

Special Issue
Migratory Stratification.
A New Analytical Perspective for a
Stratigraphy of Human Mobilities,
Socio-Territorial Transformation
and Cultural Change

FUORI LUOGO

Journal of Sociology of Territory,
Tourism, Technology

Guest Editors

Francesco Della Puppa

Giuliana Sanò

Giulia Storato



Editor in Chief: Fabio Corbisiero
Managing Editor: Carmine Urciuoli

Vol. 25 - Number 2 - September 2026 – YEAR IX
FedOA - Federico II University Press
ISSN (online) 2723-9608 - ISSN (print) 2532-750X

Special Issue
Migratory Stratification.
A New Analytical Perspective for a
Stratigraphy of Human Mobilities,
Socio-Territorial Transformation
and Cultural Change

FUORI LUOGO

Journal of Sociology of Territory,
Tourism, Technology

Guest editors

Francesco Della Puppa
Giuliana Sanò
Giulia Storato

Editor in chief: Fabio Corbisiero
Editorial manager: Carmine Urciuoli



Vol. 25 - Number 2 - September 2026 – YEAR IX
FedOA - Federico II University Press

ISSN (online) 2723-9608 - ISSN (print) 2532-750X

Summary

9. Editorial

The Depth of Places: Migration, Sedimentation, and Social Transformation

Fabio Corbisiero

13. Migratory Stratification. A new analytical perspective for a stratigraphy of human mobilities, socio-territorial transformation and cultural change

Francesco Della Puppa, Giuliana Sanò, Giulia Storato

17. Vertical migration in the Italian metromountain: migratory stratifications between agency and structural constraints

Andrea Membretti, Fabio Lucchini

27. Between factories and agencies. Migratory stratifications and changes in immigrant labour: the case of Alte Ceccato

Andrea Calabretta, Davide Marchi

41. Migratory Stratifications in a Border Transit Camp. The case study of Friedland in Germany

Anna Louise Weßling

53. «You feel like a person, not a working animal»: Emancipation trajectories after labour exploitation in Northern Italy

Franca Zadra, Serena Piovesan

3T SECTION

3T READINGS

75. Della Puppa, F., Lise, A., Matteuzzi, F., Saresin, F., & Storato, G. (2024). *I disconosciuti. Vivere e sopravvivere al di fuori del sistema di accoglienza*. BeccoGiallo.

Francesca Cimino reads

77. Ruggeri, S. (2023). *Voci da Grafica Veneta. Esperienze di vita e di lavoro nel Veneto contemporaneo tra capitalismo flessibile e caporalato*. ISTRESCO

Teresa Ferraresi reads

81. Reed-Danahay, D. (2024). *Sideways migration: Being French in London*. Routledge

Andrea Calabretta reads

FUORI LUOGO MEETING

87. Migratory Stratifications and the Dynamics of Global and Euro-Mediterranean Migration: an interview with Ibrahim Sirkeci

Francesco Della Puppa, Andrea Calabretta

FUORI LUOGO CONTRIBUTIONS

95. For a Sociology of Literature. Dystopia and Utopia in Philip K. Dick

Linda De Feo

103. Climate Justice and Biodiversity in the Mediterranean Basin

Alessandra Terenzi, Nunzia Borrelli

117. Stylistic-Linguistic Paths in Early Twenty-First-Century Travel Literature. Paolo Rumiz and the Gaze Toward Europe and the East

Milena Elisa Daniela Romano

131. Posillipo, tra fascinazione e deprivazione. Riflessioni sulla dimensione turistica di un quartiere "esclusivo"

Luca Zarrilli

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Fabio Corbisiero (University of Naples Federico II)

✉ direttore@fuoriluogo.info

EDITORIAL MANAGER

Carmine Urciuoli

✉ caporedattore@fuoriluogo.info

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Fabio Amato (University of Naples L'Orientale), Enrica Amato (University of Naples Federico II), Francesco Antonelli (Roma Tre University), Biagio Aragona (University of Naples Federico II), Adam Erik Arvidsson (University of Naples Federico II), Rossella Barile (EPNV), Elisabetta Bellotti (University of Manchester), Erika Bernacchi (University PEGASO), Kath Browne (Maynooth University), Domenico Caputo (University of Naples Federico II), Amalia Caputo (University of Naples Federico II), Gilda Catalano (University of Calabria), Matteo Colleoni (University of Milano-Bicocca), Paola Conti (EPNV), Linda De Feo (University of Naples Federico II), Paola de Salvo (University of Perugia), Paola De Vivo (University of Naples Federico II), Abdelhadi El Halhouli (Sultan Moulay Slimane University of Beni Mellal, Morocco), Domenica Fari-nella (University of Messina), Claudia Florio (University of Naples Federico II), Giovanna Gianturco (Sapienza University of Rome), Luca Guizzardi (University of Bologna), Mohamed Hadach (Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco), Karima Khalil (Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco), Mariano Longo (University of Salento), Vincenzo Luise (University of Naples Federico II), Fabiola Mancinelli (University of Barcelona), Luca Marano (University of Naples Federico II), Mara Maretta (Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara), Giuseppe Masullo (University of Salerno), Pietro Maturi (University of Naples Federico II), Antonio Maturò (University of Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum), Claudio Milano (Autonomous University of Barcelona), Salvatore Monaco (University of Foggia), Khalid Mouna (Moulay Ismail University of Meknes, Morocco), Pierluigi Musarò (University of Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum), Mariella Nocenzi (LUMSA University), Katherine O'Donnell (UCD - University College Dublin), Giustina Orientale Caputo (University of Naples Federico II), Alfonso Pezzella (University of Naples Federico II), Gaia Peruzzi (Sapienza University of Rome), Jason Pine (State University of New York), José Ignacio Pichardo Galán (Complutense University of Madrid), Tullio Romita (University of Calabria), Emanuele Rossi (Roma Tre University), Mariella Ronza (University of Naples Federico II), Sarah Siciliano (University of Salento), Federica Viganò (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano), Annamaria Vitale (University of Calabria), Anna Maria Zaccaria (University of Naples Federico II), Eugenio Zito (University of Naples Federico II).

EDITORIAL BOARD

Antonella Berritto (University of Naples Federico II) Naples, Italy

✉ antonella.berritto@fuoriluogo.info

Amalia Caputo (University of Naples Federico II) Naples, Italy

✉ amalia.caputo@fuoriluogo.info

Rosanna Cataldo (University of Naples Federico II) Naples, Italy

✉ rosanna.cataldo@fuoriluogo.info

Linda De Feo (University of Naples Federico II) Naples, Italy

✉ linda.defeo@fuoriluogo.info

Gianluca Di Martino (University of Naples Federico II) Naples, Italy

✉ gianluca.dimartino@fuoriluogo.info

Monica Gilli (University of Turin) Turin, Italy

✉ monica.gilli@fuoriluogo.info

Santina Musolino (Roma Tre University) Rome, Italy

✉ santina.musolino@fuoriluogo.info

Marco Pizzi (University of Perugia) Perugia, Italy

✉ marco.pizzi@fuoriluogo.info

Ciro Prospero (University of Naples Federico II) Naples, Italy

✉ ciro.prospero@fuoriluogo.info

Mara Sanfelici (University of Milano-Bicocca) Milan, Italy

✉ mara.sanfelici@fuoriluogo.info

Francesco Santelli (University of Trieste) Trieste, Italy

✉ francesco.santelli@fuoriluogo.info

English text editor: Pietro Maturi.

Cover by Fabio Improta. Original photo by Emiliano Grigis.

PUBLISHER



FedOA - Federico II University Press
Centro di Ateneo per le Biblioteche "Roberto Pettorino"
Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II

The publisher is responsible for the journal's publication infrastructure.
Scientific and editorial responsibility for the contents rests with the journal and the authors.

Registered at the Court of Naples, no. 59 of 20 December 2016.
Responsible Director: Carmine Urciuoli
ISSN online 2723-9608 – ISSN print 2532-750X

<https://serena.sharepress.it/index.php/fuoriluogo>
redazione@fuoriluogo.info

Articles

Aims and scope Fuori Luogo. Journal of Sociology of Territory, Tourism, Technology is a peer-reviewed scientific journal devoted to critical and interdisciplinary inquiry into the relations among territories, mobilities, tourism, technologies and social change.

Peer review Research articles are evaluated through a double-blind peer-review procedure. The Editorial Board verifies the scientific relevance, formal suitability and ethical integrity of submissions before and after review.

Open access The journal supports open and responsible circulation of scholarly knowledge. Published contributions remain attributable to their authors and are made available according to the licence stated on the journal website.

Publication ethics Authors, reviewers and editors are required to respect principles of originality, transparency, confidentiality, impartiality and correct attribution. Conflicts of interest must be disclosed to the Editorial Board.

Copyright and permissions Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce copyrighted material and for the accuracy of quotations, references, data and images included in their contributions.

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Contacts

Editorial Office: redazione@fuoriluogo.info

<https://serena.sharepress.it/index.php/fuoriluogo>

The Depth of Places: Migration, Sedimentation, and Social Transformation

Every territory carries the memory of the movements that have crossed it. That memory is not confined to archives, statistics, or family stories. It can be read in the built environment, in the organisation of work, in material and symbolic borders, and in institutions, languages, and everyday practices. Migration does not simply pass through places: it helps to make them. It leaves traces that continue to shape social life long after the circumstances that produced them have changed. This is one of the central insights of Sayad's understanding of immigration as a "total social fact", à la Marcel Mauss. Migration cannot be grasped through economics, law, or culture alone, because each of these dimensions is bound up with the others (Sayad, 2004). The topic that runs through this issue - migratory stratification - invites us to give those intersections historical depth and social density. The image of the stratum is useful because it takes migration out of the register of permanent emergency. Public debate tends to present every new arrival as an unprecedented event, detached from what came before and destined to produce an absolute rupture. Historical sociology tells a different story. Foner's comparison of New York's two great eras of immigration shows that each cohort enters a city already transformed, materially and institutionally, by earlier arrivals (Foner, 2000). In this sense, layering is not simply a metaphor borrowed from geology. It also evokes what Glick Schiller and Çağlar describe as the scale-making processes through which migrants and localities continually reshape one another (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011). To speak of stratification, however, is not to imagine territory as an inert deposit. Social strata are not neatly stacked layers, nor are they remnants of the past waiting to be uncovered. They overlap, shift, and acquire new meanings as institutions, policies, and social relations change. Research on precarious immigration status shows how legal and administrative systems produce differentiated forms of inclusion, rather than a simple divide between regular and irregular migrants (Goldring *et al.*, 2009). Anthias's concept of translocational positionality broadens this perspective by showing how legal status intersects with class, gender, ethnicity, generation, and place, positioning people differently across time and space (Anthias, 2008). From this perspective, the past is not buried beneath the present but remains active within it. Administrative categories, labour-market hierarchies, reception systems, community networks, and representations of otherness accumulate and are continually reworked. They shape, without ever completely determining, the opportunities available to those who arrive later. One strength of this perspective is that it keeps the *longue durée* of social transformation in view without losing sight of individual lives. Bourdieu's account of "capital" (1986) is especially helpful here. Unequal stocks of economic, cultural, and social capital, often shaped by earlier migratory histories, produce unequal opportunities to settle, find work, and imagine a future. To treat migration as a total social fact is therefore to connect its economic, political, cultural, spatial, and temporal dimensions. It also means refusing a sterile choice between structural analysis, in which people disappear, and biographical analysis, in which power and history fade from view. Migratory stratification brings the relationship between the two into focus: structures orient lives, while people, through adaptation, resistance, and invention, also alter the structures they inhabit. The framework becomes still more productive when mobility is examined through its infrastructures. Xiang and Lindquist show that migration is never a "spontaneous flow"; it is channelled through technologies, intermediaries, institutions, and regulations that together form a migration infrastructure (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014). At the urban scale, Meeus, Arnaut, and van Heur describe the facilities, associations, services, and networks through which newcomers find a foothold as arrival infrastructures (Meeus, Arnaut, & van Heur, 2019). These arrangements do not begin again with every new arrival. They accumulate experience, resources, routines, and exclusions from successive migrations. A similar temporal layering is visible in border and transit

regimes. Agier's analysis of camps shows how displaced people are received, classified, and represented through dispositifs that change over time yet remain anchored in particular spaces. The camp thus becomes at once a threshold, a border, and a condition of prolonged uncertainty (Agier, 2011). Emancipation has a stratigraphy of its own. Leaving conditions of labour exploitation is rarely a single, decisive passage. More often, it is a cumulative and uneven process that unfolds across transnational relationships, local services, and institutional arrangements, some of which create opportunities, while others reproduce dependence. Wacquant's work on advanced marginality reminds us that movement out of precarious positions depends on resources that build over time and are unequally distributed, rather than on one legal decision or biographical turning point (Wacquant, 2008). Security, autonomy, and dignity are pieced together gradually, through setbacks as well as recognition, new rights, and material gains. The archaeological metaphor must itself remain open to criticism. Geological sediment does not struggle over meaning; social strata do. Later arrivals can change how earlier migrations are remembered, while established groups may invoke selected versions of the past to legitimise themselves or to exclude newcomers. Stratification is therefore best treated as a heuristic device, not as a neutral description of a natural process. Only then can the metaphor illuminate power relations rather than quietly smoothing them away. Taken together, these perspectives make clear that migratory strata cannot be reduced to national groups succeeding one another over time. They include legal regimes, economic models, public representations, infrastructures, and unequal experiences of time. This allows us to ask not only who moves, but who is able to move; who is made to wait; who is detained; who is recognised; and on what terms. The archaeological metaphor thus acquires a political force: it brings into view what an exclusive focus on the present tends to conceal. Nor should place be treated as a ready-made container for these processes. Massey understood place as a provisional constellation of relations rather than a fixed object: an encounter among trajectories that might always have been assembled differently (Massey, 2005). This is precisely where a sociology of territory has work to do, at the points of connection between global processes and everyday lives, between memory and future projects, and between material change and social imaginaries. Migratory stratification is not offered here as a finished formula. Its value lies in the research questions it opens. Its comparative usefulness will need to be tested in cities and rural areas, borderlands, industrial districts, tourist regions, and territories increasingly shaped by climate crisis. We need to examine how strata overlap, reinforce one another, and come into conflict, while continuing to question the limits of the metaphor itself. Above all, the voices of those who live through these transformations must enter the analysis not merely as testimony, but as forms of knowledge capable of challenging the categories through which migration is studied. Ultimately, this issue asks us to change both the timing and the position of our gaze. To hold the camera on a place is not to freeze reality; it is to observe movement with greater depth. Every territorial present is composed of earlier passages, of presences that have become familiar, and of forms of otherness that are continually being reconstructed. Reading these sediments helps to free migration from the rhetoric of exception and return it to the social history of places. From that depth, a more rigorous understanding, and perhaps a more just politics of living together, can emerge.

If migratory stratification invites us to read territory as a repository of human passages that accumulate, overlap, and are reconfigured over time, the contributions that follow extend this same interpretive principle to phenomena seemingly far removed from international mobility. The exclusive neighbourhood, the Mediterranean basin, the travel narrative, and even the dystopian fictional universe all share a fundamental insight with the theme of migration: no space, physical, social, or imaginary, is ever neutral or given once and for all. Rather, it is the outcome of layers of power that have sedimented over time and that a critical gaze, situated at the margins, can bring to light. In this sense, the "open-topic" essays do not merely coexist alongside the thematic section; they extend its interpretive logic, shifting the focus from the mobile body of the migrant to the body of the territory itself, as inhabited, traversed, or narrated. Despite their disci-

plinary heterogeneity—literary criticism, environmental geopolitics, stylistic-linguistic analysis, and tourism geography—the four contributions share at least three thematic axes that allow them to be read not as a miscellany but as a coherent constellation organised around a common problem: the non-neutrality of space and the possibility of an alternative gaze capable of exposing it. The first axis is space as a device of power and exclusion. In each essay, a space—urban, coastal, narrative, or geopolitical—ceases to be a neutral backdrop and becomes a surface onto which power relations are inscribed. The hillside neighbourhood that simultaneously fascinates and repels, denying access to the sea and to greenery behind the veil of private property; the maritime basin divided between two shores according to extractive logics inherited from colonialism; and the dystopian narrative universe, where the human body is colonised by technologies and capital that redraw its boundaries, all reveal a space that is produced, never given, and therefore always contestable. This convergence resonates productively with the issue's guiding theme even where the essays do not address it directly: space, everywhere, sediments history and inequality. The second axis is the marginal or deviant gaze as a critical instrument. The oblique gaze of the traveller moving by train or bicycle along Europe's margins, refusing codified itineraries; the gaze of the "expert" tourist who eschews the panoramic bus to grasp a neighbourhood's social stratification; and the science-fictional gaze that, by inverting the categories of the real, allows a critical reading of the present through its imaginative distortion. In every case, authentic knowledge of space does not arise from a dominant or official viewpoint, but from a decentred and lateral position. The third axis, less visible but equally recurrent, is slowness as a practice of resistance. Solitary cycling, "slow nomadism" set against hit-and-run tourism, and the invitation to a pedestrian experience of the exclusive neighbourhood against its fruition from the height of the tour bus make slowness not merely an aesthetic choice but a method of knowledge opposed to the logics of speed, exploitation, and extraction.

Read in this light, the four essays are not an extraneous body within the monographic issue, but function almost as its thematic counterpoint: where the migratory stratification section interrogates the historical sedimentation of inequality across the territories traversed by people, these contributions interrogate, from different angles, the sedimentation of power within lived, narrated, and traversed spaces, and the possibility of a lateral gaze capable of rendering it visible.

References

- Agier, M. (2011). *Managing the undesirables: Refugee camps and humanitarian government*. Polity Press.
- Anthias, F. (2008). Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: An intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations: Migration and Social Change*, 4(1), 5–20.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- Foner, N. (2000). *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's two great waves of immigration*. Yale University Press.
- Glick Schiller, N., & Çağlar, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Locating migration: Rescaling cities and migrants*. Cornell University Press.
- Goldring, L., Berinstein, C., & Bernhard, J. K. (2009). Institutionalizing precarious migratory status in Canada. *Citizenship Studies*, 13(3), 239–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020902850643>
- Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. SAGE.
- Meeus, B., Arnaut, K., & van Heur, B. (Eds.). (2019). *Arrival infrastructures: Migration and urban social mobilities*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91167-0>
- Sayad, A. (2004). *The suffering of the immigrant*. Polity Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2008). *Urban outcasts: A comparative sociology of advanced marginality*. Polity Press.
- Xiang, B., & Lindquist, J. (2014). Migration infrastructure. *International Migration Review*, 48(S1), S122–S148. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12141>

Migratory Stratification. A new analytical perspective for a stratigraphy of human mobilities, socio-territorial transformation and cultural change

Migration, whether international or internal, constitutes both a driving force and a manifestation of the profound social, cultural, economic, demographic, and territorial transformations affecting contemporary societies. Migration processes are deeply intertwined with global dynamics, by which they are shaped and which, in turn, they contribute to transforming at both national and local scales.

Drawing on Mauss's formulation, later applied to human mobility by Sayad, migration may be interpreted as a total social fact: a phenomenon that interdependently involves human practices and experiences across their social, economic, political, cultural, and religious dimensions, together with systems of world representation.

Starting from these premises and adopting a diachronic perspective, it becomes possible to observe, on the one hand, the transformations that migration processes produce within societies of origin, transit, and destination and, on the other, the progressive sedimentation of different migratory epochs, shaped by changing global and local scenarios and embedded within material artefacts and socio-cultural practices.

The contributions presented here focus, through specific empirical cases, precisely on this sedimentation and, therefore, on what may be defined in terms of migratory stratification, an expression through which we refer to the superimposition of different migratory phenomena that, during partially overlapping historical periods, affect the same socio-territorial context.

Migratory stratifications leave traces within territories and societies that sediment over time without entirely erasing previous ones, thereby contributing to the construction of continuously transforming social landscapes. These landscapes are composed of a plurality of heterogeneous elements which may nevertheless reveal a degree of semantic coherence. Indeed, the same social landscape may be traversed, across different historical and social epochs, by successive waves of immigration, emigration, and transit of diverse origins and forms, enacted through multiple modalities and involving a multiplicity of individual and collective actors characterized by distinct sociological and identity-related features.

Within migration studies, the principal theoretical constructs and analytical perspectives – from Sayad's double absence (1999) to transnationalism (Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992), from translocal positionality and translocations (Anthias, 2006; 2008; 2011), to mobility regimes (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) and motility (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2004) – focus attention on the trajectories of subjects and the intertwining of their geographical and spatial, social and identity-based, legal and normative, as well as temporal mobilities and immobilities, insofar as these are shaped within specific policies of spatial and temporal control (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024; Sanò *et al.*, 2024; Storato *et al.*, 2023). Employing a visual and cinematic metaphor, we might argue that the camera follows individual and collective actors in their movements through physical-geographical and social space, progressively revealing the social complexity and subjectivities that emerge from it. However, if the camera were kept fixed on a specific frame, it would become possible to record a sequence of snapshots capable of highlighting the sedimentation and superimposition of different migratory moments, understood as dynamic phases within the process of social transformation triggered by migration phenomena within a specific contextual – national, territorial, social, demographic, cultural, artistic, economic, or institutional – field.

1 Francesco Della Puppa, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, francesco.dellapuppa@unive.it, ORCID 0000-0003-1437-4719; Giuliana Sanò, Department of Cognitive Sciences, Psychology, Education and Cultural Studies, University of Messina, giuliana.sano@unime.it, ORCID 0000-0002-8971-1540; Giulia Storato, Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, giulia.storato@unive.it, ORCID 0000-0003-2565-6199.

Maintaining the camera in a fixed position – to continue the cinematic and photographic metaphor — and adopting an apparently circumscribed observational standpoint does not imply a crystallization of the gaze or of its object. On the contrary, such a perspective allows social change and transformative processes affecting all spheres of society to become more visible. Indeed, this approach makes it possible to isolate the connections and feedback loops between the structural dimension of global phenomena and the traces they produce within the observed space, where the sedimentation and overlapping of migratory phenomena become manifest.

The perspective of migratory stratification finds its most immediate application in sociology and urban anthropology, cultural studies, urban narratives and literary representations of cities, as well as territorial and spatial approaches. The superimposition of different population arrivals, occurring at different moments within the same territorial context, has long attracted attention within urban studies, albeit without being conceptualized in these terms. We may think, for example, of the ecological succession model developed by Robert Park (1936a; 1936b) and his analysis of the “competition” between city dwellers and newcomers, centred upon stakes involving both material and symbolic resources, eventually leading to a restored equilibrium within a situation of “community order.” By focusing on physical replacement within urban areas (Massey, 1983), Park’s ecological succession model incorporated a local and contextual perspective attentive to intergroup conflict dynamics. Although this model was subsequently criticized – understandably – for its biological and mechanistic reductionism and its evolutionist assumptions, the study of relations between “old residents” and “newcomers” (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015) soon re-emerged and was revitalized within sociological studies (Elias & Scotson, 1965).

Adopting the analytical perspective of migratory stratification means acknowledging, following Charles Wright Mills’s intuition (1959), the necessity of connecting the socio-anthropological interpretation of transformations produced by migration phenomena to broader historical processes, while considering both their structural repercussions at the local level and the subjective trajectories of individuals. The “migratory landscape” of a given historical moment, as well as the biographies of the subjects moving through it, can only be fully understood when situated within the historically and processually determined overlapping of different “migratory strata”. Only from this perspective does the migratory landscape reveal its dynamic nature and render intelligible the historical meaning of individual experiences.

Drawing once again on Mills’s reflections concerning sociological inquiry, the perspective of migratory stratification interrogates scholars about the positioning of a specific migratory landscape within the broader process of migratory stratification, the dynamics of its transformation, and the role it assumes within this sedimentation process. It also invites reflection on how a given social, cultural, territorial, economic, or symbolic component influences the migratory panorama while simultaneously being shaped by it, as well as on the distinctive characteristics of each “stratum” and the specific socio-cultural imprint it produces.

This perspective also incorporates Norbert Elias’s reflections on the necessity of a historical sociology. For Elias, social reality can only be understood in its becoming, through long-term processes intertwining micro and macro dimensions. Consequently, the study of migratory transformations must consider both the historical stratification of migration processes and the tension between social structures and subjective trajectories. Social reality – intrinsically conflictual – and, with it, every migratory landscape, thus appears as a continuous process, not linear but dialectical, shaped by the superimposition of different “migratory strata” influenced by both structural and superstructural dynamics. Within this framework also lie the reflections of Elias and Scotson (1965), who demonstrated how the “old outsiders” of Winston Parva attempted to distinguish themselves from the “new outsiders” in order to preserve privileged social positions. Such dynamics highlight a stratification of different yet coexisting migratory experiences within the same context, thereby overcoming essentializing readings of social life.

This monographic section therefore presents several contributions that pioneer the application of the migratory stratification perspective to selected empirical case studies, beginning with

analyses of transformations in socio-territorial and urban contexts, through the contributions of Anna-Louise Weßling and Fabio Lucchini and Andrea Membretti.

Weßling focuses on the empirical case of Friedland, a small village in central Germany established as a transit camp in 1945 by the British military administration. Following the end of the Second World War, many people were on the move: some had been displaced by border changes, others had fled bombings, while many had lost their homes. The purpose of the border transit camps erected along the boundaries of the British occupation zone, such as Friedland, was to control immigration into the territory and to provide temporary shelter for people after exhausting journeys. While many camps were closed in the immediate post-war period, Friedland remained active and continues to operate today. This transit camp never hosted only Germans, but always accommodated international residents as well: from 1949 to 1952 it included a displaced persons camp for liberated forced labourers from several European countries; from the 1970s onwards it hosted asylum seekers from African and Asian countries as well as refugees from Vietnam and Chile fleeing wars and military regimes; and since 2011 it has functioned as an official first reception centre for asylum seekers from across the world. Friedland has been and continues to be represented as a border place, a "gateway to freedom," and a site of experiences of mobility and/or immobility. In the following chapter, the author intends to examine those aspects which, on the one hand, critically analyse the structure of the camp and thus provide a local perspective on migration movements and, on the other hand, highlight the significance of migration in individual lives and therefore the temporal dimension and the respective stratifications involved. Lucchini and Membretti, by contrast, adopt the perspective of migratory stratification by focusing on the Western Alps, and particularly on the border territory of the Susa Valley in Italy. The authors observe, describe, and analyse the stratification and overlapping, across different historical and social moments, of the multiple migration movements involving mountain areas within the framework of ongoing epochal transformations linked above all to the megatrends of demography, digitalization, and climate change.

The application of the migratory stratification perspective to the dimension of immigrant labour is undertaken by Andrea Calabretta and Davide Marchi, who focus on the socio-territorial context of Alte Ceccato, in the municipality of Montecchio Maggiore, in the Province of Vicenza (Italy), adjacent to the most important Italian – and perhaps European – tanning district, described in this regard as "an emblematic case" of *migratory stratification*. In particular, the authors explore the relationship between macro-level changes (productive models, economic crises, migration policies) and the local reconfiguration of migration phenomena, with particular attention to their relationship with the local productive fabric and its needs. Their study captures the complex relationship between economic-productive transformations and migration dynamics, a relationship characterized both by the interpenetration of these two phenomena and by their relative "autonomy." Furthermore, at a conceptual level, it demonstrates the value of the migratory stratification perspective as an analytical framework for understanding migration processes longitudinally and in their development across the global-local nexus.

Finally, Franca Zadra explore and Serena Piovesan the complex systemic constraints progressively overcome by survivors of labour exploitation who benefited from support programmes. In the case of most interviewees, such programmes produced a temporal stratification of experiences articulated in terms of a "before, during, and after," within a pathway toward emancipation and societal embeddedness that ultimately achieved positive outcomes. Their study focuses on experiences related to support programmes and highlights how survivors' trajectories and transnational relations, as well as local public policy and service contexts, shape programme experiences within a stratified and complex process aimed at restoring autonomy.

References

- Anthias, F. (2006). Belongings in a globalising and unequal world. Rethinking translocations. In: Yuval-Davis, N., Kannabiran, K., and Vieten, U.M. (eds), *Situating Contemporary Politics of Belonging*. Sage, pp. 1–13.
- Anthias, F. (2008). Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality. An intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations*, 4(1), 5–20.
- Anthias, F. (2011). Intersections and Translocations. New paradigms for thinking about cultural diversity and social identities. *European Educational Research Journal*, 10(2), 204–217.
- Della Puppa, F. and Gelati, E. (2015). Alte Ceccato. Una banglatown nel nordest. *Professionaldreamers*.
- Della Puppa, F., Storato, G., and Sanò, G. (2024). Bordering and debordering across time. Refugees and asylum seekers facing chronopolitics. *Italian Sociological review*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.13136/isr.v14i9S.798>
- Elias, N., and Scotson, J.L. (1965). *The established and the outsiders. A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*. Sage.
- Glick-Schiller, N., Basch, L., and Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 645: 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1992.tb33484.x>
- Glick-Schiller, N. and Salazar, N.B. (2013). Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39(2), 183–200.
- Kaufmann, V., Bergman, M. M., and Joye, D. (2004). Motility: Mobility as capital. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(4), 745–756.
- Massey, D.S. (1983). A Research Note on Residential Succession: The Hispanic Case. *Social Forces*, 61(3), 825–833.
- Mills, C.W. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- Park, R.E. (1936a). Succession, an Ecological Concept. *American Sociological Review*, 1(2), 171–179.
- Park, R.E. (1936b). Human Ecology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 42(1), 1–15.
- Sanò, G., Storato, G., and Della Puppa, F. (2024). Claiming time: Refugees and asylum seekers dealing with the production of different temporal regimes by asylum and reception policies. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 25(4), 1223–1229.
- Sayad, A. (1999). *La double absence. Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*. Seuil.
- Storato, G., Della Puppa, F., Sanò G. (2023). Timescapes of (im)mobility. Disruptions, waitings, and transits. Introduction. *The Lab's Quarterly*, XXV/2: 7–15.

Vertical migration in the Italian metromountain: migratory stratifications between agency and structural constraints²

Introduction. A new Alpine attractiveness

In recent times it is being observed a new human mobility to the Alps, in the opposite direction to the 'sliding downhill' and urbanization that dramatically characterized most of these territories during the twentieth century (Zanzi, 2004; Viazzo & Zanini, 2020; Membretti *et al.*, 2025). The literature therefore initially studied 'amenity migrants', first and foremost affluent and often retired people seeking mountain places with a high quality of life (Moss *et al.*, 2009). The new sociocultural movements of the early 2000s, linked to the growing disaffection of many citizens with metropolitan areas of residence and the rise of green values, then produced a strand of research on 'highlanders by choice', mostly educated young adults and families with children, seeking a sober and sustainable lifestyle in alpine territories, often in inland and abandoned ones (Corrado *et al.*, 2014). The issue of 'highlanders by necessity' and 'highlanders by force' (i.e., international migrants who have come to the Alps in recent years for work or because placed in reception centers for asylum seekers and refugees) emerged successively in relation to the broader dynamics of global human mobility (Dematteis *et al.*, 2018; Perlik *et al.*, 2019). Most recently, especially after the pandemic and in relation to the effects of climate change in lowland urban areas, a further flow to the mountains of 'would-be highlanders' is emerging, aiming for multi-local forms of life facilitated by the reorganization of remote work (Membretti, 2025). That said, in a context of transformation related to the megatrends of demography, digitalization and climate change, the article relies on the perspective of migratory stratifications to propose - with specific reference to migratory movements to Italian mountainous areas - a theoretical reflection on the relationship between migrant agency and structural constraints.

1. Migratory stratifications between agency and structural constraints

As it has been conceptualized, migratory stratification - giving prominence to continuities and ruptures at the historical level - first emphasizes the structural elements that shape migrations and that in turn are modified by migrations through a process of sedimentation of differences in a given context (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024). However, this does not mean underestimating the role of agency in migration processes, as is evident from various approaches to this topic.

Differentiating from the representation of migration as a 'double absence' from the place of origin and the place of arrival (Sayad, 1999), the transnationalism approach theorizes and defines the migrant as an active participant subject in the social, cultural and economic activities of both poles of migration and involved in frequent transnational commuting (Glick-Schiller *et al.*, 1992). Such a perspective is thus interested in the movement and dynamism between the two poles of migration - the contexts of departure and destination - overcoming the structural-functionalist hypothesis of a tendentially static society and a homeostatic model of social structure (Palumbo *et al.*, 2023).

Transnational migration sets in motion processes of self-construction affecting both those directly involved in migration and the social structures and relations of the departure and arrival societies: the multiplicity of such translocal placements is the result of the attribution of static

1 Andrea Membretti, Univ. Valle d'Aosta / Université de la Vallée d'Aoste – GREEN, a.membretti@univda.it, ORCID: 0000-0003-4685-2690;
Fabio Lucchini. Univ. eCampus, DiSUS, fabio.lucchini@uniecampus.it, ORCID: 0000-0002-6092-1907.

2 Received: 27/09/2025 – Revised: 27/01/2026 – Accepted: 07/06/2026 – Published: 30/09/2026

identities by the hegemonic discourses of the destination society; this multiplicity is also structured by institutional regulatory norms (i.e., migration policies and power relations between states and continents) (Della Puppa, 2014; Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024). Given this, within the transnationalist framework, individuals - including migrants - are conceptualized as social actors endowed with multiple identities and differentiated forms of agency, which are mobilized according to the contextual and scalar dimensions of their interactions (Caglar & Schiller, 2018). Therefore, a growing number of scholars interested in the dynamics of mobility, migration, and socio-spatial interconnection are turning to translocality as a research perspective: translocal approaches seek to overcome the limitations of transnationalism, on which they are usually based, in order to describe socio-spatial dynamics and processes of simultaneity and identity formation that transcend boundaries (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

At the theoretical level, there is no shortage of approaches to migration that focus on the agency of individuals, while taking into account the role of social structures in shaping migration patterns (Carling & Collins, 2020; De Haas, 2021). In order to describe the pluralistic migratory reality and the continuous identity shifts of those involved, it is certainly useful to analyze the specific socio-cultural and territorial contexts in which the different migratory movements overlap. However, specific attention to the biographical trajectories of migrants should not be neglected, as they are built through the relationships between agents facing a common horizon of possibilities in a structured and structuring social and physical space characterized by different forms of capital, expectations and opportunities (Bommes & Radtke, 1996; Bourdieu, 1994). Hence, the relationships between micro and macro, individual and society, voluntarism and determinism, are particularly important both in the development of social theory on migration and in shaping policy responses to human movements.

In relation to the structural contexts in which migrants act, the spatial dimension is important, with specific reference to the concept of 'enactment' (Weick, 1969), that is, the activation by individuals of the context (and its opportunities) in which they find themselves. In the daily lives of migrants, agency is thus developed in different spheres: for example, when they act to improve their housing conditions, participate in cultural and political life, improve their education, or have fun (Barbera & Membretti, 2018). In this regard, it is always important to recall, as is evident from the typology of metromontane populations proposed later in this paper, the role of socio-economic and cultural capital in influencing migrants' agency.

The feedback effects of agency are associated with processes of socio-cultural negotiation, social construction of everyday places, and horizontal knowledge transfer (Woods, 2018). Thus, the human emerges and expresses itself through social relationship, maintaining its own autonomy through an 'internal conversation' (Archer, 2003). Social structure influences human action through the person's internal reflexivity, which is such because it introduces and considers data from the external context in her/his strategies. In short, the individual is not simply socialized from the outside, but socializes her/himself throughout her/his life, thanks to the internal reflexivity that mediates between structure and acting. The fact that a human being - although immersed in and conditioned by social structures - acts on the basis of her/his internal conversation and not as a mere structural extrinsication highlights the multifaceted nature of reflexivity: it involves cognitive factors, emotions, desires. Agents have projects about reality and evaluate the situation in which they find themselves based on circumstances and in light of their own interests and concerns (what a person believes will improve her/his life on a material and ideal level) (Donati, 2024): this also implies an embodied view of the agent which emphasizes the significance of the physical and emotional dimensions of interaction for human action and social structure (Shilling, 1999).

The theoretical frame is enriched by the opportunity to also consider the temporal dimension in the analysis of migration (Cwerner, 2001), a perspective that highlights how different national and international regulations imply temporal regimes that slow down and accelerate migrants' daily and biographical time: such circumstances can be suffered by migrant subjects, but also

elicit reactions from them (Achnich, 2022). In a diachronic perspective, it is possible to observe the reshaping acted by migratory phenomena on societies of origin, transit and destination. This makes it possible to isolate the connections and retroactions between the structural nature of global phenomena and the imprint generated in the space in which the sedimentation and overlapping of migration phenomena are observed. Indeed, previous migration experiences and the settlement of migrants in a given area can facilitate and incentivize migration (Bakewell *et al.*, 2012): the social capital embedded in networks of relatives, friends and compatriots reduces the costs and risks of migration, giving rise to migration dynamics independent of their initial conditions and to mechanisms of cumulative causality (Andrikopoulos & Duyvendak, 2020; Bashi, 2007). On the other hand, if local populations have not experienced the 'other' in the past or if they view migrants with distrust - as a threat to jobs, traditions and identities - it becomes complex to build social bonds and integration pathways (Connor, 2007). Therefore, migrants experience simultaneous inclusion and exclusion using experiences and their transmission over time to gain knowledge about their landing places, and developing, under certain conditions, a sense of belonging to those territories (Ivekovic, 2022).

Considering the above, the migratory stratification approach induces the observation of migration from a perspective aimed at framing events, processes and changes within the socio-historical structure in which they are stratified. The study of social transformations resulting from migration phenomena should both take into account long-term migration stratification and identify the tension between structural processes and agents' trajectories. Social reality can thus be observed, analyzed and interpreted in its becoming - not linear, but dialectical - keeping together the lines of continuity and discontinuity and avoiding isolating facts and events from the socio-historical structure in which they take shape (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024; Elias & Scotson, 1965).

2. Metromontane populations in the Italian Alps: a typology in progress

During the second half of the 20th century, the Italian Alps, and in particular the two extremes of the mountain chain, were considered, especially from a socio-demographic point of view, as a shrinking region: a declining and marginalized macro-region, affected by a dramatic phenomenon of depopulation, and therefore of mass relocation, especially of young people, to the urban and metropolitan areas (Dax *et al.*, 2021). An exodus - for a long time seemingly unstoppable - caused by the search for better living conditions and essentially counterbalanced by the development of winter tourist resorts, whose strong environmental and cultural impact was not however offset by real benefits in demographic terms.

The progressive marginalization that has affected a great part of the Alps has translated into its physical and symbolic-cultural estrangement from the urban world: physical because - with the exception of the tourist resorts and the localities located on the great Alpine crossing axes - the connection between highlands and lowland cities has been rapidly deteriorating. It happens hand in hand with a widespread perception at the political and social level: that is, it was not worth investing substantial resources to 'keep within' the urban-centric system these "places left behind" (Rodriguez-Pose, 2018), e.g. realities that are demographically in crisis and economically unproductive (at least, compared to the standards of industrial capitalism). At the same time, a symbolic and cultural detachment emerges, which has been nourished by a representation of the mountain as antithetical to the city (De Rossi, 2016): a space of uncontaminated nature, traditions and folklore, supportive community, assets (starting with the architectural heritage) and values to which the urban populations themselves have begun to look with growing interest. In fact, the mountain is perceived as radically 'other' in an age of transition from the industrial to post-industrial and contemporary model of society. Within this symbolic repertoire, the idea of wilderness deserves particular attention: not as a "natural" condition, but as a socially produced imaginary that frames mountain territories as places of escape, moral regeneration, or alternative lifestyles.

The double removal process (of physical and symbolic 'remotization': Membretti, 2023) of the mountains has thus contributed substantially to the affirmation of a dichotomous vision between the two areas - mountain and urban-metropolitan - linked in particular to the flows of people in the two directions: from above, the trickle of mountain dwellers, pushed to migrate massively and definitively towards the settlements and productive activities of the plains; from below, the flow of city tourists, temporary and recurring, linked primarily to seasonal skiing and second-home trends. A flow, the latter, that for decades brought with it entire 'pieces' of the city to the highlands - in terms of relations between social classes, use of space, collective consumption, heritagization of land and buildings. However, such a dynamic did not create interconnection and reciprocity, but rather caused the mountains to be colonized by urban and lowland patterns, and this led to the adaptation of the mountain dwellers to citizens' expectations, also in terms of folkloristic self-representation.

Socio-demographic variables - at the spatial-territorial level - are of great importance in describing and interpreting the aforementioned processes, because of its repercussions in terms of widespread perceptions, imaginaries, spatial transformations and policies implemented. In defining the relationship between cities and mountains - and the growing gap between them - the social representation of opposing population flows played a crucial role. A large part of the Alps was for decades considered places of irreversible abandonment, while a much smaller number of tourist resorts were associated with an idea of temporary and non-residential attractiveness. In the last twenty years, however, the representation of the Alps (in Italy and elsewhere) has changed radically, in relation to a growing scientific and popular literature on the interconnection between mountains and cities, as also to the renewed role of mountains for lowland and urban systems in terms of ecosystem services and landscape value (as illustrated by the case of the Dolomites, which have become a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Thus, attention is focused on the renewed flows - of people, goods, capital, knowledge and information - that cross and 'hold together' a socio-territorial system defined as 'Metromountain' (Barbera & De Rossi, 2021). On the one hand, that of the academic side, the perspective change was triggered by the collection and dissemination of relevant scientific data (such as those gathered by the Alpine Convention's Demography group: AlpConv, 2015). This indicates a reversal of population dynamics since the early 1990s in the entire Alpine region: the data showed a recovery, or at least a stabilization, of the population in many contexts, often the closest to the plains, but also in quite a few inland and remote areas, especially those with attractive natural and landscape resources. Data and trends that have been confirmed, ten years later, by the new analyses conducted again under the Alpine Convention in 2025 (Membretti *et al.*, 2025), where it is clearly shown how immigration (internal and international) is the only factor of demographic stability or even recovery in almost the Alpine arc.

This phenomenon, mostly unexpected, has been in fact related by scholars not to an increase in the birth rate in those territories (very difficult, given the ageing rates of the population remaining there) but rather to the arrival of new residents, that is, to a positive migratory balance. On the other side, that of public opinion, the last two decades have seen - in Italy as in other Alpine areas - a rediscovery and valorization of the mountains in relation to their many and often untapped resources; an unprecedented attention further stimulated by the new scenario determined by the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential offered by sparsely populated territories with respect to society as a whole (Fondazione Feltrinelli, 2024); an attention driven by a mix of factors related to the 'new highlanders' movement, the affirmation of positive narratives associated with the highlands, and also the policy implemented in Italy by the National Strategy for Inner Areas, involving mountainous and low-populated areas. Such an attentiveness, finally, has been fueled in recent years (starting with the so-called 'migration emergency' of 2015) also by an unusual visibility of the international presence in the Alps, dating back at least three decades but 'discovered' in relation to national policies of asylum seekers and refugees' reception in Alpine villages (especially developed in 2015-2018: Perlik *et al.*, 2019).

As anticipated, reflection on migration flows to the Alps can be usefully framed through the concept of 'Metromountain', originated in the debate on the definition and delimitation of metropolitan areas³, with particular reference to the specific situation of Turin, whose metropolitan area actually overlaps with the mountains. The concept was first used referring to local mountain systems connected to global networks of culture, technological innovation and economy (Dematteis, 2018): a territorial system in which the ancient image of rural and backward mountains is opposed to the progress of the city. This reflection was relaunched more recently by the collective volume *Metromontagna* (Barbera & De Rossi, 2021), where the concept has been given explanatory as well as normative meanings.

The phenomenon of large-scale urbanization is growing on a planetary level as in Italy. Nevertheless, for at least a decade there have been signs of a reversal of the trend in the global north, and especially in an area such as the Alps. Hence, the choice of the prefix 'metro': it is confirmed that the urbanization trend is still ongoing, but an important semantic meaning is given to mountains and, most importantly, it is hypothesized that large cities may partly change their dynamics - housing, social, productive - towards a new relationship with mountains. The metromountain, on the largest territorial scale, thus tends to be a space of settlement redistribution and circular human mobility, consciously chosen by people (especially those who dramatically experience urban overcrowding in times of polycrisis) in the context of fluid spatiality based on alternating physical proximity and long-distance digital relations.

Metromountain should therefore be understood as a mode of socio-economic and symbolic-cultural interconnection between highlands and cities: the result of a long history of exchanges and tensions, dominations (urban) and claims to (mountain) autonomy. The mountain, in this perspective, does not represent an alterity but, on the contrary, one of the two poles of a spatial-cultural continuum within the broader and more radical redefinition of relations between the rural and urban worlds.

The different populations we define as 'metromountain populations' - stratified over time in Alpine contexts - express different conceptions of space and time, starting from their life trajectories, forms of mobility, territorial rootedness and, of course, socio-cultural and economic capital: for example, in the face of a weakening of vertical intergenerational transmission of local knowledge in mountainous contexts, horizontal forms of transmission are emerging that specifically involve new inhabitants. Newcomers appropriate this knowledge - sometimes altering it to the displeasure of the natives - but giving rise to innovation, adaptation and forms of creativity that would otherwise be difficult in contexts demographically in crisis and subject to 'generational isolationism' due to the local aging of the population. In this perspective, the temporal dimension of the relationship with the territory focuses on the spatial-temporal fluidity, reversibility of settlement choices and the intermittency of multi-local dwellers, smart workers and commuters, fostered by digitization and post-pandemic reorganization of work and business (Mayer & Meili, 2016). Therefore, adopting the lens of the migratory stratification and following a translocal approach to social theory on migration and human movements - which recognizes the role of socio-economic and cultural influences on agency - a categorization of metromontane populations is the one proposed by Membretti (2021): according to it, three main groups of new inhabitants of Italian mountain areas are now highlighted, with reference to their characteristics, motivations and socio-economic impacts.

a) *Amenity migrants*

- Who: rich people, often retired, coming from metropolitan areas or from abroad (e.g. the United Kingdom, Germany), with high cultural and economic capital.
- Motivation: seeking a better quality of life, attraction for the mountain environmental and cultural heritage.

3 Law 56/2014 established metropolitan areas in Italy.

- Local impact: they transform the landscape by renovating old buildings or second homes, but often remain multi-local residents with both urban and mountain ties; they can contribute significantly to the so-called 'Alpine gentrification' (Perlik, 2019) accentuating socio-territorial inequalities without real rootedness in local communities.

b) *Mountain dwellers by choice*

- Who: young adults (30-45 years old) with high education and some economic resources, coming from urban areas.
- Motivation: desire for environmental sustainability, green values, self-entrepreneurship projects in the agro-pastoral, tourism and socio-cultural sectors, also remote workers and digital nomads.
- Local impact: social and cultural innovators, they rediscover local traditions in a modern key, helping to revitalize mountain areas; their presence reversed the demographic decline in some municipalities and fostered a new debate on the urban-rural relationship.

c) *Mountain dwellers by necessity and by force*

- Who: economic migrants (mainly non-EU citizens) and asylum seekers/refugees, often forced to live in the mountains due to work necessity or government reception policies.
- Motivation: search for better living conditions, job opportunities in agriculture, tourism, construction, or escape from crisis situations in other countries.
- Local impact: they counter depopulation, support local economies and essential services (e.g. schools, transport); however, their presence is often invisible or ambivalent, oscillating between being perceived as 'resource' or 'threat'. In this regard, reception policies have highlighted both critical issues and potential for territorial resilience.

The three groups represent different metromontane connections between urban and mountain areas, with complex and sometimes contradictory impacts. While amenity migrants and mountain dwellers act by choice, international migrants often respond to necessity or compulsion. In any case, with their different migratory trajectories, stratification and biographies, they all contribute to redefining and re-inventing the role of mountain areas, with respect to new social meanings that shape, legitimize or constrain vertical migratory movements. In this sense, the symbolic construction of the mountains as spaces of authenticity, slow living, or environmental wellbeing – often juxtaposed with the perceived pressures of urban life – seems to play a relevant role in orienting the mobility choices from urban areas of specific social groups, e.g., the ones owning the appropriate resources and the concrete possibility to choose their relocation.

3. Discussion and conclusion. Towards new research directions

As just highlighted, to understand the complexity of migration phenomena and how they manifest in a particular territorial context, it is necessary to consider both the role of structural constraints and of agents' biographies and trajectories.

In accordance with the theoretical framework described in this article, it is not possible to understand individual experiences and attitudes without contextualizing them in a given era and relating them to those of individuals under similar conditions: operating in this way, researchers would follow continuities and changes from one generation to the next. Therefore, a research program aimed at grasping the complexity of the migration phenomenon should consider not only the structural aspects of a social context, the relationships among its components, and their role in preservation or systemic change, but also the historical perspective (Mills, 2018). The lens of the migratory stratification thus seems appropriate for unveiling the processes of transculturation and the dynamics of social change and of negotiation between different migrant pop-

ulations that overlapping and sedimentations entail in all spheres of social action. The latter was the focus of some recent research on migration processes in the Italian mountains, such as the action-research activities carried out by the Horizon 2020 MATILDE project⁴ in the Italian Alpine areas of South Tyrol, the Metropolitan City of Turin and in other areas of Northern Italy (in Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto regions) (Gilli & Membretti, 2022). By describing and analyzing social innovation initiatives – for example, the asylum seekers' active involvement in the maintenance of natural landscapes and common goods, and the role of a social enterprise in empowering migrants and supporting the extended local communities – the aim was to discuss how migrants can be a factor of local development and resilience for Alpine communities affected by demographic and economic crises.

In the background, there is a reflection on the conditions and structural basis for the development of migrants' agency as a means for their socio-economic inclusion in rural areas. With reference to the typology described in this paper, the different opportunities in this regard are clearly evident in terms of socio-economic and cultural capital among *Amenity migrants*, *Mountain dwellers by choice*, and *Mountain dwellers by necessity and by force*. In particular, mountain contexts present ambivalent and critical conditions with respect to the possible development of migrants' agency: for instance, access to job opportunities, without interaction in the public sphere, are not sufficient for the enactment of newcomers as citizens. In this regard, from the research activities above mentioned (Lardiès-Bosque & Membretti, 2023) emerges a need for public recognition of migrants as agents capable of social (and also political) action in the communities in which they operate and interact with. In other words, the visibility in public spaces places, the fruition of a territory beyond the household or commuting dimension, the recognition of individual and professional skills turned out to be essential for migrants' integration in the observed Italian cases: in essence, it should not be enough for migrants to 'find a place or a job', but they should be able to develop their own skills and consciously set their own life plan within the host community.

It thus emerges clearly how appropriate the diachronic and cumulative perspective of migration stratifications – with its emphasis on continuities and discontinuities over time – can be for conceptualizing and interpreting the complexity of the phenomena just described. Within this approach, therefore, an in-depth reflection on the characteristics, motivations and socio-economic impacts of metromontane populations appears to be of particular interest in exploring their potential for integration and social innovation, outlining future and promising research directions in the rural migration study field.

References

- Achtnich, M. (2022). Waiting to move on: Migration, borderwork and mobility economies in Libya. *Geopolitics*, 27(5), 1376–1389.
- AlpConv - Alpine Convention (2015), *Cambiamenti demografici nelle Alpi. V Relazione sullo stato delle Alpi*, Segnali alpini - Edizione speciale 5: https://www.alpconv.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/RSA/RSA5_IT.pdf
- Andrikopoulos, A., & Duyvendak, J. W. (2020). Migration, mobility and the dynamics of kinship: New barriers, new assemblages. *Ethnography*, 21(3), 299–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138120939584>
- Archer, M., 2003, *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bakewell, O., De Haas, H., & Kubal, A. (2012). Migration systems, pioneer migrants and the role of agency. *Journal of critical realism*, 11(4), 413–437. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jcr.v11i4.413>
- Barbera, F. & De Rossi A. (2021) (Eds.). *Metromontagna. Un progetto per riabitare l'Italia*, Donzelli: Rome.
- Barbera, F. & Membretti, A. (2018). *I nuovi montanari sognano anche nuove montagne?*, in De Rossi, A. (Eds.), *Riabitare l'Italia. Le aree interne tra abbandoni e riconquiste*, Donzelli: Rome.

4 MATILDE is a three-year Horizon 2020 research project (2020-23), funded by the European Union, aiming at assessing the impact of international immigration on socio-economic wellbeing and territorial cohesion in European rural and mountainous regions: research and participatory activities in 10 European countries were conducted, involving case studies at regional and local level.

- Bashi, V. F. (2007). *Survival of the Knitted: Immigrant Social Networks in a Stratified World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bommes, M. & Radtke, F.O. (1996). Migration into big cities and small towns. An uneven process with limited need for multiculturalism. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 9(1): 75-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.1996.9968473>
- Bourdieu, P. (1994). *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*. Paris: Seuil.
- Caglar, A., & Shiller, N. G. Displacement, and Urban Regeneration. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018. *Journal of International and Global Studies Volume*, 10(2), 152.
- Carling, J. & Collins, F. (2020). Introduction: Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration. In *Aspiration, desire and the drivers of migration* (pp. 1-18). Routledge.
- Connor, I. (2007). *Refugees and expellees in post-war Germany*. Manchester University Press: Manchester.
- Corrado, F., Dematteis, G. & Di Gioia A. (2014). *Nuovi montanari. Abitare le Alpi nel XXI secolo*, Angeli: Milan.
- Cwerner, S.B. (2001). The Times of Migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(1), 7-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830125283>
- Dax, T., Schroll, K., Machold, I., Derszniak-Noirjean, M., Schuh, B., & Gaupp-Berghausen, M. (2021). Land abandonment in mountain areas of the EU: An inevitable side effect of farming modernization and neglected threat to sustainable land use. *Land*, 10(6), 591. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land10060591>
- De Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(1), 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00210-4>
- Della Puppa, F. (2014). *Uomini in movimento. Il lavoro della maschilità tra Bangladesh e Italia*. Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier.
- Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., & Storato, G. (2024). Migratory stratifications. A new perspective to observe the intersection between migration and social change. In *Migratory Stratifications. A New Perspective on Migration and Social Change through the Italian Lens*. Transnational Press London.
- Dematteis, G. (2018). The alpine metropolitan-mountain faced with global challenges. Reflections on the case of turin. *Journal of Alpine Research| Revue de géographie alpine* (106-2). <https://doi.org/10.4000/rga.4402>
- De Rossi, A. (2016), *La costruzione delle Alpi*, Donzelli, Roma.
- Donati, P. (2024). Margaret Archer e il personalismo sociologico. *Studi di sociologia: LXII*, 2, 2024, 95-109. DOI: 10.26350/000309_000190
- Elias, N., & Scotson, J.L. (1965). *The established and the outsiders. A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*. London: Sage.
- Fondazione G. Feltrinelli (2024), *Dentro e fuori la rete. Lavoro, cittadini e welfare alla prova della transizione digitale*, Feltrinelli editore, Milano.
- Gilli, M. & Membretti, A. (2022), *Comparative Report on Action-Research in Rural and Mountain Areas of Europe*, MATIL-DE H2020 Project (<https://matilde-migration.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/d55-comparative-report.pdf>).
- Glick-Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 645, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1992.tb33484.x>
- Greiner, C., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2013). Translocality: Concepts, applications and emerging research perspectives. *Geography compass*, 7(5), 373-384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12048>
- Ivekovic, R. (2022). *Migration, New Nationalisms and Populism: An Epistemological Perspective on the Closure of Rich Countries*. Taylor & Francis.
- Lardiès-Bosque, R. & Membretti, A. (2023), *Foreign immigration to European mountain regions: a resource for local revitalization and sustainable development*, in Schneiderbauer S. et al. (eds.), *Safeguarding Mountains - A Global Challenge. Facing emerging risks, adapting to changing environments and building transformative resilience in mountain regions worldwide*, Elsevier.
- Mayer H., & Meili R. (2016). *New Highlander Entrepreneurs in the Swiss Alps*, in *Mountain Research and Development*, 36(3), 267-275 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-16-00040.1>
- Membretti, A. (2025). La montagna désirée. Les trajectoires des "aspirant montagnards" italiens (Piemont, Italie), in Angelo BERTONI et Ornella ZAZA (eds.), *Habiter la montagne aujourd'hui. Réseaux ferroviaires et dynamiques citoyennes en débat*, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, Collection : Montagne et innovation.
- Membretti, A., Bender, O., Cruciani, S., Gazzelloni, S. & Viazzo, P.P. (eds.) (2025), *Demographic scenarios, residential mobility and impacts of climate change in the Alps. Intermediate report focusing on the Italian and, partly, Austrian Alps*, ALPCONV.
- Membretti, A. (2023), *Il richiamo della "remoteness". Ambivalenze e potenzialità dell'estrema lontananza nelle aree interne e montane*, Dialoghi Mediterranei, Marzo 2023.
- Membretti A. (2021), *Le popolazioni metromontane: relazioni, biografie, bisogni*, in Barbera F. and De Rossi, A. (eds.), *Metromontagna. Un progetto per Riabitare l'Italia*, Donzelli, Roma.
- Mills, C. W. (2018). *L'immaginazione sociologica*. Il Saggiatore: Milan
- Palumbo, B., Pizza, G., & Schirripa, P. (2023). *Antropologia culturale e sociale. Concetti, storie, prospettive*. Hoepli: Milan.
- Moss, L.A.G., Glorioso, R.S., & Krause, A. (Eds.) (2009), *Understanding and Managing Amenity-Led Migration in Mountain Regions*, The Banff Centre: Banff, Canada.
- Perlik, M., Galera G., Machold I. and Membretti A. (eds.) (2019), *Alpine Refugees. Immigration at the core of Europe*, Scholars Publishing, Cambridge.

- Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2018), The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it), *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, Volume 11, Issue 1, March 2018, Pages 189–209.
- Sayad, A. (1999). *La double absence. Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*. Paris: Seuil.
- Shilling, C. (1999). Towards an embodied understanding of the structure/agency relationship. *The British journal of sociology*, 50(4), 543-562.
- Viazzo, P.P. & Zanini, C.R. (2020), Le Alpi italiane. Bilancio antropologico di un ventennio di mutamenti. *EtnoAntropologia*, 8(2). ISSN 2284-0176
- Weick, K. E. (1969). *Social Psychology of Organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Woods, M. (2018). International Migration, Agency and Regional Development in Rural Europe. *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 62(3): 569-593. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/dag.372>
- Zanzi L. (2004), *Le Alpi nella storia d'Europa*, Cda & Vivalda: Turin.

Between factories and agencies. Migratory stratifications and changes in immigrant labour: the case of Alte Ceccato²

Introduction: Migrant Labour in Italian Stratifications

The relationship between migration and labour is so deeply entrenched that it has become naturalised. As Abdelmalek Sayad argues, *work* is the principal reason that sustains a rupture in the social order, such as emigration-immigration (1999). Work serves as a justification, both for the societies involved in migration and for the migrants themselves: «since the immigrant has no meaning, in his own eyes and in those of his entourage, and has no existence, if at all, except for work» (Sayad, 1999, p. 319)³. Work – or, better, low-paid manual work – functions as a filter for migrants' participation in the host society (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). As long as they remain confined to the most disadvantaged segment of the labour market, the receiving society can be reassured that their presence has not disturbed the symbolic and social hierarchy: «it has been *mutatis mutandis* always the case: the last to arrive at proletarian status in urban and industrial civilisation almost systematically falls into the lowest position in the social hierarchy and, in the same way, in the hierarchy of professions» (Sayad, 1999, p. 295). Building on these considerations, this article explores how migrants' insertion into the social and labour hierarchies of the receiving context intertwines with changes in the labour market, drawing on the Italian case and, more specifically, that of Alte Ceccato.

The role of work as a means of social integration of migrants – albeit in a subordinate position – emerges clearly in Italian history, which is fundamentally a history of migration. It marks the paths of emigrants who left the peninsula for the Americas, Oceania, or Northern Europe (Sanfilippo, 2011), as well as internal mobility from rural areas to cities and from the South to the North (Alasia & Montaldi, 1960; Eve, 2011). Moreover, it defines the experiences of those who have arrived in Italy from abroad since the 1970s to live (and work) in the country (Piro, 2020). Vincenzo Guarrasi, in his commentary on the Tunisian presence in Sicily in the early 1980s, described the situation as follows: «[Migrants are] given an extremely limited range of job opportunities. They appear as street vendors, labourers, farm workers, fishermen, manual workers, etc. [...] the world of immigrants inevitably disintegrates into a nebula of living and working conditions, the common trait of which is the pervasive state of precariousness» (Guarrasi, 1983, p. 361). Since the onset of international immigration in Italy, the precarious legal and social conditions of migrants, alongside the competition fostered by employers with native workers (Sacchetto, 2013), have directed foreigners towards the secondary sector of the labour market. This dynamic has shown significant persistence over the following decades «with men from developing countries working mainly in manufacturing, construction, retail and catering and women segregated in housekeeping and elderly care activities» (Fullin, 2016, p. 396). In Italy – as in other Mediterranean countries (Riba-Mateos, 2004) – the possibility of accessing work with equal rates to native workers is often compensated by poor-quality employment, high turnover, and the risk of persistent entrapment in low-skilled, low-income, and insecure jobs (Fullin, 2011). This outcome is also tied to the low dynamism of the Italian labour market, characterised by limited levels of intragenerational and intergenerational mobility (Avola & Piccitto, 2020) and the profound impact of social origins on work trajectories (Ballarino *et al.*, 2016). The resulting picture is of a foreign population primarily integrated through work, yet in a subordinate position relative to Italian society (Ambrosini, 2003).

1 Andrea Calabretta, University of Padua, andrea.calabretta@unipd.it, ORCID 0000-0002-6770-6724; Davide Marchi, University of Milano-Bicocca, d.marchi6@campus.unimib.it.

2 Received: 04/10/2025 – Revised: 09/02/2026 – Accepted: 28/02/2026 – Published: 30/09/2026

3 Wherever possible, reference has been made to texts in the original language. Translations have been carried out by the authors.

While this long-term dynamic persists, the entry of migrants into Italy and its labour market has evolved over time. One factor of change lies in the restructuring of the productive system, which has seen a decline in the prominence of heavy industry in favour of small and medium-sized enterprises in sectors such as light industry, retail trade, construction, agriculture, tourism, and hospitality services (Ambrosini, 2002). This productive model has fostered significant growth, particularly since the 1990s, in the North-East regions, acting as a pull factor for foreign labour (Daly & Barot, 1999; Della Puppa, 2022). In this post-Fordist system, demand for manual, flexible and low-paid labour remains high (Fullin & Reyneri, 2011), while these working conditions are increasingly less accepted by the native workforce (Pugliese, 2006).

Substantial changes have also occurred within the migration phenomenon. Over the years, the demographics of migration to Italy have diversified, with a shift from predominantly young men from Mediterranean areas (Maghreb, Balkans) to the inclusion of families from a wider range of origins. The multifaceted nature of immigration in Italy (in terms of age, gender, and origin) has intertwined with the needs of the labour market. This is exemplified by female migration, which has met the growing demand for domestic workers in an ageing society such as Italy (Scrinzi, 2004; Redini *et al.*, 2020). Another migratory dynamic linked to production demands is the formation of migratory networks (Massey *et al.*, 1990). The enlargement of different immigrant communities in Italy has been accompanied by their internal stratification and their positioning within specific labour sectors, resulting in the creation of ethnic niches (Ambrosini, 2000). A further major change in the recent history of immigration in Italy concerns immigration policies, which over time have increasingly criminalised and made more precarious the presence of foreigners (Fabini *et al.*, 2022), while also narrowing the legal channels for work-based immigration (Colucci, 2018). Consequently, asylum and family reunification channels, which also serve as labour reservoirs (Della Puppa & Sanò, 2021), have gained greater centrality and visibility.

In light of these considerations, it seems topical to interrogate the relationship between immigration and labour integration, and the simultaneous changes in both phenomena. A novel view on this interplay comes from the approach of *migratory stratifications*. This perspective advocates a processual and locally situated reading of the relationship between migratory phenomena that evolve in the same context over time (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024). By using the local as an analytical tool to understand broader dynamics, this paper focuses on the case of the hamlet of Alte Ceccato, Italy, and its complex *migratory stratification*. It examines the transformation of migratory patterns in this hamlet, from internal to international migration and, more recently, the surge in asylum-seeker arrivals. Through the lens of migratory stratifications, these changes are read in relation to local economic restructuring within the framework of global capitalist dynamics. In this sense, local migratory networks remain linked to countries of origin, providing new labour or enabling return and onward migration (Della Puppa, 2018), thus paving the way for new arrivals. Hence, this case study offers an opportunity to examine the relationship between industrial production, policy shifts, and migration, shedding light on both their intertwining and their *autonomy* (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2009). From this perspective, the paper contributes to the debate on migratory stratifications by showing how these are mutable and deeply relational, and how they are intertwined with the materiality of local labour markets. After a methodological section, the paper proceeds with a description of the research context. This is followed by three empirical sections analysing the integration of the new migrant labour force in the Alte context, the role of intermediaries, and migrants' resistance practices. A concluding section closes the paper.

1. Methodological Note

The aim of this study is to analyse the relationship between migration and labour in the Chiampo Valley, with particular focus on the hamlet of Alte Ceccato. This investigation relies on a quali-

tative methodology to capture not only the personal narratives of the participants but also the representations and meanings they attribute to their experiences (Cardano, 2019).

The study is based on 14 open-ended interviews and 4 focus groups conducted between 2022 and 2023 with recently arrived migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (mainly Nigeria, Ghana, and The Gambia), as well as migrants from the Indian subcontinent (Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan) and Latin America (Bolivia and Colombia). The interviewees from Africa and Asia are young men employed in the tanning district while the interviews with Latin American participants involved women employed in the care sector or outside paid employment. The recruitment of participants followed a *purposeful sampling* model aimed at addressing the research questions in the most effective way (Coyne, 1997). The focus groups included a heterogeneous group of migrants, both men and women, from diverse backgrounds and age groups. The focus groups were conducted in several Italian language schools for adults located in the area of Alte. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed *verbatim*, and the material underwent content analysis (Scheufele, 2008). To capture the potential of the *migratory stratification* perspective, the collected data were examined in conjunction with existing scientific literature on the “emblematic” case of Alte Ceccato (e.g. Della Puppa, 2014; Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015) and grey literature including local and provincial statistical data. This multi-method analysis provided useful insights for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted layers of migration in Alte Ceccato.

2. Research Context: Production and Migration in Alte Ceccato

From an economic and productive perspective, Veneto is the heart of industrial development that has characterised the North-East of Italy since the 1970s (Bagnasco, 1977). This development was based on the proliferation of small and medium-sized enterprises, organised in production chains and districts. This organisation proved to meet the flexibility demands of the contemporary market far more effectively than the large Fordist firms of the past (Anastasia & Corò, 1996). This process of neo-industrialisation, which has also benefited from tax breaks and national contributions, has made Veneto the second most industrialised region in Italy (after Lombardy), with Vicenza standing out as a prime example of industrialisation (Anastasia & Corò, 1996; Sacchetto, 2004). Within the Veneto system, production is segmented through complex subcontracting chains that link a main company to various smaller companies, whose production is largely tied to the former, allowing for cost savings in management and a prompt response to demand fluctuations. Not only is production segmented, but so too is the labour force, divided across numerous small and medium-sized enterprises and stratified according to the different tasks performed. The presence of migrant labour plays a central role in this system, as it represents the most replaceable and underpaid workforce.

The hamlet of Alte Ceccato exemplifies these dynamics perfectly. The settlement developed in the 1940s and 1950s around Ceccato Spa, a manufacturer of automotive components and workshops (Festival, 1999), attracting workers from nearby areas. During the 1960s, the productive fabric of Alte Ceccato merged with the tanning district of the Chiampo Valley. New immigrants arrived in the hamlet, this time from Southern Italy (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015). During the 1980s and, particularly, the 1990s, as the work expectations of young Italians changed (Panichella, 2012), the production demands began to require low-cost, high-turnover labour. As a result, foreign labour started to arrive in Alte. In the first decade of the 2000s, 2,500 foreigners came to the hamlet, while 1,500 Italians left (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015). By 2011, the population of Alte Ceccato was composed of two-thirds Italians (around 4,200) and one-third foreigners (around 2,200), with Bangladeshis (around 1,100) being the largest group (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015). By the next decade, the economic crisis led many migrants to seek mobility abroad (particularly to the United Kingdom), or, less frequently, to return to their countries of origin (Della Puppa, 2018).

During the same period, the flow of incoming migrants to the region dwindled, resulting in an overall reduction in the foreign population. After the economic crisis, a new phenomenon began to shape the Italian context (and the emblematic case of Alte Ceccato): the humanitarian crises in the Mediterranean. From 2015 onwards, the number of arrivals seeking international protection in Europe, particularly via the central Mediterranean route, increased significantly. In a context where work-based immigration had been completely curtailed, «the only legal pathway to enter Italy appears to be through asylum rights» (Colucci, 2018, p. 177). In Vicenza province, the share of asylum permits issued between 2008 and 2014 was 2 per cent of the total, the same as between 2019 and 2022. It was between 2015 and 2018, however, that 2,771 residence permits were granted for asylum and humanitarian reasons, representing 16% of the total new permits issued during those years (ISTAT, 2025). These young people, who arrived on humanitarian grounds, are required from the outset to offer their labour on the labour market (Piro & Peruzzi, 2024).

Table 1 - Five largest foreign communities in Montecchio in 2024 (registry office data). Montecchio has a foreign population of 3,800 and a total population of 23,600 inhabitants (source: Municipality website)

Country	Montecchio Maggiore	Alte (Montecchio's hamlet)
Bangladesh	917	752
India	631	321
Serbia	347	137
Ghana	299	172
Albania	207	84

This development has only partially altered the migratory stratification of Alte, where some historical communities, such as the Bangladeshi and Indian communities, continue to hold significant weight, even though new groups, such as the Nigerian community, have started to emerge (Tab. 1). It can therefore be argued that Alte Ceccato represents an emblematic migratory crossroads (Calabretta *et al.*, 2024), where various migration phenomena have alternated and blended, shaping the social landscape and the productive destiny of the area. The following sections will focus on this latter aspect.

3. Challenges of labour market access for recent migrants

The difficulty of accessing the necessary documentation to obtain regular employment represents a significant obstacle for migrant workers seeking jobs in Italy, often forcing them into occupational niches characterized by a high degree of informality or weak regulation (Basso, 2010). A recent report from the Prefecture of Vicenza sheds light on the migratory situation in Alte and more generally throughout the province. A total of 2,250 undocumented migrants applied to benefit from the special regularisation programme launched in 2020 (Prefecture of Vicenza, 2022). Half of the applications came from migrants from communities that have historically been present in the province (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Morocco), highlighting how complex it is for migrants to access the necessary documentation to secure regular employment (Bonizzoni & Hajer, 2023). This condition frequently exposes them to situations of vulnerability and irregular employment, severely limiting their possibilities for legal protection and recognition and effectively relegating them to the most degrading occupational sectors available in the labour market. These work sectors, often characterized by a low level of unionisation and a fragmented workforce, lack strong mechanisms of collective struggle and solidarity capable of significantly improving working conditions (Doellgast *et al.*, 2018). «In fishing, agriculture,

and domestic work, a link emerges between bargaining power and workforce composition. Immigration in Italy thus seems to be a response to the attempts of workers employed in the most hazardous sectors, with undefined working hours, who were ready to demand improvements in working conditions» (Sacchetto, 2013, p. 53)

The agricultural sector often represents the first area of employment in which migrant workers manage to enter the Italian labour market. It is a sector strongly characterized by pronounced seasonality and precarious working conditions, which make employment unstable and poorly protected. For these reasons, many workers tend to leave it as soon as more advantageous job opportunities arise, either in the industrial or the tertiary sector, where contractual and wage conditions are generally better and offer a greater prospect of economic and occupational stability.

«I had already told you that in 2019, before, we were working together in the agricultural fields. At that time, we had arrived in Italy only recently, we had been there for just a year and a half. Then, in November, I think, it rained continuously for seven days, and the work stopped. The owner of our company, in the agricultural sector, told us: "You have to wait between 15 and 20 days." At that point, my friend Zafar told me: "We can't stay idle like this, we have to prepare our CV and look for another job." So, we made our CVs, put them in our bags, and went around many companies, in the areas of Trissino, Verona, near Vicenza, everywhere we could find something. The following week, I think, the owner called Zafar and invited him. So, we went together to talk to him. He told us: "You are young, and I want to hire young people. This is my job: if you want a heavy job, I will pay you 2,200 euro; if instead, you want to do trimming, the normal job, I will pay you 1,600 euro. We replied: "Alright, 1,600 euro is enough for us"». (Imran, Pakistani worker, 32 years old)

Regarding countries of origin, until a few years ago the migrant workforce in Alte Ceccato was quite homogeneous, with the presence of Bangladeshi workers being well documented around the 2010s (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015). The current composition, however, is much more heterogeneous and scarcely studied so far:

«The Indian community is very particular because all people arrive here legally through work contracts, also because they dominate the flyer distribution market. So, people come here to distribute flyers and, in the meantime, they learn the language and find another job. The Nigerian community has certainly had an exponential boom, as it now represents a large share of immigration in the Vicenza area in recent years. The Bangladeshi, Ghanaian, Burkinabè, and Senegalese communities are also significant. The Maghrebi communities are much less represented, and the Serbian, Romanian, and other communities from contexts such as Morocco and Tunisia are much smaller than before». (Luigi, Italian recruiter)

The entry of migrant workers into the labour market is closely linked to the resources individuals have at their disposal. Social capital and migratory networks (Ambrosini, 2000) play a fundamental role in this process: a relative or fellow national already employed in a company signals a job opportunity, or conversely, informs the company of the availability of an acquaintance.

«Q: How did you find the job you do today? Did someone help you?

R: As I told you before, everything depends on friendship. I am a person who always goes out to meet friends. Junas, a friend of mine, helped me; he also worked in that factory. So, when the boss was looking for someone to work, knowing that I was looking for a job, he gave me a hand. Alone, I probably wouldn't have made it». (Amadou, Gambian worker)

The resources that social capital provides to migrants can be crucial in allowing "newcomers" to enter the labour market, but at the same time, they confine them to the occupations occupied by pioneers, which, as mentioned, are the lowest positions available in the local labour market. This results in a phenomenon of occupational segregation (Ambrosini, 2000). Another element to consider regarding the occupational condition of recently arrived migrants is the

high turnover rate (Alberti & Sacchetto, 2023). Migrants' working experiences, especially in the initial phase, are often characterized by precariousness: contracts lasting a few months before moving to another company, possibly with several months of unemployment in between. Their typical trajectory involves short-term employment in different companies, often within the same sector, where the skills acquired are transferred from one firm to another. The importance of social capital and migratory networks was fundamental for Bangladeshi migration in the 2010s (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015), when migrants shared the same origin, making it much easier to activate mutual aid and solidarity dynamics. This phenomenon, however, is now much more heterogeneous: recently arrived migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, do not have pioneer co-national migrants who have been settled in the area for a long time, but rather experience a *meeting* (if not a clash) with previous migratory flows. In this context, phenomena of solidarity between immigrants of different origins can emerge, as well as dynamics of conflict that manifest not only in the labour sphere but also in social reproduction. In our research these dynamics frequently emerged in the search for housing, where immigrants who have been stabilized in the area for some time rent rooms and apartments to newly arrived migrants, sometimes helping them by offering housing that would be more difficult to obtain from Italians, but often exploiting them by charging very high rents or housing many people in the same home, relegating them to overcrowded conditions.

«Q: Is it difficult to find an apartment?

R: I'm not looking for an apartment because he [a friend of mine] found this one before me. He found it before me, and then I arrived, and he gave me a room. But they have been looking for a house for almost three years and still haven't found one. I have also asked many times, but it's difficult to find... I don't know why, I don't know... We are foreigners, it's difficult to find apartments. A lot of people here can't find anything. Foreigners, Africans, many Africans. Because where I work, I ask every day, but nothing is available. It's difficult.

Q: And for example, the Bangladeshis who bought houses, do they rent them out?

R: Yes, some Bangladeshis buy houses. Many Bangladeshis here buy houses, but if they rent them out, they only rent them to other Bangladeshis». (Modou, Gambian worker)

During the research, we frequently encountered these stratification dynamics among different migratory waves. Migrants who settled in Alte many years ago and bought a house, and then continued their migratory journey to other countries, now rent their houses to newly arrived migrants. In the labour market, the stratification of various migratory phases emerges less evidently, but is no less invasive and conditioning: the most recent arrivals are placed in the most degrading and lowest-paid working positions, immediately above the migrants who arrived earlier, up to the Italians, who occupy the best positions in the labour market, both within the same company, where they hold the most qualified roles with the highest salaries.

4. Agencies and contractual precarisation

The deregulation of the Italian labour market pursued over the past decades has led to increased job precarity and flexibility, affecting both native and migrant workers. The introduction of employment agencies as intermediaries between companies and workers has further intensified labour market flexibility and precariousness (Dimitriadis, 2023; Struolano & Raitano, 2020). Migrants who have recently arrived often enter the local labour market through recruitment agencies, which play a key role in the job placement process. In the four-year period ranging from 2019 to 2022, almost 40 per cent of the recruitment of foreign workers in the province of Vicenza took place through employment agencies and not directly by the producing companies (Prefecture of Vicenza, 2022). Moreover, data on the hiring of foreign workers show how in the province of Vicenza the high turnover that characterises the employment of migrants in Italy

(Fullin, 2011) reaches gigantic proportions, especially for African and more recently immigrated communities. For example, the average annual recruitment of Serbian migrants over the last few years (2019-2022) is 1,566 people (Prefecture of Vicenza, 2022) out of a community of 8,000 (ISTAT, 2025), suggesting that every year one out of five Serbian citizens (20% of the community) either finds or changes jobs. This figure rises to around 35% for Asian communities (India, Bangladesh, China) and reaches 55% for citizens of Senegal and Nigeria, suggesting that these communities provide a new workforce, which has just arrived in the province, or - alternatively - that Senegalese and Nigerian workers frequently lose and change employment, experiencing a high turnover. Thus, as already revealed in the work of Elias and Scotson (1965), migratory seniority has a significant influence on the access to local resources, and the more recent strata of a certain migratory configuration are more likely to experience job insecurity and social marginalisation. When this dynamic is combined with symbolic hierarchies (such as those that marginalise black people or those of Islamic religion) and civic stratifications (Morris, 2003), the complexity of *migratory stratifications* can only increase.

In this stratification process, employment agencies play a fundamental role in enabling newcomers to access the labour market. However, while they can facilitate entry into employment, they simultaneously hinder the possibility of obtaining more stable positions through direct hiring by the companies where workers are employed.

«Here we work always in tannery, there is metalwork but here almost all [immigrants] work in tannery. [...] I changed company I don't know how many times... sometimes you work two or three months and if then they say there's not much work, they send you home and tell you to go back to the agency and look somewhere else. I can also sign a contract but if after in company you no need anymore they send you away, you cannot say 'now I want fixed contract', they don't give you permanent contract, only through agency they take you. If you not hired directly from company, you stay always under agency». (Madou, Gambian worker)

The issue of job precariousness is a particularly significant concern for workers. Very often, temporary employment agencies offer contracts of extremely short duration, sometimes lasting only a few days, with the primary goal of allowing companies to assess whether the worker is suitable for the job, whether they demonstrate sufficient commitment, and whether they possess the necessary skills for the role. Only after this initial phase of evaluation, if the worker is deemed appropriate, companies may decide to extend the contract for a slightly longer period, typically one or two months. However, this initial phase, characterized by extremely short-term contracts, represents a period of great uncertainty for many workers, where job continuity is by no means guaranteed (Rocco *et al.*, 2023; Fullin, 2011). This situation places workers in a precarious position, where they are constantly subjected to the risk of non-renewal, forcing them into an ongoing cycle of insecurity and dependence on agency decisions. At the end of this process, which could be described as a form of probation or trial period, some workers manage to secure direct employment with the company. This transition to a direct contract offers them a relatively more stable employment condition compared to their initial situation, though it often remains marked by the broader structural challenges of the labour market and the ever-present risk of instability.

«I have worked in many places. My first job here was in grape harvesting. When I was in accoglienza [the Italian reception system for migrant people], without documents, I always went to harvest grapes. I also attended a course to become a welder. One day, an employment agency called me in Lonigo [Lonigo is a municipality in the province of Vicenza] and told me they had found a job for me. I said, "Are you joking?" I couldn't believe it. I went to the agency to sign the contract, which at first was only for three days. They sent me to the company, and I started working. After the first day, on the second day, the agency called me and said, "The company says you are good! So they are offering you a one-month contract." I worked for one month, then they renewed it for three months, then for another five

months, and finally for another two months. In total, I worked with the agency for nine months, until I was transferred directly under the company with a permanent contract. Now I am still working there». (Kalifa, Gambian worker)

The labour market in Alte Ceccato is relatively uniform and, unlike metropolitan cities, it cannot offer a high heterogeneity of available occupations. In fact, many of the workers interviewed are still concentrated in the nearby tanning district (Belussi & Sedita, 2010; Marchi, 2024), which relies heavily on labour agencies to recruit flexible workers:

«In this area, when you go to an agency to look for work, they always find you a job in a tannery! Because there are many tanneries here, but they pay little! Only in the big companies do they pay well, but in the small ones, no». (Sandeep, Indian worker)

The agencies, far from providing active labour market services, simply act as intermediaries between labour demand and supply, effectively functioning as brokers within an already structured labour market. On the one hand, they provide a service to the unemployed by offering a database of companies looking for staff, and on the other hand, they offer companies a pool of available and flexible labour. Moreover, they relieve companies from the entire process of negotiation and training, which falls on the agencies.

Beyond the heightened precarity resulting from the intermediation of employment agencies, the local labour market is also characterized by irregular contracts and forms of semi-formal employment (Cillo, 2010). Migrant workers are often compelled to accept irregular jobs that provide neither adequate protections nor fundamental rights. By semi-formal employment, we refer to the practice whereby companies issue a regular employment contract but underreport the actual hours worked. Consequently, the social security contributions paid are significantly lower, enabling firms to reduce labour costs. However, for workers, this results in diminished social security contributions over time, which affects their unemployment benefits (and potentially their future pension).

«But I also want to change jobs. At the beginning of the year, I had decided to do it, but then the war broke out, Mario Draghi resigned, and I told myself I had to hold on until December to see how things would go. I'd like to look for a job in a factory because I see it as a fairer environment. For example, I've had a domestic worker contract for many years—18 years, including 2 off the books. This year, I went to the unions to check how many contributions had been paid, and they told me it was very little: after 20 years with this contract, I would get a pension of just 130 euros! So, I decided to change because I still have to work another 25 years since I started late. And that's why I told myself that a factory would be a better choice than staying with this contract». (Mariana, Colombian worker).

Even more critical is the situation of those employed off the books, without any formal contract (Ficco *et al.*, 2014). In addition to the complete absence of social security contributions, these workers lack any form of insurance coverage. If they sustain a workplace injury, they are not entitled to legal protections and cannot report the incident without risking termination. While they may seek medical assistance at a hospital, they often refrain from disclosing that the injury occurred in the workplace to avoid legal repercussions or employer retaliation.

5. Workforce resistance and strategies

The working trajectories of immigrant workers in Alte Ceccato, as examined so far, are characterised by subordinate positions, low wages, degrading conditions, and precarious employment. However, the research clearly reveals a remarkable capacity for agency in multiple facets: from migrant entrepreneurship to the instrumental representation of work or in the declared willing-

ness to continue their migration journey, refusing to remain confined to the occupations available in the Alte hamlet (Alberti & Sacchetto, 2023; Smith, 2006).

«I still don't know. I will not go back to my country to live there forever, no, I won't do it. Maybe I will go there sometimes, in a few years, to visit, but not to live. And to live in Italy... I don't know (laughs). I have always wanted to live in an English-speaking country, always. I also thought Italy was like that, but when I arrived, I realized everything was different. Since I was a child, I have always wanted to live in an English-speaking country because all my relatives live, half in England and half in America... but even this has changed. I don't want to go to England or America anymore, they suck. So maybe there will be something in the future... I would like to go to Australia». (Farid, Bangladeshi worker).

While firms exploit immigrant labour to reduce costs and remain competitive in the market, the interviewed workers demonstrate a capacity for self-representation beyond mere subjugation (Dimitriadis, 2023). Migrant entrepreneurship (Ambrosini & Erminio, 2011; Avola & Cortese, 2012) is vividly manifested in the urban fabric of Alte Ceccato, with numerous successful examples of grocery stores, barbershops, and small businesses. A particular "entrepreneurial strategy" emerging from the research pertains to migrants who settled in Alte, purchased a house, and subsequently continued their migratory journey to other European countries, often to the United Kingdom. Rather than selling their property, these migrants choose to rent it out to more recently arrived migrants, resulting in dynamics that combine both solidarity and exploitation.

«Q: And once they leave, who moves into the houses?

R: Other Indians. Often the Indian who bought a house rents it out to Africans, puts a lot of Africans in there, and charges them a lot. This happens. These Indians arrived about twenty years ago, they made their fortune, managed to buy houses, send their children to school, and now they're doing very well. There's a high demand, but Italians are afraid to rent their houses to these people. Those who are looking for a house to rent, through word of mouth, know that these are the people to approach». (Mariana, Colombian worker)

Even wage workers demonstrate a significant capacity for agency, perceiving their employment as temporary and instrumental to achieving diverse objectives: returning to their country of origin, sending remittances to support their family back home, or bringing their spouse to live with them in Italy (De Haas, 2005). Very often, interviewees express the desire to start their own business or continue their studies to specialise in a particular field. Additionally, some migrant workers perceive their manual labour in Italy as a temporary stage in their migration project—a stepping stone—with the intention of moving to another European country once they obtain Italian citizenship (Della Puppa & King, 2019).

«Actually, I have three projects, not one. Open a restaurant, a barber, or a clothes shop, but nice clothes, in the centre of a city. If you want to succeed to do something big, you have to think big, otherwise, you can go to work in tannery and go home. If we want to live our dreams, we must think big, we have our plans, and Allah will help us, and we will succeed to do something. To do something we need money, how do you live your dreams with tannery salary? After fifteen days, money is already finished». (Imran, Pakistani worker)

In this interview excerpt, it is evident how, despite the subordinate position that migrant workers occupy in the labour market, they are still able to develop a form of self-representation that perceives them as independent from power dynamics and discriminatory logics. Through their aspirations, choices, and actions, migrant workers actively challenge the constraints imposed by structural inequalities, positioning themselves as agents of change rather than mere subjects of exploitation. The forms of these aspirations and practices of emancipation depend on contextual variables, foremost among them the length of one's stay in the receiving context and the ability to draw on economic, linguistic, or social resources. Equally central are, of course,

the biographical and migratory aspirations of individual people. Cutting across the different communities of Alte, these expressions of agency manifest not only in the way migrants envision and plan for their future but also in the hopes and goals related to their migratory journey. Many of their projects seem to be oriented towards new destinations, highlighting a desire for emancipation from their current circumstances and a willingness to create new opportunities for themselves, beyond the difficulties and limitations imposed by the socio-labour context in which they are situated. At the same time, some interviewees, aware of the discrimination and challenges encountered by many migrants, actively engage in helping those in need. Beyond economic strategies and aspirations for mobility, some migrant workers also engage in volunteer work to redefine their role in society, resist marginalization, and actively contribute to their communities. The story of Fatoumata, which we present here, clearly highlights how important it is for her to engage in solidarity, demonstrating a clear capacity for agency that develops into civic commitment:

«Q: Do you have a project you're working on?

R: I have a project that I haven't been able to bring to life yet, but it's something I've been working on for many years, and I'm looking for ways to make it happen. My goal is to help. I always say that we can't erase poverty, but we can help reduce it, making sure there is less of it. So, I want to be one of those people who dedicate their days and nights to helping others—whether it's providing food, clothing, or support. Last year, I took a course on how to open an association, offered by a local cooperative. I took it because I felt a real responsibility, and I thought, "Well, I'll take this course to learn how to do it, how to get started." Years ago, I wrote a letter of introduction with Alberta, but people told me it would be difficult to start from scratch when no one knows you. It's hard to raise money because people need to see that it's something credible. That's why I took the course, to get more ideas on how to move forward.

Q: Would you like to open an NGO or something similar?

R: Yes, I would really like to. Actually, I already try to do something in my small way. Whenever I can, I collect clothes and donate them. The last time, I sent clothes to a maternity ward for babies and newborns, and they were very happy». (Fatoumata, Burkinabè worker)

Engagement in volunteer work allows migrants to break away from the stereotypical portrayal of passive and dependent individuals, enabling them to take on an active role in mutual support and community-building. Through this experience, they not only strengthen their agency but also position themselves as key actors in the process of integration and socialisation with the host society. Volunteering thus becomes a space of participation where migrants can actively contribute to their social environment, develop new skills, and reinforce their sense of belonging (Baert & Vujić, 2016; Erminio, 2022). In this way, their involvement not only addresses an individual need for inclusion and recognition but also challenges dominant narratives that confine them to a position of marginality.

6. Conclusion

The study has explored the relationship between work and migration in contemporary Italy through the case of Alte Ceccato and its peculiar *migratory stratification*. Following a review of the literature on this issue, the empirical investigation began by analysing the processes through which migrant workers integrate into the labour market in Alte. In this context, characterised by a highly fragmented and extensive tanning production system, newcomers enter the most disadvantaged segments of the labour market, undertaking heavy and poorly paid jobs. A crucial factor in accessing employment is participation in networks of compatriots and acquaintances, who provide social resources enabling migrants to benefit from previous *migratory stratifications*. However, this is not always the case, particularly for asylum seekers, who often arrive in the country due to the mechanisms of the reception system and may lack any prior connection. For

many of them, employment agencies play a pivotal role in securing work. These agencies have profoundly changed the nature of employment in Alte and the rest of Italy in recent years, not only acting as intermediaries but capitalising on workforce instability to make it more readily available to firms. Finally, the study has highlighted migrant workers' expressions of agency, their endurance strategies in precarious conditions, their onward mobility projects and civic activism. The case of Alte Ceccato has proven to be both emblematic and instrumental in developing interpretations that enhance our understanding of contemporary shifts in migration and its entanglement with labour market. As noted at the outset of the paper, drawing on Sayad's insights, the "latest arrivals" have historically been confined to the most disadvantaged positions within the social and occupational hierarchy. However, the specific ways in which this dynamic materialises depend on the symbolic hierarchies and structural conditions of a given space-time. In the present case of Alte, the hyper-precarity experienced by newcomers appears to stem from the intersection of two factors. On the one hand, it is connected to the characteristics of contemporary migration. The newcomers of present times are young people from Sub-Saharan Africa, with limited ties in the territory and subject to racial discrimination (Fullin, 2016). On the other hand, this hyper-precarity is connected to the structural characteristics of the production system, exposed to an increasingly fluctuating market, whose costs are offloaded onto the most vulnerable workers. The specific case of Alte sheds light on national, if not global, dynamics related to the role assigned to migrants in the labour market. Pushed towards the lowest strata of the occupational pyramid, especially when they lack material, social and symbolic resources (read: discrimination processes), immigrant workers absorb the small and large crises of firms, while natives extract value from their labour force. The precariousness of their social and working positions is therefore used for the benefit of the *nationals* (Calabretta & Ragone, 2024), mitigating that social insecurity (Castel, 2003) which – paradoxically – is attributed precisely to migration. Returning to Sayad (1999), the study highlights the profound dynamics underlying the relationship between migration and work. On the one hand, foreign labour is absolutely necessary to sustain the Italian productive system (Chiaromonte & Federico, 2021); on the other, political rhetoric—particularly from the far right—continues to frame migration as a temporary phenomenon (see, for example, recent positions on "remigration"). Temporality (whether real or declared), precariousness, contraction of rights, and discrimination are mutually reinforcing dynamics (Sayad, 1999), leading—both in Alte and beyond—to extensive processes of "differential inclusion" of migrant workforce (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013).

Finally, this study also offers reflections on the ambiguous role of social capital (Portes, 1998). As observed, participation in ethnic networks can lead migrants to be absorbed into 'ethnic niches' that are segregating from an occupational standpoint. However, those arriving in Alte without such networks do not appear to have better employment prospects. On the contrary, social capital emerges as a crucial resource for "latest arrivals", who often cannot rely on financial assets and, in many cases, lack linguistic and cultural capital to spend in Italy. From the perspective of *migratory stratification*, it can therefore be argued that the ability of migrants to integrate and capitalise on pre-existing stratifications plays a central role in overcoming the challenges of migration and resettlement in the host country (Calabretta & Romania, 2024).

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated how an in-depth analysis of a local case - such as Alte Ceccato - can illuminate over the reverberations of macro dynamics related to the intersection of migration and labour. This inductive approach has been reinforced by the adoption of the *migratory stratification* perspective, which has enabled us to situate our study within spatial and historical processes, preventing it from being a mere descriptive exercise. In this sense, the study offers an alternative perspective on the concept of migratory stratifications, exploring its ability to capture the interplay of autonomy and dependency between migration and economic realities across different scales.

References

- Alasia, F., & Montaldi, D. (1960). *Milano, Corea*. Feltrinelli.
- Alberti, G., & Sacchetto, D. (2023). Mobilità, turnover e lavoro. *Cartografie sociali: rivista di sociologia e scienze umane* (8)15, 97–113.
- Ambrosini, M. (2000). Gli immigrati nei mercati del lavoro: il ruolo delle reti sociali. *Stato e mercato*, 20(3), 415–446.
- Ambrosini, M. (2002). Senza regia, ma non per caso: l'incontro tra immigrati e mercati del lavoro locali. *Sociologia del lavoro*, 88(4), 99–114.
- Ambrosini, M. (2003). Dopo l'integrazione subalterna: quali prospettive per gli immigrati e i loro figli? *Sociologia del lavoro*, 89(1), 13–26.
- Ambrosini, M., & Erminio, D. (2011). Introduzione: gli immigrati come attori economici: l'autoimpiego tra risorse etniche ed economie locali. *Mondi migranti*, 2, 31–40. <https://doi.org/10.3280/MM2011-002002>
- Anastasia, B., & Corò, G. (1996). *Evoluzione di un'economia regionale. Il Nordest dopo il successo*. Ediciclo Editore.
- Avola, M., & Cortese, A. (2012). Mobilità e carriere di immigrati imprenditori. *Quaderni di sociologia*, 58, 7–40. <https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.586>
- Avola, M., & Piccitto, G. (2020). Ethnic penalty and occupational mobility in the Italian labour market. *Ethnicities*, 20(6), 1093–1116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796820909651>
- Baert, S., & Vujić, S. (2016). Immigrant volunteering: a way out of labour market discrimination? *Economics Letters*, 146, 95–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2016.07.035>
- Bagnasco, A. (1977). *Tre Italie. La problematica territoriale dello sviluppo italiano*. Il Mulino.
- Ballarino, G., Barone, C., & Panichella, N. (2016). Origini sociali e occupazione in Italia. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, 57(1), 103–134.
- Basso, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Razzismo di stato. Stati Uniti, Europa, Italia*. FrancoAngeli.
- Belussi, F., & Sedita, S. R. (2010). The evolution of the district model: 'reverse relocation' and the case of the leather-tanning district of Arzignano. *European Review of Industrial Economics and Policy*, 1.
- Bonizzoni, P., & Hajer, M. (2023). Civil Society Actors and the 2020 Italian amnesty: bordering to deborder? *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 44(1), 44–60.
- Calabretta, A., & Ragone, M. (2024). State thought and social hierarchies between Italy and Tunisia. From history to identity. *Revista Interdisciplinar de Mobilidade Humana*, 32. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-858525038800032107>
- Calabretta, A., & Romania, V. (2024). Migratory stratifications and social ageing. Disentangling change in a Tunisian community in Italy. In F. Della Puppa, G. Sanò, G. Storato (Eds.), *Migratory Stratifications. A New Perspective on Migration and Social Change through the Italian Lens* (pp. 65–78). Transnational Press London.
- Calabretta, A., Della Puppa, F., & Storato, G. (2024). The migratory crossroads of Alte Ceccato. An emblematic case of migratory stratification. *Identities*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289x.2024.2356430>
- Cardano, M. (2019). *Defending Qualitative Research. Design, Analysis, and Textualization*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429464232>
- Castel, R. (2003). *L'Insécurité sociale : qu'est-ce qu'être protégé?* Seuil.
- Chiaromonte, W., & Federico, V. (2021). The labour market needs them, but we don't want them to stay for good: The conundrum of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers' integration in Italy. In V. Federico & S. Baglioni (Eds.), *Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers' integration in European labour markets: A comparative approach on legal barriers and enablers* (pp. 193–212). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67284-3_10
- Cillo, R. (2010). Economia sommersa e lavoro degli immigrati. *Economia e società regionale*: 111(3), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.3280/ES2010-003004>
- Colucci, M. (2018). *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia. Dal 1945 ai giorni nostri*. Carocci Editore.
- Coyne, I. T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26(3), 623–630. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.t01-25-00999.x>
- Daly, F., & Barot, R. (1999). Economic Migration and Social Exclusion: The Case of Tunisians in Italy in the 1980s and 1990s. In F. Anthias, & G. Lazaridis (Eds.), *Into the margins: migration and exclusion in Southern Europe* (pp. 35–53). Ashgate.
- Dimitriadis, I. (2023). Migrants and undeclared employment within the European construction sector: challenging dichotomous approaches to workers' agency. *Work, Employment and Society*, 37(5), 1321–1338.
- De Haas, H. (2005). International migration, remittances and development: myths and facts. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(8), 1269–1284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500336757>
- Della Puppa, F. (2014). *Uomini in movimento: il lavoro della maschilità fra Bangladesh e Italia*. Rosenberg & Sellier.
- Della Puppa, F. (2018). Ambivalent Mobilities and Survival Strategies of Moroccan and Bangladeshi Families in Italy in Times of Crisis. *Sociology*, 52(3), 464–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518764622>
- Della Puppa, F. (2022). Ponti di dialogo. L'immigrazione a Venezia e nel Veneto dal medioevo a oggi. *Studi Emigrazione*, 227, 355–368.
- Della Puppa, F., & Gelati, E. (2015). *Alte Ceccato. Una banglatown nel nordest*. Professionaldreamers.
- Della Puppa, F., & King, R. (2019). The New 'Twice Migrants': Motivations, Experiences and Disillusionments of Italian-Bangladeshis Relocating to London. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, 45(11), 1936–1952. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01369183x.2018.1438251>
- Della Puppa, F., & Sanò, G. (2021). *Stuck and Exploited: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Italy between Exclusion, Discrimination and Struggles*. Edizioni Ca' Foscari. <https://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-532-2/000>

Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., & Storato, G. (2024). Migratory stratifications: A new perspective to observe the intersection between migration and social change. In F. Della Puppa, G. Sanò, & G. Storato (Eds.), *Migratory Stratifications. A New Perspective on Migration and Social Change through the Italian Lens.*: Transnational Press London. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2025.2473211>

Doellgast, V., Lillie, N., & Pulignano, V. (2018). From dualization to solidarity: halting the cycle of precarity. In V. Doellgast, N. Lillie, & V. Pulignano (Eds.), *Reconstructing Solidarity* (pp. 1-41). Oxford University Press.

Elias, N., & Scotson, J. L. (1965). *The established and the outsiders. A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*. London: Sage.

Erminio, D. (2022). Il volontariato come forma di cittadinanza dal basso. *Mondi migranti*, 1, 45-61. <https://doi.org/10.3280/MM2022-001003>

Eve, M. (2011). Established and Outsiders in the Migration Process. *Cambio. Rivista sulle Trasformazioni Sociali*, 1(2), 147-158.

Fabini, G., Ferraris, V., & Sbraccia, A. (2022). Migrazioni, criminalità, criminalizzazione. In T. Pitch (Eds.), *Devianza e questione criminale* (pp. 81-102). Carocci.

Festival, F. (1999). *Alte Ceccato*. Edigraf.

Ficco A., Iadevaia V., Pomponi F., & Tagliaferro C. (2014). *Il lavoro sommerso e irregolare degli stranieri in Italia. Sintesi dei principali risultati*. Isfol.

Fullin, G. (2011). Tra disoccupazione e declassamento professionale. La condizione degli stranieri nel mercato del lavoro italiano. *Mondi migranti*, 1, 195-228. <https://doi.org/10.3280/mm2011-001010>

Fullin, G. (2016). Labour market outcomes of immigrants in a South European country: do race and religion matter? *Work, Employment and Society*, 30(3), 391-409. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017015575867>

Fullin, G., & Reyneri, E. (2011). Low Unemployment and Bad Jobs for New Immigrants in Italy. *International Migration*, 49(1), 118-147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00594.x>

Guarrasi, V. (1983). Prime valutazioni sulla presenza di lavoratori stranieri in Sicilia. *Studi Emigrazione*, 20(71), 356-362.

ISTAT. (2025). Available on Immigrati.Stat: <http://stra-dati.istat.it/>

Marchi, D. (2024). Stratificazione, nocività e lavoro immigrato. Il caso del distretto conciaro della Valle del Chiampo. *Economia e società regionale*: 1, 61-73. <https://doi.org/10.3280/es2024-001005>

Massey, D. S., Alarcón, R., Durand, J., & González, H. (1990). *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*. University of California Press.

Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Morris, L. (2003). Managing Contradiction: Civic Stratification and Migrants' Rights. *International Migration Review*, 37, 74-100.

Panichella, N. (2012). Le migrazioni interne nel secolo scorso: vecchie e nuove forme a confronto. *Stato e mercato*, 32(2), 255-282.

Papadopoulos, D., & Tsianos, V. (2009). L'autonomia delle migrazioni. *Mondi Migranti*, 2, 83-96.

Piro, V. (2020). Politiche migratorie e disfunzioni funzionali. Il caso della legge Martelli. *Meridiana*, 97, 245-260.

Piro, V., & Peruzzi, G. (2024). An emerging 'camp labour regime': refugees' labour between production and reproduction. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-19.

Portes, A. (1998). Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.1>

Prefecture of Vicenza (2022), *Consiglio territoriale per l'immigrazione. Dossier statistico*, 22 novembre 2022.

Pugliese, E. (2006). *L' Italia tra migrazioni internazionali e migrazioni interne*. Il Mulino.

Redini, V., Vianello, F.A. & Zaccagnini, F. (2020) *Il lavoro che usura. Migrazioni femminili e salute occupazionale*. FrancoAngeli.

Riba-Mateos, N. (2004). How can we understand immigration in Southern Europe? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(6), 1045-1063.

Rocco I., Bertazzon L., & Girardi D. (2023). *La partecipazione degli stranieri al mercato del lavoro regionale: percorsi lavorativi degli occupati nel 2022*. Misure/116. Osservatorio Mercato del Lavoro - Veneto Lavoro.

Sacchetto, D. (2004). *Il Nordest e il suo Oriente. Migranti, capitali e azioni umanitarie*. Ombrecorte.

Sacchetto, D. (2013). Migrazioni e lavoro nella sociologia italiana. In S. Mezzadra, & M. Ricciardi (a cura di), *Movimenti indisciplinati. Migrazioni, migranti e discipline scientifiche* (p. 50-67). Ombrecorte.

Sanfilippo, M. (2011). Cronologia e storia dell'emigrazione italiana. *Studi Emigrazione*, (183), 357-370.

Sayad, A. (1999). *La double absence. Des illusions de l'emigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*. Editions du Seuil.

Scheufele, B. (2008). Content Analysis, Qualitative. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecc134>

Scrinzi, F. (2004). Professioniste della tradizione. Le donne migranti nel mercato del lavoro domestico. *Polis*, 18(1), 107-136.

Smith, C. (2006). The double indeterminacy of labour power: labour effort and labour mobility. *Work, employment and society*, 20(2): 389-402. Doi: 10.1177/0950017006065109.

Struolano E., & Raitano M. (2020). Early-career complexity before and after labour market deregulation in Italy: Heterogeneity by gender and socio-economic status across cohorts. *Social Indicators Research*, 151, 231-255. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02373-0>

Migratory Stratifications in a Border Transit Camp. The case study of Friedland in Germany²

Introduction

Getting off the train in Friedland, a little village in the centre of Germany, a billboard indicates the way to a "border transit camp" (in German: Grenzdurchgangslager). In 2025, this might evoke questions, as the national borders are several hundred kilometres away. Not so until 1990 when the inner-German border, which corresponded to the borders of the Soviet occupation zone with the American and the British occupation zones from 1945, was just in sight from the hill sheltering the village to the East.

Following the indicated way, one walks up the "returnees' street" (in German: Heimkehrerstraße). Passing by a supermarket, a dentist's office, a construction company, a brickwork factory and several residential buildings, the camp appears on the Western side of the street. Although a fence and a barrier demarcate it as a restricted area, the gate is open most of the time and entering drivers simply give a friendly nod to the usher in the gatekeeper's lodge.

On the site, there are several two-story buildings, where people are walking in and out, sitting in front of the houses, or playing table tennis. The inscriptions on some of the houses make it clear that people only live here temporarily: Registration, timetables for bringing laundry to the washing service, a canteen, a donated clothing facility are just some examples that show that life in the "border transit camp" is not an independent one.

Something that cannot be seen from just walking inside the camp, but that becomes visible (or rather audible) after some time of interacting with camp residents and employees, is the central question: When will be my transfer? No one is meant to stay in Friedland long term; as an initial reception centre it is a temporary step on the route of diverse migrations and life journeys. Yet, the place itself shows the continuity of migratory movements: Until today, more than 4 million people have passed through the Friedland border transit camp.

Taking these observations as the starting point for research, this article will explore how different layers of migration stories intertwine in a small place. Using the example of Friedland, we will examine the extent to which the analytical lens of migratory stratifications is suitable for understanding migration history. The aim is neither to provide an exhaustive mapping of the location nor to document all perspectives of the actors involved in this location. Instead, the focus is on two buildings that exemplify how a small physical space can contain many years of migration history. This history is visible in the many documented changes of use that have left their mark. However, the migration history of the place becomes even clearer in the lives of people who are connected to these places – through their own migration experience or through other points of reference to this place. Encounters are a necessary methodological tool for discovering this history. This article focuses on encounters with people and places in order to provide an example of migratory stratifications in Friedland.

The essay is structured in such a way that the Friedland border transit camp is first introduced, supplemented by the various discourses and research fields that are associated with this place. The analytical perspective of migratory stratifications is then explained. Based on this, encounters with individuals at two specific locations in the transit camp are examined – individuals whose lifepaths are influenced by a temporary stay or work in one of those buildings and who in turn also shaped the place Friedland themselves. Combining observations of physical locations and their change over the years with biographies of former residents or workers of the border

1 Anna Louise Weßling, Museum Friedland; PhD candidate at the University of Vechta and the University of Göttingen, anna-louise.wessling@mail.uni-vechta.de.

2 Received: 04/10/2025 – Revised: 02/03/2026 – Accepted: 29/07/2026 – Published: 30/09/2026

transit camp, will add a new perspective to the concept of migratory stratifications: Far from proceeding in a strict chronological order, layers of migration history can be interdependent in very individual ways.

1. A Village Mirroring Decades of Immigration History

The Friedland border transit camp was opened on 20th September 1945 by the British military administration. After the end of the Second World War, many people were on the move: Some had been evicted due to border shifts, some had fled bombings, others had lost their homes. The goal of border transit camps erected along the borders of the British occupational zone was to control the immigration into the territory and to give people a temporary shelter after an exhausting journey. People stayed here for just a few days, as the word transit indicates. Many camps were closed in the Nineteen Forties or Nineteen Fifties, but Friedland remained – and is still in function today. (Baur & Bluche, 2017)

For a long time, it was perceived in the public eye as a place to receive Germans, like expellees from Eastern Europe, children separated from their families, returning prisoners of war, refugees from East Germany, people with German origins that had stayed in the West of Poland and ethnic German immigrants („Spätaussiedler“) from former Soviet Union countries. (Baur & Bluche, 2017) However, a look at the groups who were housed here shows that the Friedland border transit camp had never been receiving only Germans, but always had international residents as well. There existed a Displaced Persons camp from 1949 to 1952 for released forced workers from many European countries. From the Nineteen Seventies ongoing, asylum seekers from African and Asian countries and refugees from Vietnam and Chile fleeing war and military regimes arrived in Germany via Friedland as well. (Baur & Bluche, 2017)

Since 2011, the camp is an official first reception centre for asylum seekers. The people arriving in Friedland today are asylum seekers from all over the world: People in the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) resettlement program or humanitarian reception programs (although the German government has put this on hold since April 2025) (cf. Tagesschau 08.04.2025) as well as immigrants from former Soviet republics with German and/or Jewish origins. (Baur & Bluche, 2017)

It is rare for a reception centre for refugees to exist continuously for so many years. Even though the groups arriving and the political conditions have changed over time and the procedures in the camp have had to be adapted to this changed context, there is still continuity. This continuity also extends beyond the camp: many refugees who arrived in the 1940s remained in the village; with support from the Catholic Church, among others, more and more buildings were constructed around the border transit camp, so that today it is located in the centre of the village. Many of the residents have connections to the border transit camp, for example through their own family's migration history. The border transit camp is also an important employer in the region. Furthermore, over time, many residents have become involved as volunteers. At the same time, the Friedland Museum has sources that describe conflicts between the residents and the camp inhabitants. In a recently launched research project, the museum team is attempting to examine the relationship between the camp and the village in more detail and to better understand the coexistence of these 'temporary neighbours'.

Also under investigation is the understanding of Friedland as a border place: From the Nineteen Forties, the expression 'gate to freedom' (in German: Tor zur Freiheit) emerged to describe Friedland, positioning the camp as a central place of memory in post-war Germany in the tradition of anti-communist and victimisation narratives. (Schießl, 2016) The expression has never left public discourse and has an identitarian function, as it appears for example in the official language of the municipality of Friedland. Seeing Friedland as a place of arrival is certainly true – as those

who arrive here have survived and have overcome physical borders. It is also a place of transit – historically and for groups with certain nationalities (like the ethnic German immigrants from former Soviet Union countries). But the notion of a border is not as historical as it might seem: Although the inner-German border doesn't exist anymore, Friedland represents the administrative borders of Europe for asylum seekers. Once in Friedland, they still don't know if they can stay or not, so the term "gate to freedom" does not apply to them. It might apply in the sense that people hope to start a new phase of life in Friedland, but whether this happens – and when – also makes this little village also a place of immobility: According to German law, people need to reside in refugee accommodations, at least for the first months of their asylum procedure. (cf. Asylgesetz §47) Although they have moved a lot to come there, their freedom of movement seems to have vanished for the time being in Friedland.

