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The Integration of the Asylum Seekers and the State of Permanent Emergency of the Immigrants in Calabria

This paper aims to analyze the situation of the asylum seekers and the economic immigrants starting from an historic and legislative summary of the immigration in Italy. The case study concerns the situation in Calabria, Southern Italy. The comparison between the situation of the *Calabrian jungles* and the protection system called SPRAR, is used to explain the paradigm of the Italian migration policy that still considers immigration as some kind of permanent emergency.

Key words:

immigration,
Rosarno,
refugees,
permanent
emergency

This paper demonstrates how Italy has been officially managing immigration since the '80s. We focus on the state of permanent emergency, which represents the main way of immigration management in Italy. In order to discuss this problem we explore how both immigrants and refugees are actually treated in the *Piana di Gioia Tauro*, with a reference to the particular form of violence and racism that exists since immigrants arrived during the '90s. NGOs' reports, news, direct experiences have been used as sources of information as well as Italian laws on immigration. We compared them to the real situation in the field. The lack of scholarly studies about the Calabrian situation is balanced by the NGOs' reports, which include interviews, a good analysis of the social context and quantitative data.

1. The Italian immigration law from the 60's until today

1.1 A historical foreword

Italy has not always been an immigration country. During the first half of the 19th century, thousands of Italian workers went to the United States or to South America dreaming of a better life. However, in the 60's and the 70's, some European countries, first of all Germany, but also Belgium, became the destination country for the Italians who emigrated (Cornelius 2004)¹. Since 1973, Germany has decided to stop the guest-worker immigration flow due to the energetic crisis (Martin 2004, 229). At that moment, the Italian economic situation was flourishing and the workers could take advantage of trade-union protection and occupational securities. This was the moment when Italy started its transition from being an emigration country to becoming the immigration one (Venturini 1991). The booming economic situation of the Peninsula, combined with relatively low control at the borders, facilitated the entrance of foreigners the majority of which came from French-speaking countries of Northern Africa, such as Morocco or Tunisia, ex Italian colonies such as Eritrea and Ethiopia, or from countries which shared the same religious tradition with Italy, such as the Philippines or El Salvador. Nevertheless, Italy was totally unprepared to react to those arrivals, both on the cultural as well as on the legislative level.

Italian law did not consider the migrant as a legal person, just the foreigner. That was an obsolete figure which had existed in the Italian judicial system since the Second World War². At that time, the Italian government preferred to leave to the Market, the charitable organizations and the local authorities the power to spontaneously face the first arrivals and the emergencies. The range of that event had not been perceived yet.

1.2 The Italian immigration laws

In the 80's, both the Government and the public realized that something was changing for real and that, consequently, the Italian law should change. The first law intending to regulate the immigration was the law n. 943 of the 30/12/86.³ This act introduced several new legal instruments but also some new technical misunderstandings. It regulated only the conditions for foreign workers and their families, although it restricted the rights to dependent work. For example, it did not regulate the situation of foreigners who ran their own private companies and of people who had come to Italy for a different reason (see Adinolfi 1987). Speaking of new legal instruments, the law n. 943 introduced the *indemnity* for foreign workers. This was officially motivated by the willingness to change the working situation of those who could not take advantage of specific rights for foreign workers before from illegal

1. Zwischen Minarett und Werftarbeiter, Gesellschaft für Stadtentwicklung mbH 2007/docarts - neue passagen, gefördert mit Mitteln des Europäischen Fonds für Wirtschaft und Häfen der Freien Hansestadt Bremen

2. http://www.storicamente.org/05_studi_ricerche/03bernard.htm available on 30th March 2014

3. <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/briguglio/immigrazione-e-asilo/1992/luglio/legge-943-86.html> available on 30th March 2014.

to the legal one. Although it was initially thought as a *una tantum* measure, indemnity has periodically been used since 1986 to regulate the conditions for different kinds of workers (agricultural laborers, maids and housekeepers, etc.). However, this law did not reduce the frequency of Italian bosses hiring illegal immigrants, but rather it increased the percentage of the illegal workers. It was usually assumed that, even though an immigrant had been hired illegally, an *amnesty*⁴ would solve the problem later on. The second law dealing with the immigration issue was the law n. 30 of the 28/02/1990,⁵ also named Martelli Law⁶. It definitely had a wider range than the previous one, because it accepted the presence of the immigrants who had decided to come to Italy for a reason other than working. Its main goal was to define and to control immigration flows as well as to establish admission and rejection procedures.

