered that the kitchen is the epicenter of many interactions. This discovery is intriguing because it indicates that the kitchen is a hub for positive and negative interaction.

We will delve into further detail about the kitchen during the interviews. As the study progresses, the focus will shift toward exploring the kitchen in more detail. This will involve conducting additional in-depth interviews with two individuals (Interview 01: Male- Indian, Interview 03: Male- Indian, and another Iranian student) with experience living in the Newton residency. By speaking with these individuals, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the kitchen in residence and how it impacts the social dynamics between residents. However, this part focuses mainly on the kitchens' physical features and will go to other aspects in other chapters.

The second-floor kitchen was selected as the location of the study because of its high use by the two interviewees. In addition, after asking the interviewees, I found that the kitchens, in particular, the bigger one (Figure 62) on the second floor, are more crowded probably because of their proximity to the more rooms on the first, second, and sometimes third floor, with daily use of the students:

*"Even though there are other kitchens available, a lot of Italian students still choose to come and cook in this one. I think it's because they like to hang out with their friends while they're cooking and eating. (Interview 10: Male- )."*

In short, this one clearly had a larger user base and was more conveniently located. As a result, we zeroed down on one specific kitchen for the research because of the rich information it would bring.

Simulating students in a kitchen without photos is difficult but possible. The three student interviews can be used to create a 3d simulation of their kitchen (Figure 62). Multiple workstations, cooking utensils, and ingredients could be used to simulate students' real-life actions. For educational or research purposes, illustrating students' interactions in the 3d environment can show how they interact with meals. The simulation may not perfectly replicate real-world interactions but can still reveal student kitchen dynamics.

Figure 62 shows that the kitchen is completely closed off, with no space for students to sit outside to make room for others. The residency's layout—double bedrooms without kitchens—limits its use. The residents rely on the communal kitchen.

The students' kitchen problems stem from the building's inflexibility. Students cannot collaborate without enough space. The kitchen's closed nature limits student socialization and the formation of cross-cultural relationships.

I had difficulties obtaining administrative data and then describing the nationalities of Newton residency students. However, based on my interviews and observation, Italian students, usually from the south, are first, followed by Indian and Pakistani students who create groups. Iranian students' numbers are notable but typically don't form groups.

Regarding kitchen habits, Indian/Pakistani, and Italian students cook and eat between their groups (4-5 people), while Iranian and other nationalities cook and eat alone, often while watching on their phones or tablets. Iranian students occasionally join Indian groups.

The passage describes how Italians and international students in Newton residency have modified furniture to meet their social needs (Figure 62). It states that Italians have one table and international students, primarily Indian/Pakistani, have another. Many students mention this configuration:

*“When we were in the kitchen, it was split up into two groups - the Italians on one side and the international students, who usually come from third world countries, on the other side. And get this - even at the birthday party, we didn't really hang out with each other. We didn't invite them to our gathering, and they didn't invite us to theirs. It was kind of like we were two separate groups, even though we were all in the same room. But hey, everyone's entitled to their own party, right?” (Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

It's interesting how the physical environment, like furniture placement, has been adapted to students' social habits and groupings. Social dynamics shape how people live and interact, even in seemingly mundane activities like eating and cooking.

The fact that all students know this configuration suggests that it has become a significant part of Newton's residency life. It may also show students' pride in their groups and customs.

This study shows how social dynamics and cultural differences affect the physical environment and daily routines of people living together. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting different cultures and social habits to promote harmony and inclusion.

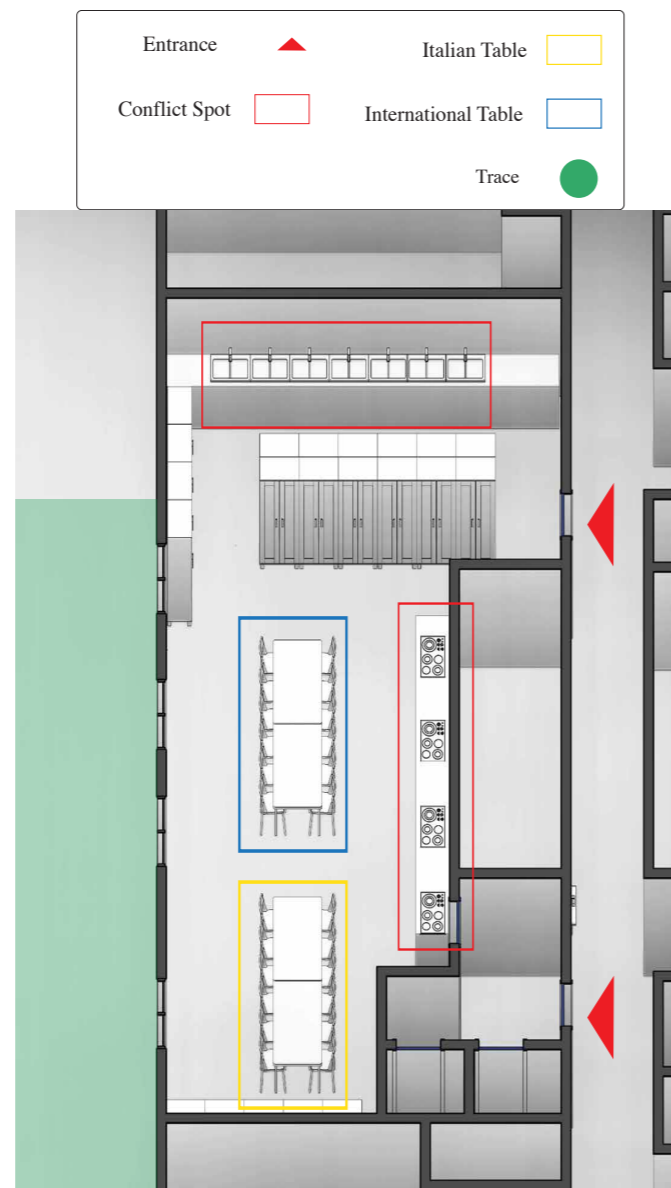


Figure 62 3D section of the kitchen on the second floor

Note: Illustrated by Author



Figure 63 The Kitchen on the second Floor

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According to three interviewees, the Newton residency's main conflicts involve cleaning, using sinks, and using other people's ingredients. Cultural differences in hygiene and resource sharing may cause these conflicts.

In communal kitchens, tables, refrigerators, and shelves are separated between two groups probably to address these issues. This separation reduces conflict by clearly defining and allocating space for each student group.

By having separate areas for each group to store and cook their ingredients, students can avoid using each other's ingredients or confusing whose turn it is to use a sink or stove. This reduces stress and promotes harmony.

The study also suggests that Italian and international students' separate kitchens may reflect the Newton residency's social dynamics. While this separation may solve communal conflicts, it must not further divide or reinforce cultural stereotypes and prejudices.

In conclusion, the study's findings show a low level of conflict between the students who live together, which suggests that they are compatible with one another. However, the study's findings also indicate a limited amount of interaction between students of varying cultural backgrounds. Some of the reasons for this cultural isolation may be the personal choices made by individual students; however, the study suggests that the space design does not play an essential role in promoting cross-cultural exchange and reducing conflicts between groups. In other words, it could be much better.

Even though residency arrangements can potentially integrate people of different cultures per se, the spatial design of Newton does not offer sufficient qualified spaces for promoting social interaction between people of different cultures. Consequently, there is a danger of fostering cultural segregation and restricting opportunities for interaction between different cultures.

In general, the study's findings highlight how important it is to consider spatial design when attempting to promote intercultural exchange and reduce conflicts in residential living environments. It may be possible to increase compatibility between students of different cultural backgrounds who live together if spaces encourage social interaction and the exchange of cultural norms and practices.



Figure 64 Camplus Sesto San Giovanni

### 3.3 Camplus Sesto San Giovanni

One of the most interesting aspects of this residency is its management history. Previously, the residency was managed by the University of Milan-Bicocca. However, the residency management was recently transferred to Camplus, a network of university residences and services that aims to offer students higher-quality accommodation and learning opportunities. This change of management represents a new challenge and opportunity for the residents and allows the study to compare two different kinds of management.

Camplus Sesto San Giovanni is a student housing facility in Sesto San Giovanni, a town well connected to Milan by subway and suburban train. It is part of Camplus, the first housing provider for university students in Italy and Spain. Camplus Sesto San Giovanni offers 152 single and double studios, ideal for Italian and international students who want to live the university experience in Milan but away from the noise of nightlife, in a context where spacious areas and services are designed to encourage study and sociality without giving up privacy. Camplus also provides educational services tailored to students' passions and study paths.

This residency is geographically located outside of our area of interest mentioned before. However, all of its residents and the residency are well-connected to the city of Milan, and it is practical and can be considered inside the area of interest.

### Urban context

This section will explore the student residency and the neighborhood experience for students in detail. First, it will summarize what the neighborhood offers students regarding mobility, diversity, and social opportunities. Then, it will examine the student residency and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses regarding affordability, quality, and accessibility.

The Residency is located in the northeastern part of Milan city, near the border with Cinisello Balsamo. It is close to several public services, such as schools, sports facilities, health centers, and Supermarkets and Open. The neighborhood is well connected by public transport, with buses and metro lines serving the area (Figure 65). University students in Italy and Spain. Camplus Sesto San Giovanni offers 152 single and double studios, ideal for Italian and international students who want to live the university experience in Milan but away from the noise of nightlife, in a context where spacious areas and services are designed to encourage study and sociality without giving up privacy. Camplus also provides educational services tailored to students' passions and study paths.

This residency is geographically located outside of our area of interest mentioned before. However, all of its residents and the residency are well-connected to the city of Milan, and it is practical and can be considered inside the area of interest.

Wide streets, green spaces, and tall, isolated buildings define this modern neighborhood. This design has drawbacks like isolation, lack of defensible space, and social cohesion. Camplus residents is isolated from neighborhood like other high-rise buildings in the neighborhood. Demography speaking, the neighborhood hosts many immigrants which without any right policy has contribute to the more segregated neighborhood.



Figure 65 Accessibility to the public transport for students of the residency

Note: Illustrated by Author

### 3.3.1 Spatial features

#### Shared spaces:

The residency offers a variety of shared spaces for the residents to enjoy and use. There is a recreational open salon where residents can play games, watch films, or socialize. There is also a relaxing salon where residents can unwind, read books, or hang around. There is a closed study room equipped with desks, chairs, and so on for those who need to study or work. For those who want to stay fit and healthy, there will be a fitness room with various exercise machines and equipment. Finally, there is a laundry room where residents can conveniently wash and dry their clothes (Figure 66).

#### Private Spaces:

The residency offers a variety of private spaces for its guests. There are 136 mini apartments for single use with an average size of 20 square meters on eight floors. Each apartment has a mini kitchen and bathroom (Type 2). Some are slightly bigger depending on the location (Type 2B & Type 2C), and a few have a balcony (Type 2C & Type A). The residency also has eight apartments with two single rooms each (Type A). These apartments share a bathroom, a small kitchen, and a balcony. The private spaces of the residency are designed to provide comfort and convenience for the guests.

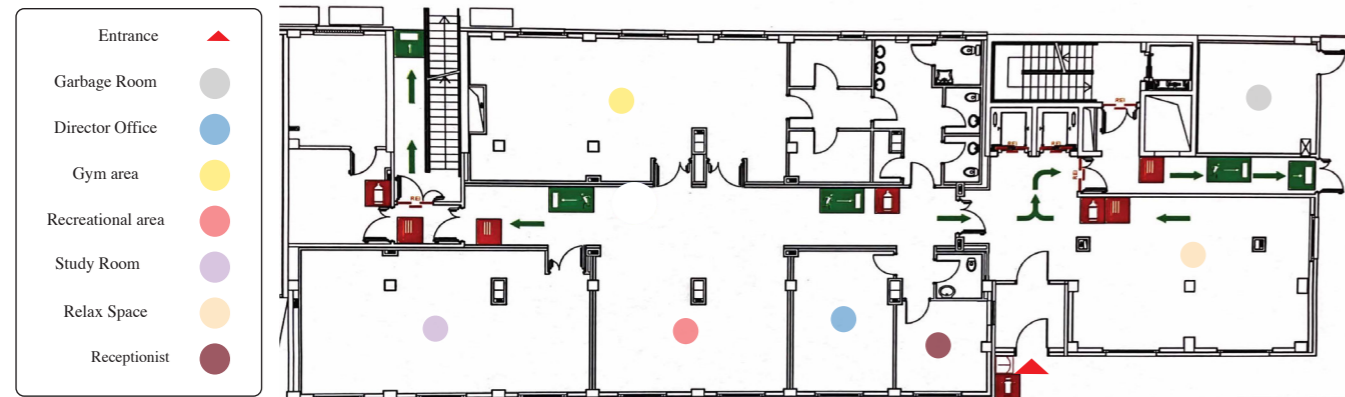


Figure 66 Floor Plan of the residency of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni  
 Note: Adapted from evacuation floor Plan of the residency provided by the Camplus

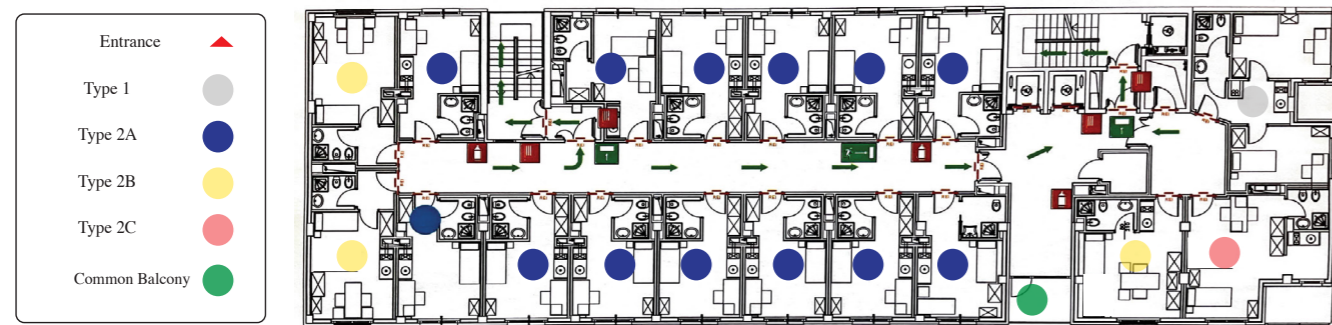


Figure 67 Fifth floor plan of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni Residency  
 Note: Adapted from evacuation floor Plan of the residency provided by the Camplus



Figure 68 shared spaces in Camplus Sesto San Giovanni

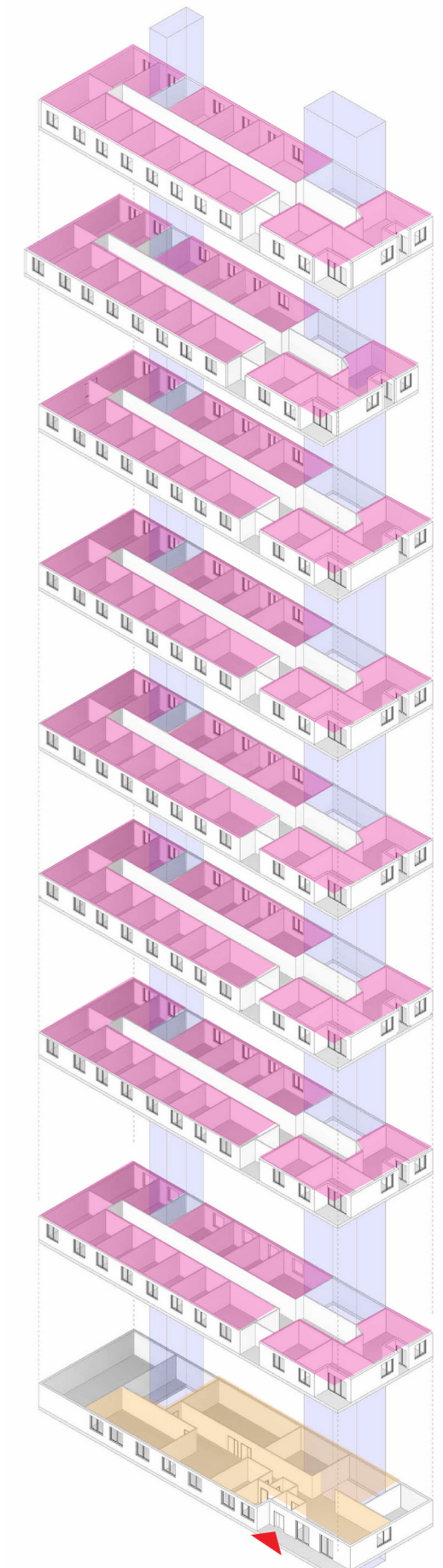


Figure 69 3D section split of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni  
 Note: Illustrated by Author

Figure 69 shows how the shared and private spaces are separated; the only connection is vertical shafts. However, the spatial order is more vertical to the residency of Newton. The vast spatial difference between this residency and the previous one is the absence of a shared kitchen; all the students have their own kitchens in their apartments. This residency has more private space arrangements and fewer common spaces for interactions. However, the spatial order is more vertical to the residency of Newton residency. The floors type are either completely the same or with minor changes. In general, the overall design is like the newton residency.

The design of student residences can vary widely depending on their location, size, budget, and target market. Some residences offer more shared spaces for socializing, studying, and entertainment, while others prioritize private spaces for individual comfort and privacy. Figure 69 illustrates one example of a residence with a high degree of separation between shared and private spaces, with only vertical shafts connecting them. This residence also differs from other examples in that it does not have a shared kitchen for communal cooking and dining; instead, each student apartment has its own kitchen facility. This implies that this residence caters to students who prefer more autonomy and independence over community building and interaction. The spatial order of this residence is also more vertical than horizontal, meaning there are more floors with similar layouts than different ones. Generally speaking, The Camplus Sesto San Giovanni residence resembles another example of a high-rise building like the Newton residency in its overall design. However, it may have some variations in details, such as furniture or color schemes. They both represent a spatial arrangement of the dormitory rather than residency.

### 3.3.2 Actors

Having conducted an interview with one of the managers of one of the Camplus Branch, the actors involved in the management became a bit clear. The manager explained that Camplus main office is situated in the city of Bologna, where they take care of all the aspects related to administration, communication and marketing of the business. The headquarter di Camplus in Bologna also establish contacts with providers and negotiate the best deals for their services. The Bologna office has the administrative authority over the other offices. It sets the guidelines and the prices for the accommodation offered all over the Italy. However, they also have a decentralized system at the lower level. In other words, each office has its own structure and management. They are responsible for signing contracts, ensuring quality standards, and solving any issues that may arise in their premises. Each office has a director and a staff that includes receptionists, doormen, and other personnel.

The Bologna office coordinates and supervises the activities of the other offices. It provides them with support and guidance whenever needed. It also collects and analyzes data from each office to evaluate their performance and identify areas of improvement.

Camplus has the vision of create somehow community between student and they frequently organize travel, gathering,etc. These events can range from informal to formal gatherings, and can involve different levels of organization and coordination. In this context, it is noteworthy to mention that there is an advisor service actor who manages social events like cultural events at the national level. However, the events at the residence level are run by each director or sometimes simply by students with the director's permission.

Each branch of Camplus has a director who is responsible for overseeing the daily operations and resolving any issues that may arise. The director also communicates with the students regularly and listens to their feedback and suggestions. In addition, there is a secretary who helps the director with administrative tasks, but not on a full-time basis. Moreover, there is always a doorman who ensures the security and order of the premises.

One of the distinctive features of Camplus is the close relationship between the provider and the users. Unlike public university dorms, where the management is often distant and bureaucratic, Camplus adopts a bottom-up approach that involves the students in the decision-making process. For instance, the students can propose and organize cultural and social activities, such as workshops, seminars, concerts, and sports events. They can also request changes or improvements in the facilities or services provided by Camplus.

However, this does not mean that the students have a formal representation in the management of Camplus. Unlike Newton residency, which is another private accommodation option for students, Camplus does not have a rule that requires the election of the students' representative. This is because the students do not feel the need for such a role, as they can directly communicate with the director or the staff whenever they have a problem or a suggestion. Therefore, Camplus fosters a sense of community and participation among its residents, without imposing a rigid structure or hierarchy.

### 3.3.3 Rules/ Services

In this section, like other case studies, the study discovers the residency's most influential rules and services.

Like other case studies, these studies only mention the most critical and controversial rules considered essential for students, particularly the South Asian students(5 of 16). The focus is on the significant aspects, while other details are usually excluded:

The tenants should be students to be eligible in one of the universities of Milan. Although, in certain instances, the company may consider a particular blend of students based on their nationalities, in this branch, they did not consider any such mix in an academic context.

2. Setting up a domicile in the residency is feasible, but residency is not allowed. In other words, it is a kind of hospitality housing contract.

3. Despite the Newton residency, there are no stringent rules governing the use of communal spaces. The common spaces are open 24 hours. Regarding behavior, there may be rules aimed at preventing disturbances that could disrupt other users.

Concerning big parties and events, there is no necessity for inhabitants to seek permission from authorized personnel before organizing a party.

Regarding guests, there is no restriction regulation regarding the number of guests. However, guests are not allowed to stay for the night without permission. The director gives permission online, and it is not a complicated issue.

Even though it is a private company, the cost of living in this residence is affordable, particularly compared to the average cost of housing in Milan. The rates for a month are from 360(Type 1) to 450(type 2) euros(Figure 67), making it a fantastic choice for those seeking a reasonably priced place to live in Milan. Additionally, an €800 damage deposit must be paid, which will be reimbursed during the three months after the conclusion of the contract.

Regarding services, this residence offers several amenities, including a 24-hour reception desk, 24-hour shared spaces, access to bed linens and towels that are changed every week or can be purchased as linen, room cleaning every week, daily cleaning of communal areas, a broadband internet connection, access to water, electricity, heating, and air conditioning, as well as the use of various facilities such as a laundry room, a recreational and relax room, a gym, and a study room ( (Allegato Bando | Camplus Sesto San Giovanni Anno Accademico 2022-2023, 2022))

### 3.3.4 Practices

#### Neighborhood level

The study explores the experiences and perceptions of residents living in former management by university residence and the current time by Camplus. I, the author, have transferred to live here recently. Therefore, I am collecting other comments from students in the new management. In the new management, the population of international students, especially Iranians, is notable. I also searched for online comments from former residents before the privatization.

Having taken the comments, I understand that Camplus residency, an example of a high-rise building in the neighborhood, faces similar modern design issues. The statements provided by current and former students of this institution support the notion that the residence has historically been separated from the surrounding community.

Based on the residents' comments, the students have almost nothing to do with the neighborhood, and their relationship with the neighbors is limited to taking public transport or doing groceries. All declare that the neighborhood has nothing to offer but silence. As Milan is a big city with lots of attractions and nightlife, the students satisfy their social life in the city center until late at night and satisfy their calmness in the quiet, isolated neighborhood with vast green areas when they calm back. This may also be influenced by the fact that Milan is well-connected by public transport, making it easy for students to move quickly from residency to Milan 24 hours a day.

However, regarding safety, contrary to the Newton residency neighborhood, which is located in an isolated area with many crimes reported, the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni residency neighborhood offers a more peaceful and quieter environment without crime. Despite its isolation from the city, the students present the neighborhood as safe when they want to return to residency. They can use the night bus service provided by the ATM when the metro is out of service after midnight. The residency also has guards and cameras to monitor any suspicious activities. Therefore, safety is not a significant concern for the students there.

One of the main findings of this part was that students who live in Milan tend to value public transport and safety more than the social integration of the neighborhood. This suggests that students are not interested in interacting with the local community or culture but in enjoying Milan's urban amenities and nightlife. Students perceive Milan as a place to have fun and explore different opportunities. Therefore, they prioritize living in well-connected and secure areas rather than in diverse and inclusive areas.

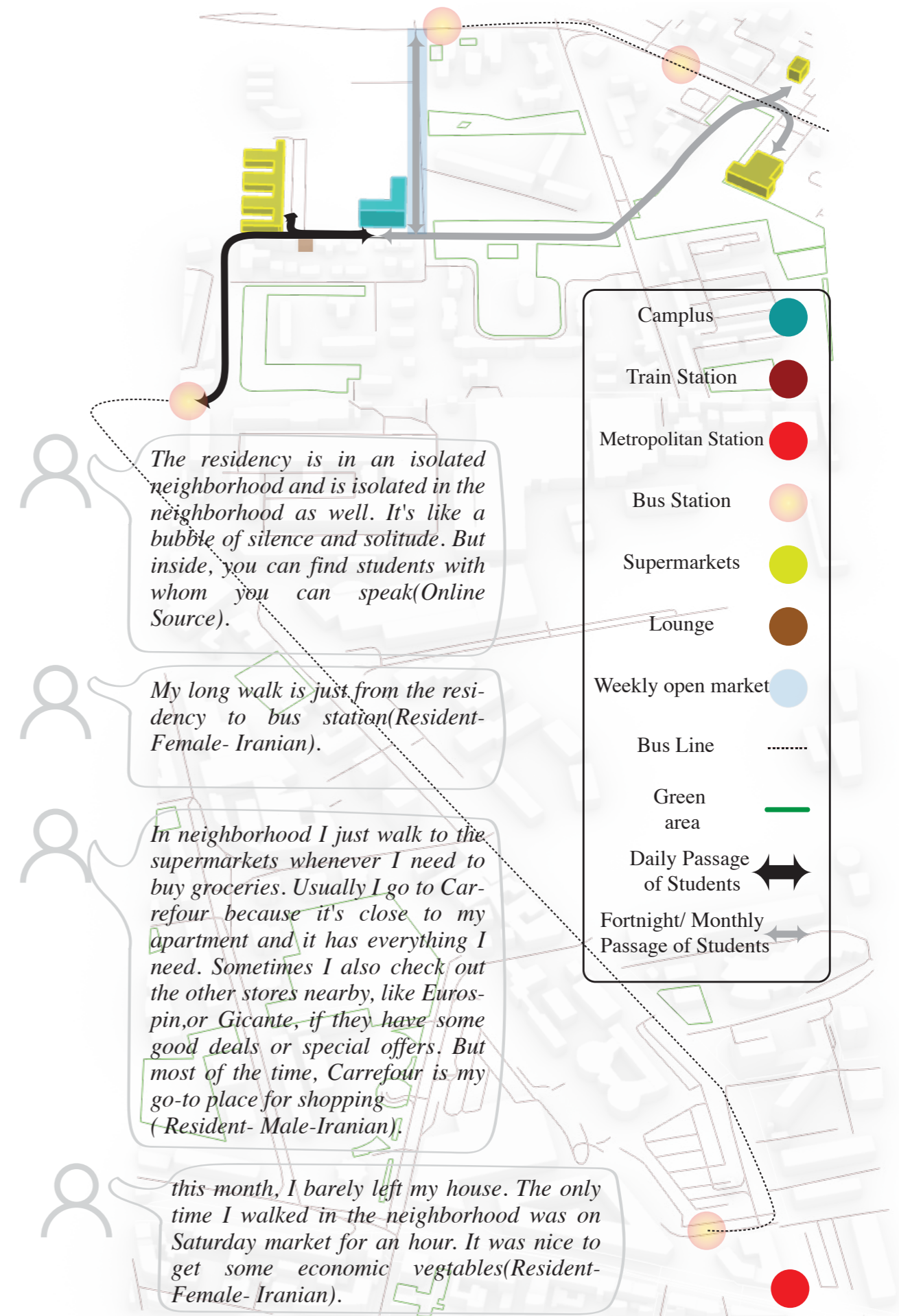


Figure 70 Frequent passage of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni residents in the neighbourhood  
 Note: Illustrated by author

## Inside the Residency

Recently, the residency management at this building has undergone a significant change, and evaluating its practices and outcomes has become challenging. Due to the newness of the change, there is limited experience or data to draw from. Nevertheless, some initial analysis can be made based on the feedback of current residents, personal observation of the author, and the spatial layout of the building.

