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The migratory crossroads of Alte Ceccato: an emblematic case of migratory stratification

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ABSTRACT

Italy acts as a migratory crossroads in which emigration, immigration, and internal migration continuously overlap. These processes have affected not only large cities, but also small towns such as Alte Ceccato (Veneto Region). After WWII this small industrial town received immigrants from the surrounding countryside, then from Southern Italy, and since the 1990s from the so-called Global South. Today it receives refugees from sub-Saharan Africa. Adopting the analytical tool of migratory stratification, we discuss Alte Ceccato as a peculiar example of the mixture of social, cultural, demographic and urban changes driven by migration on multiple geographical scales.

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1. Introduction

Exiting the A4 linking Turin to Trieste at the Montecchio tollgate, a futuristic skyline appears, made up of semi-utilized industrial warehouses and fields. The area is devastated by noxious substances and by now useless infrastructure; the horizon broken by the heights of hotels and residential buildings of steel and mirrors that, at the end of the 1950s, represented the 'new consciousness' of a 'traditionalist and conservative' territory (Festival 1999, 43). This is the profile of Alte Ceccato, a hamlet of Montecchio Maggiore, a municipality of around 24,000 inhabitants, in the Province of Vicenza, north-eastern Italy.

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In its recent history Alte Ceccato has been subject to immigration and emigration, new arrivals, continuous departures and repeated transits. Hence, today this hamlet provides an emblematic case of migratory stratification and lends itself to particularly fertile fieldwork through which to observe the swirling social, cultural, demographic and urban changes brought about by migration on various geographical scales.

2. The theoretical stratification of a renewed empirical perspective

The overlapping of different population flows in the same territorial context has long been of interest to migration and urban studies. Robert Park, in developing the *ecological succession model*, argued that migration triggers 'competition' between city-dwellers and newcomers that involves both material and symbolic resources (Park 1936b) until the return to a situation of 'communal order' (Park 1936a). Focusing on physical replacement within urban areas, the *ecological succession model* included a local and contextual perspective (Clark 1993; Wood and Lee 1991) attentive to conflict dynamics between groups. Even if this model was questioned due to its biological reductionism and evolutionist features, not long after the study of relations between established groups and newcomers re-emerged in sociological studies. An example is Elias' analysis of changing power configurations between new and old groups in the town of Winston Parva (Norbert and Scotson 1965), widely taken up in migration studies (Calabretta and Romania 2022; Eve 2011; Petintseva 2015; Tobin et al. 2023).

The overlapping of different migration flows seems to be best understood through the analysis of a specific socio-cultural and territorial context. The importance of a local approach in the study of migration has been emphasized since the 1990s (Bommes and Radtke 1996), also thanks to the transnational perspective that acknowledged the 'particularistic' nature of cross-border ties (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004) and the importance of migrants' 'localized contexts and everyday practices' (Datta and Katherine 2011). The study of migration in 'global cities' marked a further attempt at 'locating migration', observing migrants' local participation in institutional construction and capitalist hierarchies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011; see also King and Della Puppa 2021).

In light of this, the migratory stratification perspective aims to merge diachronic and situated approaches of analysis in order to better understand the characteristics and interplay of migration flows. The Italian case is 'exemplary' (Sayad 1999b) in this respect due to the evolution and coexistence of different movements from, to and within Italy. The country was in fact characterized by substantial emigration flows originating from both the North and the South, which peaked at the end of the 19th century

(Romano 1992) and then by internal migration in the mid-20th century (Sanfilippo 2011), to the rise, from the 1970s onwards, of international immigration (Colucci 2018). The latter intensified in the 1980s (Bonifazi 1998) and then soared in the 2000s (Fullin and Reyneri 2010), despite the hostile political climate, growing Islamophobia (Allievi 2003; Perocco 2018), and a restrictive legal framework (Della Puppa, Gargiulo, and Semprebon 2020; Piro 2020). While new arrivals in Italy have gradually decreased, international immigration to Italy has now become a structural – and increasingly complex – phenomenon. If we add to this the persistence of emigration flows from Italy concerning both natives and migrants (Della Puppa 2018; Della Puppa and King 2019; Dubucs et al. 2017) and internal movements (Pugliese 2011), which often involve immigrants themselves (Bonifazi, Heins, and Tucci 2012; de Filippo and Strozza 2011), it is clear that Italy is still a migratory crossroads.