These different interpretations of the border transit camp Friedland – as a border location, as a 'gateway to freedom', as a place of both mobility and immobility experiences – touch on several areas of migration and border studies research. The following chapter takes into account the aspects that, on the one hand, critically examine the structure of a camp and thus enable a spatial perspective on migration movements, and on the other hand, highlight the importance of migration in a person's life and thus the temporal perspective. The combination of these various research approaches leads to the migratory stratification approach used in this article.

2. Transit, Labels and Liminalities

Starting off with the term 'border transit camp', a whole body of literature on life in (refugee) camps can be drawn upon: The loss of autonomy while being forced to stay in a camp, being deprived of possibilities of controlling one's future, but being forced to follow external rules, not being a political subject anymore but being reduced to the "bare life" (Agamben, 2002) are only some of the characteristics of this situation. (see Agier, 2011; Turner, 2015; Ansems de Vries & Guild, 2019; Devlin *et al.*, 2021) Literature that critically examines the existence of (refugee) camps is also closely linked to research on border regimes (see Hess & Tsianos, 2010; Pagano, 2019). Current research projects are applying the border regime perspective to Friedland. However, this perspective has received little attention in the literature to date: The literature on Friedland specifically covers mainly its first 45 years of existence (Schießl, 2016; Spatz, 2018), taking a historical-descriptive perspective in order to document events with a focus on transit. Further material can be found in the chronicle created by the camp administration, in auto-edited contemporary witnesses' publications (Tomm, 1992; Reding, 1956; Müller-Bringmann, 1956) as well as diverse publications by Museum Friedland. (Baur & Bluche, 2017)

All the more, numerous are the discourses that can be associated with the place: Starting off with the question of who is labelled as a refugee or a migrant, the discussion is vivid inside the camp. Many different groups arrive, all of which belong to different residence categories. Legal categories are linked to the access to resources (Arendt, 1943; Zetter, 1991) which might also entail ascriptions and assumptions.

The label that people are given through the process of migration is significant for their further lives. It also hints to what Abdelmalek Sayad called "double absence" (1999), describing exile as being absent from the place migrants left but being only physically, yet not fully present (and therefore absent) in the country of destination as well due to forms of exclusion. This is followed by the concept of translocal positionality (Anthias, 2006, 2008, 2011) that hints to the change of social position due to a migration process. It is therefore interesting to understand at which specific points this change happens. To answer this question, we might enlarge the concept of "liminal space" by Victor Turner (1969) from the temporary residence in camps to the whole process of migration.

Bringing the literature on camps, liminal spaces, double absence and transit together invites a deeper interrogation of the place that carries all these discourses. How can we therefore combine the historical and the contemporary dimension of the Friedland border transit camp? The following chapter takes the literature mentioned here as a basis for finding a methodology that corresponds to the specific characteristics of the research location. The diversity of interpretations of the place already suggests that a closer look should be taken at how these levels of meaning gradually emerged. Thus, retrospectively, various layers of migration history can be understood, and a connection can be made.

3. Towards a Multi-Layered Research

For studying migration history, several methodologies have been developed, either focussing on putting forward the notion of movement in time or paying attention to the physical movement of a person from one point to the other.

When researching the history of migration on the basis of biographies, the focus is placed on movement over time. Biographies or narrated life stories are narrations that fix the perspective on one's own experience from the point in time when the life story is recorded or written down. (Rosenthal, 1995) This means that the narration might undergo changes throughout time and with each retelling and thus needs to be set in a context. The same applies for the situation in which it is narrated. The relation between the researcher and the interviewed person is part of power hierarchies due to positionalities that need to be reflected on. (Kaufmann & Schütte, 2020) A biographical approach to migration history has the potential to produce 'situated knowledge' (Haraway, 1995) that permits a diversification of perspectives.

Taking this further, the trajectory approach follows migrants on their routes, trying to understand how routes emerge, how borders are overcome and how a life story develops according to movement. (Schwarz, 2020) Meanwhile, there are also scholars like Aurora Massa who had a look at trajectories accumulating in one place. (Massa, 2020) This makes it possible to understand entanglements of trajectories and biographies: By staying in one place long term and observing how it is shaped by migratory movements, one can achieve a cross-sectional perspective.

The approach of migratory stratification is further developing this point of view: Stratification, a term derived from archaeology, means to understand migration history as a sedimented pattern. Migration events rarely stay without traces and the analytical lens of stratifications starts off from these traces, trying to contextualize them, and re-construct the continuity between past and present. It permits to develop a multitude of perspectives on the same spot but also understand their links to each other. (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024, 2025)

The concept of migratory stratifications might help to form a deeper understanding of migration history in Friedland. Which layers of migration sedimentation can be found nowadays and how do they link past and present? Understanding migration history as a history of the encounters between people, places and territories suggests choosing a research method of encounter as well. Utilising the idea of a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), the research method is to "roam around" (Fiedler & Hielscher, 2014) as a way of mapping. The author is part of the museum's team and is working at the intersection of curation, collection and pedagogical activities and is thus close to former and current camp residents and employees. The article will equally follow the Friedland museum's collection and outreach activities: Led by the intention to value memory and to make it accessible for today's residents and visitors, the aim of the museum's activities and therefore the author's perspective is to understand the historical meaning of places. The attention paid to lived experience in both collection and outreach is a central driver for this research design.

The focus of this research will be set on two specific sites with historical and contemporary meaning inside the border transit camp, namely the Nissenhütte as a former form of accom-

modation and House 14, which has had various welcoming functions throughout its history. Focussing on these two places resulted from the museum's cultural work: Through participatory remembrance pedagogy and research for the collection, encounters with people were (and are) created that can uncover the history of these places piece by piece and make the interconnect-edness of places and people visible. Using a mixed-method approach of ethnographic mapping, biographical interviews and participatory observation, the encounter with people who can tell the story of material remains from previous years of arrival and departure in Friedland, will enable me to get an excerpt of how migration has shaped the place and is doing so until today.

4. Revealing Entangled Encounters

The research results for this article are based on several years of pedagogical, curatorial and collection-related work in Friedland. Just as research-relevant moments intertwined during the research process in accordance with the chosen method, the presentation of the results should also follow this dynamic in order to visualise the various layers of migration history at the selected locations in an exemplary manner.

4.1 *From shelter to exhibition*

One of the places, where encounters with contemporary witnesses are happening, is a half-round-ish hut on the central square of the camp. Metal roof, wooden front, positioned in diagonal to the rest of the rectangularly arranged houses, its historical origins are not deniable: The "Nissen hut" dates back to the beginnings of the Friedland border transit camp. After the second world war, Nissen huts gave shelter to many homeless people, mostly in the British occupation zone. Invented already in the first World War by the Canadian officer and engineer Peter Norman Nissen for soldiers on the field, they equally served civilians at a time where many houses were destroyed. Easy to construct by four to six people within a few hours, the Nissen huts were the solution at hand to give a roof to many. In Friedland, there were 220 of them, each hosting up to 20-25 people, but equally serving as canteen, church, medical station etc. Although it was very cold in winter and unbearably hot in summer in these huts, finding shelter in it marked an important step for the people arriving in the late 1940s. (cf. Museum Friedland)

«The camp for me was the end of the war. One thing in particular that I remember a lot were the Nissen huts. These strange, curved little houses in which you no longer had to lie on the floor but were given a kind of bed, but in which you had one thing: you were no longer afraid. There was nothing left for which we had to flee. (...). A new life began for us in Friedland». (M.A., MF_L_2_108, English translation by the author)³

The people who can still bear witness of that time were born in the late 1930s or early 1940s. They arrived in Friedland as children, mostly with their parents. Born during war times, not yet fully aware of the political situation at that time, the temporary life in Nissen huts belongs to their early childhood memories.

«I remember (...) this Nissen hut, which was basically the first memory I had of a home (...) where I could sleep, because before that it was all nebulous for me. And this Nissen hut (...) was a somewhat smaller room, (...) and when I came in, there were four metal bunk beds in a row on the left-hand side. And on these metal beds were straw mattresses that stung and we covered ourselves with woollen blankets and

3 Original quote in German: „Das Lager für mich war das Ende des Krieges. Insbesondere, woran ich mich sehr erinne-re, das waren die Nissenhütten. Diese eigenartigen, gekrümmten kleinen Häuschen, in denen man nicht mehr auf dem Boden liegen musste, sondern eine Art Bett bekam, in dem man aber eins hatte: Man hatte keine Angst mehr. Es gab nichts mehr, wofür wir hätten fliehen müssen. (...). Ab Friedland begann für uns ein neues Leben.“ (MF_L_2_108)

I still remember that they smelled very musty and of course the mattresses stung terribly and basically, as a child, I was very sensitive and found it terrible. And then, right at the beginning, there was a pot-belly stove, next to it a small washstand and on the washstand there was a washbowl with a jug where water was always topped up, but cold.» (E.G., MF_L_2_0035, English translation by the author)⁴

Several decades have passed since this experience, yet stepping back into the Nissen hut is emotional for some of their former residents. For many, the Nissen huts materialise their memories of loss and pain, but also of relief and hope. They all established a life in post-war Germany, even though the label “refugee” had long-lasting consequences for them:

«This [time] has shaped me indirectly, because I’m not aware of a lot of things. But the memories came back when the flood of refugees, [20]15 in particular, there had been some before that, but [20]15 in particular, and when Ms Merkel said that we could manage it. And that is a saying that I fully support, inwardly (...) and my husband too, as I said, we are refugees ourselves, we have been taken in ourselves, we are rooted again, and really rooted, we have found a home. (...) But we are always aware of the value of what we have.» (D.J., MF_L_2_0036, English translation by the author)⁵

The Nissen huts in Friedland were replaced by wooden barracks in the 1950s. Some of them are still in use today, but they are being replaced little by little by the already mentioned two-story houses made of stone. This aspect of the architectural history of the place carries a message in itself: The temporary character of refugee housing architecture is abandoned with the construction of solid, permanent houses, anticipating the future existence of this camp. At several moments in time, the question arose as to whether the camp should be closed. (cf. NDR 26.09.2023) But migratory movements necessitating to house shelter-seeking people and the growing awareness of the historical dimension of the site have led to the fact that the Friedland border transit camp is still in operation today. The political decisions to maintain the camp and to make it the central arriving place for Ethnic German immigrants from Post-Soviet countries from the year 2000 onwards also fostered the attempts to preserve the history of the place, not least with the decision of the regional parliament in 2006 to start developing a museum dedicated to the past and present of the Friedland border transit camp.

The last remaining Nissen hut is part of this memory culture: Reconstructed from historical, original parts of the Nissen huts in Friedland it takes up a central position between administration, accommodations, fire fighters’ station, canteen and chapel. In the 1990s, the camp administration started to exhibit several historical objects in the hut. Since 2016, the newly opened museum has used it for temporary exhibitions. Since 2024, the new permanent exhibition “SHELTER. Life in between” acknowledges the historical dimension and the contemporary camp life at the same time: The exhibitions’ concept was developed collaboratively by a team of ten co-curators together with the museum’s team and a scenographer’s agency. All co-curators have a special link to the camp, either as former residents from two, ten or 75 years ago, as village neighbours or as

4 Original quote in German: „Ich erinnere mich (...) an diese Nissenhütte, die war ja für mich im Grunde genommen auch die erste Erinnerung an überhaupt ein Zuhause (...), wo ich drin schlafen konnte, weil vorher war das ja alles für mich nebulös. Und diese Nissenhütte (...) war ein etwas kleinerer Raum, (...) und da standen, wenn ich reinkam, links-seitig vier Metallhochbetten hintereinander. Und auf diesen Metallbetten lagen so piekende Strohmatt ratzen und zugedeckt haben wir uns mit Wolldecken und ich erinnere mich noch, dass die sehr muffig riechen oder rochen und es eben auch natürlich auf diesen Matratzen es unheimlich geiekt hat und ich im Grunde genommen, so als Kind auch sehr empfindlich war und das ganz schrecklich fand. Und dann stand gleich am Anfang, stand so ein Kanonen-ofen, daneben so ein, sag ich mal, so ein kleiner Waschtisch und auf dem Waschtisch war so eine Waschs chüssel mit einem Krug, wo dann immer Wasser nachgefüllt wurde, aber eben kalt.“ (MF_L_2_0035)

5 Original quote in German: „Diese [Zeit] hat mich indirekt geprägt, weil bewusst ist mir ja vieles nicht. Aber die Erin-nerungen kamen wieder, als die Flüchtlingsströme, [20]15 speziell, davor waren ja auch schon welche, aber speziell [20]15, und als Frau Merkel sagte, wir schaffen das. Und das ist ein Spruch, den ich voll befürworte, innerlich (...) und mein Mann auch, wie gesagt, wir sind ja selber, wir sind selber Geflüchtete, wir sind selber aufgenommen worden, wir sind wieder verwurzelt, und zwar richtig verwurzelt, wir haben Heimat gefunden. (...) Wir sind uns aber immer bewusst, was es wert ist, was wir haben.“ (MF_L_2_0036)

staff of the camp. They followed the invitation of the museum to contribute their perspectives to this participative process that wanted to take into account the fact that migration to Friedland has never stopped; quite the contrary: migration memories are made continuously here. When entering the Nissen hut, it surprises its visitors with colourful furniture and a lot of open space. The exhibition has five key elements:

- The Nissen hut as a historic building and a cultural memorial is at the centre of attention. It is the only original object in the exhibition, maintained in its original state, highlighted through the colourful accents of the exhibition design.
- The memories of the contemporary witnesses – people who lived in Nissen huts as children – find a place of preservation in the Nissen hut. The original narrations are audible in one part of the exhibition, where visitors can sit or lie down on wooden boxes, listen to the narrations and peruse biographical texts and photos of the Nissen huts in Friedland in booklets right beside them.
- Visitors have the opportunity to write down their own experiences. The design of this installation evokes the moment of registration, central to each camp experience according to the co-curators. But instead of asking categorising questions, visitors have the opportunity to render the different layers of migration visible by adding their own perspective to the exhibition.
- The function of the Nissen hut was to provide shelter in a physical way, but for many it also meant a first emotional shelter after a long time of distress. The co-curators thus dedicated the largest part of the room to the topic of encounters: Historic and contemporary encounters in the Friedland border transit camp become visible on large photo boards and contemporary experiences of these encounters are shared through audio stations. But first and foremost, the exhibition aims to encourage encounters itself – bean bags and benches create a cosy atmosphere, providing a place to sit and relax, to think and to breathe, to get inspired by the question cards on the board on the opposite wall and to start an conversation with other visitors.
- The exhibition in the Nissen hut can be accessed in six languages: Arabic, English, German, Spanisch, Russian and Turkish. These are some of the languages spoken most frequently in the camp and also the languages spoken by the co-curators' team. The choice of multilingualism in the exhibition has not only a representative function: It is the clearest sign of invitation to newcomers who don't speak German yet to feel welcome in the exhibition.

The Nissen hut exhibition and the process around it refers thus to situations from the past and the present at the same time. This continuity of past and present was the main principle defined by the co-curator's team, as they realized early during their first encounters as a group that this was a central theme. The process and the design expressed this in various ways:

- References to old field beds and straw mattresses are made through the rectangle wooden boxes and bean bags; they abstract the idea of shelter, hinting to the emotional importance rather than the material one.
- The rejection of a categorizing logic that puts people into categories and deprives them of any privacy is illustrated by the creation of a place where people can decide themselves on their scope of visibility by writing something about their experience – or not.
- Audio snippets and photos convey the feeling of having lost home, of being not yet orientated in the new place, of not knowing where and when the future life will happen.
- Waiting for more stories to be told is not only a pedagogical approach towards memory culture, but also a reference to a contemporary witness. As a 15-year-old boy he came to the camp when he heard that prisoners of war were released from the Soviet Union:
« [The fascinating thing was to sit in these Nissen huts, on the beds, with these former prisoners

of war, and to listen to their life stories up to that point. And grasp the feeling of what it meant for them now to be back here, to be at home again, to be back in their homeland, to be able to return to their families, that was something special. (...) You were here, (...) you met these people and tried to help them a little so that they could slowly, little by little, feel at home here. (...) And the second thing was that they had the feeling and the certainty that they could express themselves here. It sounds a bit strange today, but I sometimes sat for, I don't know, half an hour or an hour and just listened.» (H.M., MF_L_2_0043, English translation by the author)⁶

One year after the opening of the new permanent exhibition in the Nissen hut, thereby establishing the building as a place that reflects history, it is clear that this is exactly what has happened: the notes left at the participatory stations of the exhibition bear witness to the experiences of refugees currently living in Friedland and former residents who have written their stories into the history of the place. The perspectives of people who experienced the Friedland transit camp at different points in history correspond with one another here.⁷

4.2 From charity to dialogue

While the Nissen hut shows the different layers of migration history and the reflexive memory process around it in one physical site, other places are more difficult to decrypt by just looking at them. Important hints to explore migration stratification further come from people who have dimensions of migratory stratification in their own biographies. This is the case for one of the co-curators of the Nissen hut exhibition, M.S.: When she was a child, her grandfather was employed in the camp and helped to bring the luggage of the newcomers from the train station to the camp. As a little girl, M.S. was allowed to sit on top of the loaded hand cart. She used to play with the arriving children, who became her temporary friends. During this time people didn't live in Nissen huts anymore, but her grandfather showed some of the remaining huts to her. M.S. was shocked that people had to live in such poor conditions. She later lived abroad for a few years, but then returned to her home village near Friedland. Since then, she has been an active volunteer of the Caritas giving out donated clothes to the newcomers. An open-mind and a helping hand towards anyone, regardless of their origins, characterise her understanding of her own role in Friedland over the years.

«My attitude certainly also came from my childhood memories here in the camp, namely that every person, regardless of origin, religion or skin colour, is worth just as much as I am and that we are all human beings first and foremost and deserve to be treated and respected as such. Dealing with people who arrived here as strangers and homeless has shaped me - in addition to my parents' upbringing: I grew up believing that if you are doing well, you have an obligation to look out for other people who are not doing so well and stand by their side whenever possible.» (M.S., MF_L_2_0135, English translation by the author)⁸

6 Original quote in German: „[Das] Faszinierende war, in diesen Nissenhütten zu sitzen, auf den Betten, mit diesen ehemaligen Kriegsgefangenen, und sich deren Lebensgeschichte bis dahin anzuhören. Und, das Gefühl mitzunehmen, was es für sie jetzt bedeutete, wieder hier zu sein, wieder zu Hause zu sein, in der Heimat zu sein, zu ihren Familien zurückkehren zu können, das war also was Besonderes. (...) Man war hier, (...) man traf diese Menschen und versuchte ihnen so ein bisschen zu helfen, dass sie sich hier so langsam, peu à peu, zu Hause fühlen. (...) Und das Zweite war, dass sie das Gefühl hatten und die Gewissheit, dass sie sich hier mal aussprechen konnten. Klingt zwar im heutigen Begriff ein bisschen merkwürdig, aber ich habe manchmal, ich weiß nicht, halbe Stunde, Stunde gegessen und habe nur zugehört.“

7 This small selection of perspectives from today's refugees invites us to take a closer look at the current situation in the border transit camp and the experiences of people fleeing to Germany. Research on this topic is already being conducted within the museum and at universities. However, this topic is too broad to cover in this article.

8 Original in German: „Sicherlich ist meine Einstellung auch von meinen Kindheitserinnerungen hier im Lager gekommen, nämlich, dass jeder Mensch, egal welcher Herkunft, Religion oder Hautfarbe genauso viel wert ist wie ich und dass wir in erster Linie alle Menschen sind und es verdient haben, als solche behandelt und respektiert zu werden.“

Since 2022, one of her many activities as a retiree is to help out in the “open space”, a weekly program for creating encounters between people with and without refugee migration experience that is organised by Museum Friedland. Until summer 2025, these activities used to happen in a house on the camp site with the number 14. A long white bungalow which belongs to the second generation of architecture in the border transit camp Friedland: The wooden barrack itself is from the 1950s while its insulating outer shell was added in the 1970s. House 14 is another example of migratory stratification in Friedland: Since the 1980s it was used by staff tasked with helping arriving people with advice as well as clothing. Namely a team of the Red Cross, an organisation that has been involved in the camp since its beginnings, moved into House 14, where they greeted the arrivals with coffee and gave them advice on the many questions they had about their future, helping them with documents, integration classes and distributing donated clothes. A team of volunteers also went round the camp, knocking on room doors and enquiring about people’s welfare. This was due to the experience that some people feel too bad – physically or mentally – to seek help outside of their room.

«In winter, we wore blue coats with a Red Cross badge on them, which I wore for a long time. That had the advantage that you were recognised everywhere on the site and were often approached when people had questions and couldn’t find their way around.» (B.B., MF_L_2_0134, English translation by the author)⁹

In conversation with B.B., the former director of the Red Cross, a picture emerges of how House 14 has long been a place of help and learning. As a retiree, B.B. is now a volunteer of the “Friedlandhilfe”, an association that supports arriving people in Friedland and moved into House 14 in 2019. But before that - when the Red Cross ceased its work in Friedland at the end of 2013 and the Inner Mission, a Protestant charity organisation, took over the donated clothing room – the offices and the seminar room of House 14 were used for different purposes, for example from 2016-2017 for career counselling for the arriving refugees through a project of the labour office of the nearby town. From 2017 to 2019, the social services of the camp administration held information events and orientation classes in House 14. (cf. email conversation with social service/ camp administration on 16.07.2025) When the museum started to offer activities and intercultural encounters and was looking for a regular meeting point in 2023, some of the rooms were free. From 2023 to 2025, the “open space” was at the time the name for the big seminar room in the house, but also for the concept itself to provide a space where people can exchange freely, independently of their origins. (These activities are still ongoing, albeit in a different place due to practical reasons.) In order to promote this exchange, various workshops are offered that deal with art, music, movement, language learning, history etc. The participants are camp residents and neighbours from the village and the area around Friedland. Topics that are discussed are not necessarily experiences of flight and migration, but rather topics to which everyone can contribute. The categories of being a migrant or not become less important for a short moment – they might be part of the discussion, but they play a minor role in the exchange of the participants with each other. (cf. Museum Friedland)

During these activities, one quickly realises that the barrier that needs to be overcome is that of languages. Only very rarely is there one common language. Most days the languages spoken in the activities vary between German to Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, English and French. Continuous translation, either in a consecutive way or by whispering to each other

Der Umgang mit den Menschen, die hier fremd und heimatlos ankamen, hat mich – zusätzlich zur Erziehung durch meine Eltern – geprägt: Ich bin so aufgewachsen, dass, wenn es einem gut geht, man die Verpflichtung hat, andere Menschen, denen es nicht so gut geht, in den Blick zu nehmen und ihnen nach Möglichkeit zur Seite zu stehen.” (MF_L_2_0135)

9 Original in German: „Im Winter trugen wir blaue Mäntel, mit einem Rot-Kreuz-Abzeichen drauf, den habe ich ganz lange getragen. Das hatte den Vorteil, dass man überall auf dem Gelände erkannt wurde und auch häufig angesprochen wurde, wenn Menschen Fragen hatten und sich nicht zurecht fanden.“ (MF_L_2_0134)

(depending on the number of speakers of a language), is a characteristic element of the weekly workshops. The museum's staff is multilingual, but the concept only works with the help of volunteers, freelancers and the participants themselves. It's a special kind of conversation when you wait for the translation and then wait for your own answer to be translated. This slows down the speed of discussions but enables everyone to be part of them. One might wonder if it is not a subversive strategy to utilise the surplus of time people have in Friedland due to the lengthy bureaucratic procedures and to fill it with forms of communication that are inclusive and not exclusive, as the immigration bureaucracy suggests.

One of the volunteers bridging the linguistic gap, J.T., is a former employee of the Federal Office of Administration, which handles the process of immigration for the Ethnic German immigrants from post-Soviet countries arriving in Friedland. He himself arrived as an immigrant from Poland in the 1970s, when the economic and political situation displeased a lot of young people. His first connection to Friedland came about through a random encounter in his home town of Stargard, where a woman from West Germany was searching for her origins. C.S. had fled the region at the end of the Second World War, arrived in Friedland after many stops and lived in the neighbouring town. She became the young Pole's hostess:

«I spent my future days and weeks with the family of my random encounter in Stargard. They helped me (...) to find acceptance in the Federal Republic of Germany as a German because of my ethnic German lineage. I am grateful to my host family (...) and the Federal Republic of Germany for this for the rest of my life. I made new friends quite quickly. [Soon after arrival] I threw myself into learning the German language. (...) I was able to take a little of the money I got to live on and use it to support my parents in Poland. I wrote to my parents: 'I'm staying here in this country and making it my home.» (MF_L_2_132, English translation by the author)¹⁰

The experience of C.S. who fled Stargard after World War II is now part of the museum's collection through a narrated life story interview and also visible in the permanent exhibition, through a little object that remained from her flight: a pouch with addresses and contact details that many children wore around their neck during the flight. If they were to get lost in the chaos of the overcrowded trains, this would have enabled them to be returned to their families. This aspect of her migration experience is one of many she tells in round tables organized by Museum Friedland or in schools in order to raise awareness for historical refugee experiences.

«Personally, I think it is an obligation to make your memories available to a museum (...), (...) as this creates a mosaic [of memories], in addition to what is written down, especially by later generations. I have always seen this obligation and would also like certain aspects that are always used in a generalised way to be seen in a differentiated way.» (C.S. in a roundtable discussion in Göttingen on 03.10.2021, English translation by the author)¹¹

Entering in conversations with (former) camp employees, one realizes that many of them have a migration history themselves that is linked to the place they now work. They carry many layers of migration history in their own biography: As former newcomers, their experiences now influ-

10 Original quote in German: „Meine künftigen Tage und Wochen verbrachte ich bei der Familie meiner zufälligen Begegnung in Stargard. Sie haben mir geholfen (...) aufgrund meiner volksdeutschen Linie eine Aufnahme im Bundesgebiet als Deutscher zu finden. Dafür bin ich der Gastfamilie (...) und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland mein Leben lang dankbar. Ich fand recht schnell neue Freunde. Ich habe mich nun auf das Erlernen der deutschen Sprache gestürzt. (...) Von dem Geld, was ich zum Leben bekommen habe, konnte ich ein wenig abzwacken und damit meine Eltern in Polen unterstützen. Ich schrieb an meine Eltern: Ich bleibe in diesem Land hier und mache es zu meiner Heimat.“ (MF_L_2_132)

11 Original quote in German: „Ich persönlich finde, es ist eine Verpflichtung, sich mit seinen Erinnerungen einem Museum (...) zur Verfügung zu stellen, (...) da ergibt sich ja ein Mosaik, neben dem, was aufgeschrieben ist, insbesondere durch nachgeborene Generationen. Diese Verpflichtung habe ich immer gesehen und möchte auch, dass bestimmte Aspekte, die immer pauschalisierend gebraucht werden, dann auch differenziert gesehen werden.“ (Zeitzeugin beim Podiumsgespräch in Göttingen am 03.10.2021)

ence their work when they are part of shaping today's migration history in Friedland. The same applies to the neighbourhood, especially between the East and the West sides of the camp. Neighbouring gardens and residential buildings blend in with the accommodation buildings. Migration sedimentation becomes visible in the structure of the village: Some of the refugees arriving in post-war Germany settled in Friedland and built houses next to the camp where they – or their children and grandchildren – still live today. Over time, the refugee accommodations have integrated into the neighbourhood as part of the village. There is also the daily interaction, for example in the supermarket, at the church or at the railway station – or (albeit rather insignificant in number) at the designated spaces of encounter, such as the aforementioned House 14.

5. Conclusions

Using the analytical lens of migration stratification invites multi-method research: Being present at the place of interest, trying to understand what remains from migration history and entering into in-depth-conversations with people. It is not the places that tell stories, but the people who shape them and interact with each other there. The focus on encounters not only allows us to dismantle the functions and forms of specific meaningful places layer by layer, but also consider the connections between the people that are affected by these places and influence them over time.

Creating a multidirectional picture of migration history of Friedland by using the methodological approach of migratory stratifications, one might wonder how far the history of this place is relevant for the people arriving here. Is there any awareness of the generations that passed through the same places and if yes, does this awareness matter? Whilst it could be argued that the museum's attempts to communicate the history of this place reach thousands of people each year, further research would be needed to establish the relevance of memory culture at this site. This is particularly interesting when it comes to the impression that public artworks make on newcomers. What do people think of memorials that represent only certain groups of people who have passed through the camp? Does it change anything that the recent artworks on the new museum's building site try to take into account the diversity of the place and its inhabitants? Further research could continue the description of the migration landscape of Friedland by looking at what (and who) remains, but it could even stratify the migration stratification approach by examining the impact of migration history on the people involved.

References

- Agamben, G. (2002). *Homo sacer: Die souveräne Macht und das nackte Leben* (H. Thüning, Trans.). Suhrkamp.
- Agier, M. (2011). *Managing the undesirables: Refugee camps and humanitarian government* (D. Fernbach, Trans.). Polity.
- Ansems de Vries, L., & Guild, E. (2019). Seeking refuge in Europe: Spaces of transit and the violence of migration management. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(12), 2156–2166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1468308>
- Anthias, F. (2006). Belongings in a globalising and unequal world: Rethinking translocations. In N. Yuval-Davis, K. Kannabiran, & U. M. Vieten (Eds.), *The situated politics of belonging* (pp. 17–31). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446213490.n2>
- Anthias, F. (2008). Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: An intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations: Migration and Social Change*, 4(1), 5–20. [uel-repository.worktribe.com](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1468308)
- Anthias, F. (2011). Intersections and translocations: New paradigms for thinking about cultural diversity and social identities. *European Educational Research Journal*, 10(2), 204–217. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eej.2011.10.2.204>
- Arendt, H. (1943). We refugees. *Menorah Journal*, 31(1), 69–77.
- Baur, J., & Bluche, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Fluchtpunkt Friedland: Über das Grenzdurchgangslager, 1945 bis heute*. Wallstein Verlag.
- Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., & Storato, G. (Eds.). (2024). *Migratory stratifications: A new perspective on migration and social change through the Italian lens*. Transnational Press London.
- Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., & Storato, G. (2025). Migratory stratifications: A new analytical tool for investigating social change. *Identities*, 32(6), 745–758. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2025.2473211> Taylor & Francis Online

- Devlin, J., Evers, T., & Goebel, S. (Eds.). (2021). *Praktiken der (Im-)Mobilisierung: Lager, Sammelunterkünfte und Ankerzentren im Kontext von Asylregimen*. transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839452028> Ssoar
- Fiedler, M., & Hielscher, L. (2014). Gescheitert im Kampf um das „Tor zur Freiheit“: Ein Traditionslager in der Transformation. In R. Löneke & I. Spieker (Eds.), *Hort der Freiheit: Ethnografische Annäherungen an das Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland* (pp. 139–166). R. Löneke.
- Haraway, D. J. (1995). Situiertes Wissen: Die Wissenschaftsfrage im Feminismus und das Privileg einer partialen Perspektive. In C. Hammer & I. Stieß (Eds.), *Die Neuerfindung der Natur: Primaten, Cyborgs und Frauen* (pp. 73–97). Campus Verlag.
- Hess, S., & Tsianos, V. (2010). Ethnographische Grenzregimeanalyse als Methodologie der Autonomie der Migration. In S. Hess & B. Kasperek (Eds.), *Grenzregime: Diskurse, Praktiken, Institutionen in Europa* (pp. 243–264). Assoziation A.
- Kaufmann, M. E., Otto, L., Nimführ, S., & Schütte, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Forschen und Arbeiten im Kontext von Flucht: Reflexionsslücken, Repräsentations- und Ethikfragen*. Springer VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-28380-3>
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95–117. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>
- Massa, A. (2020). Borders and boundaries as resources for mobility: Multiple regimes of mobility and incoherent trajectories on the Ethiopian-Eritrean border. *Geoforum*, 116, 262–271. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.01.007>
- Müller-Bringmann, W. (1956). *Das Buch von Friedland*. Musterschmidt-Verlag.
- Norddeutscher Rundfunk. (2023, September 26). *Durchgangslager Friedland: „Tor zur Freiheit“ für Kriegsgefangene*. <https://www.ndr.de/geschichte/schauplaetze/Durchgangslager-Friedland-Tor-zur-Freiheit-fuer-Kriegsgefangene,friedland102.html> (Retrieved July 16, 2025; the page was updated on 15 May 2026).
- Pagano, S. (2019). *„Nomadin-Sein“ im „Dorf der Solidarität“: Eine kritische Ethnografie zu Camps für Rom_nja in Rom*. Universitätsverlag Göttingen. <https://doi.org/10.17875/gup2019-1224> univerlag.uni-goettingen.de
- Reding, J. (1956). *Friedland: Chronik der großen Heimkehr*. Paulus-Verlag.
- Rosenthal, G. (1995). *Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte: Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen*. Campus Verlag.
- Sayad, A. (1999). *La double absence: Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*. Seuil.
- Schießl, S. (2016). *„Das Tor zur Freiheit“: Kriegsfolgen, Erinnerungspolitik und humanitärer Anspruch im Lager Friedland (1945–1970)*. Wallstein Verlag.
- Schwarz, I. (2020). Migrants moving through mobility regimes: The trajectory approach as a tool to reveal migratory processes. *Geoforum*, 116, 217–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.03.007>
- Spatz, C. (2018). *Heimatlos: Friedland und die langen Schatten von Krieg und Vertreibung*. Ellert & Richter Verlag.
- Tagesschau. (2025, April 8). *Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen aus UN-Programm gestoppt*. <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/aufnahme-fluechtlinge-un-programm-ausgesetzt-100.html> (Retrieved July 17, 2025).
- Tomm, W. (1992). *Bewegte Jahre: Erzählte Geschichte; evangelische Diakonie im Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland 1945 bis heute*. Evangelisches Hilfswerk.
- Turner, S. (2016). What is a refugee camp? Explorations of the limits and effects of the camp. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 29(2), 139–148. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev024> OUP Academic
- Turner, V. (1969). Liminality and communitas. In *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* (pp. 94–130). Aldine Publishing Company.
- Zetter, R. (1991). Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(1), 39–62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/4.1.39>

«You feel like a person, not a working animal»: Emancipation trajectories after labour exploitation in Northern Italy²

1. Recovering Safety, Autonomy and Dignity after Exploitation

A person working in the Italian antitrafficking system shared this observation: “If you are experiencing labor exploitation it is not just a matter of switching jobs, and the problem is gone. The underlying reasons that brought you to arrive to that place must be addressed, or you won’t have a real alternative. You don’t undergo that kind of subjugation if you believe there are alternatives”. The “underlying reasons” highlighted in this remark point to the compounded disadvantages that disproportionally affect migrant workers at risk. These disadvantages constrain agency, narrow opportunity structures, and intensify pressures and fears, producing unmet needs and extreme isolation. Subjugation processes prey on those vulnerabilities and do not occur instantaneously: they are sustained by repeated abuses of power over time. Correspondingly, empowerment cannot be understood as a single event, but rather as a process that offers structural conditions and relations which expand choices, and that builds on multiple autonomous actions exercised across time.

This study wishes to contribute to the understanding of processes of empowerment after labor exploitation from the point of view of survivors, by analysing trajectory narratives by exploited migrant workers, through the lens of migratory stratifications (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024). The framework allows us to approach the layered, complex and progressive processes of losing and regaining self-determination by survivors, seeing how migration trajectories, labor market access, transnational ties, policy structures and local actors can entangle, affecting workers’ ability to negotiate labor conditions, which determine numerous affordances.

In the absence of a global consensus on basic labor rights or on what constitutes labor exploitation, the ILO’s concept of forced labor has contributed to gather comparable global data, and to take steps towards achieving even a minimum of policy standard consensus. Despite its theoretical limitations, this notion has contributed to locate the dimension of agency at the center of labor trafficking research, and widened international labor policy dialogue to observe its margins. In 2023, identified victims in Europe have risen by 6.9%; and 25% were local citizens, 7.9% from other EU states, and 64.1% from non-EU countries. A post-Covid escalation of human trafficking has been documented, with a 47% rise in forced labor between 2019 and 2022, surpassing sexual exploitation as the most common trafficking purpose (UNODC, 2024). Unrecognised cases are likely high, and consequences are severe – for victims, for EU economies (European Commission, 2020), and for the credibility of human rights frameworks.

However, the binary “forced or free”, has been applied widely in the context of labor, prostitution, and migration itself, as a means to apply differentiated regimes which stratify protections. The early criminological focus on human trafficking research built on that binary (forced prostitution or free sex work) in the attempt to bring traffickers to justice. While distinctions are necessary, binaries are reductive. An either/or approach to forced labor doesn’t explain the complex and structural pressures on agency that arise from intersectional and situational vulnerabilities particularly affecting undocumented migrant workers. Exploiters prey on structural vulnerabilities of economic and legal systems, not only of workers. In fact, UNODC (2024) recognises a “funnel effect”, that is, the sizeable difference between identified cases and related prosecutions and convictions, thereby underlining the insufficient capabilities of the current justice system against labor exploitation. Today human trafficking research incorporates knowledge coming

1 Franca Zadra, Department of Law, University of Verona, francazadra@gmail.com, ORCID 0000-0002-6597-1188; Serena Piovesan, University of Trento, serena.piovesan@unitn.it.

2 Received: 23/12/2025 – Revised: 30/03/2026 – Accepted: 09/04/2026 – Published: 30/09/2026

from many disciplines, including a critical analysis of the structural roots of exploitation, as well as the effects of different migration regimes, *labor policies and welfare systems* (Burke, 2022; Lewis et al., 2015). Preventive, multidimensional approaches to labor exploitation are emerging (such as Calafà, 2021), as well as survivor-centred strategies (Protopapa, 2022) though their policy reception, enactment and impact appears still limited (Palumbo, 2024).

Overcoming the forced/free binary, the concept of unfree labor is used to describe the continuum of precarity in which spaces of choice are increasingly limited (Brass, 1999; Strauss & McGrath, 2017). However, beyond the debate on how these or other terms are being used, what must be avoided is “the tendency for scholars to theoretically and empirically ‘ring-fence’ forced labour” (LeBaron & Gore, 2020), as if it were an anomaly and not a structural feature of contemporary production systems. In fact, it is not only criminal individuals who exert coercion, but chain mechanisms, through dynamics of control and inequalities in complex work structures (D’Amours et al., 2022), as well as through migration policies.

The complex links between different structural aspects which condition personal agency resulting in labor exploitation are being observed with increasing interest by scholars. Gansemans & D’Haese (2022) have explored the impact that local opportunity structures have on the possibility to exert labor agency, that is, the worker’s ability to improve labor conditions, concluding that it is shaped by local opportunity structures related to job insecurity, structural vulnerabilities of migrant workers, lack of unionisation and insufficient control and enforcement of labor laws. Many disadvantages experienced by migrants in European labor markets result from policy designs. Migration policies stratify access to citizenship rights (Nash, 2009) in multiple categories with different affordances, entitlements and durations, making most types of permits temporary and revocable³, making permanent and full legal status rarely obtained in the decade that follows a first migration. Thus, visa stress becomes chronic, eroding migrant energy, health capital, and integration processes (Jasso, 2013). Moreover, foreign education and professional titles are rarely recognised in Italy. Migration, education and labor policies combine in ways that restrict employment access, work security, unionisation and vertical mobility, while perpetuating migrant families’ precariousness and enhancing risks of exploitation even beyond the first generation.

Research on how personal agency is recovered after labor exploitation is still limited, and this study aims to contribute to this question. However, studies on processes of subjugation during labor exploitation are evolving, and showcasing how agency is progressively contained, pressured, and abused, particularly in the agricultural field, while noticing the negative impact of public system fragmentation (Iglesias-Rios & Handal, 2025; Corrado et al., 2023). In fact, such fragmentation affects the response capabilities of local governance structures, with direct consequences on victim identification and support. Attempts to address this issue are visible in the recent evolution of Italian migration policy (Calafà, 2025; Zadra, 2025b). The National Guidelines for the Identification, Protection and Assistance of Victims of Labour Exploitation in Agriculture (MLPS, 2021, hereafter Guidelines), (valid beyond the agricultural field) present the aim to create a referral system that integrates public efforts against exploitation, enhancing the response capabilities of local governance structures in the identification, protection and assistance of exploited workers. Project Common Ground, through which participants in this study were recruited, has the goal to apply these Guidelines in five partner Regions of Northern Italy, to enact a multi-phase model of intervention that includes: a) early identification, which entrusts all frontline actors—public and private—with the capacity to initiate “preliminary identification” of potential victims, before the authorized public actors (antitrafficking programs, justice system and labor inspectorate) formally recognize their status for rights-granting purposes; b) referral systems, built on inter-institutional cooperation and designed to facilitate access to protection

3 For instance, the “Decreto Salvini” (Law Decree No. 113/2018, converted into Law No. 132/2018) restricted humanitarian protection and residence permits, while tightening reception measures, being flagged by FRA among the *Key fundamental rights concerns* (FRA, 2019).

irrespective of victims' legal status or collaboration with law enforcement; and c) integrated assistance, including assistance related to legal issues, housing, healthcare, training, and labour inclusion, among others (cf. Zadra, 2025a).

As labor exploitation entails complex interactions between structural conditions and personal agency, so does the processes of empowerment after labor exploitation that we are about to explore. This study sheds light on the factors influencing the exercise of personal agency in recovery trajectories, through the narratives of 20 persons that experienced the assistance program in Common Ground. It reflects on the factors that may support or hinder the reconstruction of a person's agency after experiences of subjugation, from the theoretical framework of migratory stratifications (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024). The core elements of this approach with greater explanatory weight in data analysis were related to a) the expanded concept of trajectory as "the intertwining of mobilities -and immobilities- in a geographical and spatial, social and identitarian, legal and normative, and even temporal sense" (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2025), b) the integration of the time and space dimensions, c) the understanding of labor exploitation of undocumented migrants as a total social fact, and d) the stratification and complexity of recovery processes, centred on the survivor's agency, but requiring the activation of multiple supporting actors and structural opportunities.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in the framework of project Common Ground⁴, aimed at preventing and combating labor exploitation in all its forms and in all economic sectors. Its main objective is to identify potential and actual victims of exploitation, provide legal and social support, improve access to employment, and strengthen cooperation among public institutions and third sector organisations to promote decent, safe and lawful work through integrated actions, including orientation, training, labour inclusion, and territorial networking. Every Region implemented common packages of services, as well as region-specific interventions, both described in the final Interregional Guidelines, outcome of an Interregional collective effort to represent the project's lessons learned (Zadra, 2025a). A blueprint for the service structure was inspired by the experience of the Veneto Region, described by Zadra *et al.* (2025).

Participant recruitment was facilitated and pre-screened by support service providers, with attention to various criteria. All survivors to which interviews were proposed were not currently in a moment of crisis or struggle⁵, had spent several months being assisted by the project, had a minimum of skill in the Italian or English language to be able to speak privately and directly with the researcher without mediation services, and all (or most) provinces in the two regions of reference were to be represented in the sample, as programs are handled by different providers in each territory. Attempts were made to include persons who reported negative experiences in the project, and persons who dropped out of the project, to allow for more critical perspectives, but in those cases interviews were declined. It is to be noted that interviews were also declined by persons with positive experiences. In some cases, participants accepted the interviews, but declined at a later moment, after various scheduling attempts. In any case, the potential bias that this self-selection introduces is to be taken into account.

The interview questions related to the following aspects: a) needs for which assistance was sought or not, b) services that were received through the project that were useful or not, c) as-

4 This massive project, which reached with services almost 6 thousand beneficiaries in its first phase, from 2023 to mid-2025, was participated by five Regional Governments: Piemonte, head of the partnership, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, and Liguria. The first project phase had a €15 million budget, financed by the Labor and Interior Ministries with PON Inclusion / European Social Fund (FSE) resources. The second project phase is set to start in autumn of 2026, funded through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI).

5 A research priority was not to interfere with recovery processes or service delivery.

assessment of the program's outcomes in their lives, d) future plans and desires, and e) suggestions on program improvement. Ethnographic interviewing took place between September and November 2024 with 13 participants in Region A, and in January 2025 with 7 participants in Region B. The participants came from 10 different nationalities, and the most represented were Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan and Brazil. All participants were adults under 40, with 13 men, and 7 women, of which 3 transgender women. All of the participants had survived severe labour exploitation, and some of the women, including transgender women, experienced sexual exploitation as well. Narratives were transcribed verbatim, exception made for 1 interview in which consent to recording was declined, and copious fieldnotes were produced instead. Narratives were inserted in MaxQDA and thematically coded. For this study, selected excerpts were translated by the authors from Italian to English, (except in cases in which they were rendered originally in English) but language was not edited for linguistic correctness, with transcriptions and translations as close to the original utterance as possible. Initial results were discussed in one provider focus group per each region, in which notes were taken. Iterative dialogue with practitioners throughout the project has been reflected in fieldnotes. This input enriched the analysis with additional information and perspectives.

The study has limitations in terms of sample, which is not representative⁶, and the results of this analysis are not to be generalised, or taken as a program evaluation. The analysis we hereby present seeks to favour a deeper understanding of processes of empowerment after labor exploitation from the point of view of survivors, through an analysis of trajectory narratives by exploited migrant workers. It aims to offer a contribution to the understanding of exploited workers' agency and their trajectories of recovery and empowerment, as well as an invitation to expand the social imaginary around migrant labor and the role that receiving societies may play regarding labour exploitation.

Outcomes on emancipation trajectories

2.1 From "precarious documents" to "real documents"

All interviewees recalled experiences of grave labor exploitation, and in some cases other forms of exploitation were also present, such as sexual exploitation. Many of them followed the required pathway to have their experiences formally identified as human trafficking, later choosing to enter an antitrafficking program or other forms of assistance, as it is their prerogative. All survivors recall a variety of interconnected constrictions, beyond the theoretical binary of free or forced labor, compressing the structure of opportunities they found themselves in. A lack of knowledge about the country of residence, its labor market, its policies, its language, certainly played a part. However, the first and most important element in the stories of exploitation and in those of recovery, is for all survivors the "documents" issue.

Obtaining a residence permit (*permesso di soggiorno*) is an awaited milestone in many migration trajectories and is viewed as the solution to all major struggles, determining a new status. In many narratives, it articulates a before-and-after, as if it automatically offered access to local services, decent work, and personal safety. As we explained, the process is more complicated than that. Italian migration policies have differentiated a variety of permits, most temporary in duration, which come with different sets of rights and affordances. Documents are generally understood as residence permits, and not having any form of locally issued permit, means to be undocumented⁷. In several testimonies of survivors and providers, "real documents" are long-term

6 Only 2 of the 5 participating Regions decided to host the study. Moreover, 20 beneficiaries is not a large number, as the project provided more than 30 thousand services to 5,902 persons in precarious situations, with a variety of labor-related struggles, from mid-2023 to July 31st, 2025, and reached 14,793 persons through outreach activities.

7 But even this concept is stratified. For some public officials, undocumented means to be "clandestine", meaning that the government did not issue any acknowledgement of entry. Others include those with expired permits or visas in the undocumented category, considering illegal the stay beyond the date of coverage written on the permit, even if the renewal is granted and the delay in the document being issued was caused by the authorities. In some cases,

residence permits which allow to work, while “precarious documents” are short-term permits, conditionally renewed after a few months or a year, with limited affordances⁸. The latter, in fact, prolong in time the precarity, in which the person cannot establish in the local context, while the former may start to bring to the person, finally, a sense of safety, legitimation and belonging. The project pathway provided legal representation, including legal support in evaluating and accessing the best permit available, given the person’s situation. Usually, years pass, before an undocumented person reaches a full and permanent resident permit, but in documented cases of labor exploitation, new types of temporary permits are becoming available with the evolution of the Immigration Act (Calafà, 2025). Even when a person overcomes the undocumented status by acquiring a residence permit, other documentary obstacles often arise to access services and rights, such as the certification of residence, which depends on their having a stable, adequate and official housing arrangement that can be certified by the municipality, or SPID, the digital ID that is required to interact with public offices.

It is only when the “real documents” arrive that the migration journey ends, in the analysed narratives, because the years of exploitation are accepted as a continuation of the travel hardships, and “when the documents finally arrive, the government recognizes who they are, is like they receive a new name, they are officially here, they think that all their problems have ended, and finally they will be treated equally” (provider contribution). Not having to wait years for long-term residence permits would afford immigrant persons the opportunity to enact long-term investments in the local context, such as learning the language, developing social networks, joining labor unions or at a minimum gathering information about labor rights, all protective factors against labor exploitation. Otherwise, a sense of belonging hardly takes root, and even if naturalisation⁹ is eventually achieved, onward migration may impose further mobility on next generations (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2025). We see how the document issue has both material and symbolic significance in the lives of migrants. Sayad in *The Double Absence* explains that “immigrant labor is constructed as an inferior labor, an auxiliary labor, always substitutable, always available, but never fully legitimate” (Sayad, 2004 [1999], p. 39).

Expectations and promises of employment upon arrival are frequently frustrated. Policies make it almost impossible to have non-EU titles recognized, impeding access to less precarious and more specialized work. We see these structures weighing on several narratives, in which expectations of working in one’s professional field were progressively crushed. Resistance strategies were firstly directed to seeking a local degree in the specialized field, which proved too costly and time demanding. Then, a short-term professional course in a neighboring but less specialized field, often renounced after realizing that professional training has language demands that exceed current fluency. Time passes and expectations are progressively eroded:

«I was graduated in India... I was graduated. I go to University and I had a diploma of electrical and electronics also. So... and... I was finding that job, elettricità, elettronica, ok? But for that I... Previously I was thinking that my certificates maybe change. But no, they said: you have to do a course over here. (...) almost I am here from 2 years in Italy, ok? So... I’m in need of job, I don’t know which kind of job, I can do any kind of job. I try...» (B2).

the return to an undocumented status may be produced by juridical changes. E.g. Art. 1 of Decree-Law no. 113/2018 abolished the general humanitarian residence permit provided by Article 5(6) of Legislative Decree no. 286/1998 (the Immigration Act), replacing it with narrower forms of “special cases” protection. As the permit expired, persons could no longer renew it, going back to the undocumented status.

8 E.g. In some cases, the person must wait 60 days since the permit was issued before being allowed to work, other types of permits require the person has worked and can support herself as a condition for issuing. Some can be converted into different types of permits, while others cannot. These and other conditions’ variability in time is confusing for most immigrant persons.

9 After 10 years of *continuous* residence in the country, migrants from outside of the European Union may apply for Italian citizenship, provided a list of requirements (certificate of fluency in the Italian language, no serious criminal record, current and valid residence status, among others), but administrative discretion still exists, as a vague “overall integration” criterium is evaluated. That renders naturalisation processes less accessible in practice.

And when in time, “any legal job” becomes “any job at all”, exploited labor is all that is left. In most cases, undeclared labor and exploited labor were conflated in the Italian expression “lavoro nero”, that is, “black work” was the only experience of the labor “market” that migrants had in the early stages of migration in Italy.

What was expressed in more or less explicit terms by all participants, is the association between the undocumented migration status and exploitative work conditions. When undocumented, undeclared work is all what is available. It is summed up in the: “But black work is no good. (...) I know this thing that... you can do nothing, because you have no documents, you have nothing, you cannot report anyone” [implicit: for exploitation] (A4). In many cases, the association between irregular status and exploited labor implied the expectation of exploitative conditions before obtaining the “documents”, as well as the expectation of decent work access afterwards. Exploited labor was accepted and normalized, even considered inevitable, but up to a point, and on a temporary basis:

«I know that they... exploit you, when you have no documents. I know this, but you can't do anything about it. You have to be patient, until you have... documents... Oh, yes. But they do too much. Maybe they do a little, they exploit you a little, that is ok. But they do more, and more, and more, and always more...» (A4).

It is not the exploitation what is contested in this narrative, but the extent of it. It shows exploited labor progressively escalating, breaking expectations and boundaries of workers without legal work alternatives. Participants offer a clear analysis of the power asymmetries at play between an employer and an undocumented (called “irregular”) worker. Narratives often follow this reasoning: when you are undocumented, the employer may force you to accept exploitative conditions, threatening to report you for expulsion from the country. Instead, when you have a regular residence permit, you become credible to the authorities, and can report the employer that exploits you, resisting inferiorization processes:

If a person works, he is irregular, the employer can say whatever they want, they can do whatever they want. The employer thinks of this person as something else, not a person. Like... they think, “This guy isn't a guy. This animal. Works, then out” But if you work regular, no one can do that stuff, because you're regular, you can report them, and I'm afraid of you. If you don't work regularly, you don't have documents, maybe I scare you, I say ‘work or I'll call the police to take you back to Morocco’... Anyway, there's a big difference. (...) Even if you're regular, you find bad employers. But at least if you're regular, you have documents, you can change jobs. If you're irregular, it's difficult to find a job and... difficult to find a job. And when you find a bad job, you can't say, “No, I'm changing, I can't.” You need it, and you have to work. (A9)

We see in this narrative an understanding of the alienation process of exploited labor. Its dehumanization: “this guy isn't a guy. This animal: works, then out”; its lack of alternatives: “you need it, and you have to work”; its lack of freedom and self-determination: “you can't say no”; and its lack of labor rights and labor agency (cf. Gansemans & D'Haese, 2022): “the employer can say whatever they want, they can do whatever they want”. Coercion sometimes doesn't entail physical violence, as studies on unfree labor demonstrate (Brass, 1999; Strauss & McGrath, 2017). Survivors explain limitations to their agency determined by numerous structural factors, which exploiters use to leverage workers into submission.

Any emancipation pathway from labor exploitation starts with a progressive awareness of the differences between regular, irregular and exploited labor, and recovering expectations of acceptable work conditions. A lack of residence permit determines a structural barrier to access decent labor that is narrated with tones of desperation by survivors. Short-term and conditional permits that cannot be converted into long-term residence permits do little but prolong the precarity. When long-term permits are acquired, the persons finally feel safe and legitimized, and the process of recovery can begin. However, difficulties accessing decent work and housing don't disappear overnight.

2.2 Trajectory stratifications through space and time

Participant trajectories started earlier, but most narratives' biographical starting point revolves around labor exploitation experiences, in the context of undocumented migration, which brought them to the project Common Ground. The National Guidelines of 2021 recognised the State's responsibility to prevent and redress exploitation. To one of the participants, this realisation has arrived a decade too late:

"before, many years, always black work. This life I have is no good. Also this country, Italy. Because I now here the life, not in Pakistan life. Right? -You want to stay here. Yes. Here also government Italy does not want that I do black work... 7, 8, 9, 10 years of black work, now they don't like. (Participant A3).

Sedimented layers of denied rights and exploitation take time to deconstruct. It takes repeated experiences of respect and support. For participants, trust relations with program providers were healing, but had to be tested and developed in the course of time: "I trust them, always, I still do. Because... a person that wants to help you, wants to help you, not one time, always you see that wants to help, then you trust" (A9).