One of the drawbacks of living in high-rise buildings is the loss of opportunities for casual and brief social interactions in outdoor spaces. The interaction is less likely to happen when residents go through the hassle of descending from their upper-floor apartments to access public areas (M. Abu-Ghazze, 1999).

It is interesting to mention that despite the sufficient shared spaces and usually tiny private spaces, the students, like the Newton residency, do not use well-furnished shared spaces as much as they can. In a vertical spatial situation, the layout of the building appears to hinder the formation of informal social interactions among students (Figure 69).

On the other hand, efforts to facilitate formal social interactions through top-down interventions do not work well. Camplus, as a private company, does not seem to have a specific vision or strategy to promote even formal social interaction among residents. Therefore, it is not absolutely surprising when the residents declared the place they see other students is elevator!. In fact, when the provider care less about this issue, the role of the physical factors becomes more critical:

*“I always see the random face but I don’t know anyone. The only small talk is on the elevator, when we exchange awkward greetings and weather observations” (Male- Iranian).*

The role of kitchens in private spaces is another factor influencing social interaction among students living in residences. As previously mentioned, the kitchen is vital for fostering communication and collaboration among residents. However, the design and availability of kitchens can vary across different residences and affect the quality and quantity of interaction. For instance, in Newton’s residence, the study criticizes the kitchen’s spatial design as inadequate for cooking, eating, and other mixed activities. In contrast, the lack of a shared kitchen has diminished the opportunities for interaction in the Sesto San Giovanni residence. Nevertheless, the study does not advocate for a single model of shared kitchen provision for all residences. Instead, it acknowledges that cultural differences among students may lead to conflicts over shared kitchen use:

*“I have my kitchen, that is awesome, I can eat cook meat without any disruption to my vegan flat mate (Male-Iranian)”*

Therefore, it suggests a balanced approach that combines private kitchens in mini-apartments with communal catering spaces where residents can prepare and consume light meals and beverages. This way, students can enjoy their own privacy and comfort while having access to spaces that encourage casual and spontaneous interaction.

The next part of the study examines the impact of density on the social interactions among students living in the residency. Unlike Newton’s residency, which had a high density of students and a shared kitchen space, this residency had a low density of students due to the private kitchen for each unit. This meant that there was less opportunity and incentive for students to interact with each other within the residency. The study found that most students followed a similar pattern of spending their daytime hours at the university and their evening hours in Milan, where they engaged in various social activities. They only returned to the residency to eat (in private) and rest. Thus, the high social capital of students did not translate into a strong sense of community within the residency. The study suggests that this situation is like how students behave towards the neighborhood, which they perceive as distant and irrelevant to their lives.

One of the interesting factors that emerged from the dialogue with two residents was the lack of proper service on the ground floor for people to invite their guests and enjoy drinks or appetizers. This factor indicates that the residents value social interactions and hospitality, but they do not have adequate facilities or amenities to support them. A possible solution is to provide a common ground floor area equipped with comfortable seating, tables, a bar, and a kitchenette. This would allow the residents to host their guests more conveniently and pleasantly and foster a sense of community among themselves. However, it should be considered that it may not work due to the vertical spatial arrangements, as many claimed in the Newton residency. The study suggests that the residencies, instead of putting strict limitations on the guests and the residents, could generate positive interaction by using the presence of the guests and the residents.

*“My mini apartment is enough for my daily life, and I am satisfied; however, I cannot invite my friend because it is too small. I wish there was a kitchen on the ground floor” (Female- Iranian).*

In conclusion, as stated before, the residency has changed from university management to private management. University management may be more eager to integrate students, while private agencies may be less interested in these activities and focus on maximizing profit. However, at the end of the day, the evidence shows that top-down formal intervention is much less effective than spontaneous informal social factors, which physical factors can generate. While some factors, like vertical spatial arrangement, are impossible to change, some suggestions for change in spatial arrangement, which I have already made, can make a difference.

In summary, the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni is an excellent example to show that changing the provider may not significantly change the situation. In general, a radical change in physical and social factors is needed to shift social behavior paradigms.

# Chapter-04 Interviews



### Semi-structured, in-depth, and informal interviews

A qualitative interview is a methodological framework in which not only can practice and ideals are documented but also realized, questioned, and reinforced. (Oakley, 1998). The purpose of conducting interviews is to gain a more nuanced understanding of a subject by hearing different people's perspectives. Semi-structured interviews mean non-directive interviews aiming to generate data with pre-planned questions followed by unplanned ones developed instantaneously during the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In contrast to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to be flexible and to ask additional in-depth questions while the interview is in progress which is absent in structured interviews.

All interviews with dwellers are semi-structured. Some questions were asked uniformly across all interviews, while others were modified. The questions are designed to fit the interview's purpose, the interviewee's background, and the flow of the discussion. As the conversation progresses, several follow-up questions arise to dig even further into certain aspects of the topic.

There is the potential for confusion if the results of two distinct types of interviews are combined (Krathwohl, 2009). Therefore, it is tried that all discussions be conducted similarly to the one described above, resulting in more valid and trustworthy interviews. Luckily, all interviewees live in Milan, and face-to-face interviews will not be limited. Face-to-face interviews are compelling because they let the interviewer build a strong relationship with those interviewed. The mutual understanding is generally high due to the same social class interviewees and me. We usually have the same concerns, leading to a much more honest conversation. Besides mutual desires, the interviewees are my friends or acquaintances. Therefore, it increases comfort, honesty, and openness in the discussion.

Even though the interviews were over just over two months, I was already familiar with most of the people who participated. I generated specific questions based on topics we had already discussed with them.

I had numerous casual discussions with each of them before the official interview. The interviewees felt at ease with me and answered my question without stress.

The interviews are conducted primarily in the interviewee's native language, i.e., in Italian with an Italian and in Persian with an Iranian. Regarding other nationalities, they conduct themselves in English, their fluent language. It is worth noting that the amount of information lost in translation in the interviews was minimized due to the interviewer's sufficient language level in Italian, English, and Persian. However, for better validity, the text transcription was sent to interviews to be confirmed.

Plus, all interviews are one-on-one. Group interviews usually have more drawbacks than benefits. The interviewer would need to be able to listen to more than one individual speak while also comprehending the group dynamics and capturing meaningful information. Multitasking abilities are therefore required. Second, some group members may be too self-conscious to speak their minds openly, which could result in important information being overlooked. On the other hand, in a group interview, anything that one person says might lead to another person reacting differently, leading to a more exciting and broad debate, which ultimately results in more useful information being acquired. However, in this study case, the multiplier effect of group interviews is irrelevant due to the language barrier between interviewees.

Regarding the location of the interviews, as contacting interviews is time-consuming and challenging, the sequence of the interviews is based on their availability. Interviews were conducted (approx. 60 Min) with one or more tenants in the coliving spaces where they live to note how the space was laid out. In order to protect the interviewees' anonymity and respect their right to Privacy, the names of those interviewed are unknown in this study.

Regarding the documentation, the interviews are recorded and then transcribed. The interviews will be transcribed at the time of the interviews using "live captioning," a recently released Apple technology. However, the technology is only available in English. So, for non-English discussions, the audio must be recorded after getting the interviewee's permission. To identify a recurring pattern of meaning, data will be categorized according to a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### Type of questions

As we have already discussed, literature shows that the social, personal, and physical aspects are three essential parts of how people interact. The first parts of the questions regard mainly personal factors, that is, the backgrounds of people—their culture, lifestyle, previous lives, and all those factors that already influenced them before coming to Milan. These questions were followed by a range of questions about feeling, conciseness, and personal perceptions of their life in cohabitation.

Later, several questions are asked about how this idea affects behavior based on the three factors already mentioned. These questions aim to discover how the factors and sub factors we have already discussed affect the interactions between dwellers in coliving. However, the study is not limited just to factors mentioned in the literature; it is looking for new crucial ones.

Yes-or-no questions are avoided because we want more explanation in a semi-structured review. Instead, "WH" questions are used in the majority of questions. Although multiple questions are written down, they are asked individually in the interviews. This way, there is a higher probability of getting all the answers.

Not all essential questions listed here will be asked the same way during every interview. The order of events is subject to change, and the interviewer can provide recommendations and ask for further information at any time.

One advantage of conducting interviews in an unstructured format is that the list of subjects that might be discussed can change from one interview to the next (Farthing, 2016), which usually is missing in semi-structured interviews. In our particular instance, I try my best to integrate the questions raised in one interview into the next one I conduct.

#### Personal questions:

The personal question starts from their family and culture, the city they come from.

- Every migration decision has a background of the family. Who are your parents? What kind of family do you come from? What is your family's religion, Believe, etcetera?
- Explain socio-economic situation of your hometown.
- Why did you choose to come to this country/community rather than another? Was that an individual decision? Or did you have the consent of your family
- What was your journey to this new country or community like?
- What was the most challenging part of coming here?
- How did you find your accommodations in Milan?

#### Home life feelings and consciousness questions:

In the second space, it tried to investigate interviewees' personal feelings regarding the place they live. What do they accept from their accommodations, what are their indoor activities, and what do they like or dislike regarding the house's spatial quality and services?

- Have you ever lived in a shared housing situation? How was your ex-accommodation? Make comparison between them.
- Have you ever lived in a shared residence? Which one do you prefer, and why?
- Do you see "home" as a personal boundary where you want to disconnect from society or as a constructive, social environment where multiple social learning occurs? Why did you choose to live in coliving? Was that mainly for financial benefit or social aspects?
- What are your indoor and outdoor activities? Explain your home life.
- What are your thoughts on living with someone of the opposite gender?
- How do you feel about private and public spaces in your house? Are they designed in a proper way?
- Are there any semi-private spaces? What do you think of these spaces?

#### Behavior-related question:

The third and may be the hardest part is dedicated to the questions to understand how the personal, physical, and social factors influence the behavior between flat mates

- How do different spatial and architectural designs of living spaces affect your social interaction with one another?
- Do you feel close to the people here, particularly the Italian youth?
- How friendly do you find your cohabitation? Do you prefer to live with your people, with whom you share more interests, or with people from other community? Why?
- What languages do you speak? How does it affect your interaction with your flat mates?
- Do you engage in indoor or outdoor activities with your flat mates regularly? With whom? What kind of activities they are? What about small conversation?
- How often do you have heated arguments with your roommates? What are the conflicts about?
- What about top-bottom Intervention? Do you see that as applicable and valuable?
- Do you have much contact with your direct neighbors? Is that by non-direct force or voluntary?

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- *What about top-bottom Intervention? Do you see that as applicable and valuable?*
- *Do you have much contact with your direct neighbors? Is that by non-direct force or voluntary?*

## Interviewees

The qualitative data mainly focuses on interviewing young students and professionals from southern Asia countries. It aims to select people from all three kinds of accommodation mentioned above to compare comprehensively. However, since the main issue deeply concerns the young host generation, there are also young Italian people participating in interviews.

Supply sides In terms of management and the system of coliving, it is intended that the dwellers chosen will be diverse. According to the available research, distinct patterns of social interaction may be associated with the various management structures. Consequently, those who are selected ought to reside in communities that are managed by a variety of different systems, such as the university, social housing, and the market. However, some interviewees have also had experience living in other forms of shared living, such as cohousing and shared apartments, which could bring the discussion to a new level.

Researchers frequently use purposeful sampling to select potential study participants. Using this kind of sampling, individuals who can provide valuable insight into the research topic and questions are chosen thoughtfully.

Although it may seem simple to state that anyone with knowledge of the topic and comes from specific countries should be included, these criteria will need to be much more specific. Nonetheless, this strategy can serve as an excellent starting point. You might find it beneficial to start fleshing out who will be included in your study based on these fundamental qualities.

Having trimmed the range of possible participants to those who already have some knowledge of the subject at hand, the next step is to consider what other qualities those individuals might have. People between 2(mostly Master student's) and 35 who live in one of the coliving systems and are unstable, in a transitional period of their lives, or are students or young professionals can participate in this study.

It was previously stated that Southern Asian Students share the same situation, goals, desires, lifestyle, barriers, etc. In a comprehensive approach, we can put them in the same group. However, in detail, they have differences: in financial situation, occupation, cultural background, language, gender, et cetera.

As a result, an attempt was made to select a variety of people with minor differences to give a more extensive perspective to qualitative research. As you see in Table 5, people are selected from different countries with even diverse cultural backgrounds within countries. For example, we have people from the least religious to one of the most sacred cities in Iran. The same method is followed between families. People are coming from the most conservative to the least ones. The same approach is seen in Italy and India. Apart from cultural backgrounds, the selective group has experience in different kinds of communal living managed by our three other systems. Some have experienced both of them. Then making comparisons is even more comprehensible. The same method is followed in selecting Italians. Two Italians come from Both south and north of Italy with different ages and occupations.

We should remember that the interviewer is free of any interests, and the interviews are not oriented to arrive at a particular result. This is a crucial fact since it is a prevalent trend in the housing sector. Even in the social housing sector, the aim is to maximize economic and advertising benefits. In short, it is value-free research.

I had another written interview with one representative of students who is living in the Newton's residence y plus one face-to-face interview with one of the personnel of the residency. The interview was very informative and provided me with valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of students living in the residency. During the interview, we discussed a wide range of topics, including the quality of accommodation, the availability of resources and facilities, and the social and cultural activities that are organized for residents.

I had also many short and long dialogues with students in the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni residency. These dialogues were brief conversations that I used as comments in my research. Despite their brevity, these dialogues provided me with valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of students living in the residency. Through these conversations, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that students face while living in Camplus Sesto San Giovanni.

Finally, after several attempts, I finally managed to get an interview with a manager who oversees some of the facilities in Camplus. He/she requested to remain anonymous for privacy reasons. The interview was conducted in present and lasted about 20-30 minutes.

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan(Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
University	University Dorm	Interviewee 01 25 M	North of India	Student (Management engineering )	366€(DSU)+ family financial support	300€ 295€	3.5
Cooperative	Coliving						
Market	Shared apartment	Interviewee 02 25 M	East of India	Student (Transportation engineering )	366€(DSU)+ family financial support	300€ 295€	3
Cooperative	Coliving						
Market	Shared apartments	Interviewee 03 25 M	South of India	Student (Mechanical Engineering)	Minimized Family support+ app. 300€(side hustles job)	300€ 300€ 295€	4
University	University Dorm						
Cooperative	Coliving						
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 04 22 M	Teheran	Student (Cultural Mediation)	family financial support	295	2
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 05 31 F	Northern west of Iran (Turkish ethnic)	Student (sustainable Architecture)	366€(DSU)+ 300€( Stage)	295€	4
Cooperative	Coliving						
Market	Shared apartment	Interviewee 06 28 M	North of Iran (Guilak ethnic)	Student (Built-environment Architecture)	675€(IYT)+ 800€( Stage)	410€ 300€	5
Market	Shared apartment						
Market	Shared apartments	Interviewee 07 34 F	Northern west of Iran (Turkish ethnic)	Student (Urban Planning & Policy Design)	366€(DSU)	300€ 295€	2
Cooperative	Coliving						
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 08 25 M	Ravenna	Student (Electrical Engineering)	family financial support	460€	3.5
Market	Shared apartments	Interviewee 09 30 M	Sassari	Young Professional (Director in Media)	Full-time job contract	300-600€ 1100€ 475€	10
Cooperative	Flat in cohousing						
Cooperative	Coliving						

Figure 71 List of interviewees  
Note: Illustrated by author

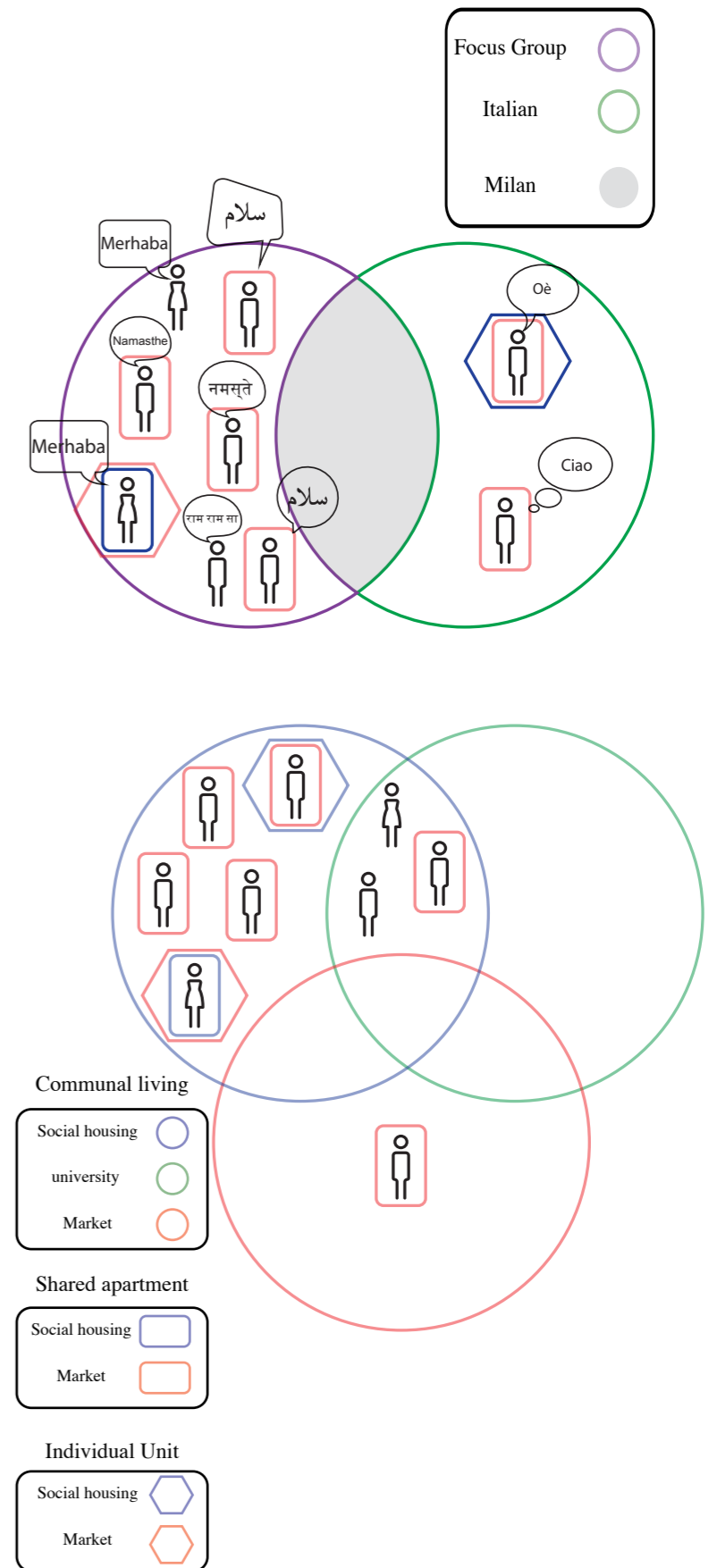


Figure 72 3D interviewees ethnicity and sharing accommodation type between interviewees  
Note: Illustrated by Author

# Chapter-05 Interpretation

The study primarily focuses on investigating the various factors that impact the lives of individuals living in communal housing structures in Milan. The study's primary data collection method, interviews, has given the researcher valuable insights into interviewees' experiences and perceptions.

In the second stage, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the communal living structure in Milan for students, particularly those from South Asian countries, the study proposes several suggestions for improving the condition of communal living. These suggestions are based on an analysis of the relevant literature, case studies, and interviews with tenants conducted for the study.

## 5.1 The Role of communal living in the Lives of Young Southern Asians in Milan

### 5.1.1 Interpretation through the lens of the literature

There is currently a lack of specific literature that focuses on the living conditions and experiences of South Asian students who live in Milan, Italy. This study aims to contribute to this gap in knowledge by examining the housing situation for young people, particularly those from South Asian backgrounds.

From a financial perspective, the literature confirms that the cost of living in Milan can be quite high, especially when it comes to housing. This is particularly challenging for students who often have limited resources. As a result, the literature suggests that communal living can be an essential option for students, at least in the short term. Communal living provides an opportunity to share expenses and resources, thereby reducing the financial burden on individual students.

Socially speaking, although some literature has highlighted the importance of shared spaces for young people to socialize, there is little information or literature available on how residents from different cultural backgrounds utilize these spaces. Therefore, this study aims to explore how South Asian students living in Milan use shared spaces and how this may differ from the experiences of other residents.

Notably, to help interpret the factors that may influence communal living, the study draws on William's book, which provides a framework for understanding the influential factors in communal living. However, the study also includes additional investigation questions to expand on this topic and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of South Asian students living in Milan.

Finally, I should mention that I highlighted some literature on personal factors, including the Iranian character (see Appendix 3). While this literature is relevant to the thesis topic, I did not include it in my analysis due to its subjective approach. Nonetheless, it may be of interest to those studying the cultural influences on personal factors.

### 5.1.2 Interpretation through the lens of the interviews and case studies

The study analyses the interviews and case studies based on the factors categorized in personal, physical, and social. The categorization presented in this context draws primarily from existing literature (Williams, 2005), but, as mentioned above, the author has also provided their own rationale for dividing these categories. The study categorizes personal, physical, and social factors for different reasons.

Firstly, classification is based on the methodology we used, which involved three types of investigations: literature reviews, interviews, and case studies. The interpretation through the lens of the literature has been discussed above. When interpreting data gathered from case studies and interviews, it can be challenging to separate the two. Unlike literature reviews, which provide a more objective view of the research topic, case studies and interviews offer a more subjective and explorative perspective.

However, while the two methods may be closely connected, there are still differences in their approach and focus that can allow for some level of separation in interpretation. During the interviews, we focused on exploring personal and social factors that are relevant to our research question. On the other hand, the case studies enabled us to investigate physical factors that may affect our research topic.

Secondly, the factors are categorized into personal, physical, and social categories by their related disciplines. Personal factors, which are more stable and related to new arrivals' backgrounds and their future, are more related to social science because residents' cultural, social, and economic backgrounds are crucial to understanding their communal living experiences. However, human behavior is complex and dynamic, making predicting how people will behave in any situation challenging. Therefore, it is less related to the thesis, and the study does not touch on this issue much. Physical factors, such as the communal living spaces' spatial features, are more related to architectural design because they can significantly affect residents' experiences and interactions. Case studies detail this. Finally, social factors like residents' relationships with communal living space management are more related to policy design. Developing policies and guidelines for communal living spaces can significantly improve residents' interrelations behavior. However, since they are interconnected and influence each other, separating them is difficult. (Figure 73). Intentional policies that organize events and manage social interaction through rules, laws, and guidelines can improve resident social interaction. Policies can foster a respectful and inclusive community by setting clear rules and expectations.

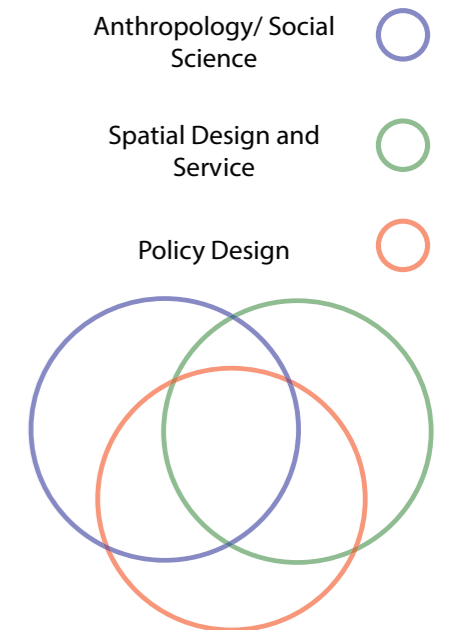


Figure 73 The different disciplines intervening in the subjects.

Note: Illustrated by Author

The third reason for this categorization is that they are time-related factors. The study starts by asking "WH" questions to understand the interviewees' background and future and personal factors. These questions include "Who," which seeks to understand the type of people who come to Milan for communal living; "Why," which focuses on the reasons behind their immigration; "When," which considers the age at which they came to Milan; "Where," which explores the reasons for choosing Italy and Milan as their destination; "How," which looks at the bureaucratic processes they had to go through to secure coming to Milan, and "What" are their plans for the future stay?

I have decided to interpret these factors in a chronological order to make the analysis more tangible and understandable. By analyzing the data in a narrative way, I hope to create a coherent story telling that illustrates how these factors have influenced the individuals being interviewed over time.

Firstly, chronologically examining influential factors can help residents understand their past, present, and future. First, it can help identify life events that had a major impact on people. A significant event or time period that shaped their beliefs, attitudes, or aspirations such as the Eastern culture.

Second, analyzing the data chronologically can reveal patterns and trends that affect residents' well-being and satisfaction with their actual living situation and make a comparison with the residents' previous life. This data can help identify areas for intervention or research to improve residents' lives.

In conclusion, studying the influential factors in chronological order can give researchers a deep understanding of the complex interaction of personal, physical, and social factors that affect the residents' lives. It can also identify areas for intervention or research to improve residents' lives and well-being.

To provide a narrative account of these experiences, I will use quotes and stories shared by the interviewees to give readers a better understanding of the decision-making process and the personal experiences that shaped it.

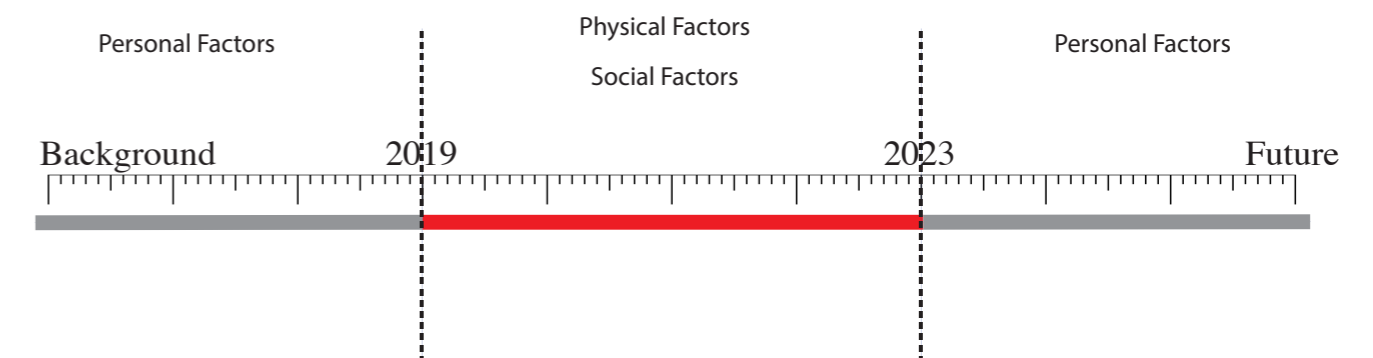


Figure 74 Time-related Factors

Note: Illustrated by Author

## Decision making

In the first stage, I will look at the main goal and decision-making process for students to leave their countries and come to Europe. I chronologically approach this stage, from the initial thought of pursuing studies/life abroad to the final decision to come to Europe. I will also explore the various challenges students faced during this process and how they overcame them.