Furthermore, the migratory phenomenon in Italy is known for its local nature (Balbo 2015). Following the economic geography of the country, the settlement of foreign workers (and of their families) has involved metropolitan areas (Bergamaschi and Piro 2018) and provincial manufacturing districts as well as small agricultural towns in the South (Ambrosini 2015). The search for free and affordable housing has accentuated this territorial dispersion (Petrillo 2018), establishing the importance of small and medium-sized municipalities to the Italian migration landscape (Semprebon, Bonizzoni, and Marzorati 2017). This trend is even more clear in the region of Veneto and north-eastern Italy, an area characterized by small export industries scattered throughout the territory (Fregolent and Vettoretto 2015). The hamlet of Alte Ceccato, close to the core of Veneto's leather tanning district and a hub of internal and international migration, embodies the complex and locally rooted character of Italian migration.

3. Methods

The data and reflections presented here are drawn from various studies conducted in different periods by the authors, both individually and collectively, as well as from the sociological and anthropological literature on Alte Ceccato and its (history of) migratory phenomena. The first set of fieldwork studies, conducted in the 2010s, included in-depth interviews with Italian key-informants, Bangladeshi migrants, and Italian-Bangladeshis who had emigrated to the UK, as well as the analysis of quantitative data produced by the Italian National Statistical Institute (ISTAT) and the Municipality of Montecchio Maggiore.

The most recent fieldwork study – which began in 2022 and is still ongoing – includes in-depth interviews with Italian key-informants, refugees and asylum seekers coming from Sub-Saharan Africa (mainly Nigeria, Ghana,

and The Gambia), and migrants from the Indian sub-continent (Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan) and Latin America (Bolivia and Colombia), and an analysis of the updated demographic and statistical data.

The data generated by this latter study was analysed and combined with the outcomes of the previous studies, allowing us to have a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted layers of migration in Alte Ceccato.

4. The creation of the North-east and the productive role of immigration

From the productive and economic standpoint, the Veneto Region has always been represented as the 'beating heart' of the industrial development that has affected North-east Italy from the 1970s. Since its development, such 'North-east model' has been ideologically portrayed as a comeback of small-medium enterprises over the large Fordist industry present in the North-west regions (Bagnasco 1977), which was unable to effectively confront market challenges – namely, the crisis of overproduction – due to its insufficient flexibility (Anastasia and Corò 1996). The North-east success was often attributed to – and at the same time proof of – the industriousness and work ethic of the 'Venetian people' opposed, in the same view, to the lack of initiative and the 'little desire to work' of southern populations. Actually, the presence and success of a large number of small-medium enterprises in Veneto was the result of precise political and economic choices. In the post-war period, the Italian policy decided to remedy at the enormous economic and demographic imbalance between the so-called Industrial Triangle (Milan-Turin-Genoa) and the rest of the country. While the development of the South was based on large industry subsidized by the State, for the North-East, the focus was on small-medium enterprises, aided with economic contributions and tax breaks. This choice also fitted into the US strategy, aimed at a social and interclass recomposition that would defuse the conflict between capital and labour (Sacchetto 2004) in an area close to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, where the workforce had sympathized with the partisans and opposed agricultural and industrial patronage and could express attraction towards the Soviet bloc.