Unfortunately, the law was written in general and superficial terms and a big part of it was cancelled by the most recent Turco-Napolitano Law⁷ that is the law n. 40 of the 6/03/1998.⁸ The main purpose of this law was to regulate the emergency measures. Therefore, regular and irregular immigration flows became strictly separated. The first one was directed toward obtaining citizenship, and it assumed the possibility of a family reunion and it guaranteed health assistance and education. On the other hand, the government started to fight the irregular immigration harshly by introducing the possibility of the individual rejections (Parati 2005). In concordance with this new legal instrument, Turco-Napolitano Law established the CPT (Centri di Permanenza Temporanea).⁹ This acronym means Centers of Temporary Permanence and they were actually invented to temporarily detain the irregular immigrants who had just received the decision to leave the country, until the conditions for that were met (Ibid., 161).

The immigration law in Italy followed the changes in the governing board during the years and so in 2002 a new law on this topic came in force. It was the law n. 189 of the 30/07/2002,¹⁰ also known as Bossi-Fini Law¹¹, which was, together with 2009 Pacchetto Sicurezza (Security Package), a compendium of the hardest measures concerning immigration. It was indeed strongly desired by the most extreme right-wing Italian political party, the Lega¹². The main characteristic of this law, as the title

4. The amnesty, or indemnity, is a legal measure used to regulate the status of a migrant, in order to “forget” his illegal condition and turn it to legal from a date on.

5. <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1990/02/28/090G0075/sg> available on 30th March 2014

6. Claudio Martelli was a socialist minister and Attorney General in 1990. Law n.30 of the 28/02/1990 was named after him.

7. Livia Turco was the Minister of Social Solidarity while Giorgio Napolitano, who is today the President of the Italian Republic, was Minister of the Interior during Prodi government.

8. <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/980401.htm> available on 30th March 2014.

9. <http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/immigrazione/sottotema006.html> available on March 30 2014.

10. <http://www.unhcr.it/cms/attach/editor/PDF/Legge%20n.%20189-2002.pdf> available on 30th March 2014.

11. Umberto Bossi was the Minister of Institutional Reforms and Devolution while Gianfranco Fini was the vice-premier during the second Berlusconi government.

12. The Italian political elections of 2008 were won by a right-wing coalition, composed by Il Popolo della Libertà, Lega and Movimento per l'Autonomia.

suggests, was to consider immigration not as an international policy or geo-political issue, but rather as a problem of the public order (Merlino 2009).

The Bossi-Fini Law introduced the possibility to reject not just people who were already on the Italian territory, but also boats that had still been in extraterritorial sea. This was possible because in those years Italy was stipulating agreements with the other Mediterranean countries¹³. Most of them were the countries from which the irregular immigrants left to reach the Southern European shores, like Lampedusa.

Furthermore, this law enabled the detention of up to four years for those immigrants who had stayed in Italy although they were imposed to leave (Ibid.). On July the 15th in 2009, the Italian Government approved the law n. 94¹⁴, better known as Pacchetto Sicurezza. All the articles and dispositions of this law were focused on security issues and public order, with the purpose to demonstrate how much the presence of immigrants threatened the everyday life of the Italian citizens (about securitization see Ibrahim 2005). The main changes referred to the criminal law and to citizenship, both of which were highly restricted (Merlino 2009.).

Speaking of criminal law, it introduced the *illegal immigration felony* and, accordingly, CPT was transformed into CIE (Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione), the acronym of Centers of Identification and Expulsion (Ibid.).¹⁵

2. The immigration flows to Southern Italy: the emergency in the media and the social perception

We have seen how the different Italian immigration laws had changed according to various political ideas and different governing boards from the '80s onward. Nevertheless, there is another essential part of this topic that needs to be taken into consideration. During the second half of the '80s the government and the public opinion realized that Italy was becoming an immigration country. From Martelli Law onward, "the political exploitation of the immigration" started, as Ambrosini defines it (Ambrosini 2001, 22). This means that, from 1986 on, both the political parties and the media that were related to them started to show the arrivals of the illegal immigrants (but also of the majority of the legal ones) as a spectacle and to present the immigration issue in two opposite and even fictional ways. We can actually identify two opposite paradigms which are still used in the Italian political debate. These are almost always connected to a left-wing or a right-wing ideology.

The first one is the paradigm of the massive invasion (about securitization of migration see Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002). It started almost simultaneously with the first boat arrivals from Albania to Puglia shores in 1991. Indeed, due to its geographical position, Southern Italy is very close both to Albania and Montenegro and to Northern

13. <http://www.meltingpot.org/Italia-Egitto-Accordi-di-riammissione-e-divieti-di.html#Uz3tCf2-BFA> available on 30th March 2014

14. http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/16/0189_legge_15_luglio_2009_n.94.pdf available on 30th March 2014.