Encountering the project symbolizes for participants a turning point, separating the time before and after. In their narratives it sometimes acquires an immediacy that upon reflection is recognized as a mirage. Awareness, knowledge, choices, and processes in their trajectory of emancipation took time to build. It was sedimented into multiple and overlapping moments of development, support, and autonomy:

«If we're on our own, we don't do what we've been doing now. We don't learn Italian, because we can't. Because if you work 10 hours, 11 hours, 12 hours... you get home, cook, eat, and if you can sleep in this cold we've been having, you sleep; if not, you stay like that until morning. And then back to work; without a shower, we stink, sorry... It's a difficult life. How we live now is so much, much better, so much better... This project can change the lives of so many people. Like, how I was, how I am now... where I lived before, where I live now; how I felt before, how I feel now... how... how I worked before, how I work now... it's changed so much... Before, I lived in an ugly, dirty house with nothing. Now I live in a beautiful house and have everything. (...) at least, if you work regularly, you can... if you don't have... if you don't like something, you can ask... 'I don't like this'. Like... you feel like a person, not a working animal. You can ask. Once the employer... you don't agree with the employer, what they're saying, all this... eh... but it depends on the contract. Maybe you wait until the contract ends, and then you leave» (A9).

According to this narrative, the program supported an empowerment process that supported survivors recover their dignity, going from the dehumanising exploitation of a working animal to recovering the voice and choice of a person: You can ask... you wait... then you leave. Moreover, this narrative speaks volumes about service integration. Providers, in fact, struggle to integrate areas, services and systems that develop in different milieus, and don't communicate easily (Zadra, 2025b). It all becomes naturally integrated in the life and experience of survivors: legal status, labor agency, housing, language learning, hygienic conditions, psychological wellbeing, social interactions. The dramatic effect of this narrative delineates a sedimentation of different layers of humanity being reclaimed.

The "new present" opens the imagination of future opportunities. The desire in the younger respondents is to be able to conciliate work and studies, to advance one's professional pathway: "I was hoping that... I got maybe four, five [hours], maybe... If I get a job in [city], then in the evening I can go in the school also. I really want to do this" (B2). Sometimes the will to engage in studies can emerge when the person feels safe enough regarding basic survival, or after gaining an understanding of the conditions of access to the various areas and levels of the labor market, or even when they realize the importance of speaking the language: "Before I just wanted to help me documents. And then I heard that there was also... you can help study (...) If you not

learn language, is difficult to live a country... Always find exploitation!!" (A4). Beyond learning and professional growth, the sense of possibility eventually roots in the persons' own identity and self-worth:

«I am very happy for my future, and I believe I have many things for achieve in life, living here in Italy... I pray for greater heights that I will be there someday sometime, because I believe in myself, I believe in good work, in hard work, when you study hard and do what you want that make you happy and you do it till you have. I am good to be there one day. But I have many things to achieve in life, in this land of Italy. By God's grace, I will get there». (A3)

Survivors have learned to live in various worlds. Multidimensional and multilayered trajectories are depicted in simultaneity by survivors to showcase the coexistence in their minds of the past moment of dehumanisation, the present moment of reclaimed dignity and the future moment of opportunity. Similarly, they coexist in multiple places, and those places exist in them. Families in the country of origin, in early stages of migration may enact a buffer function, but eventually expectations of economic returns tend to accentuate the pressures on migrant workers to get any job. Being subordinated to the needs of others, both in the land of origin and in that of arrival, Sayad's notion of the double absence comes to mind: "Neither citizen nor foreigner... the immigrant exists only by default in the community of origin and by excess in the host society". The person is "trapped in that hybrid sector of social space in an intermediate position between social being and non-being, periodically generating recrimination and resentment in both" (Sayad, 2004 [1999]).

Coming from spaces of severe exploitation, undeclared rules and imposed proximities were controlled and enforced by others and disregarded the persons' basic needs. The memories of challenging hosting conditions during times of exploitation are evoked by participants with clarity: When they [exploiters] take a house, you know how many people live with this house? A lot. Too much. One bed, one bed, one bed, they sleep so close, tight. If one had an illness, everyone gets, understand? Everyone gets. They don't understand this thing. They only want to work, earn money, send to the family money and live with this money" (A1)

In sight of such experiences, hosting facilities in the project needed to balance respectful and dignified cohabitation with enabling a sense of freedom and self-determination. Being housing a significant challenge, hosting facilities were extremely appreciated by participants. Not only the hosting structures and the time-frames of hosting periods, but the rules and conditions of hosting that are strongly dependent on local organisations. For the most part, they were considered to their benefit and advantage: "rules are good, better for me, because I don't smoke, I don't drink! I don't drink alcohol. Because rules have written, you don't drink in the house, don't smoke... many things" (A6). A participant found some rules infantilising, but accepted them as part of the package:

«Even if you don't agree, you have to get in the house, so you must. To enter at 10... a bit... if you want to go have fun with your friends, entering a bit late... because I am not 14 or 15 years old, to have a 10pm curfew you know? Understand? Also pocket money, to have 35 euros per week you do nothing with it (...) they give you a paper, and everything is written there, the rules, and you don't have to go and look for black work, or something, understand? You have to go with what they say... and they help you to do something for your life» (A1).

For sure, experiences build on the sediments of previous experiences and differing expectations determine different evaluations. For instance, a participant had lower standards from which to judge the same rules:

«I was thinking that maybe I am going to jail or like that. But when... they changed the bedsheets, they changed everything, they give me new towels, new... everything they give me. And then... I was relaxed.

This is not jail! And then they told me that... 'before 10 in the night you have to enter in the home. You can go anywhere'. So I relaxed, I said 'I am not in jail'. (...) I buy my own groceries, and I cook my own whatever I want... (...) I am very lucky that I am in this project. Yes, free to cook, free to go out... free to get out... free to... I have everything... I have the freedom. I have the freedom to everything, for everything» (B2).

However, overall, housing rules are considered reasonable, within common courtesy: "To me rules are good, because they are few and they are justified, because, if you want to invite someone, you only need to ask, they even give you an extra bed if they can (...) You do all the normal things, you are free, but the things of the house you don't do ugly, you do good, and if you need something you ask" (A9). Moreover, provider mediation in housing structures during emerging conflicts among peers was a function of program providers narratives recognised as helpful¹⁰.

2.3 Compounded vulnerabilities and supporting actors

The undocumented status doesn't reduce agency only in the labor area. It affects one's legitimacy in society, and the power of being heard and believed when reporting exploitation, among a range of other personal and social needs. It creates formal barriers, such as the impossibility to have an official residence, which is requisite to opening a bank account or buy a sim card for a mobile phone, contributing factor to homelessness and social isolation. It also generates fear which produces damaging self-containing strategies (Kukreja, 2021). In the studied narratives fear refrained persons from numerous opportunities that are available to undocumented persons: getting vaccinations, including Covid-19 vaccinations, asking questions about available services, getting help from NGOs like Caritas for food and clothing, seek healthcare services¹¹, taking public transport, and even going for a walk. A participant explained that even requesting asylum for the first time was avoided, because "when you go to ask for a residence permit... they take away your passport. That is the problem. If they want to bring you back to your country, they have your passport and they just send you back immediately, that is the problem. The fear of many persons to do this document" (A6). Participants explain their sense of legitimation after obtaining a permit: "now I can go to the hospital, to the office, any place, any place; much, much changed, my life" (A8); it allowed "living like a normal person, going around in Italy, wherever, on the train, without having this fear of meeting a policeman" (A12). A residence permit allowed participants to access basic rights, to develop a sense of belonging to local communities, entailing experiences of agency, mobility and citizenship.

In any case, with or without documents, participants expressed the challenges of survival in the absence of fair work. Survival and safety became all-consuming priorities, such as having access to personal safety, food, urgent health services, dignified housing¹². As exploited workers, caught between the expectation of remittances from the country of origin and the precarity in the country of arrival, participants often recount feeling isolated: "I could only ask God for help, I didn't have my family, I had no one to count on, only myself" (A6). Narratives don't describe experiences of overt discrimination, racism or rejection from local populations. However, almost all participants expressed surprise and gratitude for experiencing respectful relations since the first contacts with the project's program providers. A participant expressed about program providers: "they are good persons, they give you respect, and everything" (A1). Receiving respect, in their experience, was a rare occurrence. Another expressed surprise and appreciation about providers encouraging them to express their needs or preferences, and offering services in a timely manner:

10 It may entail from a sit-down to talk out a solution to changing someone to another placement when incompatibilities were identified.

11 In Italy healthcare services are available by law to all, including undocumented migrants, with the prohibition of providers to report patients to the authorities, according to Art. 35(5) of the Italian Consolidated Immigration Act (Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione, D.Lgs. 25 luglio 1998, n. 286), except in cases where there is an obligation to report an offence prosecutable ex officio, under the same conditions applicable to Italian citizens.

12 Stratifications of homelessness have been categorized by FEANTSA, in the ETHOS typology available here.

«they ask every person 'do you have any problem?'. We don't have any problem. If they had problem, then they solve immediately... but... we never had any problem, but they asked every day 'are you well? Did you sleep well?' Even last days my blood pression... I had tension... and they take me to the hospital. They are very nice, very nice» (B2).

Another participant said appreciated the fact that "there is no racism in them, for me, I am happy with them" (A3). Experiences of respect and support are accentuated by the social containment in which they were previously confined, explaining the overwhelming positive feedback on relations with providers. As one provider explained, their training focuses on building trustworthy help relations, because "the first tool of social professionals is ourselves; it is trusting relations that heal exploitation: after being controlled by others, it is important to regain autonomies, one by one" (practitioner contribution).

Despite the general positive feedback, participant narratives include critical comments around providers' performance. One provider was criticised for delivering the news of the hosting period being cut short. One expressed a sense of frustration after a mismatch between the expressed need (support in finding housing in the same city as the workplace) and the provided response (the offer of an electric bike which could not be used to cover such long distance) (B6). Some organisations were said to be slower in providing services than others. When drugs were found at one housing program, an operative was criticised for a racist comment reported in these terms: "he is no good, I heard him say 'you are African, ok'. There are guys of African color. And them he said 'African, Nigeria, no good. They always drugs'. But I am different, not the same, guy is not the same (...) I am ok with the project, but that one, [name] is the problem" (A2). Individual conducts, errors in judgement or tensions around scarce resources are flagged by survivors, but criticisms remain just a handful of instances, against numerous and recurring expressions of gratitude and praise, including interviews that have ended the trajectory for months and have no current contact with providers.

Project providers were the main sources of services, but not the only ones. Service providers tend to organize their resources by specialized sectors, such as housing services, legal services, healthcare services, and so forth. In the project Common Ground, services were organized locally in multiagency teams in which the different specialties interfaced with each other around the specific cases, to build personalized solutions to emerging needs, bridging with their organizations when required. Providers invested during the project in enhancing and reinforcing network connections with numerous public and private services¹³. Even if the right to access services is granted on paper, frequently migrating persons find difficult to know access pathways, experience linguistic barriers, or other factors that result in interaction failures. Project operatives attempt to take some of the burden of service research and interface away from the exploited person, to lighten the load at the beginning, then progressively step back and support autonomous access.

Throughout the narratives of survivors, the exploitation of migrant labor appears as "a total social fact" which reshapes individual expectations and experiences of worker rights, as well as societal expectations and experiences on migrant workforce. As a total fact, it impacts not only the work sphere, but the whole life of the persons, and their position in society: their capability to fulfil autonomously their fundamental needs as well as their sense of meaning and social belonging. That is why they appreciate as a gift the navigational assistance, that facilitates access to publicly available services: "they give you a social worker, a family doctor, they give you everything... They also search, to find a job, they give you everything..." (A1). Bridging and navigational assistance towards other public services was an important part of the program: doctors, legal advisors, social workers, employment mediators, psychologists, among many other professionals were involved by providers in participants' pathways. In the project, services pertained

¹³ Most were public services, but among private ones, labor unions certainly were the most active in creating synergies against labor exploitation.

to the following areas: a) legal-juridical support, b) physical and mental health, c) public service navigational assistance, d) linguistic and professional education, e) employment, f) housing, g) active citizenship (Zadra, Bragagnolo & Scarone, 2025).

The area of active citizenship entails support in building a social support network, recreational and cultural activities, community organization initiatives, among others. The value that participants recognize to socialization and recreational activities is in fact high. Sometimes they help discover and build new simple skills: "there is a workshop that makes things like candles or sewing" (A10) and in some cases it represents an additional income source: "in an artisanal workshop those who wanted could participate in the mornings and get paid... a little help, and it was marvelous, you learned many things, they taught you, and it helped also in the psychology" (A13). These are precious building blocks of a sense of belonging with others that share the program, and to society at large. Occasional friendly ties can blossom in time into friendships, social capital and opportunity, or they can remain occasional and playful, contributing to defeat anxiety and isolation:

«If you don't have papers... where do you go? To a café? It is boring, you stay put and think 'I want documents, I must do this... the future'. A person that thinks. Sometimes the project does something very beautiful, that sometimes you are there thinking and those who work for the project come and say 'let's go play football, let's go play bowling'... they get a bus, they fill it with people, and we all go bowling!» (A9).

Linguistic and cultural mediation services were also paramount to explain the program and its possibilities to participants:

«This hour I don't understand well Italian... without her [refers to the mediator]... hard. Hard also to trust. I think, because I don't know that project is... Before I don't understand what project is. Before I think just community that helps, I don't know, lawyers... just reporting... I did not know that project helps with documents... with doctor, with all these things» (A4)

The "centrality of the person", is an expression repeated by providers as a mantra. It entails to follow each survivor's lead in determining their own pathway, making proposals in response to emerging needs, but respecting the persons' rhythms and choices (Zadra, 2025a; Zadra, Bragagnolo & Scarone, 2025). In survivor's narratives, this has been confirmed and appreciated as a practice.

2.4 Program outcomes and survivors' agency

The program determined very tangible outcomes in the lives of participants. When asked about the most important results they obtained in the project, a participant made a quick list:

«One: document. Two: they have learned me how... how life is. How life is. Three: there is work, too. There is! Four: they have learned me speaking a bit Italian! [laughs] Because I speak nothing before, nothiiiiing! Instead, even if I go to school, there, in the project, I come home, one of them, that works there, takes the book and the pen, and continues to teach me» (A11).

Survivors agree on measuring project outcomes first and foremost around obtaining the documents, that is, residence permits: "the project is great, as it is, because everything went well, and I got my document". Without this condition, "you can't do anything. You can't work, or do anything else".

Sen explains that "development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedom that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency" (Sen, 1999, p. xii). Survivors expressed gratitude for the support and resources offered by the program, while highlighting their own journey as a personal struggle to regain autonomy by exercising self-determination. Throughout their pathways, survivors obtained legal documents, understood labor regulations and rights, addressed their urgent needs through progressively more autonomous

service access, improved their linguistic skills, and cultivated ties to local communities. Once underlying difficulties to access work were addressed during the program, participants were enabled to find occupation, sometimes on their own. Even if almost all participants were occupied by the time of the interviews, the sustainability and quality of occupation pathways remain a challenge. It takes time for barriers to access the labor market, stemming from complex needs, to be resolved¹⁴.

One participant describes exerting their agency and taking charge of their own wellbeing, and recovery from the consequences of marginality and exploitation, when the situation allowed them to do so:

«There is a thing inside of me that speaks “is time of you change”. You change, or you never will. That I thought. I must reach old, I must let me reach old (...) This project has everything, gives everything to you. I go to SERD¹⁵, always negative, every monday, the pee, and doctor is very satisfied. She said sleeping, I am taking a small pill, tiny, to sleep. Another victory. Cigarettes, I used to smoke two packs, now I smoke just 4. I see my life went from water... how do you say? From water to wine. Yes, changed that way. And it was me... my strength, my victory... I work from 8 to one¹⁶, I go to doctor, tomorrow I start school B1¹⁷, many projects, you understand? My life...» (A7)

Some had to combat addiction, some had trouble finding affordable housing, some had health challenges with lasting consequences. The emancipated “now” is far from perfect or easy. However, progressively, fear subsides, when they become aware of their own strengths and resources. Many participants express an enhanced sense of agency, autonomy and self-efficacy: “I feel stronger now, because I’m on my own, I do everything on my own, I have found a job on my own... It is not like before. In the project I had food, housing, everything with them. Now I do it on my own” (A8). Another participant spoke about her emancipation trajectory as having grown into adulthood: “I am grown, now. My problem I can solve on my own, without sobbing, without asking for help of a person, without speak about my problem to many persons. So I am happy” (A11). In contrast with practices of infantilization and dependence experienced in exploitative contexts and in receiving societies, the ability to satisfy one’s fundamental needs brings the person to overcome fear and insecurities.

The sense of agency did not remain confined to the management of personal affairs but was extended in several forms of outreach towards communities. Once participants acquired balance, they were empowered to give back. Some by becoming ambassadors against exploited labor in their communities or promoting project Common Ground among their peers. Others by offering suggestions and initiatives for program improvement. For instance, by promoting uptake of psychological support activities, proposing workshops that are conducive to small additional earnings, facilitating sports, or religious and cultural activities, by discussing with peers and providers the most demanded training opportunities, such as driving license courses.

3. Discussion: limitations, analytical contributions and future questions

3.1 *The limits of individual empowerment: what remains obscured?*

The limitations of the study are to be attentively considered. It does not endorse current policies or interventions, nor suggest that the positive impacts reported in these narratives extend to the

14 Project *Common Ground* has provided a variety of remedies, but it initiated its activities less than two years ago, and this is not the time or the place that would allow a serious outcome-centred evaluation.

15 SERD is a medical service against addictions, which in this case entailed weekly urine screenings.

16 Referring to experiences of *tirocinio*, that is an apprenticeship for persons in situations of vulnerability, entailing a State-shared minimum wage.

17 Referring to Italian language courses, at the intermediate level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

whole person's trajectory, to the whole project, or that they can be replicated with similar results in other contexts. Given the positive bias in data collection, this study merely documents what worked, in the given times and cases. More methodological and empirical knowledge is needed for program evaluations that are truly survivor-centred and grounded in program theory. This is not it. Moreover, while survivors' narratives document meaningful recovery of agency, autonomy and dignity, we must critically examine what our study reveals about the limits of individual empowerment processes within unchanged structural conditions. We hereby present several critical questions that emerged from our findings:

Firstly, the temporal question. We interviewed survivors who had received several months of assistance and were not in crisis at the time of our dialogue. The enthusiasm and sense of empowerment evident in their narratives is real and significant, but we cannot know whether this will persist in the years after program exit. Will the hope and optimistic determination in their words endure, when confronted with ongoing barriers to housing, credential recognition, and labor market discrimination? We acknowledge that our study cannot answer this question.

Secondly, the precarity question. Survivors obtained residence permits through the program, although they typically received short-term, conditionally renewable permits that maintain what the literature calls "chronic visa stress", comprising not only undocumented status, but also the exhausting, health-eroding cycle of temporary and conditional legal status that must be continually renewed, and generates a persistent risk of falling back into the undocumented status. While survivors prefer these "precarious documents" to no documents at all, these remain far from the "real documents" or long-term permits that signify true security and belonging. The structural conditions that enable exploitation, as well as the stratification of citizenship rights through migration policies, are not fundamentally altered by individual assistance programs, however well-designed.

Thirdly, the intersectionality question. The limited numbers in our study did not allow for a systematic analysis of how emancipation trajectories varied across different axes of identity and experience. While we identified several compounded vulnerabilities and their reciprocal effects, operationalising a full intersectional framework (cf. Crenshaw, 1991) on a larger sample of survivors could examine how different positionalities shape recovery trajectories, how gender identities may affect access to housing and employment, how age or country of origin may influence outcomes, and more. We hope that the next phase of the program, starting this year, will offer an opportunity to expand on this initial research.

Fourthly, the structural transformation question. The framework of migratory stratifications and the narratives themselves point towards the need of structural change. Areas like migration policies, labor market regulation, housing access, credential recognition, and the enforcement of workers' rights. While the study highlights the importance of assistance programs, as essential and life-changing for participants' individual trajectories, these operate within, and cannot fundamentally alter, the structural conditions that produce vulnerability to exploitation. The risk is reproducing a binary of before and after, that may obscure the ongoing structural barriers towards societal and labor market participation.

3.2 Emancipation entails stratified agency and a supportive structure

This study has examined emancipation trajectories after labor exploitation through the lens of migratory stratifications, revealing how recovery unfolds not as a singular event, but as a stratified exercise of autonomous agency, facilitated by a sedimentation of experiences of legitimization, support and resource access. The narratives of 20 survivors in Northern Italy illuminate four interconnected dimensions that structure both emancipation and subjugation: 1. the stratifying power of migration policies and "documents", that is, the variety of residence status, with their different affordances, durations, and legitimising effects, in terms of citizenship rights; 2. the spatial and temporal layering, interaction and sedimentation of experiences within individual

trajectories; 3. the relational networks that either constrain or enable agency; and 4. the progressive reconstruction of self-determination through repeated encounters with legitimization and support.

Our findings demonstrate that the binary of “forced or free” labor inadequately captures the complex continuum of constraint and choice that characterises both exploitation and recovery. Just as subjugation processes prey on intersecting vulnerabilities and unfold through repeated abuses of power over time, empowerment requires structural conditions and relations that progressively expand choices through multiple autonomous actions exercised across time.

The potential for structural change and recognition that access to “documents” enable, both in reality and in the minds of survivors and service providers, emerge as the primary structuring force in survivors’ trajectories, determining not only legal status, but facilitating access to housing, healthcare, education, labor rights, and ultimately, the possibility of belonging and self-determination.

The migratory stratification framework reveals how migration policies create layered vulnerabilities that exploiters systematically leverage. The non-recognition of foreign educational and professional credentials, the chronic visa stress of short-term renewable permits, the conditionality linking residence rights to employment contracts, and the restricted access to housing and social services combine to produce what survivors describe as a prolonged migration journey that continues through years of exploitation. As one provider observes “when the documents finally arrive, the government recognises who they are, is like they receive a new name” -highlighting the profound symbolic and material significance of legal recognition in the emancipation process.

3.3 From fragmented responses to integrated systems

The migratory stratifications framework, applied here to recovery processes, aligns fundamentally with the multi-dimensional, multi-agency approach to labor exploitation that is evolving in Italian policy and practice. The National Guidelines for the Identification, Protection and Assistance of Victims of Labor Exploitation in Agriculture (MLPS, 2021) represent a critical policy evolution, explicitly recognising that “it is the State’s responsibility to enforce fundamental labor rights, as human rights, and labor legislation, and to provide protection and assistance in case of violation”. This study’s findings underscore the necessity of this integrated approach while revealing persistent challenges in its implementation. As (Zadra, 2025b) has articulated, responding to labor exploitation requires moving beyond sectoral silos and epistemological boundaries to construct “connective spaces” for integrated knowledge and intervention systems. The Italian antitrafficking legislation is evolving, from the criminological focus of article 603bis of the Penal Code, to the preventive, multidimensional strategies of the Triennial Plan and National Guidelines against labor exploitation, and most recently article 18-ter of the Immigration Act, providing alternative pathways to residence permits. This evolution reflects an expanding recognition that exploitation is not an anomaly but a structural feature of contemporary production systems, requiring coordinated responses across criminal justice, labor inspection, migration policy and social welfare domains.

Our study reveals how survivors’ emancipation trajectories depend on the activation of multiple supporting actors operating in concert. The program model examined here -encompassing early identification by diverse frontline actors, integrated referral systems, and comprehensive assistance addressing legal, housing healthcare, training and labor inclusion needs- demonstrates a practical application of this multiagency vision. However, survivors’ narratives also expose the fragility of these systems when coordination falters, when service thresholds remain too high, or when institutional actors inadvertently reproduce the power asymmetries and revictimisation that exploitation entails.

3.4 Knowledge construction and survivor-centred practice

This study contributes to an emerging epistemology that recognises exploited persons not merely as needs-bearers but as experts by experience, whose reflexive knowledge is essential for understanding and addressing labor exploitation. The survivor-informed, survivor-centered and survivor-led approaches increasingly called for in anti-trafficking literature¹⁸ find empirical support in our findings. Participants' analysis of power asymmetries, their articulation of how structural vulnerabilities are leveraged for subjugation, and their identification of what constitutes meaningful support demonstrate the irreplaceable value of centring survivors' perspectives in both research and practice.

As Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons, as well as Zadra (2025b) emphasise, universities and research institutions are not the sole sites of knowledge creation and transmission, but can facilitate "connective spaces for reflection and multidimensional response strategies" that transcend positional interests to generate more spacious epistemologies and integrated intervention systems. This study exemplifies such transdisciplinary collaboration, integrating academic analysis with practitioner expertise and, most critically, with survivors' lived experience. The iterative dialogue with practitioners throughout the project, the focus groups discussions of initial findings, and the centring of survivors' narrative authority in the analysis all reflect a commitment to co-construct knowledge that can inform more effective, contextually responsive interventions.

3.5 Helping relations and power dynamics in support systems

The emancipation trajectories documented here reveal that recovery requires not only material resources and legal protections but also relational healing. Trust relations with program providers emerged as central to survivors' recovery, but these had to be tested and developed over time, through repeated demonstrations of genuine, non-controlling support: "a person that wants to help you, wants to help you not only one time, but always you can see that wants to help, then you trust". This finding underscores the importance of continuity, consistency, and authentic commitment in anti-trafficking work -qualities that depend on adequate training and structural support for the professionals providing these services. (Zadra, 2025a) draw attention to the need of care for exploited persons, social workers and system fragilities, recognising that sustainable, effective responses to exploitation require attending to the wellbeing and capacity of service providers themselves, as well as the structural constraints and resource limitations that shape their work. The program model articulated in the cited study, whose characteristics served as an aspirational blueprint for the programs developed in project Common Ground, depends on adequate training, coordination, fair and sustainable employment conditions, investment in connective spaces, and protection against the burnout and secondary trauma that this demanding work can produce.

Moreover, our findings highlight the need for ongoing critical reflection on power dynamics within helping relationships. The asymmetries inherent in provider-survivor relationships must be actively countered through empowerment practices that progressively expand survivors' spaces for self-determination, both individually and through collective organising. The recognition that survivors can contribute invaluable testimony and participate in configuring assistance pathways (user-informed services) represents a crucial shift from paternalistic "savior" mentalities toward genuine partnership and solidarity.

18 OSCE (2024) Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils (NSTACs); La Strada International, *Elevating the voice of trafficked persons with dignity and respect alongside the critical role of an independent civil society*, Statement July 30th, 2021; US State Department, *Engaging survivors of human trafficking*.

3.6 Future directions of inquiry towards structural transformation

While this study focuses on individual emancipation trajectories, the migratory stratifications framework and the multiagency, multidimensional, policy approach, both point toward the necessity of structural transformation. The preventive strategies outlined in the Triennial Plan (combating undeclared work, ensuring transparency in labor intermediation and recruitment, incentivising compliant businesses, facilitating knowledge sharing across public sectors, among others) represent essential macro-level interventions that address the systemic conditions enabling exploitation. However, our findings (among other relevant scientific contributions in this field) reveal persistent gaps between rights enshrined in law and rights effectively accessible in practice. The stratification of citizenship rights through migration policies, the fragmentation of collective bargaining and union representation particularly for migrant workers, the inadequate enforcement of labor protections, the barriers to housing and social services, and the continued use of certain contractual forms and subcontracting arrangements as tools of control, all require sustained policy attention and reform. The recent introduction of Article 18-ter, providing an alternative pathway to resident permits through labor inspectorate assessment represents a potentially significant evolution, but its implementation and impact require careful monitoring. Future research should continue to center survivors' narratives, which are essential not only for knowledge generation but for shaping societal responses and improving policies and service responses. User-informed programs can innovate and better target interventions, redefine quality indicators, lower access thresholds, and multiply entry points to information, reporting channels and support resources. Comparative studies across different territorial contexts, longitudinal research tracking long-term outcomes, and participatory action research engaging survivors as co-researchers would all contribute valuable knowledge to this evolving field.

4. Conclusion: Sedimented legitimation and the possibility of belonging

The migratory stratifications framework reveals how "signs become sedimented in territories and societies without completely erasing the previous ones and create continually evolving landscapes of memory through a multiplicity of elements that, despite being heterogeneous, display their own semantic unity" (Della Puppa *et al.*, 2024, p. 10). Applied to emancipation processes, this insight illuminates how recovery unfolds through the gradual sedimentation of new experiences: of legal recognition, respectful treatment, genuine support, skill development, social connection, and autonomous decision-making. These experiences progressively overlay and transform, without entirely erasing, the traumatic memories and internalised oppression and exploitation.

The title quotation from a survivor, "you feel like a person, not a working animal", captures the essence of this transformation. Emancipation is fundamentally about the recovery of personhood, dignity, and the capacity for self-determination that exploitation systematically denies. This recovery occurs within the "unresolvable tensions between control and freedom, autonomy and support, lasting wounds and healing, social structures and individual choices" (*ibid*) that characterise human experience. It requires both individual agency and collective support, both immediate assistance and long-term structural change, both specialised anti-trafficking interventions and the transformation of mainstream systems to become more accessible, responsive and just.

Justifying interventions to redress exploitation by posing survivors as intrinsically vulnerable and thus needing to be saved, does not constitute an adequate premise to structure empowerment processes. Effective redress and support programs must recognise survivors as agents of their own recovery who possess resources and capabilities that, when given a fighting chance

through adequate structural supports and relational solidarity, enable them to reconstruct lives of dignity, autonomy and belonging. The challenge for researchers, practitioners, policymakers and society at large is to create and sustain the legal, socioeconomic and relational conditions that make such emancipation trajectories possible for all who have experienced exploitation's dehumanising subjugation.

This study has sought to contribute to that collective endeavour by making visible the complex, stratified process through which survivors recover agency, and by highlighting both the promising practices and persistent challenges in current responses to labor exploitation. We hope it will inform continued dialogue, innovation and transformation in the ongoing struggle for labor justice, migrant rights and human dignity.

References

- Brass, T. (1999) Towards a comparative political economy of unfree labour. Frank Cass.
- Burke, M.C. (2022) Human trafficking. Interdisciplinary perspectives. Routledge. Lewis, H., Dwyer, P. Hodkinson, S. & Waite, L. (2015) Hyper-precarious lives. Migrants, work and forced labor in the Global North. *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(5), 580-600. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132514548303>
- Calafà, L. (2025) A labour law analysis of Article 18-ter of the Italian Immigration Act. *Lavoro e Diritto*, 3, 387-407. DOI: 10.1441/118201
- Calafà, L. (2021) For a multidimensional approach to labour exploitation, *Lavoro e Diritto*, 6(2) 119-140. DOI: 10.1441/100860.
- Crenshaw, K.W. (1991) Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- D'Amours, M., Pogliaghi, L., Bellemare, G., Briand, L., & Hanin, F. (2022). Reconceptualising Work and Employment in Complex Productive Configurations. *Work, Employment and Society*, 38(1), 63-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221103131>
- Davidson, JOC (2015) Modern slavery: the margins of freedom. Springer.
- Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., Storato, G. (2024) Migratory stratifications. A new perspective to observe the intersection between migration and social change. In: Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., Storato, G. (eds.) *Migratory Stratifications A New Perspective on Migration and Social Change through the Italian Lens*. Transnational Press. <https://hdl.handle.net/10278/5077261>
- Della Puppa, F., Sanò, G., & Storato, G. (2025). Migratory stratifications: a new analytical tool for investigating social change. *Identities*, 32(6), 745-758. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2025.2473211>
- Ditmore, M. & Thukral, J. (2012) Accountability and the use of raids to fight trafficking. *Anti-trafficking Review*, 1, 134-148.
- European Commission's Study on the economic, social and human costs of trafficking in human beings within the EU. , Fundamental Rights Agency (2019) Key fundamental rights concerns, *Quarterly Bulletin* 1/2019.
- GRETA (2022) Online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings; see also EUROPOL (2020).
- ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), Art. 2(1).
- Krieger, K. Gibbs, A. & Cutbush, S. (2022) Evaluating human trafficking service programs. *Journal of Human Trafficking* 8:2, 157-183.
- Kukreja, R. (2021) Visible yet invisible: the disciplinary mechanism of self-surveillance among undocumented South Asian male migrants in rural Grece. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(15) 3660-3676. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1642740>
- LeBaron, G. & Gore, E. (2020) Gender and forced labour: understanding the links in global cocoa supply chains. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 56 (6), 1095-1117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1657570>
- MLPS - Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali (2021) Linee guida per l'identificazione, protezione e assistenza delle vittime di sfruttamento lavorativo. Disponibile qui.
- MLPS - Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali. (2020). Piano triennale di contrasto allo sfruttamento lavorativo in agricoltura e al caporalato (2020-2022). Disponibile qui.
- NVA- Numero Verde Antitrattra (2025) Numero Verde contro la Tratta degli esseri umani e/o il grave sfruttamento. Relazione annual, 2024. Available at: https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/d4qir2gq/relazione_nv_2024.pdf
- Palumbo, L. (2024) Taking vulnerabilities to labour exploitation seriously. A critical analysis of legal and policy approaches and instruments in Europe. Springer, IMISCOE, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55424-7>
- Protopapa, V. (2022) From Rights to Collective Action. A Way Out of Labour Exploitation. *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 3, 379-400. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718166-12340134>
- Sayad, A. (2004 [1999]) The suffering of the immigrant. Polity.
- Sen, A. (1999) Development as freedom. Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, K., & McGrath, S. (2017). Temporary migration, precarious employment and unfree labour relations: Exploring the 'continuum of exploitation' in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program. *Geoforum*, 78, 199-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.01.008>
- UNODC (2024) Global report on trafficking in persons.
- US State Department, Engaging survivors of human trafficking.

- Winterdyk, J. & Zhang, S. (eds.) (2026-preview) Bridging gaps in our efforts to combat human trafficking. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003559726>
- Zadra, F. (2025a) Linee Guida Interregionali Common Ground. Available at: <https://piemonteimmigrazione.it/lp/commonground/attivita/procedure-e-linee-guida>
- Zadra, F. (2025b) Processi di costruzione della conoscenza e prassi per un sistema multiagenzia nei territori. *Lavoro e diritto*, 39 (3), 1-19.
- Zadra, F., Bragagnolo, C. & Scarone, S. (2025) Prendersi cura delle persone sfruttate, degli operatori sociali e delle fragilità dei sistemi. Contributi teorico-pratici della rete antitratta in Veneto. *International Journal on Migration Studies / Studi Emigrazione*, 62(238), 312-338. <https://www.cser.it/studi-emigrazione-n-238-2025/>
- Zhang, S.X. (2022) Progress and challenges in human trafficking research: Two decades after the Palermo Protocol. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 8(1), 4-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2021.2019528>

3T SECTION

3T SECTION



FUORI LUOGO READINGS

Della Puppa, F., Lise, A., Matteuzzi, F., Saresin, F., & Storato, G. (2024).
*I disconosciuti. Vivere e sopravvivere al di fuori del sistema
di accoglienza*. BeccoGiallo.

«I was at the intersection of four worlds, far apart from one another. They had no other contact point, and they were struggling to communicate with each other». In this ethnographic novel, Anna, an early-career researcher, is conducting an ethnographic study on the conditions of asylum seekers left outside the asylum reception system. When she says this sentence, she feels at a crossroads, divided between her family, her partner Marco, the university, and the stories and trajectories of immigrants in her research.

«I “disconosciuti” (the unrecognised, disavowed) is a collaborative work by two researchers, two screen-writers, and one illustrator. Although its title suggests a focus on asylum seekers living inside or outside the reception system, it is clear from the first pages that the book addresses considerably more than its subtitle implies. In fact, not only does Anna meet with Farad, Alieu, and Arif to collect their stories and “unveil the reality as it is» (to quote her supervisor), but she also experiences the typical life of a precarious young researcher in Italy. In both dimensions, she unwinds the skein of often painful experiences, stories, and emotions. The unrecognised are not only the asylum seekers excluded from the reception system, but also Anna, a precarious researcher.

Temporality is a central dimension throughout the book. For the asylum seekers, there is a neat distinction between their experience before and after migration. The journey is often recounted as a traumatic experience, but words of hope are associated with the expectations toward the country of arrival (once upon a time, we would have called it a ‘host country’, but as this graphic novel rightly suggests, that term no longer holds). These expectations are invariably disappointed because, as soon as the person enters Italy, they enter a maze from which it is difficult to escape. The asylum seekers in the book found themselves stuck in the maze many times: while waiting at the reception centre for any news of their administrative situation, while trying to navigate life in a new city, and while struggling to find a job, experiencing a “temporal dissonance” (Tefera & Gamlen, 2025). Farad explains: “If you don’t work, you just wait. You wait, and you wait, you eat at the charity canteen, and wait. You have a shower at the dormitory, and wait”.

Temporality is also represented by sudden and unexpected changes. They are the manifestation of the precarity affecting all aspects of an asylum seeker’s life. Farad “disappeared” without leaving a word to Anna, while Alieu will go back to sleep under the bridge because the tenant of his friends’ house does not want him to host anymore. Within a single scene, we are confronted with the fact that the decent life he had built since he left the bridge (sleeping under a roof, eating at least once a day, studying to become a socio-sanitary operator) has gone. Not only might asylum seekers be stuck in the maze, but they can also be forced to start over. The temporal dimension of asylum seekers’ lives is contrasted with that of state institutions: while everyday life seems to be a long wait, the bureaucracy and administrative practices are quick, fast, and profoundly change lives. During a meeting with Anna, Arif remembers that the reception system alerted him six months after his arrival to the availability of a place at a reception centre far from where he was living: “They wanted me to start over in another city. To leave my job and the house where I was living and look for other solutions”.

The experience of temporal dispossession, however, is not confined to the migrants alone. Anna, too, finds herself stuck: overwhelmed by the fieldwork, unable to move forward, and encouraged to follow a logic of academic expectations that leaves little room for reflection. As her partner Marco observes, the pressure to follow a prescribed trajectory mirrors the constraints of the

1 Francesca Cimino, Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, francesca.cimino@unive.it.

academic career: both systems demand compliance, penalise deviation, and offer little tolerance for uncertainty. In this way, the graphic novel suggests that precarity (temporal, institutional, existential) is a shared condition, differently experienced but structurally related.

Invisibility is another central dimension of the book. Participants in the research and protagonists of the graphic novel are migrants holding a residence permit for (seeking) international protection who, despite their migration status being recognised by the authorities, remain invisible to local authorities and excluded from the support system. They are visible to national authorities through their asylum applications and asylum decisions, as well as through their placement in reception centres, but invisible regarding integration support and opportunities. Invisibility thus operates on two distinct registers: as a structural condition imposed by institutional neglect and as a tactical response adopted by migrants to navigate a hostile environment. This distinction becomes particularly evident when Alieu faces the prospect of losing his residence permit: “[My residence permit] will expire soon and... I will then need to hide, behave well, invisibilise myself, accept every offer...”. Rather than a passive outcome of exclusion policies, it becomes a deliberate survival strategy. To preserve their identity, to avoid police checks and minimise the risk of what De Genova (2002) calls “deportability” (the condition of being perpetually exposed to the threat of removal), undocumented migrants adopt adaptive behaviours, among which are self-segregation, living in remote places, and mimicking the behaviour of native residents. These are not signs of resignation but of agency, however constrained: what Scott (1985) would recognise as everyday forms of resistance.

The choice of the graphic novel as a medium for ethnographic research is not incidental but methodologically significant. It offers something that conventional academic writing rarely can: the multidimensional reality of conducting fieldwork. In sociological publications, the structure is usually standard and includes a discussion of the theoretical framework, methodology, and findings. Yet, researchers who go into the field know that there is much more to it than is reflected in academic contributions. Access to the field, the actual conduct of every single interview, the relationship with the participants, the places where the fieldwork is conducted, the endless talk with every person surrounding the researcher, the difficult conciliation between private and professional life... The graphic novel format gives us back these aspects, usually ignored in mainstream academic writing. And yet, the visual dimension does more than illustrate: it also structures the narrative itself. The changing of the seasons, for instance, is associated with the phases of Anna’s research: autumn, the traditional start of the academic year, marks her arrival in the field; winter accompanies the difficulties she encounters, her struggle to make sense of what she sees and to access the field properly; and spring arrives only when she finally finds a way through, just as her supervisor tells her to stop. It is a simple but effective device, and one that only the graphic novel format could carry so naturally.

I Disconosciuti is a rich and thought-provoking work that goes well beyond what its subtitle suggests. It is not only a book about asylum seekers living outside the reception system, but also about what it means to conduct research with and on them. By following Anna through the seasons of her fieldwork, we are reminded that knowledge is never produced from a neutral position: it is always entangled with the life, emotions, and constraints of the person producing it. The book will be of great interest to scholars working on migration, asylum, and qualitative research methods, as well as to anyone curious about what ethnographic fieldwork actually looks like from the inside.

References

- Goshu Wolde Tefera, Alan Gamlen, Theorizing experiential time in refugee migration: speed and duration, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 38, Issue 4, December 2025, Pages 982–997, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaf031>
- Nicholas P. De Genova. (2002). Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31, 419–447. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4132887>
- Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ruggeri, S. (2023). *Voci da Grafica Veneta. Esperienze di vita e di lavoro nel Veneto contemporaneo tra capitalismo flessibile e caporalato*. ISTRESCO

«Labor Exploitation: A Tremor at Grafica Veneta in Trebaseleghe” reads the headline in Il Mattino di Padova, in its first article dedicated to the case involving one of the most prominent companies in the Italian publishing industry, employing 394 workers, both direct and indirect, with a branch in the United States and the production capability to print a book in 24 hours. Grafica Veneta is one of the many factories scattered across the deep Veneto region, “situated between the Piedmont hills and the lagoon [...], with many names, many faces, many mayors, many towns, no center” (Paolini, 1998, 13:36), a region where some of the country’s most crucial economic struggles are waged. In this area, far removed from the plurality and bustle of the cities, lies the village of Trebaseleghe. It is here that Silvia Ruggeri relocates to investigate the “scandal” surrounding the case of systemic exploitation at Grafica Veneta, an inquiry that would become the subject of her undergraduate thesis and, the following year, be published as a book by Istresco: *Voci da Grafica Veneta. Esperienze di vita e di lavoro nel Veneto contemporaneo tra capitalismo flessibile e caporalato* (2023).

The judicial investigation into the working conditions at Grafica Veneta began a year before the event was reported in the media and Ruggeri’s research was published. It all started when a Pakistani man was found near Piove di Sacco, a town in the province of Padua, with his hands tied behind his back and clear signs of violence on his body. It was May 24, 2020: on the same day, other nationals were either discovered or presented themselves at the emergency room in Padua in similar conditions. All of them had been employed at Grafica Veneta, hired through a subcontract with a Trentino-based company, Bm Service, which was also managed by Pakistanis. The owners of Bm Service ordered the assault as an act of retaliation after the workers had filed a union complaint for being dismissed without notice or payment of overdue wages. What emerged a year later, in July 2021, following the investigations, revealed that these acts of violence were the peak manifestation of an enduring exploitation system at Grafica Veneta, quickly leading to the use of the term “caporalato,” which Ruggeri chooses consciously as a term to narrate the story. A form of *caporalato* that involved “12-hour shifts, seven days a week, with no protections, holidays, or breaks, wages under 600 euros per month, and housing provided by Bm Service, shared at times with up to 20 people, with rent to be paid monthly” (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 17).

For the author, this story is crucial to tell because “it uncovers the presence of *caporalato* not in the southern tomato fields and agricultural industries where it is typically imagined, but in the industrialized northeast, embedded within a green, innovative, virtuous company” (Ruggeri, 2023b). By exposing this, the case reveals how exploitation is not an aberration but “a structural component of an economic system that thrives on the disposability of certain bodies to ensure its survival and profit” (ibid). This realization prompted Ruggeri to explore the “scandal,” which, rather than being an exception, appeared to be a hidden norm in the northern manufacturing sector. Motivated by a desire to understand and document, she set out with a clear purpose: to show that, despite its specific context, this story reveals broader truths about contemporary labor—an increasingly fragmented world where marginalization is engineered through invisible, intangible boundaries—boundaries that render certain bodies exploitable in the relentless pursuit of profit. Yet amidst all this, a fundamental question emerges—a starting point: Who are these bodies? Where are their voices? What shapes their lives, defined by the rhythms of the Italian-shaped flexible capitalism? It is here that Ruggeri decides to start. In fact, in the months

1 Teresa Ferraresi, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice.

following the events, there was much discussion, but never with the voice of those who had endured the conditions of labor exploitation at Grafica Veneta on their own skin. The media coverage of the case focused on the voices of the locals: the president of Grafica Veneta, Fabio Franceschi, speaks, as do the unions—two Cgil federations, Slc and Fiom, and Adl Cobas—that begin to follow the case. Also speaking is the president of the Veneto region, Luca Zaia. However, “completely absent is the voice of the primary figures in this story: the Pakistani workers, whose exclusion is symbolically reinforced: it’s necessary that they remain invisible in order to continue exploiting them” (Ruggeri, 2023b). It is thanks to this awareness that Ruggeri decides to fill this void in an affirmation of her methodological stance: starting with those who endure the distortions of the organized exploitation system that lies behind the “Made in Italy” excellence, beginning by listening, aiming to understand, to question, and to examine the experiences of the protagonists in their entirety—as workers, immigrants, and men. This is done by dismantling the identity essentialism with which this segment of the workforce is often viewed, and instead attempting to begin with an analysis the productive context of flexible capitalism and just-in-time (JIT) production in the Veneto region, within which the figures involved in the Grafica Veneta scandal operate and respond. This is the content of the first chapter.

The story of Grafica Veneta fits into “an economic model that focuses on seeking profit and market competitiveness through labor flexibility and decentralization, or rather, through a network organization between companies” (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 10). Both elements are relevant when analyzing labor exploitation in Grafica Veneta for the author. The company operates 24 hours a day but functions on a commission basis, through the just-in-time system, meaning it produces only what is requested by the customer, within the time frame desired by the customer, thus products are only made when there is a real need and exactly when that need arises. Ruggeri links this productive form to a specific workforce requirement: “for JIT to function, flexible labor is required, available on demand, especially for specific tasks” (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 15). This is where outsourcing through cooperatives such as Bm Services comes into play, creating a form of “local zero-kilometer production decentralization that, through cost reduction, allows for the pursuit of the law of maximum profit” (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 11). And, to make the expense of the achievement of profit are, once again, the workers: “in the case of Grafica Veneta, outsourcing one of the production segments results in a lower expense because the subcontracted company is guilty of *caporalato* by employing workers under exploitative conditions” (ibid).

The fact that all the workers involved in cases of labor exploitation share a migratory background is far from coincidental for the author: it is recognized that “the employment of immigrant labor guarantees flexibility because it involves vulnerable and blackmailable individuals,” (ibid), a condition that is not naturalised but reconducted to current immigration laws. This point is developed throughout the book without succumbing to a reductionist view that directly links immigration to exploitation, but rather by uncovering the deeper, underlying conditions that allow such situations to persist. In doing so, the migratory phenomenon is revealed in its close connection to the production needs that drive it and the legislative framework that sustains it, ultimately invoking the concept of immigration management as a tool for the *multiplication of labor* (Mezzadra & Nielsen, 2013), a low-cost labor force specifically that is manufactured by the condition of legal vulnerability imposed on immigrant subjects and responds to the exigency of having a highly precarious and exploitable workforce. This approach is capable and willing to highlight the responsibilities of the political system, in addition to the dominant economic system, in actively shaping the widespread forms of immigrant labor exploitation, of which the Grafica Veneta case serves as an example. In this regard, the book can be situated within the tradition of public and partisan social science (Burawoy, 2005), in other words, a social science that is engaged with the situations and people it studies in a pursuit of advocacy and social transformation.

The merit of the book lies in its ability to place the individual within a broader context without resorting to a deterministic approach, intertwining individual biographies through a structural

analysis—intersecting the realities of production with the migration regime—that shapes life choices and the needs of individuals, while also unflinchingly pointing to those accountable for this situation.

At the core of the book are the interviews with two Pakistani workers from Grafica Veneta involved in the case of *caporalato*, Omar and Samir. In their stories, the dimensions of travel and work intertwine, both of which are fundamental to their ability to stay in the country and fulfill the expectations of their roles as breadwinners, or the head of the family who fulfills the role of provider for the family's economic subsistence. While their experiences of migration and labor are marked by different tensions and levels of awareness, what emerges across both stories is that each moment of their lives is "marked by the color of their skin and the choices it forces upon them in a Europe that does not meet the expectations of rights and opportunities that they both had imagined" (Ruggeri, 2023b). The stories shared by Omar and Samir reveal how their time in Italy is constantly marked by a sense of disorientation and non-belonging, alongside the awareness of what they have left behind at home and how it is gradually being lost. "Nostalgia and attachment to one's culture are constantly renegotiated within a foreign and fundamentally rejecting context," writes Ruggeri, providing a Sayadian framework for the migratory experience as a double absence, where the immigrant is torn between two worlds, absent from both their society of origin and the one of destination (Sayad, 2002). On one hand, the immigrant is alien, as shown in two workers' isolation in Trebaseleghe, detached from the life and dynamics of the town that welcomes them but systematically identifies them as "others." On the other hand, they are also absent from life back home—from the growth of family members, the marriages of siblings, and the funerals of parents. The stories collected in the book restore the immigrant's experience as one of non-belonging, a limbo of estrangement. In this context, work is interpreted by the author as a way to make sense of that non-belonging, but also as a means to fill the void: through work and remittances, the immigrant can, in part, feel connected to home, and through the same work, they can, again in part, legitimize themselves within the host society.

A geography thus emerges, composed of precarious and ever-shifting balances, a mosaic of belongings in perpetual renegotiation. In this sense, the book is able to narrate contemporary migration starting from the needs, expectations, and lived experiences of those who depart, challenging the overwhelming uniformity of public discourse surrounding migrants and the linearity of life to which they are typically confined and allowing the reader to move beyond those discursive construction that confine, for example, "migration to static categories tied to poverty, war, and labor" (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 42).

The interview with Omar and Samir offers a broader perspective on the case of *caporalato* at Grafica Veneta, shifting the focus to the individuals working in the factory, their motivations, and personal journeys. This approach has the merit to show that working at Grafica Veneta is just one part of a larger story—one of many forces shaping the lives of the interviewees as they navigate their own constellation of movements, tensions, and decisions. The choice to let Omar and Samir auto-represent allows to frame immigration as a diversified reality, "one made up of groups and individuals who negotiate their agency based on their own needs, their positioning, and the structural realities of the world around them" (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 32). This perspective enables a deeper understanding of their specific cultures, strategies, and future prospects, while also offering valuable tools for those who work with—and presumably for—them. Trade unions are one of these actors and they appear to be still grappling with how to effectively understand migrant workers' issues. It is through an exploration of this ambiguity that Ruggeri's research concludes, adopting a propositional approach. By recognizing this difficulty as a shared condition within Italian trade unionism, the book reveals key aspects that provide insights and suggest strategies for addressing similar situations in the future.

Grafica Veneta is described as a factory that has been deeply anti-union since its inception. Alongside the factory environment, which is largely impermeable to union influence, the complexities of subcontracting and immigrant labor further complicate the union's efforts to in-

tervene and succeed, according to the author. The issue of relations between migrant workers and trade unions constitutes a key theme in the current national political and public debate, especially in light of the increasing use of immigrant labor in local businesses. Nevertheless, trade unions appear to face significant challenges in engaging with this new workforce. As Ruggeri points out, “there is a lack of a comprehensive policy on migrant workers, leaving strategies and responsibilities to be determined by individual officers and delegates at local offices or within factory representation bodies. Without clear operational directives, these individuals often struggle to find a sense of direction.” (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 78) This highlights the difficulty of addressing the specific needs of this segment of the workforce, shaped by their particular social and legal status. This situation does not seem to be fully recognized or accepted; the union remains paternalistic and unable to take effective action, possibly due to the absence of figures within the organization who have experienced, or continue to experience, the specific realities of being migrant workers, the author suggests.

The factor that emerges most strongly on this topic throughout the book, however, is the internal fragmentation within the trade union world, which, in some respects, seems to reflect the conditions of the job market itself and ends up reinforcing it rather than combating it. As one of the direct workers interviewed reports, it appears that the three trade union organizations have followed separate paths, without “any kind of discussion, any kind of support, they didn’t engage with each other on anything [...], they took separate, different routes, without ever confronting each other, and this did not benefit the workers” (Ruggeri, 2023a, p. 83). The author presents this situation as paradigmatic of a broader issue in Italy, where trade unionism is “in crisis, struggling with the new identities and dynamics of the labor world, and trapped within frameworks and practices incapable of acting with political efficiency in the face of new forms of work” (Ruggeri, 2023b), characteristic of contemporary capitalism.

The case of Grafica Veneta, and its developments as reconstructed in the book through an attempt to uncover the complexity of the unfolding events, exposes the hidden mechanisms of the current labor system. In doing so, it forces us to confront the uncomfortable truth that behind the imperative of flexibility often lies systemic exploitation. It also provides a stimulus for reflection and emphasizes the urgency of reconstructing actions to address the distortions in the current labor organisation, based on the insights this case, in its partiality, has revealed. Ruggeri acknowledges that this is not a book offering a definitive solution to the issue, but one that revitalizes the necessity to confront it and provides valuable methodological guidance. On one hand, it advocates for a deeper investigation into what lies behind Italy’s so-called “productive excellence,” urging a critical engagement with the labor conditions that sustain it. On the other hand, it stresses the need to challenge these conditions. Doing so by listening to those directly affected, shaping political strategies rooted in their needs and desires, even when these challenge the pre-established norms of those who should represent them, such as trade unions. This approach requires the flexibility to navigate the contemporary labor landscape while maintaining the firmness necessary to fundamentally rethink it.

Bibliography

- Burawoy, M. *For Public Sociology*. American Sociological Review 70, no. 1 (2005): 4-28.
- Mezzadra, S., and Brett N. *Border as a Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Paolini, M. *Bestiario Veneto-Parole Mate*. Jole Film, 1998.
- Redazione Il Mattino di Padova. “Sfruttamento di manodopera alla Grafica veneta. Undici arresti, l’amministratore delegato ai domiciliari.” *Il Mattino Di Padova*, July 26, 2021. <https://mattinopadova.gelocal.it/regione/2021/07/26/news/sfruttamento-di-manodopera-alla-grafica-veneta-undici-arresti-l-amministratore-delegato-ai-domiciliari-1.40537918>.
- Ruggeri, S. *Voci da Grafica Veneta: Vite e lavoro nel capitalismo contemporaneo*. Istresco, 2023a.
- Ruggeri, S. “La normalità dello sfruttamento.” *Jacobin Italia*, October 24, 2023b. <https://jacobinitalia.it/la-normalita-dello-sfruttamento/>.
- Sayad, A. *La doppia assenza: Dalle illusioni dell'emigrato alle sofferenze dell'immigrato*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2002.

Reed-Danahay, D. (2024). *Sideways migration: Being French in London*. Routledge

The new book by Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Sideways Migration. Being French in London*, offers a timely and empirically rich account of middle-class French relocations to London. This seemingly specific research topic enables the author to reconnect the threads of her decades-long scholarly trajectory, weaving the study of migration together with theoretical reflection inspired by Bourdieu and a deep ethnographic reflexivity. The result is a lucid analysis of the interplay between physical and social mobility.