First and foremost, our interlocutors, the people from South Asia, are immigrants. The ultimate destination is unclear and varies from person to person, but what is clear is that most people do not want to come back for at least a decade. It is like a one-way ticket for them. Then they are also called immigrants in some parts of the thesis instead of visitors or ex-pats. I personally consider them “legal refugee..”:

*“I was applying everywhere to leave Iran. My main goal was to leave Iran; studying was the easiest way. Otherwise, I would choose working reason” (Interview 05: Female- Iranian).*

Starting from goals, our interlocutors comes from third-world countries to Europe to improve their professional and personal lives. At the same time, Italian students’ motivation is to improve their job prospects. According to our interviews with students from South Asian countries, the primary concern of Indian students is mainly professional and financial opportunities and, later, a better welfare system. In contrast, Iranian students’ main concern is liberty from the authoritarian regime and conservative culture. The recent “women’s, life, and freedom” uprising in Iran also confirms these desires on a national level:

*“ But the main reason for coming here was Politecnico. In engineering, it is the sixth in the world ranking. I wanted to have my higher education at a good university, and Politecnico accepted you quickly” (Interview 03: Male- Indian).*

*“There is no perspective in Iran. You have neither social freedom nor money. I come from a somehow wealthy family, but anyway, even if you have money, you don’t live life” (Interview 04: Male- Iranian).*

However, leaving your country is not an easy process. As an Iranian, I understand that it is hard for people and their families to leave their home countries in the Eastern countries mainly because of the integrity of the eastern culture. At the same time, it may be easier for Europeans with a more individualistic culture. However, the socio-economic situation is so bad for students in the origin countries that it has convinced them to leave their families and friends for better life perspectives. The same situation is for their families. On the one hand, families do not want to lose their children, who were once members of their household, sometimes (Especially in Indian culture) even after marriage. Nevertheless, due to the high standard of living, they also accept leaving their children, hoping for a better life for themselves in western countries:

*“My parents love me, and they didn’t want me to leave in the normal situation. However, the adversity of the economic situation and lack of hope in Iran made them accept that migration was the best case for my brother and me” (Interview 06: Male- Iranian).*

However, the condition is not the same for both genders. From the interviews, some critical factors came out: While the male students have the freedom to choose whether to immigrate, the female students have problems convincing or fooling their conservative families:

*“Also, my father didn’t know whether we were preparing to leave Iran. That was a stressful period” (Interview 07: Female- Iranian).*

The decision-making phase is hard but not the hardest. Based on a famous Iranian expression, the young people in Iran are categorized into two groups: those who have escaped and those who want to escape. In other words, at the end of the day, almost all young people with high human capital decided to leave their original countries, which is not a questionable decision.

## How to escape/ immigrate?

Money talks. The interviewees’ first priority, and the primary driver of immigration for many people traveling to Europe, was money. Our interlocutors, regardless of financial or social class, is aware that due to the large currency gap, they will face financial difficulties when they arrive. I understood that most of the interviewees didn’t intend to come to Italy in particular. There are many reasons for choosing Italy as a destination, but financially speaking, the DSU scholarship makes a huge difference. The scholarships are based on the economic status of the families, and as stated before, no matter which family you come from, unless you are from a third-world country like Iran or India, you will be poor and eligible for a scholarship:

*“Anyway, Italy had never been my choice, but I had to leave Iran because of document expiration, and I chose Italy because of my DSU scholarship” (Interview 05: Female- Iranian)*

Also, apart from the DSU scholarship, Italy is one of the least expensive countries for students in the western world as well. Throughout interviews, it appeared that the focused group desired to go to North American countries, but financial obstacles obligated them to come to Italy. Based on interviews, financial problems are at the root of choosing communal living as well, including Italian ones. In this sense, communal living seems to be not a choice but a remedy or obligation in response to the housing crisis in Milan. South Asian students know how to sustain themselves on a tight budget. While living with DSU money is a kind of survival based on the European standard, our interlocutors declared that they could live well enough for a couple of years. Therefore, Italy has become an obligatory but not a bad choice at all for our interlocutors to live:

*“Economically, Italy is cheap compared to other European countries. I have always wished to live in Europe, and Italy was the best door to enter from” (Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

The second thing to consider is the bureaucratic reason for leaving the countries. Italy is famous for its knotted bureaucracy. However, surprisingly enough, the process of obtaining a visa in the South Asian countries, at least in the case of Iran, seems different. While international students always complain about the chaotic Italian bureaucracy, they all praise the ease with which visas can be obtained in their host countries, especially in Iran. This is declared in almost all Iranian interviews.

Nevertheless, in general, Italian embassies issue study visas quickly, or, better to say, with fewer difficulties than other countries in the western world. The high-ranking universities of Italy offer and accept a wide range of courses and students in English. For example, it is noteworthy to know that Politecnico di Milano, at least for our interlocutors, is easy to enter despite its high reputation:

*“Italy visa application is much more straightforward and cheaper than in other countries” (Interview 04: Male- Iranian).*

To put all these things together, we can understand why Italy has become a top-rated destination in these specific countries. While the high-ranking universities in Italy tempt Indian students to come, the DSU scholarship seems to be the priority for their Iranian peers. Notably, the obstacles to finally coming to Italy are endless and a long process. The process of decision-making and preparing documents may take a lot, like 3–4 years.

Regarding bureaucracy in Iran, the situation is worth discussing with the Iranian male student. The aim is not to go into the details of complicated regulations in Iran. However, it should be noted that male students usually cannot leave the country for a bachelor’s degree, and when they leave after a couple of years, they cannot return. Therefore, the average age of students coming to Milan from Iran is slightly higher than in other countries, and their journey is literally a one-way ticket:

*“Leaving Iran as a man is very problematic. There are many bureaucratic barriers due to military service. They don’t release your degree easily, and you must put in an expensive deposit” (Interview 06: Male- Iranian).*

## After arrival

Another reason that came up in the interviews was that the students already knew many people in Milan. Immigrants tend to stick together in certain parts of the countries where they live. Although the ethnic enclave does not exist in our case in Milan (as it does in Arab society), moving to Milan to study is part of a fast-growing trend among South Asian countries. That is the main reason the study focuses on this group:

*“And the second reason was that I was more familiar with the process and everything regarding Politecnico and Italy. Because there were already many of my friends studying here. I knew they’d be there for me in an emergency” (Interview 03: Male- Indian).*

The first thing to do when you enter a country is constantly find accommodation. There are many online Iranians, some Indian groups of alumni, and actual Iranian and Indian residents in Milan. The first accommodation they find is to stay with their friends or pay a small amount of money to stay with an acquaintance. Then they start searching for the house in their presence. However, during this stage, as I found in interviews, they encounter another phase that I will refer to as “the compatriot rejection phenomenon.”

Before that, it was said that immigrants usually move to where their friends live. However, except for one interviewee, our interlocutors prefers to live with foreigners after living with their compatriots for a short time. Someone may say these interviews are not an excellent way to learn about Southeastern students as a whole. In other words, they intend that the interviews are done with more open-minded and xenophile people.

On the other hand, as I come from these countries, I know this phenomenon exists. For example, the phrase “run when you see an Indian/Iranian abroad” is popular among Iranian and Indian societies.

There are many reasons behind this. I go shortly through it: Back to our interlocutors, they see their compatriot as jealous or hard to understand. Nevertheless, the most important one is privacy. People from conservative cultures tend to want more privacy in their new, liberal, modern lives. They want to live their new life as they want without being judged by their people. This behavior is more common in girls due to the increased pressure on females in patriarchal societies like Iran and India:

*"I thank God because I knew two languages that she didn't know. She couldn't understand what I say my family or boyfriends" (Interview 05: Female- Iranian).*

*"I mainly go out with Indians, but I avoid living with them when it comes to living abroad" (Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

Our students very soon start to find new accommodations or live in their temporary ones because of their many disadvantages. All the interviewees living in the social housing system have learned about these accommodations thanks to their friends or acquaintances. It means not only is the number of accommodations, not enough, but also the information about social housing is vague and usually in Italian. Accessing social housing is based on being simply fortunate. On the university side, however, they are well-informed about the residency due to the information provided by the university. However, as it is widely publicized, the competence is high for taking the accommodations:

*"Ross informed us, and thankfully, they accepted us. My life got in the way from that point on, I'd say" ( Interview 07: Female- Iranian).*

### Living Experience phase

Before this, the study looked at what made our interlocutors decide to come to Immigrant, move to Italy or Milan, and live in a communal living situation. In this section, we interpret how their personal backgrounds affect their interactions with their flat mates.

The research analyzes newcomers' compatibility with the host culture to improve their quality of life, not integration. Thus, the goals are cohabitation and harmony between newcomers and the host culture. Integration is essential, but the research is not focusing on it. The study does not aim to work on immigrant children to integrate them into the new society. Our interlocutors are already adult, and integrating is more challenging. Instead, the research seeks to understand what makes cohabitation successful and identify ways to promote positive cross-cultural interactions. The research focuses on cohabitation rather than integration to improve immigrants' lives and create more welcoming communities for all.

Speaking of cohabitation and compatibility, as a polyglot and based on my personal experience, the first thing that came to my mind was investigating the language barrier. The language barrier in the context of Italy is the huge one. It is prominent either in post offices or in daily life social interaction. It is a potent tool for both Italian and international people to knock down each other in conversation:

*"Once a day or week, they should mention why you don't speak Italian"(Interview 01: male- Indian). On the other hand, despite all disadvantages, language barriers can provide more privacy for tenants in the coliving context. Interviewees declared that because their tenants cannot understand what they say, watching hugely contribute to their privacy and puts them at peace:*

*"First, you cannot hide anything, nor can you pretend. When you live with non-Indian people, you can choose what part of your life is shown and understood, especially when you live in a coliving or a dormitory with many people"(Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

Notably, non-Italian tenants withdrew voluntarily from confrontations and debates, considering this method as a critical approach at times to opposing the prevailing "Italian Language" and an excuse to ignore the responsibility. They claim that in multicultural coliving people should speak English:

*"We always had some small chats with my Italian flat mates. But, after a while, we couldn't continue the conversation anymore. As they chose international people here, I think they had to choose an Italian who speaks English" ( Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

Also, the tenants started to use some applications to divide the expenses used for shared space; however, when it comes to the money, nothing goes well:

*"We created a "Tricount" application group. An application in which we put what we buy. But at the end of the day, no one pays the debts and rarely go to shopping after many times of warning" (Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

In general, culture can significantly impact an individual's beliefs, values, and behaviors. The study divides culture into two broad categories, Western and Eastern, to examine their differences. However, it does not delve into sub-cultures, as this is not the focus of the thesis.

Based on interviews, it appears that, in general, students coming from eastern cultures have more

integrative cultures, while the western culture is more individualistic. In all communal living structures, people from eastern countries generally tend to integrate more with each other, and the host culture integrates with itself.

*"I prefer to be with Iranians (" Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

*"I want to be with easygoing people who get my joke. I find it a lot between Iranians, Pakistani, Lebanese, and Israeli" (Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

However, there are some exceptions. Finding a direct relationship between family, nationality, and willingness to interact with a new culture is not always easy. However, people from bigger cities are generally keener on cultural diversity. Some students may be more open and willing to interact with people from other cultures, regardless of their background:

*"I feel very close to Italians rather than other third-world countries, even compared to Turkish native speakers like me" ( Interview 05: Female- Iranian).*

Cohabitation implies that living with others is not always easy or beneficial. Cohabitation has its own issues. Cohabitation is about learning from each other, despite these challenges. In the interviews, the Eastern students indicate they prefer living with Italians.

Conversely, the Italian interviewees emphasize that they do not have problems with it. The new arrivals said they would rather live with locals because of its benefits, like language and culture learning:

*"I must know the culture I'm living in and decide whether I want to go to another country or stay here"( Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

It may be also because of their more integrated culture, or because simply because they are lonelier. Usually off-campus students tend to socialize more than other students. This pattern is seen also in Italian ones as well. These students often work hard to earn their money and prioritize meeting their basic needs over socializing with others.

However, it is important to note that willingness to interact with others is different from being able to do so. Despite some students expressing a desire to live communally and interact with others, various factors may prevent them from doing so. For instance, some working students from countries like Iran face significant financial struggles and have busy schedules, leaving them with little time and energy to socialize when they return home. In these cases, they may prefer to have privacy and quiet time to recharge or simply cannot afford to spend money on social activities due to the high living costs in Europe:

*"In the last months of my staying in coliving, I was used to working a lot. Excess work hours stopped me from participating in any social activity inside or outside. When I was home, I tended to do my chores piled up during the week, like washing cloth, cleaning around, cooking and shopping for food, and having a good long bath that washes away the pressure of the week, all alone"(Interview 06: Male- Iranian).*

Another factor that prevents residents from indirectly interacting with flat mates is their social network bond. It came out from a conducted interview with residents in coliving Lambrate. Those with higher socioeconomic status tend to interact less with their flat mates due to their social bond outside the house or lack of time.

I have a strong interest in gender issues and believe that they play a pivotal role in shaping various aspects of socio-political life. With the ongoing women's life and freedom revolutions in my country, I have been actively researching and studying this topic to gain a deeper understanding of its significance and impact. Consequently, I also want to discover the role of gender in social interaction for my thesis.

As discussed before, the females in eastern culture lead a different life compared to their male peers in the same situation. After speaking deeply with different people, I understood that the female interviewees had better compatibility and a higher tolerance for diverse cultures. When I spoke to one of them, she mentioned an interesting point about the arrogance of Iranian men. I felt the same things while interviewing an Iranian male. As an Iranian man, this point triggered my mind, and I started to search for it; the research and author suggest that it existed. Based on interviews, Iranian men are more conservative and less open to others due to decades of conservative regulation along the lines of their favorites.

*"We are excessively proud of ourselves, and we have high expectations of other people" (Interview 07: Female- Iranian).*

For more analysis, read the Appendix section (Appendix C: Further Research, Arrogance in the case of Iran).

On the contrary, women from conservative families and society see no difference between sharing with girls of the opposite or same sex.

It is noteworthy to mention that almost all interviewees prefer living in mixed-gender apartments; in this way, they can maximize the benefits for both genders. Sometimes, the interviewees prefer to be with girls because they consider them cleaner.

In the final stage of the analysis, I aim to examine the most influential factor that significantly impacts cohabitation between people in our interlocutors. According to the interviews, the level of conflict people tends to have a direct relationship with their shared living experience. People who have already experienced shared housing in a shared flat or

Dormitory, especially in multicultural situations, has much more compromise with other people:

*"I get along well living with many people because I've been living in shared apartments, even abroad, with different people"* (Interview 09: Male- Italian).

However, it is not all about the previous life. Based on the interviews conducted with the interlocutors, those with a long-term perspective of staying in Italy are more interested in understanding the local culture. Most interviewees stated that communal living is a passing phase in their lives, and it will finish sooner or later. People who intended to stay in Italy for an extended time appeared to be more willing to spend their transitory period in multicultural communal living than people who saw Italy just as a bridge to reach other countries. This factor is crucial if you see it in the context of language learning. Whoever does not want to stay in Italy is not keen on learning Italian and being in contact with Italians as well:

*"I've always been grateful for Italy for all it gave me, but it's not where you can progress. You can't find job without knowing Italian. Fortunately, now I found a job without any requirement for Italian language, but it rarely happens. The income is low, and no one speaks English. I don't want to learn it because I've always seen Italy as a bridge to going to northern Countries like the Netherlands; I have already applied visa for there"* (Interview 02: Male- Indian).

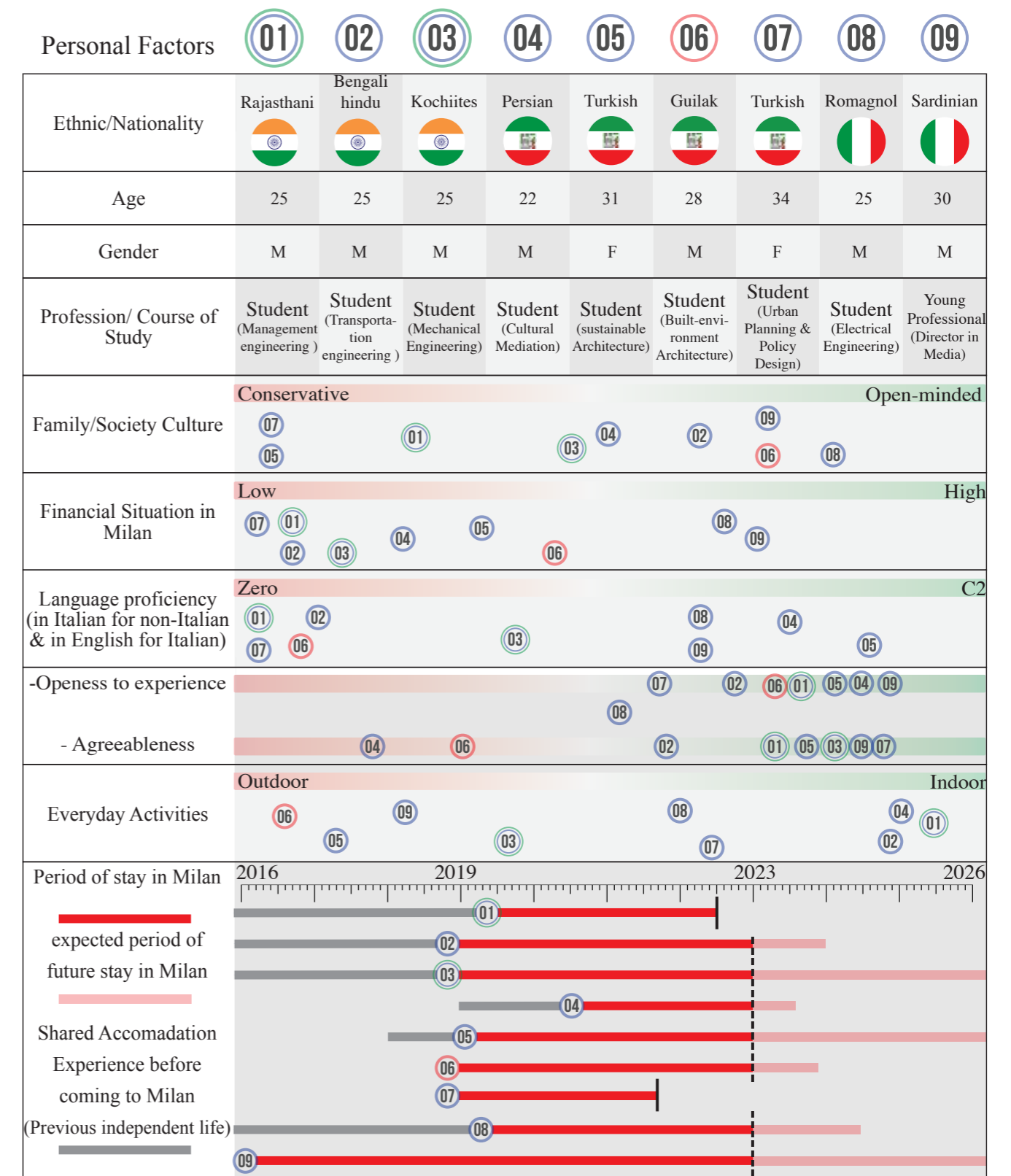


Figure 75 Interviewees' personal factors  
Note: Illustrated by author



## 5.2 Suggestions

As previously mentioned, the primary objective of this thesis is *not* to analyze the process of integrating tenants, but rather to focus on ensuring compatibility. The aim is *not* to alter the behavior regarding local culture, but to manage it effectively. The study does *not* intend to propose social science solutions, but rather to provide suggestions related to spatial and policy design in the architectural and planning sector. Through this research, we aim to explore and propose innovative strategies that can enhance the *compatibility* of different communities within a shared space, without compromising their unique cultural identities. I believe that effective spatial and policy design can facilitate harmonious coexistence and create a vibrant, less intense environment for all.

The ultimate goal of this study is to provide practical recommendations for architects, planners, and all stake holders playing role in providing housing in Milan to create more tolerant environments that can accommodate diverse tenant groups from South Asian countries with local ones. The recommendations are categorized into two based on the type of factors they address. The first group focuses more on the social aspects of the problem and aims to inform and influence policy makers, planners and stakeholders. While the second group deals with the physical and spatial aspects of the problem and targets architects and spatial designers.

### 5.2.1 Policy intervention

One of the main challenges of communal living is how to manage the social factors that affect the quality of life and well-being of the residents. Policy intervention can play a vital role in addressing these factors and creating a harmonious and supportive environment for communal living. In this paper, I will first review some of the key social factors that influence communal living, based on the book by William (2022), which provides a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the topic. Then, I will propose some suggestions for policy intervention that can help improve the social aspects of communal living and foster a sense of community and belonging among the residents.

The study recognized that social factors are interconnected with how residents interact within the community. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to clarify the specific type of social interaction it examines. The study tried to get distance from the “community building” utopia. Even the tenants do not see it necessary to have tight bonds with one another. Therefore, while positive social interaction is crucial in a desired outcome, compatibility- a state in which two things can exist or occur together without problems or conflict- resulting in acceptable behavior is the focus in our cases. This is also true for our interviewees. This is the transitory period for all to explore, practice, and examine their tolerance for different lifestyles. Although tenants welcome positive interaction, you can see many phrases declared by interviews focusing on having the phrase “no problems.” The focus is more on having less heated arguments than compassion.

Therefore, while homogeneity seems crucial in a more stable and permanent structure like cohousing or families, compatibility- a state where two things can exist or occur together without problems or conflict- is fundamental in our cases. Based on the (William, 2005) we have tow kinds of social factors:

1. *Informal social factors:* The first category of social factors focuses on the individual’s relationships and resources. By individual relationships and resources, I mean mainly cultural norms and values- shared beliefs, lifestyles (the personal factors)- that define acceptable behavior.

2. *Formal social factors:*

Organizational structures and policies refer to the formal rules and guidelines by stakeholders to govern how tasks are performed, resources are allocated, and conflicts are resolved within an organization. In addition, the Housing provider also includes initiatives aimed at promoting positive social interactions between residents.

#### Putting priority to Informal social factor to informal social factors

Policy makers can certainly influence formal social factors through laws, rules, and regulations. However, to truly effect positive change in a community or society, policy makers must consider formal and informal social factors. Understanding the personal factors of students and other community members can provide policy makers with insights into the social factors that shape behavior and decision-making. By considering these factors, policy makers can develop more effective policies and interventions that consider the social and cultural context in which they will be implemented.

The study argue that, regarding housing policies in informal social factors, there is often more flexibility

and adaptability than in formal factors. Informal policies can be tailored to meet a residents’ specific needs and desires, whereas formal policies tend to be more rigid and standardized.

In addition, informal policies often arise organically from the community itself rather than being imposed from above. This means that they are more likely to be accepted and followed by the community, which can lead to better outcomes in the long run.

Also, informal policies can be implemented more quickly and efficiently than formal ones, which often go through a lengthy bureaucratic process. This means that informal policies can be more responsive to changing circumstances and can be adjusted more easily if they are not working out.

Of course, there are also downsides to relying solely on informal policies, and there are situations where formal policies may be more appropriate. Nevertheless, there is a lot to be said about the flexibility and efficiency of informal social factors regarding housing policy.

In general the study suggests more bottom-up approach rather than top- bottom. It is essential to listen to the needs and concerns of residents when designing and implementing social interventions in coliving and dormitory settings. While some level of top-down approach may be necessary to establish basic policies and structures, bottom-up approaches that involve close collaboration with residents can help ensure that social interventions are relevant, effective, and sustainable.

Investing in informal social factors, such as creating opportunities for residents to connect and build relationships on their own terms, can be particularly important in fostering community and well-being in coliving and dormitory settings. This might involve providing communal spaces for socializing or organizing activities and events catering to residents’ interests and preferences. It may also involve empowering residents to take ownership of social initiatives and giving them a voice in decision-making processes:

*“Let me say that we students are kind of against this as they make decisions without knowing how life inside the residence is. I’ve seen them come to our building less than how many years I’ve been staying there (this is my fifth year), so I think this chain of control must change for student to gain some control over certain decisions that we do not agree with” (Written Interview 01).*

However, if the events are interesting for them, they may participate. However, in a general overview, interviewees are reluctant to participate in the events promoted by people outside their groups. Another reason can be because they are young and have their way of entertainment, and they are not satisfied by events held by other communities. Residents declare reluctance to these events in the Newton residency and coliving Lambrate, and residents declare their reluctance to these events:

*I don’t see them as something necessary. I do not get used to having these kinds of parties. It’s not in our culture. Once I went when that was a concert. But, you know, I don’t have a family life. When I’m free, I prefer to hang out with my friends than have dinner with families with children(Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

*This said, usually they decide which kind of events they want to organize (let’s say sport, foosball and tennis table tournaments, courses around residences and more) (Written Interview 01).*

It is not uncommon for individuals to react negatively to attempts to control or restrict their behavior. This can be particularly true in communal living situations where residents may have different lifestyles, preferences, and priorities. Attempts to impose rigid rules or restrictions on residents without their input or consent can create resentment, frustration, and resistance:

*There’s a lack of collaboration between students and residency managers in my opinion. These days we’re trying to start a talk with them because they make changes to how we live inside the residence that are completely ruining the experience (Written Interview 01).*

*There are some events downstairs, but they are all about children. I don’t have any child or family, then what’s the use of those events for me?(Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

*That was too complicated, and we were got to use to invite our friends secretly. Rules are made to be broken, right?(Interview 01: Male- Indian).- Instead of organizing events that students are required to attend, provide opportunities for students to create their own events based on their interests and needs.*

In summary, foster a positive and cooperative living environment in coliving and dormitory settings, it is essential to strike a balance between providing structure and guidance and respecting residents’ autonomy and individuality. This might involve creating flexible policies that allow for personal choice and expression while setting clear expectations and boundaries for acceptable behavior. Effective social interventions in these settings may also involve proactive communication and collaboration with residents, giving them a voice in decision-making processes and soliciting their feedback and ideas for improving the living environment. Taking a collaborative and respectful approach may create a sense of ownership and investment among residents, leading to greater compliance with rules and policies and a more harmonious living environment. Sometimes the students present the better solution.

Some Practical suggestions are:

- Provide adequate and accessible shared spaces for students to use for socializing, studying, or hosting events as they wish.
- Encourage students to give feedback and suggestions on how to improve the residential experience and address any issues or concerns they may have.
- Selecting the more adequate residents with giving a chance to residents having a voice in choosing their roommates, flat mates, etc

### 1. Interdisciplinary collaboration

Second key factors for achieving the best outcome in any project is to foster interdisciplinary collaboration among various fields of expertise. This is especially true for complex and multifaceted issues such as housing issue in Milan. Therefore, it is essential that professionals from different disciplines, such as architecture, policy design, and social science, work together at various stages and in different organizations to share their insights, perspectives, and solutions.

### 2. Selection of the tenants

The primary goal of this study is not even to determine which housing provider structure is most effective for our target group, as all structures have their merits and should work in conjunction with each other. Instead, the study aims to put forth recommendations for enhancing these structures and creating better living conditions for their tenants, particularly those from south Asian countries.

Returning to personal and social factors, it is not the aim of this study to change people's culture and behavior. Rather, the focus is on how housing providers can select the most compatible tenants to create a harmonious living environment. The study begins by providing recommendations for the tenant selection process, taking into account personal and social factors that influence compatibility. These factors are outlined in Figure 77.