15. <http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/immigrazione/sottotema006.html> available on March 2014.

African countries like Tunisia and Libya. The huge number of immigrants trying to reach Italy by boat was presented by the right-wing as an invasion of the people who would steal money, jobs and welfare. This vision has been just slightly altered during the years, in order to refer to the other kind of arrivals, such as the ones from Kosovo or from Northern Africa.

Even though today multiple studies demonstrate that boats do not carry the majority of the illegal immigrants to Italy¹⁶, but that this is constituted by people who come to Italy with a regular permit and let it expire, the massive invasion paradigm still works¹⁷. The 2009 Pacchetto Sicurezza relates to that and to the today mainstream perception of the immigrants as people who cause problems in the public order. Therefore, in order to enjoy a quiet life, the Italian citizens have to reject them (Ibid.).

However, there is an opposite paradigm, the one which is typically expressed by the humanitarian organizations and the left-wing parties – the victim paradigm (see Anderson 2008). As the name says, the immigrant is presented as a poor victim of persecution or extreme poverty. Even if the situation of extreme poverty a migrant escapes from is real, this paradigm is not realistic because it just victimizes people and it does not go beyond this. What immigrants need most is not compassion, but rather practical policy measures to let them build up an independent life in another country. What do these two paradigms show is that the state of emergency which has characterized Italian immigration laws since the beginning still prevails. Moreover, Ambrosini states that the Italian approach to immigration fluctuates between a theoretical closure and a factual acceptance. He suggests that this experience is still not mature if compared to other European countries such as England or Germany (Ambrosini 2001).

In the Peninsula, the migration phenomenon is still considered as temporary and unexpected and this implies the use of legal measure which follows an event (the indemnity is a very good example) and do not foresee it. This provokes the state of the official permanent emergency and relegates the immigrants to provisional and depending situations.

3. The Italian asylum law and the SPRAR system

Before we begin to define the SPRAR system, it is necessary to remember that “there are many different understandings of refugees’ integration across Europe. There is not one European society to integrate into, and there is no single form that integration would take” (IntegraREF 2008 Report). The word “integration” itself presents some problem as Castles and Miller underline, we should always wonder who is the subject to *integrate* and

16. Immigrazione:Frontex,-82% in Italia in 2012, ma rischio alto http://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/altrenews/2013/04/18/Immigrazione-Frontex-82-Italia-2012-ma-rischio-alto_8572937.html accessed 30th April 2014

17. To have an idea we suggest the news from the Ministry of the Interior who present the data http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala_stamp/notizie/immigrazione/2014_02_05_bubbico_audizione_ue.html_1698044801.html referred to the new arrivals. Accessed 5th April 2014.

which is the aim of this process (Castles and Miller 2012, 280).

The ground on which the SPRAR system is based is the European Common Asylum System (ECAS), established by the European states in 1999 in order to set some common minimum standards of reception of the asylum seekers.¹⁸ Another purpose of the Heads of States who agreed on the ECAS was to ensure a fair and full integration of those who would apply for refugee status.

In November 2004, the Hague Program was adopted, too.¹⁹ It aimed to set common asylum procedures and the same kind of international protection for the people entitled of rights and obligations comparable to those of the European citizens. As we can understand, the ECAS final goal is the integration of refugees, which can be achieved through rights and obligations. Despite these noble intentions, the reality is different from the prospected situation.

Even though it had several laws on immigration, Italy has never approved a consistent and organic asylum law, but it was only conforming to the international law. As we previously wrote, one reason could be the relative novelty of the phenomenon and the consequent lack of preparation. In April 2001 the National Asylum Program (NAP) was created. It originated from the huge number of asylum seekers arriving in Italy from the Balkan area during the '90s war, for which the European Union allocated conspicuous funds. After that, it was necessary to set a national policy so the NAP was transformed into SPRAR by Bossi-Fini Law in 2002.²⁰

SPRAR is the acronym for System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. It consists of a network of local authorities that manage centers, facilities and programs for the asylum seekers. The SPRAR network is officially national, but it works on regional and province basis. The resources should be taken from the National Fund for Asylum policies and services, but they are often not enough to guarantee the necessary assistance. More specifically, a SPRAR program includes: the reception of a group of immigrants claiming their right to asylum, their transfer from their first arrival place to another center (technically speaking from a CPSA to a CARA), their settlement in a shelter, the provision of food, clothes, health care and bureaucratic help.²¹

Even though the National Fund for Asylum policies and services finances the program, the Municipalities subcontract the shelters management to third sector bodies, such as NGOs, social cooperatives or associations.²² This often causes management problems and misunderstandings. First of all, there is an overlapping of the tasks that these bodies need to do, the most of which are the bureaucratic ones. Although the

18. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index_en.htm available on March 30th 2014.