The book advances the concept of sideways migration – a form of horizontal, geographically proximate mobility in which migrants move to a neighbouring state with broadly comparable socio-economic indicators – and employs this perspective in a sustained ethnographic inquiry into emplacement, dislocation and belonging. Through the notion of sideways migration, Reed-Danahay sheds light on a dimension often rendered invisible within migration studies, which have tended to focus on migratory routes between countries differing in socio-economic indicators – typically between the Global North and the Global South. In the book, Reed-Danahay combines attention to sideways migration with a focus on middle-class migrants, positioning her analysis within a blind spot of migration research. Migration studies have, in fact, tended to concentrate on the more visible and dramatic aspects of migration, such as the violence associated with border crossings. Alongside studies focused on low-skilled migrants from the Global South, research has emerged over the years on high-skilled or lifestyle migrants, whose movements appear to fulfil the promises of a globalised world. The space between these two poles – that is, the migratory and relocation trajectories of the middle class – remains largely unexplored. The author's focus on this social group not only adds new empirical insight to migration literature, but also more closely connects migratory movement to the crossing of social stratifications, since – precisely because of its position “in the middle” – the middle class is particularly aware of its social position and of its potential transformation through migration. The middle class migrating in a proximate context: these are the main coordinates of the inquiry, which fuel coherent research questions. What conditions in migrants' lives and what wider social processes enable the relocation and settlement of the French in London?

In the introduction, the author argues for new analytical ways to describe forms of ‘mundane relocation’ such as that of the French in London. To reach this objective, Reed-Danahay calls for the adoption of a dual focus on the microsociological level of personal narratives and the structural factors shaping individual migratory movements. Central here is the concept of emplacement, understood as both a sense of belonging and social acceptance within a given space – ‘a way of anchoring oneself both socially and physically’ (p. 4). With the evocative prose typical of anthropology, Reed-Danahay takes the reader into the field, situating London as an attractive, proximate alternative to France that remains socially and culturally accessible. The first chapter develops a thorough engagement with the scientific literature. Reed-Danahay shows how her conceptualisation of sideways migration is grounded in anthropological scholarship and highlights its horizontal character. She discusses its convergences and divergences with related notions such as lifestyle or high-skilled migration, as well as its relationship to transnational studies. Building on this discussion, she clearly and convincingly presents sideways migration as a form of mobility enacted across proximate socio-territorial contexts and unfolding over time. Within this framework, Reed-Danahay reconnects with her earlier work and demonstrates the value of analysing this type of migration through Bourdieu's concept of social space. According to the author, ‘social space expresses articulations between physical space, embodied habitus, and sociality’ (p. 36), thereby linking personal practices and narratives with ‘the broader contexts in

1 Andrea Calabretta, University of Padua, andrea.calabretta@unipd.it, ORCID 0000-0002-6770-6724.

which migration occurs' (p. 37). Extending Bourdieu's notion of social space enables the author to examine how migration shapes emplacement within the social stratifications of both receiving and sending societies, showing how such dual social participation particularly characterises sideways migration.

The following four chapters constitute the empirical core of the book, moving from individual experiences to structural dynamics while maintaining a vivid ethnographic texture. The second chapter examines participants' narratives concerning their search for 'one's place in the world' through mobility. Keeping the theme of space and emplacement central – in its physical, symbolic and social dimensions – Reed-Danahay shows how migration entails distinct identity redefinitions depending on social position. She distinguishes between upper-middle-class individuals who readily define themselves as Franco-British, and those previously marginalised in France (for ethnic or religious reasons) who, upon entering the British social space, can revalorise their Frenchness. This tension between two identity and social references permeates many aspects of daily life — housing, habits, relations with public space, and food practices. The third chapter shifts to the political and regulatory context in which the sideways migrations studied by Reed-Danahay unfold. Her decade-long fieldwork, conducted between 2014 and 2024, allowed her to observe the effects of Covid-19 and Brexit on cross-border mobility between France and the United Kingdom. This analysis highlights how these socio-political changes reinforced national borders and affected migrants unevenly, particularly the middle class, who feared being assimilated to lower-class migrants. The fourth chapter examines what Thomas Lacroix has termed the 'migrant social institutions' – the complex of organisations, associations, forms of political representation, and commercial services that sustain foreign communities and their ties to the country of origin. Here, the reader encounters the 'overlap' of national social spaces that characterises sideways migration. Reed-Danahay's focus on this assemblage offers a corrective to migration literature, which tends to privilege either micro-narratives or macro-policy. In the fifth chapter, drawing on literature, cinema, and television series, the author explores how media texts shape and reflect representations of London life among the French. Tropes such as the "French bubble," the trailing spouse, and success-seeking entrepreneurs are used to contrast lived experience with published narratives. Reed-Danahay demonstrates how London becomes a kind of French suburb, offering opportunities for social advancement and redemption, while shaping the expectations of new migrants. The concluding chapter brings together empirical and theoretical threads – sideways migration, emplacement and dislocation, and the emigration apparatus – reflecting particularly on both change and continuity in class stratifications through migration.

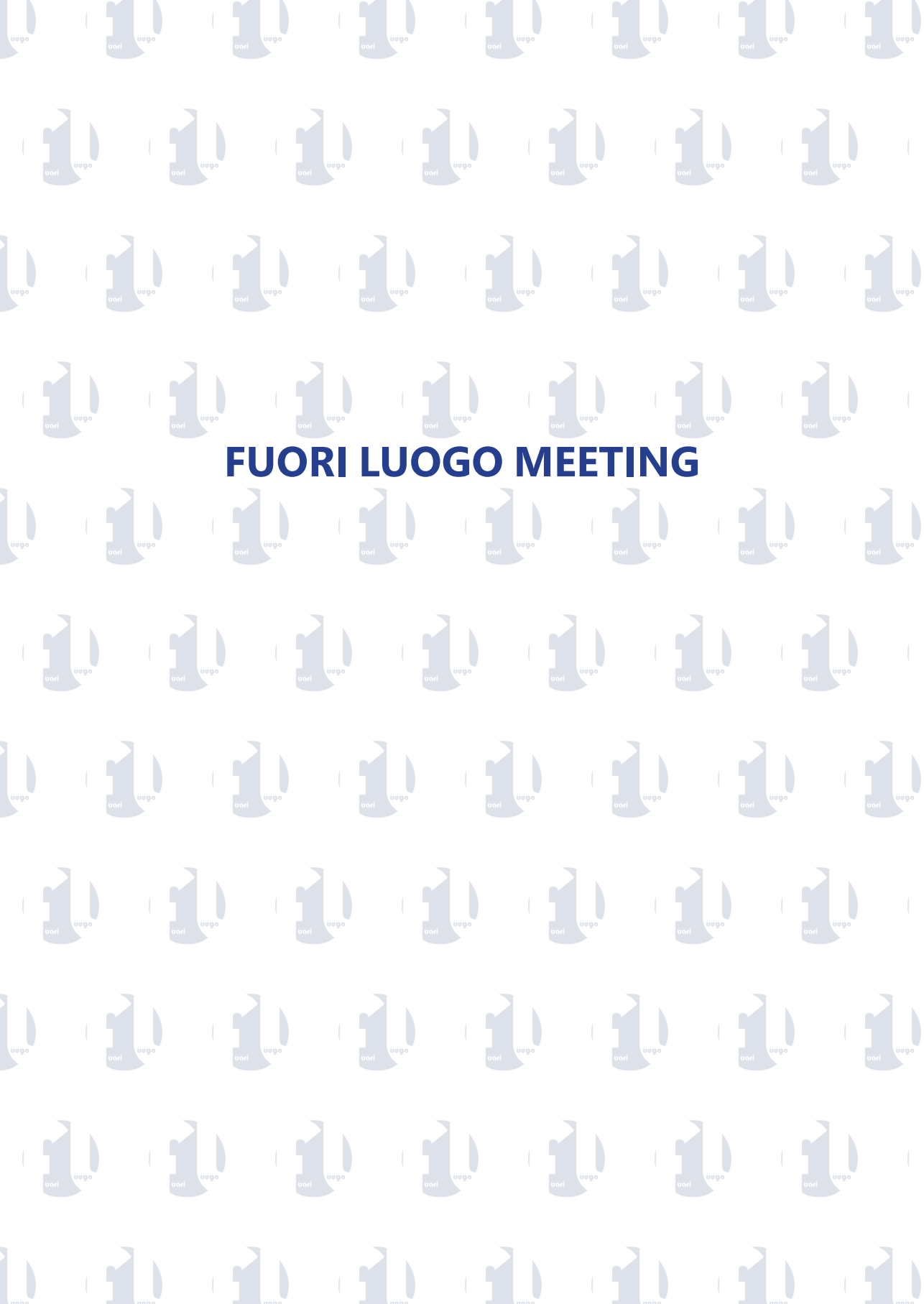
Sideways Migration has many merits. First, although migration studies often suffer from repetition and stagnation, the book demonstrates that there are still unexplored aspects of migration, offering new insights and shedding light on previously overlooked areas of the field. The notion of sideways migration is particularly analytically useful: it identifies a common yet under-theorised form of mobility operating through proximity and comparability rather than unidirectional economic stratification. Hence, Reed-Danahay's conceptual move encourages scholars to consider how distance, national prestige, and the maintenance of symbolic capital shape migratory choices. By focusing on sideways migration, the author shows that in every movement through physical space, there are underlying expectations of advancement within social space. London thus becomes simultaneously a French suburb and a frontier, where migrants can attempt to restart their trajectories without the weight of previous histories and stigmatisations. Yet, as Reed-Danahay reminds us, the inertia of social stratifications persists: 'divisions of class and ethnicity travel to London with those who relocate' (p. 156). In this sense, Sideways Migration is important both for contemporary migration literature and for studies of social stratification, with the hinge between these dimensions found in the term relocation, which signifies not only physical movement but also attempts at mobility within social hierarchies.

The discussion of migration and stratification is further enriched by the question of identity as practiced and lived in everyday life, mediated through Bourdieu's framework. Another key merit

of the book is its grounding in a clear and robust theoretical framework – a rarity in migration studies. Reed-Danahay positions her argument squarely within a Bourdieusian framework: habitus, social space and the ‘sense of one’s place’ are mobilised to explain how dispositions and positionalities travel with migrants and are refracted in new social spaces. Her nuanced use of Bourdieu avoids reductive formalism, illustrating how habitus shapes both aspiration and adaptation in translocal contexts. In this way, the text demonstrates both the possibility of doing social theory through migration studies and of studying migration in a theoretically grounded, epistemologically reflexive, and methodologically rich manner. This theoretical awareness is matched by the careful and considered placement of the text within the scientific debate. Reed-Danahay highlights the specificity of her work in relation to currents of lifestyle migration and transnationalism, while drawing on the anthropological tradition in migration studies. One cannot read *Sideways Migration* without encountering the echoes of Hannerz, Barth, Appadurai, and Sassen. This firm anchoring in migration studies supports the theoretical innovation of incorporating Bourdieu’s concepts into the analysis – concepts often marginal in migration research but increasingly recognised within the field. The strength of the book also derives from its exemplary empirical richness and reflexivity. A decade of fieldwork, multiple return visits, and a combination of participant observation, interviews, and institutional site-work produce a textured account of everyday practices of emplacement and the lived effects of Brexit and the pandemic. The author’s reflexive methodological discussion further reinforces confidence in her empirical claims.

If limitations are to be noted, they concern the relative brevity with which some themes are treated, which have received more attention in her previous work. One example is the relationship between internal migrations in France and subsequent relocations to London, or more generally, the pre-migratory stratifications of her interviewees. Another area that might have been further developed is the theoretical framework, particularly the application of Bourdieu to migration studies. Although Reed-Danahay has addressed this elsewhere, a more detailed exposition in this applied context could have further clarified how Bourdieu’s insights can be recovered in contemporary migration research. Regarding the empirical basis, the author is candid about the limited scope of her sample, which includes only middle-class, first-generation migrants dispersed across London. A deeper exploration of migrants’ digital lives and of racial and colonial stratifications might have further strengthened the analysis.

The result of a decade of field research, *Sideways Migration. Being French in London* is an accessible and engaging text that is simultaneously dense and ambitious. It makes a persuasive case for analytic attention to proximate, class-inflected forms of migration. Reed-Danahay’s combination of long-term fieldwork, sensitive deployment of Bourdieu, and institutional analysis of the emigration apparatus produces a book of great interest to scholars of migration, urbanity, and social stratifications. The volume participates in current debates in migration studies and provides a clear analysis of the overlaps between physical and social mobility, developing concepts that are particularly fertile in this field. It is to be hoped that the notion of sideways migration will become established in studies of proximate migration and that migration scholarship will draw inspiration from Reed-Danahay’s approach, more deeply rooting the analysis of migrant narratives in the social and symbolic stratifications within which they move.

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of a light blue logo. The logo consists of a stylized, blocky letter 'U' with a small, curved shape on its right side. Below the 'U' is the text 'fuori' and to its right is the text 'luogo', both in a small, sans-serif font.

FUORI LUOGO MEETING

Migratory Stratifications and the Dynamics of Global and Euro-Mediterranean Migration: an interview with Ibrahim Sirkeci

Ibrahim Sirkeci is a British Turkish academic of international renown in the field of human mobility and transnational markets. At present, Sirkeci holds the position of Director of the International Business School, Manchester, United Kingdom. Previously, he served as a professor at various British universities, including the European Business School London and Regent's University London, and was the Director of the Regent's Centre for Transnational Studies.

His academic career is characterised by a multidisciplinary approach that integrates geography, social sciences, demography, and market studies. He is known for having developed the "conflict model of migration", drawing on the concept of insecurity and applying this concept to the study of migration. In his studies he has also coined the term "transnational connected/mobile consumers". He has written widely on transnational marketing, international migration, internal migration, population movements, labour markets, segregation, ethnic conflict, and minorities. Over the years he has developed a profound expertise in several fields of study, such as Turkish and Kurdish migration to the United Kingdom and Germany. Sirkeci is also an expert consultant for governmental bodies and international organisations, having collaborated with institutions such as the World Bank and the European Commission. He is a member of various editorial boards and has founded academic journals such as the *Transnational Marketing Journal* and *Migration Letters*.

Among his most recent works are *COVID-19 and Migration: Understanding the Pandemic and Human Mobility* (2020), which analyses the impact of the pandemic on migration flows; *Turkey's Syrians: Today and Tomorrow* (2017), an investigation into the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey; and *Transnational Marketing and Transnational Consumers* (2013), which explores the implications of marketing in a global context. Other significant works include *Migration and Remittances during the Global Financial Crisis and Beyond* (2012) and *Cultures of Migration* (2011).

Below is an interview conducted by Francesco Della Puppa and Andrea Calabretta with Professor Sirkeci, aimed at introducing him to the Italian academic public and discussing with him the concept of migration stratifications.

Interview with Prof. Ibrahim Sirkeci

Question. What are the main current trends in migration that can be observed, both globally and within the Euro-Mediterranean region?

Globally as well in Mediterranean region, some key trends include increasing numbers of displaced people as many are forcibly displaced due to conflicts, persecution, violence, and human rights violations, and lack of democracy. This includes many who are able to move through several legal routes such as work permits, study visas etc. These are able, capable people with relatively good access to resources but feeling deprived of liberties or uncomfortable with current political leaderships. This group can be found in countries like Turkey, USA or Russia, for example. Another trend is increasing potential of climate-induced migration as concerns are strong about extreme weather events, desertification, and rising sea levels, leading to internal and cross-border displacement.

¹ Francesco Della Puppa, University Ca' Foscari Venice, francesco.dellapuppa@unive.it, ORCID 0000-0003-1437-4719; Andrea Calabretta, University of Padua, andrea.calabretta@unipd.it, ORCID 0000-0002-6770-6724.

Given the existing and deepening inequalities between classes, regions, and countries, economic motives will remain prominent and so labour migration between places of have-nots and others will continue. Migration destinations are plenty compared to three or four decades ago. People perceiving insecurities are destined to wherever they can get access to and relatively secure. One additional driver for this is increasingly stricter border controls in traditional host countries as well as increasingly hostile political environments marked by growth of far right parties.

Technology and infrastructure advances made migration easier and perhaps safer as information sharing about routes and destinations and maintaining connections with families across borders became easier. Within the Euro-Mediterranean region, specific trends may cover mixed migration flows, comprising asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants, often arriving via sea routes across the Mediterranean. Increasing political will to establish border externalization and controls is evident but realization of these ideas/plans may not be that easy.

Again, in response to anti-immigration sentiment growth in politics and rise of far right, there is more and more focus on returns and readmission (of particularly irregular immigrants). At the same time, total fertility in Europe continues to decline and is currently well below the replacement levels. This means more demand for labor migration, particularly in sectors like healthcare, domestic care, and seasonal agriculture. Anywhere in the industrialised world but particularly in Europe, leading source countries will remain to be conflict zones nearby (e.g., Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Ukraine).

Question. The “Age of Migration” and the rhetoric of globalization have shaped many analytical frameworks and interpretative paradigms, such as that of transnationalism. In your view, is the current scenario a reaction against that phase, or does it carry within it some of its long-term structural features?

From the perspective of conflict model of migration that I have been developing over the last few decades, the current global and Euro-Mediterranean migration scenario can be viewed as both a reaction against the “Age of Migration” and the rhetoric of globalization, while simultaneously carrying within it some of its long-term structural features. The Conflict Model of Migration emphasizes that migration is fundamentally driven by conflicts arising from inequalities, power imbalances, and competition over resources, rather than solely by economic or demographic factors. It posits that migration is a response to various forms of conflict, including political, economic, social, and cultural tensions, both in origin and destination countries. The reaction, in this model, is shaped by the degree of perceived insecurity and moderated by capabilities in terms of social capital, human capital, financial capital, physical capability and political/legal frameworks. In this view, the current scenario exhibits a reaction against certain aspects of the “Age of Migration” and globalization. The rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, increased border securitization, and the surge in nationalist and populist political movements in many destination countries, particularly in the Euro-Mediterranean region, can be interpreted as a direct backlash. This reaction is fuelled by perceived threats to national identity, social cohesion, and economic resources, which are often framed in terms of conflict between “us” and “them” and weaponized by far-right politics. The conflict model would argue that these reactions are not merely policy shifts, but manifestations of deeper societal conflicts exacerbated by migration flows. Hence these new insecurities may lead to return migrations, onward migrations and so on too.

However, the current scenario also carries within it the long-term structural features of the “Age of Migration” and globalization. This is also in line with the Conflict Model of Migration. The underlying drivers of migration, such as persistent economic disparities, ongoing geopolitical conflicts (e.g., in Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine), demographic imbalances between sending and receiving countries, and the impacts of climate change, are fundamentally rooted in global structural inequalities. These are precisely the kinds of conflicts that our model highlights as perpetual drivers of migration. While globalization’s rhetoric might have promoted interconnectedness

and fluidity, it also created and deepened these structural conflicts. Therefore, despite attempts to curb migration through restrictive policies, the fundamental pressures that lead people to move remain, ensuring that migration continues as a structural feature, albeit in altered forms and often through more perilous routes. The enduring nature of transnational ties, even amidst heightened restrictions, further underscores the persistence of these long-term structural features.

Question. Migration studies have significantly expanded and been renewed over recent decades. In your opinion, what are the areas in which the most substantial innovation has taken place?

Migration studies have indeed seen significant expansion in recent decades. In my opinion, some of the most substantial innovations have taken place in the following areas:

Transnationalism has been a paradigmatic shift. Moving beyond traditional assimilation models, the focus shifted to understanding how migrants maintain multi-faceted ties (social, economic, political, cultural) with their countries of origin and destination simultaneously. This led to concepts like “transnational social fields” and “long-distance nationalism,” highlighting the ongoing connections and identities that transcend national borders.

Methodological pluralism and mixed methods are probably a key development that changed how we study human mobility. We moved towards a consensus on combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of migration phenomena, integrating large-scale statistical analysis with in-depth lived experiences and subjective meanings. Innovations include longitudinal studies, network analysis, and digital ethnography. Similarly, now we are witnessing increasing and unknown influence of AI perhaps.

Not so new but, gender became a cornerstone of migration scholarship. In the past, this was an overlooked area. Recent decades have seen a strong focus on gendered migration patterns, the agency of female migrants, the impact of migration on gender roles in both origin and destination contexts, and the feminization of certain migration streams (e.g., care work).

Also forced migration became a primary focus of migration scholarship due to the growth in volume in relation to increasing number of global conflicts and climate change. There are large groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons.

Another innovation is perhaps emergence of a school of studies focusing on governing and controlling migration and borders. There is ever more research on the complexities of migration governance, including border externalization, securitization, the role of non-state actors, and the impact of policies on migrant rights and experiences. This is also fostered by the growing sections/departments in governments dedicated to immigration and borders across the world.

Question. Conversely, what do you consider to be the main gaps that remain to be addressed – both in terms of thematic focus and methodological tools?

I think we need to look into some really longer term impacts and experiences. We are not clear about what happens after four or more generations both in destinations and origins. How do identities evolve? What are the intergenerational impacts? This is also a methodological gap. Longitudinal studies are costly and take time to see results but very useful in understanding such trends. Return migration and reintegration experiences of migrants are still understudied. The conflicts and insecurities in this process need to be studied further. With the increasing use of digital data and online platforms to study migrants, there is an ongoing need for refined ethical guidelines and practices to ensure privacy, data security, and responsible research conduct, especially given the vulnerabilities of many migrant populations. We need to look into emerging challenges in practice of research too.

Question. One common critique of migration studies – particularly those adopting a qualitative approach – is that they tend to overemphasize migrants’ individual trajectories, while paying insufficient attention to their positioning within broader social hierarchies. In your view, how can migration research better reconnect structural dimensions with the agency of subjects?

There is a dominance of neo-liberal narrative in migration scholarship. Push-pull model, aspirations model etc. are all products of this genre. Therefore, there is a lot of emphasis on agency. I don’t deny the role of agency, but embedded nature of agency is often overlooked. Thus, migration experiences are very commonly depicted as caricatures of what really is happening. It feels like a lottery driven by a desire to win. In these models, anybody with aspirations and some set of capabilities can move and be the “successful immigrant”. The reality is far from this. People don’t just aspire and then look at the destinations and make a rational choice to realise these aspirations. One way or another people move in response to the insecurities they face, to avoid what is uncomfortable, to avoid conflict, to overcome inequalities.

And they can only do this if they have adequate social capital, human capital, finances, and if they are also physically able to do so, and if only the political climate is conducive. Otherwise, we all have aspirations but only a fraction of people actually moves. The notion of migratory stratifications adds depth here: it demonstrates how individuals’ agency is always embedded in layered structural inequalities, and how their positioning shifts within overlapping migratory moments. This is clearly visible in cases such as Alte Ceccato in Italy, where successive waves of internal, national, and international migration overlap, producing both opportunities and exclusions. Such examples show how agency is filtered through stratified labour markets, housing opportunities, and symbolic hierarchies.

Question. How can we rethink or reinvent the relationship between migrant subjects and the territories in which they are (more or less durably) embedded?

I think we need to consider a dialectical relationship here. It is temporal and spatial with shifts every now and then. People are motivated by comfort and consider moving when this disappears or is threatened. We have already developed some theoretical tools to understand this such as transnationalism. Increasing nationalisms and protectionism are big threats to international migration and we need to examine this domain much further to understand how this relationship has been evolving. The perspective of migratory stratifications enriches this analysis, showing how territories are layered with successive waves of migration. Places are not empty backdrops but sedimented with past presences and absences, shaping how new migrants relate to them. The Alte Ceccato study exemplifies this: the layering of southern Italians, Bangladeshis, Africans, and others created a dynamic local configuration where past presences structured the opportunities and constraints for new arrivals. This highlights the mutual transformation of migrants and territories across time. The migration stratifications approach challenges the idea of “migrants” as a single, homogenous group and embeds it to various forms of social stratification that shape their migration experiences and life outcomes. It represents a progressive jump from simple “push-pull” models to understand the complex, layered inequalities that are both a cause and a consequence of human mobility.

Question. From this perspective, what do you see as the main potentialities of an approach based on the notion of migration stratifications? And what aspects, in your view, require further development or reinforcement?

I think the inequalities and the repercussions of inequalities in various domains of social, economic and political spheres are the avenues to further develop this notion as a framework. In this

way, I can see what we propose with the conflict model of migration also overlaps and complements our understanding of human mobility going forward.

One key aspect is where we bring agency back into the equation is the perceptions. "Perceived insecurity" is key to understanding dynamic open-ended nature of human mobility as individuals and groups respond and react to changes in their environments and also the changes in perceptions in relation to the changes in their understandings and immediate circumstances.

Migratory stratifications also help avoid media sensationalism and political instrumentalisation, by focusing research on what remains and becomes layered in societies, rather than short-term "migration crises." The case of Alte Ceccato is emblematic here: despite the so-called "refugee crisis," local migratory stratifications proved resilient, with established networks and symbolic hierarchies continuing to shape integration more than sudden political discourses. This shows the analytical and political strength of the stratification perspective.

Question. Can you think of empirical contexts in which such an approach could be fruitfully applied?

Triangulation of various sources of data is ever more important and possible with the availability of digital data and digital tools to gather and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. The critical question here is the access and control of such data. It is not like census data we are used to access and analyse. The scope is endless and ownership is often unclear or private and hence reliability issues are of concern.

Global labour migration and integration could be one area to further apply and test the perspective. In fact, recent studies on Italy (e.g., farmworkers in Sicily, intergenerational Bangladeshi migrants in Alte Ceccato, Victoria Square in Athens) have already shown how stratification analysis can reveal overlapping layers of migration and inequality. The Alte Ceccato case in particular illustrates how local labour markets, housing, and symbolic hierarchies interact to shape long-term trajectories. Such contexts demonstrate the fruitfulness of the approach and suggest many other empirical fields where it can be applied.

Question. To conclude, how do you envision the future development of migration studies, and what role might perspectives such as that of migration stratifications play within it?

As I mentioned above, there is a mainstreaming trend in migration scholarship, we are seeing less and less variety and more and more repetition when it comes to conceptual models. In the past, there was concern about lack of conceptual development in the field and it was partly due to the scarcity of data, studies and so on. Now, we have passed that point and yet scholarly development is not matching. Editorial controls, scholarly conventions, attitudes are unfortunately not conducive to innovation. Avoiding issues, especially legal and political issues, are very important for academic institutions and we are seeing examples of worst-case scenarios in the US and many other countries. This environment inevitably affects the way we think and intellectually produce. I am afraid we will have more censorship and self-censorship in the near future.

Yet, new perspectives will flourish from this challenge too. I envision the future of migration studies as being increasingly interdisciplinary and policy-oriented, moving beyond a focus on discrete events and instead examining the long-term, systemic impacts of human mobility.

Key areas of focus will likely include: Climate-induced migration: The growing number of people displaced by environmental factors will be a central topic. Digital and virtual transnationalism: The role of technology in maintaining ties and creating new forms of community will become more prominent. The intersection of migration, health, and well-being: A greater emphasis will be placed on the health outcomes of migrants and their access to care.

Within this future, the perspective of migratory stratifications can play a crucial role, underlining a foundational lens for understanding the inequalities inherent in migration patterns. The Alte

Ceccato case demonstrates how overlapping migratory “layers” can persist and adapt through crises, offering a methodological and conceptual toolkit for future studies. The archaeological metaphor of stratifications also reminds us to study what remains layered in societies, not only what passes, ensuring a deeper historical and social understanding. Ultimately, this approach can be useful for a more nuanced body of research that not only describes migration but also contributes to developing more just and equitable solutions.



FUORI LUOGO CONTRIBUTIONS

For a Sociology of Literature. Dystopia and Utopia in Philip K. Dick²

Introduction. Figments and ultimate truths

Philip K. Dick is considered a cult writer of post-World War II America. His work starts out from the canons of orthodox science fiction and then projects itself onto a speculative horizon that raises multiple sociological questions (Nati, 1996, pp. 5-7).

Despite the fact that tropism for the fantastic (Robinson, 2000, p. 7) appears to be the natural element in which Dick's work develops, any attempt to categorise it in a specific literary current is destined to fail. He deals with themes ranging from the interpenetration of quantum physics and metaphysics to virtual reality, with its implications diffused in entire social systems. He also explores the relationship between schizophrenia and consensual collective hallucinations, observing the human qualities in the age of globalization and the epochal turning point that leads to a redefinition of individual identity.

The concept of progress that, at times, stems from the ruin of the past marks the first stretch of the author's narrative parable, but it fades in the last phase of his creation.

This paper will consist of an examination of the dimensions both utopian and dystopian of Dick's creative parable. The method used will be historiographical-epistemological. A precise philological intent will be pursued. A constant attempt will be made to interpret elements of the continuous dialogue between structural processes, theoretical assumptions and imaginative encyclopedia. The focus will be on two significant works, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, published in 1965, and *Valis*, published in 1981.

The writer's analytical lucidity, his depth of questioning, his genius and his hypothetical visions, "as if" views, create an expressive elaboration capable of exploring the contemporaneity and predicting the future.

Dick could be compared to the writers of the beat generation, but his obsessive focus on society, his extraordinary narrative power and his hypertrophic vision distance him - with the exception of William Burroughs - from the post-symbolist individualism of underground culture.

Science fiction narrative is not only a form of manifestation of needs, expression of desires or exorcism of fears, but it is also a set of unprecedented forms of aesthetic, political, economic, religious intelligence. The depiction of the conquest of space by cosmic ships and death rays has been replaced by contributions that stage a landscape of infinite and tragic desolation. Especially since the second half of the last century, this genre has moved away from the modules of the space opera, covering the undefined area between science and anti-science, between the prophets of a world composed exclusively of figments and the seekers of ultimate truths through the absurd (Hobsbawm, 1994). The atmospheres described in Dick's works are aesthetic «mirrorings», *Widerspiegelungen* (Lukács, 1971) of an objective reality, of a widespread sense of decadence, of an apocalyptic conception that does not envisage palingenesis (Dick, 1995).

The imaginary should be intended as a rich set of representations, mental or materialized in works, based on visual (paintings, drawings, photographs) and linguistic (metaphors, symbols, stories) dimensions, capable of forming coherent wholes (Wunenburger, 2003). It is a dynamic system that establishes meanings and contributes to establishing a relationship between human beings and the cosmos.

The novels placed at the center of the reflection are useful to observe how the Dickian dialectic between utopia and dystopia is articulated. In these works the presence of two horizons is linked to the presence or absence of divine inspiration.

1 Linda De Feo, University of Naples Federico II, linda.defeo@unina.it, ORCID: 0000-0002-7001-952X.

2 Received: 08/05/2025 – Revised: 14/06/2025 – Accepted: 02/11/2025 – Published: 30/09/2026

The first novel, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, is one of the most significant works in the entire history of science fiction and it contains various interpretative keys of the Dickian universe. The second novel, *VALIS*, was published in the year before the author's death.

1. Capitalism, anamnesis and extropy

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch stages the conflict between the old paternalistic industrialism, metaphorised by the deuteragonist, Leo Bulero, prototype of the American tycoon, and the cosmic capitalism, impersonated by the protagonist, Palmer Eldritch. Half human and half alien, Eldritch, back in the solar system, bears three signs of his conjugation with machinic otherness, three signs of hybridization with technical heteroreference: steel jaw, bionic eyes and a grafted arm. He represents a metaphor, the temporarily last result of the process of cybernetization of the human being.

Eldritch has returned from the interplanetary expanses to market *Chew-Z*, a lichen, a psychotropic substance capable of transforming the past, manipulating the present and offering a Faustian future. The connection between religious spirit and capitalistic ideology is denounced: the mercantile hero promises immortality by selling it. The sacred perspective, with Eldritch, refers to a techno-utilitarian paradigm. Thus, on an allegorical level, the human being is a fund available for the practices of consumption and unlimited economic growth generated by technicized capitalism. The exchange value of *absolute* capital is the new monotheistic deity. The desertification of transcendence is coessential to the plane of commodified immanence. The depopulation of heaven (Hegel, 2018), the disenchantment of the world (Weber, 2004) and the death of God, understood as a dissolution of obsolete values (Nietzsche, 2022) are processes that reflect and relaunch some dynamics of creation of a dystopic space.

Palmer pursues a pantocratic design to take possession of everyone and everything. This project of domination is destined to turn into a work of destruction, of extermination. Eldritch appears in each of the reincarnations experienced by the users of *Chew-Z* and cancels out all forms of dissent, of eccentricity, to achieve an indistinct primordial unity. A process of all-encompassing cosmization of religious phenomenality is staged. The Platonic dualism between the phenomenal sphere and the immutable *ousia* is overturned by the narrative plot in the monism of the *parousia*, of the presence of the intelligible in the sensible, which Dick, thanks to Eldritch, uses in the medieval version. The protagonist is the creator of reality, who becomes the entire reality, overcoming death and reigning among the scattered fragments of the infinite multiverses. Human beings incorporate Eldritch. They subsume his stigmata into their bodies and take on the appearance of monstrous, demi-human creatures, cyborgs, perhaps even with artificial blood or flesh. They transform themselves into emblems of a deformed humanity to which the promise of eternity does not guarantee a real existence.

The main character is at the same time *eldritch*, horrific, and palmer, bearer of palm, malefic and beneficent. He constitutes a negation of the principle of non-contradiction. The contamination of good with evil, of the demonic with the angelic, of the just with the unjust, of the true with the false produces confusion of codes.

In the unified world, controlled by Eldritch, the deformed realization of the Eucharistic and transubstantiated *agape* is reconfigured. *Agape* is a Greek word meaning *caritas* in Latin language and empathy in English language. The term empathy indicates interpenetration in the mood of the neighbor, of the fellow, of *the other*. Empathy is a relevant concept in the Dickian fertile production. With the constant attempt to perceive the inscrutable horizon, to attribute an ultimate sense to life, Dick has elaborated a complex theological interpretation of a planetary technology (Formenti, 2000, p. 80). It is marked by the utopia. The treacherous nature of the technique, that emerges in the early, dystopian novels, is dissolved in the description of an extensive living system of intelligence (Vast Active Living Intelligence System), defined by the acronym VALIS

from which the title of the famous novel derives. VALIS is a system that tends to assimilate the surrounding habitat into information assets, thus performing a negentropic function. It indicates a purpose-oriented structure.

In works such as *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the technique is judged perfidious. In VALIS the technique will perform a fundamental saving function. It has acquired an extropic and anamnestic role through the dissolution of mechanical hardness into electronic fluidity. This novel develops an original technological conception in the form of a mythical narration. In this portrayal the technique is conceived as a complex of human faculties embodied in the technosphere. It corresponds to a reality innervated with communication networks, in which energy and information, let us say energy and spirit, merge. A computerized transfiguration of the *anamnesis* myth is described. This myth has been configured since Orphism as a practice capable of bringing back the memory of human origins. It is referring to the rites practiced in the esoteric Greco-Roman religions, including primitive Christianity. These rites institute the attempt to free inhibited memories and to bring to light already existing contents. The recovery in Platonic thinking consists in the memory of pre-existing ideas in the soul. Plato is an author very often evoked by Dick. By deactivating the forgetting module, the *anamnesis* -word marked by double privative *alpha*- alludes to the loss of amnesia and, therefore, to the retrieval of remote and buried reminiscences. The human being experiences the regaining of genetic memory, which crosses generations. This is an important aspect of the thought of another philosopher, Giordano Bruno. Memories reflect the divine mind that governs the universe and that reveals to the Self its belonging to an order emerging from the depths of consciousness (Bruno, 2012).

There is a deep connection between the Renaissance tradition and Hermetic Gnosticism. The Gnosticism conceives personal religious experience as the production of a reverberation of the divine universal mind within individual minds³. According to Bruno the universe is an image in which the divinity is reflected. This divinity is a perceptible figure for the shadowy and limited human being, who is a mere detail within the infinity of finite worlds (Dick, 1995).

In VALIS the human creatures appear as cosmic microforms, repositories of experience, comparable to coils of memory placed in a computerized thinking system. The technique becomes an instrument of salvation, attainable through the liberating function operated by gnosis (Sanchiz, 2019, pp. 839-858), or, more precisely, by the annulment of oblivion (Dick, 1981).

2. The pink ray

The idea of absolute good in Dick becomes perfectly congruent with the image of a supreme divinity, with the image of a God-universe. Following the dissolution of mechanical technologies into electronic ones, a God-machine is identified in a God-computer, VALIS. VALIS is identifiable with the God Progress, who is no longer the historical human-divine figure described and handed down by the evangelical story, but he is identifiable with the One present in the plurality of Matter. This planetary system is an evocative anticipation of the destiny of information that ac-

3 Dick's interest in Gnosticism is partly due to his friendship with Episcopalian Bishop James A. Pike, who inspired the protagonist of *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, published in 1982. The prelate was a charismatic figure for pacifist and radical Christians who had fought for civil rights alongside Martin Luther King, and later for the Berkeley protesters. The discoveries, which occurred around 1946-1947, of two manuscript collections -the so-called Essene library of Qumran and the Gnostic library of Nag Hammadi- constituted two fundamental discoveries in archaeological theology. The Qumran scrolls mention Zadok, a priest of Israel at the time of David, who gave his name to the community of the Zadokites, whose existence is attested by documents dating back to the 2nd century b. C. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a conspicuous amount of *loghia*, the sayings of Christ that prefigure the Gospels two hundred years in advance. They should be separated from the character Jesus, revealing a mysterious figure, indicated by a Hebrew term whose best translation is Expositor, to whom many of the *loghia* are attributed (Dick, 1982). The New Testament would therefore be an "imposture", and the presence of pre-Christian practices in the Messianic-Judaic sect would make Christianity a late manifestation of the Zadokite cult (Carrère, 1993). It is advisable to consult also Sutin, 2003.

quires autonomy and independence from individual brains. Thanks to capillary diffusion of the means of communication, the lumps of thought scattered on the planet are connected. VALIS corresponds to what Pierre Lévy defines «collective intelligence» (Lévy, 1994) and Derrick de Kerckhove defines «connective intelligence» (de Kerckhove, 1995; de Kerckhove, 1997).

This narrative precognition hypothesizes the future electrified plots of the Net through the mediation of the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Teilhard de Chardin, 1962). Dick explicitly refers to the Teilhardian Noosphere in his essay *Man, Android and Machine* (Dick, 1995). The Noosphere is a floating mass above the Biosphere and it is an entity in which all subjective thoughts are immersed, influencing each other. This collective brain entity is composed of transmitting and receiving stations and it is a layer of the Earth's atmosphere made up of holographic and informative projections within a unitary *Gestalt* in constant elaboration. This entity is energetically linked to the media communication networks thanks to a development that has generated the indistinction between natural evolution and artificial evolution. It organizes matter and produces interconnection between elements. It thus takes on the role of a force opposed to entropy, allowing the human beings to reconfirm themselves as the authors of a process and it offers, from discovery to discovery, constant gratification to the needs expressed in specific historical contexts. Thanks to the invention of radio transmission, the noospheric energy level, no longer a passive receptacle of information, has acquired a life of its own, transcending human knowledge, elaborating solutions and transforming itself into a titanic system of artificial intelligence (Dick, 1995). Hypostatized Reason, or what Philo calls *Logos*, would thus perform a mediating function between the particular and the universal. The antinomy constituted by Good and Evil would therefore be overcome thanks to a sophisticated Gnostic conception and its reference to divine perfection. This perfection can be found in the Valentinian Pleroma, that is the set of eternal beings to which everything will be brought back, the totality of the aeons destined to cover the distance between God and matter. The term pleroma in the New Testament is used in reference to Christ, who is described as the fullness of God, and to believers who draw upon this fullness through faith in Christ. In the Gnostic system, however, the term has a more defined meaning. It denotes the region of the heavens from which comes the secret wisdom that brings human being's salvation. The pleroma would correspond to the *Urgrund* or the point of it from which we come and to which we will return (Dick, 1995).

During the last phase of his production, Dick "transmigrates" to other horizons and celebrates the absolutization of the logic of simulation (Frasca, 1996, p. 216). The empirical world is subtended by an immutable and eternal background. It would be a kind of illegitimate imitation of what has been created, affirms Dick in *How To Build A Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later*, that was introduced, according to a Gnostic theory, by the inferior god, or Satan, the "Monkey of God", in order to weaken the faith of Christians in the return of the Saviour (Dick, 1995). For the Gnostic thinkers, considered by the Fathers of the Church as heretics, this Luciferian demiurge would be represented by the holders of power on the Earth. In the fideistic search for the absolute and the ultimate meaning of existence, the premises for the configuration of a symbolic design are developed. From this project, speculative suggestions about illness and death emerge, which, in March 1974, transform into a revealing experience, an apocalypse (Dick, 2011). In fact, the doors of the knowledge of objective reality seem to open for Dick when a pink ray, a ray of colored light, sparkling and dazzling, rich in information, strikes his brain like an illumination and, at the same time, a hallucination.

In *How To Build A Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later* Dick underlines how Heraclitus' philosophical intuition penetrates the mystery according to which "the latent structure governs the evident structure. Fragment 54". The existence of another reality that underlies the world deducible from perceptual schemes is affirmed and the most sophisticated Platonism is anticipated: "The nature of things lies in the habit of hiding. Fragment 123" (Dick, 1995), of concealing its essence behind the veil of appearance, of what Hindus indicate as *maya* and the

Greeks designate as *dokos* (Dick, 2011). In Plato's *Republic*, the original condition of humanity is expressed by an image that portrays human beings chained in a cave, where the light can be glimpsed only through a pale reflection, and where the prisoners mistake the objects of sensations, the shadows cast on the wall, for real objects. It is the partial, indirect knowledge that Saint Paul speaks of, attained *per speculum in aenigmate*, through a mirror. That reflection of oneself when one looks at oneself in the polished bottom of a metal bowl (Dick, 1977), when one looks at one's own upturned face. It is current knowledge contrasting with future knowledge, that we will acquire when we could see things *facie ad faciem*.

In *Cosmogony and Cosmology* Dick hypothesizes that the world would consist of a spurious projected reality, devoid of ontological substance. It would be generated by a machine comparable to a computer that programs and controls humanity, an artifact that reflects this reality in the image and likeness of its creator, defined in 1616 by Jakob Böhme as *Urgrund*, origin. The destiny of the artifact is dissolution. The end of human beings will be the isomorphism, the fusion with the original entity, which will absorb us, permeating us. It will break the spell of the illusory world when it will defeat the deterministic power of the artifact, annihilating it, reducing it to non-being. Then, only an exhaustive monistic structure will remain, entirely alive and sentient. There will be no possible time, place or condition outside the *Urgrund* (Dick, 1995). Human thoughts are destined to reach the Omega point, real pole of psychic convergence in the Universe, a cosmic point of total synthesis, existing beyond the human being in time and space, starting from which the brain of the Earth will no longer be a set of punctiform individualities, but a collective entity.

The attempt to explain the unknowable is an impulse that Dick felt deeply. The perfect coincidence emerged in the first novels between the deceptive nature of technology and the evil reality is diluted in an ever less accentuated dichotomy between organic and inorganic, and in an ever more complicated recognizability of artificial creatures (Fortin, 2024, pp. 53-77). The androids are frighteningly similar to human beings reduced to mechanical beings, an-empathetic, unaccustomed to reaching out compassionate hands, emotionally deprived by alienation and reification (Formenti, 2000, p. 84). In *Man, Android and Machine* Dick advances the visionary hypothesis that electronic constructions could be the disguise of living realities, because they are linked, in an absolutely inscrutable way, to the "ultimate Mind". *Sepher Yetzirah*, or *Book of Creation*, is a Kabbalistic text that dates back almost two thousand years. It says: "God then set one against the other: good against evil, and evil against good; good purifies evil, and evil good". In both contenders [however] there is God, who is both and neither of them". There is the *Urgrund*, which reconciles absolute opposites. There is Palmer Eldritch, who, behind the angry grin of the God of Wrath, behind the cruel metallic face, lets us glimpse soft flesh (Dick, 1995).

3. Machines and death

Utopia is a word derived from the Greek language and it means absence of place, *utopos*, but it indicates also a good place, *eutopos*. In his later works the writer supposes that the World Wide Web and its eschatological horizons could represent an *eu-topia*. Reworking the bold hypotheses of Teilhard de Chardin, Dick paints a faithful portrait of social reality, constantly malleable in the complex *continuum* of human being-machine fusions.

VALIS is the prophetic literary representation of a mathematizing cosmology reoriented from the transcendence of the divinity to the immanence of the cyberspatial knowledge, a form of unprecedented wisdom enriched by promises of immortality (Geraci, 2007, pp. 961-980).

The concept of wisdom is very relevant in Dickian works. It is a guiding concept, but also an ambiguous concept.

An adolescent memory of Hans Blumenberg comes to mind. The philosopher mentions that he read an inscription in the auditorium of his high school in Lübeck (Blumenberg, 2021): «The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom». The phrase is cited several times in the Old Testament and, in general, the genitive «of» has been interpreted in an objective sense. The phrase could refer to the fear that Dick felt towards an entity perceived one morning in 1963 and recognised as God. It could refer to fear of human beings in the face of divinity. Fear as a principle of wisdom understood as the acquisition of awareness of their non-omniscience. This fear can have an opposite sign when that «of» performs a subjective function, when the Lord is afraid and when Palmer is afraid. This character, through the *Chew-Z*, has acquired an *Unheimliche Weisheit*. He has created the spiraling desiring processes in human beings. He has re-created the world, but he has been imprisoned in the labyrinth he constructed. He has defeated death, but he reigns among the disseminated fragments of the endless wastelands.

If, in the manner of Blumenberg, a subjective sense is assigned to the genitive, God will appear intimidated by his own creatures. These creatures do not appear aware of their own precariousness and do not possess the awareness of their own finiteness.

Human finitude is also *con-finement*. It is necessary not to violate the biological *telos* and to respect the norm enshrined in human physiology. It is necessary to respect the paradigm of human recognizability.

The machine is an aspect of human embodiment, as Donna J. Haraway states (Haraway, 1991) and reiterates (Haraway, 1997), but the technique is also a way of the limit. It is just one of the functions of the human being, even if it is rooted in the material substratum of *homo natura*. Human beings are «natural born cyborgs», as Andy Clark (Clark, 2003) affirms and as also other authors assert, authors like André Leroi-Gourhan (Leroi-Gourhan, 2018), Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan, 1964) or Najef Yehya (Yehya, 2001). Dick, in his creative parable, expresses his *Weltanschauung*: the human being is endowed with a changing identity. He suffers if he does not alter himself (Bachelard, 2002), but the human being is also a dynamic invariant of cultural becoming. The minor circle of science has become the existential a priori, as Jacob Needleman (Needleman, 1963) sustains. The minor circle of science transforms the properly human way of being in the world as bodily existence and transfigures the human presence, which could be dominated by an alien project.

In the exergue of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Leo – a name that probably evokes Ezekiel's lion – alludes to the dust, of which human beings are constitutively made. The dust constitutes the only possible starting point.

Dickian celebration of the quintessence of nothingness, typical of the writer's early works, has been characterized as nihilism. A form of nihilism which is marked by sense of possibility, of virtuality, functioning as an attempt to face the implacable destiny and the ancient drama of the unattainable human infinity.

Dick is aware that human creatures cry for more life, like his androids, half organic and half cybernetic, perhaps willing to consume *Chew-Z* to freeze time, hoping that they and also their memories will continue to survive thanks to technique. Humanity is perennially intent on opposing the *katastrophikòn*, the catastrophe in which greedy and predatory time contracts.

Death possesses the emblematic negativity and brings out the unresolved and unsolvable sense of the end of life, even, and perhaps especially, when its exact expiry date is known. This aspect of existence seems to have inspired the creation of Roy Baty, the bat-king of Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Dick, 1968), who has become the mad-king, Roy Batty, character of *Blade Runner*, cult-movie directed by Ridley Scott, with the shifting of symbolic perspectives that this transfiguration entails. This famous character represents a tragic allegory of the drift towards which a humanity obstinately intent on reformulating itself is sliding.

Human creatures are miserable bastard artifacts (Haraway, 1997), transformed into tangles of pumps, catheters and dials. They are figures inhabitable by machines and death, incarnate in

simulacra, very old like Manfred-cyborg, another Dickian character (Dick, 1964), and cultivate the intimate hope that their emotions continue to be born and to die. They lose themselves in the rhythm of artificial pulsations, with metal boxes next to their hearts, with the astonished gaze, like Manfred's, and with the *stupidity* of the androids.

In the aspiration to not close the cycle that goes from the unknown to the unknown (Piovani, 1981, p. 122), in the aspiration to bend death, each of the human creatures tries to live their own suffering, their own pain, their own passion in an absolutely idiosyncratic way. In an absolutely idiosyncratic way each of us tries to interpret the inscrutable mystery of the flesh.

4. Conclusions

Dick does not believe in the privileged role of scientific activity as the only legitimate source of knowledge and he gives problematicity to the notion of the existing as a sequence of events projected finalistically towards a result. This conception rejects the idea of a unidirectional dimension of history as an ascending and cumulative becoming, in which each event is the direct precipitate of a growth in relation to the past and the condition of a future development. Far from a historical vision that is unilinear in a vertical sense, free from ideological conditioning, the Dickian *Weltanschauung* places the rationalized, intellectualized and disenchanted modern West no longer at the peak of a story of progress.

The impossibility of accessing a conclusive truth, the denial of a totalizing theory, the critical and interpretative urgency lead to a constant redefinition of the boundaries of Dick's vision. It intertwines historical-political-sociological analysis, idiosyncratic religious refunctionalization, elaboration of the imaginary and, like a complex system of linkages, is aimed at unexpected connections.

Imaginative discoveries and material achievements jointly structure the dynamics of change. At the intersection of research, cultural production, and technologies, there are biological bodies with boundaries marked by social interaction (Haraway, 1991). These frontiers are illuminated by authors such as Dick, who draw maps of biopolitical geography and connect *logos* and *mythos*, science and science fiction.

The achievement of immortality through the manipulation of reality and time and the return of the sacred by the mysterious pilgrim Palmer Eldritch (Caronia, 1985, p. 116), foreshadow the emergence of current cyborg figures. These creatures are produced by the hybridization between machine and organism, artifice and nature, money and life (Haraway, 1997).

The human subject is overwhelmed with what was once the irreducibility of his or her body, a place of inextricable intertwining of matter and knowledge, truth and lies, life and death. The illusion of an indefinite knowledge creates the most self-destructive delusions of fantasy. The claim of scientific accuracy, associated with the management of an absolute power, typical of a world dominated by simulations, risks leading to the annihilation of planet Earth.

Dick foresees the catastrophic results of technical development (Best & Kellner, 2003, pp. 186-202). However, in the last part of his production, he glimpses the saving power of the process of technicization. This power resides in a shared system of intelligence, which will become the communication space of the global community. *Homo sapiens* is also *homo socius*. According to Aristotle, the proper condition of human being as a political animal is "negentropic", an antinomic state with respect to the general tendency of the universe (Vaccari, 1989, p. 44). The theological system is thus transformed into a technical, semiotic and socio-organizational device. From individual intelligences emerges a collective intelligence that orients human subjects in the widespread places of an immanent knowledge. It is present wherever life grows and it is permeable to the proliferation of fundamental mnemonic and organizational potentialities.

Bibliography

- Bachelard, G. (2002). *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*. Bolton: Clinamen.
- Best, S., Kellner, D. (2003). *The Apocalyptic Vision of Philip K. Dick*. "Cultural Studies. Critical Methodologies". 3, 2, pp. 186-202 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708603003002005>; Scopus 2-s2.0-34247455423).
- Blumenberg, H. (2021). *St. Matthew Passion*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Bruno, G. (2012). *Cause, Principle and Unity: and Essays on Magic*. Blackwell, R. J., de Lucca, R. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Caronia, A. (1985). *Il cyborg. Saggio sull'uomo artificiale*. Roma-Napoli: Theoria.
- Carrère, E. (1993). *Je suis vivant et vous êtes morts*. Paris: Seuil.
- Clark, A. (2003). *Natural Born Cyborg. Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dick, Ph. K. (2011). *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1995). *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick. Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*, Sutin L. (ed.). Armonk-New York: Baror International Inc.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1982). *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1981). *VALIS*. New York: Bantam.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1977). *A Scanner Darkly*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1968). *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1965). *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Dick, Ph. K. (1964). *Martian Time-Slip*. New York: Ballantine.
- Formenti, C. (2000). *Incantati dalla Rete. Immaginari, utopie e conflitti nell'epoca di Internet*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Fortin, J.-P. (2024). Blade Runner's Replicant Humanity: Self-Discovery and Moral Formation in a World of Simulation. "Journal of Moral Theology". 13, 1, pp. 53-77 (<https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.92062>; Scopus 2-s2.0-85182468312).
- Frasca, G. (1996). *La scimmia di Dio. L'emozione della guerra medievale*. Genova: Costa&Nolan.
- Geraci, R. M. (2007). *Robots and the Sacred in Science and Science Fiction: Theological Implications of Artificial Intelligence*. "Zygon". 42, 4, pp. 961-980, December (<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2007.00883.x>; Scopus s2.0-36549023950).
- Haraway, D. J. (1991). *A Cyborg Manifesto. Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*. New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, D. J. (1997). *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™. Feminism and Technology*. New York: Routledge.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1994). *Age of Extremes - The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*. London: Michael Joseph.
- Kerckhove de, D. (1997). *Connected Intelligence: The Arrival of the Web Society*. Toronto: Somerville House.
- Kerckhove de, D. (1995). *The Skin of Culture. Investigating the New Electronic Reality*. Toronto: Somerville House.
- Leroi-Gourhan, A. (2018). *Gesture and Speech*. Cambridge-London: The MIT Press.
- Lévy, P. (1994). *L'intelligence collective. Pour une anthropologie du cyberspace*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Lukács, G. (1971). *The Theory of the Novel*. London: Merlin.
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Nati, M. (1996). *Prefazione*. In Dick Ph. K. *Radio Libera Albemuth*. Roma: Fanucci.
- Needleman, J. (1963). *Critical Introduction*. In Binswanger, L. *Being-in-the-world. Selected papers of Ludwig Binswanger*. New York: Basic Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (2022). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Piovani, P. (1981). *Oggettivazione etica e assenzialismo*. Napoli: Morano.
- Robinson, S. (2000). *Introduzione*. In Dick, Ph. K. *VALIS*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Sanchiz, R. (2019). *The human and the gnosis. On Febrero 30, La novela luminosa, Blackstar and the "VALIS Trilogy"*. "Orillas", 8, pp. 839-858 (Scopus 2-s2.0-85078836131).
- Sutin L. (2003). *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*. New York: Kensington Publishing Corporation.
- Teilhard de Chardin, P. (1962). *L'énergie humaine*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Vaccari, B. (1989). *Philip K. Dick: l'allucinazione come mezzo conoscitivo*, in Viviani, G.-Pagetti, C. *Philip K. Dick. Il sogno dei simulacri*. Milano: Editrice Nord.
- Weber, M. (2004). *Science as Vocation*. In Weber, M. *The Vocation Lectures*. Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Wunenburger, J.-J. (2003). *L'imaginaire*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Yehya, N. (2001). *El cuerpo transformado. Cyborgs y nuestra descendencia tecnológica en la realidad y la ciencia ficción*. México-Buenos Aires-Barcelona: Paidós.

Climate Justice and Biodiversity in the Mediterranean Basin²

1. The Mediterranean: A Boundless, Liquid Plain

«What is the Mediterranean? A thousand things at once. Not one landscape, but countless landscapes. [...] Not one civilisation, but civilisations piled one upon another. [...] Ancient realities, still alive, coexist with the ultra-modern: next to the apparent stillness of Venice stands Mestre, an imposing industrial complex [...]» (author's translation from Braudel, 1985, pp. 8–9).