The study recognizes that some factors may be irrelevant to the compatibility of tenants and therefore focuses on those that are most likely to impact the relationship between tenants from south Asian countries and local ones.

Analyzing personal data such as gender, age, and occupation can provide valuable insights into how these factors influence the way people interact with each other.

A study suggests that biological age is unimportant for people or the field of study. However, as mentioned before, the focused group is usually older than the average student who comes to Milan. Fortunately, in recent years, the social housing policy has extended its target group to people aged 35 and older. In some cases, the tenants interviewed were older than 30 years old, representing the extended adulthood of young people. On the university side, there is no age limitation as well.

Apart from age, a mix of occupations, like young workers and students, can benefit from shared living space residents. Different lifestyles allow people to use common spaces at different times, preventing overcrowding and promoting diversity:

*"I think shared living was more challenging in the shared apartment when we were all students because we were all young and worked less. On the contrary, now that I'm sharing my living with older people with different occupation and we have a bigger space, we see fewer people with bigger space" (Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

The statement also suggests that having only students as residents may make residency monotonous and less beneficial. In Newton residency, for example, the space can be empty or full, showing that lacking the occupation diversity can make common spaces less efficient.

According to the statement, interviewees in shared apartments also reported occupation diversity issues. This suggests that a mix of occupations makes for a more vibrant and diverse community and optimal use of common spaces in shared living spaces. In addition, Different occupations can also help in social learning for our focused group:

*"If people are of different ages, they can teach more to each other, in particular the old ones" (Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of shared living experiences and personality compatibility for choosing coliving partners. The tenants should have some prior experience in living with others, such as in dormitories, and should be able to communicate their needs and preferences clearly and respectfully. They should also look for people who have similar values and interests, or who can complement their strengths and weaknesses.

Choosing the residents with some level of both Italian and English language is highly suggested by the study. Many conflicts come from language barriers because the Italians are not good at English and vice versa. Some interviewees with higher proficiency in Italian and English said there is no language barrier in resolving the household chores. However, language proficiency alone is not always enough to ensure

social compatibility and effective communication. Even if both parties have a sufficient level of language proficiency, other factors such as cultural differences, personality traits, and life experiences can also influence the dynamics of social interaction. Language proficiency is not always good; knowing some language levels can create conflicts, but it is not shared:

*"On the other hand, some foreigners speak Italian, but as they are not native, their purpose is misunderstood, sometimes creating even more tension and misinterpretation" (Interview 08: Male- Italian).*

One solution to confront the language barrier is technology. Technology can ease the language barrier; For instance, translating what someone writes rather than speaks is much more understandable and straightforward.

As stated earlier, gathering all tenants for the meeting is almost impossible. Some discussions can be simply done in the virtual world. "Translatable" messages can be even more effective because they let people take their time and speak more frankly as well:

*"If somebody doesn't want others to use its tools, simply write it down in our common WhatsApp group" (Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

### 3. Briefing meeting, super majority & permanency

In interviews, one crucial finding was that interviewees identified personality as the main factor determining compatibility among flat mates. However, providers responsible for selecting tenants are not necessarily trained psychologists. Even if they conduct short interviews, it can be challenging and time-consuming for them to assess compatibility, mainly when dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds. They often do not receive adequate information from providers about what to expect from their living arrangements, partly due to language barriers.

On the other hand, due to the urgent need for housing, young people often accept living situations without fully accepting what they agree to. Therefore, there is a need to constantly monitor living situations to ensure that everyone is comfortable and needs are met. Firstly, all documentations in English are a must. One possible solution could be to implement short-term, semester-based contracts, allowing for frequent voting of tenants. In many instances, tenants have had to deal with difficult flat mates they do not get along with. However, due to the terms of their housing contracts, they are often forced to endure the situation:

*"We had a guy who had problems with almost everyone in the house, and he had the contract. We asked manager to kick him out, but he answered he has the contract. We couldn't do anything, but fortunately, he himself, decided to leave the house, and the house became calm again" (Interview 02: Male- Indian).*

Such contracts would benefit the entire group and make it easier also for problematic individuals who struggle with communal living to leave without incurring additional fees.

However, a short-term contract should not prevent the possibility of renewal for several years. Based on Figure 75, it can be observed that the least duration of stay or to become stable for our interviewees in Milan is between 4 to 5 years. In this way, the students, especially our interviewees, without family support and a second house, have time to find a stable job and leave the transitory life.

We should pay attention that the interlocutors students consider their accommodations their house, while the off-set Italian students consider them their second. This makes a huge difference. International Non-EU students should find a place before leaving, and it is problematic when your future professional life is vague. Contrary to their Italian peers, these people do not have a second shelter as plan B. Therefore, the study recommends that students should have the option of extending their contracts if they desire. This would give them more excellent stability and reduce the stress of finding new living arrangements every few months. The same story is valid for the closure in August. The interviewees in the Newton residency claimed deeply about this issue.

At last, there is another thing to point out. The university dorms are usually closed in August during the year. Back to our note, the interviewees students do not have Plan B to live like their Italian peers in August. Due to high-cost flights in this period and strict regulations, returning to their countries is not a good idea either. The only possible option is to live in their friends' apartments. Moving in and out of foreign countries is expensive and time-consuming:

*"It's such a pain that we have to move out of the dorms in August and lug all our stuff somewhere and again put it back in the first of the September. And don't even get me started on not being able to use my driving license in Italy helping me out a bit" (Interview 10: Male- Iranian).*

While the university's contractual rules are in line with Italian and other European students coming to Milan in the Erasmus exchange program, it appeared that, in this issue, our non-EU students' needs are neglected.

## 5.2.2 Architectural intervention

The study's first section focuses on factors related to individuals and their behavior in groups. In contrast, the current section is more focused on the case study section and the impact of physical factors on communal living.

According to case studies and interviews, physical factors affect inhabitants' social interactions deeply, especially in the case of multiculturalism. Their physical surroundings profoundly influence residents' perceptions, experiences, and social interactions.

The crucial factor here is that physical factors may be modified entirely to increase multicultural student satisfaction and compatibility, which is more complicated and absent in other factors. This information helps housing managers and legislators make the most significant change in providing multicultural communal living by designing better areas that foster beneficial social interactions and communities.

The details of the case study's context are explained in the study section, with figures and drawings, meaning that the reader can better understand the case study's background and context by looking again at the case study section. Here the study involves analyzing and interpreting the data and identifying key themes and patterns related to the impact of spatial design on communal living.

The physical factors indicated in Figure 77 for analysis are proximity, number of residents, density, Surveillance and privacy, size and layout and flexibility of the shared spaces, and the physical quality. It is impossible to analyze each factor because they are all related. They interact and influence each other in complex ways. For example, proximity to services and amenities may affect the number and diversity of residents, affecting the level of Surveillance and privacy. Similarly, the shared spaces' size, layout, and flexibility may affect how residents use them and how they perceive their physical quality. Therefore, analyzing each factor separately is impossible; a holistic approach is needed to understand how they work together to create different living experiences in shared housing.

First, the study starts with the most tangible factor, the size of the community. In our cases, regarding the population, the size of the community is split into two parts based on how many people live together for their daily life tasks and share their kitchen, living room, bedrooms, and bathroom. In other words, they consider it their accommodation and use it in everyday life. In the first case study, as seen in the structure, there are 8–13 people. While in the dormitory structure, more than 150 people share spaces.

At first glance, more users result in fewer benefits for residents. The population, on the other hand, is difficult to quantify and a tricky word. While having a large and diverse population can bring many economic benefits, such as proximity and more social cohesion, it can also pose some potential disadvantages that must be addressed.

Based on the residents' experiences living in large and small communities, the study suggests that large communities have potential problems. First, the study suggests that not every social interaction is positive. More interaction does not always result in better relationships between respondents. In other words, more interaction is not always a positive fact.

The respondents brought up the issue of the potential for anonymity concerning the proximity and density of one's living environment in significant communities. The respondents at the Newton residency said that the constant influx of many people gave them the impression of being anonymous. When you are forced to accept a space with an excessive number of people, you lose all sense of responsibility and ownership over that space as you do not feel the space is yours.

One person who had lived in both the dormitory and the "coliving Lambrate" stated that they experienced a greater sense of comfort and were friendlier in the latter because they were more familiar with the faces of the people with whom they shared the space:

*"There are too many people in the dormitory; you may see more people, but you perceive them as strange. People come and go, so the person you spoke with last night may not be there today". "In coliving, I feel at ease because I know my roommates. I know they will be with me for a while and feel much safer here" (Interview 03: Male- Indian).*

Managing a large number of people at once, such as in university dorms, is more difficult because the greater anonymity of living in a large group may make people less motivated to participate in community activities (Williams, 2005). The high population allows you a wider variety of options and greater freedom. It may be necessary to divide people into smaller groups to maintain familiarity among participants and promote social interaction (Williams, 2005):

*"We had small groups there. I'll give you an example. In the kitchen, where we usually meet people, they were divided into two groups. The Italian and the international sides come primarily from developing countries like ours" (Interview 01: Male- Indian).*

However, the story of lack of responsibility is also relevant regarding the furniture and services. Because there is no owner, managing the structure, contents, and furniture is the most challenging part because

they do not belong to anyone. The lack of responsibility is higher in Newton residency due to its population. A temporary period of stay doubles the maintenance problem caused by a lack of responsibility.

Besides all these maintenance problems, the study suggests that fully furnished structures are due to various reasons. Our interlocutors and, in general, the young generation is in a transitional period; they do not have a stable life, home, or job. Because of this uncertainty, they cannot possess many household items, objects, and so on. Most of them came to Milan with just two pieces of luggage. Unsurprisingly, a fully furnished house appeared to be a must for them. The only resolution has good services and better supervision to compensate for the problem of the lack of responsibility in residency with a high population, which is somehow provided in Newton residency.

Back to the density factor, from an economic standpoint, university structures with high density are inevitable. Therefore, the study, instead, tries to analyze the Newton residency to minimize the disadvantages of high-population residency.

The study focuses more on the density concept rather than population. In the sharing economy, where ownership has less meaning, temporary use is more important. Therefore, in the study cases where accommodations are considered commodities and not capital goods, the used timing is more crucial. The balanced density at different times and spaces is critical. For instance, coliving Lambrate have a more diverse population regarding occupation, age, and lifestyle, allowing them to manage their shared spaces better. They can avoid conflicts over using facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms, or living room at peak hours:

*"I think shared living was more challenging in the shared apartment when we were all students because we were all young and worked less. On the contrary, now that I'm sharing my living with older people with different occupation and we have a bigger space, we see fewer people with bigger space" (Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

On the other hand, Newton Residence has a more homogeneous population of students who attend Politecnico di Milano, which may lead to problems using common spaces at certain times. For example, they may have to compete for study areas during exam periods and every day for the kitchen:

*"The kitchen is too crowded and at certain times it is literally impossible to cook and to eat calmly, because there is too much noise and crowd. I understand that people want to spend time with friends, but I suffer from severe headaches and kitchen makes them worse every day. The study room is either completely silenced or constantly disturbed by people playing games, watching television or talking unnecessarily loudly, I really can't understand where the idea of placing games and study tables together came from."(Appendix B: Questionnaire).*

Second, understanding the role of the different spaces is very influential; for example, the kitchen is the most essential shared space for all the interviewees and a strategic space in communal living. If the designer can understand the density of spaces, he or she can also manage the size of the common spaces. However, some common spaces, like kitchens, are always busy and unpredictable. Here is where the role of the flexible spaces and furniture comes in to increase and decrease the kitchen threshold during peak times:

*"The kitchen is totally cut off from the rest of the common areas and private spaces. When you come to cook in the kitchen, it's like your cooking life is on its own planet away from the rest of your individual life. You can't even brew tea and back to continue studying. You have to come to the kitchen, cook your grub, eating, and then get back to your room. It's kind of like a separate world in there!"(Interview 10: Male- Iranian).*

Last but not least, another essential factor is surveillance: a resident's ability to select whether or not to participate in ongoing social interactions is facilitated by their capacity to witness those interactions in the community.

According to the definition of surveillance, it is closely related to how spaces are organized and accessed. The study cases section explores how residents have different preferences for the layout of shared and private spaces to maintain their privacy. A surprising finding was that residents valued large common spaces, especially the kitchen, to enhance their privacy. They were less concerned about the size of their private spaces as long as they were exclusive and personalized:

*"Yes, my room is small, but I don't prefer to be bigger instead of having a smaller living room. I make you an example. I usually see more people in the house for dinner time. I wouldn't eat in my room, even if I had a bigger one. The big living room allows me to use that space to have dinner with my friends without disturbing my flat mates and gives me more privacy"(Interview 09: Male- Italian).*

The study suggests that in a communal living setting, a single bedroom, even if small, is preferable to a shared bedroom. The shared bedroom poses various challenges to privacy and comfort. Moreover, the study suggests that having a single space allows residents to communicate better in common spaces because they can choose when and how to interact with others.

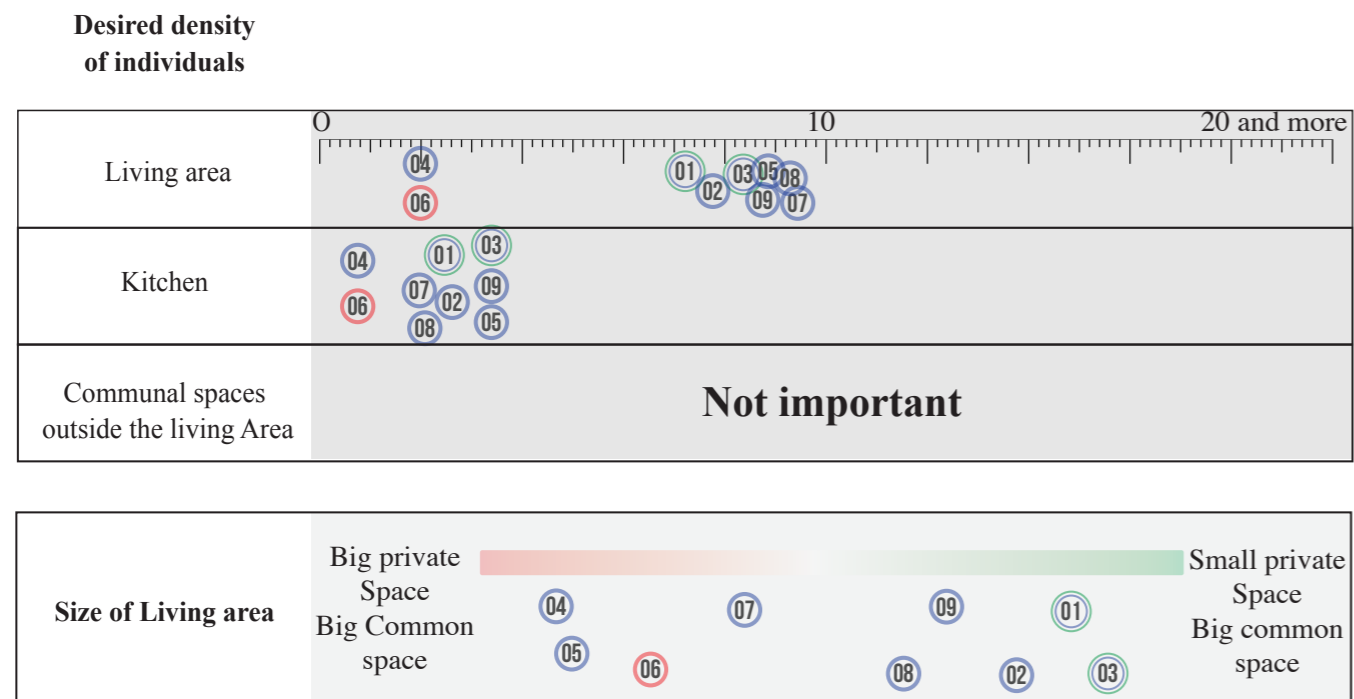


Figure 76 Interviewees' preference towards physical factors  
 Note: Illustrated by author

Personal Factors	Physical Factors	Social Factors	Other Factors
Ethnic/Nationality	Proximity	Homogeneity	Access to social housing
Age and occupation	Density	Language proficiency	DSU scholarship
Gender	Size of the community	Briefing meeting	Easier visa process
Family/society culture	Facilities, flexible Space and Furniture	Permanency	High Italian University ranking
Family support	Surveillance and privacy		
Expected future stay	Entrance		
Indoor/Outdoor lifestyle	Semi-private space		
Personality	Private space		
Friends' compatriot support	Role of the kitchen		
Compatriot rejection phenomenon	Size of shared spaces		

Figure 77 The influential factors for the interlocutors life condition in communal living  
 Note: Illustrated by author

# Conclusion

## Conclusion

The study explores the current situations and housing challenges of south-eastern students who migrate to Milan for educational purposes and opt for multicultural communal structures such as a university or non-university residences and colivings. These structures are becoming more popular in Milan, as they offer more affordable accommodation in an expensive city like Milan. However, it raised questions about the compatibility of students with diverse cultural backgrounds living in shared structures.

This study explored the feasibility of compatibility and cohabitation between students with different cultural backgrounds in the context of shared living. To achieve this goal, the study employed a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative analysis:

In-depth, written interviews, and dialogue with students from various countries and regions who reside in these multicultural communal living

Conduction field study research to analyze the management, spatial features, and other aspects of three different kinds of communal living structures in Milan run by three different providers.

The findings revealed that compatibility and cohabitation are possible outcomes for students who seek to enrich their intercultural experiences while sustaining their life financially. However, the study also identified challenges and barriers that may hinder or prevent such outcomes, such as language difficulties, cultural misunderstandings, stereotypes, spatial constraints, and inadequate housing policies. Therefore, The study acknowledges that these recommendations may require further research and collaboration across various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, architecture, urban planning, and policy studies. Therefore, the study hopes to contribute to the existing literature on housing issues by providing a comprehensive and holistic perspective that incorporates multiple voices and narratives from diverse actors.

Based on study findings, apart from the exploration part, the study proposes some suggestions for improving the socio-economic conditions and opportunities for better compatibility and cohabitation among students with different cultural backgrounds. These recommendations cover both spatial/physical features and more responsive and effective housing policies.

The suggestions offered by the study are not meant to be definitive or conclusive at all but rather to stimulate further discussion and research on the housing situation of a marginalized group of students in Milan. The study acknowledges that its findings are open-ended and tentative and do not provide a clear-cut solution to the complex and multifaceted problem. Instead, the study aims to shed light on the experiences and perspectives of these students, who have often been overlooked or ignored in the urban planning and policy-making processes. By giving voice to these students, who are increasingly immigrating to Milan for educational opportunities, the study hopes to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse urban realm that can accommodate their needs and aspirations.

## Table of the figure

Figure 1 The housing terms and sub-terms distinguished by the individual and collective use . . . . .	2
Figure 2 Coliving and Cohousing architectural layout . . . . .	4
Figure 3 The Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household,2018 . . . . .	5
Figure 4 Crude birth rate in Europe from 1950 to 2022 . . . . .	5
Figure 5 Annual resident permit issue for middle eastern and southern Asian people resident permit in Milan. . . . .	6
Figure 6 Statistical sub-regions as defined by the UNSD . . . . .	7
Figure 7 The approximate present-day distribution of the native speakers of the eight branches of the Indo-European language family . . . . .	7
Figure 8 Home-ownership rate in Italy from 2008 to 2019 . . . . .	9
Figure 9 The residency permit issue from 2012 to 2021 . . . . .	9
Figure 10 The City of Milan . . . . .	10
Figure 11 Private/ Public ratio in legal person ownership (Big owners) . . . . .	10
Figure 12 Public/private ratio and Rental/non-rental properties ration . . . . .	10
Figure 13 students enrolled in Milan universities in last decades . . . . .	11
Figure 14 The data is provided by the monthly report on tourism in the Milan area 2023 (up to 2021). . . . .	11
Figure 15 Family units' structure in City of Milan in 2019 . . . . .	11
Figure 16 total beds offer in university residencies in metropolitan Milan . . . . .	14
Figure 17 map of temporary subsidized accommodation contracts for students . . . . .	14
Figure 18 rental accommodation in the Province of Milan to which the South Asian students access . . . . .	15
Figure 19 Medium rent price/mm . . . . .	15
Figure 20 The Rent Price for single rooms (all expenses & fees included) in Market-Driven coliving in 2022 . . . . .	15
Figure 21 Monthly rates for bed in single room with bathroom by type of student residence. . . . .	16
Figure 22 Comparison between Different kinds of accomadation by three different systems. . . . .	17
Figure 23 Research layout reasoning . . . . .	20
Figure 24 The interaction between physical, personal, and social factors and their impact on behavior . . . . .	20
Figure 25 Scheme of similarities and differences in communal living structures run by different suppliers. . . . .	26
Figure 26 Cohabitat Lambrate . . . . .	27
Figure 27 realized, ongoing, and future projects on the East side of Ex-Lambrate rail station & Rubattino neighbourhood and their connectivity . . . . .	27
Figure 28 Mobility map of the surrounding area of the Cohabitat . . . . .	28
Figure 29 Land-use map of potential features for students . . . . .	29
Figure 30 Spatial arrangement of "Cohabitat Lambrate" . . . . .	30
Figure 31 Floor plan of coliving C and E and the other plan Typology of the different floor. . . . .	31
Figure 32 3D section coliving E . . . . .	32
Figure 33 Photos of the coliving E . . . . .	32
Figure 34 3D section coliving C . . . . .	33
Figure 35 Photos of the coliving C . . . . .	33
Figure 36 The most frequented route and places by Coliving residents . . . . .	36
Figure 37 Some of the events held in the condominium . . . . .	37
Figure 38 Coliving level the presence of 1-4 People in the kitchen (Everyday life) . . . . .	38
Figure 39 presence of 4-7 People (once in two weeks). . . . .	38
Figure 40 presence of 4-7 People (once in two month) . . . . .	38
Figure 41 Coliving Night Club . . . . .	39
Figure 42 Fitness room coliving . . . . .	39
Figure 43 Media room Coliving . . . . .	39
Figure 44 Coliving Indian restaurant . . . . .	39
Figure 45 Aperitivo table on the terrace of the coliving E . . . . .	40
Figure 46 Cube sofas in the living room of coliving E . . . . .	40
Figure 47 table tennis in Coliving E . . . . .	40
Figure 48 Living room of Coliving E . . . . .	40
Figure 49 The access to the (semi) private spaces from outside the unit . . . . .	41
Figure 50 Desired layout Stated by interviews. . . . .	41
Figure 51 Semi private spaces in coliving C . . . . .	42
Figure 52 entry in coliving C . . . . .	42
Figure 53 door of the private spaces close to the common spaces. . . . .	42
Figure 55 accessibility of students to public transport. . . . .	44
Figure 56 The Important land use of the neighbourhood for Newton residency residents . . . . .	45
Figure 57 3D section split of the Isaac Newton residency. . . . .	46

Figure 58 Shared spaces in the Newton residency. . . . .	47
Figure 59 Private spaces in the Newton residency. . . . .	47
Figure 60 Open spaces in front of the Newton residency Entry . . . . .	50
Figure 61 frequent passage of the Newton residents in the neighbourhood. . . . .	52
Figure 62 3D section of the kitchen on the second floor . . . . .	56
Figure 63 The Kitchen on the second Floor . . . . .	56
Figure 64 Camplus Sesto San Giovanni . . . . .	58
Figure 65 Accessibility to the public transport for students of the residency . . . . .	59
Figure 66 Floor Plan of the residency of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni. . . . .	60
Figure 67 Fifth floor plan of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni Residency . . . . .	60
Figure 68 shared spaces in Camplus Sesto San Giovanni . . . . .	61
Figure 69 3D section split of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni . . . . .	61
Figure 70 Frequent passage of the Camplus Sesto San Giovanni residents in the neighbourhood. . . . .	65
Figure 71 List of interviewees . . . . .	74
Figure 72 3D interviewees ethnicity and sharing accommodation type between interviewees . . . . .	75
Figure 73 The different disciplines intervening in the subjects. . . . .	79
Figure 74 Time-related Factors . . . . .	79
Figure 75 Interviewees' personal factors. . . . .	85
Figure 76 Interviewees' preference towards physical factors . . . . .	92
Figure 77 The influential factors for the interlocutors life condition in communal living. . . . .	93
Figure 78 Accommodations of interviewee No.1 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	106
Figure 79 Accommodations of interviewee No.2 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	110
Figure 80 Accommodations of interviewee No.3 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	113
Figure 81 Accommodations of interviewee No.4 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	116
Figure 82 Accommodations of interviewee No.5 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	119
Figure 83 Accommodations of interviewee No.6 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	122
Figure 84 Accommodations of interviewee No.7 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	126
Figure 85 Accommodations of interviewee No.8 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	129
Figure 86 Accommodations of interviewee No.9 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	132
Figure 87 Accommodations of interviewee No.10 before and after immigration to Milan . . . . .	135

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Interviews transcription

### Interview 01: Male- Indian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
University	University Dorm	Interviewee 01 25 M	North of India	Student (Management engineering )	366€(DSU)+ family financial support	300€  295€	3.5
Cooperative	Coliving						

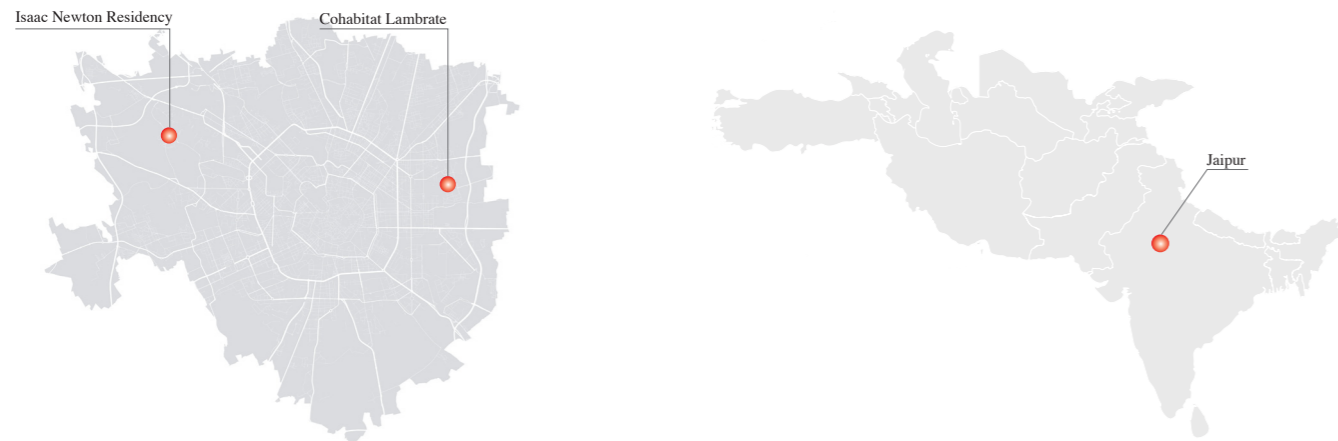


Figure 78 Accommodations of interviewee No.1 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

*Tell me a bit about your family.*

I come from a middle-class family. My father just works in our family, and my mother is a housewife. Besides that, we have properties on Airbnb that help us significantly. Our family religion is Hinduism; however, I don't practice religion. But my parents do. I'm not religious, but I care a lot about my culture and traditions.

*Why? Is your city top-visited?*

Yes, because there are many famous palaces and castles in Jaipur. Also, it's a destination for weddings for people around the world. In general, it's a global city in terms of tourism.