19. <http://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/file/the-hague-programme.aspx> available on march 30th 2014.

20. <http://www.resettlement-observatory.eu/documents/italy/outputs/countryprofile/italycountryprofile.pdf> available on 30th March 2014.

21. <http://www.resettlement-observatory.eu/documents/italy/outputs/countryprofile/italycountryprofile.pdf> available on 30th March 2014.

22. <http://www.serviziocentrale.it/file/server/file/SPRAR%20Description%20-%20Italy.pdf> available on 30th March 2014.

organizations change according to the local contest, just to make it simple, it happens very often that two clerks, for example one from a Municipality office and one from the cooperative running the shelter, are working on the same permit. Secondly, this overlapping is also the main cause of budget related problems. In the last few years there have been multiple protests by social workers who were not paid.

The refugees should have been entitled to enjoy an amount of money around 40 euros per day, given to them not in form of money but through services: food, housing, bus tickets, clothes and general assistance. But unfortunately, due to the obstacles in the general management, there is a big lack of service quality. The shelters are often in an isolated place far from the city, and the housing takes place in different buildings which are not used anymore, such as old schools or ex storages. Thus the refugees sleep in improvised “rooms”, separated by curtains and tents. An official bulletin of the Ministry of the Interior states that “Facilities offered by SPRAR, which tend to be either apartments or small to medium sized accommodation centers, have a social-educational nature and must never be considered as a part of the health service facilities.”²³ Unfortunately, according to reality, the SPRAR system is far away from setting a path capable of bringing refugees to autonomy.

3.1. Two examples of SPRAR program in Calabria

Riace is a small village of 1800 inhabitants on the east cost of Calabria. As the other little towns in Southern Italy, Riace is affected by a marked depopulation process: young people leave town to look for job opportunities elsewhere. The mayor Domenico Lucano chose to join the NPA program in 2001 and to take the chance offered by the SPRAR system to transform the local context trough the presence of asylum seekers. As Lucia Turco stated: *“Here the local context recognizes the global one as a constitutive part to confirm the right to naturalization (...). Migratory flows are the concrete proof of the dynamicity that characterized the local context as well as the global one. The local inhabitants face the depopulation issue through the integration of people coming from the sea. The historical center has been recovered, migrants had received houses and, thanks to the financial support of the Italian government and the European Union, an interchange process was launched: first with the economical support and the instruction of the minors, the migrants had learned the handcraft jobs that were at risk of disappearing because of the local emigration. The Regione Calabria – the local institutional body for the entire region – had launched the law called “The Riace Model” (Turco 2008).*

Despite the national and international attention that this model received, the situation is not completely positive at the moment.²⁴ There are more than 270 hundred immigrants who live in the town: some of them are part of the SPRAR system, some

23. <http://www.serviziocentrale.it/file/server/file/SPRAR%20Description%20-%20Italy.pdf> available on 30th March 2014.

24. To have an idea of the consideration of this experience consult the quantity of articles dedicated to the topic. For example “Riace - Complementary Currency helps integrate asylum seekers, refugees” <http://ccmag.net/riace-immigration> accessed 30/03/2014

are included in the Northern Africa Emergency plan, and the minors constitute the majority of pupils of the local school. All these people are supposed to receive a sort of salary called “pocket money” but, as predictable, the financial situation become dramatic since 2012²⁵. The cost of this integration system is high for a small municipality and the delay of the money transfer from the competent office – Servizio Centrale – caused big problems in the whole organization. Nowadays the recent decision of the central office, chose to let 170 immigrants leave the town and to adjust a maximum of 15 available places to the SPRAR program, that is the regular number for the town with less than 5000 inhabitants. After the first success in almost ten years integration experience, from a political point of view the Riace Model is considered as almost failed despite the fact that the social efforts made at the local level still represent one of the most important examples in the field of immigration policies.