This process of neo-industrialization has made Veneto the second most industrialized region in Italy, after Lombardy, with 15 manufacturing workers per 100 inhabitants. Vicenza – including Montecchio Maggiore and Alte Ceccato – holds the highest national industrialization rate – with 21 workers, compared to a national average of nine (Anastasia and Corò 1996; Sacchetto 2004). In this system the bureaucratic elements typical of large enterprises are streamlined, the production process is immersed in the social environment, the workforce is segmented and so it is the production process, through complex subcontracting chains that tie multinational companies to

cooperatives, small family workshops, and even private homes, with home-based work. This creates a strongly hierarchical system – the district system – with a main company and many smaller companies whose production, for the most part, is linked to the former, allowing it for saving on management costs and responding promptly to fluctuations in demand.

Finally, another characteristic of Venetian industrial development should be emphasized, namely the processes of labour market stratification resulting from the opening to an international workforce. Veneto, in fact, is characterized as an area of intense international immigration – particularly after the economic crisis of the first half of the 1990s – which satisfies the needs of the production system (Della Puppa 2022) and represents an important factor of social change.

5. Alte Ceccato: Born out of migration, survived due to migration

In 1937, ‘Ceccato Spa’, a factory that specialized in garage and automotive products, was founded in Alte. Particularly in the 1950s, a labour town sprung up around this factory (Albertini 1956), made up of houses, roads, modern shops, a square, a church, a cinema and even a local railway station (which was never completed). The town served as a port of call for goods destined for the industrial area (Festival 1999).

In subsequent years, the manufacturing capacity of Ceccato Spa continued to increase, trebling the workforce and creating new production units: from 156 employees in 1949, the workforce reached 480 by 1952. This, coupled with the low cost of land, led to Alte’s rapid growth. The strong demand for labour attracted workers to the area: between 1951 and 1955 more than 350 immigrants arrived from other parts of the region and across the country. With them, in addition to those not officially registered, were the numerous family members of the resident population, which was very young and also included employees and American soldiers stationed in Vicenza. The more the company-town developed its peculiar physiognomy, the more it reflected a community born of mass immigration and based on factory membership.

As seen, in the 1960s, a new production model took hold in north-eastern Italy, organized in districts made up of small industries working for a large mother company. In Alte the local industries put themselves at the disposal of the leather processing factories that were growing up in the nearby Chiampo Valley.¹ Economic growth led to a new flow of immigration to the hamlet, this time from Southern Italy (Albertini 1956; Festival 1999). As a doctor in the town, who had also come from the South, told us:

When I arrived, this town was full of people from the southern regions; the majority of my patients were southerners. At least half of them. Now, there are still southerners like me, but they constitute a minority. This has always been a transitional area. [...] Alte Ceccato has been and still is referred to as ‘the foreign legion’. When I arrived, they sent me here because it was the land of

southerners. Since I'm Sicilian, they immediately advised me to align with the criterion. So, I accepted and opened the clinic, and it's been the same since 1975, it has never changed. However, over the past ten years, the population has changed. Few southerners remain, almost all the Venetians have left, and populations from a variety of origins have arrived. So it's still 'the foreign legion'! [...] These people could never manage to find housing elsewhere, but here, yes, they've found it, because social housing was specifically for southerners.

(Pietro)²

It should be underlined that the medical office is a space for analysis in itself to observe the intersections between different migratory 'layers'. Opened 40 years ago and managed by a doctor who immigrated from southern Italy, today it has a predominantly immigrant patients base, especially from Bangladesh, to the point that, in the doctor's own words:

I now have few southern Italians or, in general, Italian patients and it's practically as if I were working abroad, in a country foreigner where there is a minority of Italians.

(Pietro)

Therefore, attracted by the possibilities of affordable housing and the wide employment opportunities in the area, the southerners went to settle in the spaces left vacant by the former 'pioneers' in what can be described as the first ecological succession within Alte (Park 1936b).