*Therefore, have you ever spent a long time with foreigners before coming here?*

Unfortunately, people who come to my city stay just a few days; we don't have many foreign residents, let's say.

*Speaking about your family, did they accept your decision to come?*

Yes, absolutely. They wanted their son to study abroad. They not only accepted me but also supported me. Maybe because they knew I'd return one day.

*Why did you decide to study abroad, specifically in Italy?*

Firstly, it was easier to study in Italy than in Indian universities. The academic atmosphere in India is so competitive that it is hard to enter a university. Obtaining Politecnico di Milano admission was super simple. However, the bureaucratic process was a bit confusing. I wonder why you must translate all documents into Italian. Because when you have admitted to a course taught in English, it was unacceptable for me to prepare all documents in Italian for getting a visa and other things lasted longer than usual also because you must go to different cities for paperwork.

*Why did you decide to study abroad, specifically in Italy?*

Regarding my choice of Italy, it was just a matter of timing. Because the only university in Europe that offers the course in the second semester in my field is Politecnico, I didn't choose Italy just for Italy. I was just in a hurry.

*What was your main challenge after coming here?*

By far, the most challenging task is finding accommodations at an affordable price. But for me, it was even worse. Because when I arrived, the Covid pandemic had just arrived. And families stop renting their houses to people, and a few agencies even raise the rent price. Then one of my friends hosted me for a month and a half. I mean, that was an "under the counter"

contract, let's say which is common between us. Later, I could take a double room in the Newton residence for a semester. And I'm now living here in the coliving Lambrate for about a year.

*Speaking of your experience in shared housing, have you ever had any experience in your country?*

Yes, I got my bachelor's degree in another city far from my hometown. For about a year, I lived in a dormitory with hundreds of people in one of India's southern cities. Later, I moved into an apartment with some friends.

*It seems you've lived in shared living for many years, even in your country. Do you prefer to share your accommodations with Indians or internationals?*

I prefer to be with Iranians. My experience with Indians was terrible. I mean, nine out of ten is usually awful. Living with Indians is complex. You must consider many things because you share the same culture, land, and everything else. First, you cannot hide anything, nor can you pretend. When you live with non-Indian people, you can choose what part of your life is shown and understood, especially when you live in a coliving or a dormitory with many people.

*What about other nationalities or cultures?*

I have a little experience with Europeans. But I sincerely prefer people from Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkey, et cetera. Based on my friends I say. Sharing my room with Italians is impossible for me. They are cold and living with them again is too complicated. For example, how we sleep, maintain cleanliness, use the bathroom, and everything else differs. But I can share my flat with them. In fact, I prefer to share my flat with them. Although it might be a problem regarding cooking, spices, and all, but it had many benefits for me. I could learn a bit about the Italian language and some of their cultures, which helped me in my office. I could find some subjects I found in Italian to speak about with my manager in the office, like some cuisine.

*What do you mean by "cold"?*

It is hard to make a connection with them. Most of them need to speak English properly or don't speak at all. For example, once a day or week, they should mention why you don't speak Italian. Even those who speak English turned back to Italian in conversation. Plus, they take almost everything seriously. One main reason I find it easy to live with Iranians is that they are chill and do not care about things. Do not worry about the spices, making parties, ...

Even if something happens, they will forget very soon. They don't have the feeling of revenge. In the case of the Indians, they remember and keep it in their hearts and minds forever.

*Suppose you could choose your house mate; what kind of people, nationalities, and cultures would you select?*

I would say all because I came abroad to meet people from various cultures. I wouldn't be completely open with all of them. Perhaps I don't cook for them or invite them to my parties, but I want to live with people of different cultures to learn from them. Maybe I'm not keen on sharing my room with people from different cultural backgrounds, like Italians. But as I told before I prefer to share my flat with all kinds of people including Italians.

*Do you see "home" as a personal boundary or social environment where multiple social learning occurs? Why did you choose to live in coliving? Was that mainly for financial benefit or social aspects?*

Money talks. But it's not just a matter of money. If the price of coliving and an individual apartment were the same, I would choose my own apartment. But I like living with other people too. I mean, there isn't a big difference. Both have their pros and cons. Evaluating my financial and comfort, I absolutely prefer living in coliving to an apartment. Anyway, I'm a kind of a homebody person. I like staying home for a long time. Then being at home alone would be boring if I had a whole apartment. But in coliving, you have a cheat chat. I also should say that people around me also has a significant influence on me. For example, on exam periods, I couldn't simply stay home and study, but when I saw my friends at home, I was motivated to study more. My father always tells me that if you can learn something from people ranging from eleven to one hundred eleven, you should do it. I believe that living with people is the best context in which to learn. I see the change in people's behavior and how they model each other's habits, like going to the gym, eating well, studying, etc., And If people are of different ages, they can teach more to each other, in particular the old ones. However, I think people in the same age range could get along better. I think people in the same age range may have a more similar lifestyle. I mean you can learn from older people while to can get along well better with the same age people. Maybe it could be both. But they shouldn't be too immature. Based on my experience, I had more problems with people at 19 than people of other nationalities and cultures. Also, I think the age range shouldn't be wide, around five-six years at most. Then yes, I see my living space as a place to learn social learning let's say but not at the cost of the huge trouble.

*You considered yourself to be a homebody? What do you do when you're at home?*

I always try to figure something out. It's not like I stay in bed doing nothing; I search a lot. I contact my family. My family is everything to me. And more importantly, I cook. I love cooking. I spent a lot on cooking. That's a part of my life.

*To what extent does coliving prepare the situation for your indoor activities? How do you feel about private and public*

*spaces in your house? Are they designed in a proper way?*

As I said before, I love cooking, and because of our big kitchen, I am freer to cook; I can walk around, stay longer, and enjoy my time in the kitchen. There are many cooking utilities my house mates and I brought. We all use that. If somebody doesn't want others to use its tools, simply write it down in our common WhatsApp group. Also, I enjoy having my friends over, and fortunately, we have a large living room where we often throw parties. My room is small. But who cares? Honestly, I don't want to invite my friends into my personal space. Anyway, I see my room as a place to sleep; Therefore, the small size of my bedroom doesn't bother me. On the contrary, it could be even better for me. Because it forced me to come to a shared space, I enjoy chatting with people. By the way, based on my experience, the rooms are small, even in the usual apartments. It's not comparable to bedrooms in my country. Just as I told you I wanted to separate my private space from the common, I preferred to have more area that covered my private room. For example, in the other part of some rooms, there is that privacy. I mean the space between my and shared space. Once, one of my house mates asked us to close our bathroom door because it was visible from the common room. She was right, but anyway that was our private zone. In general, I think the location and design of the building could be better.

*What are your thoughts on living with someone of the opposite gender? Have you ever had the opposite experience?*

No, not about the room, but about a flat. But regarding the opposite sex, it's not something strange for me. We have the same relationship with girls in India. I believe it should be a mix of both genders because you can help with different tasks. You can learn other things.

*But could you continue living here in the long term?*

I don't think so. It has some limitations, but only at certain ages. Because that is only a passing experience for me, I do not want to know new people for the rest of my life. I believe that as we get older, we become less patient and should accept it. This is a transitional period in which you can learn much from your peers and your house mates. Especially for me as a foreigner, I believe that was useful, even if I don't want to stay here in Italy.

*I see you have the experience of living in the Newton residency; I want you to compare two kinds of living. Which has better satisfied your need?*

My first concern was always money when I came here. Because the value Euro is so much higher than the value of my country's currency, I can only count on my family for a small amount of money. I don't speak Italian and couldn't find a proper job either. Then I had to adjust to living on a limited budget. In any case, both are roughly the same price. But regarding value/price, here our apartment is much better because my friends in the same situation are paying more. Then, I think, in general, the dormitory should cost less. But personally, it was the same. But besides price, the most crucial reason DSU students from our country choose dormitories is that the process is much more straightforward. Almost all Indian students receiving the DSU scholarship choose the dormitory as their accommodation because they know how difficult it is for Indians to find housing in Milan. We are in contact with previous Indian students in Milan and have already informed them of the housing situation here. The first problem is convincing owners to sign the contract, which is necessary for a DSU contract. Because they don't want to pay taxes, they usually take the contract's taxes from you.

Also, your accommodations should be close to the city. If you want to receive the total amount of your scholarship, you cannot rent a house outside Milan. Also, the owners are unwilling to rent their apartments to foreigners, particularly male Indian students. If you are lucky enough to sign a legal contract, you should spend a lot on a deposit and agency fee.

The most annoying thing about the dorm was its limitations: to do anything, and you needed permission. You can only invite up to two people with permission; they can only come to your room; If they are more than two, you should inform the receptionist and give him their name. They are not allowed to stay after certain hours. That was too complicated, and we were got to use to invite our friends secretly. Rules are made to be broken, right?! Also, you can just have a party in the kitchen. There was no specific area on your floor where you could throw a party. People should sleep, and you couldn't have a late-night party. We had a communal area for the party, but you should reserve it ahead of time. Come on, we are students; we decided to have a party at 10 p.m. and start it one hour later. In addition to the paperwork, the shared space was far from the kitchen, and for our culture, which is tied to cooking, that was useless. But you couldn't find other people using that too.

*What about other services provided there?*

The gym was awful; without any equipment to work out with, people came with personal gear. But the best service provided was cleaning. We have cleaning services every two weeks, and they give you washed, ironed bed sheets. The spaces were usually clean!

*In contrast to the dormitory, you should share some of your expenses with your flat mate. How was your experience sharing your expenses used in the common space? How did you manage that?*

Not particularly good. We created a "Tricount" application group. An application in which we put what we buy. But at the end of the day, no one pays the debts and rarely go to shopping after many times of warning.

*Back to your relationship with your coliver, did you get along well with them? What is the difference between coliving and dormitory living?*

I found many international friends, but regarding local students, that was more complicated. The number of people in the dormitory is so large that you can't possibly know everything. We had small groups there. I'll give you an example. In the kitchen, where we usually meet people, they were divided into two groups. The Italian and the international sides come primarily from developing countries like ours. We didn't even enter each other's groups at the birthday party for a second. We had a small talk with Italian students from the south of Italy; I think just because it was necessary. However, most of them were heated argument. They always wanted to tell us how we should use kitchen tools, cleaning, and this stuff which I felt was offensive most of the time. And yet the classical question: why you don't speak Italian?! Instead, we know each other better here (in coliving Lambrate) and resolve our problems better. Still, I feel that separation between Italians and us. But I have fewer issues regarding cooking, cleaning, and hosting friends than in a dormitory. Honestly, I haven't had long conversations with my Italian flat mates since they don't speak English. How can we make friendship when we can't even talk to each other. We didn't go out ever even once. I don't know; maybe I'm wrong. Maybe because we see each other in the house enough. Maybe because we live together, or simply the conflicts regarding shared living doesn't make us separated. An expression in India says that you have a good friendship when you are at a certain distance. But the friendship may no longer be suitable once you become closer. Or maybe if I could speak Italian, we could be friends... But for now, I can just say we didn't manage to make a friendship. But generally, I would say everything is okay because we have much less conflict here than in the dormitory. I also think we care more about our apartment and want to keep it cleaner.

*Speaking about conflict, do you agree with intervention from outside of the house if you couldn't resolve the problem yourselves?*

If you mean Luca, I don't think so; we can resolve the problem by speaking. Anyway, no one listens to him.

*And how did you find out about the condominium "Cohabitat Lambrate"?*

Like everyone says hello when you see families with children, I feel entirely safe here. And they are exceedingly kind; I didn't hear any complaints about us in these years. That's a really friendly situation.

*Have you ever spent time with them? At the Meeting held in the condominium.*

Two families invited us to their house, and vice versa. We spent some time with them, especially with young couples. Recently, I had a dance performance, and I invited two couples. Sometimes I participate in their gathering in our shared space, but I don't understand Italian and can't enjoy it as much as I want. If I had the opportunity, I would have lived with an Italian family. I believe they can teach you far more than young people.

## Interview 02: Male- Indian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan(Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Market	Shared apartment	Interviewee 02 25 M	East of India	Student (Transportation engineering )	366€(DSU)+ family financial support	300€  295€	3
Cooperative	Coliving						

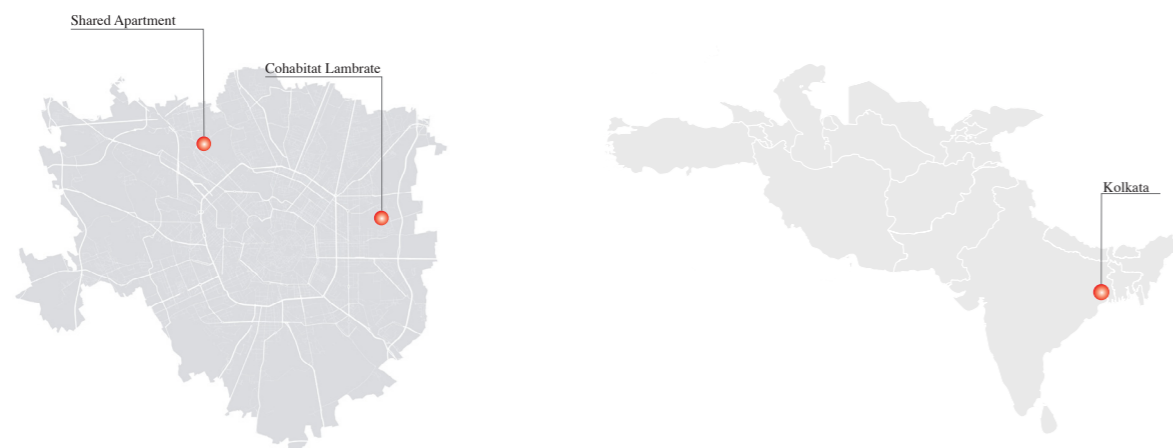


Figure 79 Accommodations of interviewee No.2 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

Tell me a bit about your family.

I come from a middle-class family, and my father is the sole breadwinner in our family, which is common in India. My mum is a housewife. My father previously served in the military but is now a customer of one of the American food companies. In short, I come from a normal family, not rich, not poor. Our religion is Hinduism, and I partially practice religion, mainly about what I eat. I love my religion; it's soft and gives a meaningful spiritual experience. We don't kill people in the name of God.

Is that a moderate religion isn't?

Yes, it's not a monotheistic religion and allows you to experience various choices for your life. You know, it's even more moderate in my city. Because in my place, we are interested in western culture, especially about women's rights; girls are freer in their lives. They can enjoy their life much more compared to other parts of India. In other regions, families force their daughters to marry at younger marriage, usually with people chosen by them. In every aspect, we are more modern than in other regions.

Then you had fewer problems accustoming yourself to western life than other Indians?

Yes, a lot, and I have many more international friends. Even in my city in India, I had some international friends.

Then your city is a global city?

It's the second most visited city after the capital. You know, just because it's the capital of India. Otherwise, my city has more attractive. It's famous for science, art, and poets. We all speak English fluently. Most of the diplomats and embassies are found there.

Regarding your family, did they accept your decision to come?

That was entirely my decision to come here, but my family supported me this way despite being an only child.

Why did you decide to study abroad, specifically in Italy?

Because I didn't have any job prospects in India, my course was old-school in engineering, and I had to change my field. I told myself that now that I have to change my course; let's choose one famous university, not make the same mistake, and Politecnico is one of the best in Europe. Secondly, I'm prone to cold, and Italy is one of the warmest European countries. Thirdly because I wanted to improve my standard of living, anyway, in India, I could work in some way. Still, you have another lifestyle in Europe; economically, Italy is cheap compared to other European countries. I have always wished to live in Europe, and Italy was the best door to enter from. I always wanted to do something different; I liked that craving to leave India and be different.

Do you want to stay in Europe/ Italy?

At least for a decade in Europe, mostly not in Italy.

Why?

I've always been grateful for Italy for all it gave me, but it's not where you can progress. You can't find job without knowing Italian. Fortunately, now I found a job without any requirement for Italian language, but it rarely happens. The income is low, and no one speaks English. I don't want to learn it because I've always seen Italy as a bridge to going to northern Countries like the Netherlands; I have already applied visa for there.

What was your main challenge coming here?

Admitted in Politecnico wasn't complicated for me. I got that in a brief time with a silver scholarship. The visa paperwork was relatively easy for me as well. As I told you, in my city, all the embassies are found close to my accommodation. However, sometimes I had to go to south India because my bachelor's university was there. But the mandatory translated documents in Italian were irritating. You need help finding an Italian translator in my city.

You mentioned you study in another city far from your hometown. Have you ever experienced shared living?

I got to use to in a coliving in India. But all male Indians.

Which one do you prefer? Mix sex and nationalities or male Indians?

I try to avoid being with Indians because you find lots of competition, jealousy, and show-off. They want to take you down with all they have in their hand. For having fun, they are good. I mainly go out with Indians, but I avoid living with them when it comes to living abroad. But regarding my hangout Indians Friends, I also go out with Indians from other parts of India. Regarding girls, I absolutely prefer living with them. They are more kind when they make parties, they invite their friends, and you can talk to girls more. There is the better atmosphere in the house. They are more sensible and warn you more about housing tasks, we had the same situation here, but it also would be better for the home. The whole male-sex flat mates make the apartments very messy.

You told me that you don't want to live with Indians, but what is your preference? What kind of people do you prefer to share your living with?

I want to be with funny people like me. Because I'm extraordinarily sociable and I tease people a lot. I want to be with easygoing people who get my joke. I find it a lot between Iranians, Pakistani, Lebanese, and Israeli. I have many friends from these countries. It didn't happen to me to hang out with European people in general, maybe just on some Erasmus vacations. Regarding Italian specifically, I see many snobbish and biased behaviors while living with them. They see themselves as higher than us. I prefer not to be closer than it should be.

What do you mean by "snobbish and biased" behavior?

I see biased behavior regarding cohabitation issues. For example, if I cough, they ask me to go and take the test; they say you should respect our health, but when they cough, they say no, it's just a cold. I see this kind of behavior from almost all of them. They act like a boss. Living here is like this; they always mentioned that you must do this. They command a lot, and it seems there are no other alternatives for them. Especially when manager put strict regulations regarding COVID, and we were always fighting. By snobbish, I mean they don't participate in our party when we make parties, and they don't carry or conservation when I try to do so. We have never hanged out either outside our house or inside. Their facial behavior and all. However, people are different. I was fortunate to know some people in university and on vacations which are entirely different.

Therefore, if you could go back, would you choose here as your living?

Absolutely yes. There are uncomfortable things in life that are necessary to learn. Living here has many advantages. Just because I faced conflict doesn't mean I wasn't satisfied. I must know the culture I'm living in and decide whether I want to go to another country or stay here. I already knew that the job prospect was not good, but I like the weather, so I had to know Italian culture. In this way, I can decide better. Anyway, that wasn't just about the conflicts between us. We also chatted often about food, because I like cooking a lot and, in the evening, we had some small conversations. Despite that, I should mention that I made strong friendships with other internationals living with me, like Iranians. Also, there are other essential factors; my first concern and challenge when I came here were financial issues because we have a huge difference in currency values. Here we didn't spend a lot sincerely. The apartments are well-designed and furnished. It's beautiful, and we have big spaces.

You mentioned many things, and we will go further into them later. What are your priorities in selecting here?

First is money. Second because architecturally is well-design, it's modern, clean, and new. Thirdly the cultural atmosphere it had. But consider that about the third thing I had no idea when I chose to live here. But now I find it enjoyable despite all conflicts we had. However, I would have preferred if I had enough money to have my small private apartment.

I think for my situation as an immigrant, I wanted a place to learn about society, but for a temporary period. I can't conflict every month. Up to now, that was informative, and I liked that.

*What are your suggestions for having fewer conflicts?*

Many of our conflicts come from language barriers and misunderstandings. If we could have people who can speak English reduce not only the conflicts but also increase the conversation. We always had some small chats with my Italian flat mates. But, after a while, we couldn't continue the conversation anymore. As they chose international people here, I think they had to choose Italians who speak English. There was some meeting to resolve our problems, but I didn't participate because I didn't understand anything. So, what was the use of that for me? Plus, being in the same age range would reduce the conflict. Close to my room was a 33-year-old man; he slept early and always reminded me not to make noise, even the small things like closing the door. Now they give it to two people. We call them kids. They are just 18 years old, and every night they smoke weed and make many noises until the morning and don't speak to anyone in the house. Also, we had problems shopping for dishwasher detergents and cleaning stuff. Some just specific people get used to shopping for the house and just watch. We had an application in which we divided the expenses, but people even rarely paid their debts. And another thing. We should have the right to get rid of somebody if they don't want to change their behavior. We had a guy who had problems with almost everyone in the house, and he had the contract. We asked manager to kick him out, but he answered he has the contract. We couldn't do anything, but fortunately, he himself, decided to leave the house, and the house became calm again.

*How do you feel about private and public spaces in your house? Are they designed in a proper way?*

I get to use to being in the house. Even now, I'm doing the smart work. I love being home because I cook, sit, lay down, and usually, I don't want my boss to see me while working. We have a big kitchen and a living room for cooking and working. I love that. But my privacy could be better. You hear the sounds of other people. Also, our semi-private space is tiny and close to the living room. My room is small, but the room is just for sleeping me. I push myself to be outside of the room because there, I become lazy without doing anything. And we are in Italy to study, earn, doing something useful, then it's better not to be in our bedroom. I wish my room were at the end of the house. But in general, I like the design.

*But have you ever felt uncomfortable in shared spaces?*

No, I feel free when I do things. I just don't want anyone to see what I'm searching for and seeing on my laptop. Therefore, I sit in a position in which my screen is hidden from them.

*You mentioned a bit about the role of manager before, do you agree with intervention from outside of the house if you couldn't resolve the problem yourselves?*

It depends if it is out of reach of our hands, yes. Like kick out one house mate is a legal process. I ask the manager. But the conflicts inside the house can be resolved anyway. As I mentioned before, the manager's interventions just created more problems than fixing them.

*Do you have much contact with your direct neighbors?*

Not much. I go out and have dinner just with a couple. Others say no, mainly because they all speak Italian. And you know they are usually families; we don't have much in common. There are some events downstairs, but they are all about children. I don't have any child or family, then what's the use of those events for me?! But they all are calm and kind. I feel safe in this building.

### Interview 03: Male- Indian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Market	Shared apartments	Interviewee 03 25 M	South of India	Student (Mechanical Engineering)	Minimized Family support+ app. 300€(side hustles job)	300€ 300€ 295€	4
University	University Dorm						
Cooperative	Coliving						

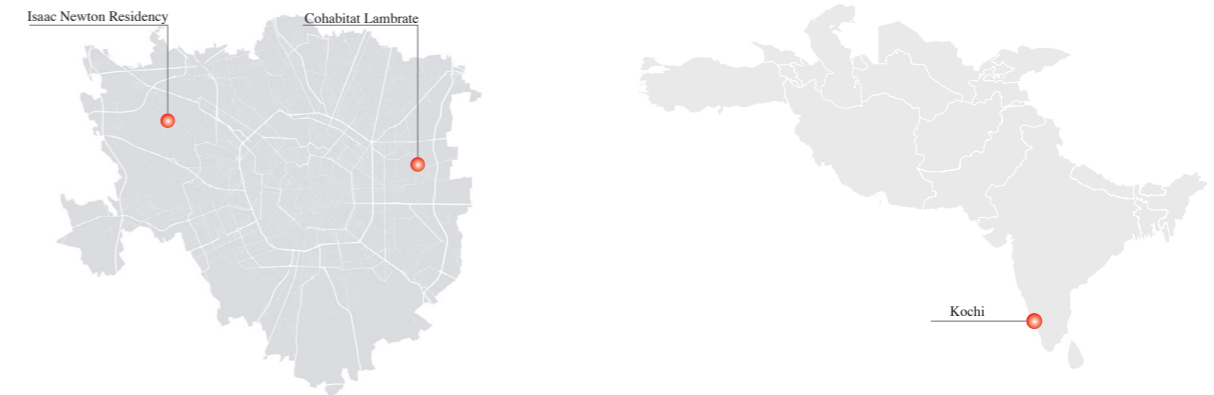


Figure 80 Accommodations of interviewee No.3 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

*Tell me a bit about your family.*

In a small Indian city near Kochi, I lived with my uncles and aunts in a joint family. Economically, I come from an upper-middle-class somewhat rich family.

*But I noticed you were always working for a living. Why?*

Because I'm 25, I wanted to stand on my own. I don't want to explain to anyone why or how I'm using my money. Because in general, in India, the parents intervene in your personal life, and when they are helping you financially, their intervention is also more significant. In fact, I came here to become independent and free of my family and, more importantly, my relatives.

*Apart from families, tell me about the city where you have grown up.*

My city is a port city, and many come from other countries. It's a trading city, and you can find many worship houses. By the way, it's not my parents' city; I mean, we originally belonged to the northwestern area of India, and we followed our own culture, outfit, language, food, etc.

*Therefore, do you live with international immigrants in your cities, or are they just tourists?*

Many resident foreigners come to my city and stay for a few years. I already had many international friends. India is a popular place for many foreigners to live temporarily, mainly because of work, food, and the English language. I had lots of international friends there.

*Therefore, you are a multilingual person. Right? Do you speak Italian?*

Yes, with my family, I speak our own language. At the same time, I use another language with society and absolutely English with international people. I try to learn Italian but learning a language after a certain age is difficult, but I'm trying my best.

*Since you are learning Italian, do you plan to stay here? Did you choose Italy specifically as a destination?*

Still, I'm a student, but if I can find a proper job here, I will definitely stay here. The weather is excellent here, but the main reason for coming here was Politecnico. In engineering, it is the sixth in the world ranking. I wanted to have my higher education at a good university, and Politecnico accepted me quickly. I was also admitted to some universities in Belgium, but the ranking and quality of Politecnico were much better. And the second reason was that I was more familiar with the process and everything regarding Politecnico and Italy. Because there were already many of my friends studying here. I knew they'd be there for me in an emergency.

*Speaking about your family, did they accept your decision to come? Was that your personal choice or not?*

That was my decision, which my parents and, shall we say, my extended family all accepted and supported. They also understand that being in India limits my professional opportunities.

*Therefore, were your main reasons more educational and professional reasons?*

Yes, if I had the same opportunities in India, I would undoubtedly stay.

*What was your main challenge after coming here?*

Finding accommodation before coming here, I said to myself, "Okay, it's a big city full of houses, and you can easily find an apartment." I booked an Airbnb, and I haven't had any permanent accommodation for six months. Before going to the dormitory, I tried every living arrangement, mostly cramped shared apartments without contracts. Then I could take a university dormitory and later coliving.

*Speaking of your experience in shared housing, have you ever had any experience in your country?*

I lived with other Indian men in a hostel for a year in the city where I went to university.

*You've lived in shared housing for a year, in your country as well. Do you prefer to share your accommodations with Indians or foreigners?*

I think it is time to live with Italians because we moved here, and I share my life with them more than Indians. I had to learn about their culture. If I stayed just with Indians, I wouldn't know how to act with Italians. OK, you can choose whom to live with, but if you want to work, you have to work with them, and it's much better to have at least some general ideas about them.

*What about other nationalities?*

I want to spend time with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Still, to be honest, my priorities were being with the Italians, learning their culture, and improving my Italian for both my professional and personal life.