On the other hand, to have a complete view of what integration means in Calabria, we want to present the situation of another SPRAR project²⁶. Montebello Jonico is a little town 30 km from Reggio Calabria, the main town of the district. In August 2013 it had accommodated 18 asylum seekers coming from Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, which arrived only two days before in Lampedusa, in one building that was a former elementary school. The accommodation center was managed by the local department of a national organization – ARCI – together with one local partner responsible for the building. The asylum seekers received different services: legal assistance, health checks, Italian language course. In every SPRAR project people are free to move all over the national territory and they can choose also to leave the project. Only two persons actually did it in six months. Although the rest of the group received food, accommodation, daily assistance and Italian classes, a feeling of dissatisfaction remained the main problem. The immigrants come to Italy to look for a job, start a new life and maybe to bring their families there as soon as possible. But also they left because of the difficult situation on Africa. They can be both asylum seekers and economic migrants, but when they apply for international protection, the Italian Government reduces the right to work, at least in the first six months of the legal procedure according to the Decree 28 gennaio 2008 n.25 that applies the European Directive 2005/85/CE.²⁷ After six months they can work, but this option remains a possibility, due to the difficulty existent in Italy about employment. Since February 2014 the aforementioned group of asylum seekers originally accommodated in Montebello Jonico, has been moved to the town Villa San Giovanni, closest to Reggio Calabria. They live in houses in small groups and have better transport connections as well as the possibility to join some cultural activities proposed by one local cultural center. The organization who manages the project has still to face the budget problem.

25. Riace, il paese dell'accoglienza ridotto in miseria: http://www.volontariperlosviluppo.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2176%3ARiace-il-paese-dellaccoglienza-ridotto-alla-fame&catid=130&Itemid=200109 accessed 30/03/2014

26. The information of this paragraph came from the direct experience of one of the authors of this article – Patrizia Riso - who had worked as intercultural mediator within this SPRAR project since August 2013 until January 2014.

27. <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/08025dl.htm> available on 30th March 2014.

The crisis affects also the integration and immigration policies. While immigrants arrive expecting to have everything in a very short time – job, money, help – Italy has difficulties in supporting the only positive model of “integration” existing. One problem is clear: integration – that means social inclusion, protection and cultural mediation work – is a challenge for every country who really wants to be considered as democratic and respectful of human rights, as Carrera highlights “The respect of fundamental rights and freedoms of every human being needs to be taken as a point of departure in every security initiative adopted on behalf of our safety. This continues to be a challenge for the EU” (Carrera 2005, 721-722).

4. Rosarno: the permanent emergency of seasonal workers

Rosarno is a town of the district of Reggio Calabria, in Southern Italy, which counts around sixteen thousand inhabitants. This area is famous for the production of oranges. The data provided by the Italian Statistics Institute and referred to July 2013 show that just the district of Reggio Calabria produced up to 1.802.283 oranges²⁸. What we are trying to explain here is who is picking this fruit? A large number of seasonal workers, coming from Africa and partially from Eastern Europe, are the most relevant component of the agricultural labor market.

The municipality of Rosarno is located within a peculiar area called “Piana di Gioia Tauro”. With a sociological and short analysis of the context, we will try to show the best paradigm of the relationship existing between the Italian immigration policy and the immigration flows system itself: Italian economy needs immigration flows to survive although Politics – at a local, regional and national level – keep ignoring this necessity.²⁹ Despite the lack of willingness in understanding this social bond - facing and correctly managing these issues - up to 20,000 seasonal workers have been coming to Calabria since the beginning of the 90’s.

It is clear that, while people have been coming there for more than twenty years, none of the different Italian governments has chosen to start managing it with humanity, pragmatism and respect for workers’ rights.

4.1. Between seasonal work and slavery³⁰

The working conditions of the immigrants in Rosarno are based on a kind of modern slavery which can be defined, in the context of the non-formal labor market, only linked to the word *caporalato*. The *caporale* is the chief of the estate where the people work to pick the fruit. This person owns the property and manages the organization of the work. Every morning the immigrant workers wait in the center of the town, along two or three main streets where some people, early in the morning, pass in a van to pick them up and drive them to the working place. This ride is not for free. The daily salary is around 25 euros. They work at least twelve hours and it

28. Istat <http://agri.istat.it/jsp/dawinci.jsp?q=plC240000030000193200&an=2013&ig=1&ct=506&id=15A%7C21A%7C31A> accessed on 30/03/2014.

29. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2000/11/feature/it0011362f.htm> available on 30/03/2014.

30. <http://www.euronews.com/2013/02/15/italy-s-migrant-slavery/> available on 30th March 2014.

is not always sure that they will actually receive this money at the end of the day. Sometimes the *caporale* can easily refuse to pay a worker or the broker – mediator – who brings them to the work, keeping the money for himself; and another possibility is that someone robs them on the way home, threatening with knives or guns.

The bicycle is the most important way of transport for the immigrants as well as a source of danger for the safety of the people who use it. The immigrants are the only part of the local population who ride bicycles while the others only use cars and all the area is not provided by safe roads. Street lights do not cover the entire street, especially the one leading to the largest “accommodation camp” located in San Ferdinando, a little town close to Rosarno³¹.