6. From internal migration to international migration

This is the context in which, in the second half of the 1990s, the first international migrants settled in Alte Ceccato. The continuous expansion of the tanning district (Della Puppa and Gelati 2015) demanded a new labour force no longer satisfied by workers from other parts of Italy, who continued to arrive but no longer entered the secondary sector of the labour market. It was foreign workers who were attracted to Alte and – thanks to a series of amnesties – obtained residence permits and often moved from Southern Italy to industrial towns in Northern Italy (Daly 2001; Schmidt di Friedberg 1996). During this time, Alte Ceccato saw an increase in the arrivals of foreign migrants, reaching approximately 200–300 per year in the first decade of the 2000s (Della Puppa and Gelati 2015).³ Despite some difficulties in accessing housing, between 2001 and 2010, 2,500 foreigners settled in Alte and 1,500 Italian citizens moved elsewhere (Ibidem). Those Italians who had achieved a higher socio-economic status wanted to move to neighbouring towns with fewer symbolic connotations than the working-class suburb of Alte, leaving housing available for the newly arrived workers and their families (White 1984).

Alte Ceccato's transformation since the 1990s is part of changes happening at a national and international level. While in Italy there was a drastic reduction in emigration and internal migration flows, new people and new countries became part of the global migration phenomenon, including Bangladesh, a young nation that gained its independence in 1971. When in the 1990s Italian north-eastern regions demanded a flexible and low-cost workforce, migratory networks and word of mouth supported the settlement of the Bangladeshi community in Alte:

I had to renew my residence permit, so I needed a job. I'd looked in Rome, but couldn't find one. Then a friend told me to come to Vicenza where I could find a job. I came, and in one day I visited four or five factories, I spoke with one manager and he said to me: 'Alright, you'll start tomorrow'. One person called someone else, then they called me, then I called others, and so on. . .

(Masum)

Data from 2011 shows the outcome of this process. That year the population of Alte Ceccato was made up of two-thirds Italians (around 4,200) and one-third foreigners (around 2,200), of which Bangladeshis were the most numerous (around 1,100) (Della Puppa and Gelati 2015). The hamlet also included many other communities: Serbians (226); Ghanaians (191); Indians (159); Moroccans (88); Albanians (85); and others (Ibidem). By focusing on the Bangladeshi community we can begin to understand the gradual shift towards a 'population' – or 'family' – migration (Sayad 1999b). For instance, in the first 15 years of Bangladeshi migration to Alte (1995–2011), the proportion of Bangladeshi women accounted for one third of the Bangladeshi community in the town. The birth rate is also interesting. While at the end of the 1990s about 40 children were born in Alte every year, one or two of whom had foreign parents, in the second half of the 2000s, 60% of newborns had foreign parents (and one out of three were Bangladeshi) (Della Puppa and Gelati 2015).

The Bangladeshi immigration to Alte has halted a socio-demographic decline that, until 25 years ago, seemed inevitable, through a transformation of the neighbourhood via the repurposing of public and private spaces, an increase in births, the emergence of numerous commercial activities, and the opening of two Islamic prayer rooms. To complete this picture, three Bangladeshi associations have been established, and local associations, interacting with the 'newcomers', developed various 'intercultural' activities. Despite its small size, the hamlet has gradually acquired a deep symbolic and material significance, to the extent that, in the discourses and rhetoric of the Bangladeshis themselves, it is proudly identified as 'The Bangla Capital' of the province: 'Alte is our Capital. [. . .] We now say "Banglatown"'. (Tipu)

Finally, the arrival and stabilization of foreign people in Alte from the 1990s onwards can be seen as part of a migratory dynamic that affects the entire province of Vicenza and the Veneto region, and that highlights the continuity of

the phenomenon. For instance, until 2014, the issue and renewal of residence permits continued to be for work (53%) or family (42%) reasons, with negligible numbers issued for other reasons (health, study and asylum) (ISTAT 2023).⁴

7. Alte Ceccato as a departure point

Over the course of the 2010s, some migratory dynamics in Vicenza and Alte Ceccato showed signs of change. First, the entry of foreigners into the province decreased: there were only 2,167 new entries in 2020 while 10 years earlier there had been close to 16,000 annually (ISTAT 2023). Meanwhile, migrants who had been in the territory for some time were more likely than ever to obtain Italian citizenship⁵: between 2013 and 2017, almost 6,000 foreigners became Italian citizens in the province each year. Reduced arrivals, dual citizenship, and secondary migrations to other European countries intersected in the 2010s (Della Puppa 2018; Della Puppa and King 2019) and led to a province-wide reduction in the foreign population from 96,000 in 2014 to 67,000 in 2022 (ISTAT 2023).