*You stayed in a hostel with 100 other Indian men. How was your experience? Do you prefer mixed-gender or same-sex living accommodations?*

I prefer to be with men. Because I am very shy and have problems connecting with girls, especially foreign girls. Mainly because, in shared living, you are sharing your personal life with your house mates. Perhaps, just regarding my privacy, it was easier for me in a hostel or dormitory because we knew less about each other, but in a coliving situation with 12 people, you feel more at home and expose yourself more, so it was more embarrassing for me but not better at all.

*Apart from your necessities for being with local people, do you like being with many people, with unfamiliar cultural background?*

I've always lived in a joint family with my uncles, aunts, and grandparents, and I don't mind living with 10 to 12 people. In fact, I love it. I have also experienced living with hundred people in hostels and dormitories in Italy and my country. I'm not concerned about my personal space and would like to learn a new way of life. But to be honest, I prefer at least some Indians among the people with whom I share my living space. We can talk deeply, cook our cuisine together, and speak about our country. However, I had a better experience living with non-Indians.

*I see you have experience living in the Newton residency; I want you to compare two kinds of accommodation. Which has best met your requirements?*

There are too many people in the dormitory; you may see more people, but you perceive them as strange. People come and go, so the one you spoke with last night may not be there today. That atmosphere in a dormitory isn't friendly; you perceive people as strangers who come and go. You can't know the people at all. You see just random faces. You cannot feel a sense of friendship. The only space you consider your home is your room. I had a few interactions with Italians in the dorms, mostly about sessions and group conversations. If we had group projects, we would have this mandatory conversation. Since you don't know anyone, you don't feel at home. You don't feel like the spaces are for you, and I don't feel any responsibility to keep them clean either. I think there would be a big mess in the dormitory if there wasn't frequent cleaning by staff. Anyway, they provide clean sheets regularly, which is inconvenient for me; perhaps if I had been younger, I would have appreciated it, but now no. I can go and do laundry and this stuff by myself. On the contrary, in coliving, I feel safer because I know my roommates. I know they will be with me for a while and feel much safer here. The duties and responsibilities are clarified, and we can speak and resolve the problem if someone messes up. Also, many here have questions about my experience in a shared apartment, which I like. I don't have the sense of loneliness I had in a shared apartment. I'm shy; I don't speak much, but simply being with others and living with them makes me happier.

*What about price and services?*

I had no trouble getting to either place, but I'm sure I was lucky because my friends had many problems finding accommodation either in the dormitory or here. I didn't have any ideas about the people or what cohousing is, but the quality of the services was much higher. Or, at the very least, the number of people who used them are less. This was something new. Well furnished, with a big kitchen and living room just for ten people. Also, the price was about the same. There were useless communal areas in the dorms and a gym with no equipment or furniture. There, you had to deal with many students, while here, there are just 10.

*Speaking of your house mates in coliving, did you get along well with them? What were the main conflicts about?*

The main conflicts were usually between English-speaking people and Italians, mainly because we couldn't understand each other well. There were always misunderstandings regarding the discussion and the rules of the house. Besides that, I think we had different perceptions of cleanliness, duties, and hosts. And another problem was the change in the tenants of the house. Every six months, one goes, and another comes. You couldn't plan who and when someone should clean or throw out the garbage. And also, because there wasn't the consenting presence of my house mate. One returns to their hometown for two weeks; another is on vacation.

*What about interaction? Any friendship?*

We created strong bonds between international house mates, while our communication with Italian was limited. Mainly because, after a certain moment, I couldn't carry on the conversation due to language barriers. But I have to admit that I'm an introvert. Maybe it was just because I couldn't develop a deeper relationship with them, which was on my side. Anyway, I usually do not insist on having connections with people, and I didn't see any enthusiasm from them either. In any case, we sometimes exchanged food and other items and had a small party once or twice. We had some minor conflicts, but we had good coexistence.

*A curiosity: did you have less conflict in your house in India with your relatives or so-called "joint families" or with people of unfamiliar cultures, languages, etc.?*

Maybe this is surprising, but in our cohabitation with people with whom I can't even have a conversation, I had less conflict and less connection.

*Why do you think like that?*

Perhaps because we are all the same age and live the same lifestyle in coliving.

*In general, what do you do when you're at home? To what extent does coliving prepare the situation for your indoor activities? How do you feel about private and public spaces in your house? Are they designed in a proper way?*

I have been always a working student. I'm a busy person in general, and I don't spend much time at home. I felt easy living there because of the big communal spaces we also had in India. Although the design is modern and has nothing to do with our traditional house in India, the big communal spaces and traces are the same in our houses in my hometown. I usually invite my friends because it's part of my culture. I wanted a big space for partying and cooking, which our coliving has. I have a relatively small room, but I had one even smaller before.

*Do you have conflicts with your roommates regarding your guests?*

Yes, and later we had the rule to invite just once a week, usually on weekends, and if there were more than two, we should host them in our room. Anyway, our room has a big private terrace, and we went there. That was a problem, but we managed it.

*Speaking about conflict, do you agree with intervention from outside the house by rules or regarding the problem between yourselves?*

Supervising the rules agreed upon before the contract is OK for me. But you can not put new rules after that, but they did. Instead, our conflicts are created inside and should be resolved inside the house.

*Let's speak of neighbors. Have you ever spent time with them? At the meeting held in the condominium. Never Why?*

I rarely find time, and they can't speak English. They're also older than me, and I don't think we have anything in common.

## Interview 04: Male- Iranian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 04 22 M	Teheran	Student (Cultural Mediation)	family financial support	295	2

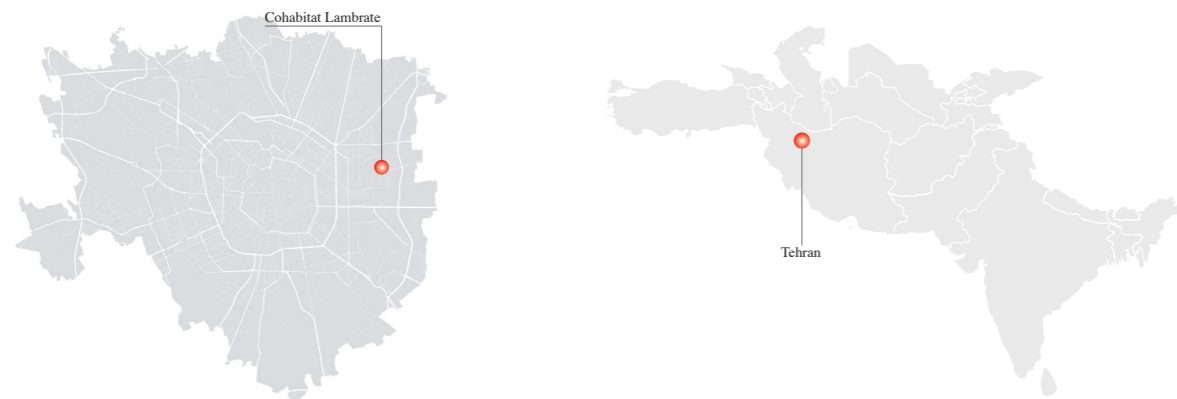


Figure 81 Accommodations of interviewee No. 4 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

*Tell me a bit about your family.*

I consider myself from a wealthy family in Iran. My mother is a housewife, and my father has his own business. I have always lived in one of the famous neighborhoods in Teheran, in one of the world's biggest cities.

*Tell me about your family's culture and religion.*

We are all Muslim on paper, but you will know that it's fake, and we Iranians don't believe in Islam. It's just part of us by force.

*Right, we all know that at least young Iranians are not religious. But What about being conservative? Do you see your family or yourself as conservative?*

I see my family as conservative as they were raised and born in a somehow religious atmosphere but not myself. I mean, I see myself and my friends as more modern than many Italians.

*Then you had fewer problems accustoming yourself to western life?*

I didn't have trouble getting used to modern culture. However, I don't see Italian culture as a modern one. That's not my favorite lifestyle here.

*Then where did you desire to go, and why did you come here instead?*

If I had the chance, I would have gone to the USA, But I chose Italy for many reasons, you know. First, going to the USA is complicated for Iranians because of political reasons, and second, it costs a lot.

I came to Italy mainly because we have an Italian school in Teheran run by the Italian embassy, which teaches the Italian language and prepares the visa paperwork for students. You should study and take the language certification, and you can come here for a bachelor's degree. Italy visa application is much more straightforward and cheaper than in other countries. For me, it was even better because I didn't do military service and couldn't leave the country for study reasons, and Italy gives a much easier tourist visa with which I left the country. Then I got the certification; later, I got the tourist visa and changed it to a student visa after enrolling at the University of Milan.

*Therefore, you can't come back to Iran for some years. Is that difficult? Did your family still support your decision?*

Yes, in the first year, I had depression and couldn't pass my exams either. Besides that, I came during the Covid pandemic period, and it doubled my depression problems. Regarding family support, all young students are emigrating from Iran, which is already common in Iranian families. There is no perspective in Iran. You have neither social freedom nor money. I come from a somehow wealthy family, but anyway, even if you have money, you don't live life. And I didn't want to do

military service as well. Then, my family strongly supported me even if they knew they wouldn't see me for a couple of years.

*Then besides studying, did you have many reasons for leaving your country?*

Yes, studying was the easiest way to emigrate, let's say.

*What was your main challenge coming to Milan?*

Undoubtedly finding accommodation, for that reason, I went to live in Lecco for a year. Later I joined coliving, and when I left, I had problems finding a new one. Even harder.

*I don't think you plan to stay in Milan. Right? What is your plan for the future?*

I plan to graduate from the University of Milan and leave for the USA. However, I have a tough time now and want to return to Iran as soon as possible. I hope just the revolution will work, and I will surely come back.

*Have you ever experienced shared living before emigration?*

No, I lived just with my parents before coming here. Now life is much more challenging for me. Either on the emotional side or daily life tasks. This is the first time I've been independent. However, I'm still financially dependent on my family.

*Have you ever spent a long time with non-Iranians before emigration?*

No, you can find few foreigners in Teheran and Iran. Then no. But we always follow western media, culture, etc.

*Based on your experience, what kind of people do you prefer to live with? Culture, Nationality, or which age range?*

I'm studying cultural mediation, which means I want to know and understand diverse cultures. Because of that, I started living in "cohousing Lambrate"; I wanted to see people from diverse backgrounds and languages. And I have to improve many languages in my profession. But living with different people is too complicated.

I don't particularly appreciate living with Iranians because of their jealousy and, more importantly, their intervention in your life. I care a lot about my privacy. I should keep it for me. Anyway, at least I understood that I have to live alone.

I've never had good memories with Italians as house mates, either in my shared apartments or coliving Lambrate. But I think that was just a matter of people than culture. By the way, I don't feel the culture of Italy is close to mine.

*Did you feel less privacy in a coliving or shared apartment structure?*

It is hard to make the comparison because in the coliving structure, I didn't even have my single room, and I couldn't be alone for a moment. I don't want people watching me while studying, cook, etc. Then fewer people are always better. I prefer living in a shared apartment with as few people as possible. I came to know unfamiliar cultures and languages, but very soon, I understood that sharing life is not a good method to do so.

*Then You're the kind of person who prefers to be alone in your living area?*

First, I chose to live here because I thought living with many people would help me face loneliness. But I understood that the best way, at least for me, is to have my own space, even if it is tiny. I want to socialize with others, but whenever I want and not by force. In coliving indirectly, you are forced to talk to people while cooking or studying. There were awkward situations where my flat mates asked me repetitive questions, and I was reluctant to, but I had to. Apart from my conflict regarding the room, I had some heated discussions with some Italian flat mates. But I went along with international flat mates.

*What were the conflicts about?*

It seemed to be about the cleaning, but the way they used words was offensive to my culture, and unfortunately, I know many languages included Italian. Unfortunately, our arguments weren't limited to the housing task and went further to delicate issues like culture and nationality.

*What do you mean by "unfortunately"?*

I mean, "X" and "Y" always were trying to offend you either by words or by behavior. They consider themselves better than you. They excused something like cleaning to get you down.

*Speaking of girls, do you like to share living with the same sex or the opposite sex?*

I prefer the mix of them. My problems with them had nothing to do with their gender or nationality but their character.



*Do you have any suggestions for reducing the conflicts?*

Maybe before shaping the flat mates, they can have some meetings to understand if they can live under the same roof to anticipate some problems.

*What about top-bottom Intervention from owner to resolve these problems? Or any meeting? Do you see that as applicable and valuable?*

A few times, some rules were enforced by owner representatives about weekly gatherings or monthly events together and stuff like that. But it was not really working; it felt like we were school children, and the teachers wanted us to be good boys and girls, be nice to each other, and play together. But the life of a young-adult immigrant is much more complex than that. To be intervened by some theoretical ideas. So, after several failures, they stopped to continue that. As I said before, the meeting should be held before coming to see if we can get along well with each other or not.

*Do you think there is any way in coliving to change to protect people's privacy? How do you feel about private and public spaces in your house? Are they designed in a proper way?*

I prefer the way other residents of coliving are living in. They have their apartment. Once in a while, there are parties in the shared space, and whenever somebody wants, they can participate. Here we have a big apartment; it should have been divided into 5-6 apartments for people. In this way, you have your own privacy and should deal with one- two people at most. Arguing with ten people is really irritating; that's why I left the "Coliving Lambrate".

*Is there anything you liked about coliving?*

Not much, I had bad memories and was full of tension. But honestly, the house is beautiful and modern. The price was incredibly low, with high-quality services.

Do you have much contact with your direct neighbors? Because you mentioned you liked that kind of volunteer interaction.

Not at all; as I told you, it is a choice, and I didn't have anything in common with my neighbors; they are families and much older than me.

## Interview 05: Female- Iranian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan(Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 05 31 F	Northern west of Iran (Turkish ethnic)	Student (sustainable Architecture)	366€(DSU)+ 300€( Stage)	295€	4

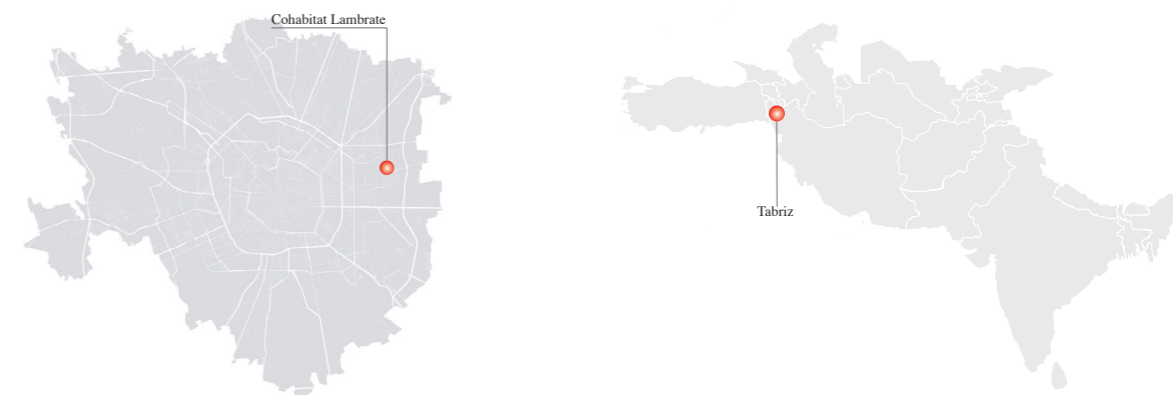


Figure 82 Accommodations of interviewee No.5 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

*Tell me a bit about your family. Was immigration your personal or family choice? Were they willing to see you leaving them? Did your family still support your decision?*

I come from a strict religious family. I leave Iran to have a free, Normal life. Not just surviving life. Economically I come from a wealthy family; however, also in Iran, I was financially independent because I didn't have a good relationship with my conservative father.

*But based on regulation, you can't leave the country without the father's permission? Right?*

Yes, but that works when you don't have passport; fortunately, I had already got my passport. Then I could come.

*What was your journey to this new country like? Why Italy?*

I was applying everywhere to leave Iran. My main goal was to leave Iran; studying was the easiest way. Otherwise, I would choose working reason. However, I was very into sustainable architecture, but the city wasn't important to me at all, and I went to Piacenza for that. Anyway, the cheapest place to go was Italy, with a DSU scholarship. However, due to bureaucratic problems, I didn't get that. I didn't have financial support from my father. He told me I'll end my connection with you if you leave me. Anyway, I got an offer from one famous university in the USA with a scholarship, but I was already in Italy, and sincerely in the earlier months, I like living here, therefore I decided to stay. Before coming to Italy, I was unwilling because, in Iran, the people say that there is no job in Italy and those things, but I found a job very soon.

*What was the most challenging part of coming here?*

Opening bank account. I had to pay for everything in cash. I remember the first day when I was looking for the bank to put all my money in. I was going from one bank to another with two luggage and backpacks, and all were rejected because of my nationality.

*I know, we are investing in housing. Was finding the accommodation challenging for you?*

Fortunately, no; First of all, in Piacenza, it is much easier to find a house. Second, I had already been chosen as a part or a project named "Ospitalità Solidale."

*Talking of shared living, was that your first experience sharing your living with unknown people?*

Of course, yes; My father, family, authority, and society don't let you live on your own as an independent girl.

*I know that Project as well. How was your life and apartment in that Project?*

I shared the apartment with two other girls. My space was on another floor with a private bathroom. That was wonderfully comfortable. We should do some volunteers work every week, which was fun, and the rent was exceptionally low.

*How and why did you find the Coliving “Cohabitat Lambrate”?*

When I was in Piacenza, I was searching for a house in Milan because there are many job opportunities in Milan. First, we found an apartment in Milan; the house was fine, but the neighborhood was dangerous. Then through one of my sister's classmates, I found here. I already had experience with social housing and its concept. But at that moment, based on my experience, because of its safety, I wanted to rent the room from a legal person rather than a natural person because of its security. Also, I saw the space on the website representing the co-working space, which I liked a lot. However, the communal areas closed due to the Covid.

*In your shared apartment in Piacenza, you had your room and a private bathroom with much fewer people. In coliving, you had to share your paces with more people. Which one did you prefer?*

I sincerely prefer coliving. Even though my flat mates invited many of their friends to the coliving, I really liked their behavior. I found many valuable friends. I mean my flat mates. We are still friends even now after leaving coliving now. My friend, I found, is incredibly supportive. Currently, as you see, they participate in protests supporting Iranians. These things are mean to me. However, recently my ex-flat mates told me that after you everything changed.

*Why do you think that is? What creating company or conflict between people? What kind of people do you prefer to live with? Culture, Nationality, or which age range?*

I think the character of people is more important than other factors. I have many close friends who experienced shared living, and after a while, they started heated arguments. I have experience living with international people from East Europe companies, Italians coming from different parts of Italy, and Iranians. I can tell you that it entirely depends on the personality rather than where they come from or what they do or study.

*What did you like about coliving the most?*

Living with unfamiliar culture was valuable for me. There are things that you don't learn just learned by living with new people. You understand their lifestyle, and you feel you are living in Italy. I see my Iranian friends just living with Iranian communities. Then I see no change in their behavior, interest, etc. In general, life in a coliving in “Cohabitat Lambrate” was a valuable experience for me. I'm happy to choose that for a period of my life.

*I knew that there were almost girls in your coliving? Do you think that was helpful?*

We were always almost girls there. In Piacenza and in “Cohabitat Lambrate” coliving. It's hard to the comparison being with the opposite sex. But I can tell that living with the same sex can work properly.

*If you were living with the opposite sex, did you change your behavior in the house, outfit, and everything else?*

It's not important at all in every sense. Each of my flat mates was selected randomly, and I got along well with them. And I know many friends of mine were selective in finding flat mates and resulted awfully.

*In your coliving, there was another Iranian girl. How was your relationship with her?*

Not very friendly.

*Why do you think like that?*

I couldn't make friends with her. I didn't see her honest with me. You know, the thing I like about Italians and Europeans, in general, is their honesty. You can talk to them about the problems and resolve them. I don't have a good memory of sharing the apartment with Iranians. Second, I felt less privacy when living with Iranians because you feel them closer to you than other people. Especially in this case because her room was close to mine. I thank God because I knew two languages that she didn't know. She couldn't understand what I say my family or boyfriends.

*Speak of Languages. You speak four languages. How did speaking Italian and English influence your relationship in coliving?*

In the first years, my Italian levels were extremely low but living in the coliving beside my relationship with my Italian boyfriend helped me learn it fast. But I see Iranians are unwilling to learn Italian, make them separate from Italians. I see huge language barriers between international students and Italians, and you can see that somehow in coliving.

*Back to personality, what are the differences between Iranians and Italian young generation? Is there anything in their culture, behavior, or way of life that prevents them from interacting or creating conflicts with Italian if they live on the same roof?*

I feel remarkably close to Italians rather than other third-world countries, even compared to Turkish native speakers like me. I don't see any barrier in our background. There Regarding people on the street in Iran, I think they have very modern opinions and lifestyles which fit property in cities like Milan. They have many things in common with the young generation here. Then they don't have background difference which make conflicts between them, let's say. Although the eastern and western culture is hugely different, the young people who come here are Westernized. However, as I said if their personalities

fit each other. I see the character of individuals playing a central part in living together than their origin. The only significant difference I see is the perception of cleanliness. In general, I see Iranians much cleaner than Italian.

*What was irritating you about coliving?*

Sometimes I simply wanted to be alone in the living room or grab a cup of coffee alone, but whenever I went to the shared space, I would see someone. I was often in a hurry when I was leaving apartment, but I had to stay and have a small conversation by force. In contrast, being empty was also sad. That was a mixed feeling. But in short, that wasn't the major problem. I could be alone in my room anyway. There were some arguments, but they are everywhere.

*What were the conflicts about?*

We've never had problems regarding cleanliness. Maybe because we were all girls. There were minor problems which usually got resolved by talk. They were mainly regarding guests. But we were in a big house and my room was far from kitchen. Therefore, that wasn't that much irritating for me. Personally, I'm not great at resolving arguments, but I welcome them because I know I'll learn from them and it will increase my negotiation skill, but of course I don't want to do that my whole life.

*You have an Italian boyfriend. How does living in coliving adapt you in your relationship?*

In general, living with other people increased my tolerance for facing strange things. Then I can understand my boyfriend much better.

*Are you a homebody or an outgoing person in general?*

Before, when I was younger, I was always out. I had more energy, or maybe because I didn't want to be with my family, I mean my father. But now I prefer to be at home now. I think the Corona changed my habitat and made me more homebody. I Just chill and trim, watering my flowers. Just to be away from the chaos of my daily life at work.

*You're an architect. Tell me, how do you feel about the coliving's large common areas and limited private spaces? Are there any semi-private spaces? What do you think of design of these spaces?*

In my case, both spaces were large enough. But if I want to sacrifice space, I prefer a smaller living room. My room should be big enough. Anyway, it's not just about the size. Fortunately, my room was far from shared spaces, and we also had a filter space between rooms and shared areas. I mean, the spatial design is more important than the size itself.

*Regarding interior design, as an architect, what are the good and bad point of design of here?*

The design is minimal and without too much detail. There is no useless furniture. But the best positive point here is the furniture flexibility, like the IKEA sofa and small table. You can easily change the space of those sofas and tables based on different needs created at other moments. You can give different shapes to sofas.

*Have you ever spent time with your neighbors in “Cohabitat Lambrate”?*

Yes, when I was in coliving, I spent time with three families there. We still have dinner together. I love the atmosphere of “Cohabitat Lambrate”. The people are more than neighbors. I believe the common spaces and the event hold there are improving the neighborhood quality significantly.

*You are the only interviewee who made friends with neighbors in the “Cohabitat Lambrate”. Why do you think like that? As a Landscape architect, do you have any idea about connecting the colivings to a bigger scale?*

In the projects like this that try to improve the neighborhood quality, I understand people participate when they know how important these social activities are. For instance, I, as a sustainable architect, and my flat mates who studied the same field usually participated in these activities. When you know your action has a result, you will be more motivated to participate. We should inform people about the importance of these events. I think adult people are generally more willing to improve where they live. As you can see in “Cohabitat Lambrate”, people are doing some actions to do so. Second, we should also dedicate the events to younger people who reside here, like people in colivings, not just for families like organizing DG set for the young generation.

*Do you see any role of manager of Cohabitat in informing people of the condominium or in general, in the neighborhood?*

The cooperative can make a massive difference by promoting activities. There are families here who organize meeting for themselves. But if you pay attention, the families arrange meetings based on their needs, like the meeting about children. But this way, you can't attract young people to the condominium. They once held some music events, and I saw young people coming.

*What do you think of manager intervention in the regulation inside the units put after COVID?*

Let's not enter authority inside houses, please

## Interview 06: Male- Iranian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan(Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 06 28 M	North of Iran (Guilak ethnic)	Student (Built-environment Architecture)	675€(IYT)+ 800€( Stage)	410€	5
Market	Shared apartment					300€	

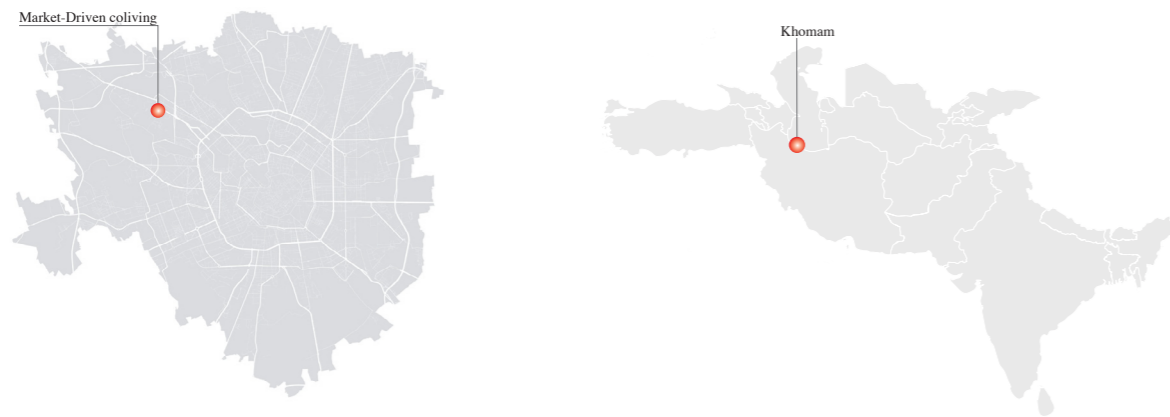


Figure 83 Accommodations of interviewee No.6 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

*Tell me a bit about your family.*

I come from a relatively small family consisting of only me, my parents, and my brother. We were intricately connected while we did not have relatives around. Alongside most of Iranian society, my parents used to respect religion, not strictly religious, but only care about its overall dimensions. However, in recent years, they get drifted apart from it since they all consider a hidden connection between most of their issues and the state of religion. However, personally, I'm not too fond of Islam, and I don't respect it. Anyway, I come from a middle-class family.

*Was immigration your personal or family choice? What were your parents' hopes or expectations for your new life here? Were they willing to see you leaving them?*

It was generally a personal decision, whether the whole idea of migration or its details. My parents love me, and they didn't want me to leave in the normal situation. However, the adversity of the economic situation and lack of hope in Iran made them accept that migration was the best case for my brother and me. As they saw that the amount of effort in Iran was not proportionate to the amount of achievement, they solely wanted me to have a normal life. They wanted me to live where there was a balance between my endeavors and what I gain. Maybe they had an unspoken hope of joining me here to live as a breakthrough for them to escape that state of hopelessness as well, but they surely don't want me to come back.