This place is called *tendopoli*, which literally means “town of tents”. Here around 1,700 persons live for a total of one hundred and sixty tents, provided by the Italian Minister of the Interior. The NGO Medici senza frontiere (Doctors without borders) report the situation of San Frediano *tendopoli* where more than 70% of inhabitants have a permit of stay and 45% have already applied for international protection. Every *tendopoli* in the area was supposed to be a temporary solution but people had been staying there since the spring of 2013. In January 2014, there was no electricity, no illumination, no hot water. Health conditions are questionable. The Italian NGO Emergency has opened a mobile ambulance in Rosarno area in December 2011. They report that their users are mostly young men affected exclusively by diseases coming from difficult working conditions. The position and the hard efforts produce pains; gastrointestinal infections derived from the low quality of food consumed; infections to the respiratory system are caused by the cold they suffer day and night due to the lack of any heating and because of inadequate protective covering. The low level of hygienic conditions causes skin infections, hard to heal without hot water. Most people report problems with teeth, a persistent problem for everyone.³²

It must be added that this NGO usually works in war-torn regions: Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. Although news does not report it as a fact, it is clear that, a particular kind of “war” is in action in Italy as well, lasting for decades.

4.2. Civil violence, racism and the lack of social awareness

In order to explain how it is possible to consider this area as a war context we will try to explain the cycle of violence, racism and slavery that characterizes it. The following list shows some examples of civil violence perpetrated against the immigrant workers who reside in the Rosarno area by some local residents. On 10th September 1990 Mohamed El Sadki – 28 years old – was shot in the legs. One year later similar attempt was organized against Mohammed Zerivi – 24 years old, from Algeria. On 27th of January 1992 two youngsters from Algeria – Malit Abykzinh,

31. To see what *tendopoli* means, we suggest this video <http://video.corriere.it/tendopoli-rosarno/abecb23a-4871-11e2-ab86-ffed12a6034c>

32. <http://www.emergency.it/italia/ambulatori-mobili-diario-rosarno-gennaio-2012.html> accessed 30/03/2014

24 years old and Boumtl Rabah, 27 years old – were shot during a robbery in their own apartment, by some local inhabitants. There have been different victims in this local war: on 11th of February 1992 two Algerians Abdelgani Abid and Sari Mabini were shot; one man from Cote d’Ivoire, Mourou Kouakou Sinan, died in February 1994 while the other two persons - Bama Moussa, 29 years old and Homade Sare, 31 years old, both from Burkina Faso, were injured. Two years later the body of another migrant was found in the countryside. What is the reason for this violence? In order to give a good explanation we chose to use the words of the journalist Alessio Magro who describes the context in this way: “The hunting of Marroquin people (everyone in Calabria called black people *Marroquin*) is the favorite “sport” of the worst youngsters of Rosarno. These guys wait for the African migrants on the National Road – the main road of Rosarno (ndr) – that has no pedestrian passage, so the migrants have to walk along the motorway. Every day they would try to hit them with their car doors, or with sticks if they were riding motorcycles. They also tried to attack them in their shelters by night, the first “Calabrian jungles”. They create a terror climate around the migrant presence in order to marginalize them and force them to live as ghosts. “Honest people feel scared so they don’t want to rent us any house – said one migrant - so we are obliged to live in temporary shelters without human conditions, without water and electricity”.³³

While the violence against migrants has been going on since the 90’s, the reaction of the civil society was surprising. Giuseppe Lavorato became the mayor of the Municipality of Rosarno after the elections on November 1994. He was a member of the Italian Communist party and a very strong opponent to the power of the ‘*ndrangheta*, the most powerful Italian criminal organization. The presence of the mafia, which will not be possible to analyze in this article, is strong in the area, and directly connected to all aspects of the economy, including agriculture. On the 6th of January he organizes the Celebration of the Peoples (Festa dei Popoli), a special day in which the city hall, together with various civil organizations, provides food in the main square and organizes cultural events to encourage the integration with the migrant population. The organization of this event could be considered as a politically correct way to show some social and institutional effort in the field, but at the same time is an occasion to see what local people think towards them in a public situation.

4.3. The “black” demonstration of December 2008 and January 2010

On the 12th of December 2008 two citizens of the Cote d’Ivoire had been injured by gun shots. The day after the people who were used to living in one shelter called “Ex Cartiera” organized a demonstration with a big banner “Stop killing blacks”. Around 700 hundred African people joined the demonstration, the first spontaneous public walk to get public an obvious request: react against all the violence perpetrated

33. Alessio Magro February 2010 *Vent’anni fa i primi morti. Dimenticati*, Stopndrangheta.it published on Dossier “Arance Insanguinate”. http://www.stopndrangheta.it/file/stopndrangheta_875.pdf available on 30th March 2014

against the immigrant community of the area. Public institutions made some promises but the situation did not change at all³⁴.