Let's return to the Bangladeshi community to understand the transformation of Alte Ceccato in more detail. Like the rest of the foreign workforce in Italy (Avola and Piccitto 2020; Fullin 2011), Bangladeshis had long been confined to the secondary sector and especially to leather manufacturing that provided a secure wage in exchange for a low-skilled and demanding job. The economic crisis deepened this trade-off between employment and poor working conditions (Ambrosini and Panichella 2016), making labour segregation even more burdensome for migrants and fuelling the fear that their children would also remain 'manual workers for life' (Sayad 1999b), experiencing downward assimilation (Portes and Zhou 1993). Within the Bangladeshi community increasingly difficult material conditions created a growing sense of symbolic exclusion (Della Puppa and Gelati 2015) in which Islamophobia also played a strong role (Allievi 2012):

I don't go to the mosque all the time. Sometimes I would like to pray, but the municipality is creating too many problems for us to go to the mosque. Because they say we're causing disturbances, that we're dangerous. So I pray here, in my house, because this administration doesn't want Islam, they don't want Muslim people to practice their religion here.

(Shafiq)

To avoid the failure of their migratory project many Bangladeshi families left Alte, mostly moving to the UK where they hoped to find a more dynamic labour market (Della Puppa and Gelati 2015) and better opportunities for their children, as well as a large and supportive Bangladeshi community and a multicultural context more attentive to Islamic and Bangladeshi traditions (Della Puppa and King 2019). Italian citizenship made this onward migration

easier, taking on a double meaning: the right to stay in Italy as citizens but also the right to move, especially within the European Union (Della Puppa 2018).

These movements appear embedded in a renewed flow of emigration from Italy which gained consistency during the 2010s to the extent that the Italian migratory balance turned negative again (Sanfilippo 2017). The new wave of Italian emigration shows both continuity with the past – such as for the link with processes of impoverishment and underemployment and the direction towards Northern Europe and North America – as well as interesting novelties like the urban origin of emigrants (both from the North and the South) and their greater social diversity (Gjergji 2015). The reference is also to the presence of numerous migrants and migrants' descendants who, after many years spent in Italy (or even though they were born in the country), take up the migration route again (Sanfilippo 2017), as also evident among the Bangladeshis in Alte Ceccato.

Within this complex configuration, while some migrants left the hamlet, others settled more deeply into local life and newcomers continued to arrive. As far as Bangladeshis were concerned, new arrivals – from Bangladesh and from other parts of Italy – were made both for family reunification and for work. In the former case, there were even instances of parental reunification, a phenomenon that reaffirmed the mature nature of Bangladeshi migration, as emphasized by the local doctor in the town:

When they feel they have reached an acceptable state of well-being, they also bring over other relatives. In the last four or five years, we have seen older people arriving, at least in terms of the turnout at the clinic, and when it comes to people on the street, a lot of white beards are starting to be seen.

(Pietro)

In the second case, that of arrivals for work, between 2012 and 2014, 200 Bangladeshis came to Alte, half of whom arrived directly from Bangladesh. While these figures are a far cry from those of the 2000s, they confirm the strength of migratory networks and the central role played by Alte for the Bangladeshi diaspora in Italy, especially in those years when community, family, or friend based welfare was more important than ever to survive the crisis.

8. Changes and continuities in the most recent migration season

In the course of the last decade, the channels used to arrive in Alte have partially changed. If until 2014 more than half of the new residence permits in the province of Vicenza were issued 'for work reasons', in the last eight years they have made up only a quarter of the total, with 60% being issued for family reasons (ISTAT 2023). This is also confirmed by Giovanni, an employee at the Municipality of Montecchio Maggiore:

Migration here is above all related to family unification, characterized by a male first-migrant who left their country of origin, got married rigorously in that country to be reunited some years later with his wife and children, if he has any. The children are either born in Italy or are reunited with him in this way.