*Why did you choose to come to Italy rather than another?*

To be honest, Italy was never an option for me, but the offer that I found at the polytechnic university of Milan, with the amazing scholarship of IYT, shifted my path here. They offered me more than 8 thousand euros per year plus a tuition waiver, free language class, and a guaranteed job position while studying. Who can say no to that! Plus, the reputation of Polimi in architecture convince me to come.

*What was your journey to this new country or community like? Before and After Arrival.*

Leaving Iran as a man is very problematic. There are many bureaucratic barriers due to military service. They don't release your degree easily, and you must put in an expensive deposit. Then you have to face difficulties regarding the visa issue. The wide currency gap between Iran and the world is a significant problem that puts us all in difficulties. Despite all these problems I can say it was like a dream at first, and when I hit the ground. Because I had many delightful images of life in Europe with all its liberties and boundless opportunities, many of the simple joys of life, partying, nightlife, or even free interpersonal relationship that was prohibited by the state of religious theocracy in Iran, made the starting point of this journey amazing. And, of course, like any other dream come true, everything became ordinary just after a year. Once I read that dreams are like bubbles, they become bigger and bigger as you get closer to them, but the moment you approach to touch, they will be popped to nothingness. And when the good things became ordinary, I started to see problems in everything; the unwelcoming, hardly-English-speaking community of Italian cities was among my daily complaints.

*What was the most challenging part of coming here?*

Definitely, the part about leaving the family and the whole identity I had created during a quarter of a century in Iran. All those belongings, people, places, things, and memories shaping who I was had to be left behind. Instead, a brand-new character needed to be sculptured from scratch. I have no idea how I got through it because it still sounds scary. Besides being homesick, the most challenging part of leaving here was finding a house. Me and my 10-years friend I came here together. We got a shared room in a shared apartment in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of Milan. We had a rough time there. Before returning home, we always were afraid of people around us, mainly because we didn't know the city, regulations, and the language. Fortunately, my best friend and I came here together; otherwise, I don't know how I could handle the security problems.

*Talking of shared apartments, was that your first experience sharing your living with unknown people?*

In Iran, I had my own room and always lived with my family before coming. But I usually adapt my lifestyle to new conditions. In short, for me was a good experience sharing an apartment wherever I lived in Milan. Later I moved to a shared apartment with many rooms and bathrooms with a big kitchen and living room in Bovisa for Two years.

*Tell me about your "Coliving" apartment.*

In fact, it is a private property where the owner just decided to apply for a coliving settlement here to follow the trend of such a housing system in Milan. It is a huge apartment, consisting of eight rooms all connected with a long corridor to a big living space, where there are a lot of books, a variety of chairs of different ages, and another spacious area for dining with a big table that you can see in Dracula movies. The circulation of tenants happened with an online company that does a kind of selection among the applications that they receive, I am not sure based on what they decide, but I assume from the people that I lived it is based on requests of typology of accommodation and the dates. They didn't want their room to be free even for one day.

*What's the difference between coliving and shared apartments in which you lived? How was the interaction between people?*

The first difference seems to be the size, where the typical shared apartment at the biggest are two or three bedrooms. But a coliving unit, I think, cannot be less than a certain number of rooms and tenants. Despite the size, due to my personal experience, I lived in both the whole philosophy of living with people with different lifestyles. My personal experience with coliving was full of ups and downs, hours of struggles with people, gathering talks, and sharing work among people. I spent the time on things I did not care about. While during the short time that I was in a shared apartment with another Italian guy, we barely saw each other. The few times we met; we had a good basic relationship. Somehow there was no external force on any of us about anything. In coliving they were friendly, at least the people whom I have known longer than the other. Because some of them are really new and they keep changing people every semester, it is a big issue for finding mutual interest with someone who is there only for a few months. However, I indeed prefer my shared apartment with my girlfriend and my closest friend. I prefer to live with those with that I have mutual memories, not only mutual interests. Because having a collective memory means that you know that person, and both sides can be the original versions of themselves. While without such binding interaction, people would feel fake and rudimentary. Collective memory, even if it could be a long-lasting friendship or a person from the same city, same nationality, or same culture in which you do not need to explain everything every day and be in a constant effort to justify or explain yourself. On the contrary in coliving It is hardly said that I feel at home living with them because experiencing this situation gradually moved me to a state where I am happy to call my bedroom or bed my home. In a way, I have retreated from all fields to the place where I can be the most original version of myself. That's where I feel entirely at home, where no one is.

*Then I think you prefer your shared apartment to coliving, right? I mean Do you see "home" as a you want to disconnect from society or as a constructive, social environment where multiple social learning occurs?*

I believe that definition of home is mainly a temporal concept; during a certain period of your life, the home might appear to be a sanctuary unit of disconnection from noises out there. At another specific time, it might be a place of warm gatherings, friendships, parties, and social interactions. It really depends on the stage of life that we are in. About the coliving, I would say it may fit the best to someone new to this environment, just beginning to get familiar with a community, and wants to grow himself together with a few individuals around together. But as time goes on, the person settles down and goes through the last stages of the university and entering the career, decision makings, and pressures make it hard to interact with others. He or she would hope to have just a closed boundary far from anything just to handle the personal issues of life. I also chose to live in this coliving unit with the same idea of getting to know people and having the chance to find friends and girls for relationships. But then, when I proceeded in life and stepped into a new phase, both personally and professionally, the previous perfect living condition for me started to seem like hell.

*Explain your lifestyle shortly to understand why your experience became hell in coliving after a while?*

I try to be a sociable person on the outside, outgoing, easy to communicate with, a good listener, and a conformist to all social norms. While deep inside, I am a sophisticated introvert, nothing is more joyful for me than just sitting in a corner and reading a book in darkness with the sound of light music. And there is nothing to do about it seems I am forced to maintain

both characters simultaneously; otherwise, this new identity will collapse in the absence of either of these two sides. In the last months of my staying in coliving, I was used to working a lot. Excess work hours stopped me from participating in any social activity inside or outside. When I was home, I tended to do my chores piled up during the week, like washing cloth, cleaning around, cooking and shopping for food, and having a good long bath that washes away the pressure of the week, all alone. I also sometimes went out for a run or ride my bike around a city just to see what is happening around, or in the best case, to find a green area and a nice tree to sit under and read a book (that happens once in a season in fact). Because of the intense pressure at work, whenever I was at home, I tried to relax as much as possible. However, as soon as I entered the house, I was confronted by people who offered me a beer to drink. We have that Iranian culture that doesn't let you say no. Consider that I'm talking about positive things on my nerve. Imagine how it was about arguments and conflicts! I had income; then, I returned to the shared apartment with my close friends and girlfriend. This time in one of the best neighborhoods in Milan.

*Then do you consider Italians distant from where you are?*

I think there are two layers; one is the mainstream, where you have shared knowledge and interest like sports, football, and partying. That's where I feel similarities, or at least I pretend. And then there is another deep layer beneath the surface where I feel I am a total stranger to them. I suspect that they also consider me a stranger regarding very personal details of our characteristics, those that are shaped during years of living under tough circumstances and in the transition of immigration, the dark corner of us where this Italian has no idea how gloomy it looks like.

*You said that you liked living with different people in the first years of your life. In general, in coliving, what kind of interaction did you have with your flat mates? With which ones?*

In those early years, yes, a lot. Like every week, I pushed someone to cook their local food, and we had it all together on Sunday nights. I was among those that presented this idea and tried to maintain it, but it was not supported by all, so when I started to drift away due to lack of time and my interest. Later our activities limited to the inside of the house and sudden events, and I liked those unexpected things as well. But over time, I lost my interest in those sudden events as well. Another thing that bothered me was the financial reason, I had to spend my money on events, and no one contributed to those parties. Regarding people, there were two or three of them whom I preferred to spend time with them more than others. Mainly because they speak English, because we have known each other longer, or we share more things in common, or because we had a mutual interest about watching football or drinking together. Something that I could never have with an east-Asian-non-drinker-vegetarian flat mate.

*Therefore, you preferred to spend time with English speaking people. Do you think language barriers play an essential role in your perception?*

Unfortunately, I only speak Farsi and English and am not fluent in Italian. That is something I suffered a lot during these years, both about the life in our unit and the life out there. Many opportunities could have been much better if I knew Italian, and I may have been much closer to many of my current or previous flat mates if I knew their language fully.

*Do you think if you could speak Italian, you could continue living in Coliving?*

I think the story was the same even if I was fluent in Italian due to the cultural barrier and my carrier. I'm fluent in English but faced the same issues with international people after a while. I couldn't find any more profound common interest over time. I was the most talkative person in the unit. I tried to talk with everyone, even with those in which I barely have any interest in their characteristics. But for example, I want to discuss serious issues like politics, like the things happening in Iran, but I didn't see any of my non-Iranian friends be sensitive or simply have any knowledge about it. They don't even know where Iran is. I have the same issue at work as well. But now I'm sharing my house with Iranians, and we usually discuss issues I'm interested in.

*How often do you have heated arguments with your roommates? What are they about?*

That is the part I hate about living in coliving the most. Everyone seems too nice and friendly, but whenever a problem occurs, some words come out that you can't imagine. It's like a volcano that remains silent for many years while hating each and everything that others do. When the chance comes, they pure it all around, and then we need to sit, talk things through, and fix the broken relationships.

*What about top-bottom Intervention from owner to resolve these problems? Or any meeting? Do you see that as applicable and valuable?*

No, He didn't care about these things. He just cared about money.

*What are your thoughts on living with someone of the opposite gender? How much is that common in your culture?*

I really don't see specific differences that are only for gender, people are different from each other in an overall view, and I do not relate it to gender. I had good and bad flat mates of both genders. But there is one thing I can say is that girls tend to be cleaner and tidier (I would say tend to be, not factually cleaner), which suits my desired standards more. In Iran, sharing your

living space with a girl is illegal. However, it's culturally becoming common.

*You're an architect. Tell me, how do you feel about the coliving's large common areas and limited private spaces? Are there any semi-private spaces? What do you think of these spaces?*

It was okay since the huge space was perfect for the time I was interested in socializing. And now, when I really don't have time for it, my room is enough for me. I think having one huge, unified space instead of having two or three smaller common areas is generated deliberately to avoid clustering among flat mates because I can easily imagine if there were two spaces, the whole group could have been already separated into two, which I actually see potential members of each side. So, I would say that's tricky while constructive configuration for a living unit like this.

### Interview 07: Female- Iranian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Market	Shared apartments	Interviewee 07 34 F	Northern west of Iran (Turkish ethnic)	Student (Urban Planning & Policy Design)	366€(DSU)	300€ 295€	2
Cooperative	Coliving						

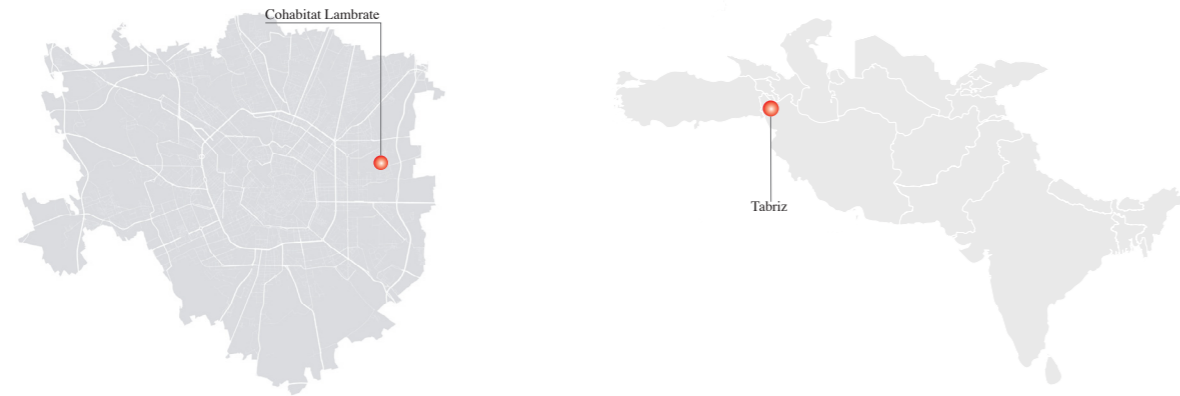


Figure 84 Accommodations of interviewee No.7 before and after immigration to Milan  
Note: Illustrated by author

Tell me a bit about your family. Was immigration your personal or family choice? Were they willing to see you leaving them? Did your family still support your decision?

My family has a very deeply held religious faith, and my father follows it very strictly. Before coming abroad, I had always lived with my family. However, I had my own separate flat on the top floor. In terms of finances, I come from a wealthy family; however, also in Iran, I was financially independent for years, which helped me to have some savings for immigration. No one in the family supports us either financially or emotionally.

What about your city?

As you know, Tabriz is an extremely conservative city. The people from Tabriz are close-minded, and we were always creating social bonds among ourselves. Maybe it's because of their language, or maybe it's just that our people are more shy and less talkative. Regarding myself, the university itself opened up my mind significantly. I began to hang out with other ethnics, speaking Persian and all. I decided to overcome my biases towards my city and Turkish ethnicity.

What was your journey to this new country or community like? Why Italy?

First of all, I didn't want to study for a master's in Italy. I had already got a master's degree in Iran and wanted to further my education with a Ph.D. I applied for a PhD and got admitted to two universities. However, they did not provide you with a scholarship during the first semester, and you had to rely solely on your savings. I had some savings, but our currency was worthless in comparison to the dollar. It took me around one year to prepare the documents, like the English certification, but that was the hardest time because I had to choose one university as soon as possible due to the documentation experience. Also, my father didn't know whether we were preparing to leave Iran. That was a stressful period. Anyway, Italy had never been my choice, but I had to leave Iran because of document expiration, and I chose Italy because of my DSU scholarship, the more straightforward visa process, and, more importantly, family reasons. My sister was already here, and I was vulnerable and dependent on her. To be honest, if my sister wasn't here, I would surely come back to Iran. Now I'm happy, because I think for immigrant like us, you should handle you metal status and emotional situation. I couldn't stay without my sister.

Now, if you had opportunity to go back and if you had the scholarship from the universities in US, would you choose to go to US?

Having lived in Italy and Germany, I would say no. I prefer staying here. Even if my sister wasn't here. First, Europe is close to Iran. Second, I love the connection between European countries. You can experience more culture. In general, European cities are more attractive to me than modern American cities. In fact, from the beginning, I wanted to come to Europe, but first, hardly anyone can find Ph.D.. Courses with scholarships in Europe. Second, my boyfriend in Iran wanted to apply for the USA, and we wanted to go there together.

What about visa Application?

Not complicated at all.

What was the most challenging part of coming here?

Finding an accommodation. For the first month, I was moving between houses. I was changing the houses once a week. I found an apartment for four months. I had many problems with my flat mates there. And I had to leave it. We found a decent apartment for one month, and finally we found cohousing.

How did you find Cohousing?

Ross informed us, and thankfully, they accepted us. My life got in the way from that point on, I'd say.

Did you know already what the Lambrate multicultural co-living situation would be like? Or did you choose it because it was inexpensive?

Yes, I knew Ross would explain how it works. It is intended for financially vulnerable young people. But that wasn't my priority at that moment. I was living in a decent apartment, and I had to change it as soon as possible.

What was the difference between living with a large group of strangers and your previous living situation?

Look, before coming to Milan, I was used to living on my own. I had my own flat. However, I was an upstairs neighbor of my family. In any case, I wasn't used to sharing my accommodations with other people, let alone strangers of different nationalities! However, after coming here, I first shared my life with Iranian people. Yes, the culture makes a difference. Surprisingly, I got along much better with my non-Iranian friends than Iranians.

Why do you think so? . . . . .

I have no clue. It's always been a big question on my mind. Because I have always been keen on my people. I have been thinking of supporting other Iranians. You've probably heard the famous Iranian advice to avoid other Iranians outside the country. I was always opposed to those opinions before, but it's sadly true. I see the same pattern among other Iranians and also people from Turkey.

What were the main conflicts you had with your Iranian flat mates? What is the different having Iranian or non-Iranian flat mates?

Their personalities, they want to bother you for nothing. But they usually do that when making messes. They don't clean with intention. In my previous experience with international people, I did not have the same issue. My Italian flat mates are still far from my cleaning standards, but they apologize for their actions, implying that they don't want to bother you.

For Instance, my Italian flat mates have invited many of their friends to the house, which I did not appreciate. But they are convincing people. Problems can be solved by talking and negotiating. On the contrary, although I am almost a native Persian speaker, I couldn't speak with my Iranian flat mates. They use your name against you. On the other hand, we could manage our problems with Italians very well.

The language barrier wasn't a problem for you regarding resolving the problems, but what about your interaction with your flat mates?

Before, I thought having a foreign boyfriend would make it hard to express your emotions, purpose, etc. But I understand that if somebody wants to understand or be understood, the language barrier can be overcome. I had an unbelievably beautiful moment with my Italian flat mates. They were party people, and whenever I wanted, I joined them. I don't see many barriers in that sense. I mean, for creating interaction, it doesn't need to know the whole language. The interaction is based on different factors, including language. Also, there were other flat mates with whom I got along well. But she was there for a short time, and we couldn't make friends, probably because of the short time.

Your beautiful moment wasn't because you were almost a girl? Which gender would you prefer as flat mates?

No, we were all girls also in my previous accommodation. That doesn't count. Anyway, I preferred to be mixed if they are clean. Anyway, the boyfriends of my flat mates were almost there. That was literally a mixed coliving.

What about age range?

In my apartment, we are the same age, and one reason we could negotiate could be that. I think until 28 years old is fine. I find it difficult to get along well with young people, like 25-year-old. Anyway, it's all about personality.

The socio-economic situation in Iran is terrible now. In the coming years, we will probably see a massive influx of students to Italy, I'm speaking of those who are marching on the streets right now. Is there anything in their culture, behavior, or way of life that make trouble young generation from interacting with or sharing their lives with young Italians?

Having seen Iranians in both Italy and Germany, I should say that the main barrier for Iranians, in particular the men, is to be connecting with the host culture is nothing but their arrogance. We are excessively proud of ourselves, and we have high expectations of other people. We always nag about the Italian system, but we forget where we come from. One of my friends works in an immigrant camp in Germany and sees people from some countries, including Iran, having problems integrating with the local culture because of their arrogance. But the problem is compounded if they come by force because of several situations in Iran. Here in Germany, I see people who have come as refugees, especially the political ones. The immigrants who are forced to immigrate are more complaining. These people have a better financial situation than students, but they may be disappointed because they, themselves didn't decide to come. The same situation may happen to the Iranian young generation.

*Any other differences?*

Generally, I don't see Iranian young people as outdated; rather, they are, in some ways, more progressive than their Italian peers. But they should be more modest.

*Backing to you, are you a homebody or an outgoing person in general?*

I like being home on my own. Before coming here, I had my own apartment, and in general, I didn't want to live with many people. But here I'm forced to share my living. I spent many times being home.

*Then how did you handle the many people coming to your house?*

Fortunately, my room was far away from common areas, particularly from the kitchen. For me, the silence is incredibly important. We also had a separate door that led directly to a corridor near the semi-private space. I had never heard the noise fortunately. I could enter my private room without passing through the shared space. Even in Iran, when we had guests and I wasn't in the mood, I tried not to greet my mom. That was essential for me because I want to be with people when I want to.

*You're an architect. Generally, how did you see the co-living design? Tell me, how do you feel about the coliving's large common areas and limited private spaces? What do you think of these spaces?*

I appreciate its modern design. I've stayed in traditional Italian apartments. Maintaining old apartments is difficult, and there is no filter for noise. If we were in an old apartment, it would sure a harsh conflict between us. In typical Italian apartments there is also an excessive amount of detail in the design and other aspects which I don't like. On the contrary, in our unit, you hardly find useless furniture. However, we still didn't have enough space for our skillet and equipment. The apartment was efficient in every sense, and I liked that. In terms of shared and private spaces, I should say that I don't want to sacrifice my private space for common space at all. It's good to have a bigger common space, but not at any cost. Anyway, we didn't use to occupy the living room so much; it was usually empty. On the contrary the kitchen had to be much bigger. Even when they invite their friends, they all stay in the kitchen, even after eating. We were initially shocked as to why they don't leave the kitchen after eating. Then we understand its Italian culture of seating and talking before and after meals for hours. I honestly didn't like that, because when you are living with eight people, after eating you should clean and leave the kitchen for others to use. But anyway, the kitchen was small for eight people. Also, I would change the layout of the two rooms close to the kitchen.

*You've also lived in university dorms in Germany. Can you explain to me the difference between two structures and countries? Which one do you prefer?*

I shared a two-bedroom apartment with another girl. We had our own flat with a kitchen and bathroom. But the whole dormitory has a bar, study room, fitness area, and interior courtyard. As I told you, I prefer to live on my own; therefore, I surely prefer my accommodations in university dorms. Whenever I wanted to have a small chat, I could go to the bar. But again, I just shared my flat with one person, and that was less complicated and cleaner. The connection between people was different there, but I think it had nothing to do with structure. In general, there are a lot more international students in my dorm. And also, that German students are more open to you than Italian ones. For instance, in our classroom in Politecnico, the Italian students are always together, while there the situation is different. Now I have my own apartment, I should tell that it is becoming boring now, especially in when you are living in Germany.

## Interview 08: Male- Italian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Cooperative	Coliving	Interviewee 08 25 M	Ravenna	Student (Electrical Engineering)	family financial support	460€	3.5

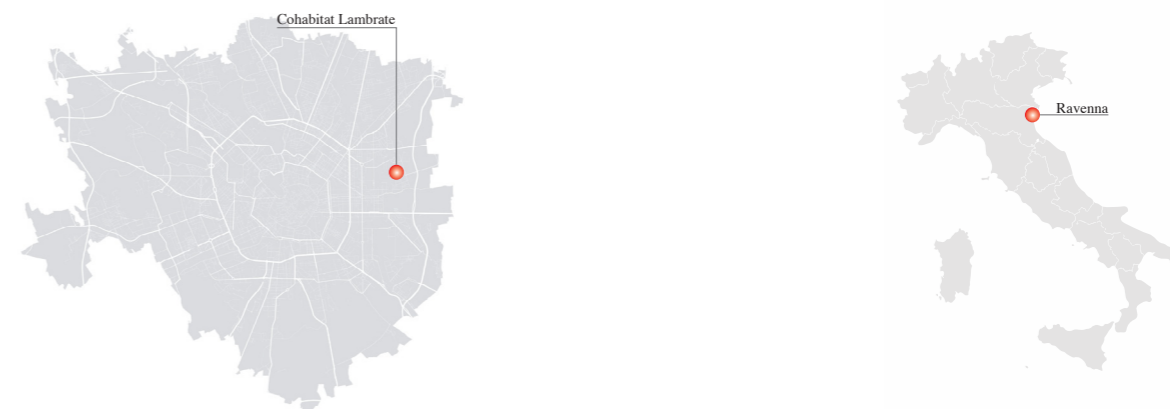


Figure 85 Accommodations of interviewee No.8 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

*Tell me a bit about your family.*

Financially speaking, I come from a Middle-class family. I have never had a financial problem. I come from a somehow moderate social religious family.

*Are all your family or relatives Italian?*

Yes, my relatives and families are all Italian.

*Before coming to Milan, have you ever lived in another city?*

Yes, before coming to Milan, I lived in Bologna for four years, where I got my bachelor's degree.

*Why did you decide to come to Milan?*

I chose Milan to study in Politecnico, not for Milan per itself.

*Have you decided to stay in Milan after graduation? Why?*

I told you my main reason for coming here was to study in Milan. But for now, I'm evaluating the job opportunities. I have to see financially whether it is convincing me or not. Because living in Milan needs a high salary. Because the rent and expenses are high. Let's see

*Then your stay in Milan is just a matter of money?*

In Milan, you have plenty of job opportunities, for your career opportunities it is excellent, but you have to always consider the financial issue. Now I have a job offer of 1500 euros. But I probably refuse that.

*Therefore, would you come back if you had the same job opportunity in your hometown?*

Of course, I would come back to live close to my family. I enjoyed living here for three years, but now I want to create my professional and personal life. If changing city helps me financially, with the same job opportunities, I would surely do that. In fact, I always had temporary life in Milan. I can leave here easily.

*What was the most challenging part of coming here?*

Maybe going back to my hometown almost every two weeks to see my family and girlfriend was tiring and took me much energy.

*What about finding accommodation? How did you find your accommodations in Milan?*

One of my distant relatives knew someone working on this project and informed my mom, I made a request, and they accepted me quickly. I was truly fortunate to find it here, let's say.

*Were you informed before coming that you have to share your apartments with many people you don't know?*

Yes, before renting, the manager informed us of the whole situation, and I already knew, but I had no problems. In contrast, I was eager to experience a new kind of living.

*But have you ever experienced Bologna living with many people, especially foreigners?*

In Bologna, I shared my apartment with my girlfriend and her friend, then living in coliving was entirely new to me.

*Did the multicultural atmosphere of the house convince you more to choose here or high quality and relatively low price?*

I would say the first one convinced me more because I was curious about atmosphere. You should consider that at that moment the house situation wasn't like this three years ago. I could afford a single room even closer to Politecnico in a shared apartment with just 1-2 people. However, the fact that the home is modern and has an attractive design is not just helping to its cleanness. Despite the fact that it is brand new, the kitchen is often unclean. However, if they let us renew the contract, I would continue staying here willingly.

*But are you still willing to live with ten people?*

Living as a professional person is different from living as a student. You have to work all day and when you come back you want to simply rest. However, this time, I would still like to stay here because of Milan's housing situation. Even though I enjoyed being here, I would rent my whole apartment after graduation if it was like three years ago. But now I don't have many choices.

*What is the difference between living with many unknown people and few close friends?*

It is more complicated living with more people because it creates new issues to solve regarding garbage, cleaning, and guests. When you share the house with eight people rather than 2, your housing issue becomes 8 times more complicated than four times.

*But did you manage to resolve the new complicated issues created in coliving?*

Personally, I didn't have significant problems. But it sometimes happened to other flat mates. I see other flat mates that have heated discussions. But for me, that's normal sometimes to have conflicts between flat mates with different personalities and cultures. Anyway, we tried to have some meetings to resolve those problems created usually for cleaning. But we didn't hold meeting that much, and problems came from a lack of talk. Also, another problem was some wrong attitudes toward other people due to misunderstanding a different culture and the lack of responsibility.

*First, why didn't you manage to hold frequent meeting?*

I think the conflicts came from the lack of discussion, mainly because we are culturally different, and we speak different languages as well. Second, some tension between flat mates has been created, usually mostly because of misconceptions and some people didn't want to speak to each other. Third, there were people more closed-minded and didn't speak to other flat mates. They didn't participate in the meeting. I have no idea how to deal with these people. We had a guy like this who didn't listen to anyone and annoyed almost everyone in the house. Taking shower at 7 Am for an hour, when I had to prepare myself for job...But maybe the main problem was absence of pre advance meeting. Before coming here, we didn't have group sessions to explain how things go on. Or we didn't know the people who were added to the house. Also, we couldn't find a specific day on which all are present. In our house, some people are always randomly missing. Finding the time also was difficult because some were students, and some were workers. Some work in the morning, another one at night. We had some off-site students who lived close by and were used to coming back to their hometown every weekend, like me. Despite all these issues, we created some schedule for throwing away the garbage, sharing the expenses, and inviting our guests.

*Second, where do you think this lack of responsibility comes from?*

Because everyone is busy with one's life and when you come back from university or work at 7 PM, you don't go to tidy up the house, because he doesn't consider yourself responsible for the home, for example. Or maybe after a tiring day, he doesn't want to interact with other people to clean the kitchen, for instance. Tenants didn't want to clean others' mess. That's normal.