The humanitarian conditions in which they live in have become public only in 2010. On the 10th of January two immigrants were injured by gun shots.³⁵ This time, again, around two hundred workers chose to take the streets. It has been the biggest demonstration against racist attacks organized by the persons who are mostly involved. It was not a peaceful demonstration due to the high level of anger and determination of the immigrants. The purpose was clear: to clearly say stop to the decades of the racist violence. More than two hundred persons occupied the streets of the town: they destroyed dumpsters, cars and displayed the banner: “stop shooting blacks” again. This kind of direct action attracted the attention of the national and international media. So, in a few hours, Rosarno became the center of Italian immigration issues, as well as Lampedusa in 2013. This small Calabrian town is the location of a new form of civil war.

After the “black demonstration”, a group of local inhabitants organized a counter demonstration against African people. They protested against the “black violence” and expected the use of a hard intervention by security forces. The police came fast and two days after the riot, around six hundred immigrants were moved from Rosarno to the first accommodation center of Crotona, in Calabria³⁶. Although the official reason was the safety of the immigrants, it seems that the deportation was based on the skin color³⁷. Only the black people were forced to leave the town, while the local protest – composed also by a lot of violent actions – is still considered to be one of the most evident expressions of southern Italian racism. A few weeks after this “soft deportation”, African immigrants started to come back to Rosarno to work again. At first they stayed hidden in the countryside – the fear of other violence was high – while, after a few months, the situation became the same as before the riot so the seasonal workers came back to live in the surroundings of the Piana di Gioia Tauro. The emergency remained ordinary.

As the activists from AssociazioneSUD say in their report about the situation in Rosarno referred to the work season 2011/2012 “there is not the presence as it was before the riot when 2500 seasonal workers plus one other thousand persons living around in the area. In autumn 2011 more than 1000 workers have been registered. Thanks to the combination of the official data from Prefettura³⁸ and those obtained from research in the field, we can assume that more than 2000 African persons have

34. Immigrants Riot In Rosarno, Italy http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/08/immigrants-riot-in-rosarno_n_416482.html

35. <http://www.4report.com/node/8389> available 30th March 2014.

36. Italians cheer as police move African immigrants out after clashes with locals <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/10/calabria-mafia-africa-immigration> available on 30th April 2014

37. «I mandarini e le olive non cadono dal cielo» I migranti di Rosarno a Roma (01/02/2010) Stopndrangheta.it published on Dossier “Arance Insanguinate”. http://www.stopndrangheta.it/file/stopndrangheta_875.pdf available on 30th March 2014

38. Prefettura is the Institutional governmental body that represents the Government in every Italian region main town.

been living in Piana di Gioia Tauro at least during the work period (autumn – winter) divided into different parts of the area as Rizziconi and Rosarno”³⁹.

People who live in the *tendopoli* of San Ferdinando receive legal assistance, check-ups by NGO’s doctors, and Italian language classes from volunteers. In 2010, the activists – lawyers, journalists, social workers – from AssociazioneSUD and Rete Radici/Rosarno⁴⁰ launched a political action to fight against the local interpretation of the Rosarno situation by bringing this issue at the national level. Two hundred persons obtained a stay-permit. After the riots of January 2010, the law recognized their right to stay in the country. It was a drop in the sea, but several groups of CSOs organize activities and try to maintain the focus of public attention on this area.

4.4. Migrant places

We can define the Italian jungles of the South – *tendopoli*, temporary shelters, any place where a modern form of slavery exists – as migrant places. The people who live in a particular place characterized it by crossing its street on a bicycle, by shopping at the supermarket, by working there. The immigrants who arrive in Calabria from Lampedusa and before that from every part of Africa by crossing the desert and the sea, became not only a part of the seasonal work in Southern Italy but also a fundamental element of the whole context. The European Union would define them as the economic immigrants that entered the country illegally, without applying for international protection, without entering formally in the job market. Nevertheless, they are part of the Italian civil society. Rosarno is a paradigm of a kind of the migration system the civil society and politics should avoid at all costs. It is far away from any respect of human dignity. This form of slavery in which our seasonal workers live, is the image of a country that is not able to understand itself by ignoring one of the most important pieces of the puzzle: immigration.