This is how Braudel portrays Mediterranean cities: through an evocative interplay of light, colour and spatial forms, in cities rich in history and urban functions. The relationship between these urban spaces and the civilisations that have inhabited them is expressed in a multitude of landscapes. These landscapes reflect forms of life that embody the historical foundations of different cultures while also shaping individual and collective experience across past, present and future. The urban landscape consists of physical forms that tend to organise themselves into economic, political, social and cultural structures (D'Angiolini, 1967). However, the Mediterranean Basin is more than a precious cradle of civilisations. Here, human history is intimately intertwined with nature, and the landscape is also an environment: a complex system of interdependent species, organisms and habitats.

Discussing landscapes in these terms today recalls and updates a line of thought developed by the urban planner D'Angiolini in the 1960s. According to this perspective, the landscape remains an expression of civilisation, but it is also rendered contradictory by the profound tensions that characterise contemporary development (Canella & D'Angiolini, 1975; Terenzi, 2016). These contradictions are closely connected to rapid human-induced transformations that have altered territories, undermined the meanings attached to places and disrupted the delicate social and environmental balances created through the relationships between communities and their environments. The effects of the various settlement strategies adopted during the twentieth century are clearly visible in the environment, producing highly differentiated conditions that acquire particularly complex and distinctive features in the Mediterranean context (Terenzi, 2016). From this perspective, Compagna's work remains especially relevant. As early as 1967, he stressed the need to interpret economic development in relation to territorial policy, highlighting the importance of territorial specificities and local organisational structures. The approach adopted in this study draws on this interpretative framework and emphasises the importance of a contextual and territorially grounded analysis of environmental inequalities.

The Mediterranean region is home to extraordinary biological diversity and to a rich sociocultural heritage shaped by three continents. The semi-enclosed nature of the Mediterranean Sea and its complex topography have produced distinctive physiographic and ecological conditions.

1 Alessandra Terenzi (corresponding author), University of Pisa, alessandra.terenzi@unipi.it, ORCID 0000-0002-8642-3893; Nunzia Borrelli, University of Milano-Bicocca, nunzia.borrelli@unimib.it, ORCID 0000-0001-8435-9667.

2 Alessandra Terenzi is the author of the paragraphs: 1). The Mediterranean: A Boundless, Liquid Plain. 2). Methodological Approach and Source Analysis. 3). Climate Justice, Inequalities and Biodiversity: Theoretical References. 4). Exploitation and Inequalities: Between the Northern Shore and the Southern Shore of the Mediterranean. 5). Energy, Resources and Green Colonialism: Exploitation Dynamics in the Energy Transition. Nunzia Borrelli is the author of the following paragraphs: 1). The Mediterranean: A Boundless, Liquid Plain. 6). Concluding Remarks: Towards an Ecosystemic Approach. This contribution was also developed on the basis of the project Urban Policies and Practices for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, and Sustainability in Cities (2023). This ongoing project was launched within the framework of the National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC), the first Italian research center dedicated to biodiversity, coordinated by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR).

Received: 25/07/2024 – Revised: 31/10/2024 – Accepted: 04/11/2024 – Published: 30/09/2026 (first published online: 06/11/2025)

The region has experienced continuous human activity for several millennia and is now home to more than 500 million people, with a high concentration of urban settlements and industrial infrastructure near the coast. The Mediterranean Basin is one of the world's leading tourist destinations and contains one of its busiest maritime routes (Ali *et al.*, 2022).

The region's distinctive geographical position and exceptional environmental diversity have supported its cultural development while also providing the conditions for the evolution of rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

The Mediterranean Sea is recognised as a major global hotspot of marine biodiversity. A comprehensive assessment identified approximately 17,000 marine species in the basin and estimated that its macrophytes and metazoans account for about 6.4% of their global counterparts. Mediterranean biodiversity is also characterised by high levels of endemism, although knowledge remains uneven across taxonomic groups and geographical areas, particularly along the Southern and Eastern Shores (Coll *et al.*, 2010).

However, the Mediterranean is not only a major biodiversity hotspot. The interaction of multiple climate-related risks with the high exposure and vulnerability of human societies has led the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to identify the Mediterranean as one of the world's most significant climate-change hotspots (IPCC, 2021). These interacting pressures can have severe consequences for the region's social and ecological systems.

The Mediterranean, whose territorial exploitation has ancient roots, is a region in which human impacts are particularly evident. The population of the Mediterranean countries amounted to approximately 571 million inhabitants in 2020. Whereas the Northern Shore accounted for 68% of the Mediterranean population in 1950, in 2020 approximately 61% of the population lived on the Southern and Eastern Shores. This demographic shift has been accompanied by an increasing concentration of the population in urban areas, particularly in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. According to the median scenario of the United Nations projections, the Mediterranean population could reach nearly 685 million inhabitants by 2060, with the Southern and Eastern Shores accounting for approximately 72% of the total (Doignon *et al.*, 2023a).

According to the *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*, urbanization is expected to continue across Mediterranean countries in the coming decades (United Nations, 2019). This trend will be accompanied by a further "coastalization" of the population, while the number of inhabitants living in urban agglomerations with more than 300,000 inhabitants is projected to increase until 2035, particularly in cities on the Southern and Eastern Shores (Doignon *et al.*, 2023b). The Mediterranean is one of the fastest-warming regions in the world and is expected to be particularly affected by rising temperatures. During the twenty-first century, climate change is projected to intensify across the region, increasing existing risks and producing warming above the global average. However, the effects of this rapid transformation of the relationship between natural and human systems are not evenly distributed across the Mediterranean (Ali *et al.*, 2022). This study explores climate justice in the Mediterranean region, examining how the climate crisis and biodiversity loss contribute to widening socioeconomic inequalities. It focuses specifically on the implications of these processes for climate justice and on the economic, political and commercial dynamics that characterise relations between the Northern and Southern Shores of the Mediterranean. The study adopts an inclusive and multidisciplinary approach, interpreting environmental inequalities not merely as consequences of ongoing transformations but as structural challenges that must be addressed if a fair and sustainable ecological transition is to be achieved. It therefore promotes an integrated and comparative reflection connecting environmental conditions, social inequalities and public policies across the region's diverse contexts. Euro-Mediterranean cooperation agreements, often promoted under the banner of "shared prosperity", may in fact exacerbate the vulnerability of Southern Mediterranean countries, which are historically marked by structural fragilities, colonial legacies and persistent political, economic and social instability.

This situation is further aggravated by climate change, as the region is increasingly exposed to desertification and climate-related migration, which intensify existing imbalances and contribute to worsening inequalities.

By analysing the literature on environmental justice and the relationship between the climate crisis and inequality, this study contributes to the debate by examining how environmental challenges and socioeconomic disparities interact, producing new forms of injustice that require integrated responses grounded in climate justice.

The following sections present the methodological approach (§ 2) and the theoretical references that define the study's conceptual framework (§ 3). Sections 4 and 5 develop an interpretative analysis of the Mediterranean region through the lens of climate justice, while Section 6 presents the concluding reflections.

2. Methodological Approach and Source Analysis

Methodologically, this study combines theoretical analysis, based on an in-depth review of the relevant literature, with the consultation of official websites and documents produced by inter-governmental organisations, research institutions, think tanks, private companies and nonprofit organisations. The principal organisations and institutions consulted include:

- *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nations body that assesses scientific knowledge related to climate change.*
- *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a United Nations agency that promotes sustainable development.*
- *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations agency responsible for coordinating environmental activities.*
- *International Monetary Fund (IMF), an international organisation that promotes global monetary cooperation and financial stability.*
- *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), Italy's National Research Council and largest public research institution.*
- *Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), a regional programme of UNEP dedicated to protecting the marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean.*
- *Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR-ISMed), a CNR research institute specialising in the Mediterranean region.*
- *Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), an independent Spanish think tank.*
- *Eni, an Italian multinational energy company.*
- *World Bank, an international financial institution that provides financing and technical assistance to developing countries.*
- *Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), an intergovernmental organisation that promotes cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean countries.*
- *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), an Italian think tank specialising in international affairs.*
- *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), an Italian research organisation specialising in international relations and European affairs.*

Together with the theoretical literature, these sources provided the basis for developing critical insights into environmental justice, social inequalities, the climate crisis and threats to biodiversity. These issues were examined in relation to the complex and contested Mediterranean context, with particular attention to the profound disparities characterising relations between the Northern and Southern Shores.

This study is part of a long-term research trajectory initiated in 2009 and developed through several research experiences whose results have been published in scientific articles, mono-

graphs and book chapters. This trajectory has included fieldwork and direct research experience in several of the places examined, which are characterised by complex combinations of peoples, cultures, biodiversity and distinctive natural and urban landscapes. These landscapes extend across the coastlines of the Maghreb and Mashreq and are shaped by profound social, economic and environmental inequalities.

These research experiences adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative analysis based on official data and institutional databases with qualitative analysis conducted through semi-structured interviews with key informants from academic, institutional and professional settings. This approach enabled empirical evidence to be combined with interpretative perspectives within an inclusive and multidisciplinary framework for analysing environmental inequalities.

This long-term research trajectory has gained further theoretical and empirical impetus through the project *Policies and Urban Practices for Ecological Transition, Biodiversity and Sustainability in Cities*, launched in 2023. Developed within the National Biodiversity Future Center (NBFC), Italy's first national research centre dedicated to biodiversity and coordinated by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), the project examines the environmental governance models adopted by Mediterranean cities to address the climate crisis and protect urban biodiversity.

The project employed an integrated methodological framework comprising three components: (1) qualitative analysis based on interviews with experts in urban biodiversity; (2) quantitative analysis based on the reprocessing of indicators drawn from official national databases; and (3) analysis of institutional and media communication on urban biodiversity. Although the findings of these activities are not presented in this article, they informed the definition of its conceptual framework and principal analytical themes.

3. Climate Justice, Inequalities and Biodiversity: Theoretical References

The concept of climate justice entered public debate around the time of COP6 in 2000 (Carducci, 2022). During the same period, the Climate Justice Summit was held in the Netherlands as the first international meeting devoted entirely to the issue. Other important milestones in the development and dissemination of the concept included the adoption of the Bali Principles of Climate Justice in 2002 and the establishment of the Climate Justice Action network in 2009.

These emerging movements challenged traditional approaches to economic cooperation, which were criticised for overlooking profound inequalities in access to natural resources and exposure to the consequences of greenhouse-gas emissions. Climate justice is based on the recognition that climate change does not affect everyone equally. Although it is a global phenomenon, it disproportionately affects populations and territories that have contributed least to causing it, while exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities (Ruben & Loporini, 2021).

This understanding places territories and communities at the centre of climate justice. It highlights the need for reparation and compensation measures tailored to specific regional contexts rather than generic and uniform solutions designed exclusively at the international level. Although global warming affects humanity as a whole, its consequences are unevenly distributed. Some geographical areas are more exposed and vulnerable because of the interaction between climatic and geographical conditions, political and institutional factors, and growing economic and social inequalities.

In this context, distributive injustice becomes apparent across different geographical areas, institutional settings and scales. Greenhouse-gas emissions provide an emblematic example: the populations and territories responsible for the highest levels of emissions are not necessarily those most severely affected by their consequences. On the contrary, populations that have contributed least to global warming often bear some of its greatest environmental, economic and health-related costs. Studies conducted by research and advocacy organisations such as

Oxfam, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) show that technological innovation and emissions-reduction measures, although central to climate-neutrality strategies, have remained insufficient for more than three decades. As a result, many changes in the climate system are now irreversible over centuries to millennia (IPCC, 2021). In accordance with the Paris Agreement, avoiding even more severe consequences requires a substantial reduction in consumption and emissions in high-consumption societies. These studies identify inequality as a central feature of the current development model: the richest 10% of the global population are responsible for approximately 36–49% of global emissions, whereas the poorest 50% account for only 7–15% (Akenji *et al.*, 2021; Gore, 2020, 2021). These inequalities operate both between and within countries and intersect with disparities in income, health, access to natural resources and access to public services. Addressing them therefore requires coordinated responses and interdisciplinary dialogue across policy sectors and fields of research. This situation also demonstrates the growing urgency of climate justice and the need for more equitable solutions. According to Oxfam, limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require the per capita emissions of the richest 10% of the global population to fall to approximately one-tenth of their current level. At the same time, consumption among the poorest 50% may need to increase in order to ensure minimum standards of living (Akenji *et al.*, 2021; Gore, 2020).

The relationship between CO₂ emissions and emissions-reduction policies demonstrates that inequalities may be produced not only by climate change itself but also by the measures adopted to address it. Climate policies can conflict with the rights and livelihoods of local communities, creating complex tensions between environmental protection and social justice. Although these strategies may support the transition towards a low-carbon economy, they can also marginalise vulnerable regions and populations, producing forms of “climate exclusion” (Terenzi, 2023). This occurs when mitigation measures, including decarbonisation policies and conservation projects, fail to take adequate account of local socioeconomic needs and impose disproportionate burdens on communities that already have limited resources or live in fragile contexts.

Beyond the unequal distribution of burdens and material benefits, climate justice also has a procedural dimension concerning whose voices are heard in global decision-making processes. Processes of exclusion and marginalisation can affect vulnerable communities even during international climate negotiations, where significant inequalities in participation persist. Approximately 40,000 participants registered for COP26 in Glasgow (UNFCCC, 2021). Nevertheless, participation in global climate negotiations continues to be shaped by structural economic and political inequalities, particularly for representatives from developing countries (Williams, 2021). Although COP27 was held in Africa and African delegations increased their numerical presence at both COP27 and COP28, greater representation did not necessarily translate into an equivalent capacity to influence negotiation outcomes. Significant asymmetries in bargaining power persisted, while African delegations and civil-society organisations continued to call for stronger commitments from developed countries concerning emissions reductions and climate finance (Markiewicz *et al.*, 2024).

These examples reveal significant shortcomings in procedural justice, understood as the right of all interested parties to participate actively and meaningfully in decision-making processes. Ensuring procedural justice requires recognition of cultural and social differences and the development of genuinely inclusive and participatory environmental strategies. Local communities must be involved in decision-making and must benefit directly from conservation initiatives, so that environmental policies, even when inspired by principles of sustainability, do not reproduce or intensify pre-existing inequalities. The concept of a just transition is particularly relevant in this context, as it emphasises that the transition towards environmentally sustainable forms of production must address the distribution of its social and economic costs and benefits (Steviss & Felli, 2016). It also underscores the need to plan carefully for employment, infrastructure development and the redistribution of wealth during the transition to renewable energy (Cimini, 2023).

A just transition therefore seeks to ensure that already marginalised communities are not further excluded or harmed by transition processes. At the same time, the principle of “leaving no one behind” can generate policy tensions when social inclusion, environmental objectives and territorial development are not adequately coordinated (Sarkki *et al.*, 2022). From this perspective, climate justice requires systemic change capable of combining ecological sustainability with social justice. Public policies must protect human rights and ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits, resources, risks and burdens associated with climate change (Rosignoli, 2020).

In recent years, climate litigation has expanded considerably across different regions of the world. The term refers to legal proceedings concerning climate-change mitigation, adaptation or climate science, brought against public authorities or private actors in relation to their responsibilities for climate-related harm (Rigobello, 2022; Galanti, 2023). This phenomenon represents a more structured form of climate activism and seeks judicial protection for the claimed human right to a safe and stable climate (Rigobello, 2022). According to the *Global Climate Litigation Report: 2023 Status Review*, published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2,180 climate-related cases had been filed in 65 jurisdictions by December 2022, compared with 884 cases in 2017 and 1,550 in 2020 (United Nations Environment Programme, 2023).

The intensification of climate change and the unequal distribution of its effects have led a substantial body of scientific literature to examine the relationship between climate change and inequality. Several studies have shown that extreme climatic events can exacerbate economic and social inequalities, highlighting the interdependence of social and environmental justice (Bassetti, 2019; Diffenbaugh & Burke, 2019; Méjean *et al.*, 2020; Terenzi, 2023). These studies also draw attention to the relationship between climate justice and biodiversity. Extreme events such as floods and severe storms disproportionately affect socioeconomically vulnerable areas, which are often characterised by high exposure to climate-related hazards and the rapid loss of local biodiversity (Eckstein *et al.*, 2021; Terenzi, 2023).

The literature emphasises the relationship between climate justice and biodiversity. Biodiversity, defined as the variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes of which they are part (CBD-UN, 1992), plays a crucial role in supporting community resilience to environmental challenges. It provides essential ecosystem services, including food and water, climate regulation, water-quality regulation, and cultural and spiritual benefits (MEA, 2005).

Diverse and healthy ecosystems, including forests, wetlands and coral reefs, also contribute to climate-change mitigation by storing carbon and protecting communities from climate-related impacts. Biodiversity loss compromises these services, with particularly serious consequences for communities living in already fragile areas. Habitat degradation can lead to species extinction and the destruction of essential ecosystems, threatening not only the survival of individual species but also the stability and livelihoods of the human communities that depend on them.

Despite growing evidence of the importance of biodiversity in shaping both climate-change dynamics and their consequences, the relationship between biodiversity, climate and human health remains insufficiently understood in academic research (Marselle *et al.*, 2021). Greater understanding of this relationship could support the conservation of urban biodiversity as a strategic investment in public health and encourage the integration of nature-based solutions into both urban and healthcare policies.

In February 2022, Italy took a significant step towards environmental protection by amending Articles 9 and 41 of its Constitution. Article 9 was amended to include the protection of the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems, including in the interests of future generations. Article 41 was amended to establish that private economic activity may not be conducted in a manner that harms health or the environment (GURI, 2022). These amendments represent an important development in Italian constitutional law, recognising the essential role of natural systems in supporting life and human well-being (Senato della Repubblica & Camera dei deputati, 2022). Although the constitutional reform retains an anthropocentric framework, it represents an important step towards recognising human dependence on healthy ecosystems. As Camino (2023)

observes, a just society must protect the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems so that all citizens can benefit from them equitably. The reform establishes environmental protection as a constitutional responsibility and challenges the treatment of places as inert spaces available solely for resource extraction and waste disposal. Instead, places can be understood as living and responsive systems connected through ecological relationships that extend far beyond their immediate boundaries.

4. Exploitation and Inequalities: Between the Northern Shore and the Southern Shore of the Mediterranean

Environmental and social inequalities between the Northern and Southern Shores of the Mediterranean are becoming increasingly apparent in the context of the climate crisis. Climate-related impacts are unevenly distributed and can intensify long-standing structural vulnerabilities and existing processes of exclusion and exploitation.

According to the IPCC assessment of the Mediterranean region, climate-related risks for people and ecosystems are particularly severe because of the interaction between climatic hazards, high exposure and pre-existing socioeconomic and ecological vulnerabilities (Ali *et al.*, 2022).

An analysis of Mediterranean urban areas through the three categories of stressors identified by Frem *et al.* (2018) reveals the simultaneous presence of chronic, acute and social pressures. Chronic stressors include biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation resulting from resource scarcity, desertification and rising temperatures. Acute stressors include extreme weather events such as heatwaves and floods, which can have severe consequences for infrastructure and local populations. Social stressors arise from rapid urbanisation and changes in land use, contributing to limited access to services, economic inequalities and forced displacement. These stressors interact with and reinforce one another, increasing the vulnerability of Mediterranean cities to climate change.

Climate change therefore adds another layer of pressure to a region already marked by exploitation and profound socioeconomic inequalities, which have historically shaped relations between the Northern and Southern Shores. Although the entire Mediterranean region is exposed to climate-related hazards, Southern Shore countries generally have a lower capacity to respond because of pre-existing economic, political and institutional vulnerabilities rooted partly in unresolved colonial legacies.

Although Italy has introduced, at least at the constitutional level, a new understanding of places as living systems requiring protection, with significant differences in implementation across the country, extractivist and hierarchical mechanisms continue to operate throughout the wider Mediterranean region. Within the global economic system, the most vulnerable territories are often treated as “container-places”: spaces primarily intended for resource extraction and for the displacement of environmental costs. This provides a clear example of the asymmetrical relationship between the two shores.

Relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean have historically been shaped by asymmetrical structures rooted in colonialism and reproduced through contemporary economic globalisation. Southern Shore countries primarily supply raw materials and low-value-added resources and host relocated industrial activities, while European Union countries retain greater control over value chains and export high-value-added products, technologies and institutional models. This international division of labour reinforces the economic and political subordination of Southern Mediterranean countries (Terenzi *et al.*, 2015).

This process has contributed to the material and ecological impoverishment of Southern Mediterranean societies while also affecting their political and environmental structures. In her analysis of environmental security in the MENA region, Cimini (2023) observes that many environmental policies are oriented towards control rather than participation. These strategies often

reflect top-down European models and “green” cooperation agendas that frame environmental issues primarily in economic and depoliticised terms.

The transfer of these models has contributed to strengthening top-down environmental policies characterised by extractivist approaches and limited attention to local needs. Such policies remain consistent with historical patterns of European domination in the Mediterranean. Although they adopt the language of global governance, they are implemented in contexts marked by structural vulnerabilities that have themselves been reinforced by unequal economic and environmental relations with the Northern Shore.

As Brazzoduro and Ellena (2014) observe, the contemporary Mediterranean increasingly operates as a divide rather than as a space of connection: a region marked by inequality and multiple forms of control. These forms of control include the selective management of human mobility, the production of irregular legal status among migrants and the increasing militarisation of maritime borders, which simultaneously function as political, ecological and social boundaries.

Although communities on the Southern Shore have contributed comparatively little to global emissions, many are disproportionately exposed to desertification, biodiversity loss, water stress and climate-related displacement (Gore, 2020; Ali *et al.*, 2022). The environment consequently becomes a field of political conflict in which rights, responsibilities and access to resources are negotiated under unequal conditions.

Far from constituting a neutral and symmetrical space of cultural exchange, the Mediterranean operates as an unequal arena in which the Northern Shore holds greater economic, political and symbolic power than the Southern Shore. Despite the rhetoric of cooperation and sustainability, Northern countries continue to benefit from processes of accumulation through dispossession, contributing to ecological impoverishment and sociopolitical instability in the South. This imbalance is evident both in the management of migration, which often treats migrants as a flexible labour force, and in economic relations that concentrate accumulation in the North while perpetuating the extraction of resources and value from the South (Brazzoduro & Ellena, 2014). These unequal relations coexist with political instability, water scarcity and economic vulnerability, all of which are further intensified by desertification and climate-related mobility (UNEP-MAP, 2020; Ali *et al.*, 2022). Cities on the Southern Shore often lack the infrastructure and resources required to address climate change, leaving their populations more exposed to environmental impacts. Economic inequalities across the Mediterranean are also substantial: the region is home to more than 512 million people, but the average GDP of countries on the European Shore is three times higher than that of countries on the Southern and Eastern Shores (UNEP-MAP, 2020). Although the proportion of the population living below the absolute poverty threshold of US\$1 per day is relatively low, it rises considerably when a threshold of US\$2 per day is applied. Large sections of the population are therefore vulnerable even to relatively small economic shocks, including increases in food and fuel prices (Ferragina, 2020). This vulnerability helps explain why the social contracts between governments and populations in several Maghreb countries depend heavily on public subsidies for essential goods such as grain and fuel. These arrangements can generate social tension when international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund require governments to reduce or eliminate such subsidies.

The climate crisis intensifies these imbalances, turning the Mediterranean into a high-risk region and amplifying existing forms of instability and social tension. Its effects are unevenly distributed both between and within the two shores. In her discussion of the findings of the *Report on Mediterranean Economies 2018*, Ferragina (2020) shows how socioeconomic inequalities, territorial disparities and changes in employment conditions affect migration dynamics.

Population and economic activities in North African countries are highly concentrated in urban and coastal areas, increasing exposure to climate-related risks (UNEP-MAP, 2020; Doignon *et al.*, 2023b). This concentration has significant implications for urbanisation and climate vulnerability. Internal inequalities, closely related to income disparities, are also reflected in differences in neonatal mortality, access to education and school-dropout rates.

According to Ferragina (2020), the region is characterised by marked territorial disparities, including differences between urban and rural areas and a high concentration of population and economic activity along the coast. In Egypt, Cairo faces severe pollution and population pressures, while rural areas are affected by water scarcity. Coastal cities such as Alexandria may face extensive inundation over the coming decades as a result of sea-level rise (El-Gawhary, 2022).

Countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon face limited resources, political instability and high levels of economic vulnerability. The Eastern Mediterranean is also affected by armed conflicts, particularly in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon, as well as by significant migration flows.

Within the wider Euro-Mediterranean geopolitical space, the Western Balkans are also exposed to economic and political competition involving the European Union, China and Russia, particularly in the fields of infrastructure, mining and energy. Chinese-financed projects have expanded especially in Serbia and Montenegro, while Russian economic influence remains concentrated in strategic energy sectors. Where regulatory safeguards and the rule of law are weak, these investments can reinforce economic dependencies and generate significant environmental pressures (Vulović, 2023).

In this context, progress towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 varies considerably across the region: countries on the Northern and Western Shores generally demonstrate greater resilience than those on the Southern and Eastern Shores (Ali *et al.*, 2022). The climate crisis therefore acts as a multiplier of inequality, but it also provides a lens through which Euro-Mediterranean relations can be reconsidered in terms of equity, inclusion and shared ecological transformation. Promoting climate justice in the Mediterranean requires a critical re-examination of extractivist practices and closer attention to the diversity of existing social and environmental conditions.

Valuing local knowledge and supporting bottom-up pathways to resilience could contribute significantly to this objective, provided that the complexity of these processes and the need for multiple and gradual approaches are fully recognised.

5. Energy, Resources and Green Colonialism: Exploitation Dynamics in the Energy Transition

The energy sector is one of the areas in which structural inequalities between the two Mediterranean shores are most clearly visible. Rather than automatically providing opportunities for equitable development, the energy transition risks reproducing, in new forms, the same patterns of exploitation that have historically characterised relations between the Northern and Southern Shores. This section draws on selected illustrative cases to examine how unequal energy relations can reproduce contemporary forms of climate and environmental injustice in the Mediterranean.

Unequal relations between the Northern and Southern Shores are particularly evident in the energy and natural-resource sectors, where the labour, territories and ecosystems of the Southern Shore are subject to intensive exploitation. Energy has long been a strategic component of colonial and expansionist policies and continues to play a central role in the transition towards renewable sources (Bartiaux *et al.*, 2019). These dynamics have produced new forms of “energy colonialism”, based on the appropriation of resources, the marginalisation of local communities, geopolitical inequalities, environmental harm and extractivist economic models.

This paradigm, often concealed beneath the language of sustainability, perpetuates less visible forms of injustice and undermines both human rights and ecological balances (Parsons, 2023). The absence of genuinely inclusive and sustainable policies further intensifies existing inequalities, obstructing the development of effective resilience strategies and limiting the capacity of Southern Shore countries to adapt to climate change.

Several examples illustrate these dynamics. One of the most significant concerns Egypt and the role of the Italian energy company Eni, which has operated in the country since 1954. Eni is currently Egypt's leading energy producer, with production of approximately 350,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day (Eni, 2023). Over time, the company has signed several agreements for the exploration and production of natural gas, including the development of the Zohr, Nooros, Baltim West and Meleiha fields and the Damietta liquefaction plant. The Zohr field is considered the largest offshore gas discovery in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Eni's activities, particularly the development of the Zohr field, have contributed significantly to Egypt's domestic gas production (Eni, 2023). At the same time, the country's broader energy strategy has involved substantial infrastructure costs and reforms with direct socioeconomic consequences for the population. Electricity-price increases of up to 26% (Enterprise, 2024), together with the progressive reduction of public subsidies encouraged by the International Monetary Fund (Cousin, 2023), have increased socioeconomic pressures on Egyptian households.

Declining domestic gas production and growing electricity demand, compounded by extreme heat and population growth, have contributed to the introduction of scheduled power cuts. During the summer of 2023, extreme temperatures and recurring power outages had particularly serious consequences for vulnerable groups and small businesses (Wirtschafter & Nader, 2024).

In addition to their socioeconomic implications, oil and gas extraction and processing raise significant environmental concerns. In Egypt, some concessions held by Eni overlap with areas identified as priorities for biodiversity conservation, while infrastructure associated with the Zohr gas field is located near the Ashtoum El-Gamil protected area and Lake Manzala. These spatial overlaps have raised concerns about industrial emissions, ecosystem degradation and the effects of extractive activities on local fishing communities. However, determining the precise contribution of individual operators requires transparent environmental monitoring and careful independent assessment (Daraj, 2026).

Another illustrative case concerns European investment in solar-energy projects in Morocco. The country has historically imported more than 90% of its energy requirements, and its energy mix remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels (Liga, 2021). Driven by economic expansion, primary energy consumption increased by approximately 170% over the thirty years preceding 2021, accompanied by a substantial increase in CO₂ emissions. The energy transition has consequently become a national priority, while Morocco's renewable-energy potential has also attracted growing interest from European countries seeking to diversify their energy supplies.

North Africa's solar potential and extensive desert areas have led the region to be identified as a possible centre for the production of solar and wind energy for export to Europe through submarine electricity cables. Morocco is already connected to Spain by electricity interconnectors and has emerged as a potential regional leader in renewable-energy production, particularly solar energy. Although the country has made significant progress in expanding its renewable-energy capacity, an important part of its emerging strategy is oriented towards integration with European markets and the future export of electricity and other forms of green energy (Volpi, 2023). This export-oriented model raises questions about the distribution of benefits between European consumers and local communities. It recalls colonial patterns in which resources are mobilised primarily to satisfy external demand without necessarily ensuring that the resulting benefits are distributed equitably among local populations.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has accelerated the geopolitical reorganisation of Mediterranean energy relations, particularly in the natural-gas sector. In this context, Italy has sought to replace Russian gas with increased supplies from Middle Eastern and North African countries. In 2022, Italy and Algeria signed an agreement involving Eni and Sonatrach to increase the volume of Algerian gas transported to Italy through Tunisia via the TransMed pipeline (Ghilès, 2022).

More broadly, Algeria's role in the diversification of European energy supplies has expanded since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. However, this export-oriented strategy coexists with a highly

carbon-dependent domestic energy system, as almost all Algerian electricity is generated from natural gas. The expansion of gas exports therefore raises questions about the balance between European energy-security objectives, Algeria's domestic energy needs and the region's long-term decarbonisation goals (Ghilès, 2022).

Another relevant example is the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and Tunisia, which includes cooperation on the green-energy transition and on strategic energy projects, including the ELMED electricity interconnection between Tunisia and Italy (Ezzamouri *et al.*, 2024).

Taken together, these illustrative cases indicate that investment in Southern Mediterranean countries does not automatically lead to improved living conditions for local populations. Energy agreements may prioritise exports and European supply-security objectives over domestic needs and may fail to address their environmental and distributive consequences adequately. Where transparency, democratic participation and accountability are weak, such agreements can also reinforce existing power asymmetries (Ezzamouri *et al.*, 2024; Ruggieri, 2024).

Although foreign investment can contribute to national economic growth, it may also create new forms of economic dependency and shift costs onto local consumers, intensifying inequalities and limiting the capacity of local communities to adapt to climate change. This reflects a model of industrial development that often fails to account adequately for its social and environmental consequences, including the exploitation of human and non-human labour, adverse health effects, human-rights violations and biodiversity loss (Ruggieri, 2024).

Addressing these complex contradictions requires moving beyond the rhetoric of cooperation and shared prosperity promoted by Euro-Mediterranean policies through the transfer of "good practices". It requires critical examination of how contemporary energy and environmental relations between the Mediterranean shores are structured and whether they continue to reproduce unequal relationships and geographies of power. The conditions necessary to make these policies and exchanges more equitable must be identified by recognising the role of local communities and giving priority to territorially grounded knowledge. Such reflection should examine the relationship between climate justice, ecological transition and international cooperation in the Mediterranean rather than merely transferring regulatory models from the North to the South. Only a critical reassessment of value chains, trade policies, and material and regulatory infrastructures can support a shared and equitable ecological transition centred on local communities, territorial knowledge and the recognition of their rights.

6. Concluding Remarks: Towards an Ecosystemic Approach

As early as 1967, Compagna emphasised the close relationship between territorial policy and economic development, arguing that an understanding of territorial characteristics is essential to interpreting the economic structure of a region (Compagna, 1967).

This analytical perspective is particularly relevant to the Mediterranean, where distinctive territorial characteristics and an exceptional concentration of biodiversity coexist with a fluid geopolitical context and intense human pressure on limited resources. The "liquid space" of the Mediterranean (Braudel, 1985) suggests a complex geography composed of multiple interconnected areas. Its interpretation must account for the persistence of long-standing geographical, social and settlement structures alongside more recent flows of people, resources and capital.

Academic research has shown that the future of Mediterranean societies will depend substantially on environmental governance and on their capacity to address the medium- and long-term effects of climate change by integrating effective governance with principles of sustainability.

Although the entire Mediterranean region is exposed to severe climate-related risks, climate inequalities reflect the profound socioeconomic disparities and extractive relationships between the Northern and Southern Shores. This demonstrates how the relationship between territorial

policy and economic development identified by Compagna remains highly uneven across the Mediterranean. These disparities may be reinforced by bilateral agreements between European and African countries that give insufficient consideration to democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights, preventing local populations and civil society from benefiting equitably from investment. Such dynamics are particularly visible in the energy sector, where the European Union negotiates as a relatively integrated political and economic bloc, while Southern Mediterranean countries are more fragmented and frequently characterised by greater vulnerability, lower response capacity, limited economic resources and political instability. This fragmentation can intensify domestic tensions and, in some cases, conflicts between local communities and governmental institutions.

Although Northern Shore countries generally possess greater socioeconomic and political stability and more resources for developing effective environmental policies, they also face increasing pressure on urban infrastructure. These pressures affect their capacity to adapt to climate change and can intensify substantial inequalities within individual countries. Areas such as Southern Italy and rural Spain, for example, face economic and environmental challenges that differ considerably from those affecting more developed northern regions. These disparities also influence migration both between and within Mediterranean countries. The difficulty of existing policies in responding effectively to these movements highlights the need to recognise fully the effects of climate change on human mobility within governance frameworks. Research therefore points to the need for targeted approaches that take account of the socioeconomic and environmental conditions of each shore, as well as differences within individual countries. Such approaches should strengthen essential urban infrastructure and promote a balance between the environmental, social, political and economic dimensions of urban development.

This requires the development of intersectoral and interregional cooperation policies, together with initiatives that strengthen the adaptive capacity and resilience of coastal communities on the Southern Shore while safeguarding the rights of vulnerable populations. It is also essential to promote new pathways of economic development that support the sustainable use of regional resources, prevent overexploitation and protect the exceptional biodiversity of Mediterranean territories. Cooperation between local communities and institutions is indispensable, as is the adoption of sustainable climate and energy policies that promote greater justice between Southern Shore countries and the European Union and ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits generated by investment.

In conclusion, this study has shown that addressing the complex environmental, social and climate-related challenges of the Mediterranean requires an inclusive and multidisciplinary approach. Reducing environmental inequalities is an essential prerequisite for promoting a sustainable ecological transition and safeguarding biodiversity.

A possible future development of this research could involve establishing a Mediterranean Observatory on the relationship between environmental crises, biodiversity loss and social inequality (Terenzi, 2023). The Observatory could adopt an intersectoral and interdisciplinary structure, with representatives from each country bordering the Mediterranean. It could collect and integrate geopolitical, socioeconomic and environmental data from different national and regional contexts while connecting existing local initiatives and databases addressing these issues. The Observatory could support comparative analyses of local impacts and develop guidelines to inform governance tools and future agreements between Mediterranean countries. Such an initiative could represent a first step towards genuinely shared prosperity in the Mediterranean, moving beyond purely rhetorical commitments.

References

- Acuto, F., De Martino, C., & Terenzi, A. (2015). Mediterraneo in evoluzione: Flussi, porti e città in trasformazione. *Urbanistica Informazioni*, special issue, 277–280.
- Akenji, L., Bengtsson, M., Toivio, V., Lettenmeier, M., Fawcett, T., Parag, Y., Saheb, Y., Coote, A., Spangenberg, J. H., Capstick, S., Gore, T., Coscieme, L., Wackernagel, M., & Kenner, D. (2021). *1.5-degree lifestyles: Towards a fair consumption space for all*. Hot or Cool Institute.
- Ali, E., Cramer, W., Carnicer, J., Georgopoulou, E., Hilmi, N. J. M., Le Cozannet, G., & Lionello, P. (2022). Mediterranean region. In H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E. S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, & B. Rama (Eds.), *Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability* (pp. 2233–2272). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844.021>
- Bartiaux, F., Maretti, M., Cartone, A., Biermann, P., & Krasteva, V. (2019). Sustainable energy transitions and social inequalities in energy access: A relational comparison of capabilities in three European countries. *Global Transitions*, 1, 226–240. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glt.2019.11.002>
- Basseti, F. (2019). The cruel irony of climate debt. *Climate Foresight*. CMCC Foundation. <https://www.climateforesight.eu/migrations-inequalities/the-cruel-irony-of-climate-debt/>
- Braudel, F. (1985). *La Méditerranée: L'espace et l'histoire*. Flammarion.
- Brazzoduro, A., & Ellena, L. (2014). Rovesciare la carta: Giochi di scale. *Zapruder. Storie in movimento*, 33, 2–7.
- Camino, A. (2023). Dalla giustizia ambientale alla giustizia climatica. *Centro Studi Sereno Regis*. <https://retepacedisarmo.org/educazione-pace/2023/dalla-giustizia-ambientale-alla-giustizia-climatica/>
- Canella, G., & D'Angiolini, L. S. (1975). *Università: Ragione, contesto, tipo*. Dedalo.
- Carducci, M. (2022). Giustizia climatica. In *Enciclopedia di bioetica e scienza giuridica: Aggiornamento 2022*. Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane. <https://iris.unisalento.it/handle/11587/534514>
- CBD-UN. (1992). *Convention on Biological Diversity*. United Nations. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>
- Cimini, G. (2023). Environmental security in the Middle East and North Africa: Approaches, policy patterns, and activism trends. In S. Akbarzadeh (Ed.), *Handbook of Middle East politics* (pp. 368–385). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Coll, M., Piroddi, C., Steenbeek, J., Kaschner, K., Ben Rais Lasram, F., Aguzzi, J., Ballesteros, E., Bianchi, C. N., Corbera, J., Dailianis, T., Danovaro, R., Estrada, M., Frogia, C., Galil, B. S., Gasol, J. M., Gertwagen, R., Gil, J., Guilhaumon, F., Kesner-Reyes, K., Kitsos, M. S., Koukouras, A., Lampadariou, N., Laxamana, E., López-Fé de la Cuadra, C. M., Lotze, H. K., Martin, D., Mouillot, D., Oro, D., Raicevich, S., Rius-Barile, J., Saiz-Salinas, J. I., San Vicente, C., Somot, S., Templado, J., Turon, X., Vafidis, D., Villanueva, R., & Voultsiadou, E. (2010). The biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea: Estimates, patterns, and threats. *PLOS ONE*, 5(8), e11842. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0011842>
- Compagna, F. (1967). *La politica della città*. Laterza.
- Cousin, E. (2023). Out of gas? Egypt's ambitions to become a regional gas hub are dwindling. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/4/all-gassed-up-egypts-ambitions-to-become-a-regional-gas-hub-are-dwindling>
- D'Angiolini, L. S. (1967). *Un'altra prassi urbanistica*. L'Aretina.
- Daraj. (2026). 'Ecocide': Oil cities in Egypt encircle Ashtoum El-Gamil and kill the coral. <https://daraj.media/en/ecocide-oil-cities-in-egypt-encircle-ashtoum-el-gamil-and-kill-the-coral/>
- Diffenbaugh, N. S., & Burke, M. (2019). Global warming has increased global economic inequality. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(20), 9808–9813. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1816020116>
- Doignon, Y., Blöss-Widmer, I., Ambrosetti, E., & Oliveau, S. (2023a). Population dynamics and their components. In *Population dynamics in the Mediterranean*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37759-4_9
- Doignon, Y., Blöss-Widmer, I., Ambrosetti, E., & Oliveau, S. (2023b). Spatial distribution of population and urbanisation. In *Population dynamics in the Mediterranean*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37759-4_2
- Eckstein, D., Künzel, V., & Schäfer, L. (2021). *Global Climate Risk Index 2021: Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2019 and 2000 to 2019*. Germanwatch.
- El-Gawhary, K. (2022). Climate change in Egypt: Alexandria or the sea? *Goethe-Institut*. <https://www.goethe.de/prj/ruy/en/kuq/24334894.html>
- Eni. (2023). Eni annuncia una nuova scoperta di gas nel Mediterraneo orientale al largo dell'Egitto. <https://www.eni.com/it-IT/media/comunicati-stampa/2023/01/eni-annuncia-una-nuova-scoperta-di-gas-nel-mediterraneo-orientale-al-largo-dellegitto.html>
- Enterprise. (2024). Could Egypt's electricity price hike make renewable energy alternatives more attractive to investors? <https://np.enterprise.news/2024/01/08/could-egypts-electricity-price-hike-make-renewable-energy-alternatives-more-attractive-to-investors/>
- Ezzamouri, A., Powers, C., & Cohen-Hadria, E. (2024). *Charting the course: European perspectives on EU–Tunisia relations* (IAI Commentaries 24|04). Istituto Affari Internazionali. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaicom2404.pdf>
- Ferragani, A. M. (2020). *Mediterraneo: Aumentano i divari sociali nei singoli Paesi. Presentazione dei risultati del Rapporto sulle economie del Mediterraneo 2018*. Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo, CNR-ISSM.
- Frem, J., Rajadhyaksha, V., & Woetzel, J. (2018). Thriving amid turbulence: Imagining the cities of the future. *McKinsey & Company*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/thriving-amid-turbulence-imagining-the-cities-of-the-future>
- Galanti, A. (2023). Giustizia ambientale e giustizia climatica: Così vicine, così lontane. *Ordine internazionale e diritti umani*, 641–660. <https://www.rivistaoidu.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/12-Galanti.pdf>

Ghilès, F. (2022). North African energy links are redrawn: Italy becomes Europe's southern gas hub. *CIDOB Notes Internazionali*, 276. <https://doi.org/10.24241/NotesInt.2022/276/en>

Gore, T. (2020). *The carbon inequality era: An assessment of the global distribution of consumption emissions among individuals from 1990 to 2015 and beyond*. Oxfam and Stockholm Environment Institute.

Gore, T. (2021). *Carbon inequality in 2030: Per capita consumption emissions and the 1.5°C goal*. Oxfam and Institute for European Environmental Policy.

GURI (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana). (2022). *Legge costituzionale 11 febbraio 2022, n. 1*. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/02/22/22G00019/sg>

IPCC. (2021). *Climate change 2021: The physical science basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157896>

Liga, A. (2021). Transizione green: Le ambizioni del Marocco. *ISPI*. <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/transizione-green-le-ambizioni-del-marocco-31349>

Markiewicz, V., Gandah, P. P. T., & Micinski, N. R. (2024). Who speaks for Africa at COP? Power and politics at the UN climate negotiations. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/07/who-speaks-for-africa-at-cop-power-and-politics-at-the-un-climate-negotiations>

Marselle, M. R., Lindley, S. J., Cook, P. A., & Bonn, A. (2021). Biodiversity and health in the urban environment. *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 8, 146–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-021-00313-9>

Méjean, A., Taconet, N., & Guivarch, C. (2020). Climate change could reverse falling inequality between countries. *Carbon Brief*. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/guest-post-climate-change-could-reverse-falling-inequality-between-countries/>

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA). (2005). *Ecosystems and human well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press. <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf>

Parsons, L. (2023). *Carbon colonialism: How rich countries export climate breakdown*. Manchester University Press.

Rigobello, G. (2022). *La climate change litigation in Europa: Riflessioni preliminari per una proposta tassonomica* (STALS Research Paper 2/2022). Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna.

Rosignoli, F. (2020). *Giustizia ambientale: Come sono nate e cosa sono le disuguaglianze ambientali*. Castelvecchi.

Ruben, D., & Luporini, R. (2021). Cos'è la giustizia climatica e perché è importante. *ISPI*. <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/cose-la-giustizia-climatica-e-perche-e-importante-31232>

Ruggieri, B. (2024). Colonialismo energetico: L'altra faccia della transizione tra estrattivismo e lotte per la giustizia climatica. *Duegradi*. <https://www.duegradi.eu/news/colonialismo-energetico/>

Sarkki, S., Ludvig, A., Nijnik, M., & Kopyi, S. (2022). Embracing policy paradoxes: EU's Just Transition Fund and the aim 'to leave no one behind'. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 22(4), 761–792. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-022-09584-5>

Senato della Repubblica & Camera dei deputati. (2022). *Modifiche agli articoli 9 e 41 della Costituzione in materia di tutela dell'ambiente* (Dossier, 7 febbraio 2022, XVIII legislatura). <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/01331845.pdf>

Stavis, D., & Felli, R. (2016). Green transitions, just transitions? Broadening and deepening justice. *Kurswechsel*, 3, 35–45.

Terenzi, A. (2016). *Viaggio in Levante: Armature urbane, popoli e paesaggi*. Araba Fenice.

Terenzi, A. (2023). Climate change and social inequalities: The gap between climate solutions & environmental justice. *Fuori Luogo. Rivista di Sociologia del Territorio, Turismo, Tecnologia*. <https://doi.org/10.6093/2723-9608/9847>

UNEP-MAP. (2020). *State of the environment and development in the Mediterranean: 2020 edition*. United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan. <https://www.unep.org/unepmap/resources/2020-edition-state-environment-and-development-mediterranean-soed>

UNFCCC. (2021). COP26 facts and figures. <https://unfccc.int/news/cop26-facts-and-figures>

United Nations. (2019). *World urbanization prospects: The 2018 revision*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. <https://population.un.org/wup/>

United Nations Environment Programme. (2023). *Global climate litigation report: 2023 status review*. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-climate-litigation-report-2023-status-review>

Volpi, C. (2023). L'Europa ha bisogno di energia: L'energia solare marocchina potrebbe essere una soluzione pulita. *Africa24*. <https://africa24.it/2023/05/23/leuropa-ha-bisogno-di-energia-lenergia-solare-marocchina-potrebbe-essere-una-soluzione-pulita/>

Vulović, M. (2023). Economic relations between the Western Balkans and non-EU countries: How the EU can respond to challenges concerning direct investment, trade and energy security. *SWP Comment*, 36. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. <https://doi.org/10.18449/2023C36>

Williams, J. (2021). *Climate change is racist: Race, privilege and the struggle for climate justice*. Icon Books.

Wirtschafter, J., & Nader, M. (2024). Blackouts and extreme heat plague Egypt as government extends rolling electricity cuts. *The Media Line*. <https://themedialine.org/by-region/blackouts-and-extreme-heat-plague-egypt-as-government-extends-rolling-electricity-cuts/>

Stylistic-Linguistic Paths in Early Twenty-First-Century Travel Literature. Paolo Rumiz and the Gaze Toward Europe and the East.²

Introduction

Travel literature, a dynamic genre attentive to forms of landscape expression, represents a compelling field for exploring narratives of new geographical realities, depicted as spatial and linguistic otherness. Travel narratives, arising from an often individual experience, become part of a collective practice of knowledge transmission, enabling the reconstruction of environments, geo-historical processes, and historical-linguistic dynamics that intertwine with the traveller's experience.

Throughout the twentieth century, authors such as Gozzano, Pasolini and Moravia intertwined travel journalism with odeporic literary production, thereby delineating a writing model in which direct empirical observation and narrative re-elaboration are closely interconnected. In continuity with this tradition, the landscape of the 2000s reveals a similar blending of travel literature and journalistic writing in the works of Terzani, Bettinelli, and Rumiz, who renew this interplay in light of emerging geopolitical and medial configurations.

In this perspective, the work of Paolo Rumiz, a journalist and writer from Trieste³, holds particular significance within contemporary literary production, fully positioning itself within the odeporic vein that has developed over the last two decades. This interest is motivated both by the thematic nature of his works and by their linguistic-textual characteristics.

While acknowledging the breadth of Rumiz's literary output, including his more recent travel reportage dedicated to the Italian peninsula (such as *La leggenda dei monti naviganti*, 2007, and *Morimondo*, 2013), this study will focus on the collection of travel narratives *È Oriente*⁴, in which Rumiz turns his gaze to Central and Eastern Europe, proposing his personal yet historically grounded perspective of the idea of "Europe" and the "East". From this perspective, the analysis will examine the distinctive linguistic-stylistic choices of Rumiz's travel narratives, taking into account the historical-cultural and socio-identitarian reflections embedded in his descriptions of the geographical realities he explores. Particular attention will be given to the language amalgamations arising from the author's hybrid narrative style, as well as to his metalinguistic reflections, often shaped by the intersection of his rich personal cultural heritage and his interactions with diverse cultures.

1. *ÈO*: the slowness of journey and the gaze towards Europe

The work brings together six travel narratives, both published and unpublished, undertaken between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Written with the same focus on Europe that characterises both earlier works (*Maschere per un massacro*, 1996; *La linea dei mirtilli*, 1997) and later ones

1 Milena Elisa Daniela Romano, Dipartimento di Scienze Umane, Università di Catania, milena.romano@unict.it, ORCID:0000-0002-5591-1958

2 Received: 09/04/2025 – Revised: 26/05/2025 – Accepted: 30/12/2025 – Published: 30/09/2026

3 Paolo Rumiz (b. 1947), special correspondent for «Il Piccolo» and columnist for «la Repubblica», is known for his reportages on former Yugoslavia (*La linea dei mirtilli*, 1993; *Maschere per un massacro*, 1996), Italy (*La secessione leggera*, 2001) and Eastern Europe (*È Oriente*, 2003). Among his many works, we recall the most recent ones, *Una voce dal Profondo* (2023); *Verranno di notte* (2024). In 2024, the writer was awarded the Campiello for Lifetime Achievement.

4 The work was awarded several literary prizes (Capri - S. Michele Prize, San Vidal Prize, Latisana Prize for the North-East). From here on, the work *È Oriente* will be referred to as *ÈO*. For a further study of this collection, compared with Rumiz's travel book *Trans Europa Express* (2012), see Romano, 2026.

(*Trans Europa Express*, 2008; *Canto per l'Europa*, 2021), the reportages included in *ÈO* originate from previously published journalistic articles as well as unpublished travel notes.

One of the distinctive themes of the author's odeporic fiction, which is also evident in this collection, is the preference for tourism that deviates from conventional mass itineraries, thereby facilitating complete immersion in the destinations visited. To a certain extent, *ÈO* can be interpreted as a manifesto for a form of tourism that is both slow and sustainable⁵, as reflected in the various modes of transport Rumiz chooses for his travels, explicitly mentioned in the subtitles of his narratives. In *Dove andiamo stando?*, the journey takes place by bicycle (from Trieste to Vienna), while the itineraries described in *L'uomo davanti a me è un ruteno* (from Trieste to Kyiv) and *Chiamiamolo Oriente* (from Berlin to Istanbul) unfold by train. After leaving the train, Rumiz embarks on a barge and navigates the Danube in *Ljubo è un battelliere*. The collection concludes with two journeys in Italy, recounted in *Capolinea Bisanzio* and *Il frico e la jota*, the former by car and the latter by bicycle. It is perhaps no coincidence that the bicycle, used for the final travel narrative, is the same means of transport as in the opening story, forming an ideal *Ring Composition* that provides structural as well as thematic unity to the narrative sylloge. This study adopts a deliberate methodological choice in presenting Rumiz's texts, namely to invert the order of titles and subtitles relative to the original narratives. By foregrounding subtitles (which lexicalise travel stages and corresponding means of transport) over main titles (more narrative and evocative in register), this reordering leaves the paratextual semantics unaltered. Rather, this expository strategy prioritises those lexico-geographical indexicals that most directly encode the author's low-impact, slow-paced mobility mode (which he himself terms «nomadismo lento», *ÈO*, p. 85), thereby streamlining the apprehension of his choices of means of transport alongside the progressive unfolding of the travel itineraries across the text.

In following the trajectories outlined in *ÈO*, it will become evident that movement is not merely physical but rather an exploration of the boundary between Europe and the East, in search of the deep historical, cultural, and social roots of the places visited. The title of the entire collection (*ÈO*) suggests that the East is neither a static nor a monolithic entity; rather, it is a space that evolves, merges with the West, and defies rigid definitions. The narrative voice marks the various stages of the journey. However, Rumiz does not merely provide a chronicle of the places he visits; instead, he encourages the reader to immerse themselves in the complexity of Eastern European countries, which are often misrepresented in the media. As Michał Czorycki observes in his precise study on the representation of Eastern Europe in Rumiz's works:

«È Oriente constitutes, nonetheless, a genuine attempt to understand the realities of the East, to avoid widespread stereotypes and cultural clichés. Rumiz's choice to avoid the beaten track testifies to his willingness to go 'behind the scenes', to gain access to people and cultures which remain unknown to most Westerners». Significantly, the author's interest in the region [...] is clearly in contrast with a strong cultural prejudice underpinning many books about the area and its sub-regions, such as, for instance, Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* (1993)» (Czorycki, 2014, p. 140).

Czorycki on the one hand takes into consideration Rumiz's opposition to cultural prejudices about Eastern Europe, circulating in works such as Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*, and on the other notes the Trieste journalist's adherence to the perspective adopted by Claudio Magris in *Danubio*⁶. Moreover, it is Rumiz himself who reveals Magris as his source, in the short story *Ljubo è un battelliere*, where he writes: «Inventario del sacco: [...] due quaderni di appunti, *Danubio* di Claudio Magris. Impossibile fare a meno di questo libro. Suggella una storia completamente finita,

5 In this sense, Rumiz fits into the vein of Italian odeporical literature of 'slow' journeys, which can be traced back to the post-World War II period. Among the various studies on the subject are Guagnini, 2006; Marfè, 2009 and 2012.

6 According to Czorycki, in analysing the links between Magris's *Danubio* (1986) and Rumiz's *ÈO*, it is crucial to consider a 1992 interview in which Magris notes that if *Danube* had been written after 1989 it would have been «più drammatico... più semplice, più semplicistico» (Magris, 1992, p. 52). Rumiz in his work seems to follow these indications for a post-1989 narrative (Czorycki, 2014, p. 141).

la Mitteleuropa prima della caduta del Muro, ma non puoi farne a meno. Resta indispensabile come un portolano» (ÈO, p. 91).

It is also worth noting how Rumiz, paying particular attention to the border (particularly the 'eastern' border), takes up a recurring *topos* in a large number of authors and literary texts associated with Trieste (Czorycki, 2014, p. 148; Pizzi, 2001, p. 74).

In this work, as previously indicated, our focus will primarily be on the linguistic features of the work, while referring to existing studies on the relationship between literature and attempts to define (Central) Eastern Europe⁷, as well as to Rumiz's own interviews on the subject⁸. This perspective will, however, be duly taken into account, where appropriate, as a key interpretative framework and unifying element of the collection under consideration.