(Giovanni)

Thus, while fewer migrant workers are arriving from abroad, more wives and children are joining those who have already settled in the area, reinforcing the existing migrant communities. Quantitative data confirms this trend [Table 1](#).

As shown in the data, even today the number of foreign people in Alte is growing, confirming the strong migratory vocation of this small hamlet, which is not compromised by the structural difficulties characterizing migrants' housing and working conditions, nor by the emergence of the subjective trajectories of onward migration. In fact, although the economic crisis continues to affect the local industrial district, a walk around the factories and the surrounding neighbourhood reveals a vibrant economy and an urban asset in constant renewal – with new infrastructure, neighbourhood shops, and housing opportunities. These act as forces of attraction, as confirmed by the data related to the new entries of foreign people in the municipality, which only include people with a regular residence permit and a permanent address [Table 2](#).

Both tables also show how the pandemic reduced new arrivals only during its outbreak, in 2020. Apparently, other events in recent Italian and international history had more influence on Alte's migratory stratification. The first is the so-called 'refugee crisis', which, based on the secondary data and our qualitative accounts, seems to have had a much greater influence on the political debate than on the actual socio-territorial context of the study. In fact, looking at provincial data, the share of permits issued for asylum was 2% of the total between 2008 and 2014, the same as between 2019 and 2022. However, in the years ranging from 2015 to 2018, 2,771 residence permits were issued for asylum and humanitarian reasons, 16% of the total of new

Table 1. Third country nationals (TCN) citizens in Montecchio Maggiore and Alte Ceccato.

On 12/ 31	Tot. residents in Alte Ceccato	TCN citizens in Alte Ceccato	Tot. TCN citizens in Alte Ceccato/ Tot.TCN citizens in the municipality	% TCN citizens in tot. population of Alte Ceccato
2017	6,664	1554	54,1%	23.3%
2018	6,751	1698	54,8%	25.1%
2019	6,688	1794	56,8%	26.8%
2020	6,668	1773	57.5%	26.5%
2021	6,755	1856	58%	27.4%
2022	6,911	1974	58.5%	28.5%

Source: Elaboration by the Authors from data kindly provided by the Municipality of Montecchio Maggiore.

Table 2. New registry entries of foreign people in Montecchio Maggiore by area.

Year	TCN	UE
2018	521	61
2019	484	61
2020	365	49
2021	504	52
2022	570	42

Source: Elaboration kindly provided by the Municipality of Montecchio Maggiore.

permits issued in those years (ISTAT 2023).⁶ Although the arrival of asylum seekers has been of some significance it has not affected the composition of foreigners in the area, given also that some of the largest nationalities in the reception centres coincide with historical immigrant communities (from Ghana, Bangladesh, and Pakistan: Prefecture of Vicenza, 2022). It thus seems that, thanks to the central role of community networks, previous migratory stratifications managed to persist even in times of change and that ingress and egress migratory movements have not radically altered the national composition of the workforce in the area. This also resonates with Giovanni's experience:

In Montecchio Maggiore there are a number of refugees and asylum seekers, but they are a very small part of the migrant population. Most foreigners are migrants with residence permits for work or family reunification reasons. The new arrivals are mainly migrants who were already resident in other Italian municipalities.

(Giovanni)

The second recent turning point was Brexit, when the UK left the European Union. As seen earlier, in previous years many new Italian citizens of Bangladeshi origin started an onward migration, moving from Italy – and Alte Ceccato – to the UK in search of new opportunities (Della Puppa and King 2019). With the completion of Brexit these new departures stopped:

Before the UK's exit from the EU, the Municipality received a lot of pressure from foreign nationals to obtain citizenship. After Brexit, requests to relocate as a result of obtaining citizenship have dropped significantly. There are still some requests to relocate, perhaps to France or Germany, but most of those who obtain Italian citizenship remain in Montecchio and Alte.