*Third, what do you mean by the wrong attitude?*

It happened that people didn't speak at all because they had a different type of culture, thought, let's say. I mean, the way people have conversations might differ from culture to culture and their perception of them as well. Then the whole issue is created based on misconceptions.

*What about the Language barrier? Did you have a big issue?*

I speak English and Italian, so there wasn't a big problem personally. However, many misconceptions come from a misunderstanding of language. Most international people don't speak Italian, and one reason most of them didn't participate in the meetings was the language they didn't understand. We tried to speak English, but there were some Italians who don't understand English at all. On the other hand, some foreigners speak Italian, but as they are not native, their purpose is misunderstood, creating sometimes even more tension and misinterpretation. Then knowing language may even worsen the situation in some cases; For example, once someone nagged about cleaning culture on a WhatsApp group, another precept that is offensive to its culture and we had heated arguments for days just over a specific word.

*But do you agree with intervention from outside of the house if you couldn't resolve the problem yourself?*

Not at all. We are all adults and don't need another adult to resolve the problem. If something happened to the house regarding the physical damage, yes, but regarding the conflicts, I think it would double the problems than resolve it.

*Let's speak of the privacy Issue. Do you feel the lack of privacy?*

Not at all. I have my single room. When I want to be alone, I go to my room, and when I want to have a small conversation, I come to the common spaces. I shared my bathroom but with just one person. When we want to shower, we just inform each other beforehand.

*But there are some activities you can't do in your room, but you may want them when you are alone, like cooking. Is that OK for you?*

That's what I like. When I'm cooking, I can speak with other flat mates, and that's not what I want to do alone.

*Tell me, how do you feel about the coliving's large communal areas and limited private spaces? Are there any semi-private spaces? What do you think of these spaces and its architecture?*

The dimension of my room is perfect. The only problem I have regarding dimensions is the unbalanced size of the living room and kitchen. I think they could make the kitchen bigger while reducing the size of the living room. The kitchen is not for 10 people while our enormous living room is useful only just for big parties which happen every 2-3 months.

*If you had a chance to go back in the past, would you choose to live here anyway?*

To be honest, I'm happy. Knowing a different culture and behavior, like seeing how people cook in another way than us with particular cuisine and smell. I like that a lot.

We had more beautiful times than conflicts, having dinner or grabbing the beers that covered our conflict. Those conflicts never matter to me when I see the beautiful moments we create, like having dinner together or holding beers once in a while. The concept of this is based on this house is based on the interaction of different cultures for a temporary period. I had a great time. Then, I would definitely choose to live here again.

*Would you continue if you could?*

This time, I would like to continue staying here because of the housing situation in Milan. Even though I enjoyed being here, I would rent my whole apartment after graduation if it was like three years ago.

*Have you ever spent time with your neighbors in "Cohabitat Lambrate"? Did you participate in the events of the condominium?*

No, I don't find common interests between us. Just once. Anyway, that's the condominium for families, and their events don't fit us. And that's okay because we are just 20 in the whole condominium. But I prefer to be in the condominium of young families because I feel much more secure.

## Interview 09: Male- Italian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
Market	Shared apartments	Interviewee 09 30 M	Sassari	Young Professional (Director in Media)	Full-time job contract	300-600€ 1100€ 475€	10
Cooperative	Flat in cohousing						
Cooperative	Coliving						

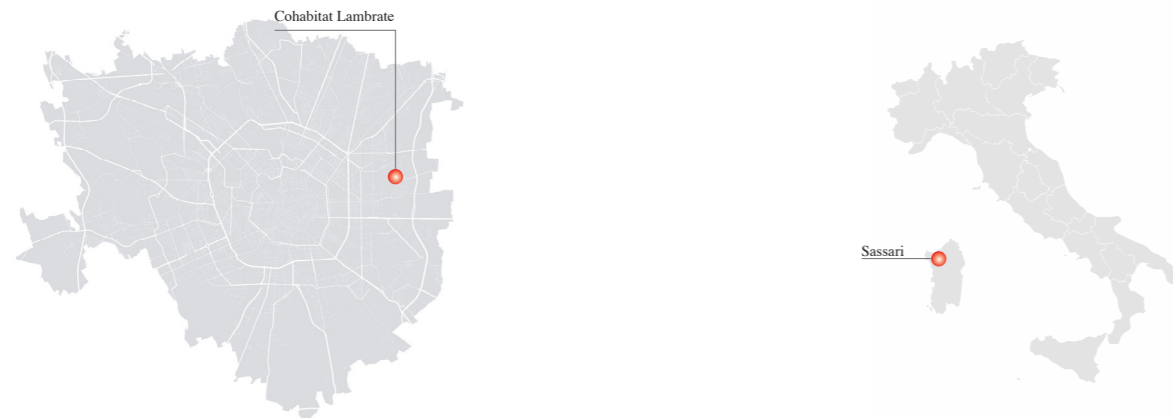


Figure 86 Accommodations of interviewee No.9 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

Tell me a bit about your family.

I come from a middle-class family, and socially we are like other Italian families. I mean, we don't belong to special political or religious ideas.

Are all your family or relatives Italian?

No, we were all Italian from my city, Sassari.

When did you leave your family?

I left my family when I had 18 years old.

Why did you decide to do that early at 18? It is not common among Italians, right?

That's true; my friends still live with their families in my city. But I was different from the first. I wanted to experience living abroad. Therefore, I went to England. In fact, I come from a small city called "Olmedo" close to Sassari. But I didn't like living in small towns, and I have always been curious about having a different experience, at least at that moment.

Why did you decide to come to Milan from London?

Because I wanted to study in Milan, I have been in a short time everywhere in Italy, like Rome, Bologna, Florence, etc., But I chose Milano because "Brera Academy" was interesting to me. Then I decided to live in Milan in 2012.

Why did you continue living here?

Because Milan is a complete city regarding professional and social aspects. You can have the most respected and desired job while interacting with different and interesting people. I mean you can experience many things in both your professional and personal life.

Would you come back if you had the same job opportunity in your hometown?

Now that I have experienced the things I wanted, I would say yes, now I may have a more stable life. There is more relaxation. Anyway, I love my hometown. If I had the same job opportunities, I would come back. But I know there isn't. Then I continue living here.

How was your accommodation here after leaving your family?

I used to live in shared apartments in both London and Milan for years. I have always had my single room.

In Milan, did you stay close to the city center?

I always had a room close to the city center. "Cohabitat Lambrate" is my first accommodation, a bit far from the city center.

Do you feel marginalized?

I think it happened just by chance, not anymore. Now my place is close to my workspace. Though, that's OK. That's not a matter of money anyway. I don't feel marginalized.

Before coming to coliving, you had an apartment in this condominium. How did you find that?

By chance, let's say. One friend of my ex-girlfriend's mother informed us of the announcement of subsidized rent, and we have all the requirements to apply, like low-medium income. Fortunately, they accepted us. That was four-bedroom apartment with a 4+4 contract. But after two years I left there to come here.

Living in this condominium was also about socializing with other people and neighbors. Did you know that, was that interesting for you?

I knew that. I didn't have any problem with that. The main reason was, however, about the money and the quality of the house.

Why did you come to the coliving from your private apartment?

I was forced because I broke up with my girlfriend. I had to leave my apartment as soon as possible, and here was the first accommodation I found.

But are you still willing to live with ten people you don't know?

Yes, I preferred my ex-apartment, but I get along well living with many people because I've been living in shared apartments, even abroad, with different people for more than ten years, and I'm used to shared living.

Will you continue living like this in the future?

No, but it's not because I didn't like that. But I think the time has come to start my own life with my own apartment and my own life, which needs a private apartment. I'm already 30 years old.

What is the difference between living with many unknown people and few close friends?

It's more complicated living with more people. But you have to consider that everyone works and studies at different hours. It's not like you live with ten people the whole day. Due to my experience, I learned how to live with many people.

Tell me about the differences between the social interactions between you and your flat mates in the coliving that you are in and shared apartments?

I see some differences. As I told you, we only live together for part of the day. But I think shared living was more challenging in the shared apartment when we were all students because we were all young with job. On the contrary, now that I'm sharing my living with older people with different occupation and we have a bigger space, we see fewer people with bigger space. Then the conflicts are less compared to my experiences in shared apartments. Sharing with just students results in the presence of more guests who don't know and results in more tension in a small apartment. In quantity, we are more here, but I feel I have more space and privacy.

Why do you feel you have more privacy?

Because the house is bigger, my room is at the end of the corridor. I have my own bathroom.

But your room is exceedingly small while we have an enormous living room. Did you prefer a more spacious room with a smaller living room?

Yes, my room is small, but I don't prefer to be bigger instead of having a smaller living room. I make you an example. I usually see more people in the house for dinner time. I wouldn't eat in my room, even if I had a bigger one. The big living room allows me to use that space to have dinner with my friends without disturbing my flat mates and gives me more privacy. Anyway, my small room is enough for me to sleep in. I spend most of my time outside for work or hanging out, and when I come home, I cook or spend time with my friend in the common space.

Then there isn't any activity you have to do in the common spaces, and you want to do that alone, like cooking?

It depends on the people I live in. Luckily, I shared my room with people I like, and it's even better to interact socially with people while cooking or eating. I liked it more. If I was living with disrespect people, I would have problems. But in this case, I never had any issues.



*How has your experience been living with foreigners?*

I just lived with foreign people in London and in this coliving. But in a shared apartment, we were just Italian. The only difference I see is culture not anymore. I see a different kind of cuisine.

*What do you like and don't like about it?*

The regulation of cohabitation should be respected, that's important things, those which doesn't related to culture, like cleaning, making noise. We had some problems regarding cleanliness and especially discarding the trash. Regarding the cultural difference, I don't have any issues. In fact, sometimes I have to speak to them in English, which improves my English.

*Do you see any language barrier in resolving the issues in coliving?*

No, discussing the issues created in the house doesn't require a high English level.

*What about social interaction?*

I think language barriers play an important part in having social interaction. You should know some Italian to deepen the interaction. Some night ago, we were explaining one board game to Indian guy, but neither we understand what we were presenting, nor he understood. Therefore, surely, we can't play together as we play with other Italian. However, If I behave with people differently from my flat mates here, it is more related to our interests and behavior. And, of course, language is important but superable. But behavior, personality, and common interests always come first.

*Have you ever spent time with your neighbors in "Cohabitat Lambrate"? Did you participate in the condominium events when you were in your private apartment or here?*

Yes, I have some friends here. The atmosphere of this condominium allows you to make friends. I find friends simply in front of the door gate or the courtyard. I have the social capacity to have a small conversation. I became close friends with one because they come from the same region I come from. But I've never participated in those events. It is mostly because of the job. I usually work until 8. But to be honest, I hardly find myself in those events.

*Why don't you like these events?*

I don't see them as something necessary. I do not get used to having these kinds of parties. It's not in our culture. Once I went when that was a concert. But, you know, I don't have a family life. When I'm free, I prefer to hang out with my friends than have dinner with families with children.

*Do you have any suggestions?*

I think they can give houses to young people in condominiums. But maybe it's not the problem of condominiums but the neighborhood issue. We have some "pizzerias" and bars, but there are no clubs or bars visited by young people like me.

## Interview 10: Male- Iranian

Living Experience in Milan		AGE Gender	Origin	Occupation	Income	Rent	Period of Residency in Milan (Year)
Provider	Type of structure						
University	University Dorm	Interviewee 10 27 M	Teheran	Student (Urban Design Studio)	183(DSU)	Take out from DSU(0)	3

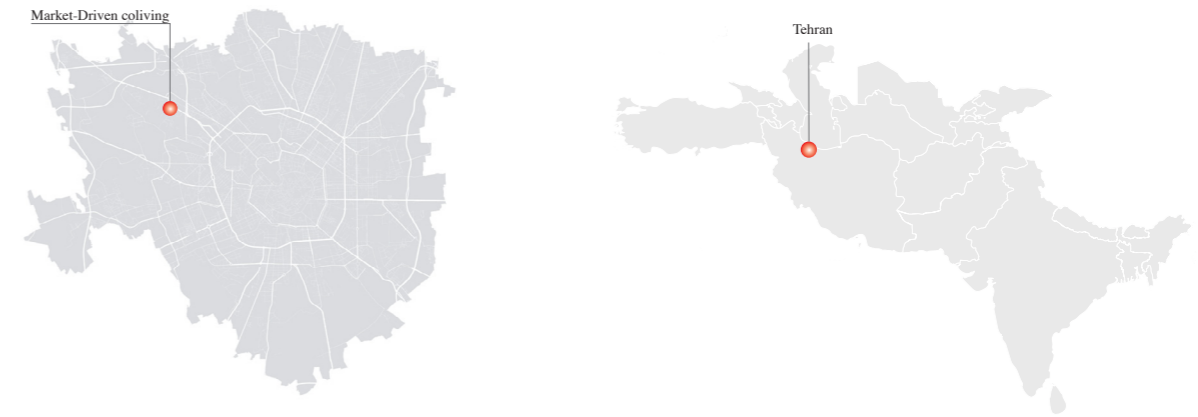


Figure 87 Accommodations of interviewee No.10 before and after immigration to Milan

Note: Illustrated by author

This interview is unique. The interviewer asked one Newton Residency student specific questions in a shorter interview. It was interesting how the interview was tailored to this student and their student housing experiences. The quotes from this interviewee is mentioned in the Newton residency sections in a scattered way.

## Written interview 01: Male- Italian

I had an opportunity to have a written interview with one of the students' representatives of the Newton Residency. I asked him about the actors involved in the residency, such as the director, manager, sponsors, organizers, and participants. He gave me insightful answers that helped me understand the dynamic of the residency and collaboration between students and managers.

*What are the specific duties and responsibilities of the University administrators in overseeing the operations of the Newton Residency?*

The residence is managed by the housing service which is a branch of the campus life office inside of Politecnico. They control pretty much anything that has to do with our residence: maintenance both inside our rooms and in common areas like kitchens, gyms and so on; cleaning of any corner of the residence; etc. Let me say that we students are kind of against this as they make decisions without knowing how life inside the residence is. I've seen them come to our building less than how many years I've been staying there (this is my fifth year), so I think this chain of control must change for student to gain some control over certain decisions that we do not agree with. To somewhat solve the problem of the housing service not being around, they appoint a director that more directly controls that services like those I mentioned above are delivered correctly and properly. This is a problem as there's yet one more person in the chain command and the director usually executes the office orders, this means (more or less) she has no decision power. But then the director agrees with them on certain points of view we do not agree with so that's yet another problem for us.

*Who are the Actors from University?*

The housing service is composed mainly of three managers: the head of the office. Below there's the manager for scholarship students (those that get residence access at a reduced cost that is deducted from the scholarship loan), while another one manages full tariff students (those that pay full price to access the residence)

*Who is mainly responsible for the maintenance and management of the physical spaces?*

I kind of told a lie before. While the housing service oversees maintenance and cleaning operations it hires another company through a public tendering to do maintenance in our building. The company is Dussman, the same that does maintenance and cleaning in Politecnico campuses (at least the Leonardo Campus). Management instead is done by the office themselves.

*How do the University, residency managers, and students work together to foster a sense of community and promote social activities and events at the Newton Residency?*

As I said above, there's a lack of collaboration between students and residency managers in my opinion. These days we're trying to start a talk with them because they make changes to how we live inside the residence that are completely ruining the experience. This said, usually they decide which kind of events they want to organize (let's say sport, foosball and tennis table tournaments, courses around residences and more). Other events like parties and so on are organized by students themselves. There's no written rule but usually the students' representatives (this is me) organize parties open to the entire residence.

*How do the residency managers handle conflicts or complaints from the residents?*

This depends on each case. Right now, the residence regulatory (which is publicly available on [www.residence.polimi.it](http://www.residence.polimi.it)) is the only source of truth the director relies on to take decisions based on what's regulated and what's happening. For all choices not regulated, she (our current director) refers to the housing service for a definitive choice. I should personally say that conflicts and complaints among students are not handled at all. All we get is the following reply: "you are adults, so you need to sort it out yourselves". This also applies to roommates that have somehow bad fights. This is also something we're trying to change because it's not something acceptable. Maintenance and cleaning complaints are managed through a ticketing system. Through the Politecnico mobile app you can access a support section and send a fault report. I won't go into details for a faster reply, but if you want to learn more, let me know. Tickets are solved fast and are the only way to complain about something broken. No other way, like talking to the director or the reception is accepted. The ticketing system is also a way for the housing service to assess maintenance service quality and speed.

*Is there any Program regarding the integration between students and local people in the neighbourhood? How? Does it work?*

There is no such program. An event was organized two years ago to go around the neighbourhood and see local realities. Only me and another participated (we were kind of forced) but found it somehow interesting. The problem here, anyhow, is that how neighbourhood is not secure to go around about at night. Personally, me and my friends go out as a group to eat ice cream in a near store, otherwise we prefer to just take the metro and go to the city centre to do more (like disco nights, restaurants etc).

*How do the residents provide feedback and suggestions for improving the management and operations of the Newton*

*Residency?*

As I said, tickets are the main way to do maintenance work. Any other feedback and suggestions, to us residents, feel like they're discarded/ignored. A yearly non-mandatory survey is offered around January. It poses specific questions about quality of kitchens, common areas in general and our rooms. Nothing else is asked except for a text field where you can add your own thoughts but it's clear they're discarded. Lots of suggestions are confronted with a no by the director based on her belief and thoughts. Additions to kitchens and gym are welcome though. I'll make an example about our ongoing problem. Since last year the housing service decided to change how rooms are assigned each year (the residence closes during august and we cannot keep our stuff inside during that period, so a new room can be assigned each year). Before the change, the director would choose or let us choose a roommate, then the housing service said this was not a good solution and decided to start applying an algorithm that basically progressively filled rooms based on certain parameters. This means that a person is randomly assigned to a room with the risk that roommates won't get along. Both housing service and the director do not accept requests to change rooms (based on the regulatory), even if bad fights among roommates happen. We're trying to fight to change this because we have rights to live peacefully throughout our studies and do not accept decisions by a service than less than never ever comes to our residence and then make choices that change how we live in it based on clueless assumptions.

*What resources and services are available to the residents to support their academic and personal success like events, competitions, courses, etc?*

No such resources and services are available except for those offered by Politecnico. The housing service only manages residences, while the campus life area organizes events for all students to take part to.

## Anonymous expert interview 01

Finally I managed to conduct an interview with a manager who handle some of the facilities in Camplus. The interviewee requested to remain anonymous for privacy reasons. The interview was part of my research project on the living and learning environment of Camplus residents. The Interviews has translated from Italian to English.

*Are there any public financial resources for Camplus to offer more affordable housing to students? What factors should Camplus consider when setting rental prices?*

We have a 20 discount for renting or buying a place with public funding based on law 338, 2021. We place the rent price roughly 30 percent lower than the market price. The price seems the same to the market, but we offer many more services. I mean accommodation with the same services and quality costs about 30 percent more in the market.

*Besides providing housing for students, does Camplus have an overview of creating communities among students?*

Yes, we even have a special sector named “Camplus advisor service” to create somehow community among students

*If so, how do Camplus, residence managers, and students work together to promote a sense of community and social activities of Camplus Residences?*

Camplus organize cultural travel, meeting, Aperitivo, and other staff events that foster social interaction and engagement. We offer these events for free or lower than the average price, for example making the process of organizing the travel much easier and more fun for our students

*Who is responsible for event planning, residence management, etc.?*

To plan and execute these events at national scale like cultural travel, we have a dedicated section called “Camplus advisor”. The Camplus advisor is responsible for selecting the best destinations, arranging the transportation and accommodation, etc. The Camplus advisor works closely with the director and the staff of each structure, who are involved in managing the daily operations, such as reception, catering, maintenance, etc. The director and the staff also provide feedback and suggestions to the Camplus advisor to improve the quality and diversity of the events.

*What resources and services such as events, competitions, courses, etc. Are available to residents to support their academic and interpersonal success?*

One of the benefits of our program is that we have a tutor in each structure to guide the students how to prepare for exam and other stuff.

*How do residents provide feedback and suggestions to improve management and operation? Are there student representatives, such as student associations, who work for the needs and interests of students?*

One of the ways we try to improve our courses is by conducting a survey at least once a year to take feedback from our students. This helps us understand what they like and dislike about the curriculum, the instructors, the assignments, and so on. We do not have any obligation to choose a representative from the students who can speak on their behalf. However, in some cases, the students choose some representative if they wish to have a more direct communication with us. This is optional and depends on the preferences of each group of students.

*Who is primarily responsible for maintenance and management of residence spaces?*

One of the advantages of our organization is that we have a decentralized system of management. This means that each structure, whether it is a department, a branch, or a project team, has its own director and staffs.

*How do residence managers handle guest conflicts or complaints?*

First, the students involved about the conflict should notify director via mail. Later, we ask them to attend an interview with a staff member. We try to resolve the issue by facilitating a dialogue between the parties and finding a mutually acceptable solution. If the dialogue fails or the conflict persists, we consider other options such as changing the rooms.

*Is there a program for integration between students and people in the same neighborhood?*

At Camplus, we have a vision of expanding our impact not in neighborhood but beyond the neighborhood and reaching out to the cities where we operate. We propose some voluntary works to students. However, to be honest, in practice, this vision is rarely realized. We face many challenges in finding suitable opportunities, motivating our students, and coordinating our efforts.

*What changes have you made or are planning to make in management compared to when it was under the administration of the University of Milan-Bicocca? Have there been any improvements for students? In what?*

One of the advantages of our management is that we have a closer relationship with the students who live in our accommodation. Unlike the previous public administration, we do not rely on intermediaries or bureaucracy to communicate with them. We have a dedicated director who is always available to listen to their feedback, suggestions and complaints. We have also invested in enhancing the quality of the facilities and services that we offer. For example, we have increased the frequency of cleaning, upgraded the furniture and appliances, and created new common spaces for socializing and studying. Of course, these improvements come at a cost, but we have tried to keep our prices as affordable as possible. We believe that by being a private manager, we can provide a better living experience for the students than a public one.

*What are the roles of the actors involved in managing Camplus Sesto San Giovanni (such as Director, Communication Manager,...)?*

The headquarter of our company is located in Bologna, where we handle all the communication aspects of our business. We also contact providers and negotiate the best deals for our services. The Bologna branch has the administrative authority over the other branches. It sets the guidelines and the prices for the accommodation we offer to our clients. However, we also have a decentralized system at the lower level. Each branch has its own structure and management. They are responsible for signing contracts, ensuring quality standards, and solving any issues that may arise in their premises. Each branch has a director and a staff that includes receptionists, doormen, and other personnel.

*Is there any factor for student selection, such as nationality, gender, university, average grade?”*

I think that allowing 30 percent of tenants to be international students but I am not sure. It is written in the band. While we do not have any specific requirements for the gender or university attended by the tenants, we strongly care that they should definitely be students. The most crucial factor when selecting tenants is their average score. I believe that this is a good indicator of their academic ability and their commitment to their studies, which is essential when living in a shared accommodation with other students.

## Appendix B: Questionnaire

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zTdk11w6N8i5BphznFUJeQMAiQQPwIXwi5hHP9TR8vc/edit>

## Appendix C: Further Research

### Arrogance in the case of Iran

First, there is not much verified international supporting research on this subject. However, in everyday Iranian daily life, as well as in some Iranian educational systems, the arrogance of Iranian people's character is recognized, especially regarding Iranian men.

Interestingly, in interviews conducted with Iranian men, you can find some influence on arrogance, which one of the Iranian girls mentioned:

However, are these accidental or frequent? And why?

According to (Heydarian, 2017), the arrogance of Iranians starts from political leadership and gradually develops into a culture arising from tyranny in the closed Iranian political society. In other words, "showing off" illusion, arrogance, and self-superiority are not necessarily exclusive to the "elite." This anomaly includes not only the people in power but also a part of the body of society, regardless of political, religious, and ideological beliefs. Where the government, political parties, and economic groups quickly become a closed cluster, the arrogance virus spreads to different degrees to society's mentality. Therefore, some Iranians reduce the world to their behavior (Heydarian, 2017).

Second, the Iranian plateau is the origin of the ancient Persian empire. It is influenced by three major world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). It also hospitalizes significant world languages such as Persian, Turkish, and Arabic.

However, with all these historically high socio-economic capital and current natural resource, Iran, or better to say, the Iranian plateau countries, are in the worse cultural, social, and economic situation in history. Plus, we have an Islamic regime propagandizing Iranian society worse than it actually is. A long list of historic pride, combined with a backward cleric Islamic regime, has given Iran society some level of inferiority Complex resulting again in arrogance. Because of that, the "woman, life, and freedom" revolution's main reason is to take back the dignity of Iranian society (Nikfar, 2023).

In a regime with a constitution against women's rights combined with a long history of conservatism, arrogance unsurprisingly results higher in men than women. One clear example represents the arrogance of some forces who repress the protest in Iran. According to (Dashti, 2022), the military force lacks empathy while repressing young people due to their high level of arrogance. As mentioned above, they believe you are either with us or wrong, and you should be eliminated without mercy.

One of the most fundamental tools to overcome arrogance and self-centeredness is to confront authoritarianism at all levels and forms, to be able to criticize all those who have power, wealth, and dignity, and to put the principle of equal opportunity for all at the center.

This is a trend that has permeated most young Iranian people for years and is exploded recently. Therefore, although arrogance has been prominent in Iran, we have a national popular uprising against the system which presents it. The revolution has become a valuable moment for young people to question their behavior as well. Although arrogance is a characteristic of the Iranian people, this is changing dramatically. The more they question totalitarianism, the more they become critical, criticism-tolerant, and open-minded.

This research tries not to count on this literature and personal opinions. However, the writer saw it necessary to mention and discuss this issue due to its importance in the thesis, current global situation, and personal concern. This research tries not to count on this literature and personal opinions. However, the writer saw it necessary to mention and discuss this issue due to its importance in the thesis, current global situation, and personal concern.

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The severe housing crisis in Milan has forced many young generations to experience shared living arrangements in various structures. This is particularly true for students, who are drawn to the city from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, these young people often encounter profound cultural clashes between Eastern and Western lifestyles when they are pushed to live in the same environment. Fortunately, most of these problems can be avoided if appropriately managed.

This topic is of great interest to me for several reasons. As someone born in Eastern culture and influenced by Western culture from a young age, I have a unique perspective on the subject. Additionally, my background in urban planning and architecture has allowed me to analyze this phenomenon in communal living using a qualitative and quantitative approach. Through in-depth on-site interviews and case studies, I have investigated cognitive and emotional aspects, taking into account the interviewee's background, the physical characteristics of the case studies, and social factors between people in these communal living situations.

My research has revealed both the advantages and disadvantages of communal living, while also identifying existing issues and proposing solutions for better compatibility and overall living conditions for students, especially those from South Asian countries. By carefully considering the needs of diverse cultures and creating living spaces that foster mutual respect and understanding, we can improve the quality of life for young people facing the challenges of shared housing in Milan.

I believe that this issue is of great importance to scholars in the fields of urban planning, architecture, and social sciences. By sharing my findings and insights, I hope to inspire a broader conversation and create meaningful change for those living in communal environments in Milan and beyond.

*We are all different but we can be beautiful like a rainbow. In memory of Kian Pirfalak, a 9-year-old boy who was killed in a peaceful protest in Iran, I end with his quote "In the name of the god of the rainbow".*