5. The difference between refugees and economic immigrants

According to the article 1 of the Geneva Convention related to the status of Refugees, a refugee is “a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to

39. Dossier RADICI/ROSARNO pag 26 Produced by the Ngos RADICI Associazione SUD/ Stopndrangheta.it with the contribution of Fondazione Integra/Azione Realizzato da published on May 2012 available on 30/03/2014 http://www.fondazioneintegrazione.it/userfiles/file/Rosarnosito%20V_leggera%20copia.pdf

40. The Rete Radici Rosarno is a non formal group of activist from different organizations. This is the blog of the campaign <http://reteradici.blogspot.com/> accessed 30th April 2014

it.”⁴¹ An economic migrant instead is someone who freely decides to move from one country to another for economic reasons. This means that he or she is pursuing a way to find a better job in terms of quality and salary. However, the line between choice and obligation is very thin because, even if a person is not politically threatened or persecuted, they can be forced to migrate by the circumstances, such as the lack of work or livelihoods.

As stated in the IntegraREF 2008 Report⁴², for some people the definition of refugee applies to all those who have been forced to move from their homes, whatever stage they have reached in their travel. The Geneva Convention of 1951 states also that a refugee cannot be rejected out of a country, while an economic migrant is subject to this legal measure when his permit expires. Speaking of nowadays situation in Italy, this one is the main difference between a refugee and a migrant, not just in terms of permits, but also of the possibility to be involved in a SPRAR program or to be detained in a CIE.

It is then necessary to introduce the Dublin Regulation of 2003⁴³, that determines which EU member state has to examine an asylum request or to grant a refugee status, according to the Geneva Convention. The Dublin Regulation forces people who reach a country to be registered by the Police because, if they want to apply for asylum, they have to do it in the first safe country they arrive in. Sometimes, as we see in the case of the SPRAR of Montebello Jonico, people admitted that join the protection system is a decision chosen only on nationality basis or maybe depending of the unavailability of places in the CARA. Those are the accommodation centers for asylum seekers where people can spend a short or a long period before reaching SPRAR projects or CIE (to be rejected). Law and politics need to make a distinction between people who are allowed to apply for international protection and economic migrants. This is both because European law acts differently towards these two figures and because it is useful in order to make the social attitude towards immigrants stronger. If you need international protection you are supposed to represent the perfect stereotype of the “migrant victim”, if you came here to look for a job and you are not able to gain or to update your permit of stay, you automatically become a criminal (compare Anderson 2009). Nevertheless, although the distinction between economic immigrants and refugees is very sharp, it is used and respected only by the specialists (compare De Genova 2002).

41. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html> available on 30th march 2014.

42. IntegraRef. Local Communities and Refugees fostering Social Integration Final Report 2008 available on http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=3963

43. Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/ALL/?jsessionid=h6CyT9zPNH2qCTpLmDsb9f7kWZXT9h84gZLTTXD882MF5Jz5kXLD!1967577200?uri=CELEX:32003R0343> available on 30th March 2014

6. Conclusion: The lack of political willingness and the denial of immigration flows as component of the national system

In the previous paragraphs, we have provided a short historical introduction which explains the legal path that Italy has gone through in the field of immigration. Afterwards we have explained how the production of these laws has been linked to the image of immigration the media have provided to the public, and that, since the beginning, two paradigms through which immigration is presented and explained have been shown: the one of the massive invasion and the one of the victim. By considering this issue as new, sudden and massive, the Italian government is officially “excused” not to provide some technical measures, new laws or long-term reception and integration programs. Indeed, should Italy prepare long-term projects for something which is considered transitory? The nowadays the situation can be considered stagnant.

Moreover, the Government does not only manage immigrant arrivals and asylum seekers conditions with later measures, but it also exploits the third sector resources way more than the institutional ones. It could be impossible to manage shelters, food and clothes distribution or Italian courses without the help of the masses of volunteers.

This happens for two reasons: the first is the one we already wrote about, that can be led back to the bad management of funds, which end up lost in the complex labyrinth composed by the National Fund for Asylum policies and services, Regions, Municipalities and cooperatives. The second one is that, even if the funds arrive, they are always too low to cover all the expenses needed for these programs. The only solution is then to appeal to volunteers.

The situation can also be viewed as a paradox. In the Italian Peninsula lives the third generation of migrants (they are the grandchildren the first one who came during the ‘90s), but the Government is still dealing with boat arrivals and asylum seekers receptions as with an unexpected emergency.

A country like Italy, with a long immigration history, is the perfect representation of the complex relationship existing between politics and immigration flows. The immigration policies had changed while the general point of view has been saved: we have experienced the introduction of a incompletely functioning integration system, we got used to the institutional indifference towards the appeal of those who arrive risking their lives by crossing the Mediterranean sea, and we assisted to the introduction of a strong and more complex bureaucratic system for those who are still trying to stay legally in the country.

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