(Giovanni)

Today, in the municipality of Montecchio Maggiore (in which the hamlet of Alte Ceccato is located) 21% of foreigners are Bangladeshis, followed by 14% Indians, and a number of other communities mentioned above (Serbia, Romania, Ghana, Albania are the other nationalities with above 5% of the total) (ISTAT 2023), proving the resilience of the local migratory stratification.

Although some constant increases in the presence – such as that of Indians – and decreases – such as that of Albanese – those five foreign nationalities have been the most consistent in numbers in the last five years (2018–22).

Despite these continuities, new trends and changes seem to be emerging in Alte and the province of Vicenza in general. For instance, in the last four years (2019–2022), almost 40% of new foreign workers were recruited through employment agencies and not directly through workplaces (Prefettura di Vicenza 2022), showing that the occupations reserved for migrants are becoming increasingly precarious:

They gave me a six-month contract, then another six months and another eight months and from there the [recruitment agency] prepared a permanent contract that began last year [...] [the agency] can send me to different companies, but the problem is the staff, they don't pay. The agency staff they don't pay, with them your income is always minimal.

(Damian)

One day the agency called me and told me they had found a job for me. I said: 'Are you kidding?'. So I went there to sign a contract, the first contract was only for three days. They sent me to the company. I started working and on the second day the agency called me and said: 'The company says you're good! So it will give you a one month contract'. Then they gave me three months, then five months, then another two months. I worked with an agency for nine months, then I was transferred under the company with a permanent contract.

(Kalifa)

This worsening of working conditions and lowering of workers' rights can be traced back to the tightening – in Italy, in Europe, in the world – of liberalistic policies and deregulation of the labour market. This is a reality that mainly affects those who are entering the job market for the first time and who, therefore, are faced with a more precarious and vulnerable working position, that is above all the most recent immigrant workers: a further (and more recent) 'layer' of the immigration ages that characterize Alte Ceccato.

Data also shows that there is an incredibly high turnover in the employment of migrants in the province of Vicenza (Fullin 2011). For example, 20% of Serbian migrants either find or change jobs every year, 35% of Asian migrants (Indians, Bangladeshis, and Chinese) and 55% of Senegalese and Nigerian migrants. This data suggests that the newest communities provide the new workforce but also that they experience a higher turnover. Migratory seniority clearly has a significant influence on access to local resources (Norbert and Scotson 1965), and the more recent arrivals within the migratory stratification are likely to experience job insecurity and social marginalization:

I've spent seven years not seeing my family, so I need to establish myself really well so that I can bring my family here. Because without an apartment you

cannot [reunite with your family]... I've been searching for a year and nine months now and I haven't found any [...] I think it's not a lack of housing, I think that people don't want to rent, especially to us Africans. It's not only about us Africans, but especially... because there are people that were here before, now they are not here anymore, they've been relocated to another country and they've messed things up for us.

(Howard)

When this dynamic is combined with symbolic hierarchies (such as those that marginalize black people or Muslim people) and civic stratifications (Morris 2003), the complexity of migratory configurations further increases.

9. Conclusions

We have traced the migratory history of the small hamlet of Alte Ceccato and in part of the province of Vicenza. Despite its apparent specificity, Alte Ceccato is paradigmatic of the history of Italy's migratory dynamics, such as the shift from being a country of emigration to one of immigration, all within a more complex international migratory context.

In this context, the industrial structure of Alte was capable of adapting to transformations in the capitalist system, changing from a Fordist town to become a part of a larger industrial district. Due to its ability to adapt, this small hamlet has always remained a pole of attraction for new labour. At the same time, the connotations associated with the town have led those who no longer work in local industries (or who do not want their children working in them) to leave Alte, in a cycle of arrivals and departures that has triggered various labour and ecological 'successions' (see: Massey 1983). This study on Alte has firstly shown how certain localities, due to the characteristics of their labour markets and urban geographies, can become such strong contexts of migratory stratification that even negative conjunctures (such as economic or pandemic crises) can be overcome, such that they continue to attract different groups of immigrants over many decades.