1.1 Trieste-Vienna in bici (*Dove andiamo stando?*)

Trieste-Vienna in bici is the subtitle of this account of a journey Rumiz made in the summer of 1998 in the company of his son Michele⁹. The title *Dove andiamo stando* presents an inversion of the grammatical structure and immediately reveals the author's predilection for metalinguistic reflections, scattered throughout the rest of the work. In the case under consideration here, the syntactic somersault «la capriola sintattica» in the title (ÈO, p. 12) will be clarified, with skilful cataphoric procedure, a few pages later: «Ricordo Michele, anni fa, quando si svegliò [...] e formulò così il suo *primo gerundio*: 'Papà, dove andiamo stando?' Quella *capriola sintattica*¹⁰ aveva in realtà una logica di ferro. L'andare non era forse conseguenza dello stare, della condizione essenziale di essere beatamente sistemato dietro papà orso?» (ÈO, p. 12). One thus grasps the author's attention to verbal morphology (*primo gerundio*) and the metalinguistic reflection that sheds light on the experimentalism of the childish utterance by attributing value to it (*logica di ferro*). The reader is induced, also through the final rhetorical question, to reconsider the linguistic rules with different eyes: the intuitive morphosyntactic construct for the Italian progressive present (*andare* + gerund vs *stare* + gerund) turns out to be a coherent construction with respect to the child's experience of the world even if, semantically, it reveals a contradiction between movement (*andiamo*) and staticity (*stando*). This dichotomy remains subtended throughout the narrative as the bicycle journey is intertwined with a parallel dream journey. The double narrative *reality vs dream* is skilfully constructed, textually speaking: the bicycle displacement is cadenced by the timely diary entries: *Terzo giorno*, ÈO, p. 14; *Quarto giorno*, ÈO, p. 18; *Quinto giorno*, ÈO, p. 21, etc. The dream journey structurally follows the course of the former, with progressive enumerations: *All'alba arriva il primo sogno*, ÈO, p. 10; *Il secondo sogno arriva di nuovo all'alba...*, ÈO, p. 13; *Il terzo sogno arriva in una notte difficile...* ÈO, p. 17; etc.). Thus, in a dual narrative, that «*andiamo stando*» of the title, exemplified by the author himself, is realised: «Ormai vado a dormire con la certezza di vivere un altro viaggio nel viaggio» (ÈO, p. 21).

If the dream is the «personale macchina dei pensieri» (ÈO, p. 21), the bicycle is «macchina silenziosa» (ÈO, p. 5), «macchina sovversiva» (ÈO, p. 6), «macchina da presa» (ÈO, p. 21) that unrolls the terrain «like a film» (ÈO, p. 5). The centrality of the bicycle in the journey, and in the narration of the journey itself, is evident in the broad and varied system of adjectives and nominal phrases that describe the vehicle (ÈO, pp. 5-6).

Rumiz's journey is not only a geographical journey, but also a linguistic one: thus the narrative is continually punctuated by toponyms (*Sonnenberg*, ÈO, p. 5), odonyms (*Laxenburgerstrasse*,

7 In addition to the aforementioned Pizzi, 2001 and Czorycki, 2014, see, among others, Wolff, 1994; Said, 2003; Davies, 2006; Guagnini, 2006 and 2009; Hammond, 2007

8 Among the numerous interviews, see *Il cuore dell'Europa batte a est*, 8 August 2011; Paolo Rumiz, *Oriente*, 9 March 2022.

9 The core of *Dove andiamo stando?* was published in the weekly «Diario» in autumn 1998 (ÈO, p. 198). From 2014 is the narration of another bicycle journey from Trieste to Istanbul: *Tre uomini in bicicletta* (with drawings by Francesco Altan).

10 From now on, unless otherwise specified, the italics are mine.

ÈO, p. 5; *Weinstrasse*, ÈO, p. 19) and colloquial germanisms (*spavati*, *schlafen* 'stanchezza', ÈO, p. 10; *zimmer*, ÈO, p. 18; *auf Wiedersehen*, ÈO, p. 23, just to name a few) that fully immerse the reader in the Viennese environment and increase the sense of immersion in the local geography. Toponyms are interwoven with gastronomic forestierisms (e.g. *čevapčići*, p. 12; *krautsuppe*, *ptuj*, *rechnitz*, *ibidem*, ÈO, p. 13) which thus become fragments of the journey and instruments of memory¹¹:

«E poi, mangiare è un modo per fissare i luoghi nella memoria. Dopo questo viaggio, Deutsch Haseldorf, in Stiria, sarà per sempre una Krautsuppe con paprika rosso fuoco, erba cipollina e panna acida. Ptuj, in Slovenia, la ricetta di una zuppa d'aglio scritta da una cameriera. Rechnitz nel Burgenland, un succo di mele fresco di cantina e un barista simpatico che indica la strada giusta» (ÈO, p. 13).

«Acceleriamo sulle piste come segugi cacciatori, gli odori scavano nella memoria [...], ne chiamano altri a raccolta. Parigi e le baguette calde 'du petit matin'; il čevap con la cipolla a Sarajevo assediata; Lisbona e il baccalà nelle locande dell'Alfama». (ÈO, p. 15).

In this excerpt, emblematic of Rumiz's prose, food functions not merely as a cultural referent but as a textual-linguistic device for mnemonic-spatial anchoring, wherein lexicon, syntax, and information structure collaborate to transform experience into a "narratable map". From a lexical standpoint, Rumiz constructs a network of gastronomic terms (*suppe*, *succo di mele*, *baguette*, *baccalà*, etc.), often paired with adjectives (rosso fuoco, calde) or adjectival phrases (fresco di cantina), which intensify sensory evocation and fix the locale through olfacto-gustatory memory (*gli odori scavano nella memoria*). Parallel to this, geographical spaces are evoked via a dense sequence of toponyms (*Deutsch Haseldorf*, *Ptuj*, *Rechnitz*, *Parigi*, *Sarajevo*, *Lisbona*), which, beyond their expected referential role in travel accounts, enter metonymic co-reference with the culinary object: the place "becomes" the dish (*Deutsch Haseldorf, in Stiria, sarà per sempre una Krautsuppe*), within a defining structure that fuses geography and individual memory. Complementing these are loanwords and foreignisms (e.g., *Krautsuppe*, *čevap*), which serve as markers of linguistic-cultural otherness and simultaneously as clues to experiential authenticity. If food represents an immediate and tangible link with a culture, Rumiz succeeds in capturing this bond, as if each dish were a "sensory photograph" and, at the same time, a linguistic trace that is inextricably linked to the geography and people encountered along the way. On the syntactic and textual plane, the "photographic" effect is achieved through a markedly paratactic construction, predicated on juxtaposition and enumerative accumulation: segments align in series (*Deutsch Haseldorf... Ptuj... Rechnitz...*) and are frequently punctuated by nominal phrases or elliptical constructs, which privilege perceptual immediacy and rapid datum registration. This serial configuration evokes a "notebook writing style", yielding a catalogic rhythm that recalls the succession of waypoints and the harvesting of impressions. The insertion of succinct references to human interactions (*la ricetta...scritta da una cameriera, un barista simpatico che indica la strada giusta*) introduces the subjective dimension of encounter, tethering the gastronomic referent to interpersonal agency. Even when a fully verbal clause appears (*Acceleriamo sulle piste come segugi cacciatori*), the simile initiates an associative chain governed by a cognitive metaphor of memory (*gli odori scavano nella memoria...chiamano altri a raccolta*), which explicates the excerpt's operational principle: odours trigger a series of recollections, enabling instantaneous shifts across distant locales (*Paris/Sarajevo/Lisbon*) via non-chronological but associative logic. From this perspective, the dishes described function as markers, connecting lexical features (foreignisms and toponyms) and syntactic structures (parataxis and nominalisation) with the geography and (olfactory) memory of places. The impression is of a writing that, rather than representing the journey, reproduces its cognitive mechanics: the trajectory organises itself

¹¹ On food as a language and experience of contact between different cultures in travel narratives, see, among others, Montanari, 2002 and Ricorda, 2015.

syntactically as a sequence of waypoints, each stabilised by a lexical node rendering it recognisable and retrievable.

Taking up, perhaps unduly, the reflection on the concept of *flânerie* in the third millennium¹², we could consider Rumiz's bicycle journey through Slovenia and Austria to be that of a *cyclo-flâneur* who lets himself be guided by the elements that ignite his senses: smells, noises, visions, or that express the essence of the places visited. The unhurried cycling, the slow pace (typical of the European tradition) allows the author to meditate on cultural and linguistic aspects, to trace the authenticity hidden beneath the spasmodic dynamism and frenetic culture often associated with southern Europe and Italy.

1.2 Trieste-Kiev in treno (*L'uomo davanti a me è un ruteno*).

The second story is the result of two different journeys made in the winter of 1999¹³: Rumiz describes a journey lasting more than six days that winds its way from Trieste, through the Sava valley (on the border between Slovenia, Austria and Italy) and Croatia (Cakocev [sic], ÈO, p. 34), touches stations in numerous villages in Hungary (Murakeresztúr, ÈO, p. 35; Budapest, ÈO, p. 36; Szolnok, ÈO, p. 40; Debrecen, ÈO, p. 41; Záhony, ÈO, p. 43; Chop, ÈO, p. 46), «perfora il gomito dei Carpazi» (ÈO, p. 50) to arrive in Ukraine and, after passing through the cities of Leopoli (ÈO, p. 50), Ternopil' (ÈO, p. 51), Torbiv (ÈO, p. 54), Vasilkiv (ÈO, p. 55), finally arriving at the capital Kiev (ÈO, p. 56), the destination of the journey.

Rumiz deploys a wide and varied system of rhetorical figures that allow him to sketch the geopolitical context of the places described. This narrative mode is evident from the very first pages, where a series of personifications relating to the different geopolitical realities of post-war Eastern Europe and the Balkans are piled up: «Dopo la guerra dei Balcani, in questo spazio in bilico tra *Eurolandia che nasce, la Jugoslavia estinta e l'Urss che non c'è più, l'unica superstite sembra questa cara, vecchia linea asburgica*». (ÈO, p. 32). The birth of the European Union, ironically connoted by the lexical use of the journalistic term *Eurolandia*, contrasts with the definitive disappearance of Yugoslavia (*estinta*) and the USSR (*che non c'è più*), which had previously defined the geopolitical order of the region.

Rumiz's descriptive and «almost telegraphic» (Czorycki, 2014, p. 156) style is brought to life through figurative procedures, drawn from semantic fields of everyday life or the rural world, reproduced through short, but icastic, phrases or sentences. Particularly distinctive, for instance, is the depiction of Slovenia: «È vero, la Slovenia *ha la forma di una grassa gallina. E la Drava ne segna il collo*». (ÈO, p. 33); «Ma nella semioscurità appare solo la forma strana del paese. *Non è più una gallina. È un alligatore. Con le mascelle spalancate sulla Bosnia*» (ÈO, p. 34). The zoomorphic metaphor for Slovenia (*grassa gallina*) humanises the territory, while the image of the Drava (*ne segna il collo*) fulfils a dual function: the river is identified now geographically, as an element that characterises the morphology of the territory, and now politically, as a border sign.

The resumption and reformulation of the metaphor a few pages further on, in which Slovenia changes its shape from a fat hen into an alligator (with jaws wide open on Bosnia), allows Rumiz to linguistically represent the dynamism of geographical perception, thus suggesting to the reader how the changing landscape can correspond to historical-political transformations linked to the territory.

In this geographical space, marked by transition and fragmentation, the dear, old Habsburg [railway] line (so first «tortuoso binario asburgico», ÈO, p. 30) represents a historical memory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, surviving the radical transformations of the 20th century.

12 On this subject, see Corbisiero, 2021 and, more generally, the special issue devoted to *flânerie* in *Fuoriluogo, Journal of Sociology of Territory, Tourism, Technology*, Special Issue *Flânerie*, Vol. 10, N. 2/2021 Anno V.

13 Only the first part (the one to the Ukrainian border) was recounted in Trieste's «Il Piccolo» in February of the same year (ÈO, p. 198). The narration of another train journey is, in 2009, *L'Italia in seconda classe* in the company of a mysterious «compagno 740» (who will turn out to be the writer Marco Paolini).

The adjective *asburgico*, implying the solidity of the Empire, also reappears later in the story: «Eppure, che strano. Anche qui, *all'ultima frontiera*, nei lunghi inverni dell'Altro Mondo [...], *ti senti a casa*. Avverti qualcosa che ti appartiene. *Che cosa?* Un triestino risponderebbe subito: l'essere alla *periferia di un Impero che non c'è più, quello asburgico*. Ma questo imprinting, *ti chiedi, come ha fatto a sopravvivere* al grande gelo dei regimi?» (ÈO, p. 48). Through colloquial language, at times interspersed with a series of rhetorical questions (*Che cosa? Come ha fatto a sopravvivere...?*), oxymoronic sentences (*all'ultima frontiera...ti senti a casa*) Rumiz stimulates the reader - also through the allocutive of the second person singular (*avverti qualcosa che ti appartiene... ti chiedi*) - to establish relations between identity, historical memory and the political transformation of the places observed.

Rumiz's journey is not an itinerary constructed solely through images, but also involves other senses:

«Poche poltrone più in là, voci familiari emergono dal borbottio ostrogoto. Due veneti. Tutto come da copione. Parlano di schei e, come secondo argomento, di tose. Sembrano indifferenti al paesaggio, la loro vita è un triangolo di dollari, fiorini e lire. Sono tecnici Benetton e vanno a Nagyálló, ai confini di Ucraina e Romania, dove l'uomo dei pullover ha spostato il grosso della produzione. Benetton fa rima con paròn, e per lui gli operai veneti costano troppo. Così 'delocalizza', ovvero trasloca: in Ungheria, dove per un buon tecnico seicentomila lire a netto sono una pacchia» (ÈO, p. 39).

The acoustic surfacing of regional Venetian terms (*schei* 'money'; *tose*, 'girls, women') in the indistinct buzz (*borbottio ostrogoto*) of the train allows the author to introduce, albeit veiled, a critique of the negative aspects of the globalised market economy, through an ironic and, at times, colloquial and familiar language. While the use of the diatopically marked element makes the conversation between the two characters more authentic, the rhyming wordplay between *Benetton* and *paròn* emphasises the parallel between the figure of the traditional master and that of the owner of a multinational company. *L'uomo dei pullover* appears earlier in the text, where, with a skilful cataphoric reference, Rumiz indicates, at the beginning of the story, the place where «finirà il nostro viaggio»: Záhony, «un villaggio sperduto [...] dove presto finirà l'Unione Europea. *Benetton è già lì a produrre braghe di tela*» (ÈO, p. 31). A veiled criticism of the exploitation of cheap labour (in Ukraine) is once again proposed through the use of colloquial and familiar language, as well as diatopically interfered with: the nominal phrase *braghe di tela* (cloth trousers) is not accidental, but refers to the Paduan proverbial expression *rimanere in braghe di tela*, i.e. 'to remain without economic resources' (GRADIT, s.v.).

As Czorycki (2014, p. 151) notes, however, Rumiz addresses Ukraine's problems in a nuanced manner, not discussing the social, cultural or economic context of the country, nor referring to specific historical facts that have determined the current situation. Thus, we could say that the condition of the Ruthenians, and of the Ruthenian who gives rise to the title of the story, is indeed taken into consideration (even explaining the geopolitical meaning of the term 'Ruthenian'), but at the same time lightly sketched, almost with a macchiattish trait:

«L'uomo davanti a me è un ruteno. Un mantice che russa in modo fenomenale [...]. Si è cucito sul cappotto lo stemma del suo paese-che-non-c'è [...]. Di tutti i luoghi con il nome da operetta [...], la Rutenia è, se così si può dire, il più perfetto. Gli abitanti sono detti anche 'russini' o 'russi subcarpatici'. Sono ex boscaioli e vivono in sei nazioni: Slovacchia, Polonia, Ucraina, Romania, Ungheria e Serbia. Appartengono a tutti questi paesi e contemporaneamente a nessuno di essi. Il nostro viene da Uzhorod. Mi spiega con irruenza che la sua gente vuole un territorio sovrano autonomo [...]. Ma quando gli chiedo di definire quel territorio, non sa rispondere». (ÈO, p. 49).

Once again the rhetorical expedient allows the author to quickly describe what should be the protagonist of the story (but in fact is not): the visual and sound metaphor (*mantice che russa*) is emphasised by hyperbolic adjectives (*fenomenale*) and adjectival phrases with an ironic conno-

tation by locutions with an adjectival function bearing ironic connotations (*che-non-c'è, da operetta*). To emphasise the complexity of the political and cultural identities of the places visited, Rumiz resorts to language that captures the continuous tension between presence and absence: *Appartengono a tutti...e contemporaneamente a nessuno...; gli chiedo di definire quel territorio, non sa rispondere*.

The story concludes by emphasising the importance of travel as a means of gaining knowledge and first-hand understanding of the contemporary world (Czorycki, 2014, p. 156):

«Il viaggio può salvarci. Il nomadismo lento, lo sguardo diagonale dal finestrino, il dialogo vis-à-vis nello scompartimento, l'ascolto di voci deboli, la fatica, la condivisione. Non abbiamo alternative per orientarci fra queste montagne di impressioni, scariche emozionali, stati d'animo, frammenti di voci, schegge di immagini da luoghi troppo piccoli, oppure, all'estremo opposto, conversazioni troppo grandi, scontri di opinioni in libertà nel cielo rarefatto dei talk show. Per non isolarci nell'afasia, schiacciati fra localismi zoppi e pestilenze globali, chiusura nelle piccole patrie e nostalgie di imperi impossibili» (ÈO, p. 58)

This is perhaps one of the focal points of the work: the author illustrates what we could call "the Rumizian manifesto of slow nomadism". In this passage, Rumiz employs a markedly journalistic register, underpinned by a syntactic architecture favouring fragmentation and rhythmic emphasis. This is particularly evident in the syncopated rhythm of the passage, which results from a range of procedures: the juxtaposition of nominal elements and the use of subordinate clauses separated by full stops (the final proposition *Per non isolarci nell'afasia...* which makes explicit the purpose of slow nomadism). The initial segment features paratactic juxtaposition of nominal clauses, serially accumulated as enumerative items cataloguing practices, perceptual postures, and values attendant to travel. The concluding subordinate clause (*Per non isolarci nell'afasia*), and ensuing past participle (*schiacciati*), reprise this nominal cadence (*fra localismi zoppi e pestilenze globali, chiusura nelle piccole patrie e nostalgie di imperi impossibili*), reconfiguring it argumentatively to foreground the ethical-social telos of slow nomadism.

At the lexical level, the brilliant discourse, hallmark of journalistic idiom¹⁴, is achieved through various expedients: the juxtaposition of visual (*sguardo diagonale, schegge di immagini*) and auditory (*frammenti di voci, ascolto di voci deboli*) images; the antithesis between polar concepts (*luoghi troppo piccoli vs. conversazioni troppo grandi; il dialogo vis-à-vis vs il cielo rarefatto dei talk show*); the use of evocative-poetic lexicon (*nomadismo lento, localismi zoppi*) co-occurring with concrete-realistic terms (*fatica, condivisione*). Overall, the juxtaposition of nominal constructs and lexical opposition between dialogic proximity and medial amplification define the passage's stylistic signature: a prose that, while communicatively trenchant, assumes a programmatic, quasi-aphoristic function, rendering intellectual reflection also a linguistic experience for the reader.

1.3 Berlino-Istanbul in treno (*Chiamiamolo Oriente*)

It is perhaps no coincidence that Rumiz places this travel narrative, from Berlin to Istanbul, at the centre of his collection, almost reflecting, and at the same time reinforcing, the statement contained in the title of the work itself (*È Oriente...Chiamiamolo Oriente*). The opening *Metti una sera d'inverno a Berlino...* resonates, even in its syllabic count, with *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* by Italo Calvino, and, as unlikely as the parallel may seem, the train that the Rumiz-traveller chooses (*Mi serve un treno*) is connected to the very place (a railway station) where Calvino's novel begins. In his careful selection of transportation, Rumiz casually references the names of trains and railways which evoke in the reader images of journeys by rail: «*Mi serve il treno. Ma non il calduccio di un Intercity: sarebbe come giudicare l'Italia dal Pendolino. Devo*

¹⁴ On these aspects of journalistic language, see Dardano, 1986 and Bonomi, 2002.

imbarcarmi su linee minori, sapendo che d'inverno il cuore del continente può diventare anche una *Transiberiana*, che è finito il tempo dell'*Orient Express*...» (ÈO, p. 59).

Having defined the destination (Istanbul) and established the means (the train), the journey begins in the city of Berlin. The description of the capital's neighbourhoods and streets allows us to grasp once again one of the keys to reading Rumizian narrative: the perspective offered to the reader is in fact never solely visual, but involves perception through the other senses¹⁵, allowing for a sensorial, and at times memorable, involvement of the traveller and the reader in the places described. Thus Berlin's Kreuzberg district is characterised by the smell of Middle Eastern food («il profumo di kebab dei ristoranti turchi di Kreuzberg [...]». Sei già a Istanbul, Baghdad», ÈO, p. 61), while the quick sketch of the mythical terminus railway station («mitico capolinea») on Friedrichstrasse, proposes the auditory and linguistic perception of different ways of speaking: «tedesco classico a oriente, tedesco americanizzato dall'altra», ÈO, p. 62).

The observation of linguistic variation between different axes (i.e., diatopical variation, *a oriente... dall'altra*; diaphasic and diastratic variation, *classico... americanizzato*) allows Rumiz to recall in the reader the historical memory of one of the main routes, separated by the Berlin Wall. Even in the short passage describing Ústí nad Labem (a Czech town a few kilometres from the German border), the author uses different sensory perceptions to involve the reader in the narrative and induce him to reflect on the country's unfortunate transformation (Czorycki, 2014, p. 152): the acoustic disturbance caused by the name of the city («un suono sinistro. È come se dicesse: prova a scendere qui, straniero, dove non scenderebbe nessuno», ÈO, p. 64) is connected to the combination of unpleasant smells («odore forte di gomma americana e zuppa troppo grassa, socialismo e mercato» ÈO, p. 64). Further unedifying descriptive elements (a square with bad acquaintances; a wall built around the nomad camp; a swindling taxi driver) ironically contrast with the fake tour-guide recommendation: «Da vedere assolutamente» (ÈO, p. 64).

Each stage of the journey - from Berlin («non luogo», ÈO, p. 60) to Istanbul (ÈO, p. 87), through Ústí nad Labem (ÈO, p. 64) and Prague (ÈO, p. 64-66), past the cities of Olomouc (ÈO, pp. 66-68) and Krakow (ÈO, p. 69), via Slovakia (ÈO, pp. 71-74), Hungary (ÈO, p. 75) and Romania (ÈO, p. 75 ff.) - contributes to the discovery of a diverse Europe, linked by a common history, but separated internally by geopolitical conflicts and fragmentation. In attempting to portray this situation, Rumiz resorts to metaphors that jumble together in a short stretch: «L'Europa è un arcipelago [...]. Uno stomaco capace di digerire popoli e culture, senza farne un meticcio informe» (ÈO, p. 65).

In the stop in Prague, and in the memory of a conversation with the Czech president Václav Havel, Rumiz first of all introduces the idea of Europe as the periphery of the world («l'Europa tutta era una periferia, un fantastico *finis Terrae*», ÈO, p. 65), underpinning his reasoning with the linguistic observation on the etymology of the toponym Europa: «l'accadico Erebu, che vuol dire 'calar del sole'» (ÈO, p. 65). Through an agitated inner dialogue, which stems from the question *Dov'è l'Europa* (ÈO, p. 66), the author proposes a reformulation of the European border, shifting it eastwards: se davvero l'Europa è il luogo in cui i popoli si addensano allora anche i muezzin di Sarajevo sono Europa, anche i monasteri sui monti della Moldavia, anche i villaggi sperduti degli ebrei bielorussi, anche il fulvo microcosmo oltre i Tatra. Anche Istanbul» (ÈO, p. 66).

The dense deductive argumentation takes shape through a complex real conditional construction (*se l'Europa è il luogo...anche i muezzin... sono Europa*) and extends through an anaphoric procedure (*anche i...*) that emphasises the generic nominal heads of the enumerative series (*muezzin, monasteri, villaggi*), enacting a progressively widening inclusivity, to culminate in the toponym *Istanbul*, positioned as both the reasoning's telic apex and the journey's ultimate way-point.

¹⁵ See above, § 1.2.

And so, having arrived in Istanbul, at the port of Karaköy («ultima corsa ai traghetti per l'altra sponda» ÈO, p. 88) Rumiz offers a concrete vision that is intertwined with an abstract reflection, nevralgic for the entire work: «*Guardi la notte che viene dall'Asia e resti inchiodato sulla riva, incapace di partire per quell'Altrove così a portata di mano. Allora pensi che le tue novantacinque ore di treno, i controlli di confine, le attese e le coincidenze mancate nella tormenta sono servite solo a capire tutto questo. Ma sì, chiamiamolo Oriente*» (ÈO, p. 88).

The deployment of the second-person singular present indicative (with direct address), embedded in a complex sentence (with final and objective clauses), renders the scene vivid, directly implicating the reader in the narrator's experiential immediacy. The effect of accumulation brought about by the jumbling of successive nominal elements (*ore di treno, controlli, attese, coincidenze*) render, lexically and semantically, the fatigue and complexity of the journey leading to the final reflection. In the conclusion (*Ma sì, chiamiamolo Oriente*) - with its disenchanting, almost nostalgic tone - there is, on the one hand, the resumption of the cataphoric element of the previous sentence (*tutto questo*) and, on the other hand, the reference to the title of the entire work, which seems to imply perhaps a question (È Oriente vs È Oriente?). In this sense, Rumiz seems to take into account the arbitrariness and relativity of a definition, that of "Orient" (on which he has often wondered), which can be interpreted, in certain cases, as a subjective and cultural construction, rather than a mere geographical entity.

1.4 Il Danubio su chiatte (Ljubo è un battelliere)

Written in the spring of 2000, the unpublished story - even if, as the author himself states, there are references to places and situations from other reports (ÈO, p. 198) - proposes the narration of a journey on the Danube towards the border between Serbia and Romania, on a merchant barge. In this story, the title character appears from the first pages: «Il barcaiolo aspetta fumando in cima a un moletto. *'Dobra večer'*, buona sera. È serbo il nostro uomo. Si chiama Ljubomir, e non fa solo il battelliere come suo padre» perché «vive anche di piccolo contrabbando» (ÈO, p. 90). The inversion of the syntactic structure, in which the predicative adjective (è serbo) precedes the subject of the sentence (*il nostro uomo*), allows the emphasis to be placed on the nationality rather than the subject itself. The greeting in the original language (with translation) allows the author, as in other parts of the work, to create a sound setting, as well as a visual one, thus completely immersing the reader in the odeporic narration. Even the means of transport has a name (*Drina, the boat*, ÈO, p. 91) and so do other boats encountered along the way: «la barca che passa si chiama *Szabadság*, libertà» (ÈO, p. 100).

The undisputed protagonist of the reportage is the Danube, which from being «fiume d'Europa» in the incipit (ÈO, p. 89) shortly afterwards becomes «Povero fiume» (ÈO, p. 97) because it is only seen «in occasione di catastrofi». For Rumiz, the Danube plays several roles: forge of images («mi offre sempre immagini straordinarie», ÈO, p. 97); detector of geopolitical boundaries («il fiume inventa un'altra metafora [...] sembra voglia sbugiardare apposta ogni chilometro di quel confine sanguinosamente ristabilito fra Serbia e Croazia» (ÈO, p. 101); a historical memory that challenges the traditional narratives of a "civilised" and "noble" Europe, as opposed to a more turbulent South-East: «Ma il Danubio ha la memoria lunga, e dice anche il contrario. Troppo spesso il male è venuto dalla parte 'nobile' d'Europa. Mauthausen è sul Danubio austriaco, Dachau in Baviera [...]. Oggi è proprio qui, a Sudest, in Vojvodina, che resiste la società multiculturale. Nonostante le guerre, la Serbia resta un paese con l'anima aperta, rispetto a certa Mitteleuropa subalpina» (ÈO, p. 103).

Beyond the geopolitical suggestions and reflections, from a metatextual point of view this story is particularly interesting because it reveals the author's writing process. One can almost see Rumiz during his journey, making notes in a notebook, in which historical knowledge («Poco più in là due ragazzi tubano su una panchina vegliati dalla statua in bronzo di Imre Nagy, impiccato

dopo la sfida al Cremlino del '56», ÈO, p. 93) and personal memories, steeped in film culture (come nel finale di *Underground...* Istvan Szabo regista di *Mephisto* e *Sonnenschein*, ÈO, p. 92). However, in addition to presenting himself as a careful observer of the situations described, Rumiz reveals himself, as in other parts of the collection, as a careful observer of linguistic phenomena. Through a dry prose, made up of short and nominal phrases, enumerations and metaphorical procedures, the author illustrates some names attributed to the Danube in different locations, intertwining the reasoning on morphological and phonetic aspects with rapid geo-historical notations. The reflection begins by quoting some verses dedicated to the Danube (*Doana mei, Doana mei* [...]). *Doana* è il Danubio, ÈO, p. 103) and continues, extending also to Italy:

«'Danubio' non va; è parola cupa. In tedesco è meglio: si dice 'die Donau', al femminile, un nome che aderisce perfettamente al suo grembo largo e quieto. Ma *Doana* è meglio ancora. [...]. Fiume femmina, come gli affluenti maggiori [...]. 'Dòo-na' dicono i russi del Don. E prolungano il suono di quel bisillabo materno [...]. In Italia, prima del secolo infame, tanti fiumi si declinavano al femminile. Anche il Piave. Si chiamava la Piave, prima di essere consacrato alla patria, svuotato da acquedotti, violentato da guerre assassine¹⁶» (ÈO, p.104).

The reasoning about the morphology of the river's name thus becomes a broader reflection on the relationship between language and culture. The observation about the change in grammatical gender for the Piave («Anche il Piave. Si chiamava *la* Piave») also seems to reflect the linguistic shift towards a new ideological function in the aftermath of the First World War: from natural entity to patriotic symbol.

Later on, Rumiz again takes the opportunity to interweave the changing vision of the places along the river with a reflection on the phonosymbolic aspects of toponymy:

«Nella gola dei Carpazi, intanto, tacciono i nomi di luogo pieni di vento, i paesi in campo aperto con le desinenze in 'ovo', 'evo', 'ova': Stara Pazova, Smederevo, Pančevo, Opovo. Comincia, al lor posto, un allineamento di villaggi solitari dal nome secco come una fucilata del cecchino: Gradište, Golubac, Milanovac, Golubnje. In un fiume la voce dei luoghi cambia continuamente. Millecinquecento chilometri a monte [...], alle desinenze fangose in 'igen', 'hausen', 'wangen', 'felden', succedono quelle ridenti e monosillabiche della bassa Baviera: 'hut', 'au', 'fing' e 'heim'» (ÈO, pp. 125-126).

In the first series of place names (*Stara Pazova, Smederevo, Pančevo, Opovo*), the repetition of open vowels (o, e) the vowels e and o — which in their possible phonetic realisations are not closed — emphasises the metaphor *pieni di vento*, associating the sounds with wide open spaces; in the second series (*Gradište, Golubac, Milanovac, Golubnje*), the repetition of the velar occlusive [g], together with the simile *come una fucilata del cecchino*, reinforces the idea of isolation (*villaggi solitari*), almost sudden and sporadic apparitions to the eyes of the navigator on the Danube. With the third series of toponymic endings, typically Germanic (*igen, hausen, wangen, felden*), in which the alternation of alveolar nasal [n] and lateral [l] phonemes can be detected, the sound of the toponyms seems to be associated with a tactile quality (*desinenze fangose*). Finally, we conclude with a review of the monosyllables of Lower Bavaria, defined by Rumiz as «ridenti».

The names of places therefore change along the river: the language itself seems to transform, with a sort of phonetic-geographical gradient, depending on the region, also reflecting the ethnic and historical diversity of the populations along the course of the Danube. The endings are therefore no longer just grammatical structures, but evoke landscapes, atmospheres and even historical events. The use of evocative images and the musicality of the language transform this reflection into a sensory journey through words.

¹⁶ The italics and quotes are by Rumiz.

1.5 Regioni adriatiche in auto (Capolinea Bisanzio)

The analysis proposed by Rumiz, in the story entitled *Capolinea Bisanzio*, offers a reflection on the historical and symbolic significance of the Adriatic regions. Although the journey takes place by car, the author has the opportunity and time to dwell on careful descriptions and reflections on the places visited: «anche l'automobile, mezzo normalmente detestabile, ti aiuta a scoprire il piacere della lentezza, la libertà del contatto con il territorio» (ÈO, p.138).

In *Capolinea Bisanzio*, Rumiz takes the opportunity to criticise the "tyrrhenocentric" perspective (ÈO, p.136) of contemporary Italy, which has led to a perception of the Adriatic no longer as «mare nostrum» (ÈO, pp. 134, 135), but as a «mare perduto» (ÈO, p. 136), forgetting the ancient role of Venice and its natural openness towards the East. Venice's "universality", its cultural and commercial cosmopolitanism, despite its ambivalences («talvolta piratesca, ma più spesso garantista», ÈO, p.136) is not just a memory of the past, but survives linguistically, as the author observes, in toponymy and monumental onomasty: «Il segno di quell'*universalità* è ancora qui, lo leggi nella topografia ai piedi del campanile, è scritto sulla Riva degli Schiavoni, nelle pietre del Ghetto, nel Fondaco dei Turchi, o nell'Isola degli Armeni» (ÈO, p. 136).

Rumiz also emphasises Venice's centrality through the use of regional and local linguistic variety that permeates the narrative. It appears at the beginning with proverbial phrases that connote the speech of some characters («'xe come i fioi che va a ciuciar el late', sono come i bambini che succhiano il latte», ÈO, p. 137). It is also found embedded in the description of the landscape and the atmosphere in evocative phrases such as «Ed è fantastica la prima luce d'Oriente sul Delta, dove l'acqua del Po diventa '*mar grandò*'» (ÈO, p. 138): the Venetian expression (*mar grandò*, open sea) reinforces the cultural identity of the story and makes the landscape even more vivid and authentic.

The local dimension then acts as a counterpart to the representation of "fortress Europe" in a geographical and cultural sense:

«Dopo la tempesta, dai colli dell'Anconitano vedi la Dalmazia e, dietro la linea di costa, il profilo delle Alpi Dinariche, spina dorsale dei Balcani. Otto anni fa [rispetto al 1999], la guerra che chiude il millennio in Europa è cominciata lassù, in un posto chiamato Krajina, cioè 'terra di confine'. 'Uno non ci pensa [...] ma la parola Marche vuol dire la stessa cosa. Quella oltremare era frontiera armata degli Asburgo; questa frontiera carolingia". Entrambe, margine meridionale di un impero» (ÈO, p. 143).

From the representation of a real landscape (the Dalmatian coast seen from the Marche region), through an evocative image (dopo la tempesta, dai colli dell'Anconitano vedi la Dalmazia), Rumiz arrives at a broader reflection, of a historical-linguistic nature. The analogy of meaning, traced in the etymology of the place names *Krajina* and *Marche* (*Krajina*, '*terra di confine*' [...] *Marche vuol dire la stessa cosa*), subsequently taken up by a specular morphosyntactic structure (the opposition *quella* vs *questa*), softened by a colloquial tone (*Uno non ci pensa*), allows the reader to grasp the parallelism between the two border territories, connecting the Balkan context to the Italian one, then sealed by the concluding sentence (*Entrambe, margine meridionale di un impero*).

The linguistic reflection proposed by the author doesn't stop there, however, and goes further: «*Vallo a dire al soldato John che la costa italiana è piena d'Oriente. A cominciare dai santi: Nicola, Marco, Ciriaco, Teodoro. Tutti bizantini*» (ÈO, pp. 143-144). The same procedure can be seen in the colloquial expression (*Vallo a dire...*) which introduces linguistic reasoning on toponymy and onomastics. If soldato John, evoking the idea of an American soldier, through the mechanism of antonomasia, alludes to the West (which ignores its own roots), the list of saints' names (with reference to the origin of these names) highlights the connection between Italian coast and the Byzantine world. The statement *la costa italiana è piena d'Oriente* overturns the widespread idea of Italy as being exclusively part of the West, emphasising instead its Eastern roots. Through

linguistic demonstrations, tempered by colloquial expressions, Rumiz thus proposes the idea of the Adriatic, of the eastern border and of the historical places of Puglia and Friuli as symbolic spaces where past, present and future meet.

1.6 *Il profondo Nordest in bici (Il 'frico' e la 'jota')*

At the end of the harvest, Rumiz embarks on another cycling trip (from Trieste to Gavia), a slow journey through the Italian Northeast (ÈO, p. 156). It is an ideal return home, a chance to explore familiar places: the reader is reassured at the end of the book, and brought back to the "hearth and home". In this story, which is born from a «collage di quattro diverse pedalate» (ÈO, p. 198), Rumiz, while not abandoning the neo-standard Italian - characterised, on a syntactic level, by a rapid and dry style - disseminates more local and regional traits. The title itself refers to, as the author explains, «due piatti identitari locali: il *frico* e la *jota*, una specie di formaggio padellato il primo, una micidiale zuppa di crauti acidi la seconda»¹⁷ (ÈO, p. 164).

Travelling slowly by bike allows you to reflect on the identity of Friuli and its relationship with modernity, highlighting a contrast between tradition and the dynamics of globalisation.

«Il Friuli non ha idee di sviluppo e nemmeno miti credibili. Come il Veneto, anche qui l'identità è qualcosa che si coltiva nel chiuso del tinello, davanti al fogolar e al tajut, il focolare e il bicchiere di vino. L'identità aderisce a simboli morti, a reperti fossili come la pialla, la gerla, il bue, in cui i giovani non possono riconoscersi. Il mondo dei 'tavernicoli', raccontato da Tim Parks. 'I friulani [...] sono tecnicamente bravissimi, navigano su Internet, parlano inglese, delocalizzano alla perfezione. Insomma: si adattano al mondo. Ma quando tornano al fogolar non trovano il mondo nel loro microcosmo'» (ÈO, p. 158).

In his parallelism with the Veneto region, Rumiz allows the reader to understand that, similarly to other Italian regions, Friulian identity is linked to traditions that are now closed and perhaps outdated. The identity that is cultivated in the privacy of the dining room evokes the image of an intimate and circumscribed microcosm, linguistically reinforced by the use of local terms (*fo-golar*, *tajut*), which recall the rural and domestic life of the Friulian tradition. To emphasise the distance between the generations, Rumiz uses not only «reperti fossili come la pialla, la gerla, il bue», but also the neologism «*tavernicoli*», a portmanteau word composed of *taverna* (semantic hypernym for *frico* and *jota*) and *cavernicoli*, with a diastratic connotation that reveals the perspective of young Friulians. Through a dry and almost photographic style, which captures linguistic images of the past and present, Rumiz seems to suggest that Friuli (and perhaps other Italian regions as well) is in a sort of cultural *impasse*: the region's strong ability to adapt to modern challenges contrasts with its lack of cultural renewal and emphasises the opposition between the microcosm of Friuli and the global macrocosm.

The ironic portrait of the Friulian village of Nimis fits into this perspective:

«Dolce saliscendi fino ai vigneti di Nimis. È un paese senza centro, di contrade disperse e antagoniste fra loro. I suoi abitanti sono friulani speciali [...]. E se una donna di fuori sposa uno di qui, si dice che lui 'l'ha gjolte una di vie dai pais', quasi a riconoscere che qui è frontiera e 'i paesi' sono altrove. La gente ha un fortissimo senso del clan e ha un modo di parlare obliquo, indiretto, allusivo: adattissimo, quindi alla politica. 'Vedremo' vuol dire 'No'. E il prete per invitare i parrocchiani alla messa, non deve suonare la campana. Deve dire che 'l'erba del sagrato è troppo alta'» (ÈO, p. 158).

The brief and incisive syntactic construction, carried out with a rhythmic cadence, seems to recall the tone of oral storytelling. The descriptive text, enlivened by subtly ironic comments (*I suoi abitanti sono friulani speciali*), emphasises the identity of the inhabitants of Nimis, characterised by a strong sense of belonging and a voluntary marginality with respect to the rest of Friuli.

¹⁷ The two dishes that characterise the region, one from Friuli and the other from Trieste, seem to be linked to the places of origin of Rumiz's parents (Veneri, 2012, p. 55).

The paremiological phrasal structure in Friulian dialect (*l'ha cjolte una di vie dai pais*) reveals the sense of cultural identity. There is no lack of linguistic reflections concerning, this time, the way of speaking of the inhabitants of Nimis: the adjectives «obliquo, indiretto, allusivo» reveal to the reader an almost slang-like mode of communication, typical of closed societies, in which language serves to maintain social equilibrium and hierarchies (*adattissimo, quindi alla politica*), and transmit information. A language that replaces the signifiers of a national language with recognisable local signifiers: no longer the sound of the bell to indicate a celebration, but the priest's expression *l'erba del sagrato è troppo alta* with a paremiological function of identity. As Rumiz notes, the common people contribute to the maintenance of the Friulian linguistic variety, «una straordinaria combinazione di conservatività e varietà interne» (ÈO, p. 164), and this merit is due, with a further diastatic connotation, to the subaltern classes: «Se la lingua friulana esiste ed esiste com'è [...] quella lingua lo deve alla gente comune. Lo deve soprattutto [...] 'alle classi subalterne, perché se fosse dipeso dai ricchi e dagli intellettuali sarebbe un tesoro svanito', non alla politica»¹⁸ (ÈO, p. 164).

2. Conclusion

In this work Rumiz proposes a vision that departs from the traditional dichotomies between West *versus* East, presenting instead a fluid and interconnected idea of these geographical and cultural spaces. The idea of the Orient described by Rumiz, and the consequent invitation to rethink European identity in a more open and dynamic way, can be grasped in the etymological gloss of the term "Europe" that the author himself provides: «*Europa vuol dire Terra del Tramonto*, e il tramonto non vuol dire affatto morte: è la benedizione della quiete dopo l'attività del giorno. Perché la nostra nuova 'casa comune' nasce solo sulle monete e ignora il simbolo grandioso che la unifica?» (ÈO, p. 20). In the context of globalisation, Rumiz's odeporic storytelling allows us to observe the reconstruction and redefinition of sociocultural and linguistic identities that are broader and more complex than in the past: their literary representation contributes to a new structure in the identity perspective of individual readers. Bianda (2011, p. 23) had already observed how Rumiz's writing moves between testimony and fiction and the distortion of journalistic language is directed in favour of a language endowed with epic inventiveness.

From a linguistic standpoint, the analysis has shown that Rumiz's prose operates as a form of linguistic cartography, in which spatial experience is indexed and stabilised through dense lexicogeographical anchoring and marked heteroglossia. Toponyms and ononyms, far from serving only an expected referential function, frequently interact with loanwords, foreignisms, and multilingual insertions, producing a controlled "mosaic" effect that encodes cultural contact and positionality. This repertoire is reinforced by recurring metalinguistic passages (etymological notes, remarks on diatopic and diaphasic variation, glosses and translations), which foreground language as a key interpretive instrument of the journey and of the territories crossed.

Equally decisive is the text's syntactic and informational design. Rumiz systematically mobilises parataxis, enumerative accumulation, and nominalisation (often in the form of verbless stretches or compressed nominal sequences) to produce a rapid, segmented rhythm that recalls journalistic briefing while simultaneously acquiring an aphoristic, programmatic force. The alternation between compact nominal series and more articulated hypotactic segments (especially in argumentative or teleological passages) structures the reader's processing of experience as a sequence of perceptual and cognitive "entries," mirroring the progressive unfolding of the itinerary. In this sense, the polyphonic balance noted in the article — between concise narration, sensory notation, and reflective commentary — emerges as a stylistic correlate of Rumiz's «nomadismo lento»: a poetics in which the ethics of low-impact mobility is inseparable from the linguistic forms through which space is made intelligible.

¹⁸ Quotation marks appear in Rumiz.

Our analysis has allowed us to see how the cultural hybridity, peculiar to the lands visited, has a strong effect on the author's narrative style, characterised by linguistic hybridisation and narrative contaminations. Rumiz's narrative style, dry and decisive, reproduces, from a syntactic and rhetorical point of view, peculiar traits of brilliant journalistic discourse (dynamic phrasing and fragmented syntax). The narrative dynamism can also be traced in the lexical and phraseological features (in particular of German and the Balkan languages) embedded in the description of the places explored. To these are added flashes of other languages (such as French or English), spontaneously emerging from the author's profound multilingual competence. The reader thus finds himself in front of a linguistic melting pot, not chaotic, but well balanced on a solid foundation of standard Italian. The rhythm is fast-paced, syncopated at times, but never lacking in clarity, generating a polyphonic interweaving between the tight narration (and meticulous descriptions) and the invitation to that «nomadismo lento» (EO, p. 58) that is the backbone and unifying element among the different stories.

References

- Bianda, E. (2011), M'è dolce questo narrar. Paolo Rumiz e il nuovo feuilleton giornalistico, https://issuu.com/webgolnetwork/docs/005_wn_enricobianda_dolcenarrar
- Bonomi, I. (2002), *L'italiano giornalistico. Dall'inizio del '900 ai quotidiani on line*. Firenze: Cesati.
- Corbisiero, F. (2021), Essere flâneur nel terzo millennio, *Fuoriluogo, Journal of Sociology of Territory, Tourism, Technology*, Special Issue Flânerie, Vol. 10, N. 2/2021 Anno V, <https://doi.org/10.6093/2723-9608/8977>
- Czorycki, M. (2014), The Politics of Travel: Eastern Europe in Paolo Rumiz's *È Oriente*, *Italian studies*, Vol. 69 No. 1, March 2014, pp. 139–157. DOI: 10.1179/0075163413Z.000000000064
- Dardano, M. (1986), *Il linguaggio dei giornali italiani*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Davies, N. (2006). *Europe East and West*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- De Mauro, T. (1999-2000) (edited by), Grande dizionario italiano dell'uso (GRADIT), 7 voll. Torino: UTET.
- Guagnini, E. (2006). "Orizzonti adriatici di viaggiatori e saggisti contemporanei". In Masiello V. (edited by), *Viaggiatori dell'Adriatico. Percorsi di viaggio e scrittura*. (pp. 103-106). Bari: Palomar.
- Guagnini, E. (2009), *Una città d'autore. Trieste attraverso gli scrittori*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis.
- Hammond, A. (2007). Frontier Myths: Travel Writing on Europe's Eastern Border, in Littlejohns, R., Soncini S. (edited by), *Myths of Europe* (pp. 197–211). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Kaplan, R. (1993). *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Magris, C. (1986). *Danubio*. Milano: Garzanti.
- Magris, C. (1992). Limes. Frontiera dell'essere, cerchio che racchiude. Conversazione con Claudio Magris. *Palomar. Quaderni di Porto Venere*, 1, 51–72.
- Marfè, L. (2009). *Oltre la fine dei viaggi. I resoconti dell'altrove nella letteratura contemporanea*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki.
- Marfè, L. (2012). *Sulle strade del viaggio. Nuovi orizzonti tra letteratura e antropologia*. Milano: Mimesis.
- Montanari, M. (edited by) (2002). *Il mondo in cucina: storia, identità, scambi*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Pizzi, K. (2001). *A City in Search of an Author. The Literary Identity of Trieste*. London: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Ricorda, R. (2015), "Il cibo dell'altro". In Camilotti S., Crotti I., Ricorda R. (edited by) *Leggere la lontananza. Immagini dell'altro nella letteratura di viaggio della contemporaneità* (pp. 57-70). Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari.
- Romano, M. (2026). Tra reportage giornalistico e narrazione odepórica: l'ibridismo linguistico di Paolo Rumiz. *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, 73 (2), 305-323. <https://doi.org/10.24425/kn.2026.1586>
- Rumiz, P. (2003). *È Oriente*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Veneri, T. (2012). "I viaggi in Italia di Paolo Rumiz". In Allasia, C., Masoero, M., Nay L. (edited by) *La letteratura degli italiani: Gli italiani della letteratura*. Atti del XV Congresso Nazionale dell'Associazione degli Italianisti Italiani (ADI), (Torino, 14-17 settembre 2011), (pp. 49-59). Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Wolff, L. (1994). *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilisation on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Posillipo, tra fascinazione e privazione. Riflessioni sulla dimensione turistica di un quartiere “esclusivo”²

Introduzione

Secondo diversi autori, nel turismo urbano contemporaneo si va affermando la tendenza a visitare anche le aree della città che si trovano al di fuori degli itinerari tradizionali (Maitland, 2008; Maitland & Newman, 2014; Richards, 2014; Russo & Richards, 2016; Matoga & Pawłowska, 2018; Cocola-Gant *et al.*, 2020; King *et al.*, 2023), secondo una dinamica espansiva che dal centro si propaga verso la periferia attraverso un processo di diffusione spaziale (Hägerstrand, 1967), con un conseguente ampliamento del raggio d'azione dei turisti. Questo fenomeno, definito “*lifeseeing*” (in opposizione a “*sightseeing*”), è motivato dalla ricerca di “generi di vita” urbani ancora autentici ed è documentato da numerosi studi, incluso un recente sondaggio da cui è emerso che, su un campione di 4.000 viaggiatori in Europa e Stati Uniti, il 42% (il 50% tra gli under 40) reputa molto importante “uscire dai sentieri battuti” (Phocuswright, 2022). Chi scrive ha avuto modo di analizzare questa tendenza nella città di Lisbona, dove il quartiere di Alcântara, situato alla periferia occidentale della città, nell'ultimo decennio ha visto crescere costantemente la sua dimensione turistica grazie a un insieme di risorse, perlopiù riferibili al suo retaggio ex-industriale, che vengono percepite dai turisti come inconsuete rispetto alla classica iconografia lisbonese (Zarrilli & Brito, 2017; Zarrilli *et al.*, 2019), il che contribuisce a una più complessa articolazione dell'offerta e a una sia pur limitata redistribuzione dei flussi dalle aree centrali.

La città di Napoli sta registrando da alcuni anni – con l'ovvia battuta di arresto causata dalla pandemia da Covid-19 – una fase fortemente espansiva dei flussi turistici (Esposito, 2023a; Esposito, 2023b; De Falco & Corbino, 2023) per una serie di circostanze concomitanti: la grande visibilità che la città è andata acquisendo grazie a fortunate produzioni televisive e cinematografiche; il crescente interesse del mercato turistico verso destinazioni ulteriori rispetto a quelle tradizionalmente più visitate (come Roma, Venezia e Firenze); la migliorata accessibilità via aereo e via treno; l'oggettiva importanza del suo patrimonio storico, artistico e paesaggistico; il superamento – e l'allontanamento dalla memoria collettiva – di alcuni dei momenti più bui della sua storia recente, come quelli legati alle guerre di camorra e alla “crisi dei rifiuti”. Alla luce di questo sviluppo, è verosimile ipotizzare che anche a Napoli un numero crescente di turisti desideri una maggiore conoscenza della – e una maggiore immersione nella – realtà quotidiana della città da ricercare nelle zone meno interessate dai circuiti turistici tradizionali (Marrone *et al.*, 2024). Il che però non significa necessariamente zone popolari o “caratteristiche”, quali ad esempio la Sanità o i Quartieri Spagnoli (la cui autenticità, a dire il vero, va sfumando di pari passo con l'avanzata del turismo): l'autenticità, vera o presunta che sia, può essere associata anche a quei “generi di vita” borghesi e residenziali che sono tipici di quartieri come Chiaia, Posillipo e Vomero.

In questo articolo ci occuperemo del quartiere semicentrale³ di Posillipo, che possiede una posizione defilata rispetto ai principali circuiti turistici e si connota per essere una zona esclusiva e distante dai luoghi comuni che vengono associati alla città di Napoli. In particolare, dopo averne tratteggiato brevemente le caratteristiche generali, svolgeremo alcune riflessioni sulla dimensione turistica di Posillipo, cercando di capire cosa il quartiere abbia da offrire da questo punto di vista e che ruolo svolga, o possa svolgere, nell'ambito della geografia del turismo di Napoli.

1 Luca Zarrilli, Università “G. d'Annunzio” di Chieti-Pescara, luca.zarrilli@unich.it, ORCID: 0000-0002-6486-2211.

2 Received: 17/07/2024 – Revised: 02/09/2024 – Accepted: 03/02/2025 – Published: 30/09/2026

3 Come da classificazione dell'Agenzia delle Entrate, <https://www1.agenziaentrate.gov.it/servizi/Consultazione/ricerca.htm>.

1. Metodologia

La metodologia adottata è sostanzialmente qualitativa, con un prevalente taglio descrittivo/interpretativo condotto secondo le modalità tipiche della geografia culturale (si veda al riguardo Claval *et al.*, 2005), che vanno dalla reiterata e approfondita ricognizione sul terreno all'analisi delle fonti letterarie⁴, pittoriche⁵, cartografiche e fotografiche sedimentatesi nel corso dei secoli, che di quel paesaggio consentono una ricostruzione in chiave storica.

Importanti spunti di conoscenza per la nostra analisi sono state poi le opere dei tanti autori che hanno fatto di Posillipo un oggetto di studio scientifico, da diversi punti di vista: geologico, per ciò che concerne l'orografia, la conformazione della costa e i movimenti del suolo (Mattei *et al.*, 2019; Aucelli *et al.*, 2018); archeologico, per la presenza di considerevoli resti romani, molti dei quali oggi sommersi, che hanno fatto ipotizzare che in epoca imperiale vi fosse un insediamento costiero di notevoli dimensioni (Gunther, 1993); architettonico, per la numerosità e l'importanza dei suoi palazzi e delle sue ville così come per la varietà degli stili che si sono succeduti, e urbanistico, attraverso il quale ripercorrere le tappe dell'edificazione della collina, che è proceduta per fasi storiche e ha finito per inglobare in un contesto moderno e borghese antichi insediamenti rurali (De Fusco, 1988; Viggiani, 1989; Ferraro, 2016); il che a sua volta ha generato un interesse di tipo sociologico per ciò che riguarda la coesistenza a volte problematica tra classi sociali e ambiti culturali molto diversi fra loro (Pfirsch, 2011; Pfirsch, 2014).

Abbiamo quindi cercato una conferma di massima alle nostre riflessioni ricorrendo ai giudizi espressi dall'utenza nel sito di recensioni turistiche Tripadvisor, selezionando le più significative fra le voci relative a Posillipo e identificando i giudizi positivi e negativi più ricorrenti. Infine, per un necessario inquadramento dimensionale della questione⁶, sono stati utilizzati dati territoriali e demografici (fonte: Comune di Napoli) e sulle strutture ricettive (fonti: Airbnb; Booking).

2. Posillipo: uno sguardo d'insieme

Nel I secolo a.C., per denominare i suoi possedimenti alla Gaiola il cavaliere romano Publio Vedio Pollione⁷ usò il termine greco *Παυσίλυπον* (Pausilypon), che può essere reso in italiano con "pausa dal dolore", "tregua dagli affanni". È un termine che ha goduto di una certa fortuna, visto che ha finito per indicare tutto il promontorio situato nella parte occidentale della città di Napoli, precedentemente denominato Mons Ammenus: solcato da profondi valloni, nel suo punto più elevato esso raggiunge una quota di 150 metri e lambisce il mare con una costa tufacea aspra e frastagliata. Il suo versante orientale affaccia sul Golfo di Napoli, mentre quello occidentale guarda verso il Golfo di Pozzuoli e i Campi Flegrei. Già da questa breve descrizione si comprende come una tale posizione sia in grado di garantire ampie vedute e scorci panoramici da una pluralità di angolazioni.

Posillipo, oltre che una componente essenziale dell'articolata orografia partenopea, è anche un quartiere amministrativo: insieme a Chiaia e San Ferdinando forma la 1^a Municipalità del Comune di Napoli. La sua superficie è di 5,17 km² e la sua popolazione è di circa 23.000 abitanti⁸, poco più del 2,3% del totale napoletano. Va tuttavia sottolineato che i confini naturali e stori-

4 Ci riferiamo alle pagine che tanti autori e viaggiatori del passato hanno dedicato a questo luogo, un brillante compendio delle quali si trova nel saggio di Silvia Croce su Posillipo nella letteratura (Croce, 2013).

5 Nelle sue declinazioni vedutista e paesaggista, ben testimoniata quest'ultima dalla Scuola che proprio da Posillipo prese il nome (Ruotolo, 1993; Mazzetti, 2001; Nappi, 2016; Maglio, 2018).

6 Dati su arrivi e presenze turistiche nelle strutture ricettive, che sarebbero di grande utilità nel quantificare il fenomeno, non sono disponibili a livello di quartiere, e potrebbero essere solo oggetto di stime che esulano dagli scopi di questo lavoro.

7 Uomo ricchissimo e di indole malvagia. Di lui Cicerone disse: «numquam vidi hominem nequiores.» (Del Tufo, 2015, p. 15).

8 L'ultimo dato disponibile nel sito del Comune di Napoli è quello del 2011, pari a 22.856 abitanti, <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/31164>.

co-culturali di Posillipo non coincidono del tutto con quelli amministrativi: curiosamente, ricadono nel quartiere Chiaia alcune strade, o parti di strade, ubicate nelle zone in cui Posillipo si protende verso la collina del Vomero oppure digrada verso Mergellina.

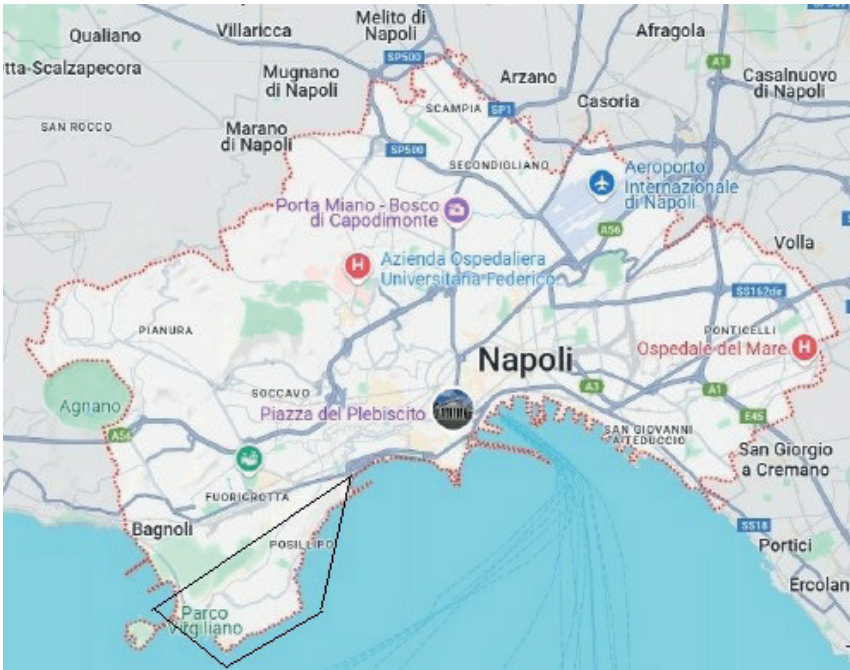


Immagine 1. Posizione di Posillipo
Fonte: nostra elaborazione da Google Maps

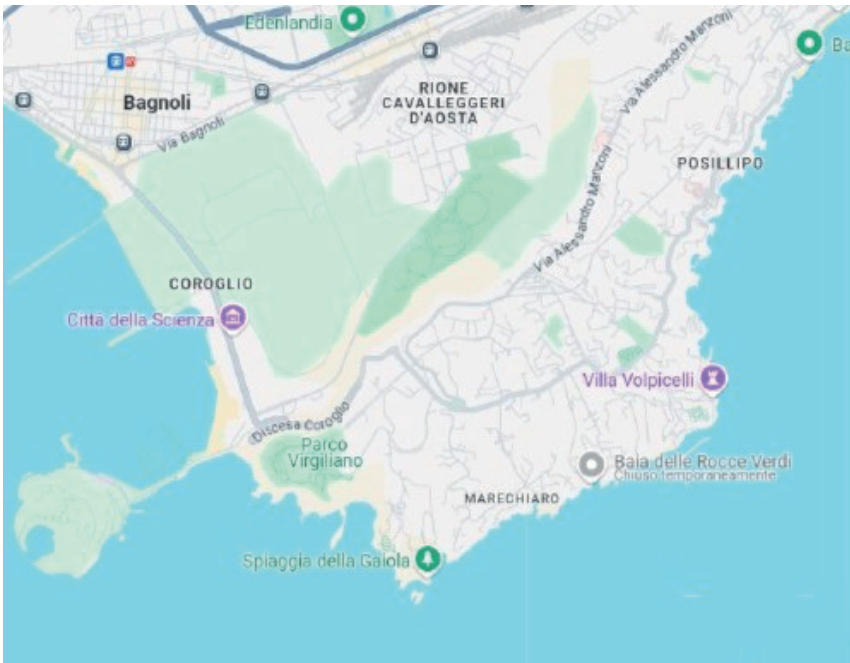


Immagine 2. Posillipo (dettaglio).
Fonte: nostra elaborazione da Google Maps

Definire Posillipo al di là della geografia fisica e di quella amministrativa non è facile. Potrebbe essere descritta innanzitutto come una sorta di microcosmo a sé stante, che nel corso della Storia è stato – e in una certa misura ancora lo è – fisicamente e sociologicamente separato dalle aree centrali di Napoli (De Fusco, 1988, *op. cit.*), pur costituendo una parte integrante e imprescindibile della sua immagine e della sua identità⁹: sosteneva Giuseppe Galasso, nell'*Introduzione* al saggio di Silvia Croce (Croce, 2013), che «dire Posillipo e dire Napoli è tutt'uno; e non è un modo di dire, tanto quel nome evoca la città» (Galasso, 2013, p. 3). Dai Romani Posillipo venne considerata un luogo di delizie dove dedicarsi agli *otia* in residenze sontuose – da cui l'idea di “pausa dal dolore”. Tale venne considerata anche da aristocratici provenienti da ogni parte d'Europa ed esponenti del *jet set* internazionale, che a partire dall'epoca vicereale e fino ai primi decenni del Novecento vi edificarono, o vi acquistarono, prestigiose magioni. Ma è anche un luogo in cui resiste una componente rurale, testimoniata dai numerosi appezzamenti destinati ad usi agricoli (orti urbani, vigneti, vivai) e da ciò che rimane degli antichi “casali”¹⁰ che punteggiavano la collina al servizio dei possidenti e del clero, che a Posillipo aveva molte proprietà. È poi un fondale alquanto scenografico per una variegata rassegna di architetture che vanno dal barocco al razionalismo, passando per il neoclassico, il liberty, il neogotico e l'eclettismo, e un compendio del loro inserimento nell'ambiente e nel paesaggio (Guarino, 2017). Si tratta di un inserimento in molti casi mirabile, in altri meno, soprattutto dagli anni Sessanta in poi, quando la parte alta di Posillipo divenne, insieme al Vomero, una delle aree residenziali preferite dalla borghesia napoletana e conobbe uno sviluppo edilizio che non a torto è stato considerato alla stregua di una “invasione” da parte di «una architettura che più banale non può darsi» (De Fusco, *op. cit.*, p. 11), a nulla valendo il monito lanciato nel 1966 da un gruppo di intellettuali nel *pamphlet* di Italia Nostra intitolato *Documento su Posillipo* (Rea, 1966)¹¹. Fu fonte di ispirazione per pittori come Giacinto Gigante e i suoi sodali della Scuola di Posillipo, che prendendovi le mosse innovarono il paesaggismo ottocentesco; per ricercatori come Robert T. Gunther, che ne restò affascinato e in veste di archeologo, pur essendo uno zoologo, ne volle indagare il passato imperiale (Gunther, 1993, *op. cit.*). Fu infine un luogo d'elezione per tanti viaggiatori e cittadini del mondo che a Posillipo si sentirono a casa, come Johann Wolfgang von Goethe il quale, nel luglio del 1787, ospite del pittore Jacob Philipp Hackert in quella che oggi si chiama Villa Barracco, della residenza posillipina dell'ambasciatore inglese William Douglas Hamilton (ancora oggi nota come Villa Emma Hamilton¹²) – o forse di Posillipo in generale – scrisse: «Non è possibile vedere a questo mondo cosa più splendida» (Goethe, 1980, p. 381); o come Norman Douglas, che nel 1896 acquistò una villa alla Gaiola “a scatola chiusa”¹³ dall'ammiraglio Nelson Foley, cognato di Arthur Conan Doyle che pure vi soggiornò spesso, cercandovi forse spunti narrativi per il suo celebre personaggio letterario.

3. La dimensione turistica di Posillipo

Una dimensione che oggi definiremmo turistica Posillipo l'ha avuta fin dai tempi dei Romani, ma l'ha avuta in epoche in cui il turismo o non esisteva come categoria concettuale, oltre che come settore economico, o era un privilegio riservato a pochi. Ci riferiamo, in buona sostanza, a tipol-

9 Non è forse un caso che il regista Paolo Sorrentino abbia ambientato la nascita di Parthenope, protagonista del film omonimo e metafora della città, a Posillipo, nelle acque antistanti Villa Rocca Matilde, anche nota come Villa Lauro.

10 Borghi rurali ubicati nella parte alta della collina, caratterizzati da attività agricole e artigianali. Il casale Santo Strato (o Santostrato) era il più importante ed è anche quello meglio conservato nel suo impianto originario, che si presenta come un nodo da cui si dipartono varie diramazioni in direzione della costa. Oggi è considerato il “Casale” per antonomasia.

11 A cura di Salvatore Rea, con scritti di Carlo Coen, Silvia Croce, Renato De Fusco, Roberto Pane e Salvatore Rea.

12 Dal nome di Emma Lyon, giovane moglie dell'ambasciatore, che divenne amante di Horatio Nelson.

13 «Tutti ammirano la Baia di Napoli. Non tutti ci comprano una casa e un parco senza nemmeno averli visti. Io l'avevo fatto.» (Douglas, 1983, p. 331). Norman Douglas la denominò “Villa Maya”, nel senso schopenhaueriano di “illusione”: e in effetti se ne stancò presto e la rivendette all'ammiraglio Foley.

ogie di mobilità individuale o di impiego del tempo libero ascrivibili alla “villeggiatura” di epoca romana, al Grand Tour o al turismo elitario dell’Ottocento e della prima metà del Novecento da parte di una ristretta cerchia di altolocati (Mazzetti, 2012; Rocca, 2013; Bagnoli, 2022). Oggetto delle nostre riflessioni è invece la dimensione turistica contemporanea di Posillipo: a parere di chi scrive, un’esperienza di turismo a Napoli che non includa Posillipo non può considerarsi veramente completa, anche per le ragioni sottolineate da Giuseppe Galasso. In effetti, più che su un patrimonio materiale aperto alle visite turistiche, Posillipo fonda la sua attrattività su qualità paesaggistiche, su un contesto naturale e su un’atmosfera di separatezza rispetto a una dimensione tipicamente urbana che la rendono unica nell’ambito partenopeo. Per comprendere quindi cosa Posillipo abbia da offrire al mercato turistico bisogna considerare le sue risorse territoriali e culturali.

3.1 La costa e il mare

La possibilità di fruire del mare nei contesti urbani, soprattutto durante la stagione estiva, rappresenta un crescente richiamo per i turisti, complici anche le temperature sempre più elevate. La costa di Posillipo è un susseguirsi di cale, insenature, grotte, falesie, speroni rocciosi, scogli, piccole spiagge, marine, approdi – vi sono persino due isolotti¹⁴ – ed è punteggiata di palazzi sontuosi e nobiliari edificati tra il Seicento e l’Ottocento, immersi in un verde rigoglioso (e di esclusiva pertinenza). Nonostante l’amenità dei luoghi, solo un giudizio superficiale potrebbe ravvisare in una balneazione di tipo tradizionale il fulcro di un’esperienza turistica posillipina, senza contare la stagionalità a cui è soggetta questa tipologia di turismo: provenendo dalla strada¹⁵, gli accessi al mare sono spesso disagiati o distanti, quasi sempre a pagamento poiché in concessione a stabilimenti balneari o del tutto interdetti al pubblico poiché all’interno di proprietà private o di circoli riservati ai soci (Esposito *et al.*, 2014). Fanno eccezione due spiagge pubbliche di dimensioni molto limitate¹⁶, le piccole marine di Marechiaro e Riva Fiorita¹⁷ e la discesa a mare di San Pietro ai due frati¹⁸. Alla luce di ciò, si comprende facilmente che il modo migliore per fruire della dimensione costiera di Posillipo è dal mare: oltre alla classica nautica da diporto, che però è appannaggio per lo più di residenti, il turista ha a disposizione diverse opzioni, che vanno dall’escursione guidata in barca lungo la costa al noleggio di kayak e sup¹⁹. Il tutto nel rispetto delle limitazioni vigenti nelle zone di riserva generale e integrale dell’Area Marina Protetta del Parco Sommerso di Gaiola, dove nei mesi estivi è possibile partecipare a itinerari con il battello Aquavision (con fondo trasparente), in *snorkeling* o in immersione subacquea per osservare la fauna marina e le vestigia romane sommerse. Da tutto ciò si evince che a Posillipo il contatto con la costa e il mare, quando non è interdetto, o è difficile, o è costoso, o presuppone motivazioni diverse da quella puramente balneare: motivazioni culturali, paesaggistiche, naturalistiche, sportive.

14 Gli isolotti della Gaiola, vicinissimi e collegati fra loro da un ponticello di ferro, che vicende storiche e credenze popolari hanno reso celebri.

15 O meglio dalle strade: ci si riferisce alla Via Posillipo (la più antica delle principali arterie stradali di Posillipo, realizzata da Murat tra il 1812 e il 1815), ai suoi prolungamenti (Via Santo Strato e Discesa Coroglio) e alle loro diramazioni (Via Ferdinando Russo, Via Franco Alfano, Via Marechiaro, Via Tito Lucrezio Caro, Discesa Gaiola).

16 La spiaggia delle Monache, situata a ovest di Palazzo Donn’Anna, e la spiaggia della Gaiola, all’interno dell’Area Marina Protetta del Parco Sommerso di Gaiola. Inoltre, una sentenza del TAR della Campania ha recentemente disposto l’apertura gratuita al pubblico anche della piccolissima spiaggia che si trova a est di Palazzo Donn’Anna.

17 Quest’ultima, in particolare, riscuote un certo interesse presso gli appassionati della serie televisiva *Un posto al sole* in quanto vi è ubicata Villa Volpicelli, uno degli edifici storici più importanti di Posillipo, scelto per rappresentare l’esterno di Palazzo Palladini, ossia il condominio in cui è ambientata la *fiction*: una sorta di embrionale forma di cineturismo.

18 L’accesso alla piccola spiaggia della Baia di San Pietro ai due frati è tuttavia di pertinenza esclusiva degli edifici che vi si affacciano.

19 Sup è l’acronimo di *stand up paddle*, una tavola sulla quale si sta in ginocchio o in piedi e ci si sposta utilizzando una pagaia.

3.2 Le risorse culturali

Se prendiamo in considerazione il turismo culturale di tipo tradizionale – ossia la visita, a pagamento o meno, di edifici e strutture di interesse storico-artistico sulla base di un orario o di un calendario prestabiliti – Posillipo ha da offrire innanzitutto il Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon. Si tratta di un sito archeologico di grande importanza: attraverso la cosiddetta Grotta di Seiano, traforo di epoca romana lungo più di 700 metri che congiunge la piana di Bagnoli alla Gaiola, si accede all'area dove era ubicata la già menzionata residenza di Publio Vedio Pollione. Qui è possibile ammirare, oltre a un suggestivo paesaggio costiero, i resti del Teatro, dell'*Odeion* e di alcune sale di rappresentanza. Purtroppo, il punto di inizio della visita è ubicato nella parte terminale dello scosceso versante occidentale del promontorio, lungo la strada – la Discesa Coroglio – che da Posillipo conduce a Bagnoli e a Pozzuoli, ed è piuttosto difficile da raggiungere con il trasporto pubblico. Turismo organizzato a parte²⁰, solo il turista esperto e fortemente motivato troverà il tempo e il modo di effettuare questa visita, il che, se da un lato limita la numerosità dei visitatori, dall'altro preserva il sito da un'eccessiva pressione antropica. Le altre strutture aperte al pubblico saltuariamente o su prenotazione sono la ottocentesca Villa Rosebery²¹, residenza napoletana della Presidenza della Repubblica; il Mausoleo Schilizzi²², un interessante edificio in stile neo-egizio dedicato ai caduti delle due guerre mondiali; il Museo Archeologico Etrusco "De Feis"²³, che custodisce reperti di varie epoche e di diverse tipologie, in buona parte riferibili alla civiltà etrusca; il Museo Navale dell'Università Parthenope, che ospita una collezione di modelli di navi e di strumenti nautici, ubicati all'interno della ottocentesca Villa Doria d'Angri, uno degli edifici neoclassici più importanti di Napoli²⁴.

3.3 L'offerta ricettiva e la ristorazione

A Posillipo vi è un'unica struttura propriamente alberghiera²⁵, mentre la quasi totalità dell'offerta è costituita da *b&b* e appartamenti a uso turistico. Secondo i dati presenti nel sito di prenotazioni Airbnb²⁶, alla data del 31 marzo 2024 risultano operative a Posillipo solo 132 delle 9.943 strutture napoletane, pari all'1,33% del totale. È evidente che la posizione defilata e la bassa accessibilità non rendono Posillipo una scelta residenziale particolarmente adatta al turista interessato a ottimizzare gli aspetti pratici della sua permanenza in città. Inoltre, quelle di Posillipo sono spesso strutture piuttosto care poiché offrono ospitalità in contesti molto signorili se non addirittura elitari, caratterizzati da grande panoramicità e, in qualche caso, da accessi privati al mare – quindi particolarmente idonei a garantire, anche se per pochi giorni, una "tregua dagli affanni". Ne consegue che, dal punto di vista dell'accoglienza, Posillipo si rivolge principalmente a una particolare categoria di utenti: turisti ad alto reddito, già esperti di Napoli, alla ricerca di un'esperienza caratterizzata da un'atmosfera esclusiva e lontana dal caos del centro cittadino, in prossimità del mare ma pur sempre in ambito urbano, per ottenere la quale sono disposti a spendere cifre che possono superare, nelle strutture più prestigiose e nei periodi di alta stagione, i 400 euro a notte²⁷.

20 Ad esempio le gite scolastiche, che a volte inseriscono il Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon nei loro itinerari.

21 Villa Rosebery può essere visitata solo su prenotazione o in occasione delle Giornate FAI.

22 Realizzato alla fine dell'Ottocento dal banchiere livornese Matteo Schilizzi per ospitarvi le tombe di famiglia, fu acquistato dal Comune di Napoli nel 1921. È chiuso al pubblico dal gennaio 2019 per non meglio specificati motivi di sicurezza, ma è visitabile in occasioni straordinarie come le Giornate FAI.

23 Visitabile su prenotazione.

24 Visitabile su prenotazione nell'ambito di tour guidati dedicati alla visita della Villa e delle sue pertinenze.

25 Il BW Signature Collection Hotel Paradiso, albergo a 4 stelle che dispone di 72 stanze.

26 <https://insideairbnb.com/naples/>, consultato il 5 aprile 2024.

27 Come da simulazione effettuata in data 5 aprile 2024 sul portale di prenotazioni www.booking.com, con riferimento a un pernottamento per 3 persone nella notte tra il 12 e il 13 agosto 2024.

Un accenno va poi fatto alla ristorazione. Sono lontani i tempi de "Lo scoglio di Frisio", storico e rinomato ristorante posillipino attivo tra la metà dell'Ottocento e gli anni Trenta del Novecento, che annoverò fra i suoi avventori, abituali o occasionali, personaggi del calibro di Richard Wagner, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Giosuè Carducci, Giuseppe Garibaldi, lo stesso Norman Douglas. Oggi i ristoranti famosi di Posillipo si segnalano più per la posizione a pochi passi dal mare, o per le ampie terrazze panoramiche, che per il livello e l'originalità dell'offerta culinaria²⁸, con un livello dei prezzi che però è in linea con l'esclusività dell'ubicazione e quindi poco attrattivo per il turista medio, senza contare le difficoltà logistiche dovute alla distanza dal centro. Posillipo, quindi, nonostante la localizzazione costiera e il retaggio (anche) marinaresco²⁹, che rappresenterebbero dei solidi presupposti per un'offerta culinaria basata sui prodotti della pesca, non è un quartiere particolarmente vocato alla ristorazione turistica.

3.4 Modalità di fruizione e mobilità turistica

Alla luce di quanto detto finora, sembrerebbe che Posillipo non presenti grandi attrattive per il turista, a meno di non cimentarsi in un'esperienza costosa o impegnativa, ferme restando le limitazioni alla fruizione di cui si è detto. In realtà esiste un modo semplice, comodo e non eccessivamente caro per avere una idea di massima del quartiere e delle sue caratteristiche generali: gli autobus turistici del genere *hop on hop off* includono Posillipo nei loro itinerari, effettuando soste in alcuni punti panoramici prestabiliti³⁰, dai quali è possibile osservare la Napoli "da cartolina"³¹ con il Vesuvio e il Golfo³², ma anche, affacciandosi dal versante occidentale, Nisida e i Campi Flegrei³³ con Ischia e Procida sullo sfondo. Naturalmente si tratta di un'esperienza fugace, che non consente di comprendere, se non in maniera superficiale, il paesaggio naturale e culturale di Posillipo e la sua evoluzione nel tempo.

Un'esperienza realmente significativa richiede forme di mobilità flessibili e tempi adeguati alla sua complessità, che solo itinerari a piedi³⁴ o in bicicletta – da effettuare in modalità autonoma o attraverso tour guidati – sono in grado di garantire. In questo modo è possibile non solo godere appieno del paesaggio, ma anche avere contezza della stratificazione storica e sociale di Posillipo, ripercorribile attraverso l'evoluzione dell'ambiente costruito, sia esso aristocratico, borghese o popolare, e dell'assetto viario, fatto di poche arterie principali – alcune risalenti all'Ottocento, altre realizzate nel corso del Novecento – che percorrono la collina in senso prevalentemente longitudinale, intersecate da un dedalo di strade minori³⁵, cupe³⁶, rampe e scalinate, che spesso

28 L'unica eccezione è rappresentata da Palazzo Petrucci, primo ristorante napoletano a ricevere una stella Michelin (revocata nell'edizione 2025 della celebre guida). Il ristorante fu fondato nel 2007 nel palazzo omonimo in Piazza San Domenico Maggiore, nel centro storico di Napoli, e nel 2016 si è trasferito nella nuova sede di Via Posillipo, nei pressi di palazzo Donn'Anna.

29 Si pensa alla leggenda di ambito marinaresco degli scogli di San Pietro ai due frati, ma anche alla canzone *Piscatore e Pusilleco*, scritta nel 1925 dal poeta Ernesto Murolo, musicata da Ernesto Tagliaferri e portata al successo nel 1926 dal tenore Tito Schipa. La canzone ispirò anche l'omonimo film del 1954 diretto da Giorgio Capitani. Anche in *Ferito a morte*, il capolavoro di Raffaele La Capria (La Capria, 1973), traspare chiaramente questo retaggio.

30 Il tour *Le vedute del Golfo*, effettuato dalla City Sightseeing Napoli (franchising del noto marchio internazionale), effettua a Posillipo quattro delle undici fermate previste, <https://cdn.city-sightseeing.it/Product/22/ba47fe15-599a-4533-9e3f-27a7c4890372.pdf>.

31 Il Vomero, Chiaia e il Lungomare, con i Castelli Sant'Elmo e dell'Ovo ben visibili.

32 La vista spazia dal Vesuvio alla Penisola sorrentina fino a Capri.

33 Da Bagnoli a Capo Miseno passando per Pozzuoli e Baia.

34 Per raggiungere Posillipo e dare inizio a un itinerario pedonale è possibile utilizzare gli autobus di linea del trasporto pubblico, che collegano il quartiere con Mergellina, Santa Lucia, Fuorigrotta e il Vomero. Vi è poi la Funicolare di Mergellina che raggiunge Via Manzoni, la lunga arteria stradale che percorre tutto il crinale della collina. Posillipo non rientra invece nella rete del trasporto su ferro (metropolitana, ferrovie urbane), anche se in un ipotetico futuro la linea 6 della metropolitana dovrebbe raggiungere Piazza San Luigi e da lì Via Petrarca tramite un ascensore.

35 In qualche caso piuttosto antiche come Via del Marzano, un tempo panoramicissima, oggi in parte soffocata da quella "architettura che più banale non può darsi" di cui si diceva prima.

36 Con il termine "cupa", diffuso nell'Italia centro-meridionale, si intende una strada stretta e buia, spesso scoscesa.

attraversano quel che resta degli antichi insediamenti (i “casali” di cui alla nota 10) e conservano ancora quel carattere popolare e rurale che pervade *Il sangue di San Gennaro* di Sándor Márai (Márai, 2010). Ed è solo percorrendo un itinerario pedonale che si può, ad esempio, individuare la casa dove lo scrittore ungherese visse tra il 1949 e il 1952, ben segnalata da una lapide bilingue che ne ricorda il soggiorno (Papp, 2013), e scoprire i luoghi in cui il suo romanzo è ambientato, oggi certamente molto diversi da allora ma ancora ben identificabili. In qualche caso, questi itinerari pedonali nella Posillipo di ieri e di oggi si configurano come veri e propri trekking urbani (ai confini dell’*urbex*³⁷): ad esempio, per percorrere i 562 gradini di Salita Villanova, il “canalone” seminasco e parzialmente scavato nel tufo che collegava la baia di San Pietro ai due frati con il borgo di Villanova situato sulla sommità della collina, sono necessarie, se non proprio una preparazione atletica, sicuramente una buona forma fisica, calzature adatte e assenza di vertigini. In effetti Posillipo, con il “canalone” ma non solo, è una delle possibili mete per i sempre più numerosi turisti interessati a percorrere itinerari pedonali panoramici al di fuori dei circuiti classici del centro storico. Inoltre, spostarsi a piedi o in bicicletta è di certo la formula più adatta per visitare quello che, a parere di chi scrive, rappresenta un elemento ineludibile dell’esperienza posillipina: la visita del Parco Virgiliano, così denominato in onore del sommo poeta latino che fu un assiduo frequentatore di questi luoghi. Situato in cima all’estremità occidentale del promontorio, e quindi meta ideale di un itinerario pedonale o cicloturistico che parta dal centro di Napoli o da Mergellina, il Parco Virgiliano rappresenta un “polmone verde” e un’oasi di serenità in una città spesso caotica, ma soprattutto si caratterizza per la sua posizione straordinaria: offre infatti un panorama che si dispiega quasi a 360 gradi, abbracciando tanto il Vesuvio e Capri quanto i Campi Flegrei e Ischia, con scorci spettacolari della costa che in quel tratto è a strapiombo sul mare – si scorgono dall’alto, ad esempio, il Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon e la Baia di Trentaremi.

Quanto detto finora risulta coerente con il fatto che la città di Napoli ha conquistato nel 2024 il primato di migliore città europea per quanto riguarda gli spazi all’aperto e le esperienze *outdoor* nell’ambito della classifica annuale delle “Europe’s Best Cities”, redatta dalla società di consulenza internazionale “Resonance”³⁸. Purtroppo però i marciapiedi di Posillipo sono irti di ostacoli e insidie per il pedone (buche, deformazioni dovute alle radici degli alberi, rifiuti di ogni sorta, deiezioni animali, veicoli in sosta vietata, persino rovi), tali da rendere un’esperienza *outdoor*, se non proprio pericolosa, sicuramente molto disagiata (a corroborare l’impressione del turista di stare effettuando un “trekking urbano”). Non migliora la *walkability* il fatto che molti dei pini marittimi che caratterizzavano il paesaggio di Posillipo – e di Napoli in generale³⁹ – siano stati abbattuti perché a rischio di caduta in caso di intemperie, mentre le residue ceppaie, non ancora rimosse, vanno ad aggiungersi al novero degli ostacoli. Va tuttavia riconosciuto all’amministrazione comunale guidata dal sindaco Gaetano Manfredi il merito di avere finalmente preso atto della situazione e di averne avviata la soluzione: nel luglio del 2024 sono iniziati i lavori di riqualificazione delle strade e dei marciapiedi di Posillipo previsti dal *Grande Progetto Posillipo*⁴⁰. Fra gli altri interventi figurano la sostituzione degli alberi abbattuti e persino il restauro del Parco Virgiliano, il tutto da concludersi entro la prima metà del 2026, per un costo totale di 38 milioni di euro.

37 Neologismo formato dalle parole inglesi *urban* ed *exploration*, riferito alla esplorazione di luoghi abbandonati o comunque poco visibili di un ambiente urbano.

38 La classifica è stata redatta sulla scorta di statistiche ufficiali e di una *sentiment analysis* basata sui giudizi espressi da residenti e turisti nei portali di Tripadvisor, Google, Facebook e Instagram, <https://www.worldsbestcities.com/rankings/europes-best-cities/>. Napoli risulta però solo trentasettesima nella classifica del 2024 di GuruWalk, comunità di guide locali che offrono tour pedonali, <https://discover.guruwalk.com/en/top-100-best-walking-cities-2024-the-best-destinations-to-discover-on-foot-this-year/>.

39 Si pensi al valore iconografico – e oleografico – che aveva il “pino di Via Orazio”, abbattuto nel 1984 poiché malato.

40 <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/50806>.

3.5 Breve indagine sull'esperienza turistica a Posillipo

La sentiment analysis⁴¹ è una metodologia utilizzata per valutare il gradimento da parte dell'utenza di un luogo, un monumento, una struttura ricettiva, un ristorante o un'attività attraverso i feedback e le valutazioni presenti nei social media e nei siti specializzati. Una analisi di questo tipo, che richiederebbe una sofisticata metodologia statistica e software specifici, esula dagli scopi di questo lavoro. In questa sede, abbiamo ritenuto di limitarci a svolgere una breve indagine selezionando le più significative – in base alla rilevanza e al numero di recensioni – tra le 61 voci relative al quartiere Posillipo presenti nel sito di recensioni turistiche Tripadvisor e identificando i più ricorrenti fra i giudizi positivi e negativi, in modo da ottenere delle indicazioni di massima in merito alla percezione dell'esperienza turistica da parte dell'utenza⁴².

La voce che raccoglie il maggior numero di recensioni è quella relativa al quartiere stesso: 1.022 giudizi di cui 720 "eccellente" e 233 "molto buono", con una valutazione media di 4,5 (su un massimo di 5). Prevedibilmente, i giudizi più positivi riguardano il paesaggio, l'atmosfera e l'architettura degli edifici storici; quelli più negativi lo stato di degrado di strade e marciapiedi e la difficoltà di raggiungere il quartiere con i mezzi pubblici. Segue il Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon, con 992 recensioni, di cui 840 "eccellente" e 128 "molto buono", e una valutazione media di 5. Tutti i giudizi, compresi quelli negativi, lodano la bellezza e la rilevanza culturale del sito. Le recensioni negative, che sono solo sette, riguardano la scarsa comunicazione degli orari di apertura e di visita, ma si tratta di recensioni che risalgono a diversi anni fa: abbiamo potuto verificare che attualmente questo problema non sussiste e che le informazioni relative a orari, prezzi e modalità di visita sono ampiamente disponibili in rete. Il Parco Virgiliano riceve 857 recensioni, di cui 479 "eccellente" e 278 "molto buono", con una valutazione media di 4,5; anche in questo caso l'aspetto più apprezzato è quello paesaggistico; quello più criticato è lo stato di scarsa manutenzione, se non di degrado, in cui versano sia la strada di accesso al Parco (Viale Virgilio) che il Parco stesso. L'Area Marina Protetta del Parco Sommerso di Gaiola raccoglie 751 recensioni, di cui 579 "eccellente" e 111 "molto buono", con una valutazione media di 4,5. Scorrendo le recensioni ci si accorge che esse si riferiscono a una pluralità di aspetti: la maggior parte di esse riguardano la visita del Parco archeologico del Pausilypon, e pertanto avrebbero dovuto essere pubblicate nella relativa voce (che sarebbe risultata sicuramente quella con il maggior numero di recensioni); altre riguardano la spiaggia della Gaiola, il cui ingresso viene gestito dall'Ente Parco (si veda nota 16); altre ancora le escursioni in battello Aquavision o lo snorkeling; le recensioni positive si riferiscono per lo più alla visita del sito archeologico e non si discostano da quanto già segnalato in proposito; quelle negative (22 "pessimo" e 10 "scarso") riguardano quasi esclusivamente la gestione della spiaggia e si concentrano nei mesi estivi: le maggiori criticità riguardano la prenotazione on line dell'ingresso, che è valutato come difficile, se non impossibile; l'eccessivo affollamento della spiaggia, che è di dimensioni molto ridotte; il parcheggio lungo la strada carrozzabile, che è risultato difficile da reperire e soggetto al fenomeno dell'abusivismo; il percorso pedonale per raggiungere la spiaggia, percepito come lungo, faticoso, scosceso e dissestato⁴³; lo scarso livello generale di igiene e pulizia. Fra le attività all'aria aperta, quella che riceve il maggior numero di recensioni (534, di cui 472 "eccellente") è Kayak Napoli, tour operator che organizza escursioni in kayak, canoa e sup lungo la costa di Posillipo, che ottiene una valutazione media di 4,5; l'aspetto più apprezzato è la straordinarietà dell'esperienza; quello più criticato (fra le 18 recensioni molto negative) è la scortesia del personale. Restando in tema di esperienze marine, lo stabilimento balneare maggiormente recensito è il Bagno Elena, che riceve 217 giudizi con la

41 "According to the Oxford dictionary, sentiment analysis is the process of computationally identifying and categorizing opinions expressed in a piece of text to determine whether the writer's attitude toward a particular topic, product, and so on is generally positive, negative, or neutral». (Valdivia *et al.*, 2017, p. 72).

42 L'analisi è stata effettuata nell'aprile del 2024.

43 A questo problema si è posto parzialmente rimedio nel mese di agosto del 2023 attraverso l'istituzione di una navetta elettrica gratuita, gestita dall'Ente Parco, in funzione nei weekend.

poco lusinghiera valutazione media di 2,5: nonostante il sito sia molto apprezzato dal punto di vista paesaggistico, pesano nella percezione negativa dei clienti il basso rapporto qualità-prezzo sia dello stabilimento balneare che del ristorante, la scarsa pulizia della spiaggia, la scortesia del personale e l'orario di chiusura molto restrittivo (h. 17.30). Fra gli edifici storici, quello che riceve il maggior numero di recensioni (76) è Palazzo Donn'Anna⁴⁴, con una valutazione media di 4,5; dell'edificio vengono apprezzate l'architettura particolarissima e la posizione straordinaria, ma anche il fascino dell'incompiutezza⁴⁵ e l'alone di mistero che lo avvolge; unico motivo di disappunto, manifestato da alcuni, è il fatto di non essere aperto alle visite (cosa però comprensibile, considerando che si tratta di un condominio privato). Segue Villa Rosebery con 47 recensioni e una valutazione media di 4,5; della struttura vengono molto apprezzati l'atmosfera storica e istituzionale, il grande parco, gli edifici neoclassici e il porticciolo⁴⁶.

In buona sostanza, la sfera percettiva emersa da questa disamina sembra confermare quanto sostenuto sopra: un'esperienza turistica a Posillipo può essere considerata soddisfacente, o addirittura superlativa, se si ha un interesse specifico verso il paesaggio, l'architettura, l'archeologia, la fusione di ambiente naturale e artificiale, la storia, la letteratura, il mito. Può invece rivelarsi spiacevole e frustrante se si pensa di accedere con facilità e libertà di azione alla costa e al mare; se non si consultano scrupolosamente orari, prezzi e modalità di ingresso dei siti a pagamento; se non si elabora una mappa mentale dei luoghi di interesse e non ci si informa in anticipo sugli aspetti logistici (distanze, tragitti, tempi di percorrenza, frequenza dei mezzi pubblici); se non si è disposti a vivere un'esperienza che può rivelarsi disagiata dal punto di vista logistico e faticosa dal punto di vista fisico.

4. Posillipo: un quartiere "che esclude"?

Alla fine dell'Ottocento, nelle sue "Leggende napoletane", Matilde Serao scrisse: «Posillipo è l'altissimo ideale che sfuma nella indefinita e lontana linea dell'avvenire; Posillipo è tutta la vita, tutto quello che si può desiderare, tutto quello che si può volere. Posillipo è l'immagine della felicità piena, completa, per tutti i sensi, per tutte le facoltà. È la vita vibrante, fremente, nervosa e lenta, placida e attiva. È il punto massimo di ogni sogno, di ogni poesia.» (Serao, 1895, pp. 53-54). Circa un secolo dopo, e quindi in anni successivi allo sviluppo edilizio e alla conseguente alterazione del paesaggio della parte più alta della collina, l'urbanista Renato De Fusco iniziava così il suo saggio su Posillipo: «Immaginando che un uomo (o una comunità), non importa per quale motivo, debba trascorrere tutta la vita in un luogo, egli può dirsi invero fortunato se la sorte gli assegna la collina di Posillipo. E ciò innanzitutto per i valori del sito [...] ma anche per una serie di circostanze e di connotazioni che lo hanno reso, nonché confortevole, come isolato e diverso da tutti gli altri.» (De Fusco, *op. cit.*, p. 11). Evidentemente, agli occhi di De Fusco, la trasformazione del paesaggio, il mutamento sociale e la transizione funzionale degli anni Sessanta e Settanta non avevano del tutto offuscato il fascino speciale di quel "microcosmo" che chiamiamo Posillipo – ed effettivamente quel fascino è stato sì sminuito ma non annientato, nonostante l'incuria imperante e le aggressioni mosse al paesaggio.

Ma come il poeta francese Gérard de Nerval, sentendosene diseredato, anelava alla "restituzione" di Posillipo⁴⁷, allo stesso modo può sentirsi diseredato colui che questo fascino speciale lo vive non come incanto, ma come privazione: «Pausa al dolore, seppi in seguito che voleva dire

44 Palazzo Donn'Anna, definito «il capolavoro architettonico della Posillipo barocca» (De Fusco, *op. cit.*, p. 72), è certamente l'edificio più rappresentativo di Posillipo e uno dei più famosi di Napoli. «Palazzo Donn'Anna è la prima costruzione moderna di Posillipo, espressione di quella eccezionale stagione che fu il barocco. [...] Non si parla più di bizzarrie, di stravaganze, di gusto ridondante [...] ma di un "classicismo barocco".» (ibidem, p. 79).

45 Contribuisce certamente a tale classicità [...] anche il fatto che l'edificio è rimasto allo stato di rudere.» (ibidem, p. 79).

46 È da questo porticciolo che nel 1946, dopo l'abdicazione, Vittorio Emanuele III partì per l'esilio alla volta di Alessandria d'Egitto.

47 «Rends-moi le Pausilippe et la mer d'Italie», (de Nerval, 1958, p. 693).

il nome della collina, ma non nel senso di un riposo, credo, o di un conforto. Forse nel senso di un miraggio. Perché ciò che è bello e inafferrabile quietava brevemente il dolore solo per renderlo invincibile.» (Rasy, 1997, p. 135).

Al di là delle suggestioni letterarie, si vuole qui sostenere che l'emozione che Posillipo genera o può generare in chi vi si accosti in modo non superficiale (non dall'alto di un bus panoramico, per intenderci) è, sì, di fascinazione, ma anche di deprivazione. Si è detto che Posillipo è un quartiere esclusivo, riferendoci all'accezione socio-economica del termine. Ma in realtà questo termine può essere inteso anche in senso letterale, ossia di cosa "che tende a escludere o ha la forza di escludere" (Treccani⁴⁸): dal mare, per l'accidentata conformazione geologica della costa, ma soprattutto per il regime giuridico cui essa è sottoposta; dal verde, che ricade in grandissima parte all'interno di proprietà private; dagli edifici storici, anch'essi in massima parte privati, oppure chiusi al pubblico per gran parte dell'anno; persino, in un certo senso, dal transito pedonale e ciclistico, se si considera lo stato in cui versano – si spera ancora per poco – i marciapiedi e le strade.

Una correzione di rotta è possibile, ma riteniamo che molto dipenderà dall'azione pubblica: se il *Grande Progetto Posillipo* verrà effettivamente completato nel suo impianto originario, un decisivo passo in avanti sarà stato compiuto verso la "restituzione" ai residenti e ai visitatori delle dimensioni pedonale e ciclistica, oggi certamente molto problematiche. Ma anche la pubblica fruizione del mare, argomento molto dibattuto sia a livello nazionale che cittadino, necessita di un ulteriore passo in avanti: qualcosa in questa direzione è stato fatto di recente (si veda al riguardo la nota 16), ma ulteriori provvedimenti potrebbero essere presi dagli enti competenti nel senso di una liberalizzazione di ingressi e orari di apertura delle spiagge pubbliche. Inoltre, un'azione coordinata tra la Soprintendenza, il Comune di Napoli e il FAI potrebbe condurre a una apertura sistematica e non sporadica degli edifici di interesse culturale di proprietà demaniale, oltre che – cosa difficile ma non impossibile – a possibili accordi per la realizzazione di visite guidate in palazzi storici di proprietà privata, come in effetti succedeva in passato, sia pur saltuariamente, per Villa Volpicelli. Infine, sarebbe auspicabile un potenziamento del trasporto pubblico, che migliorerebbe la qualità della vita dei residenti, come è ovvio, ma anche la qualità dell'esperienza turistica.

5. Conclusioni

Sia che la si riguardi come polo di attrazione che come nucleo di accoglienza⁴⁹, Posillipo sembra possedere caratteristiche tali da soddisfare soprattutto le esigenze di segmenti turistici "di nicchia": turismo attivo e sportivo, turismo del paesaggio, turismo d'atmosfera, turismo storico e della memoria, turismo d'*élite*. Naturalmente sono esclusi da questa considerazione i tour panoramici a bordo di autobus *hop on-hop off* di cui si è detto, che rispondono piuttosto alla logica massiva del cosiddetto turismo "mordi e fuggi". Venendo quindi alla domanda che ci eravamo posti nell'introduzione, ossia quale ruolo svolga, o possa svolgere, Posillipo nell'ambito della geografia del turismo della città di Napoli, al momento ci sembra che esso sia marginale dal punto di vista numerico – e quindi non suscettibile di mitigare, se non in minima misura, il problema del sovraffollamento turistico dei quartieri centrali – e controverso dal punto di vista dell'immagine: conosciuta "di nome", forse addirittura celebre, ma spesso incompresa o ignorata, riteniamo – anche sulla base di quanto emerso nel paragrafo 3.5 – che Posillipo, pur suscitando anche apprezzamenti entusiastici, non sempre riesca a garantire al turista un'esperienza veramente appagante. Se le misure elencate nel paragrafo precedente saranno adottate o completate sarà forse possibile dare al quartiere di Posillipo una più adeguata e meglio definita collocazione

⁴⁸ <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/esclusivo/>.

⁴⁹ Ci si riferisce qui alla terminologia utilizzata da Jean-Pierre Lozato-Giotart (2008), che distingue tra "poli di attrazione", dove sono localizzate le risorse turistiche, e "nuclei di accoglienza", dove sono ubicate le strutture ricettive.

nell'immaginario turistico partenopeo, anche alla luce del fenomeno, descritto nell'introduzione, del *lifeseeing* e del conseguente ampliamento del raggio d'azione dei turisti. In questo modo, pur restando estranea ai grandi flussi e mantenendo la sua natura di luogo destinato a turismo di nicchia, Posillipo potrebbe contribuire in maniera più significativa alla composizione dell'offerta complessiva di Napoli e alla sua immagine di città multiforme e poliedrica.

Uno sviluppo futuro della ricerca potrebbe essere quello di rilevare e analizzare le opinioni di turisti e residenti attraverso 1) la somministrazione a un campione significativo di turisti, nei luoghi di maggiore afflusso, di un questionario *face-to-face* sulla qualità dell'esperienza turistica; 2) la pubblicazione *on line*, in gruppi Facebook composti da residenti, frequentatori e *aficionados* di Posillipo, di un questionario incentrato sulle prospettive turistiche del quartiere, alla luce dei suoi punti di forza e di debolezza. Riteniamo che una prosecuzione della ricerca su queste basi potrebbe condurre a una conferma, a una integrazione o anche a una confutazione dell'analisi finora svolta, conferendole maggiore oggettività e attendibilità.

Un ulteriore sviluppo, dal taglio teorico ma dalle potenziali implicazioni pratiche (ad esempio attraverso l'elaborazione di un itinerario turistico ciclo-pedonale), potrebbe riguardare la ricostruzione storica del paesaggio e del contesto socio-culturale di Posillipo sulla base di opere letterarie che vi siano ambientate in tutto o in parte, o che vi facciano riferimento: fra queste, a titolo puramente esemplificativo, potremmo menzionare *Biglietti da visita. Un viaggio autobiografico* di Norman Douglas, che della Posillipo di fine Ottocento e inizio Novecento – e in particolar modo dell'area della Gaiola, dove Douglas, come già detto (si veda nota 13), possedette una villa per alcuni anni – restituisce un'immagine aristocratica, aneddotica e "leggera"; *Il sangue di San Gennaro* di Sándor Márai, in cui lo scrittore ungherese tratteggia una Posillipo popolare e povera, ma solo di mezzi materiali, di cui ancora oggi si coglie una lontana eco nella zona compresa tra il Casale Santo Strato, Marechiaro e Coroglio; *Ferito a morte* di Raffaele La Capria, romanzo ambientato nei primi anni Cinquanta nel fatuo contesto borghese gravitante intorno alla zona di Palazzo Donn'Anna, dove La Capria visse da giovane e che in un certo senso rappresenta il fulcro geografico ed esistenziale dell'opera⁵⁰.

Riferimenti

- Aucelli P., Cinque A., Mattei G., Pappone G., Stefanile M. (2018). Coastal landscape evolution of Naples (Southern Italy) since the Roman period from archaeological and geomorphological data at Palazzo degli Spiriti site, *Quaternary International*, 483, pp. 23-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2017.12.040>
- Bagnoli L. (2022). *Manuale di geografia del turismo. Dal Grand Tour al Covid. Quinta edizione*. Torino: Utet.
- Claval, P., Pagnini, M.P., Scaini, M. (a cura di) (2005). *The cultural turn in geography: proceedings of the conference, 18-20th of September 2003*, International Geographical Union (IGU). Trieste: Edizioni Università di Trieste.
- Cocola-Gant A., Gago A., Jover, J. (2020). Tourism, gentrification and neighbourhood change: an analytical framework. Reflections from Southern European cities. In Oskam J. (a cura di), *The Overtourism Debate. NIMBY, Nuisance, Commodification* (p. 121-135). Bingley: Emerald.
- Croce S. (2013). *Là dove finisce il dolore. Posillipo nella letteratura*. Napoli: Liguori.
- De Falco S., Corbino A. (2023). Naples and tourism: conflicts of a dream realised? Analysis of a fastchanging urban landscape, *AIMS Geosciences*, 9 (4), pp. 754–768. DOI: 10.3934/geosci.2023040.
- De Fusco R. (1988). *Posillipo*. Napoli: Electa.
- Del Tufo V. (2015). *Trentaremi. Storie di Napoli magica*. Napoli: Rogiosi.
- De Nerval G. (1958). El Desdichado. In Lemaître H. (a cura di), *Oeuvres* (p. 693). Parigi: Classiques Garnier.
- Douglas N. (1983). *Biglietti da visita. Un viaggio autobiografico* (titolo originale: *Looking back. An autobiographical excursion*, 1933). Milano: Adelphi.
- Espósito A. (2023a). *Le case degli altri. La turistificazione del centro di Napoli e le politiche pubbliche al tempo di Airbnb*. Firenze: Editpress.

50 «Laggiù, quella macchia gialla, pare una spugna vecchia, è il Palazzo Medina, punto di riferimento e centro del mondo» (La Capria, 1973, p. 20). Va precisato che nel libro La Capria si riferisce a Palazzo Donn'Anna chiamandolo "Palazzo Medina", alludendo quindi al viceré Ramiro Núñez de Guzmán, duca di Medina de las Torres e marito della nobildonna Anna Carafa della Stadera, che negli anni Trenta del Seicento ne volle l'edificazione su progetto dell'architetto Cosimo Fanzago.

Esposito A. (2023b). Tourism-driven displacement in Naples, Italy, *Land Use Policy*, 134 (15). <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2023.106919>

Esposito De Vita G., Ragozino S., Daldanise G. (2014). Diritto al mare a Napoli: accedere, conoscere, ricordare, condividere l'area marina protetta di Gaiola, *TRIA - Territorio della Ricerca su Insediamenti e Ambiente. Rivista Internazionale di Cultura Urbanistica, Special Issue* 13, pp. 133-152. DOI: 10.6092/2281-4574/2701

Ferraro I. (2016). *Napoli. Atlante della città storica. Posillipo*. Napoli: Oikos.

Galasso G. (2013). Introduzione. Dire Posillipo è dire Napoli. In Croce S., *Là dove finisce il dolore. Posillipo nella letteratura* (pp. 3-11). Napoli: Liguori.

Goethe J. W. (1980). *Viaggio in Italia* (titolo originale: *Italienische Reise*, 1816, 1817). Firenze: Sansoni.

Guarino M. (2017). Il valore del paesaggio a Posillipo tra ambiente naturale e costruito, *Aestimum*, 71, pp. 215-245. DOI: 10.13128/Aestimum-22728.

Gunther R.T. (1993). *Posillipo romana* (a cura di Viggiani D.). Napoli: Electa.

Hägerstrand T. (1967). *Innovation diffusion as a spatial process* (titolo originale: *Innovations förloppet ur korologisk synpunkt*, 1953). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

King B., Richards G., Yeung E. (2023). City neighbourhood branding and new urban tourism, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10, pp. 1649-1665. DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2023.2214719.

La Capria R. (1973). *Ferito a morte* (ed. originale, Bompiani, 1961). Milano: Mondadori.

Lozato-Giotart J. P. (2008). *Geografia del Turismo*. Milano: Hoepli.

Maglio A. (2018). La costa di Posillipo nelle incisioni del *Voyage pittoresque*, *ArchHistoR Extra 3. Supplemento di ArchHistoR* 10, pp. 147-189. DOI: 10.14633/AHR079.

Maitland R. (2008). Conviviality and everyday life: The appeal of new areas of London for visitors. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(1), pp. 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.621>.

Maitland R., Newman P. (2014). *World tourism cities: Developing tourism off the beaten track*. London: Routledge.

Márai S. (2010). *Il sangue di San Gennaro* (titolo originale: *San Gennaro vére*, 1965). Milano: Adelphi.

Marrone T., Cantone L., Cantone G. F., Basile V. (2024). The Resilience of Small and Troubling Neighbourhoods for Improving the Destination Brand of the Cities. A Case From the Neighbourhoods of Naples, *Human Factors in Architecture, Sustainable Urban Planning and Infrastructure*, 153, pp. 85-96. DOI: 10.54941/ahfe1005341

Matoga Ł., Pawłowska A. (2018). Off-the-beaten-track tourism: A new trend in the tourism development in historical European cities. A case study of the city of Krakow, Poland. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(14), pp. 1644-1669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2016.1212822>

Mattei G., Aucelli P., Cinque A., Pappone G., Rizzo A. (2019). Modificazioni del paesaggio costiero di Posillipo (Napoli) in epoca storica: valutazione e interpretazione sulla base di indagini geoarcheologiche integrate. In Salvatori F. (a cura di), *L'apporto della Geografia tra rivoluzioni e riforme. Atti del XXXII Congresso Geografico Italiano* (pp. 771-779). Roma: A.Ge.I.

Mazzetti E. (2001). I pittori di Posillipo dal vedutismo al paesaggio. In Mazzetti E., *Viaggi, paesaggi e personaggi del Sud e d'altrove* (pp. 51-103). Milano: Unicopli.

Mazzetti E. (2012). *Paesaggi del Sud. Iconografie e narrazioni*. Roma: Aracne.

Nappi M. R. (2016). Immagini di Posillipo. In Ferraro I., *Napoli. Atlante della città storica. Posillipo* (pp. 28-40). Napoli: Oikos.

Papp J. (2013). Napoli e napoletanità nei diari di Sándor Márai (1948-1952). In Di Francesco A. & Papp J. (a cura di), *Sándor Márai e Napoli. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Napoli, Napoli, 15-16 novembre 2010, Università degli Studi di Napoli-L'Orientale* (pp. 215-240). Napoli: M. D'Auria Editore.

Pfirsich T. (2011). La localisation résidentielle des classes supérieures dans une ville d'Europe du Sud. Le cas de Naples, *L'Espace Géographique*, 4, pp. 305-318. DOI: 10.3917/eg.404.0305

Pfirsich T. (2014). I margini nel cuore dei «quartieri bene»? Realtà e rappresentazioni delle *enclaves* popolari nei quartieri agiati di Napoli, *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 7, p. 113-129. <https://doi.org/10.13128/bsgi.v7i1>.

Phocuswright (2022). *The Outlook for Travel Experiences 2019-2025*. <https://www.phocuswright.com/Travel-Research/Destination-Activities-Marketing/The-Outlook-for-Travel-Experiences-2019-to-2025>

Rasy E. (1997). *Posillipo*. Milano: Rizzoli.

Rea S. (a cura di) (1966). *Documento su Posillipo*. Napoli: Associazione Nazionale Italia Nostra.

Richards, G. (2014). The New Geographies of Tourism: Space, Place and Locality. *Paper presented at the Wageningen Geography Lectures, 13th January 2014*. http://www.academia.edu/10147781/The_new_geographies_of_tourism_Space_place_and_locality.

Rocca G. (2013). *Dal prototurismo al turismo globale. Momenti, percorsi, casi di studio*. Torino: Giappichelli.

Ruotolo R. (1993). *I Gigante. Una famiglia di pittori*. Sorrento: Franco Di Mauro Editore.

Russo A. P., Richards G. (2016). *Reinventing the local in tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Serao M. (1895). *Leggende napoletane*. Roma: Edoardo Perino Editore.

Valdivia A., Luzón M.V., Herrera F. (2017). Sentiment Analysis in TripAdvisor, *IEEE Intelligent Systems*, 4, pp. 72-77. DOI: 10.1109/MIS.2017.3121555

Viggiani D. (1989). *I tempi di Posillipo. Dalle ville romane ai casini di delizia*. Napoli: Electa.

Zarrilli, L., & Brito, M. (2017). Lisbon and the Alcântara Neighbourhood Changes: Is Tourism Invading or Renovating? *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 2, pp. 254-271.

Zarrilli L., Brito M., Cappucci M. (2019). Alcântara (Lisbona), da quartiere industriale a destinazione turistica: offerta turistica, strutture ricettive e valutazione del quartiere, *Geotema*, Supplemento 2019, pp. 67-81.