Secondly, the study showed how the different 'ages of immigration' (see Sayad 1999b) that make up the local migratory stratifications do not follow each other in a disjointed manner, but on the contrary interact with one another and gradually modify the context of reference. In the case of Alte, for instance, the arrival of foreign workers in the 1990s did not simply replace Southern Italian workers but connected Alte with transnational networks, reactivated a few decades later when the economic crisis pushed some Bangladeshi migrants to move to London. The changes introduced by the build-up of migratory stratification are first and foremost social, connected to the changing symbolic hierarchies between old inhabitants and newcomers (Norbert and Scotson 1965), but they are also materially rooted and made

visible in urban graffiti, the signage of neighbourhood shops, and in advertising flyers, but also in smells, sounds, and languages that resist or vanish, leaving only traces on the territory.

Finally, the perspective of migratory stratification has shown how the settlement of new groups and individuals is shaped by the structural conditions (legislation and labour supply) and social resources present in a given context. In Alte, for example, the settlement of a large Bangladeshi community able to experience social ageing (Norbert and Scotson 1965), made them particularly resilient and still able to attract newcomers. Therefore, despite phases of change, local migratory stratifications appear to possess a certain degree of resilience since already established migratory networks support newcomers to fit into the local context, according to the employment, housing and legal possibilities available (Hily, Berthomière, and Mihaylova 2004).

It seems necessary to understand these mechanisms in order to empirically support grounded analyses of migration that avoid attempts to politicize the phenomenon. In the case of Alte, for example, the data makes it clear that the much-feared 'refugee crisis' only marginally impacted on the local migratory stratification, which had been quietly and continuously building up over the previous decades.

In conclusion, by focusing on local manifestations of migration through a diachronic lens, the perspective of migratory stratification acts as an intersection of some of the most recent trends in migration studies (Baas and Yeoh 2019; Mercier, Chiffolleau, and Thoemmes 2021), allowing for an understanding of how territorial communities are (or are not) structured within a circumscribed space. In fact, as there are changes in the people who cross a territory, inhabit it or settle in it, the attractive forces (the labour market) and expulsive forces (reception, housing, and social policies) can be inquired into their changes and continuities. In this sense, the perspective of migratory stratification realizes the potential of migration to act as a 'mirror' (Sayad 1999a, 7), allowing for a detailed understanding of the territories in which it takes root.

Notes

1. The Chiampo Valley is one of the leading Italian leather districts. It comprises the municipality of Chiampo and Arizignano, but its inducement depends also from the factories which are placed in the neighbour municipalities (e.g. Montebello Maggiore and Montebello).
2. All names provided in the interview excerpts quoted in the text are fictitious.
3. Since their beginnings in the 90s, the Italian migration policies have been foreseeing a deep link between residence permit and employment (Della Puppa, Enrico, and Michela 2020). In 2000s, regular channels to enter the national territory through the system of quotas (established number of immigrant labour force allowed to enter regularly the national territory), although scarce, were still open. Moreover, there have been some amnesties which

allowed many irregular migrants, often employed in the agricultural sector in the South, to find a regular job and obtain or renew a residence permit.

4. Data concerning the issue and renewal of residence permit are particularly important in reading the effects of migration policies on a territory and, more in general, to understand the processes of migratory stratification. In this second age, the securitization and criminalization approach to international migrations had already started, but borders were still relatively open. This political conjuncture allowed first-generation male migrants to settle and to be able, although with some difficulties, to re-unite their families, leading to the passage from a work migration to a family migration.
5. According to the Italian citizenship law (Law 91/1992), a first-generation migrant, who is not a refugee, can apply for the Italian citizenship after having spent 10 years of continuous residence in the country. This is the case of the Bangladeshi men who settled in Alte Ceccato .
6. This increase in asylum requests can be also justified by the fact that it has been always more difficult for migrant people to enter regularly – and in a safe manner – the national territory.

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